



Lucci

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Category: Romance

Description: Lucciano Culver was wild and reckless in his teens and early twenties.

As he matured, he realized a few things.

The first revelation was that he'd prefer loyalty over love any day.

His second epiphany taught him that a trifling woman could be a man's downfall.

He could have remained single, or he could have moved smart.

Lucci chose the latter.

When he picked his partner, he chose a solid woman that he could trust and not one that he was madly in love with.

After all, that fairytale romance BS was for women.

He was a realist.

Lucci is fine being in a relationship with a woman that he looks at as more a best friend than a soulmate until temptation saunters into his life in the form of a bad ass female that likes fast cars and good times.

Lucci has never been faced with the task of following his head or his heart.

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LUCCI

My brother, Tyler pulled into a parking space at one of the biggest parks in Diamond Cove, North Carolina because that was the move for the day.

It was a sweltering ninety-four degrees out, but that didn't stop people from congregating at the park and just kicking it.

He was itching to pull up at the park because The Hellcat Barbies were supposed to be there.

The Hellcat Barbies was an all-female car club.

Each one of the members drove Dodge Charger SRT Hellcats or Challengers.

They were about twenty deep and as he parked his Denali, my eyes raked over the vehicles lined up on the other side of the park. The cars were nice indeed.

"Boy, I haven't seen an ugly chick in that car club," Tyler marveled. "But muhfuckin' Breezy, Lauren, Cressida, Aubree, and Saskia are the baddest."

"Breezy?" I repeated because I lowkey liked the name for a female.

Tyler glanced over at me with a broad grin on his chestnut-brown face. "Yeap. That broad is fye as fuck. Slim, thick, she's 'bout 5'7 and has light brown skin. She drives the Nipsey blue joint."

“Damn, you stalking them or something?” I implored. “You sure do know a lot about them.”

Tyler kissed his teeth and waved my comment off. “I’m trying to hit Lauren, and her and Breezy are real close. Lauren drives the matte black one. I see why you be fucking them sophisticated hoes. I’m done with hood rats. Saskia is a cardiovascular perfusionist. Whatever the fuck that means.”

With a laugh, I pushed the car door open and exited the vehicle.

It was hot enough to go shirtless, but not everyone needed to know I had my heat tucked.

The white tank top that I wore concealed it.

I never went anywhere looking for trouble, but if trouble found me, I was always ready for it.

I had always been taught that beef was a broke man’s sport, but there were times when it couldn’t really be avoided.

There were just some niggas that were put on this earth to test people, and I had a very low tolerance for bullshit.

If I wasn’t with Tyler, I was with my best friend, Maino, or alone.

I didn’t need to roll with a bunch of people.

I was good solo or with my day ones. Opportunists, fakes, and snakes had no place in my direct world.

Nine times out of ten, someone always had a motive.

The men were just as bad as the women. Someone somewhere always had their hands out wanting something from me, and it got real old real fast.

The deeper we advanced into the park, people greeted my brother and I, and some even attempted to stop us to hold conversations.

My focus was determining who was in attendance at the event, going with my brother over to the women, so he could be a car club groupie, and parking my ass on the hood of someone's car.

Twisting the cap off my bottle of water, I spotted a woman that fit Breezy's description posing for a picture in front of a blue Hellcat.

Tyler hadn't lied. Lil' Baby was fine. She was dressed in a navy-blue tennis skirt trimmed in white, and a matching sports bra.

On her feet were blue and white sneakers, and her long braids hung down past her ass.

A few tattoos decorated her otherwise flawless skin.

I chugged my water as Tyler walked up on a petite, light-skinned female with a short pixie cut. Her black car was parked right beside Breezy's. She was the one that had taken Breezy's picture. "What up, L?" Tyler greeted her with a hug as she smiled bashfully.

"Hey, Ty. How are you?"

"Better now that I see you."

I snorted lightly, and Tyler cut his eye at me.

My skin tone was on the lighter side just like our father, while Tyler was darker like our mother.

People often joked that he should have been the light-skinned, ‘pretty boy’ because that nigga loved himself and women.

The right woman could make his ass soft as cotton.

Me on the other hand, if I had a dollar for every time someone called me mean, I could buy a Hellcat cash.

It wasn’t that I was mean. I just didn’t tolerate dumb shit, bullshit, or fuck shit, and I had no problem checking anyone that attempted to involve me in it or bring it around me.

“This is my hating ass brother, Lucci. Lucci this is Lauren, and this is her homegirl, Breezy.”

“Hi,” Lauren smiled politely while Breezy did the same.

Not every woman in the world wanted me, but I got hit on enough to know that most women weren’t too shy to shoot their shot when they saw someone they liked.

Especially when they knew that someone had money and good dick.

Nah, I wasn’t arrogant, but plenty women had told me that they heard the D was like that, and the money part was obvious.

I wasn’t super flashy, but I liked what I liked and most times it wasn’t cheap.

Women threw themselves at me so much that when a woman didn't act thrilled or pressed to be in my presence, it made me wonder what her story was.

Breezy wasn't stuck up or rude, but she damn sure didn't give thirsty.

After she smiled at me, she diverted her attention elsewhere.

My orbs darted over her fingers. She didn't appear to be engaged or married.

Honestly, it didn't even matter why she didn't seem to be interested.

For the past three years, I'd been in a relationship.

Kiandra wasn't the love of my life, but she was a rider.

She held me down on more than one occasion, and she was solid.

In my line of work, someone that was loyal and wouldn't fold was important.

Kiandra wasn't moved by dollar signs or my popularity.

If a person asked me to choose between loyalty and love, I'd choose loyalty every time.

There were no ulterior motives with Kiandra.

She was as genuine as they came. Kiandra was also smart, pretty, and she was a good girl.

Shorty went to church every Sunday, she didn't smoke, barely drank, shit she barely cursed.

I had love for her, but I wasn't in love with her.

Out of respect for her, no one knew that piece of information.

I kept it guarded. And because she was such a loyal person, I didn't entertain other women no matter how tempting it became.

I'd feel like a complete asshole if I cheated on her with a sack chaser that turned out to only be around for superficial things.

I'd seen men in my position get set up and robbed, killed, even snitched on by a woman that they were sleeping with.

I didn't trust many, but Kiandra was up there with Tyler and Maino.

I owed Kiandra. So, if I had to live life without that fairytale love bullshit then that's what it was.

I'd much rather have someone in my corner that would ride 'til the wheels fell off versus a muhfucka that was only around for the good times. That love shit nine times out of ten was only a facade, and I wasn't interested.

I'd take Kiandra over the smoke and mirrors any day.

I waited patiently for Tyler to finish his conversation with Lauren while I looked over the cars. I stopped in front of Breezy's and admired the paint job. I could feel her eyes on me while my gaze poured over her vehicle. Without lifting my head, I spoke.

"What's the fastest you ever pushed the dash?"

"I'm never going over a hundred," she chuckled.

That comment made my head raise. “You got a car that can go up to two hundred miles an hour, and you’re scared to drive faster than a hundred?”

Her brows and shoulders lifted unapologetically. “Hey. I like the cars, but I’m not a street racer, and I’m not trying to die.”

My head bobbed. “I get it. You’re just a girl, right?”

A broad grin inched across her face. “Precisely.”

I chuckled while admiring the tiny jewels she had on all four of her canines. “Hey, Breezy boo,” a tall, dark-skinned female with locs sauntered over to Breezy, and they hugged.

Tyler chuckled his chin up signaling that he was done talking to Lauren. I walked over to him and titled my head at her. “You good to stay out here for about an hour? Me and Lauren are going to grab some food when we leave here.”

“I’m cool with that.”

“You want to come? It’ll just be her and Breezy.”

“Nah. I’m good.”

Tyler grinned. “You know Kiandra isn’t going to trip. She trusts you more than I’ve ever seen a female trust a nigga. Shit, she trusts you more than mom trusts dad.”

I frowned. “That’s because I don’t give her a reason not to trust me. I’ve never cheated on Kiandra.”

“Exactly. So, if you tell her it’s just a friendly outing, she’ll believe that.”

“I’m good, Tyler. I have moves to make.”

Just because I was good at resisting temptation didn’t mean I was a fan of having it dangled in my face.

The next evening, I walked behind Kiandra with my hand placed on the small of her back subtly guiding her. When she reached the door of the restaurant, I pushed it open from behind her, and she stepped through.

“Anything you need or want before we take it in?” I asked as we trekked toward the valet stand.

“Nope,” she smiled. “I’m so stuffed, I don’t need anything else until tomorrow afternoon.”

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I chuckled at her comment before giving the valet attendant my name while tossing an icy glare at the small group of women sauntering by us.

They were gawking disrespectfully, and shit like that irritated me.

Kiandra wasn't the confrontational type.

She worked in the human resources department of Diamond Cove University, and she'd probably never been in a fight in her life.

I despised bird brain bitches that felt it was cute or okay to ogle or straight up flirt with me when I was with Kiandra.

She didn't like when I cursed them out for it, so I had learned to ignore it.

Just once, I wanted her to stand up for herself and knock a bitch's head off her shoulders, but that simply wasn't Kiandra's personality.

When the smile disappeared from my face and my nostrils flared slightly, the women's gazes snapped in another direction.

Kiandra was safe. She was plain and borderline boring.

She liked to travel and eat, but she didn't do clubs, lounges, or hookah spots.

Kiandra listened to R&B, gospel, and jazz.

I could list ten popular rappers, and she wouldn't know who any of them were.

The way she dressed was modest, and she couldn't tell the difference between a Chanel bag or a Birkin bag.

She was the kind of woman that most street niggas wanted to wife.

Her credit was good, and she didn't have a record.

She could put shit her name, and they'd never have to stress if she was sleeping around, up to no good, etc.

A woman could be unapologetically her, and I could still rock with her, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't wish she was a little more spontaneous.

A little freakier. That we had more things in common.

I owed Kiandra. At first, she started out as something to do.

She was pretty. A good girl that wanted to test the waters with a bad boy, and I gave her that.

I was twenty-four at the time and mature when it counted, but there were times that I still moved reckless as hell.

I was posted up in Kiandra's crib one day while she was cooking for me.

When taking her trash to the dumpster, I spotted someone that I had beef with, and I beat his ass right then and there in the parking lot.

My dumb ass didn't leave fast enough and not only did neighbors call the police, but

they told them which apartment I'd gone into.

Thanks to me, Kiandra's place smelled like weed, and she got evicted.

I felt like shit. With an eviction on her credit, it was hard for her to get a new place, so I gave her \$50,000 to help her buy a crib.

She was able to get a loan through one of the local credit unions, and she was approved with no money down, but I told her to put the \$50k toward her closing costs, appliances, the mortgage, etc.

After I got her in a new place, I felt like my debt to her was repaid.

I was still sleeping with her on a causal basis and doing my thing with other females as well.

After about a year, I got shot four times, and I was fucked up for a good three months.

Kiandra nursed me back to health. She was there for me every single day.

Shorty even took two weeks off work, so she wouldn't have to leave me alone.

Her parents loathed me. The one time I saw them, they looked at me like I was shit on the bottom of their shoes.

I had tattoos covering damn near every inch my body, including a small one on my face.

Even my knuckles were tatted. They lectured her for weeks about dealing with me, and it went in one ear and out the other.

I began seeing more and more how trifling females could be a nigga's downfall, so aside from just giving her money, I cuffed her.

I felt she'd not only be good for me, but taking care of her was my way of saying thank you.

Looking back, I wifed her for the wrong reasons, but we were three years in, and what could I do about it?

I knew that Kiandra loved me, and I had no desire to break her heart.

I kept thinking over time the love would come.

But I looked at Kiandra like a best friend versus my soulmate.

Since I wasn't looking for some whirlwind romance type shit, the situation was fine for me for the most part.

Kiandra stood 5'4, and she had deep brown skin, doe shaped eyes, and thick hair that touched the middle of her back.

She rarely wore weave, she didn't get her nails done, and she didn't wear make-up or lash extensions.

She had a little weight on her and would look good in form fitting clothes, if she wore them.

While Kiandra being a good girl wasn't a bad thing, there were times that I was drunk or high, and I wanted some nasty ass sex.

I liked a female that talked dirty, threw that ass back, sucked my dick at random

times.

That wasn't Kiandra. Shit, she rarely sucked dick at all.

In the car, the sounds of Keith Sweat wafted from my speakers, and Kiandra looked over at me. "Oh, I meant to tell you at dinner, my parents want me to go with them to Stone Ridge for the weekend. They're leaving Friday morning and coming back Sunday evening. That cool?"

I chuckled before glancing at her. "What you mean is that cool? I don't tell you where you can and can't go."

"Yeah, I know, but I've never stayed gone for an entire weekend. You might need me," she jested.

"I think I can manage for a weekend. I know you like Stone Ridge. Go have fun. Maybe your parents won't spend the entire weekend trying to talk you out of dealing with me."

"I think they have pretty much accepted the fact that it's a waste of time."

That got a snort out of me because that would never happen.

Her parents would use their last breath to try and deter her from being with me, and I refused to believe otherwise.

It didn't bother me at all because I wasn't fucking her parents.

They could dislike me all they wanted, but Kiandra was twenty-nine years old.

I wasn't pressed to get married, but if I ever did marry Kiandra, I'd bet money her

parents wouldn't attend the wedding.

That was also fine by me, but it would bother Kiandra.

Kiandra talked a good game, but I knew being in a relationship with someone her loved ones didn't approve of wasn't easy for her.

"I told my dad you were thinking about getting your real estate license. I could tell he was impressed."

I didn't respond because there wasn't anything to say.

I didn't seek approval from Kiandra's father.

I was thinking of taking the real estate exam because I needed money the legal way.

In high school, I dabbled with selling drugs, but I was never big time with it.

I made enough money to stay fly and to buy an eight-year-old Camry my senior year, but I was far from a kingpin.

After high school, I got turned up off scamming.

Counterfeit money, fake checks, credit card fraud, selling CPN numbers.

From the age of nineteen to twenty-three, I saw at least two million dollars from scamming.

I had a two-bedroom condo, two closets filled to the max with clothes and shoes, jewelry out the ass, a BMW, a Maserati, and every electronic device that a person could think of.

I even had a few females that did income tax fraud that got me back an \$11,000 refund two years in a row. I'd never even worked a legal job.

When their asses got Fed time, I fell back from scamming and started robbing.

I guess one could say I'd done everything except get a job.

I only robbed big fish. If my take wasn't at least \$10,000 after a robbery, I felt like I wasted my time.

The most I'd ever gotten from my cut of a robbery was \$83,000.

I sold some of the jewelry that I copped when I was scamming and even though it had been a year since I'd robbed anyone, I had money stashed.

I was living quite comfortably, but I knew sooner rather than later, my ass needed to get on my grind and start making legal money.

One thing I had was the gift of gab, so I knew real estate could be lucrative for me.

Not even knowing how hard the real estate test was to pass made me hesitant because I wasn't a dummy by far.

I approached a red light, and Kiandra reached over to touch my arm. "And I'm still waiting on you to find a class to enroll in."

Chuckling, I looked over at her. It was very possible for a woman to be smart, ambitious, motivating, and like nice things.

I didn't look down on any female that carried Chanel bags and drove foreign cars, but Kiandra wasn't into all that, and it saved me a shit ton of money.

She wanted to see me win and it wasn't for her own gain.

I had just parted my lips to speak when I noticed the person in the car beside us.

He was staring a little bit too hard and by the time recognition set in, his window was rolling down.

“Kiandra! Get down!” I yelled as I reached underneath the seat for my gun, but it was too late.

Glass shattered in her face, and she screamed as a barrage of bullets hit my car.

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brEEZY

My brows pinched together when my doorbell rang. I wasn't expecting company, so I wondered who was at my door. Popping a shrimp into my mouth, I sauntered to the door and stuck my eye in front of the peephole.

"Fuck do you want?" I barked.

"It's Taco Tuesday, hoe. Open the door."

Giggling, I twisted the lock and let Lauren in. "It's not Taco Tuesday over here for you. You stood me up to hang with Tyler, remember. Where he at?"

"Girl," she sighed walking into the living room. "His brother's girlfriend got shot yesterday. He's comforting his brother and shit."

My eyes bulged out of my skull. "Lucci? Is she okay?"

"Yeah. She was hit in the neck, and arm, but a bullet fragment got inside her ear, and it's probably going to affect her hearing. None of the injuries are life threatening, but she got hit up pretty bad."

"Damn," I led Lauren to the kitchen where I was cooking tacos and drinking tequila and Red Bull.

I couldn't even front. When I first saw Lucci in the park, he was the first light-skinned man I had ever internally salivated over.

He was seriously handsome, but when Lauren told me he had a girl and that she'd never heard of him cheating, my infatuation dissipated.

I overly respected a loyal man, and I'd never be that thirsty ass broad throwing myself at a man that was spoken for.

That was bird behavior in the highest form, and I was far from a bird.

"He be out here on that dumb shit?" I grabbed a bottle of Azul and a glass.

I could look at Lucci and tell that he was rugged as hell and far from the corporate type, but he could have had a job.

Maybe he was a tattoo artist or a rapper.

I had never heard anything about him until that day in the park when Lauren gave me a brief rundown.

"I don't really know. I honestly don't even know what Lucci does.

I don't think he sells drugs. Years ago, my cousins told me he was into scamming and shit.

He bought my cousin's homegirl a Louis Vuitton purse and some mo' shit with a stolen credit card.

I don't know what he's on now. I think he pretty much stays out the way."

"Damn that's messed up," I mumbled passing her the glass.

I'd dated my share of bad boys, and I couldn't imagine being shot multiple times

simply from riding in the car with someone that possibly had beef that didn't involve me.

I had no clue who his girlfriend was, but I said a quick prayer that she was okay.

Hearing about the tragedy had dampened the mood a bit.

I sipped my drink and tried to shake the heaviness off.

“You really like Tyler, or he's just something to do?”

Lauren's cheeks reddened instantly, and I knew she liked him. “Tyler is cute,” she grinned. “He's a little younger than me. He's only twenty-six, so I don't really know.”

Simultaneously, I kissed my teeth and rolled my eyes. “He's four years younger than you. That's not bad.”

A slight scowl covered her face. “You know men mature slow. I don't know.

He's been flirting with me for a minute, but I just gave him my number like a month ago.

I'm going to take it slow. You know these men are good for being everything you want in the beginning and as soon as you let your guard down, they unleash their inner fuck nigga. ”

“You ain't never lied,” I sighed. Shaking my head I couldn't help but think of TJ.

He begged for my number, we talked on the phone for a month, he took me out on a date, and the day after our date, I saw a picture of him on social media with his child

that had just been born five hours before. I blocked him and kept it pushing.

Men could be some sick ass creatures, and I had no desire to waste my time or energy on them.

I was thirty with no prospects in sight for a husband.

Being a baby mama was never on my bingo card, so no husband meant no baby.

Time was ticking, and it wasn't on my side.

A husband that didn't play about me and one or two kids would have been nice, but I wasn't forcing shit, and I wasn't settling.

"I can't believe Lucci looks how he looks and acts how he acts yet, no one can get him to cheat on his girl.

She's real pretty but plain as hell. Real meek and shit.

I definitely wouldn't think they'd be attracted to one another, but the fact that he doesn't cheat says it all.

She has herself a winner. And that gives me hope.

Hopefully, his brother is the same way."

I turned the stove off and used my fork to remove the shrimp I cooked from the pan.

"What does Tyler do? Does he have any kids?"

"He sells weed, and he has a mobile car detailing service. And he's not a baby daddy."

“Oh shit, you should have been gave me his card. He can start getting my baby right. I don’t mind spending with him as long as he does a good job.”

“He’s the best,” she grinned, and twerked a little on the barstool she was seated on.

“Anyway,” I laughed while grabbing a few bowls to put the toppings for the tacos in. “I’ll hit him up. Sometimes, the guy I use be on bullshit. I pay him too much money not to be completely satisfied.”

I was an only child, but my father had a huge family.

He had nine sisters and brothers and between the ten of them, my grandparents had thirty-two grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

My mother’s family wasn’t as large, but it wasn’t exactly small either.

I was cool with one of my aunts, an uncle, and a few cousins, but my mother was a deadbeat and so was her mother.

My grandmother was a drunk that let any and everybody watch my mother when she was a child.

From what I was told, my grandmother was either always somewhere in the streets or passed out while other people watched her child.

As she got older, there were times my mother fended for herself.

My parents met when they were seventeen and fresh out of high school my father landed a decent job.

It didn’t take long for him to get his own place, and my mother moved in with him.

By the time I was born, she wasn't interested in being a mother.

All she wanted to do was party all night and sleep all day.

My father would come home from work to find me screaming my head off, and her asleep.

He wasn't going for that and when I was eight months old, he put her out and never looked back.

For as long as I could remember, my mother hardly ever came around and when she did, she acted like anything but a mother.

The older I got, I had no desire to be around her and when I expressed that to my father, he didn't force me to deal with her.

Our relationship was pretty much nonexistent and while it bothered me when I was a child, as an adult, I was fine with it.

I had plenty of cousins, aunts, and uncles, plus my grandparents and father to always feel loved and supported.

Because I had such a large family, I never needed a lot of friends, but the women in The Hellcat Barbies had become my family.

Lauren and I were the closest, but I rocked with all the ladies.

I simply wanted a hellcat and two days after I got it, I used the hashtag on Instagram, and discovered there were quite a few women in Diamond Cove that had hellcats, and the idea to start a car club was born.

It was one of the best things I'd ever done.

We were two years strong. I started out with six members, and there were currently twenty-two.

Every time someone reached out to me about wanting to be a part of the organization, I was honored.

We did more than just link up at gatherings to show off our cars and race.

Last Thanksgiving, we got together and fed the homeless.

We did a toy and coat drive for Christmas, and we were holding one for back to school for the kids.

There was a monthly fee of \$100 but that didn't scratch the surface of what we did for the community.

Some of the money that we used for charity work came from our own pockets, and we also had small fundraisers here and there to raise money.

As a real estate agent, I made pretty good money and never minded contributing to a good cause.

We had a brunch event coming up. We were having the event catered and had thirty tickets available for sale.

People could come chill with us and eat, drink bottomless Mimosas, and just have a good time.

All of the profit was going toward the back-to-school drive.

Even with no man and no kids, I lived a very fulfilled life.

Still there were times that I wanted more.

I couldn't make those things appear out of thin air, so I had to either wait or just give up on the idea all together.

Lauren and I stuffed our faces with tacos and got some nice buzzes off the tequila.

I listened to music while cleaning the kitchen and took a long, hot shower afterward.

Once I had crawled into bed, I glanced over at the book that was on my nightstand.

The only irritating thing about being a real estate broker was all the continuing education courses we had to take.

I had a year to take three classes, and I was only on the first one.

Deciding not to even waste my time, I laid down and grabbed the remote control to find something that I could watch until I fell asleep.

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The sounds of my Yves Saint Laurent heels tapping marble floors echoed through the home that I was showing my client.

Waving my hand toward the fireplace in the living room, I gave him a big smile.

“This three story home has seven bedrooms, eleven bathrooms, a theatre room, finished basement, and six fireplaces. There are cathedral ceilings and a balcony on the third floor. There’s a heated saltwater pool, a pool house, basketball court, private entrance, helicopter landing pad, and enough garage space to park eleven vehicles. ”

My client was entering his third season in the NBA, and he was looking to purchase a home in the area.

Our first stop was an exquisite home that would run him \$7,500,000.

I had a total of five houses to show him and the cheapest one was \$6,200,000.

I could stand to make more than \$200,000 in the least, so I prayed he purchased one of the homes.

Real estate wasn’t an easy field to dominate, and luxury real estate was even harder to get into especially being a black woman.

Thankfully, there was a whole lot of money in Diamond Cove and people buying \$100,000,000 homes wasn’t uncommon at all.

The more expensive the house the better the commission meaning I could go months

without selling a house and not panic.

The house was spacious, and I made sure to point out all the intricate details, so the viewing took a while.

Each time I turned to face Chad and caught him ogling my body, I resisted the urge to frown.

Chad was married, but his wife wasn't with him because she was at home on bedrest, eight months pregnant with twins.

We spoke a few times over the phone, and she told me all the features she wanted in a home.

Chad took videos of each home we viewed, and she was going to assist him in making a decision.

He was a man and not just any man. He was a man in the NBA.

I wasn't sure if he cheated on his wife or not, but if he did, he damn sure wouldn't do it with me.

"What do you think?" I forced a smile once we'd toured every inch of the home.

"I like it. I like it a lot. The fact that it already has a barber room is what really did it for me, but of course, I have to at least look at the others."

"That makes absolute sense. Luckily, the second house is literally only five miles from here, and the home sits on a lake. That view is amazing. After you." I waved him ahead, so I could close and lock the door behind me.

It was pathetic that each time I turned my back to him I knew he was gawking at my behind.

Some men had no tact, and that was sad as hell.

Imagine me being at home big as hell and miserable from carrying not one but two babies inside my body while the father drooled over his real estate agent.

Men like Chad made me never want to risk my life pushing out any man's kids.

Chad got in his Jaguar, and I got in my Hellcat.

I loved my car, but I was seriously thinking of getting a second vehicle.

Maybe a BMW or a Benz truck. Despite the fact that I was a real estate agent, I was still renting.

I had a plan in place to buy my dream home and while I stacked my money to do that, I could live a little and get another car.

My current rent was \$2,400 a month. I estimated the mortgage on my dream home to run at least \$3,500 a month.

Once I saved around \$175,000, I was going to buy my home.

The plan was to put \$100,000 down, of course, I needed money for the closing costs, and I wanted to have six months' worth of mortgage saved.

If I kept grinding hard and selling at least three to four houses a month, I knew I could reach my goal in less than a year.

I had already been saving for a year and a half.

While my car sat idle at a red light, I opened the email notification that had just come through. I had listed a house for \$5,300,000, and someone had completed the contact form to view the property. “Lucciano Culver,” I read the name aloud. “Lucciano,” I repeated.

My first thought was that maybe he was Italian but then Lucci’s face popped into my head.

I had assumed that Lucci was maybe just a street name.

I’d never encountered a black man named Lucciano.

It didn’t really matter who wanted to view the home, but I still chewed on my bottom lip as I contemplated calling Lauren.

I was less than a mile away from the second home when I bit the bullet and called.

Lauren owned a bakery, and she did accounting on the side.

During tax season, my girl made excellent money.

“Hey boo.” Lauren sounded out of breath, and I could tell she was moving around.

“Hey. I won’t hold you long, I just have a quick question. Do you know Tyler’s brother’s real name? Or their last name?”

“I don’t know Lucci’s real name, but Tyler’s last name is Culver. Why what’s up?”

“I just got an email from someone named Lucciano Culver. He wants to view one of

the properties that I have listed. That name just kind of stood out to me.”

“That has to be him. Kiandra had to have surgery on her ear, but I think she was released from the hospital yesterday. I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s trying to buy her a house as an ‘I’m sorry I got you shot the fuck up’ gift.”

“That is not funny.”

“I’m not trying to be funny. I’m being dead ass. I doubt that his car was randomly shot into, and I know the shooter’s beef wasn’t with her. She took two bullets for that man, and got hit in the ear with fragments of a bullet. He’d be buying me way more than a house.”

I arrived at house number two, and Chad parked directly behind me.

I knew we’d be together for at least another hour and a half, and I was ready to get the viewings over with.

Prayerfully, his wife liked one of them, and we could get the ball rolling.

If I had to find another set of houses for them, I was going to scream.

“Alright crazy lady. I’m showing Chad the creep houses today, and we just arrived at house number two.”

“Ewww. Have fun.”

“Bye, girl,” I giggled.

Chad wasn’t the most handsome man around, but he was rich.

If he was single and a little less arrogant, he might be worthy of flirting back with, but the fact that he had a woman made him even less attractive than he already was.

I loved money, but I worked for my own. I would never be so desperate or thirsty for money, love, or kids that I lusted after another woman's man.

So for the life of me, I couldn't understand why I was nervous about seeing Lucci again.

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LUCCI

Never in life had I ever given a fuck about what anyone had to say about me or what they thought of me, but the hateful glares I received from Kiandra's friends and family at the hospital was enough to make me get missing when they came to visit her at the house.

And that was mostly because I felt guilty as hell.

Shit, maybe I deserved their glowers and disrespectful words.

When her father told me he hated the day his daughter ever laid eyes on me, I almost knocked his old ass out, but shit, was he wrong for feeling how he felt? Hell nah.

The person that shot Kiandra was a guy by the name of Rich.

He was one of the first hustlers I'd ever robbed.

He never had concrete proof that I robbed him, and I had never told a soul that I robbed him.

The only person that knew I robbed him was Tyler because he was with me when I did it.

That was at the time when I was still wild as hell and on my best bullshit so after I caught him grilling me like he had an issue one too many times, I asked him what the problem was.

That led to the fight at Kiandra's apartment complex, and he ended up missing a few teeth.

Right after he got his teeth fixed, he caught a drug charge and had to go do a bid.

I didn't even know the nigga was out. I hadn't thought about him actually.

I didn't mind beating ass. I did that shit for fun, but I'd never caught a body.

I never had a reason to, but Rich was going to see me.

I felt like a fucking coward looking Kiandra in the face and telling her that I didn't know who that nigga was or why he shot at me.

Maybe I should have been honest. Maybe that would have been the nail in the coffin to finally make her listen to her parents and leave me.

I had slowed down in the streets. I hadn't done any dirt in a minute, but things had a way of catching up with you.

In the streets, beef and grudges rarely ever died.

Kiandra was in pain, exhausted, and scared that she would lose the ability to hear out of her right ear.

She hadn't said too much to me or anyone else.

I wasn't sure if she was mad at me. If she was, she had every right to be.

Her family didn't want to leave her side, so I hadn't even been back to my own house since she was discharged from the hospital earlier.

My parents' house was where I decided to take refuge.

My mother was in the kitchen cooking when I arrived.

Normally, I would sit in the kitchen with her while she cooked, but I sat on the couch and stared off into space while thinking of the best way to make Rich worm food.

The bad thing about getting at him was I would have to be patient.

If he died anytime soon, I'd be the number one suspect.

I had already decided to calm down and go legit.

Murder wasn't a charge that I was trying to fight.

My mother brought the smell of marijuana into the room with her. Puffing on a joint, she sat down beside me. "Why you looking all down? Kiandra is okay, isn't she?"

"Is she?" I continued to stare at the television screen. My eyes had been glued to it for the past twenty minutes and if I had to answer three questions about what was on, I'd answer every single one wrong.

"Don't you know?"

"She doesn't have any life-threatening injuries, but she was shot. She had surgery to remove bullet fragments from her ear. I couldn't tell you how she feels because she isn't saying much. What is there to even say except her being with me is bad fucking luck."

My mother hit the last of the joint and smashed the remnants in an ashtray on the coffee table. "You afraid she going to leave you?"

I couldn't tell my mother the truth. I wasn't afraid that she would leave me.

I was afraid that she would stay with me.

I wasn't what Kiandra needed in her life.

Even with me attempting to stop all illegal activities and get my real estate license, I had taken her through enough.

She deserved some square ass nigga that her parents would love.

A man that would marry her and give her a house full of babies.

As long as she remained with me the relationship between her and her parents would be strained.

Kiandra had real blinders on when it came to me.

She was ten toes down for me, and I wasn't even in love with her. The shit was sick.

I used my thumb to scratch at my eyebrow. "Nah not really. I'm not afraid she'll leave me. Just kinda feel bad that she keeps going through shit."

"What else has she gone through?"

"I'm the reason she got evicted from her place that time."

"And she got a nice ass house for her trouble. That was years ago, and you were younger. We've all done dumb shit.

I've stood by your father's side through some things that I was probably called stupid

for, but that's my man, and I wasn't ready to leave him.

Shit happens. You're not a saint, but you've never done anything to purposely hurt her.

You can't help that some idiot shot into your car.

He's the one to blame for her being shot. Nobody else."

I damn sure wasn't going to tell my mother that I robbed the nigga.

I got \$300,000 and four bricks of coke from Rich's house.

I would have been mad as hell taking a loss like that too.

But the pussy ass nigga should have had better aim.

He wasn't getting any passes for shooting Kiandra rather than me.

If he wanted to do that shit, he should have done it when I was alone.

My father came in the house drenched in sweat. "What's up, Lucci?" he extended his palm, and I slapped it with mine.

"He's over here pouting because Kiandra got shot. He feels bad."

"How is she doing?" my father stood in front of the TV as he talked to me.

I knew he was going straight to the shower.

My mom would have a fit if he sat on her couch after being out all-day doing

yardwork for people in the neighborhood.

My pops was a hustler indeed, and it had nothing to do with selling drugs.

Tyler and I didn't come from a broken home.

My parents had been together for thirty-three years, and they didn't do that toxic bullshit.

Of course, they'd hit rough patches, and they argued like anyone else, but I never saw my father put his hands on my mother or disrespect her.

There were no claims of outside babies from other women, or confrontations with side chicks.

My father kept two or three hustles at a time to keep the bills paid and food on the table.

He might work on two or three cars and then go straight to doing yardwork.

He retired from a factory job, and along with his monthly retirement check, he worked for himself doing various gigs.

My father could fix cars, cut grass, cut down trees, trim bushes, pressure wash houses, etc.

he made around \$200 a day if not more working for himself, and he loved it.

My parents had never bought a home, and they had been renting the same one for the past ten years.

Tyler and I always talked about being able to buy our parents a house.

My parents weren't green at all, but if I was going to buy them a house, I knew they'd prefer I got the money legally.

They took any money that I offered them but that was for bills, groceries, or vacations.

Nothing big like a house or a car. My father prided himself on being able to take care of his family.

I didn't want to put my mom in a house using money from scamming or stealing.

If I got my real estate license it wouldn't just be for me. I'd be able to make my parents proud.

"Yeah she's good physically. It's just the mental that's got her messed up."

"I can imagine. They still don't know who shot her? Did you get a good look at him?"

"Nah, I didn't," the lie rolled off my tongue.

"It had to be a case of mistaken identity or some shit because I don't have any beef.

I'm out and about all day every day, and I never had any issues.

"The more I lied the lamer I felt. But my parents knew me.

If they knew I knew who the person was that shot me, they knew I wouldn't let it slide.

My father shook his head. “This is a crazy ass world we live in. People shooting in cars at stop lights hitting innocent people and shit. I know Kiandra hasn’t ever done anything to anybody. Her parents been on bullshit?”

“You know it,” I snorted. “At the hospital, her mother actually fixed her mouth like she wanted to spit on me. She better thank God her niece had the good sense to pull her back because if that lady would have spit on me, I know I would have blacked out and gone to her ass. It’s best that I keep my distance from them. ”

“I know you fucking lying,” my mother barked. “I’ll beat that bitch’s ass if she ever spits on you. Fuck is wrong with her? And she’s over there right now in a house that you’re paying for. I should go dog walk that bitch.” My mom was so angry, a thick vein was bulging out of her neck.

“Calm down,” my father stated in a gentle tone. “I’m saving, so we can go to The Bahamas. I can’t be taking the money bailing you out of jail.”

“Kiandra’s family better tread lightly then because I’ll go to jail or hell ‘bout mine. I wish she would have spit on Lucci. Baby, nobody would be able to keep me off that hoe.”

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And that was one of many reasons why I knew me and Kiandra could only go so far.

I didn't give a damn about a big wedding if I got married, but I knew she would want one.

Her parents would refuse to be a part of it.

My people didn't get along with her people, and we could never do anything as a unit.

My family welcomed her with open arms, but her people hated my guts, and I could live with that.

If we ever had kids, there would be tension.

If Kiandra left me, I'd wish her well and still take care of her just because I fucked with her the long way.

After all we'd been through, I'd really seem like a grade A asshole if I broke up with her.

So, until she came to her senses and decided to walk away from me, we were stuck together.

I pulled into the driveway of the home that I was meeting Breezy at.

I didn't see any other cars, and I was ten minutes early, so I assumed she hadn't

arrived yet.

I was looking at houses on a whim, and when I saw one that I liked, I clicked on it.

The pictures were impressive as hell, and it was a new build.

No one had ever lived in it before. But what caught my eye more than the house was the fact that the realtor that had the listing was named Breezy.

I knew there wasn't any way in hell that more than one Breezy lived in Diamond Cove.

That prompted me to go to her website and sure enough it was Ms. Hellcat Barbie herself.

I had no idea how long I'd been staring at her photo before I caught myself.

Filling out the form to view the house was almost a reflex because I put no thought into it.

The move was impulsive as hell. The house was dope as fuck, but I didn't have legit income on paper to drop M's on a house.

I wasn't a creep, and I wasn't a fan of wasting people's time, so while I might not buy the home that I was about to tour, I had another proposition for Breezy.

Whether she would take me up on the offer or not would be entirely up to her.

My thoughts became consumed with wondering what living in the kind of home that sat before me would be like.

The house I helped Kiandra to get was nice but in comparison to the house that I was looking at, her shit was like a guest or pool house.

It began to really sink in that all the money in the world didn't mean shit if it couldn't be spent freely.

I didn't have anything in my name thus, I had no credit.

I needed something to shake, so I could start getting the things that I wanted on my own terms and not having to get others to put shit in their name for me.

Walking into a bank to apply for a home loan with no job history, verifiable income, or record of paying taxes on the money I had would be a dummy mission.

The Feds would be at my door faster than I could blink.

I had to do shit the correct way. Kiandra didn't even have the income on paper to be approved for a multi-million-dollar house.

Less than one year of mortgage payments combined was more than her yearly salary.

When I heard the roar of an engine my eyes shot to the clock on my dashboard.

I had been sitting for three minutes when that blue Hellcat pulled in behind my car.

Emerging from my car before she even shut her engine off, I ambled toward her vehicle.

Breezy shut the car off, and I reached for the handle to open her door.

With a smile on her face, Breezy exited the car dressed in nude, silk, slacks, a crème

bodysuit, and black strappy heels.

Her short nails with French tips matched her pedicured toes.

The scent that wafted from the car with her tickled my senses as I attempted to decipher all them.

Vanilla....baby powder....something sweet. I had no clue what concoction she'd sprayed or rubbed into her skin, but the shit made her smell edible.

"Hi. Nice to see you again. You're looking to purchase a home?" Breezy was in professional mode.

My gaze poured over her frame, but I appraised her as respectfully as possible.

"I'm going to be honest with you," I stated when my gaze landed back on her face.

"On paper, I can't buy shit. Especially not a house that cost a few million.

I was looking on a whim, and I recognized your name.

For the past few months, I've been playing with the idea of getting my real estate license.

It's time for me to get on my grown man shit, and have something on paper that I can use to live life like normal people.

I've heard the test is no joke and that most people don't pass it on the first try.

I'm not a fan of doing things more times than I have to.

Long story short, how much would you charge to mentor and tutor me? ”

Breezy’s brows hiked. Her weight shifted from one leg to the other. “Oh, okay I didn’t expect that. Ummmm,” I could see the wheels turning in her head.

Shorty was fine as hell and for a split second, I wondered if I was making a mistake.

“Honestly, I wouldn’t even know what to charge for something like that.”

“I heard that a person studying for the test should put in what? About eight hours a week?”

“There should definitely be at least two to three hours a day outside of the class studying. So, more than eight actually. There is a lot of information to retain. I had to read each chapter three to four times honestly. There are twenty plus chapters, and the information in all of them is important. There is a formula, however. Like we don’t know exactly what will be on the test, but there is more than likely more questions on certain chapters than others. ”

“Did you pass the test on the first try?”

“I did,” she gave a proud nod.

“Okay, so the class I registered for this morning is a six-week class. If you work with me three hours a week for the next six weeks, how about I give you \$1,000 now and \$1,000 when I’m done?”

Breezy’s lips parted slightly, but no sound came out of her mouth. She clamped her mouth shut and raised her brows before opening her mouth for a second time. “That’s more than the actual class cost.”

“Time is money. I don’t expect you to assist me for free. I don’t mind paying for it because it’s an investment into my future. Once I become an agent and start making some money, we’ll come back, and I’ll actually be able to purchase a home and get you a commission.”

A smile split Breezy’s lips. “That sounds like a plan. “Since we’re here, we might as well go ahead and view the home. You can get your first lesson on showing a client a property.”

“Sounds like a plan to me.”

Breezy sauntered past me, and I rubbed my chin as I followed her while trying to keep my eyes off her ass.

“What made you want to try real estate?” she tossed over her shoulder.

“I need something that I can make good money from. I’m aware that while the test is hard, being successful in real estate comes from who you know and not what you know.

I think I know enough people to get my foot in the door.

It’s not something I need to study for years, and it can be very lucrative.”

Breezy nodded as she punched the code into the large padlock securing the door.

“That’s true. I come from a big family, and once I passed the test and got my license, my first few clients were friends of my relatives, members of their churches, their co-workers.

Most people look for realtors through references and word of mouth.”

Breezy pushed the door open, and we stepped over the threshold.

I could tell from the foyer alone that the rest of the house would be impressive as hell.

I listened intently as Breezy went over all of the houses' features, amenities, and appliances as if she'd given the spiel a thousand times before.

There was a good chance I wasn't the first person that she'd shown the house to, but it had only been on the market for five days.

It didn't take long for me to figure out that Breezy was good at what she did.

She wouldn't be a bad person to learn from at all.

The house was equally as impressive. I'd never stepped foot in a home that cost a few million, and I was motivated to get one of my own.

I couldn't say by any means necessary because that robbing, scamming, selling drugs, etc. was dead.

If real estate didn't work, then I'd have to come up with a plan B. When Breezy had shown me the entire house and the garage, she pivoted and faced me. "What do you think?"

"I feel like it's something that I can do if I put my mind to it. I start class Monday. The classes are Monday's and Wednesdays. Maybe we can meet on Friday's?"

"That works for me. We may have to alternate times depending on whether or not I have to do a tour, have an open house, closing, inspection, or any appointments."

"Understood. I have your email address; I can hit you there."

“I have some business cards in the car. You can just shoot me a text message Thursday morning to confirm a time.”

I nodded my understanding and walked to my car while she locked the door. I reached inside my glove compartment and grabbed the money I had tucked away. After counting out \$1,000 I emerged from the car and waited for Breezy to get the business card out of her car.

“Thank you,” she accepted the money with a smile.

We parted ways, and I drove home hoping that I wasn’t making a mistake.

I wanted to believe that I was disciplined enough to be in the presence of an attractive woman without the urge to fuck her dominating my thoughts.

It was always business over personal shit, and I needed the real estate thing to work out.

If it didn’t, I might get my CDL’s, but something had to give.

When I arrived at home, I was glad that Kiandra’s car was the only one in the driveway.

About time her bitch ass family went home.

I was trying to be nice because I did feel guilty about her getting shot, but there was only so much that I could take.

I entered the living room, and it was quiet with the television off, so I walked up the stairs.

Kiandra was in bed watching something on Netflix.

Her gaze drifted in my direction. “Hey.” Her tone was low and lazy, and I knew she’d probably taken a pain pill.

“What’s up? You hungry? You need me to bring you anything?”

Kiandra shook her head. “I had some soup about an hour ago.”

I remained in the doorway. Things in the house were awkward and tense. I wasn’t used to feeling uncomfortable in my own home. Technically, it was Kiandra’s home, but I paid the mortgage every month.

“Why are you just standing there?” she slurred her words. She was fighting her sleep and losing the battle.

I didn’t answer her question. Instead, I asked one of my own. “Why do you stay with me, Kiandra?”

Her eyes widened a bit, and she sat up in bed. “Huh? Why are you asking me that?”

“You know everything that your parents say is true. You can do better than me. Maybe you getting evicted wasn’t that big of a deal, but you got shot, Ki. I just don’t understand why you aren’t with a man that’s more your speed.”

The last thing I expected was for tears to spill over her eyelids.

“I don’t understand why people just won’t let me be happy.

Every other day someone is telling me not to be with you.

I'm kind of used to it from them, but now you're joining in.

I'm with you because I love you. Why is that so hard to understand? Do you want me to break up with you?"

My heart sank, and I moved closer to the bed. "I asked you a simple question. It wasn't my intention to get you all worked up. I didn't mean to upset you. Get some rest, baby." I kissed her forehead, and Kiandra laid back down.

Suddenly, I was annoyed, and I didn't know why. I stepped into the bathroom and turned the shower on before undressing. It was ironic that I cuffed Kiandra because she was loyal. But in that very moment, I was annoyed, because she wouldn't decide that she deserved better and leave me alone.

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brEEZY

I could only assume since he was there looking at a house that his girlfriend was okay.

I was genuinely glad about that, and I didn't even know her.

I wasn't sure why I was disappointed that he was taken.

Hell, that could have been me riding shotgun in his car and literally been shot with a gun.

Hell no. Lucciano was eye candy for sure though.

He was one light-skinned man that could absolutely positively get it. If he was single.

After dancing through four straight songs, I was hot, and my feet were screaming.

I took a seat on the couch and sipped my drink.

When I saw the crowd parting like the Red Sea as Lucci and a dark-skinned guy entered Tyler's section, my kitty purred something serious.

That man was too damn fine. I had never in life found a man with a face tattoo attractive.

Even though his tattoo was small, that was always one place that I felt tattoos should

be off limits but nothing and I do mean nothing could take away from Lucci's handsomeness.

I quickly looked away because even though he was cool, I didn't want to get caught staring. Unlocking my phone, I decided to check my social media notifications. I was responding to some comments that were posted underneath the photo I posted before going out when Lauren sat beside me on the couch.

"Biitttchhhhhh," she squealed dramatically, and I knew she was coming with some piping hot tea.

"What?" I chuckled looking over at her.

"I was talking to Tyler right, and I was eavesdropping. Why the hell did Lucci's friend Maino ask him who you were, and Lucci told him you were off limits."

My brows pinched together, and I drew back a bit. "Why would he tell him I'm off limits?" I was genuinely confused.

"Because he must like you!" She hissed. "You sure you and him only talked about real estate?"

"Yes," I frowned. "It wasn't anything like that.

He wasn't inappropriate even a little bit.

"My gaze flitted in Lucci's direction, and when I noticed that he was staring at me, my heart started beating in my throat.

He nodded his head at me, and I gave him a small smile before looking away.

I looked over at Lauren, and she was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“That doesn’t make sense though. He’s never tried me for one and for two, he has a girlfriend. ”

Lauren’s shoulders hiked into a shrug. “Hey, I’m just telling you what I heard. Maybe if he can’t have you, he doesn’t want anyone else to have you.”

“That’s not fair,” my frown deepened. Cutting my eyes back toward Lucci and his friend, I did a quick appraisal of Maino.

He was handsome. Around six feet even, dark skin, cornrows.

While he was easy on the eyes if I had to choose, I’d choose Lucci.

Which was insane because Lucci was spoken for.

I found myself wondering what Lucci’s girlfriend looked like.

How long they’d been together. Realizing that I was in the club thinking about Lucci’s woman made me feel lame.

I drained the alcohol from my cup and grabbed the bottle to pour another drink.

It was supposed to be a celebration. I’d be lying, however, if I said I wasn’t curious why Lucci told his friend I was off limits.

It wasn’t like I could ask because I didn’t want him to know that Lauren heard him.

Lauren went back over to where Tyler was.

They were being touchy feely and acting like a couple in the honeymoon stage.

He seemed like a good guy and if it was going to be a good situation for Lauren, I welcomed it.

Everyone wasn't meant to be our soulmate.

Sometimes, people just came along for us to have fun with.

I wasn't sure when my fun person or soulmate would come along but while I waited, I could have fun by myself.

I was so lost in my thoughts; I didn't notice that Lucci was headed in my direction until he was sitting down beside me. "What's going on?"

He was so close; I could smell the mint from the gum he was chewing.

I hated the way heat radiated through my body and settled in my core.

The inferno traveled from my tummy to the space between my thighs.

I almost wished that Lucci wouldn't have told Maino that I was off limits.

Maybe if he had tried to talk to me, I would have taken him up on the offer therefore making Lucci off limits to me because I didn't do the homie hopping.

"Hey." Placing my cup to my lips, I took another sip of my beverage. That was the only thing stopping me from questioning him about what Lauren heard.

"Can you see? Your eyes are low as shit." The way his gaze was so intense it was like he was studying me.

My nipples hardened, and I had to internally will myself to calm down.

Lucci belonged to a very lucky person. Well, taking bullets for him wasn't lucky.

But having a fine, faithful man that was trying to walk a straight path made her lucky as hell in my opinion.

Lucci's comment made me chuckle. My lids absolutely felt heavy, but I could see just fine. "I can see very well," I assured him with a smile.

He didn't respond. Despite the thunderous bass of music blaring throughout the club, the silence that hung between us was loud. Lucci's gaze never wavered. He continued to study me until I swallowed uncomfortably hard and took another sip of my drink.

"You driving?"

"No. Lauren and I shared an Uber. We knew we were going to get well past fucked up."

"I'm pretty sure Lauren is about to leave with Ty. You shouldn't be in an Uber this late alone. I'll take you home."

With raised brows, I stared at him. The gesture was kind. Seeing as how I was about to start tutoring him, being in his presence would be the norm, but my skin still flushed. It was suddenly uncomfortably hot in the club. It's just a ride home.

Inwardly, I had to remind myself of that because he had me sweating like a stripper in church. "That's very nice of you, but I don't live too far. It's less than ten miles."

Lucci checked the Rolex that adorned his wrist. "It's after three in the morning. It's not up for debate. I got you. Let me know when you're ready to go." Without waiting

for a reply, he stood up and walked off.

I realized that I was staring and made myself tear my gaze away from him. Lauren walked back over to me with a coy smile on her face. “What were you and Lucci talking about?” she sang.

“He seems to think you’re about to ditch me and leave with Tyler, so he offered me a ride home. I know he doesn’t care about me more than you do.”

“Fuck no,” Lauren declared with conviction. “Tyler was going to take you home too. I wouldn’t leave you in a club or let you take an Uber alone this time of the morning.”

I smiled before finishing off my drink. “I knew you wouldn’t do me like that. It’s cool though. He didn’t really leave me a choice, so I’m going to take him up on his offer.”

Lauren playfully nudged my arm with hers. “Oh, shoot now. You think we both gonna get lucky tonight?”

“Ew no.”

“Ew?” she asked incredulously. “Did you just say ew? Have you seen that man?”

With a roll of my eyes, I kissed my teeth. “I said ew as in I don’t know him, and he has a girl. I am not sleeping with him just because he offered me a ride.”

“Okay, okay, I get it,” Lauren rolled her eyes. “Are you ready? Because Tyler doesn’t have a girl, and I know him very well. Meaning, I’m about to go get some.”

Giggling, I set my empty cup on the table. “Yes, I’m ready to go nasty ass.”

I scanned the vicinity for Lucci and saw him giving Tyler dap. They must have been saying their goodbyes. Lauren and I walked in their direction, and I waited patiently for Lucci to finish his conversation. When he was done, that penetrating gaze bore into me.

“You ready?” His voice came out in a low rumble that I heard perfectly clear in the noisy club.

“Yeah.”

“After you.”

I exited the section with Lucci so close behind me that his cologne dominated the air around me.

I could practically feel his body heat. He wasn't close in a creepy way more like a protective way.

Like he had my back. Had I been sober, I probably would have thought that metaphor was kind of cheesy, but I could appreciate Lucci's closeness.

I wasn't really worried about anything popping off in the club, but it was nice to have him escorting me. I felt safe.

Okay, now you're doing too much, Breezy.

Once we were outside, I let Lucci take the lead because I didn't know if he was driving the same car he was in when he toured the house or something else. He was definitely in something else. He guided me to a charcoal gray BMW and opened the passenger door for me.

“Thank you,” I slipped past him and got in the car.

Lucci closed my door and walked around to the driver’s side.

As soon as he started the car, I gave him my address, so he could put it in his GPS.

It was my third time being in his presence, and I was going to start tutoring him weekly, but it was still kind of awkward in the car.

I really didn’t know what to say or if I should say anything.

There wasn’t anything wrong with riding in silence.

I just didn’t want to come off as rude or antisocial.

I also didn’t want to come across as flirtatious or overly friendly.

“You hungry?” Lucci glanced over at me briefly.

“I’m good. I have something at home that I can eat.”

Lucci bobbed his head. “When is your car club getting together again?”

“Next weekend actually. We’re going to that festival at the park. We also have a brunch coming up in a few weeks.”

“Oh yeah, the two day joint. I thought about it, but that’s too many people for me.”

“Yeah, I’ve been three years in a row, and each year more and more people seem to come. It’s usually pretty chill and laid back. Nobody acting stupid which is surprising.”

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Lucci didn't respond. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that whoever shot his girlfriend was probably aiming for Lucci.

I wasn't sure what kind of beef he had and suddenly my chest tightened.

Why the hell was I riding in this man's car when he'd just been shot at less than two weeks ago?

My heart pounded irately in my chest, and I tried to keep my breathing under control.

I was less than five minutes away from my home.

Closing my eyes, I said a silent prayer asking God to cover me.

Anytime a car pulled up beside us, I froze.

Whenever my anxiety flared up, it made me feel physically ill.

All the alcohol that I'd consumed was sloshing around in my belly and attempting to come back up.

When Lucci turned onto my street, I pushed out the biggest sigh of relief.

All I wanted was to make it safely out of his vehicle.

Lucci pulled up in my driveway, and I had to stop myself from jumping out of his car like somebody was after me.

“Thank you for the ride,” I managed to smile. “Be safe.”

“You’re welcome and no doubt.”

Lucci waited while I unlocked my door and walked in the house. Quickly, I punched in the code for my alarm and closed and locked the door behind me. “Thank you, God,” I mumbled.

I wasn’t interested in Lucci because he had a girlfriend but add in the fact that females were getting shot while they were with him, and I was really good on him no matter how fine he was.

For our first tutoring session, Lucci and I met at a coffee shop.

I had made some index cards with definitions and terms that he needed to know on them.

I also made notes of key points from the first two chapters that he might be tested on.

He showed up on time. Lucci didn’t smell like weed, and his eyes weren’t red, prompting me to assume that he hadn’t smoked any marijuana.

I could tell he was taking the tutoring session seriously.

“Before I start, was there anything that the teacher went over that you didn’t understand or that you had questions about?”

“Man,” Lucci drawled as he slouched in his seat.

“That muhfucka talks in straight slow motion. Listening to him talk for three hours is like watching paint dry. I don’t know how I’m supposed to comprehend what he’s

saying when he doesn't speak with any kind of emotion.

I spend all my energy trying to keep from falling asleep. ”

Giggling, I unlocked my phone and went to YouTube.

“I'm going to turn you on to a great teacher.

He has videos posted on YouTube. He owns a real estate school, and he records his lessons.

He helped me a lot. He gives really good examples and breaks things down in a way that you can understand.

I used to read the chapter on my own, listen to his video on the same chapter, and then read it again.

That helped me a great deal and before I took the exam, I watched his video on helping to prepare for the exam.

I even listened to it in the car on my way to take the test.”

“Damn that's what's up. Thank you. I never even thought to look on YouTube.”

“Since it's so much information having a person that can really break it down for you in a way that you understand is the key to retaining the information.”

I went over all the index cards with him and the notes I typed up.

I also waited while he answered the questions at the end of the chapter and out of twenty questions, he only missed six.

That was great in my opinion. Lucci was off to a pretty good start.

The hour flew by. We actually went a little over an hour.

“I appreciate you taking the time out to help me,” he stated as he gathered his things.

“No problem. That class is no joke. Everyone thinks becoming a realtor is a quick lick, and it’s anything but. The class is hard, the exam is harder, and selling houses is the hardest part.”

Lucci walked me to my car. Despite the fact that I almost had a panic attack the night he gave me a ride home from the club, I found myself disappointed that our time together had come to an end.

I really needed to get my shit together because Lucci was taken.

I loved how respectful he was of his relationship.

No matter how fine he was, if he tried to make a move on me while he was in a relationship, I’d look at him differently.

To know he was faithful, however, gave him cool points.

Since I wasn’t ready to go home, I decided to stop by my aunt’s house.

My aunt was in her sixties, but she was still active and in pretty good health.

She didn’t smoke or drink. She didn’t have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, a bad heart, or any other kind of ailment aside from gout in her ankle that only bothered her occasionally.

My aunt, Jo still loved to cook, clean, and be active.

She was the closest person to me on my mother's side of the family, and she'd been a little down lately, so I made it a point to check on her.

She had to let her husband go live with their son because she couldn't take care of him anymore.

She loved her house and didn't want to leave it to move in with her son.

He was seven years older than her and suffering from dementia.

Taking care of him was too much on my aunt especially on the days she was in pain due to her ankle.

He'd get in his car and leave and forget his way back home.

There were nights when he'd try and leave out of the house super late saying he had to go to work.

Sometimes, when Aunt Jo tried to stop him, he'd become combative.

She hated the fact that they had to live apart, but she didn't want him to hurt her whenever he became angry at her for attempting to keep him from doing certain things.

Their son could handle his father better than Aunt Jo could.

My aunt didn't drive, but it didn't matter.

Between one of her children, siblings, or neighbors, she found a way to her husband

every day.

She cooked and took him food, still did his laundry, and sat and kept him company for hours.

They had a beautiful love story, and I could only pray that I didn't leave the world having never known my forever person.

The moment my aunt opened the door for me the aroma of food smacked me in the face. "It smells good in here," I complimented.

"I just got done with a pot roast with carrots and potatoes. You know I have to feed your uncle. You want a plate?"

"I sure do. That pot roast smells delicious."

One thing my aunt was going to do was dote on people. I wasn't sure where she got that behavior from because her mother nor her sister who was my mother possessed it. My aunt told me to have a seat while she grabbed a bowl and began to place food in it. "How was your day?" she asked.

"It was pretty good. I'm tutoring someone that's taking a real estate class. Other than that, I just responded to some emails. Nothing major. What about you?"

"Today was one of those days when I thought that pain in my ankle would take me out. I've been on three different medications for this gout, and nothing helps."

You knooooow," I drawled.

"What Breezy?" she side eyed me like she knew I was about to say something she didn't want to hear.

“I can’t tell you what to do, but I have read that red meat isn’t good for gout.” When my aunt’s eyes narrowed to slits, I threw my hands up in surrender. “Your body. Your choice.”

I, however, didn’t have gout, so I scarfed my food down like I hadn’t eaten in years.

My aunt liked to sit in the house with the main door open.

It was one of those times and from where I was seated on the couch, I could see through the screen door that she had a visitor approaching.

My face twisted slightly as my mother opened the door and stepped inside the house.

“Hey sis,” she stated breathlessly like she’d just climbed a mountain. “Hey, Breezy,” her gaze flitted toward me.

“Hi,” I gave her a tight-lipped smile. Suddenly, I was ready to leave.

I didn’t care to answer any questions she had because if she wanted to know about me or keep up with the events that occurred in my life, she could pick up the phone and call.

She could visit. She could simply be a mother, but that was a concept that was foreign to her.

At my age, if I had to teach her how to be my mother then it was a lost cause.

I certainly didn’t care to hear about anything that was going on in her life.

I knew all I needed to know about Lia Bryant. She was a deadbeat mother.

“I was in the area because I’m headed to the watermelon lady. She has some yellow watermelons and some pink pineapples. You want me to get you anything?”

“Last time you brought me those cantaloupes from her they were so sweet,” my aunt marveled. “Lord they were the best cantaloupes I ever tasted. I want some of those for sure.”

My mother stated that she was headed to see ‘the watermelon lady’ but she sat down on the couch.

My gut twisted. I knew my departure would disappoint my aunt, but I didn’t have the desire to be in the presence of the woman that gave birth to me.

Our relationship had been nonexistent pretty much my entire life.

I hated the feeling of rejection that made my chest feel heavy every time she came around.

The sting of not getting an apology or any kind of affection from her soured my mood every time.

Being around her was a trigger for me, and I refused to make myself uncomfortable to appease anyone else.

That ‘she’s still your mother’ crap was dead to me.

I didn’t care that we weren’t close. I cared because I couldn’t understand what it was about me that made it difficult to treat me like I was her daughter.

I stood and forced a smile. “I just wanted to check on you and make sure you were okay, Auntie. I’ll see you next week.”

“You leaving already?” the disappointment on her face was clear.

“Yes ma’am. I’ll be back next week. I love you. Bye,” I mumbled in my mother’s direction and walked toward the door feeling as if I was suffocating.

She literally came around and made the air stale.

I used to be so jealous of anyone that had a good relationship with their mother while feeling extremely connected to people with mothers that were just as awful as mine.

Funny thing was, a lot of people that I knew that had strained relationships with their mothers it was usually because she was on drugs.

That wasn’t even my mother’s story. As far as I knew, she didn’t do drugs, and I’d never even seen her drink alcohol.

She wasn’t even the man crazy type of woman that always had to have a man around.

I had no clue what the issue was. The only thing I knew for certain was that she simply didn’t want to be my mother. And as bad as it hurt, I still had to try and find a way to be okay with that because she wasn’t worth the heartache.

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LUCCI

Leaning against the wall in the kitchen I watched Kiandra as she cooked a late breakfast of bacon, eggs, and pancakes.

I watched her move around the kitchen dressed in a thick pink robe.

The sexiest thing that she ever wore to bed was a pair of green shorts with a matching V neck top.

Shorty was pretty, but she didn't give sexy.

Kiandra could barely walk in heels. She was definitely feminine and dainty, but she didn't have sex appeal.

I stared at her, jaws clenched wondering how I would feel if she had died because of me.

Because of some dumb shit I did when I was out there wilding and not giving a fuck.

No one could pay me to figure out why of all people Kiandra was so enthralled with me.

Even after she got shot twice and had to have surgery on her ear, the most out of character thing she did was go a few days barely talking.

She never yelled, blamed me, cursed me out, or threatened to leave me.

I wanted a solid female, and I found one.

Was my loyalty and money enough n return?

Did Kiandra deserve a man that was head over heels for her?

Shit, I didn't even know if it was possible for my heartrate to increase or for my palms to sweat when I was in the presence of my significant other.

Being eager to see her. Wanting to fuck her so bad that I couldn't walk straight.

Did real men feel those things, or was that just some shit for females?

Because I'd never felt those emotions for Kiandra, and I doubted I ever would.

She glanced over her shoulder at me. "Why are you just standing there watching?"
Kiandra giggled. "You hungry?"

"Not really. I haven't smoked yet. I'm about to roll up right now." I ignored her first question. "You want to do something when I get back in this evening?"

"Um," Kiandra used a pair of tongs to remove bacon from the pan. "We can do a movie night here at the house. I'm not really up to going out."

My head bobbed. "Got you. Just text me and let me know what you want me to bring home. Food, drinks, shit like that."

"Okay. Food will be ready in a minute."

I gave a curt nod before turning to walk into the living room.

The plan for the day was to hang out on the strip for a bit to kill some time.

Then, I was going to dip and come home for movie night with Kiandra.

Once she fell asleep, I was going to slide back out and try to catch Rich.

I was able to find out where he lived, and I was going to run up in his crib.

If worse came to worse and the police began sniffing around my door, Kiandra could say with conviction that I was with her.

Tyler insisted on coming with me even though I assured him more than once that I didn't need any help.

Honestly, I had no way of knowing who would be in the house with Rich, but the fact of the matter was that I didn't care.

One of us was going to die. If he thought shit was sweet, he couldn't have been more wrong.

I wouldn't even be able to tell Kiandra that the man who shot her was dead.

She would freak the hell out. Kiandra was one of those people that believed we shouldn't take the law into our own hands.

It would have made her happy to know that he was in prison for the crime versus me killing him.

It didn't matter whether she knew or not. I would know.

Leaning forward and staring at the floor was how I chose to smoke.

My mind had been in a million different places since Kiandra got shot.

Which wasn't a good thing because the real estate class that I was taking wasn't a joke.

I was determined to have the best possible outcome, so I was going to do whatever it took.

Once Rich was dead, I'd be able to breathe a little easier.

Zoning out more and more as I smoked, I went from thinking about any and everything to thinking about nothing.

My mind was completely blank. That was actually how I preferred it to be.

I finished off the blunt and went back into the kitchen where Kiandra already had my plate prepared. "Thank you. This looks good," I complimented while sitting down at the table.

"You're welcome."

She sat down too, and then we spent the first few minutes eating in silence. "When you're out are you ever afraid that the person who shot me will come for you?" Glancing up, I caught the fear coating her orbs.

I hated lying to Kiandra. In my opinion only fuck niggas went around lying to people, but I'd rather choose a fuck nigga trait for the moment than to make Kiandra aware that I'd once been a foul ass nigga and what I had sown caused her to reap two bullets.

Lying may have been the cowardly way out, but I couldn't tell her.

“Nah, I don’t. I haven’t done anything to anybody and if I did, it was old. I’m not sure why ole boy shot in the car, but the police better get him before I do.” That was my good word.

Kiandra’s eyes widened. If the police did get him, it would be because she cooperated, but she really didn’t even see much.

She caught a quick glimpse of his face, but she couldn’t recall many details like the kind of car he was in.

Of course, I wasn’t going to say shit. I didn’t cooperate with police.

I’d rather be the judge and jury especially when it came to hoe ass Rich.

I finished my food and stood up to place the plate in the dishwasher.

“Thank you for breakfast. I’m about to go on the strip. You want to come?”

“Nah,” Kiandra scrunched her nose up. “My sister is coming by later, and we’re going to go to Walmart and order her cake for her birthday coming up.”

“Aight. I get it family is more important than me.”

Kiandra rolled her eyes. “I did not say that.”

“Nah, it’s cool though.” I pulled her into my arms and gave her a forehead kiss.

Not because it was sensual. I didn’t do romantic and soft with Kiandra out of emotion.

It was more out of feeling that was what I was supposed to do.

She could take D but of course, she wanted way more than that.

She wanted to cupcake and be all up in my personal space.

There were times that I believed she would crawl in my skin if I let her.

Kiandra didn't have a problem being affectionate.

She just wasn't spontaneous or freaky when it came to sex.

We could cuddle all day but the moment I was ready to stick dick to her, she was lazy and not worried enough about pleasing me.

There were way more important things than sex but damn, was I really supposed to go without love and nasty sex?

"I'll see you later on tonight."

"Okay, babe. Be careful please."

"Always."

Kissing her forehead once more, I walked out of the house.

My first thought was that I was getting in too deep with Kiandra, but I'd been in deep a minute ago.

I damn near thought about cheating and letting her catch me.

Kiandra deserved happiness and even if that happiness wasn't with me, she deserved it from someone.

The fucked up part about it was the fact that she was happy.

If Kiandra knew my true feelings it would crush her but for the moment, she was in love with me, and she thought the feeling was mutual.

I was meeting Maino on the strip and when I started thinking that maybe The Hellcat Barbies were there, I actually smiled at the possibility of seeing Breezy.

That blew the hell out of me. I wasn't even sure why I thought of her so much.

The fact that she was my tutor didn't help.

It was hard to concentrate with a rock hard dick.

There was no flirting or anything sexual going on.

I got turned on simply from her smiling and being herself.

Shorty was turned up I could tell. But not in a did too much, wanting to be seen, thotty ass way. I could tell she was a good time.

The entire time I drove toward the strip, I thought about how it would be if I came home from a long day and Kiandra met me at the door naked.

What if she went to the strip club with me one night then came home and fucked me like a porn star?

Just fun spontaneous shit. Wishful fucking thinking.

Shorty could barely suck dick. It was never my intentions to change her, but I wanted to at least have fun in the relationship that I was in.

I would choose loyalty over love but got damn couldn't I get fucked good in the process?

I arrived on the strip at the perfect time because I was tired of thinking about my relationship issues.

Kiandra wasn't leaving me. I was sure of it, and I couldn't leave her.

So, it would just be whatever it was until one of us changed.

Maino told me where he was posted up with his brother Los, and Los' girl, Chasity, and I headed in their direction.

The people were out in abundance. Car clubs, motorcycle clubs, niggas looking for the women, women looking for the niggas.

I walked past a female hopping out of a car that sat idle at a red light.

She began twerking in the street, and I couldn't stop the frown that formed on my face.

She wasn't attractive at all, and the term bad built described shorty perfectly.

However, I was sure somebody would fuck her.

Truth be told, even if she was gorgeous and stacked like pancakes, I would have still scoffed at her performance.

I'd take a freaky chick, but that ratchet shit was out of the question.

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I had to walk too damn far to link with Maino and Los, but I finally made it.

I bumped fists with each of them and nodded at Chasity.

I'd known Maino for ten years. Los was four years younger than him, but he was cool.

Mature for his age, and he pretty much kept to himself.

He was the type that when you saw him you saw his girl.

Maino was single and said me and Los made him want to stay single forever. Whatever the fuck that meant.

"It's hotter than a bitch out here," I mumbled. A bottle of water would have to do because I couldn't drink alcohol and stand out in the heat. Plus, I wanted to be sober when I ran up in Rich's shit.

As I was walking out of the gift shop where I purchased the water, I heard the roar of motorcycles.

Looking up, I saw three of them sitting in the street, and one of them had his helmet off talking to someone on the other side of the street.

My jaw muscles flexed as Breezy walked over to the bike with a smile on her face.

She talked to him for a few seconds before hopping on the back of his motorcycle.

The short denim shorts she wore exposed her thighs.

My nostrils flared as he pulled off, and she squealed while clenching his waist. Fuck was I jealous of?

Shorty was nowhere near mine and more than likely never would be.

I didn't miss the way Maino looked at me when I told him she was off limits, but he didn't question me.

Maino was like a brother to me, and I wasn't a hater by far, but he couldn't have Breezy.

Not with my blessing. He didn't know that I wasn't in love with Kiandra.

He did know that I didn't cheat on her. So, despite him being confused by my response when he asked who Breezy was, he let it go, and that was why he was my homie.

He was down for me with little to no questions asked.

The technicalities were never necessary with us.

If we said some shit, that's what it was.

Even though I didn't care to see Breezy on the back of another man's motorcycle, I watched her until they were out of sight.

When I found myself thinking about the fact that she didn't have a helmet on and her safety, I knew I was tweaking.

Pulling a blunt from behind my ear, I needed to clear my thoughts.

No Breezy, no Kiandra, just muhfuckin' birds chirping.

A few of Chasity's friends came over and while I wasn't rude, I wasn't too friendly.

There were times even I got mad at myself for never once giving in to temptation and allowing myself to receive the satisfaction from someone else that I was missing at home.

But if I wanted loyalty from Kiandra, I had to give it.

She was solid, and she deserved the same in return.

I couldn't stop niggas from shooting at me and hitting her, but I could control how I made her look out in these streets and how I made her feel.

Tyler approached with that ever-present grin on his face.

All I could do was shake my head at him.

I used to tease him about being too happy, but lowkey, I loved that about him.

I'd never admit it though. I didn't smile much, but he smiled enough for the both of us.

He gave me a fist bump, and I passed him the blunt.

Ignoring the thirsty glares of Chasity's friends, my eyes darted up and down the street.

There were too many heads for one blunt.

Once I got high, I'd roll another, and they could smoke.

The sounds of motorcycles caught my attention.

The same bike that pulled off with Breezy in tow stopped in the exact same spot, and she hopped off the back of the motorcycle with one hand flat on her chest. She was smiling and talking to him making my lip twitch from disdain.

Choosing to look away, I watched Maino take the blunt that Tyler passed him.

"Breezy hopping off the back of bikes and shit. Lauren better not be with her," he took a step forward and scanned the crowd.

Chuckling, I flicked the tip of my nose. "That's your girl? Because if you haven't cuffed her, you know that makes her fair game."

"Nah, we're still in the dating stage. We decided to take it slow, but that doesn't mean she can be out here riding on the back of bikes and shit." Tyler pulled his phone from his pocket and began texting.

With a shake of my head, I kissed my teeth. "I know you aren't about to text that girl and try to figure out her whereabouts. She got you pressed like that?" I teased.

"Man, I'm not thinking about what you're talking about. Lauren knows what time it is. I don't have to be her nigga to put my foot down. She's gonna fall in line or get the fuck on."

That comment made me laugh because he sounded so serious, but I knew for a fact that if Tyler really liked her, he'd be soft as cotton behind Lauren.

By the time the blunt made it to me from Los, Tyler was looking up from his phone screen smiling.

“She’s at work. She’s not even out here on that bullshit. She might be wifey material after all.”

Glancing back across the street, I spotted Breezy getting inside her car.

All the Hellcats were lined up in a parking lot across the street.

There was her infamous blue one, gold, turquoise with pink stripes, green, red and black, purple, pink camo, yellow, and black.

Engines revved, and the cars pulled out of their parking spaces one by one.

Breezy led the way, and music blasted from the cars as the women made their way down the strip.

I was a little disappointed that I didn’t get to speak to her, but I quickly brushed it off.

Despite being high, I could still think rationally.

And my rational side said whatever infatuation that I had with Breezy should be deaded because Kiandra wasn’t going anywhere, and I’d bet my last dollar on that.

My eyes narrowed as I crept into Rich’s bedroom.

The television was playing casting just enough light into the room for me to be able to make out two men sleeping in the bed.

One of them was indeed Rich. I had no idea who the other person was, and I didn’t

care.

Just like I didn't care about Rich being gay.

He could do what he wanted with his dick, and I hoped for his sake he'd had a good time because he'd never plug another shit chute.

Not only would Rich be my first body, but I'd get two in one night because there was no way I was leaving a witness behind.

I hated it for ole boy, but he would have to be a casualty of war the same way Kiandra was.

"Wake up, bitch," I snarled lightly as I slapped Rich in the face with my gloved hand. In my other hand I gripped a Beretta.

Rich's lids slowly peeled apart. When his eyes were completely open, they were red as apples, and I could tell he was under the influence of something.

His partner hadn't stirred, and I doubted he was faking because he was snoring loud enough to wake the dead.

He was on his stomach with his head turned toward the wall away from me.

If he was lucky enough to sleep through Rich's murder, I would let him live.

Rich struggled to sit up in bed. His movements were clumsy. "W-what the fuck?" he slurred.

My eyes darted toward the nightstand where a baggie of coke lay along with a small plastic bag containing three pills. I assumed Rich and his man had to get super high in

order to engage in butt play. Or maybe they just liked getting high.

“You shot my shorty is what the fuck,” I gritted. “You know how the saying goes. An eye for an eye.”

Raising my arm, I sent a bullet into Rich’s forehead before he could even blink.

The fact that ole boy beside him was still snoring was wild as hell to me, but I didn’t waste any time getting out of dodge.

I’d never seen anyone be comatose off coke, but I’d damn sure seen niggas passed out off pills and liquor that wouldn’t wake up for shit. Whoever he was, was lucky as hell.

I loved my Beretta but not getting rid of it wasn’t an option.

My mind was racing thinking of all the things I had to do.

Get rid of the gun and burn the clothes I was wearing.

I left my phone at home, and I was sure that Tyler was blowing me up.

When I pulled up in my driveway and saw his car, I wasn’t shocked.

Tyler was out of his car before I could get out of mine. The moment I stepped out of the vehicle, he was in my personal space. “You really left without me? You know how many times I called you?”

“I left my phone here for a reason. And I told you I had it, Ty. The whole reason that Kiandra got shot was because she was with me while Rich was shooting at me. He was shooting at me because I beat his ass years ago. I’m not letting you get caught up

in my shit.

I told you I was going to be good. And look. Here I am in the flesh untouched.”

“I don’t care what you told me. It’s my job to have your back. I’m your brother.”

“Tyler, man chill. Bro, I’m good. I’m the big brother, and it’s my job to protect you.

Not get you caught up in dumb shit. I was wrong for robbing Rich.

That was on me. But I couldn’t let him slide for what he did to Kiandra.

Now the situation is dead. Literally. And I handled it without dragging you into it. ”

Tyler shook his head. “There’s no point in even arguing with yo’ stubborn ass. I’m just glad you’re good.”

“Now let me ease back in here. Hopefully, Kiandra is still asleep.”

“How is she doing? She okay?”

“Yeah, she’s a trooper.” Running my hands over my waves I pushed out a small sigh.

“I feel guilty every time I look at her.”

“Even if you were wrong for robbing Rich, beating his ass, or whatever he had no business shooting into a car that had someone besides you in it. Bullets don’t have a name. Kiandra getting shot is nobody’s fault but his, and you handled that. No need to feel guilty.”

“I hear you.” I extended my palm for my brother to slap with his. “Get home safe. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I crept in the house as quietly as possible.

In the kitchen, I took my clothes off and placed them in a garbage bag along with the gun I used to kill Rich.

After placing the bag in the garage, I went into the guest bathroom and took a shower.

Entering the bedroom naked, I walked lightly over to the dresser and grabbed a pair of boxer briefs.

Kiandra was sleeping like a baby. She still had some pain medication left, so I was sure she'd probably taken something.

The surgery she had on her ear caused her to have headaches someday.

We hoped that wasn't a permanent side effect from her getting shot.

She could still hear out of her ear, but there were times I had to repeat myself a few times.

I couldn't take her pain away. I couldn't even tell her that I'd handled Rich, but I hoped Kiandra would be able to find some peace and comfort.

I stared at her as she slept. While staring directly at her my thoughts drifted to Breezy on the back of that motorcycle, and my entire mood shifted.

Turning over on my side, I closed my eyes and cursed inwardly.

It felt like Breezy was haunting me. She hadn't done anything special or out of the

ordinary, yet, I couldn't stop thinking about her.

I needed to figure out what it was going to take in order for me to stop thinking about her ass.

I'd never come close to cheating on Kiandra and at that moment, I was pissed that I couldn't act on my desires.

Thoughts of sexing Breezy on top of her car made my manhood stiffen, and that irritated me even further.

Kiandra and I hadn't had sex since she got shot but sex with her was something I did when she initiated it or when I was extremely horny and just wanted to get off.

The sex was a solid seven out of ten. It could have been worse, but it damn sure could have been better.

For a man that was adamant about not dangling temptation in his face, I had another tutoring session with Breezy in a few days. Being in her presence for an hour wasn't going to help anything. I had to figure something out fast.

brEEZY

I looked over Lucci's answers to the chapter review questions.

Out of twenty-five questions, he missed three of them.

"You have about eighteen more chapters to cover, and the information will get harder, but you're off to a great start.

As long as you keep studying and applying yourself, I see you acing the class," I marveled.

Lucci shook his head. "I dosed off twice reading chapter three. I had to get up and walk around for a minute to wake myself up."

"I don't think you'll ever hear anyone say that real estate is interesting," I replied with a giggle.

My phone was on silent. When I looked at the screen to check the time, I saw that I had three missed calls from Lauren's mother and one missed call from Lauren.

My heart began to pound because I knew something wasn't right.

I had met Lauren's mother a few times, but she'd never called me.

I wasn't even aware that she had my number.

“Everything good?” Lucci asked as I stared at my phone screen. I was almost afraid to return the call, but I knew I had to. “I don’t know,” I answered in a low tone as I called Lauren back.

Just when I thought the call would go to voicemail, Lauren answered. Right away, I knew something was wrong. I could tell she’d been crying. “Breezy,” her voice cracked sending my heart into overdrive.

“Lauren, what’s wrong, friend?”

“I was with Ty-Tyler, and we got into an accident. Somebody ran a red light, and ran into us. The car flipped, and I don’t k-know how Tyler is. They won’t tell me anything.” My gaze darted over to Lucci. Sure enough, his eyes were glued to me.

“Tell me what hospital you’re at. I’m on the way.”

“Diamond Cove Memorial.”

As I ended the call my mouth went dry. I hated that I had to be the one to break the news about his brother to Lucci.

“What’s good?” he inquired.

“You don’t have your phone?” my voice was quivering.

“I left it in the car. What’s good, Breezy?” his tone held a sense of urgency. I had to stop being a punk and spit it out.

“Lauren was riding with Tyler, and she said a car ran a red light and hit them. The car flipped. No one will tell her how Tyler is.”

Lucci shot up out of his seat and grabbed his keys.

Leaving his textbook, notebook, and pen on the table, he made a beeline for the exit.

We were in Barnes and Noble having the study session.

I grabbed his things along with mine and left too.

Despite knowing that Lauren was okay, I was still trembling.

My stomach was doing backflips, and it felt as if I was suffocating.

If Lauren had serious injuries, it still had to be a good sign that she was talking.

Not wanting to get into an accident myself, I drove the speed limit with my anxiety growing every inch of the way.

At the hospital, I cursed under my breath when I had to drive around way too long to find a parking space.

Looking for somewhere to park felt like time wasted but finally, I found an empty space.

There was a long ass walk from the parking lot, across a bridge, and into the hospital.

Walking as fast as my legs would carry me, I was out of breath by the time I entered the hospital and stood in the short line at the registration desk.

After being given Lauren's room number, I waited impatiently for the elevator.

Everything was taking too damn long. My shirt was wet in the under-arm area from

my arm pits sweating.

On the fifth floor, I stopped at the desk, and the nurse told me that Lauren had three visitors.

She explained that one of them had to leave the room before I could go in.

Too anxious to sit, I leaned against the wall and watched to see if anyone would leave her room, so I could go in.

I had just unlocked my phone to text her when a blood curdling scream stopped me mid-action.

Freezing, I held my breath as my blood ran cold.

The woman's cries echoed through the hallway.

She just kept saying no, over and over again.

A figure darted past me damn near running.

His scent lingered behind him and even if I couldn't see him my nose would have alerted me that it was Lucci.

He pushed the exit door open forcefully and walked through it.

It felt like my throat was closing up. Breathing was hard and swallowing was harder.

After about five minutes, Lauren's mother walked out of the room accompanied by Lauren's sister.

I cleared my throat and pushed up off the wall.

“Hi, Mrs. Lewis.”

“Hey, baby,” Lauren’s mother gave me a sad smile.

Her eyes were puffy from crying. “Lauren is in with her father. He’s about to leave.

Lyric drove me here. She’s going home to her kids, and I’m going to get my car.

Lauren has a concussion, two broken ribs, and a fractured wrist, but praise God, she’s going to be okay.

Because of the concussion and the broken ribs, they want to keep her for another twelve hours or so, then prayerfully, she can go home. ”

“That’s good to hear.” I breathed a sigh of relief.

A light-skinned man walked by with his teeth clenched together making his jaw muscles flex. He was walking with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes were empty. The look of agony was written all over his face, and the striking resemblance he had to Lucci and Tyler made my heart break.

Mrs. Lewis and Lyric said their goodbyes, and I walked slowly toward Lauren’s room.

I hated being the one that had to tell Lucci about the accident, and I didn’t want to be the one to tell her about Tyler.

Life was so unfair. Every time I saw Tyler he was smiling.

He made Lauren giggle and blush. I liked them together and now, he could be gone?

It was some straight up bullshit, and I didn't want to be the bearer of bad news.

Before I could make it inside Lauren's room, Lucci walked back in looking somber, but he wasn't alone.

There was a pretty, frantic woman with him and from the way she clung to his arm, I assumed she was his girlfriend.

It wasn't the time for jealousy or dumb crushes.

Someone may have lost their life. I could pretend to others.

I could even lie to myself, but God knew the truth.

And the truth was, I wished it was me comforting Lucci and not her.

It had been a long six days. I alternated with Lauren's mother and her sister helping take care of her.

I cooked, did her laundry, ran errands for her, or anything that Lauren needed me to do.

The Hellcat Barbies had come together and sent her flowers, edible arrangements, and had groceries delivered to the house.

Tyler had indeed passed, and Lauren was taking it very hard.

Due to her ribs being broken, she was in a lot of pain and crying made it worse, so she slept a lot.

Pain and all, she insisted on going to Tyler's wake.

I loathed seeing dead bodies, but I wanted to support her.

Every single day it crossed my mind to reach out to Lucci, but I didn't know what to say.

I was sure he was sick of hearing that cliché sorry for your loss bullshit.

I didn't want to be just another person calling his phone.

But I also didn't want him to think that I didn't care about what he was going through because I did.

I needed something to calm my nerves, so I took an Ativan before leaving the house.

From the time I was about twelve, I'd started randomly having crippling anxiety attacks.

They were so bad that there were times I thought I'd die.

My heart would race, my palms would sweat, and I'd hyperventilate.

Death was one of the many things that could trigger it.

I only took the medication as needed, and it was my first dose in about five months.

Of course, I knew everyone hated death, but it hit me different for some reason.

It was the one thing in life that I feared the most.

I texted Lauren that I was outside and waited patiently for her to walk out to the car. Leaning over, I opened the door for her and pushed it open. She got in the car slowly. “Hey. Thanks for coming with me.” Lauren’s tone was somber, and I immediately felt for her.

“You don’t have to thank me. I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Tyler wasn’t her boyfriend, but she really liked him, and I knew she was taking his death super hard.

The idiot that ran the light had been charged with drunk driving and manslaughter.

Currently, he was out on bond. The fact that he cost a person his life, but he was still alive, was sickening.

After I parked, Lauren and I walked to the funeral home entrance side by side.

Goosebumps pricked my arms as we trekked into the building.

We peeked into the first room, and a low groan like sob pushed from Lauren’s throat as Tyler’s casket came into view.

He was dressed in a suit, and I could see the makeup caked on his face from where we were.

Tears stung my orbs as I stood with my heart breaking. “We don’t have to do this,” I stated in a low tone using the back of my hand to wipe my tears away.

Lauren stood frozen in place. She didn’t make a move to go forward nor to pivot and head for the door.

I stood patiently by her side because whatever she wanted to do, I was with it.

I didn't care to look at Tyler in his final state.

I also had no desire to stare into the face of his grief-stricken family and friends.

The soft music wafting from the speakers made chills run down my spine.

The low whimpers of agony coming from the room that held Tyler's body made my heart ache.

I wasn't going to make a move until my friend did, but Lord knows it was taking a lot for me to hold it together for her.

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Finally, Lauren sucked in a deep breath and stepped in the direction of Tyler's casket.

Moving in sync with her, we crossed the threshold, and Lauren stood over his body.

I didn't look at him for a full minute before I was ripping my gaze away.

There was indeed a body there, but it was no longer Tyler.

The smile was gone. The life and the spark that he possessed was gone.

I couldn't take it. Looking away, I allowed the tears to spill over my eyelids and roll down my cheeks.

"I'm ready," Lauren choked out after she'd been standing there for a few minutes.

"You sure?" Meeting her eyes, I wiped my tears. Lauren nodded, and I swallowed hard. "Okay."

"I need to use the bathroom." Her tone was low. Almost a whisper.

The air was heavy. I contemplated going to the bathroom with her just to make sure she was okay, but I knew she wasn't okay.

Maybe she needed just a little bit of space.

I would give her that because I wanted to be as close to the exit as possible.

It felt as if I was suffocating, and I longed for the fresh air that waited on the other side of the door.

As I stood waiting, I deliberately avoided making eye contact with the people coming and going.

Some were crying, and some were talking quietly among themselves.

I felt him before I saw him. Goosebumps peppered my arms as my head whipped up.

Standing across the room with shades on, leaning against the wall was Lucci.

I couldn't see his eyes, but I was willing to bet my last dollar that he was looking at me.

My heart slammed into my ribcage as I watched him possibly watching me.

I had to say something. Understandably, he missed our study session.

He never texted me to confirm a place or time, and I didn't press the issue.

Before I could place one foot in front of the other, the same woman that I'd seen him with at the hospital walked over to him and wrapped her arms around his waist. My heart sank as I watched her lay her head on his stomach.

He was much taller than her. His lady. The one that took two bullets for him.

Praying that Lauren was good, I moved toward the door and pushed it open.

I needed fresh air so badly that I practically tumbled out of the door.

Feeling like a fish that had been out of water, I stood allowing the air around me to take me out of the chokehold I was in inside the funeral parlor.

The door opened behind me, and I looked over my shoulder. The sight of Lauren, with a red face and swollen eyes made my heart hurt. “You sure you’re ready to go?”

She simply nodded. Rather than walking to the car, I advanced toward her and wrapped my arms around her.

Hugging her as tight as I could without hurting her, I comforted my friend, and she broke down in my arms. The sobs that pushed from her gut made me cry too.

So we stood outside, crying together. She had already expressed that she didn’t want to go to the funeral, and I was lowkey glad.

I wanted to remember Tyler as he was. Not like that.

When Lauren pulled back from me, we walked hand in hand to my car.

The ride to her house was silent. There wasn’t really anything to say.

Sometimes, the stillness was necessary. I knew I couldn’t say anything to make her feel better, so I didn’t even try.

She hadn’t really been eating, but I did offer to stop and get her food. She shocked me when she said yes.

“I’m not really hungry, but I’m still taking medication, so I know I need to eat. We can stop by the hibachi place that’s not far from here. The one on Sunflower Boulevard.”

“Gotcha.”

My main focus was being there for Lauren, but my thoughts traveled to Lucci.

He obviously had support, but it made me feel some type of way that I didn’t even get to speak to him.

Maybe that was my fault. I should have gone over anyway.

My hurt feelings stood in the way. It wasn’t a time to be worried about myself and my own feelings.

I dropped the ball, and I was regretting it.

I would give him some time and then send a text message.

Whether he responded or not was on him. And if he didn’t, I wouldn’t take it personal.

“You want me to go in and order your food?” I asked once we were at the restaurant.

“Yes. Thank you, Breezy.”

Reaching over, I rubbed her arm. “Stop thanking me. I love you. Thank you for letting me be here for you. You want the steak?”

With a sad smile, she nodded.

“Okay. Be right back.”

I just wanted time to fast forward and for days hell even weeks to pass.

Grief sucked. I didn't know Tyler that well, and my heart was heavy, so I could only imagine how his family felt.

He was so young and so full of life. Pushing out a deep sigh, I blinked back tears because I didn't want to be in the middle of a restaurant ordering food and crying.

It was really bothering me that reaching out to Lucci kept crossing my mind.

Maybe once I got in the house and got comfortable, I would.

After securing the food, I went back out to the car and drove to Lauren's house. "You want me to come in, or you want to be alone? I'm good with either one. I'm here for you, but I don't want to crowd you. Just tell me what you need, babe."

"I love you." Lauren reached across and hugged me. "I just want to eat and go to sleep. I know you don't want to watch me sleep. Thank you so much for me being here."

"You're welcome."

At home I took a shower and sat on the couch Indian style with my food. But I couldn't eat. Grabbing my phone, I went to my message thread with Lucci and started typing.

Hey. I know it's taken me a minute to reach out, but I wanted to give you your space and honestly, I don't know what to say. If there's anything I can do, please don't hesitate to reach out.

"Ughhh," I groaned as I read over the message.

"Please don't hesitate to reach out. That sounds so formal," I chastised myself.

Oh well, the message was sent. I couldn't believe I was overthinking a message sending my condolences.

Nothing I could say would make him feel better.

It was just a gesture to let him know I was thinking of him, and who was I to think that even mattered to him?

If I lost someone extremely close to me, all the text messages in the world couldn't make me feel better.

Leaning forward, I grabbed my bag of food off the coffee table and pulled the Styrofoam tray from the bag.

I had only eaten three forkfuls when my phone chimed.

I held my breath as I scooped the device up off the couch.

I hadn't expected him to text back. It probably wasn't even him. I glared at the screen. It was.

Thanks. I appreciate it. I'm sitting out on the beach smoking. Join me?

My brows hiked as my eyes widened. That wasn't the response that I expected.

He wanted me to keep him company? After staring at the phone for a good thirty seconds like an idiot, I responded and agreed to join him.

I ate a few more bites of my food before getting up to throw some clothes on.

My real hair was past my shoulders. I had tape-ins added that touched the middle of

my back.

I brushed my hair up in a messy bun, swiped gloss across my lips, slid into a white t-shirt dress, and sprayed some perfume.

After sliding my feet into some nude sandals, I put my food away, grabbed my keys and left.

Lucci had shared his location with me, so I knew exactly where he was.

I had no clue why I was nervous. He had requested my company.

Lucci had never been inappropriate with me.

He respected his relationship, and I was going to do the same.

It was possible for a man and woman to just be friends, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't attracted to him.

My attraction to him would have to be put on the back burner.

I was joining him as a friend. I had to wonder, however, where his girlfriend was, and why she wasn't with him.

It was dark out, but I found Lucci with no problem.

The beach was practically deserted, but there were a few people sprinkled here and there.

The sounds of the waves crashing against the shore filled the air.

I loved the fact that at night, the water looked black.

Lucci had his back to me as he stared out at the ocean.

Despite it being pitch black and me not being able to see his face, I knew it was him.

I could spot Lucci among a crowd in the dark if I had to.

That was how I knew I had it bad for him.

I sat down beside him, and he didn't move. His feet were planted in the sand, and his wrists were crossed one over the other as his arms rested on his legs.

"How long have you been out here?" I asked.

"I'm not sure. Maybe two hours." Lucci continued to stare straight ahead.

I didn't want to watch him like a creep, so I turned my face toward the water. We both sat quietly staring out into the darkness. "Guess you wondered why I asked you to come out here if I wasn't going to talk, huh?" he pulled a blunt from behind his ear.

"No. Sometimes words aren't what a person needs."

He turned to look at me and the intensity of his glare made my cheeks flush. Thank God, it was dark out. Lucci's gaze was intense. It was as if he was studying me. "Glad somebody understands," he mumbled and removed a lighter from his pocket. "How is Lauren?"

"Physically, she's better. She had a concussion, two broken ribs, and a fractured wrist. Emotionally, she's having a hard time. She really liked Tyler."

Lucci didn't respond. He sparked the lighter and set fire to the end of the blunt that was pinched between his lips.

Hugging my knees to my chest, I closed my eyes and enjoyed the smell of saltwater and fresh air.

My lids parted just as Lucci extended the blunt toward me.

I plucked it from his fingers and took a long, deep pull.

I damn near burst a blood vessel trying to hold in my cough.

Finally, I had to let that shit go. After coughing for a few seconds, I composed myself and hit the blunt again. After the fifth toke, I passed it back.

"You believe in karma?" his low rumble made my center moist while under the influence of the potent marijuana that he possessed.

"Yeah. Like you reap what you sow type shit?"

Lucci bobbed his head and pushed smoke from his nose. "I'm starting to think it's bullshit. 'Cus I know some good ass people that be getting the short end of the stick for real."

"No matter how good a person is, no one is exempt from tragedy, disappointment, hard times, or even death. It's fucked up but true."

Lucci pulled from the blunt, held the smoke in his lungs, and turned to face me. "Where yo' nigga at?"

"Um," his question caught me off guard. "I don't have one." I was so stunned by the

abrupt change of subject that I answered his question almost in the form of a question as if I wasn't sure myself.

"Hmmm." He exhaled the smoke and hit the blunt again.

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Shoot." His eyes were once again focused on the water in front of us.

"Why did you tell Maino I was off limits?" Lucci chuckled and passed the blunt back to me. The few tokes I had taken had me feeling real mellow. I wasn't even nervous as I anticipated his answer.

"Because I didn't want you talking to that nigga." His gravelly tone sent chills down my spine.

I didn't want to assume. The safest thing for me to do was to inhale weed into my lungs.

Maybe he didn't think Maino was a good person.

It didn't have to necessarily be because he liked me.

The weed smoke filled my lungs creating a euphoric feeling.

My calm mood with the sounds of the ocean had me in a zone.

My nipples hardened, and my clit swelled.

"Why is that?" My tone was sultry and feminine. I was coming off real calm and cool, but if he didn't attribute his comment to jealousy my heart would sink.

“Because if I was single, you’d be mine.”

I was definitely high because his answer wasn’t one that warranted a giggle. But I did. “Keyword is if. You aren’t single. So how are you going to cock block? That’s selfish.” Staring at the side of his face, I regretted not being a hoe. Because I was two seconds from saying fuck his girlfriend.

Lucci eyed me. “You want that nigga?” Even in the dark, I didn’t miss the way his jaw muscle flexed.

“No.” I hated the anxiousness that my answer held. I wanted him to know that I wasn’t checking for Maino which was insane because the man was taken, and I didn’t do side chick.

“I don’t cheat.” A sigh pushed from his throat as if his confession was heavy. “And it is lame as hell to cock block when I have somebody. I just don’t want you with a nigga I know.”

I swallowed uncomfortably hard. “If you love your girl, then why does it matter?” I passed the blunt back to him deciding that I was done. I was high as hell. My mouth felt like sandpaper. Never in my life had I been thirstier.

“I love her, but I’m not in love with her.”

“Oh.”

There were so many questions that I wanted to ask, however, I didn’t know where to start. It didn’t matter because Lucci stood up. He reached for my hand and when I placed mine in his, he pulled me up. “Thank you for keeping me company.”

His tone was low. As he peered down into my face, I wanted him to call his girlfriend

and tell that hoe he was never coming home again.

“It was no problem. Thank you for asking me to keep you company. I didn’t even realize that I needed it too.”

“Where did you park? I’ll walk you to your car.”

We walked to my car in silence. There were so many things I wanted to say, but I chose to remain quiet.

Shit, what was there even to say? I had a crush on him, and he had a crush on me.

He was off limits though because apparently, he loved his girl, but he wasn’t in love with her.

I would have loved to know the back story behind that, but I wouldn’t find out on this night.

“Drive safe.” Lucci tapped the top of my car once I was inside. He walked off and internally, I screamed. Wanting a man that I couldn’t have was literal torture!

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LUCCI

There was a weight on my chest that wouldn't let up.

My mother was inconsolable, and my father was just as angry as me.

We didn't understand it. Tyler had beat the odds.

He was a good kid, and a drunk driver stole his life faster than anyone could blink.

Being a good person didn't pay off worth a damn, so I was back on my bullshit.

I was no longer going to real estate class, and I hadn't reached out to Breezy about being tutored.

Thoughts of Breezy made me lean forward and grab the bag of coke.

I wanted her ass so bad that before I could open the bag containing the narcotic, my dick was hard.

That night at the beach it took every ounce of restraint I had not to fuck her right there.

Staring at the white substance inside the bag, I thought back to the one other time that I'd snorted coke.

I was twenty-four and did it right before I robbed Rich.

It was a good thing he wasn't home because the drug made me aggressive.

Made me feel damn near invincible. Funny thing was, the anger brewing inside of me from Tyler's death made me feel the exact same way.

I didn't need anything in my system to be wild, reckless, aggressive, or violent.

Taking it would only amplify my already toxic mood.

But that didn't stop me from scooping some out of the bag and shoving it into my nostril.

The burning in my nose made my eyes water.

With a sniff, I tied a knot back in the sandwich bag and collected the money off the table.

Maino was entertaining one of his female friends, so I was in the den alone which was how I preferred it.

The night I invited Breezy to join me on the beach shocked even me because since my dawg died, I wanted to be alone.

Kiandra couldn't grasp the fact that I wasn't up for a bunch of talking, cuddling, or dealing with her being overly clingy.

I knew she only wanted to be there for me, and that was the only thing that had kept me from snapping on her.

I couldn't take it anymore. I was going to sleep on Maino's couch for the night.

Real estate was dead. I'd hit licks until I went to jail or hell.

If something happened to me, I knew what it would do to my parents, but I couldn't bring myself to focus on anything positive.

Life was some bullshit, and I was going to be on my best bullshit right with it.

Fuck selling a house when I could run up in a nigga's house with the blicky and take whatever he had that I wanted.

Once my money was put away, I rested my head on the back of Maino's couch.

It almost felt like I was floating. Like I was having an out of body experience.

Tyler's smiling face popped into my head, and I clenched my fists. I just wanted to know why.

Being that I'd snorted coke, sleep wasn't going to find me easily.

My best bet for surviving the night would be to drink alcohol until I was comatose.

My phone vibrated in my lap, and Kiandra's name lit up the screen.

Tearing my gaze away from the phone, I stared at the sports highlights playing on the television.

I wasn't in the mood to talk to her. When I told her I wasn't coming home, she was sure to feel some type of way, and I didn't want to hear it.

It was rare that I got irritated with Kiandra, but if she kept talking to me about talking about my feelings and expressing my grief in a healthy way, she might get good and

cursed out.

I appreciated the fact that she wanted me to be okay, but she couldn't force me to grieve the way she wanted me to.

It seemed that she'd forgotten all about being shot and made it her mission to try and comfort me.

I retrieved a bottle of Hennessy that sat at my feet on the floor, and it took everything in me not to hurl the bottle at the wall.

The coke hadn't helped, but I knew it wouldn't.

The cognac would have to mellow me out. Taking a large swig, I didn't even flinch as the warm liquid eased down my throat.

The sting was nothing compared to the aching in my heart.

The taste was completely disregarded as I took another sip. Then another.

I sipped until I was seeing double. When I had to take a piss, I could barely stand without wobbling.

I made it back to the couch and collapsed before I saw Maino and his companion walk by.

He was more than likely walking her to the door.

My eyes were burning. Begging for relief.

I wouldn't close my eyes willingly. It had to be by force.

Every time I closed my eyes I saw some variation of Tyler's face.

I saw him smiling, or I saw him in that coffin.

It didn't matter which way I saw him, the shit hurt.

It hurt real bad. All I wanted was my brother back.

I'd give my left leg for his ass to walk through the door and tell me he was alive and well.

That was wishful thinking like a muhfucka.

I had asked why a thousand times in two weeks, and I hadn't gotten one answer.

Maino entered the room, and I instantly recognized the pity in his gaze.

No one could look me in the eyes without feeling sorry for me.

I was fragile, but I'd never admit it. Letting niggas know I was weak would be like feeding myself to the wolves, and it wasn't going to happen.

He sat down on the couch and sparked a blunt.

I damn sure didn't need another substance in my system, but if he passed it to me, I wasn't going to turn it down.

Maino hit the blunt six or seven times then passed it to me.

Three tokes in, and I was higher than a light bill.

My heart was beating way too fast, and a blanket of sweat coated my forehead.

That didn't stop me from pulling from the blunt a few more times and curing my cotton mouth with a swallow of liquor.

We smoked the entire blunt in silence. Not a word was spoken, and I appreciated everyone that knew how to rock with me during my grieving process.

I didn't have the energy or the desire to tell a person what I needed. They knew or they didn't.

By the time the blunt was gone, all I could do was lean back and close my eyes.

It literally felt like I was outside my body.

How people could do numerous drugs together was beyond me.

I'd seen niggas smoke a blunt, pop a Perc, and snort coke all in the same night while drinking alcohol.

At one point, I wasn't even sure if I went to sleep, I'd wake back up. And that was fine with me.

When I said Maino was like a brother to me, and I trusted him with my life, I meant that.

I had at least one change of clothes at his house, just like he had a few things at mine.

Because of that, I was able to wash my ass, put on fresh clothes, and brush my teeth before I went home.

Initially, I thought the coke would have me up all night, but exhaustion paired with the weed and alcohol put me out.

By the time I woke up, it was noon, and Maino wasn't home.

I had the worst headache. That shit almost made me never want to do another drug.

After stopping to get something to eat, I went home.

Kiandra was at work, so I had the house to myself.

I scarfed down my food and downed an entire bottle of water in pretty much one swallow.

After getting another bottle of water from the kitchen, I sat down on the couch with clenched jaw muscles.

The anger usually hit me like a ton of bricks out of nowhere.

Every single day, I had to relive the fact that my best friend was really gone.

Each time was just as painful as the one before it.

I closed my eyes and screamed on the inside.

Fuck! There was so much pent up rage inside of me, and I didn't know what to do with it.

After consuming the second bottle of water, I walked into the kitchen to search for some alcohol.

There was a half bottle of cognac in the cabinet, and I grabbed it.

Maybe a blunt and something to drink would soothe my soul just a bit.

I had put the money and the coke away. I didn't want anymore of that shit.

It had my heart beating so fast the night before that my chest started to hurt.

Just because I didn't give a damn about dying didn't mean I wanted to torture myself.

A heart attack didn't seem like the most pleasant way to meet my maker.

While I smoked and sipped, visions of Rich invaded my mental.

I was officially a murderer. If nothing else in life was guaranteed death was.

Nine times out of ten it wasn't pretty nor was it expected.

We were never ready. When Kiandra got in from work, the bottle I was drinking from was empty.

My lids were low and heavy as I watched Paid in Full .

"I'm glad to see you're alive and well," she stated in a nonconfrontational tone. "I called you at least five times yesterday and twice today. You don't think I was worried about you? You could have at least texted me and let me know you were okay. I was at work about to go crazy."

"My bad man." I continued to watch TV. "I fell asleep at Maino's house."

Kiandra stood in the center of the room staring at me. Maybe she was trying to figure

out if I was lying. Maybe she was trying to find the right words to say. Finally, she spoke.

“Lucci, I can’t be here for you if you don’t let me. I want to help.”

“Can you get my brother for me?” I was serious as a heart attack as I peered at her. Her lips parted but no words came out of her mouth. “If you can’t find a way to bring Tyler back, then there’s nothing you can do to help me.”

“I kn?”

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“You know what there is something you can do,” I cut her off. “Can I get some head? That’s what I need. My dick sucked.”

Once again, Kiandra stared at me with parted lips looking like a deer caught in headlights.

After a fifteen second stare off, I kissed my teeth.

“Fuck it. I don’t ask for much. Hell, I never ask for shit, and a nigga can’t even get any head.

” I was beyond agitated and for the first time ever in life, I was agitated by Kiandra’s presence.

I wanted what I wanted and at the moment, it wasn’t her.

“If you want to have sex we ca?”

Again, I cut her off. “I didn’t say anything about sex. I said I wanted some head. We’ve been together three years, and you haven’t sucked my dick twenty times. That shit is crazy as hell,” I stood up. I no longer wanted to watch TV. I just wanted to be out of the house.

“I don’t understand why you’re acting like this.” Kiandra’s voice cracked, and that further infuriated me. Throwing my hands up in exasperation, I frowned at her.

“Fuck you crying for? ‘Cus a nigga is confused as to why his girl doesn’t suck his

dick? You kill me with that green ass whiny shit.” When I was sober and calmer, I would regret taking my anger out on Kiandra.

But years of knowing that I didn’t love her, and the rage that Ty’s death caused had me on some other shit.

I couldn’t help it, and I had no desire to stop it.

It felt kind of good to finally express myself.

“Okay, I’m just going to go start dinner. I don’t understand why you’re being so mean to me. If getting your dick sucked is that important to you, you could have said something.”

“I never met a man that had to tell a female that he liked to receive oral sex.”

“Do I complain that you don’t go down on me?”

“I would! Shit, I have. You lay there like a fuckin’ dead body, so I didn’t think you liked the shit.”

“Like a dead body?” Kiandra was appalled. Drawing back, she looked me up and down like she was seeing me for the first time. “Are you serious? Is this treat Kiandra like dirt day?”

“Kiandra gets treated like anything but dirt. You barely want to fuck and when you do, it’s lazy as hell.

You hardly ever give head and when you do, you don’t even do it right.

Your corny ass parents come over here in the house that I pay the mortgage on and

act like I shouldn't be here. I'm sick of all this shit.”

“So leave!” It was the first time I had ever heard Kiandra yell. Her face was red, and her chest was heaving up and down. She was pissed, and I was relieved. She didn't have to tell me twice.

I was so afraid she'd change her mind that I only took enough clothes to last a few days.

Getting out of dodge while she still wanted me gone was the objective.

Maybe I took the coward's way out. I pushed her until she told me to leave rather than telling her I wasn't happy.

I was wrong for feeling that my happiness and feelings didn't matter.

I needed someone solid and real. The love was secondary.

I was a grown ass man. I didn't walk through life wishing for love and fairytales and shit.

But it didn't take me long to figure out that if I was going to be with one person, I wanted to desire her.

I wanted to have fun with her. Be in love and have loyalty.

If I wasn't in love with her after three years, I never would be.

I stayed too long and got in too deep. Kiandra loved me.

I was her fairytale. Rather than break her heart, I stayed when the love wasn't there.

Either I had to suffer and remain in a relationship with someone I viewed in the same sentiments as a friend, or I'd put my feelings first and break her heart.

It was a lose lose situation. I stayed around for years hoping she'd finally listen to her parents or realize that she was too good for me.

The only thing that got accomplished was her falling deeper in love.

Kiandra wasn't in the living room when I walked out of the house.

I had just left the bedroom, so she wasn't in there either.

I didn't want to keep imposing on Maino, and my heart couldn't take being around my parents, so I was going to get a hotel room.

On the way there, I stopped and got more food and more alcohol.

As long as I could drink the pain away, I was cool.

Deciding to splurge, I got a presidential suite at the St. Regis.

It was \$11,500 for a week, and I didn't give a damn.

I didn't work hard for the money. I stole the shit.

In the room, I sat on the edge of the bed and looked out at the city.

The hotel room had a panoramic view. Remembering my harsh words to Kiandra, the sting of my brother being gone, and the burden of living on my shoulders made me kiss my teeth and stand up.

I grabbed a glass and pulled the bottle of tequila I purchased from the brown paper bag it was in.

I frowned as the tequila slid down my throat.

It was smooth, but it still didn't have the best taste.

The taste didn't matter, however. I emptied the glass and poured more.

I had downed the third glass before it dawned on me that I had been drinking cognac earlier.

I'd feel like a bitch if I threw up, but it was what it was. There wasn't much that I cared about.

I'd take physical suffering over mental anguish any day of the week.

My phone was on silent, and I hadn't checked it in hours.

Easing it from my pocket, I observed that I had fifteen missed calls and four text messages.

One of the calls was from Breezy. Fucking Breezy.

I wanted to call her back, but I couldn't.

Mixing liquors and smoking weed had me once again out my body.

If I made a move on Breezy, there was a chance she would be with it.

No matter how badly I craved her, I didn't want to have sex with her under the

circumstances.

Being so drunk and high that I wouldn't remember the sex wasn't how I wanted her.

Realizing I was thinking like a female, I chuckled.

I was thinking about Breezy on some, 'I want it to be special,' type shit.

It was the closest I'd come to smiling since I got the news about Tyler.

Just that fast my mood soured. Horny or not, I wouldn't be calling Breezy back.

I was going to drink until I passed out. That was the safest thing for me to do.

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brEEZY

One of The Hellcat Barbies, Rasheeda, was getting married.

A bunch of us agreed that male strippers gave us the ick.

So, to celebrate our homegirl's upcoming nuptials, we decided to do dinner at a nice steakhouse and then get on some ratchet shit at the strip club.

It had been five weeks since Tyler's death, and Lauren was still taking it hard.

She elected not to hang out with us, and I respected her decision.

Checking on her daily had become a part of my routine.

I knew it might take a while for her to get over Tyler, but I would never get tired of making sure she was good.

Changing clothes after leaving Chop House was a must because we were real elegant and classy in that establishment, but for the strip club, it was an entirely different situation.

My barely there denim shorts and matching corset helped me transform from classy baddie to leader of the bald head hoe shit crew.

We had a section reserved and were going to have a ball in honor of my girl.

It was looking like I might never get married myself so any chance I had to celebrate someone else's union, I was taking it.

Rasheeda had been with Kendrick for six years, and they had three babies.

Some said they should have been married long ago.

I said whatever worked for them was their business.

I drank two lemon drops at dinner. I had the bartender to make mine with top shelf tequila, and I had a slight buzz by the time we left the restaurant.

We'd been at the club for less than an hour when the third shot of tequila had me in the perfect zone.

The kind of zone that made me stand on the couch and rap along with Glorilla.

"Yeah, I love me a trappin' ass, dark-skinned country ass, got it out the mud, 6'1 ole thug ass talk real slick, big dick, big gun ass pick a bitch up when we fuck, ole strong ass nigga.

Makin' them plays, stackin' that pape buying me whatever I want ass nigga.

" I was rapping with my entire chest. Until I locked eyes with him and saw him watching me.

Instantly I swallowed my words and had to play it off by looking away and continuing to dance.

I had just been describing the perfect man when I locked eyes with a man that pretty much seemed to fit most of those criteria.

Or maybe I wanted him to. He wasn't dark, and I had no clue whether or not his member was big.

Getting down off the couch, I played the role of Rasheeda's hype woman and tried to ignore the racing of my heart that had nothing to do with the physical activities I was partaking in.

It had been almost a week since I called Lucci, and he didn't return my call.

I felt that constantly sending text messages might be impersonal, but I also understood if he didn't want to talk.

I was okay with knowing that I made the effort, and I didn't take it personal when he didn't answer or return the call.

When I felt a presence looming over me, I almost jumped out of my skin.

Until his signature scent engulfed me like a warm hug.

By the time I turned to face him, he was leaning down and pressing his lips against my ear.

"Let me holla at you for a second." The bass from his voice sent chills down my spine. In the hot club where we were almost packed like sardines, my goofy ass was trembling all from a man's voice. And the feel of his lips subtly brushing against my skin.

Thanks to the tequila coursing through my system, I wasn't even ashamed of the fact that I would have followed that man anywhere. And I do mean anywhere. He led me to a corner of the section that wasn't littered with people.

“I got your call that night.” While he spoke, I couldn’t help but notice the pain in his eyes. It made me want to give him the biggest hug. His eyes were low but despite him being under the influence, the alcohol or drugs couldn’t mask his true feelings. “I was just on some other shit.”

I gave him a small smile. “You don’t have to explain why you didn’t call back. I get it. I promise I do. I’m glad to see you out.”

Lucci pushed out a light chuckle. “Yeah.” His eyes roamed the length of my frame. As he sized me up, my nipples hardened. “This isn’t where I want to be. I’m trying not to be selfish and stop your fun, but I’d like your company.”

The last time he requested my presence, it was innocent.

Even after he told me that he wasn’t in love with his girlfriend, things remained cordial.

I had no clue what the situation with his girlfriend was about, but I still didn’t want to disrespect their relationship.

Lucci told me he didn’t cheat and so far, he hadn’t tried anything, so I didn’t see the harm in obliging him.

“My homegirl is getting married, and we’re celebrating. But maybe another hour, and we’ll be done.” My tone was hopeful. “Can you wait an hour?”

“I been waiting for you, shawty.” He licked his lips, and I almost had an orgasm. Waiting? Waiting on me to do what? “I’ll text you my address. Matter fact no need. I’m still sharing my location with you.” He walked off leaving me standing there stumped.

Removing my phone from my clutch, I went to Lucci's contact information and sure enough, I had his location. "Who the hell was that?!" Rasheeda clutched my arm like a crazy person.

"Um ouch," I frowned making her loosen her grip on me and giggle.

"My bad, but he was fine. You know I love me a light skin ass man."

"Like the one you're marrying," I gave her a big smile. "He's just a friend. His name is Lucci."

"Just a friend? Hoe is you cool? He looks like tha t, and he's just a friend?"

"Welllll," I drawled. "If I parted my legs for every fine man I saw, I'd be pretty run through. And last I checked, he had a girlfriend. So yeap, just friends."

"If they aren't married, fuck her."

I laughed at the fact that Rasheeda sounded serious. "Girl, please. You trying to tell me that the six years you were with your man, it would have been cool for a hoe to try him because he wasn't married?"

"Oh hell nah. But we aren't talking about me."

"Bye hoe," I sniggered and walked off.

Lowkey, I was real nervous. Why? I wasn't sure.

Maybe it was because I knew that eventually, it would be hard for me to be around Lucci and not want to pounce on him.

I simply tried to look at it as doing a good deed.

He was grieving and liked my company. Nothing more nothing less.

Sure, he made lil' slick comments here and there that let me know he was feeling me, but the fact remained that whether he was in love with her or not, he had a girl.

I went from being hype and geeked about celebrating to being antsy and ready to leave.

It was borderline annoying because I wasn't that person.

The one that was dick crazy and constantly ditched her girls to go lay up with a man.

But fuck, we were talking about Lucciano Culver.

Luckily for me, thirty minutes after he walked away from me, Rasheeda's overly intoxicated behind was ready to go.

She was sharing an Uber with her sister, so I knew they were good.

After giving all my girl's hugs and saying goodbye, I got in my car and checked Lucci's location.

My brows hiked upon seeing that he was at the St. Regis.

For one that was a super fancy hotel. For two, that was a hotel.

I tried to focus on the sounds of the Young Jeezy song that filled the car and not attempt to figure out why Lucci was at a hotel.

A room key was required to get onto the elevator, so I had to text him and let him know that I was in the lobby.

With each passing second, my heart beat a little faster, and my stomach quaked a little harder.

I had to pee something terrible, and my nerves were shot.

When the elevator dinged my heart fell into my ass, but a white couple exited, and I composed myself.

There were four elevators in the lobby. As the couple exited the one to the right of me, the one on my left dinged.

The doors slid open revealing fine ass Lucci, and I stepped on with him.

The way his eyes raked over my body made my yoni contract with desire.

The St. Regis was a dangerous place for me to be with Lucci.

It had taken a lot of effort not to act like a moral less harlot in his presence in the past. I wasn't sure I could keep it up.

I stood beside him and looked at the floor. I could feel his gaze on me, but I ignored it. When the doors opened, Lucci walked directly up on me and with his body pressed into mine, he led me off the elevator.

When we stepped off, there was a door. Only one door.

This man had the presidential suite. Reaching around me, he pressed the key card against the reader and pushed the door open.

The suite was luxurious, and I could tell he'd either been there for a few days, or he planned to be there.

A Nike shoebox rested on the floor by the couch, two bags from Sak's Fifth Avenue were on the couch, and a pair of J's rested by the bedroom door.

Asking him what was up was on the tip of my tongue, but I refrained.

"You want something to drink?"

"Um, I'll take a bottle of water." I wasn't sure if I should sit or remain standing. "Thank you." Lucci handed me the bottle of water and even after I took it from him, he remained in my personal space.

"I want the fuck out of you," he confessed while staring into my eyes.

"You said you don't cheat, right?"

"I don't. Me and shorty aren't on one accord right now. I've been staying here for the past week. Tomorrow, when it's check out time, I'm going to the apartment that I'm moving into."

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That was all I needed to hear. I was going there with Lucci and not going to think twice about it.

No details were given. For all I knew, he and his girl had a stupid argument, and they'd be back together in a month.

I could worry about specifics, or I could get my back cracked.

Lucci lightly gripped my chin in his hand.

“What you think about that?” he inquired.

Keeping my eyes locked with his, I eased my hands underneath his shirt and raked my nails lightly across his lower back.

Lucci's tongue was in my mouth faster than I could blink.

His mouth tasted like weed and mint. While we kissed, Lucci picked me up.

Holding onto my ass cheeks, he carried me into the bedroom and gently placed me on the bed.

When he pulled his gun from the waistband of his jeans and placed it on the dresser, I got wetter.

Lifting my hips, I removed my shorts and panties.

Lucci's frame was lean. He was borderline skinny, but he had a third leg that had my mouth watering and my palms sweating at the same time.

His tool looked like it could bring immense pleasure with a hint of pain.

Lucci climbed in between my legs and pulled my corset down.

With a lick of his lips, he eyed my breasts hungrily before taking one into his mouth.

Since they weren't exactly big, the entire thing fit.

My lids fluttered closed as he sucked. My back arched as his tongue swirled over my nipple.

His body lowered, and when he locked his lips around my nub, my eyes flew open.

I cupped my breasts as I moaned and opened my legs wider.

Lucci's tongue slid up and down my center, grazed my asshole, then he flicked his tongue rapidly over my pearl before sucking it back into his mouth.

"Oh shit," I whispered as I bucked against his face.

When he moaned, my yoni contracted, and my clit swelled.

The anticipation of what was to come made my toes curl.

"Right there, baby," I whimpered as he sucked my clit harder and faster.

My body jerked as my pussy muscles spasmed, and nectar ran from my center.

“You came all down my fuckin’ throat.” That sexy ass rumble turned my freak up.

“Let me taste it.” I stared into Lucci’s eyes as I told him what I wanted.

Never breaking eye contact, he ran his finger over my slick folds then placed it in my mouth.

Still staring into his orbs, I sucked his finger erotically until he removed it and rammed his tongue back in my mouth.

I gasped as he pushed into me. Lucci’s dick had a nice length to it, but it wasn’t too long.

The girth was out of this world, and he filled me all the way up.

“How you want this dick?” he spoke against my lips before pulling back to study me.

“I want to lay on my stomach.”

Lucci pulled out of me but rather than laying on my stomach, I got on my knees and reached for his tool.

It was glistening with my juices, but I didn’t mind as I took him into my mouth.

Essence ran down my thighs as he pushed out a deep groan.

Him being turned on was turning me on. Using my left hand, I gripped his dick and rotated my hand in a circular motion as I jacked him off while I sucked.

I pulled back, spit on his dick, then took him back into my mouth.

“Got damn, Breezy. Fuck,” he moaned as I deep throated him.

When it felt like I was about to cum, I popped him out of my mouth and laid flat on my stomach. Lucci spread my ass cheeks and slid into me from behind.

“Lucciano, oh my God,” I whined.

“Say that shit again,” he grunted while pumping in and out of me.

My stomach contracted making me toot my ass up in the air a bit. He reached around me and began to strum my clit as he sexed me savagely. “Lucciano, fuck!”

My body quivered as he placed kisses on the nape of my neck, along my shoulder blade, and on my back.

God, I hoped him and his girlfriend wouldn’t get back to together because only being able to get the D once or twice from him would be inhumane.

I needed that in my life. Lucci snatched himself out of me.

“Put that ass in the air.”

I wasted no time doing as he requested. The moment I was on my knees, he smacked my ass cheek then slid back into me. “I’m ‘bout to fuckin’ bust,” he grunted. “I want to shoot this shit all over your ass. Can I do that?”

“You can do whatever you want to, baby.” Lucci was stroking me so hard and fast that my words came out choppy, but he heard me loud and clear.

“I can do whatever I want to?” he asked as he grabbed a handful of my hair.

“Yes,” I moaned.

“So after I bust this nut, I can flip your ass back over and fuck you some more? Then go to sleep and fuck you again in the morning?”

“Yes, baby,” I cried as orgasm number three ripped through me like a tornado.

“Fuck,” Lucci roared like a wild animal as his warm seed shot all over my ass cheeks. I was breathing hard as hell, my legs were shaking, and my vagina was aching, but I had never felt better.

The next day, I couldn’t stop smiling if I tried.

Lucci and I had sex four times. I had so many orgasms that I lost count.

We were only able to get about two hours of sleep in before checkout time.

More than the sex, it was the way we parted.

Before I could open the door, he turned me around, peered into my eyes the way he had a habit of doing, like he was searching for answers.

Then placed a light kiss on my lips. He continued to stare as he ran his thumb over my bottom lip.

“Talk to you later.” Every time that moment replayed in my mind, I got chills.

I was exhausted, but I had a few errands to run.

I took a shower at the hotel, however, it didn’t really count because I put the same clothes back on.

I knew as soon as I got home, I was going to shower again and practically fall into bed.

My entire body was sore in the most pleasant way. Lucci had worked out my entire body.

I hadn't been sexed good in years, and it was just the remedy for some wonderful sleep. "Hey," I heard a female voice behind me as I walked out of the UPS store. The woman didn't sound sure, so I turned around to see who she was talking to.

As soon as I saw her, I recognized her. She was the one with Lucci that day at Tyler's wake. There had been quite a few people in attendance, but of course, she stood out to me. "Hey," I answered slowly wondering why she was stopping me.

"This might seem weird," she smiled sheepishly. "But I remember you from Tyler's wake. I also know that you're in a car club, and I think that's so cool. I'm actually thinking of getting a Hellcat, so I can join."

My brows hiked. "You like Hellcats? 'Cus if not, you can find other car clubs around. There's one for black women with Jeeps. Or you could start your own." What were the odds of this shit? I sleep with her man, and she wants to be a Hellcat Barbie. Just my luck.

"No, I really like them. For some reason, I always thought they were boy cars," she chuckled. "Seeing the way you guys get together and have fun, it just seems so cool. I don't have much of a social life at all. I keep telling myself that I need to get out more and meet new people."

Just that fast, the Universe had pissed me the hell off. Real bad. Why was this woman as sweet as she was in my face after I did all kinds of nasty things with her man? That wiped the cheesy grin off my face for sure.

“Oh okay, well, um, we’re always open to new members. When are you thinking about getting the car?” My body was growing uncomfortably warm. One thing I had never been was a fake bitch. I had taken this woman’s ex down, and here she was wanting to join my car club.

“I’ll more than likely make a for sure decision in a couple of days. I’ve been kind of down, and I want to make sure it’s not just a depression buy. Do you mind if I ask how you knew Tyler?”

“Um, he was friends with my friend.”

“Do you know his brother, Lucci?”

My brows hiked. I wasn’t sure why it mattered if I knew him or not. Did she know about us, and had this entire conversation been some bullshit just so she could question me? I wasn’t going to tell her more than she needed to know, but I wasn’t going to completely lie.

“Yes. I’m a real estate broker. He reached out to me for help at one point.”

The woman’s eyes widened, and her jaw slacked. “Oh my God, this is such a small world. Yes, he told me about you. Breezy?”

Shorty was a ball of fucking sunshine, and she was making me feel worse. “Yes,” I forced a smile.

“My name is Kiandra. Lucci is my boy” my heart slammed into my ribcage as she spoke. “Well, he was my boyfriend. I don’t know what we are now.” She gave me a sad smile. “Anyway, that’s not important. I purchased a ticket to the brunch. By then I will have made up my mind.”

“That’s awesome. Let me know. It was very nice meeting you.”

“Same.”

I walked back to my car not knowing whether to laugh or scream.

As long as he was single, I had plans to get the taste sexed out of my mouth by Lucci every chance that I got.

My car club wasn’t just a hobby. It was a sisterhood.

We didn’t do that funny acting shit. Of course, we all weren’t besties, but we didn’t do that talk about a person behind their back and smile in their face type of thing.

Kiandra seemed like a genuinely nice person.

And I could tell she loved Lucci. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Times like this, I needed Lauren’s advice, but she was still having a hard time.

There was no way I’d bother her with something so trivial.

What would I do if she and Lucci got back together, and she was a part of my car club meaning every time I saw her, it would make me think of him?

I groaned as a sudden revelation slammed into my brain.

“You’re the rebound you freakin’ idiot. That man is finally single and the first chance he got, he ran to get some new coochie. He just wanted some ass. Well, I just wanted some dick.” Lucciano had me in the car having full blown conversations with myself.

“Focus, Breezy, focus,” I mumbled. I hadn’t been letting men knock me off my square, and I wasn’t going to start.

Whatever was supposed to happen with Lucci would happen. And if nothing more was supposed to happen, I would be fine with that too. That dick was something delicious literally and figuratively, and I didn’t regret getting it at all. If I had it my way, I’d get it at least one more time.

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LUCCI

I didn't realize I was driving with my teeth clenched together until my jaw began to ache.

Being irritated and angry had been the norm for me since Tyler's death.

In fact, most days, I woke up angry and remained that way throughout the day.

It was only the weed and alcohol that kept me from knocking a person's head off their shoulders.

I was so easily irritated that I just stayed to myself ninety percent of the time.

Whenever I started to feel like the walls were closing in on me, I had to get out of the house.

My plan had been to ride out to the beach.

I was still doing that but on a whim, I invited Breezy out with me.

I was taking advantage of being single. With pride, I could say that I'd never cheated on Kiandra, but the moment we were done, no one could make me feel bad about getting it in with another female.

I was far from a virgin when I met Kiandra.

I'd had some good pussy in my life, but sex with Breezy was amazing.

Maybe it was because there was such a strong physical attraction before I ever slid up in her.

The chemistry was thick enough to slice with a knife, and she was on my freak level.

Breezy's pussy was tight, wet, and she could take the D.

Her fellatio was just as good as the sex.

If that was the only person I had to have sex with for the rest of my life, I wouldn't be upset.

When I arrived at her house, I put the vehicle in park and exited the car.

Before I could make it all the way to the door, Breezy was walking out of the house.

She was dressed all the way down in black spandex shorts and a matching sports bra, but my dick stiffened the moment I laid eyes on her.

Her hair was up in that messy bun that I liked, and the only makeup she wore was lip gloss.

"I should have blown the horn like a ratchet nigga?" I asked in a low tone. "You didn't even let me knock on the door."

Breezy giggled. As she neared me, her scent infiltrated my nostrils and made my dick harder. "My bad. I didn't want to keep you waiting."

"I'll always wait for you." The words rolled off my tongue too easily, and I swear I

could see Tyler laughing at me.

All the cheesy shit he used to say to females, and my ass was doing it.

I didn't like looking like a sucka, but as bad as I had wanted Breezy, finally being able to get her was a breath of fresh air.

I didn't see the need to front about it.

I didn't miss the look of uncertainty on her face, but she didn't respond. I opened the car door for her, and she eased past me. "Thank you."

In the car, she spoke before I could even put the gear in drive. "What happened with you and Kiandra?"

I looked over at her trying to recall if I'd ever told her Kiandra's name. With all the smoking and drinking I'd been doing, trying to remember was a waste of time. "We got into an argument, and she told me I could leave. So, I did."

Breezy's silence let me know that she wanted the backstory.

"When I was younger and a little more reckless, I got Kiandra put out of her apartment on some dumb shit. She wasn't my girl, and I was dealing with other females, but I felt bad.

It was hard for her to get a place in her name, so I gave her the money to start the process of buying a house.

I felt like I owed her that much. We kept messing around, and I ended up getting shot four times.

The other females I was dealing with, came by the hospital once or twice but after that, they got ghost. She held it down.

Like wiped my ass for me and all. I felt like I owed her.

So I repaid her in the form of loyalty and taking care of her financially.

Over the years, I started to realize that I was with her more out of obligation and her character than me being in love with her. ”

“Oh wow. That’s heavy.”

My shoulder hiked into a passive shrug. “As far as falling in love and shit, I wasn’t on that type of time.

I figured if I hadn’t met a female that had me out here on some sucka shit then maybe it wasn’t going to happen.

I knew I couldn’t go wrong with a woman like Kiandra by my side, and it turns out that was a mistake.

My relationship with her wasn’t the worst, but I was pretty much tolerating her.

Settling. Whatever you want to call it, but I for sure don’t love her the way she loves me, and she deserves better than that.

I kept waiting for her to realize she was too good for me and to leave me, but she never did. ”

Talking about her ass had me feeling some kind of way.

I wasn't so heartless that I hadn't thought of her.

I'd take care of Kiandra until the day I died if she wanted me to.

I'd be her friend and be there whenever she needed me, but I didn't want to be her man anymore, and I didn't think anything could change that.

"Why do you feel like she's too good for you?"

"Shorty got shot behind me, and she never once even spazzed out on me and blamed me. Getting her put out of her apartment because I beat a nigga's ass in the parking lot, having weed in her crib.

I've never had a job a day in my life. Everyone she knows tells her she's too good for me.

Kiandra barely curses. She doesn't drink.

She's in church almost every Sunday like clockwork.

She's a daddy's girl, but her father hates me.

I'm just not the nigga she's supposed to be with. "

Had it been anyone else, I probably would have been annoyed with all the questions. But I had beat Breezy's pussy up on four different occasions all unprotected. She had the right to know a little something.

"I saw her yesterday. She recognized me from the wake and said she was thinking of getting a Hellcat and joining my car club."

I didn't mean to laugh, but I did. When I realized that she was serious, my head whipped in Breezy's direction. "Get the fuck out of here. A Hellcat? Kiandra?"

"That's what she said, and it made me feel bad. She asked how I knew Tyler and if I knew you. I told her that I used to tutor you. She seems really nice, and I feel like shit."

I pushed out a deep sigh. Kiandra wasn't even thirty, but our breakup obviously had shorty on some midlife crisis type shit.

The words Kiandra and car club didn't even go together unless it was a Camry car club that got together on Sunday and went to church.

If she truly wanted a Hellcat, I'd buy her one.

But her being in Breezy's car club would be weird as fuck.

"I doubt she'd actually do it, but why do you feel bad? I knew you first. I didn't cheat on her with you, and you can't unfuck me just because she suddenly wants a Hellcat."

"I know," she mumbled. "It's just weird."

We were about five minutes away from the beach, so the rest of the car ride was silent.

Kiandra wanting to join the Hellcat Barbies was funny as hell to me.

It was almost a good idea if it wasn't for the fact that I'd done things to Breezy in the bedroom that I'd never done to Kiandra.

I didn't talk dirty to her, and I had never licked her ass hole.

We kissed, but it wasn't passionate or sloppy.

I was so into what I was doing with Breezy, I damn near asked her to spit in my mouth, and I had never in life thought of no shit like that.

The fact that she wasn't all poised and lady like during sex was what I liked the most. Breezy wasn't afraid to moan, she knew how to throw that ass back, and she talked just as dirty as me.

That was the kind of sex I'd been missing for three years.

After parking my car, I got out and walked around to the passenger side to open Breezy's door.

Once she was out of the car, I closed the door and pressed my body into hers so that she was up against the car.

"You were my friend first." Placing a kiss on the corner of her lips, my hand went around her throat.

"You gon' choose her over me?" Before she could answer, I snaked my tongue into her mouth and tongued her down like we were tucked away somewhere private rather than outside in the open.

It was dark out, but people were still out.

When we broke the kiss, Breezy shook her head at me. "You're not playing fair."

"Never." I assured her.

We made our way down the board walk then out onto the beach. I found a spot that

didn't have anyone else directly around, and we sat down. Breezy took her sandals off prompting me to grab her legs and place her feet in my lap.

“What are we doing? Am I just the fun rebound girl?”

I knew sooner or later the questions would come regardless of whether I had answers for them or not. “Rebound? No.”

“Lucci, you haven't even been single for a month. You ran to me because the attraction was there. But that doesn't mean that we'll be anything more than fuck buddies.”

“You can't even use the word friend? I don't look at you as just a fuck buddy, but I can't sit here and tell you that I'm dating to jump right back into a relationship.”

“That's fine. I've never been pressed to be in a relationship. I'm just wondering if we're going to see each other consistently for months and then I look up one day and you're back with her.”

“Breezy, what I can tell you with certainty is that right now, I'm where I want to be.” She didn't respond, and I pulled a blunt from behind my ear. “How did you end up with a name like Breezy?”

She chuckled. “According to my father, when my mother was pregnant, she liked to open the windows and let the breeze in. Supposedly, she loved a good breeze. I can't tell you if that's true because I don't talk to her.”

I turned to look at her as I sucked weed smoke into my lungs. “Why?”

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“She was never interested in being a mother. When she got pregnant, I assume she only kept me to keep my father from killing her ass, but she doesn’t have a maternal bone in her body.

She used to pretty much neglect me until my father got fed up and put her out.

She left and never attempted to be in my life full-time. ”

“Damn that’s messed up.”

Breezy shrugged. “It doesn’t really bother me anymore. I don’t care who it is. I don’t want anyone in my life that doesn’t want to be there.”

I passed her the blunt and turned my attention back to the calming waves of the ocean.

My thoughts switched to Tyler, and I closed my eyes.

He dominated my thoughts most days. He was the first thing I thought about when I woke up in the mornings, and the last thing I thought about at night before sleep found me.

Eyes still closed, I bowed my head and tried to keep my emotions from taking me to a place that I didn’t want to be.

I was in such a zone that I didn’t realize Breezy had stood up until she was behind me, wrapping her arms around me and resting her face on my back.

I opened my eyes and saw the blunt she was trying to give me.

I plucked it from her fingers, and she squeezed me tighter.

Sitting behind me with her legs stretched out on each side of me, Breezy comforted me without words.

Her touch, the sound of the waves, and the weed kept me in a safe place mentally.

We smoked in silence. The blunt had been gone for about ten minutes, when I turned my face to the side and spoke over my shoulder.

“Come here.”

Breezy ended up in my lap straddling me.

“We going to your place or mine?” I kissed her shoulder. “Or do you want to cut out the fuck part and just be buddies?” I peered into her eyes.

“I like the fuck part.”

That got a laugh out of me. “I bet you do. Freaky ass.” I suckled Breezy’s bottom lip before snaking my tongue into her mouth.

“We can go to my place. Come on.” Breezy attempted to stand up, but I wrapped my arms around her to prevent it.

“And for the record, I’m big on loyalty. I’d never hurt you. Not on purpose.”

Breezy nodded, and I removed my arms allowing her to stand up.

I had managed to do something I never wanted to do and that was hurt Kiandra.

Every day I thought about apologizing, but I was afraid that if I contacted her, she'd want me to come back.

I was torn like a muhfucka because since meeting Breezy, I could no longer settle for someone that I wasn't fucked up about.

It wasn't lust with Breezy. I rocked with her and having to leave her alone to get back with Kiandra would mess me up.

But something was telling me that as long as Kiandra wasn't over me and wanted to be with me that one of them would end up being the very thing that I didn't want them to be.

Two days later, the one thing that I had been dreading happened.

Kiandra reached out to me. She said she wanted to talk, but she also asked me if I could give her a ride somewhere because she had dropped her car off to get a crack in the windshield fixed.

When I arrived at the house, I didn't even get out and go to the door.

I texted her and let her know that I was outside.

It felt like I was on my way to court the way I wasn't looking forward to a conversation with Kiandra.

She walked out to the car looking nice in a peach-colored maxi dress. Her hair was full of loose curls, and it looked like she had makeup on. I was staring so hard that she was almost at the door when I realized I hadn't even got out and opened it for her.

“My bad. I got that,” I made my way around the car as she placed her hand on the door handle. “You look nice. Where am I dropping you off?”

“Scrambled. I’m going to brunch.”

“Bet,” I bobbed my head.

The tension in the car was thick enough to slice with a knife.

I decided to go ahead and be a man about my shit.

I hadn’t lied about anything I said to her but the way I said it wasn’t cool.

“I’m sorry about how I spazzed that night.

Me grieving isn’t an excuse to be an asshole. You didn’t deserve that.”

“Where have you been staying?”

“I got a place.”

I could feel her staring at me. “That fast? So, you didn’t plan on coming back?” I could hear the disappointment in her tone.

“It’s been a few weeks, Kiandra. It’s not like I got a place after two days. I have to live somewhere.”

“You could have just come back home. Were you that unhappy with me? I thought things were good between us.”

Running one hand over my waves, I found myself wishing that Scrambled was closer.

“I just need some time to myself. Maybe some space is good.”

“I don’t get why we need space. There wasn’t even a real reason for us to be arguing. I was just trying to be supportive. I told you that you could leave but moving out? That’s a bit extreme.”

She was right. Because as far as she knew, I was happy.

I always felt like the truth would hurt her, but keeping the truth from her was going to end up doing just as much harm.

“Kiandra, you’ve been nothing but loyal to me since the day I met you.

I owe you a lot, and I never want to hurt you.

At this time in my life, I’m just not sure I want to be in a relationship.

I just need some time. Maybe we should both just enjoy being single and see what happens. ”

“I don’t want to be single,” her voice rose a few octaves.

“I can’t believe this. After my parents and friends constantly tried to tell me not to deal with you, I always chose you.

There was nothing anyone could have ever told me to make me leave you.

And for no reason, you just up and leave me.

I don’t understand.” Kiandra began to cry just as I pulled into a parking space at Scrambled.

With a deep sigh, I got out of the car, rounded it, and opened her door. Using the pad of my thumb, I swiped a tear from her cheek. “Come on, Kiandra. Your people are waiting for you.”

I heard the loud sounds of an engine. Looking over my shoulder, I saw a metallic gold Hellcat, and I cursed under my breath.

This was the fuckin’ brunch that Breezy’s car club was hosting.

Fuck! My eyes darted around the parking lot and sure enough, I saw her car.

I had assumed that Kiandra was meeting her family or friends.

Her sudden obsession with The Hellcat Barbies couldn’t have come at a worse time.

Kiandra sniffed and got out of the car. The streaks the tears made let me know that she did have on makeup. She peered into my eyes. “I want to finish talking about this. Please,” she tugged at my shirt while pleading with her eyes.

“Yeah, they’re in the car. I’m about to get them.” That voice made my blood run cold. Breezy was behind me. She had come out of the restaurant.

Kiandra’s orbs darted in Breezy’s direction. “There’s your tutor.”

“Kiandra just go inside and hit me later, okay?” I didn’t even want to look at Breezy. Maybe she wouldn’t care that I was with Kiandra, but something was telling me she did.

With a nod, Kiandra walked away. Breezy walked past briskly, and I observed the nude strappy heels on her feet, the crème tube top and matching shorts.

Her hips swayed, and her sharp heels stabbed the pavement with every step that she took.

It wasn't my day at all, but I couldn't see her and not speak.

"Breezy." She kept walking, and I wasn't surprised.

I watched her until she yanked her car door open and pulled out a large gift bag with her lips set in a hard line.

I wanted nothing more than to fuck the scowl off her face.

Even when she was pissed, she made my manhood harden.

With the bag in hand, she sauntered across the parking lot, eyes straight ahead.

"Breezy." She didn't even stall. More members of the car club and regular patrons were pulling up, and I didn't want to do too much. She ignored me and kept walking to the door.

The decision to let her go wasn't easy, but it wasn't the time or the place to get into heavy conversations.

Getting back in my car, I sat in the parking lot and rolled a much needed blunt.

Kiandra wanted something that I didn't think I was capable of giving her any longer.

In my eyes, I had paid my debt but in doing so, she fell in love with me, and that shit was my fault.

Trying to be a stand-up guy and shit I did her more harm than good.

That was on me. Breezy said she wasn't pressed for a relationship, and I believed her.

But only days after I promised her, I wouldn't hurt her, I ended up wiping tears off the face of my ex.

Shit was blowing me. Add in the fact that I still had so much hatred and bitterness in me from losing Tyler, and my emotions were bubbling over like hot lava in a volcano.

I hated that shit. I wanted to be numb. To not feel anything.

My mouth damn near salivated when I thought about the coke I'd sniffed that night at Maino's house.

It made me numb to the emotional discomfort of my brother's death, but it also made me even angrier and more hot headed than I already was.

If I went that route, I might end up catching another body.

After grabbing a lighter, I picked my phone up from the arm rest and checked to see if I had any missed calls or text messages.

I had to meet Maino. He said he had a business proposition for me, and my interest was piqued.

Since my real estate venture was on pause, I needed to do something to keep money coming in.

Yeah, I had done the little robbery, but I now had two sets of bills to pay.

I wasn't going to just stop paying Kiandra's mortgage with no warning after I'd been

doing so practically the entire time she lived in the house.

She could afford the mortgage, or she wouldn't have gotten approved for it.

In the beginning, I paid it as a courtesy but once I moved in, I paid it because that was what a man was supposed to do.

Kiandra was smart, and she didn't spend her money on a bunch of material shit, so I knew she had money saved.

Still, I was going to keep paying the bills there at least for a little while.

In my grief, I hadn't been caring too much about bringing money in, but it was going out.

A nigga was really tweaking when I did a damn presidential suite for a week.

When I pulled up in front of Maino's house, I saw the same female from the night I was there coming out of the house.

Depending on how one looked at it, Maino could either be considered lucky as hell or unluckier than a muhfucka.

Maino was born breech and somehow, someway, the doctor that was delivering him broke his arm.

His parents not only sued the hospital and got a huge settlement, money was put into a trust for Maino that he couldn't touch until he was eighteen.

When he graduated from high school, the first thing he did was buy a house.

He also bought some birds to flip along with a Range Rover.

Maino hustled for a few years before selling his house and upgrading into something bigger and more expensive.

Two months after he moved into the new house, he was on his motorcycle, and a woman ran a red light and hit him.

Maino was luckier than Tyler. He almost died, but he didn't.

He was fucked up for months though. It took a year for the doctor to finally release him from physical therapy.

Maino had a metal plate in his hip, and he had bad ass back issues still.

A three-week hospital stay, two surgeries, and a lot of physical therapy got him a settlement from the woman's insurance.

I had no clue how much it was for, but Maino's house and three cars were paid for.

He sold weed on a big enough scale to keep money in his pocket, but my nigga was set.

He didn't need the money that he made from selling weed, but as long as he sold it, he didn't have to touch the money from the settlement that he had left.

Maino must have been near the door because one second after I rang the doorbell, he was letting me in. "What up my G?" we bumped fists, and I crossed the threshold of his home.

I had just finished smoking, but when he passed me the blunt he had burning, I

happily took a toke.

As soon as we sat down on the couch, Maino got down to business.

“Aight so check it, shorty that just left, Amoure, she works at that fancy ass art museum on Oberlin. She knows a lot about art, and she has some connections on the black market. Long story short, some Nigerian nigga is coming into town with some kind of authentic painting that he’s hoping to sell for \$8,000,000.

We rob his ass, let her sell it on the black market, and we get \$2,000,000 each. ”

My brows hiked at the mention of \$2,000,000.

Two mil to rob a nigga was crazy. Of course, I knew there were some rich people in the world that had the kind of paper that I couldn’t fathom, but if someone could afford to buy a painting that cost eight M’s, how much were they working with total?

Got damn. Of course, I was in, but I was leery of anything that sounded too good to be true.

“It can’t be that easy to hit a lick for two mil. What’s the scoop on this nigga, and how does she know him?”

“Like I said, she has connections. The person buying the painting would rather give her \$6,000,000 than give the Nigerian nigga \$8,000,000. He doesn’t want to lower the price, so the art dealer is on some grimy shit. She turned Amoure on to the lick.”

“And you trust Amoure?”

Maino snorted. “Hell yeah. She’s a real uppity type broad. She doesn’t know anyone else to do this that she can trust. You know the wrong nigga will put a bullet in her

head and split the money two ways rather than three.”

Stroking my chin I thought about the proposition. Shit, what did I have to lose?

brEEZY

Angling my head to the left, I narrowed my eyes and studied the face on the television screen. “You know, I’ve really had to accept the fact that I’m toxic as hell. I have never and I do mean never found Micheal B. Jordan sexy but baby, Stack can get it.”

Lauren giggled from the end of the couch that she was curled up on. We were having movie night at her house watching Sinners , taking shots, and eating snacks.

“I think that’s most women. Nothing gets the panties wet like a good, ole, rebellious, bad boy.”

Lauren was slowly getting back to herself, and I loved that for her.

Her response made me simper, but the smile was quickly erased when a heaviness tugged at my heart.

There was nothing cute about toxic. In fact, that toxic shit hurt.

No one with any kind of common sense would have allowed themselves to fall for a man fresh out a relationship.

So fresh that the first time we had sex, it was in his hotel room because he’d just left the damn girl.

Lucci wasn’t a bad person. Maybe he wasn’t toxic, but the situation was toxic for

sure.

Not only did I feel for him, I had to go and start liking Kiandra's ass.

That was the part that was really blowing me.

As annoyed as I had been when I saw them together at Scrambled, when I saw her coming out of the bathroom with red eyes, my heart bled for her.

They couldn't have been back together because if they were, she wouldn't have been crying.

My anger towards him dissipated, but I still felt terrible.

The only way out was to literally remove myself from the dynamic.

When Lucci called me, I didn't answer. When he texted me, I didn't respond.

He had only called and texted once. That was four days ago.

Maybe they were back together. Maybe it shouldn't matter.

I missed him, and it was all my fault. I never should have allowed myself to get caught up in the first place.

I needed to get my mind off Lucci. "I decided to go ahead and start that Crescent Falls chapter. I'm going to drive there next week and look at venues.

Dash and E are going to put an event together to announce everything.

They have a few guy car clubs out there, and most of those niggas are sexy as hell. "

“Speaking of sexy. How are things with you and Lucci?” Lauren had asked more than once to be treated normally. She didn’t want me to keep her out of the loop or not talk about my life in an effort to be courteous. So, I had filled her in on everything that transpired between the two of us.

“I didn’t mention it at the brunch, but ole girl in the peach sundress that was standing back looking kind of sad, that was his ex. Or his girl. Whoever she is to him. Kiandra.”

Lauren’s eyes rounded. “Oh my God, are you serious? Why was she there?”

I recanted the details of how I saw Kiandra, and she told me she wanted to possibly join the car club. I also told her how I saw Kiandra in the parking lot with Lucci. By the time I was finished, Lauren was sitting there with a slack jaw.

“This is some freaky shit,” she said. I had to giggle at how perplexed she looked. At least I knew I hadn’t been tripping.

“Girl, yes. Now, I feel bad as hell, and I’ve been ignoring him. He told me from day one that he didn’t want to hurt her. It’s a complicated situation that’s still fresh, so no matter how much I like him, I have to let them sort their stuff out.”

“I really commend you friend because most women wouldn’t care how she felt. They’d be doing everything in their power to get him to leave her alone. You’re a real one. That’s why I love you.”

With a groan, I leaned forward and picked up my glass. “Being a real one is supposed to make me feel good. Instead, I feel conflicted and stupid.”

“You’re not stupid. I can’t even say another woman would be wrong not to care about Kiandra’s feelings but at the same time, what goes around comes around.

You want to be careful how you get Lucci because sometimes, how you get them is how you lose them.

Let him really be done with her then come to you if that's what he wants. ”

“For sure.” I gave a curt nod before sipping my drink.

Lauren and I watched the rest of the movie in silence and when it was over, I helped her clean up then I left.

For about two full minutes, I contemplated whether I should stop and get gas or wait until the next day.

I had to meet a client at ten, and I didn't want to have to leave the house even earlier to get gas, so I chose to stop on the way home.

Exiting the gas station once I prepaid for the gas, I locked eyes with a sexy ass man that would have been damn near perfect if he was at least six feet.

His height didn't take away from his sexiness, but he had to be around 5'9 which wasn't much taller than me at all.

“What's up?” he spoke with a lick of his lips, and I gave him a polite smile.

“Hey.”

“Damn. You single?” his gaze swept over my frame as he stopped walking prompting me to stop too.

“Yeah, I am,” I stated slowly. Good men didn't just fall out of the sky.

If I was going to ever find love, I had to be open to it, but most of the men that I ran into were a waste of time.

I had almost developed a reflex of turning down numbers and lying to guys about being in a relationship to get them out of my face.

The man that I wanted wasn't exactly in the position to focus on only me, so I refused to not keep my options open.

Using another man to try and get over Lucci would probably be a waste of time, but choosing the easy way was usually never the first option.

"Can I get your number? I'm actually new to the area. I've been here for about a month and aside from my dad and my family, I don't know anyone in Diamond Cove. Maybe we can hang out sometime."

"Um, sure. Wait, how old are you?" I didn't do YN's even on a platonic level.

He chuckled. "My bad. My name is Gavin, and I'm twenty-seven.

No kids. Just moved here from Mississippi.

What about you?" Gavin had dark skin, stark white teeth, and locs that hung past his shoulders.

A quick appraisal of him revealed clean, neat, nails, a nice watch, and fresh out of the box shoes.

"My name is Breezy. I'm twenty-seven. No kids. Born and raised in Diamond Cove."

"So, I can get your number?" His cheeks lifted in a broad grin making me giggle.

“Yes, you can have my number.”

After I rattled off my number to him, he promised to call and went into the store. I needed to fill my tank up. The pump had just stopped when he came back out of the store.

“That’s you?” His eyes swept over the car as he nodded in approval.

“Yeap. I’m president of a car club. The Hellcat Barbies,” I revealed proudly.

“Damn that’s what’s up. I’ve been thinking about getting a Camaro. You know about cars, or you just got this one because you liked the way it looked?”

Gavin and I shared a short conversation about cars before parting ways.

When I got home, it took everything in me not to check Lucci’s location.

I knew his address, so if he wasn’t there, I’d torture myself wondering if he was with Kiandra.

I lowkey hoped he’d stopped sharing it with me, but I was too much of a chicken to look and see.

Even if he and Kiandra weren’t back together, it was too soon for me to be getting caught up with him.

I’d never met a man like Lucci. He was so rugged on the outside.

He didn’t have a simp bone in his body but when he liked a woman, he handled her with extreme care, and that turned me on to the fullest. He wasn’t overly macho or cocky.

A person could look at him and tell he wasn't one to play with.

He didn't have to go around announcing it.

And the sex. Oh my God, the sex was out of this world.

Walking away from him would be tough, but it was something that I had to do. At least for the moment.

Three days later, I was at a popular wing spot on the strip called Wing It .

They had good food and strong slushie alcoholic drinks.

I was busting down a ten piece wing, fries, Cajun corn, and a strawberry slushie mixed with tequila.

Lauren was beside me, Saskia, aka Sas, and Cressida were seated across from me.

At the table beside us, were Rasheeda, Zora, Monique, and Aubree.

The eight of us weren't even half of the car club members, but the other ladies were on their way or coming out later.

There was a block party going on near the beach.

The police had blocked off certain streets, so cars couldn't come through.

There was a DJ on the side of the street that the beach was on, and people were out having a good time.

Of course, when it was over, me and my girls were going to line up and cruise

through the strip.

It was just something fun to do on a Friday night.

Sometimes, there were street races or races at the track, but I wasn't one that raced.

One wrong move could flip an entire car.

I was good on that, but I loved to watch, and a lot of the Barbies were nice with it.

"You know where we're having the back to school drive this year?" Rasheeda asked as I popped my last fry into my mouth.

"Yeah. Dove Park. I'm also about to start planning for Juneteenth next year.

It's a long time off, but I like to get this kind of thing started early.

I mainly want to secure a location. I want vendors and food trucks to come out.

I'm hiring a DJ, and I want some guys to cook on the grill, and we can sell plates.

We can do a Valentine's Day raffle or something to raise money for the food. "

"I know it's going to be lit," Sas danced in her seat. My girl loved a good party.

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I stood and finished off my drink. Ordering a second one was a must because it was hot as hell outside, and the frozen drink would hit just right.

Alcohol and heat didn't necessarily mix, but the fact that the drink was frozen sold me every time.

Half of Diamond Cove and plenty of tourists were out.

The streets were packed. It was too damn hot for our signature jackets, but we all wore matching Hellcat Barbie tees.

The shirts were white and had our logo and names in whatever color our car was.

I had mine tied in the back and paired it with denim, ripped, Bermuda shorts and J's.

Being a part of a car club made me pretty well known.

Add in the fact that I came from a big family, and I was a real estate agent, whenever I was out, it wasn't hard for me to run into people I knew.

It always bugged me out when people wanted to take pictures with me or my car.

I mean, it was a Hellcat not a Lamborghini, but I didn't mind.

I liked being out and social. If I ever did get married and have kids, I wouldn't mind staying in the house and raising them because I had fun all the time.

Traveling, car club events, nights out with friends, family functions.

My life could never be deemed boring. I came and went as I pleased.

I could honestly say I hadn't missed out on anything.

"Oh, so you something like a celebrity out here, huh?" I heard a familiar voice.

Turning around, I came face to face with Gavin.

We'd had two phone conversations, so far, and I invited him out.

During our first conversation he told me that he worked for a local cable company.

He seemed pretty cool, but only time would tell.

Most guys started off seemingly perfect and the longer you got to know them, the red flags started blowing in the breeze.

"Celebrity?" I grinned. "No, but The Hellcat Barbies are like that."

"I see." The slight gap between Gavin's front teeth was an indicator that they weren't veneers. I could appreciate how straight and white his teeth were. "What's in that cup?"

"A frozen Strawberry Shortcake tequila from Wing It. They have good food and strong drinks."

"You're my personal tour guide. I like that. Where else you gonna take me?"

I tapped my chin with my index finger. "Ummm, I'm not sure. Let me think about it."

“You do that. I was already hungry, but you mentioning food turned it up a notch. You gon’ let me ride in your hellcat?”

“Sure you can ride in my hellcat. You got gas money?” I joked.

“I fa sho’ got gas money. I’ll text you when me and my cousin finish eating.”

“Okay.”

“Do we have a new boo?” Lauren asked.

“Nah, not really. I mean, he’s cool. New in town, and we’ve had a few phone conversations. He installs cable and doesn’t have any kids. I’d be dumb not to at least give him a try. Right?”

Lauren’s lips pursed. “If I were you I would for sure give him a try, but you might not live long enough to do so.”

“Huh?” my brows furrowed with confusion. Following Lauren’s line of vision, my gaze landed on Lucci. He was watching me with clenched jaws and a slight glower.

“Lucci looks like he wants to knock your head between the washer and the dryer.”

The fact that he was looking like he wanted to kill me, but my yoni was contracting with desire, reminded me of how dumb I was. I was supposed to be off Lucci. Being off of him didn’t go well with a contracting yoni.

“Well, Lucci needs to handle his business with Kiandra.” I attempted to sound tough, but I was turning into literal putty.

When I glanced back in his direction, he was talking to some short, brown-skinned

female, and it wasn't Kiandra. Don't do it.

I refused to embarrass myself. Lucci could do what he wanted, and he could talk to who he wanted.

After finishing off my drink, I tossed my cup in a nearby trashcan.

Over and over again, I told myself not to look over at Lucci but of course, I didn't do well with following directions.

My body temperature rose when I noticed him trekking in my direction.

I wasn't ready to be close to him. All it would take were the right words, and I'd fold like a lawn chair.

"It's nice to know you have conversation for everybody but me." The anger flickering in Lucci's eyes made me trip over my words. He had flipped the script, and he was the one mad. It kind of caught me off guard.

"I was upset when you called me."

"Upset about what? Because I gave someone a ride? You're childish as hell." Lucci turned to walk away leaving me staring after him with a slack jaw.

I should have let him walk away but with each step that he took, I began to panic just a little more. I could be mad with him, but I didn't want him being mad with me.

"I'll be right back," I told my friends and started in the same direction that Lucci was walking in.

He had a decent head start, so I had to walk pretty fast in an effort to catch up to him.

After about a block, my feet were killing me.

Lucci had parked on a side street away from the crowd.

I refused to run, but I walked a tad bit faster as he hit the unlock button on his key fob.

Lucci got in the car and started it. That made my panic turn up a notch.

A few more steps, and I was knocking on his tinted window.

Seconds later, I heard the locks click, and I opened the door and got inside.

He was staring straight ahead, and I couldn't believe how mad he was at me.

"I'm sorry. We had just talked about you and Kiandra and when I saw the two of you together..." my voice trailed off. "I'm sorry, Lucci." When he didn't answer, I continued. "I told myself that I'd let you and Kiandra do what you needed to do, and I wouldn't interfere."

Finally, he looked at me. "Find you somebody else to play with."

I had never been so aroused by a man being angry at me. Leaning over, I placed a gentle kiss on the corner of his mouth. "I should have called you back and talked to you like an adult. I'm sorry."

Dragging my lips across his cheek, I softly bit his earlobe before sucking it into my mouth.

"I gotta go."

His words made my heart rate increase, but I wasn't giving up. "Lucci." I waited patiently for him to face me. When he did, I kissed him on the lips. "Baby, I'm sorry." I spoke against his mouth. "I miss you."

Lucci leaned his seat all the way back and unbuckled his jeans. "Come here."

With a devilish grin, I maneuvered until I was straddling him.

"Are you and Kiandra back together?"

"No. And you'd know that if you had answered the phone. Take them fuckin' shorts off."

We were cramped, but I got my shorts and panties off as quickly as possible. My peach hovered over Lucci's rock hard member as we stared into each other's eyes.

"My dick hasn't been in anybody else. Who had some of this pussy?"

His question made me draw back. "Nobody. It hasn't even been that long." I was offended, and he could tell. Rather than apologizing, he smacked me on the ass.

"You don't get to be mad. I'm the one mad. Sit on this dick."

Maintaining eye contact with him, I slid down on his dick and released a guttural moan. God how I had missed him. How could I ever date anyone else when Lucci made me feel like this?

"You forgive me?" I asked as I rode him faster and harder.

Lucci's teeth were clenched, and I knew he was trying to fight it, but I was wearing him down.

I tightened my pussy muscles making him moan.

Continuing to ride him, I leaned forward and began to suck on his neck.

Lucci palmed my ass cheeks and guided me up and down on his dick.

Each time my body slammed against his, I moaned.

“Fuck,” he growled. “This my fucking pussy.”

I crushed my lips against his and we kissed until we were cumming together and making all kinds of animalistic sounds.

“Fuck, I came in you,” he panted as we attempted to catch our breath.

“It’s cool. My period comes in three days. I’m way past ovulation. I can’t get pregnant right now.”

He did his usual staring into my soul thing while I stared back at him. It was that moment I realized I could become lost in someone’s gaze. With his irises piercing my existence and his dick still resting in my throbbing vagina, I did something really silly.

“It wouldn’t be fair for you to say you’d always wait for me, and I don’t do the same.” What the fuck was I waiting for?

His situation with Kiandra was a complicated one, and if I was waiting for him to fully walk away from her who knew how long that would take.

My heart drummed in my chest because how could I mean something and regret that I’d said it at the same time?

My words must have struck a chord with Lucci because he gripped my waist and tongued me down in a way that made my up and down movements on his manhood start again.

My legs were going to lock up, but I didn't care.

Right there in a cramped space parked on the streets of Diamond Cove Lucci and I partook in round two.

A slow and sensual round that had a tear escaping the corner of my eye when orgasm number two ripped through me like a tornado. The fuck was I getting myself into?

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 8:03 am

LUCCI

It had been less than two hours since I was balls deep in Breezy.

I went home, showered, and went to face the music.

The conversation that I was dreading having with Kiandra couldn't be put off any longer.

I sat on the couch, and she sat beside me.

There was an awkward silence as she stared at me.

I knew everything that I felt, but I didn't know how to say it, so I wasn't going first. A coward was never a word that could be used to describe me but when it came to Kiandra and possibly breaking her heart, I would have rather gone up against a grizzly bear.

She was one of the sweetest women that I knew and as much as I had tried, I just didn't love her the way she deserved to be loved.

"I understand that you said we need space, but I don't want or need space from you. I also just want to be clear on what you need space from. Do you just need a break from me, or do you want to date other people?"

I turned my face in her direction, and I saw the panic in Kiandra's eyes.

Attempting to sugar coat my feelings and protect her heart wasn't going to get us anywhere in the long run.

I didn't love Breezy. It was way too early for that, but seeing the next man all up in her personal space made my blood boil.

Looking into her eyes while I beat the pussy up sent my heart rate into overdrive.

Seeing her smile, watching the sway of her hips when she walked.

Everything that woman did either made my dick hard or my emotions run high.

I had never felt any of those things with Kiandra.

Just appreciation and admiration of her character.

Some man would be lucky to have her, but that man wasn't me.

She deserved the respect of eye contact, but I looked away. "Kiandra, you deserve more than I can give you."

"What does that even mean? You take care of me financially, you treat me well, we barely even argue. I just don't get what's wrong. I love you."

"I know you do, Kiandra, and I have love for you." Looking back at her was a mistake.

The way my words made her face crumble had me feeling like the most fucked up person walking the earth.

"You're one of the few people that I trust. I know you're solid and loyal, and that's

why I rock with you so heavy.

I never cheated on you. Always treated you the way you deserved but the way you love me, it never came for me.

I fuck with you because I know you'd never do me wrong.

Not because I'm head over heels in love with you. ”

“Wow,” she whispered as tears spilled over her eyelids. “Wow. So, I'm like a charity case or something?”

“I never said that Ki. In my mind, being with a loyal, solid person made more sense than just being with someone based off feelings. Emotions can make you do some fucked up things. It can cloud your judgement. I felt being with you was safe and smart.”

“I wanted honesty, and you damn sure gave it to me,” Kiandra laughed through her tears.

“So everything you said that night even though it was said in a hateful way you meant it. You don't enjoy sex with me.

You don't enjoy life with me. So, you've just been settling and shortchanging yourself, huh?

” She laughed angrily while swiping her tears away.

What was I supposed to say? That was kind of what I had been doing. “I'll always be your friend, Ki. I'll keep helping you out. I'll come by and cut your grass...”

She snorted and shot up off the couch. “I don’t want anything from you.

I wasted three years of my life with a man that just confessed to me that he was with me because it was smart.

I’d go against anybody for you. You know how many times I stopped speaking to my parents because they hated you?

I turned down guys that probably would have married me by now.

I’m damn near thirty no kids and not even engaged.

You really sat up here and wasted my time! ”

It was the second time Kiandra had ever yelled at me.

When she said we barely argued, she was right.

Kiandra didn’t nag or complain about much and when she did, I would simply agree to correct it and keep it moving.

We didn’t curse at one another or raise our voices.

We didn’t go days or weeks without speaking.

Anybody would have assumed we had the perfect relationship, but the shit was just bland and routine.

We had sex three to four times a week. Most of the time we did the same three positions.

She wasn't a fan of giving head and when she did it wasn't the best, so I stopped even asking for it.

We lived like an old married couple we just didn't have the kids. It took three years for me to realize that I wanted more. Funny thing was, had I never met Breezy, I would probably still be with Kiandra unhappy and bored.

“This is what I was trying to avoid. Hurting you. You mean a lot to me. Please don't ever think you don't.

You mean so much to me that I want you to get married, and I want your father to walk you down the aisle because he approves of the man you're going to marry.

I want you to have kids and be happy. I don't want you going against the people you love for him.

I want them to love him because he's good for you.”

Kiandra burst into tears. Her entire body shook as she cried.

I didn't know whether to console her or just leave her be.

Me touching her might make things worse.

Aside from when her grandmother died, Kiandra had never cried in front of me.

Her life was damn near perfect and drama free.

The only drama that ever came to her was on account of me.

When she argued with her family about me or when she got put out of her apartment

or shot.

I ran a hand over my waves and closed my eyes.

I didn't like seeing her cry, but it wasn't fair to her, me, or Breezy to keep this shit going on.

"You told me how you feel, and I heard you loud and clear. You can get the rest of your things and leave." Kiandra stood up straight and squared her shoulders. I almost smiled at how strong she was being, but I refrained.

I stood up and walked into the bedroom to get most of my things.

It would take too much time to collect it all, but I was going to try to take at least half of it.

I hated that I made her cry and shattered her world, but the sense of relief that I felt while gathering my things let me know that I had made the right choice.

Kiandra would get over me eventually. Without me in her life, maybe she would meet her soulmate.

I wanted that for her more than I wanted it for myself.

As much as I liked Breezy, I wasn't going to rush into a relationship and if she turned out to not be the one, I still wasn't going to regret breaking things off with Kiandra.

Breezy had taught me that it was possible to meet a solid person and be in love with them.

A nigga didn't have to choose between the two.

Kiandra remained in the living room while I packed my things.

One suitcase, a duffel bag, and three trash bags later, I was leaving her house.

I still had a lot more things to get, but I wasn't in a rush.

At my apartment, it took three trips to my car to get all my things out.

As I put the clothes away, calling Breezy and telling her to come through crossed my mind.

We had sex twice earlier in my car, and I still wanted her up under me.

I had it bad for her ass and if Tyler was there, he'd laugh at me.

Tyler. And just like that, it felt like an elephant was standing on my chest. My brother was gone but after all the dirt I'd done, I was still alive, well, and going on with my life.

That shit didn't sit well with me. Tossing the clothes in my hand aside, I sat down on the bed and grabbed my jar of weed from the nightstand.

Crazy things that Tyler used to say, his goofy smile...

memories of him played in my head like a movie as I rolled the blunt.

Since his death, I hated being sober. Being sober made me think too much.

I wouldn't give a damn if I fried every last one of my brain cells.

I hated thinking. I had just taken the first toke of the blunt when my phone rang.

Breezy's name appeared on my screen making me pick the phone up off the bed.

"Hello?"

"Hey. I just wanted to say goodnight. I'm back at home. I probably could have just texted you, but I wanted to call. What are you doing?"

"Smoking."

"You okay?"

"Nah. I need you."

"I'm on my way."

"She's coming," Cressida whispered and scurried away from the door.

Almost a week after I got my things from Kiandra's house, I was at a surprise birthday dinner for Breezy.

Had Lauren not contacted me and invited me, I never would have known that Breezy's birthday was approaching because she hadn't mentioned it.

Lauren told me that her actual birthday was in six days and a group of them were going to Bali to celebrate.

Her car club decided to throw her a surprise dinner, and they did it before her birthday, so she wouldn't be suspicious.

I was glad that Lauren found a way to reach out to me and invite me.

She asked Breezy to use her phone, and she snuck my number out of it.

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We were at a popular steakhouse, Louie, in a private room.

I was seated near the back at a table with Lauren and three other females.

A few of the women brought their significant others, and I assumed some of the other men there were Breezy's family.

There were around twenty-two women present and about nine men including me.

There was never any part of me that would be comfortable in a room full of strangers, but I liked how no one was really paying me any attention.

People spoke to me or nodded their heads, shook my hand, whatever, and went on about their day.

There wasn't any judgmental glares or frowns.

At least not that I could see. It was a very different dynamic than if I had been in a room full of Kiandra's family and friends.

When Breezy rounded the corner and stepped into the room, I was too enthralled with her beauty to yell surprise along with everyone else.

The short, sequined, gold dress that she wore with gold strappy heels had her looking elegant and sexy at the same time.

Her hair was pulled up into a bun with a loose curling hanging on the side of her face.

The way her eyes widened and the big grin that spread across her face made my dick brick up.

But then again, everything Breezy did made my dick brick up.

She surveyed the room and when we locked eyes, the way her face lit up even more made me chuckle.

Breezy made her way around the room saying hello to everyone, and I patiently waited my turn.

When she stood in front of me, her scent tickled my nostrils as she threw her arms around me.

“What are you doing here? How did you find out?”

“Lauren is sneaky as fuck. She went in your phone and got my number out.”

Breezy laughed. “Thank you for coming. And for letting me know that I need to watch my friends,” she joked.

“Why didn’t you tell me about your birthday?”

“It never really came up.”

“We’ll talk about that later.”

Breezy sat beside me. The restaurant served us a four-course meal, and I wondered who was paying for it because I would have gladly taken over the bill.

The food was good and when we were done eating, I left a \$300 tip on the table.

Breezy opened all of her cards and gifts, and people really showed out for her.

She mainly got money and ended up with a wad so big it would barely fit in her purse.

She also got earrings, perfume, wine glasses, champagne flutes, candles, and gift cards.

When she read the card on the three dozen roses and saw that they were from me, she thanked me, and I got appreciative glances from her friends and family.

When she opened the Chanel bag, the room erupted like I had proposed to her.

That purse was expensive as hell, but she deserved it.

I didn't have to think twice about getting it for her.

I did tell myself that I needed to slow down on the spending until I saw if the job that Maino put me on to would actually go through.

I helped Breezy take all of her gifts to the car.

Her and her friends wanted to go to a hookah lounge, and I told her to just come by my place when she was done.

We were hugged up on the sidewalk gazing into one another's eyes like we were the only people present.

She was tipsy and had a lazy grin on her face.

I pecked her lips and smacked her ass simultaneously.

“Don’t be out too long. You got me hard as fuck. ”

“You are the sorriest excuse of a man that I have ever had the displeasure of knowing.” I heard a male voice that had a tone laced with disgust. Looking up, I saw not only Kiandra’s father glaring at me, but her mother was shooting me evil glares while Kiandra stood watching me and Breezy with tears streaming down her face.

I pinched the bridge of my nose. Since Kiandra and I were no longer a couple, I didn’t have to deal with her father’s disrespect.

And I wasn’t going to. “I suggest you stop talking to me,” I advised him in a low tone.

“Kiandra and I aren’t together anymore. That’s what you wanted right?

So, what’s the problem?” I took a step toward him.

“Oh believe me when I tell you I’m happy about that. But we have to literally beg this girl to eat. That’s the problem. She’s somewhere sad and crying over your trifling ass and you’re out here hugged up with the next bitch.”

“You might want to watch your fucking mouth,” I damn near growled. “I’m not tolerating too much more disrespect.”

“You found someone else’s life to ruin? You think that meant something because you bought Kiandra a house? With blood money? Because I know you’ve never worked a real job a day in your life.”

I was seething and needed to get out of his presence before I did some shit that I might regret. I turned toward Breezy. “I’ll see you at the crib.” After pecking her lips, I attempted to walk off.

“So, she wasn’t really your tutor?” Kiandra asked with a quivering voice.

I turned back around to face her. “Yes, she was. I never cheated on you. Ever.”

“Bull fucking shit,” her father snorted. “You low life piece of sh”

I cocked my arm back and hit him so hard that he fell right on his ass while his wife gasped, and Kiandra screamed for me to stop.

“Are you crazy?!” She ran over and pushed me.

“Keep that disrespectful ass nigga out my face,” I warned and walked off.

I had no doubt he’d go to the police because that was the kind of man he was. “Oh my God, Lucci wait.” When I realized that Breezy was behind me, I stopped walking. “Are you okay?”

“I’m good. I’m not the person that got knocked out.”

“I’m not going out. I’ll tell them that I’m just going to your house.”

“No. Go out and have fun. I’ll be waiting for you to get in.”

I knew I was in a zone after I got in my car and realized that I hadn’t even made sure that Breezy made it to her car.

I needed to get out of there before the police came.

As long as I had been wanting to knock Mr. Jones’ ass out, I should have been smiling.

Instead, I was pissed off and irritated.

Pissed off because the shit he said to me was OD disrespectful.

I wanted to hit him more than once, but he was old as fuck, and it wouldn't have been right.

I was irritated because I didn't want Kiandra to find out about me and Breezy like that.

That coward shit was creeping up on me again because I lowkey hoped that seeing me with Breezy and seeing me knock her father on his ass would be enough for Kiandra to fall out of love with me.

I needed her to decide that I wasn't worth her tears.

Between Kiandra getting shot, me killing Rich, Tyler being killed, and punching Kiandra's pops in the face in front of her, I was surprised I wasn't snorting coke on a regular basis.

Weed wasn't strong enough for all the bullshit I had going on.

I was damn near tired of drinking. Once it got to a point that I didn't want to smell alcohol, I knew I needed a break from it.

The only bright spot in my life was Breezy.

Shorty made me want to get my shit together.

If I managed to get two M's from robbing the Nigerian, I'd be set for a minute, but I couldn't rob forever.

And I couldn't live off the money that I saved forever.

My mental was so messed up that I didn't think I had the ability to learn real estate.

Most days, I didn't want to think about what I was going to eat much less learning the do's and don'ts and laws of real estate.

At home, I took a shower, tossed back two shots of cognac and rolled a blunt while I watched my favorite movie.

I watched Apocalypto at least twice a month.

The movie had just ended, and I was high as hell when my doorbell rang.

I knew it was Breezy, and my dick jumped just from knowing she was on the other side of my door.

When I opened the door, Breezy was standing there bouncing in place. Pushing past me she rushed into the house. "I have to pee."

Chuckling I closed and locked the door. Then, I turned off the TV because I no longer gave a damn about sports highlights.

In the bedroom, I took off my basketball shorts and my boxer briefs.

Breezy was on the same type of time I was on because she came out of the bathroom naked as hell.

With a devilish grin on her face, she straddled me, and a nigga forgot about all his troubles.

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brEEZY

My birthday trip was lit. Me and my girls flew first class, and I got some good sleep on the flight.

When we landed jet lag wasn't too bad, so we took showers and got dressed for a sunset dinner on the beach.

The food was amazing and hours later, we were lounging in the pool, twerking, and taking shots.

We were staying at a huge Airbnb that had six bedrooms and five bathrooms. Lauren recorded me as I stood on the side of the pool and bounced my ass to the Lil' Baby song that was playing.

It was only the first night, and we were turning all the way up. We had three more nights to go.

"My ass is seeing double," I giggled as I sat on the side of the pool. "Ohhh I'm about to fuck those left over burritos up."

"Oh hell yeah, I forgot all about those." Lauren almost broke her neck getting out of the pool, and all I could do was laugh.

As everyone got out of the pool and walked inside the house, I checked Lucci's location and saw that he had either turned it off or he was no longer sharing it with me.

Neither one of those made sense unless he was doing something that he shouldn't have been doing.

I didn't want to get upset because Lucci and I hadn't made anything official aside from him declaring that my pussy belonged to him.

People said anything in the middle of sex, however.

I was sure that he still felt the same way about rushing into another relationship.

I wanted to respect that and give him time and space.

I was debating whether or not I should say anything to him about it.

I didn't want to come across as a nag, but why was his location off?

What was he doing? It was going to continue to bother me.

I liked Lucci a lot, but I refused to spend too much time in beautiful Bali wondering what he was up to. I could worry about later, later.

In the house, I warmed up my food while everyone talked loud as hell and laughed. I was so drunk, and the food was so good that I was leaning on the counter eating with my eyes closed.

"I'm so serious when I say when are we planning a weekend trip to Crescent Falls? They have some fine ass men in that motorcycle club, and I want in," Aubree stated.

"We can go anytime," my left shoulder hiked into a shrug. "It's not far, and I'm always down for a change of scenery."

“It damn sure won’t be because you’re looking for a fine man because you got one of those. The way Lucci popped out at your dinner with not only a whole bushel of roses, but that man copped you the Chanelly,” Ziyah declared.

“Maybe I want two fine ass men,” I teased before chugging down my Gatorade.

“I know that’s right,” Sas twerked making me laugh. One thing for certain, my girl never missed an opportunity to twerk.

As I cleaned up the kitchen, I smirked at myself because I knew if no one else did that I was just popping shit.

Lucci had me so open that it didn’t make any sense.

But was that the problem? He had been faithful to a woman that he wasn’t even in love with.

Surely, it wouldn’t be hard for him to only deal with one person if he really liked that person.

I wasn’t sure if I was just paranoid or asking myself logical questions.

We weren’t in a relationship, so technically, he wouldn’t be cheating if he did deal with someone else.

“When you think you gonna get back out there and start dating?” Rasheeda asked Lauren.

I prayed that my girl didn’t get triggered and end up being sad on the trip. She deserved to have fun. Trying to figure out a balance between grief and living had to be hard.

“I’m not in a big rush. I haven’t had the best luck with men over the years and as soon as I met one that made me feel all the feels, he got taken away. For whatever reason, I think God just wants me to be alone, and I’m tired of fighting it.”

“I don’t think He wants you to be alone,” I offered.

“Life is just hard and shitty. Nothing is on our own timing. No matter how annoying it is, we just have to learn to be patient. We all deserve to be happy and fulfilled. It took me a lil’ minute to really mean it when I said if I never get married and have kids, I’ll still be happy with how my life turned out. ”

“You better be marrying that fine ass man that was at your birthday dinner looking like he wanted to eat you alive,” Storm stated making us all giggle.

Sex with Lucci was never ever bad but the night of my birthday dinner...

that man fucked me silly. Just thinking about the things he did to my body made me quiver in the middle of the kitchen.

We weren’t trying to have any slip ups, so I tracked my cycle frequently and when I was near ovulation or actually ovulating, I swallowed his babies like they were freshly squeezed juice.

No one could deny being exhausted any longer, so we all made our way to our rooms and bathrooms. As the hot water pelted onto my skin, I leaned my head back, closed my eyes, and thought about how blessed I was.

The day before my trip two of my clients closed on a house that got me a pretty hefty commission.

I was successful in my career, and I was very close to meeting my goal for buying a

house.

I actually liked a man that had some really good qualities.

Everything was starting to fall into place.

Or were they? The paranoia began to creep back in.

When I got out of the shower, I wrapped a towel around my body and grabbed my phone.

Before I could check Lucci's location again, the phone rang in my hand.

He was facetimeing me. I wasted no time accepting and despite how in my feelings I'd been, the moment his face came into view I smiled.

"Looks like I caught you at the right time," he licked his lips before putting a blunt in between them and taking a deep pull.

"Yeah you did." I propped the phone up on the sink and grabbed my lotion. "Why was your location off earlier?" I asked casually making his brow hike.

"You checked my location earlier?" he chuckled.

"Yes." I attempted to make my tone sound confident but in actuality, I was a little embarrassed. Was I doing too much?

"I was handling something that my phone didn't need to be on for."

"Okay," I said slowly. Lucci didn't have a job. That could only mean he got his money illegally because let's be for real, a nigga with no job buying Chanel bags? If

he was in fact doing something illegal, I didn't expect him to mention it over the phone, so I was going to drop the subject.

“You over there thinking I'm out chasing pussy?”

Avoiding eye contact, I leaned over and rubbed lotion onto my legs. “I just asked you a question. Who said I assumed anything?”

That made him laugh. “You were more than likely over there coming up with all kinds of scenarios. You probably had an attitude and all. I don't know how many times I have to tell you that I'm not going to lie about shit that I do.”

Insecurity wasn't exactly an attractive trait, so I checked myself.

He hadn't given me any reason not to trust him, so I was going to stop assuming that the worst would occur.

I couldn't even be worried about him possibly rekindling things with Kiandra because even if my father was wrong, I wasn't sure I could be with a man that knocked the Mario coins out of him.

My eyes almost jumped out of their sockets when Lucci's fist connected with that man's face.

“Anyway,” I changed the subject. “I think I'm about to take the continuing education classes and the test that I need to become a BIC which stands for broker in charge. That way, I won't have to work under anyone, and I can start my own firm.”

“Word? I think that's a good idea.”

“Yeap. And I don't know of any all black real estate firms in Diamond Cove. All

black is cool but all black women would be dope.”

“Y’all stay trying to exclude niggas. All female car club. All female real estate firm. We don’t get no love, huh?”

“Welllll,” I sang while rubbing lotion onto my arms. “You could always enroll in another real estate class, pass the test, and be the first man to work at my firm.”

I didn’t miss the silence that ensued. I didn’t want to press Lucci about real estate. He had been doing well in the class, but I knew that if he wasn’t in the right head space it would be a waste of time anyway.

“We’ll see.” That was the only answer he gave.

I gave a curt nod. “I can live with that. I still have your book and your notebook.”

“Damn I hadn’t even thought about asking you if you grabbed them. I kind of assumed you left them, and they were just gone.”

“Ohhh but women assume?”

Lucci chuckled and before he could dwell too much on the events of that day, I opened my towel giving him a peek of my body. I didn’t miss the flicker of desire in his orbs.

“Damn. You gonna make me catch a flight to Bali and crash that all girl’s trip.”

“Or you can miss me and when I get home, you can fuck me so good that I walk funny for the next few days.”

“Say less my nigga. Say less.”

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Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 8:03 am

Bali was so much fun but back at home, I had to get back to business.

I had new clients that were looking to buy.

There was a married couple that I could tell right away were going to work my nerves.

The second one was a single man that more than likely wouldn't be too hard to please.

As soon as I got back to Diamond Cove, I showered, put on some comfy clothes, and started looking for listings that met each client's criteria.

I wanted to show them as many houses as possible at once.

There was a lot of competition out there so more than likely, the first house they found and put offers on wouldn't be accepted.

I'd had clients that didn't get the first, second, or third house that they wanted.

One woman literally cried because she didn't think she'd ever get a house that she liked.

People that shamed others for renting and acted as if the home buying process was so easy annoyed me real bad because the way my clients cried, got frustrated, rejected, and inconvenienced while looking for a home wasn't for the faint of heart.

Most times when they were frustrated, I was on the receiving end of it.

I just had to suck it up and learn not to take it personal.

When I was done composing a list, I reached out to my clients and set up a day and time to do the viewings.

Then, I responded to some emails and reached out to the appraiser that was working on a home for one of my other clients.

Her offer had been accepted, and we were just waiting to see what the house appraised for.

When all of that was done, I felt accomplished.

My phone rang, and I saw that Gavin was calling.

I hadn't spoken to him since my second day in Bali.

Gavin was nice, but I didn't feel right wasting his time.

In my heart, I wanted Lucci, and anyone I entertained while we got to know one another would be strictly platonic.

I didn't assume that Gavin was looking for a relationship with me, but I was pretty confident that he was looking for someone to at least have sex with. It wasn't going to be me.

"Hey."

"Damn you're supposed to be my personal tour guide. You don't hang out with me

tell me the cool spots to go to or anything.”

“Um for one, I told you to come on the strip that day; you’re welcome. And I just got back from my trip this morning.”

“I’m fucking with you. I know you’re a busy woman. Can you grab a bite to eat with me in about an hour? I’m tired of eating alone looking lame as hell.”

“Sure,” I replied slowly. There was nothing wrong with keeping it casual. If any weird or inappropriate conversation took place, I’d politely tell him that this wasn’t that. “Where do you want to go?”

“You tell me. What’s the best spots? I like different shit. Indian food, Caribbean food, good Mexican food.”

“There’s this really good Mexican spot. They have the best elote and ceviche.”

“I’m down.”

“Okay, I’ll text you the address, and I’ll meet you there.”

It was going to take me about twenty minutes to get to the restaurant, so I went to find something to wear.

I wasn’t going to look homeless, but I for sure wasn’t trying to do too much.

It didn’t take me long to decide on a cute little tennis dress from Alo.

It was white and trimmed in navy. After brushing mascara onto my lashes and swiping gloss across my lips, I grabbed a pair of sneakers from my closet, sprayed some perfume, clasped a watch around my wrist and was ready to go.

I had slicked my hair back into a ponytail after my shower, so I didn't have to do my hair.

My thoughts drifted to Lucci. I hadn't talked to him since I got home, but there was no need for me to call him when I was on my way to meet Gavin.

I'd just call him after. Lucci and I were both thinking of one another because I had just fastened my seat belt when he called me.

My belly fluttered because I wanted to talk to him, but I was scared to tell him that I was on my way to meet Gavin.

But why? We weren't a couple, and it wasn't a date in my opinion.

"Hey."

"Niggas hard headed as shit. I told you to text me when you landed."

"I know you did, and I'm so sorry. My dad called me two seconds after I walked off the plane, and then my Aunt Torrie called. When I got home, I took a shower and got straight to work. I have new clients that are anxious to start the home buying process."

"Sounds like you're in the car. Where you headed? Leaving the office?"

"No, I worked from home today. I was just going to chill around the house, but I got invited out for a quick bite to eat."

"With who?"

I swallowed hard. I didn't really expect him to ask. "Um, this guy, Gavin."

“Oh, that’s why you didn’t hit me up? You’re going out on a date?”

“No. He literally just called thirty minutes ago. It’s not a date. He’s new in town and just wants someone to show him around and hang with here and there. It’s strictly platonic. I gave him my number when we weren’t even speaking.”

“Gotcha. This how you get your lick back.”

His comment made me draw back with a frown. “Lick back? Are you kidding me? I just said we’re hanging out as friends. We’ve never been in a relationship, Lucci, so I can’t cheat on you. But I don’t want to have sex with anyone else. I don’t want to date.”

“But you can hang out with niggas?”

I released a frustrated groan. “Bro, you’re really blowing me.

I told the man I was single, and he asked for my number.

After we had sex in your car when he hit me up, no I didn’t say hey, we can’t be cool anymore because I’m having sex with someone.

I planned to talk to him while we ate and let him know that I wasn’t looking for anything serious. ”

Lucci chuckled. “This is the shit that I was talking ‘bout. That love bullshit will fuck you up every time. Fucking with a person because it feels good will have you in way more trouble than if you just found a solid muhfucka.”

“The fuck are you trying to say?” I snapped. “Please elaborate, so you can get cussed the fuck out.”

“I don’t need to elaborate on shit. I never had to worry about Kiandra going out and hanging with other men.”

“Well go back and be with Kiandra! She was the most loyal and solid person on the planet, and you weren’t happy with her ass! You not about to sit here and throw the next female in my face. Nigga is you cool?” my voice had risen at least two octaves.

“Enjoy your date, Breezy.”

The moment he ended the call, I screamed like a lunatic.

Annoyed wasn’t even the word. It was obvious that being honest didn’t get a person anywhere.

I should have lied and told him I was meeting one of the girls but nah fuck that.

I knew he had just gotten out of a relationship, but if he didn’t want me saying anything period to other men, he’d better cuff me.

That not exploring other options while single was lame as hell.

No, I didn’t want anybody else, but what was wrong with hanging out with someone as a friend?

If he decided next week that he wanted Kiandra back, I’d be looking stupid.

My mood was ruined, and I knew I wouldn’t be good company, but it was too late to back out.

I didn’t want Gavin to view me as a person that played games.

When I arrived at the restaurant, I left the engine running while I flipped down the sun visor to check my hair and face.

After all the drinking I'd done in Bali, I didn't want to see or smell any alcohol for at least a month, but I felt if I didn't at least have a glass of wine to mellow me out, my mood might not be the best. I was still fuming.

Lucci basically said had he stuck with Kiandra he wouldn't have to worry about her hanging out with other guys.

I really wanted to check his location, go where he was, and smack fire out of him.

But I wasn't going back on my word to Gavin.

My phone vibrated in my lap, and I saw a text message from Gavin that he had arrived.

With a deep sigh, I closed the sun visor and exited the car.

I spotted Gavin walking toward the door of the restaurant, and though he was cute, he wasn't Lucci.

I had to roll my eyes at my damn self. It was supposed to be fuck Lucci, and I was comparing Gavin to him.

When he reached the door, Gavin looked over his shoulder and spotted me. He held the door open, and I thanked him as I eased past him. Once we were seated, he started the conversation. "You're not jet lagged?"

"I slept on the flight, so it was cool at first, but it's starting to kick in now. I think as soon as I leave here, I'm going to head home and get in bed. How was your day?"

“It was good. My job is cool. I can’t complain. I’m starting to like Diamond Cove a lot.”

“That’s good.”

I hoped Gavin would keep the conversation very appropriate and platonic.

If he started flirting too much or being sexual, I was going to hit him with the, ‘I’m not looking for anything and that includes sex,’ speech.

For a split second, I thought maybe I should entertain him since Lucci was being an asshole, but that wasn’t what I wanted.

I used to have the date them all mindset, but I already knew that as long as I had any interest in Lucci, another man didn’t stand a chance.

Even when I was pissed with him, I knew that once the anger subsided, I’d be right back in his face and in his bed.

I wasn’t folding first, however. If we spoke again, it would be because he came to me.

And I was going to be sure to let him know that he didn’t have too many more times to throw Kiandra in my face.

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 8:03 am

LUCCI

With a kiss of my teeth, I snatched my car keys off the coffee table and walked out of my apartment.

It was one in the morning and after two blunts and a few shots I still couldn't sleep.

I couldn't sleep because I was pissed with Breezy.

A nigga had finally felt what it was like to have feelings and be jealous and shit.

I didn't like it. Caring about what another grown person did was a recipe for disaster.

I trusted Kiandra, but I wasn't stupid. I didn't put anything past anybody.

Maybe it wasn't exactly trust that made me not ever question anything.

Maybe deep down inside, I didn't care. Had Kiandra cheated, I would have been angry that she was disloyal.

But I doubted imagining another man in between her thighs would have me damn near foaming at the mouth the way Breezy hanging with another man did.

She wasn't my girl, so technically, she could do what she wanted.

And though I wasn't a fan of arguing, what I did have with Breezy was passion.

Even when I was pissed, I still wanted her.

My dick was harder than steel on the drive to her place because after I spoke my peace, I was going to fuck the shit out of her.

With Kiandra, there was never any makeup sex or angry sex.

There was no emotion. The shit felt like two robots on some roommate shit at times.

But she was in love, and I had ripped her heart from her chest. I still thought about her standing outside of the restaurant with tears streaming down her face.

I hated that she had to find out that way.

One thing about that night was certain. I'd never regret knocking her father out.

My only wish was that I'd hit him more than once.

As I walked to Breezy's door I thought about the fact that she could have company.

If she did, his ass was coming up out of there.

He could leave on his own, or I could put him out.

Knowing that I might have to put hands on a nigga, had my nostrils flaring.

When Breezy opened the door, she drew back the moment her gaze locked in on my frowning face.

"I know you aren't here this time of the morning on good bullshit." Her voice was deep, and sleep filled.

Ignoring her words, I entered her home without being invited and walked straight to the bedroom.

“Excuse you?!”

When I entered the room and her bed was empty, my facial muscles relaxed. Breezy entered the room as I was taking off my shoes.

“Lucci, have you lost your mind?” she stood in the center of the room and folded her arms underneath her breasts.

I had been so mad at her that I couldn’t think straight, but with her standing in front of me in boy shorts and a tank top with no bra, all I wanted was to slide up in her. My ass folded faster than a lawn chair and if her pussy wasn’t so good, I would have been disgusted with myself.

“What you want me to say?” I asked seriously.

Breezy’s face scrunched and she glared at me like I was public enemy number one. “I’m really about to scream, Lucciano. You woke me up for this?”

Hearing her call me by my first name made my dick harder than it already was. I advanced toward her and when I was directly up on her, I grabbed her hand and pulled her over to the bed. Sitting down, I pulled her down onto my lap.

“I was jealous, aight? Jealousy had me talking crazy a little bit.”

“Nah. It had you talking crazy a lot a bit. I don’t want to hear about Kiandra again in terms of comparison. You can go be with her if that’s what you want.”

“I apologize, Breezy. I was tripping.”

“Ummhmm. I feel your dick, and you’re on punishment. No coochie for you.”

Breezy stood and got in bed. All I could do was chuckle.

She was standing on business, and I couldn’t be mad at that.

I stood, undressed, and got in bed with her.

When I wrapped my arm around her and pulled her to me, I almost expected her to protest, but she didn’t.

Of course, I wanted to have sex with her, but laying with her was just as good.

It didn’t take long for me to begin drifting off to sleep.

Before I could knock out all the way, Breezy turned over on her opposite side and faced me.

She didn’t say anything, and I opened my eyes to find her staring at me. “You think we’re doing too much too fast?”

“I don’t know what we’re doing, but I know it’s not forced. Whatever it is, it’s flowing naturally, and I doubt that’s a bad thing.”

She kissed me softly on the lips.

“Guess you’re not mad anymore, huh?”

“I’m a little pissed, but I’m cooling off. At the end of the day, I might have been angry if you went out with someone, so I have to be fair.”

I gripped her chin in my hand. “Me not wanting to rush doesn’t have anything to do with wanting to deal with other women. I been off that shit.”

Breezy forgot all about standing on business as she moved over and straddled me.

I stared into her eyes and despite feeling like a sucka, I felt like the luckiest man on earth.

They say no one is perfect but from what I could tell, Breezy didn’t have many ill character traits.

I figured what I felt with her would eventually come with Kiandra.

I was all for not rushing but if I hadn’t fallen in three years there was no hope.

In a committed relationship with her or not, I wasn’t looking for anybody else.

I wanted us to be on one accord but if she did date someone, what could I really say? “Just give me a little bit more time.”

“I’m not rushing you, Lucci, not at all.”

There was that thing again. Us staring at one another saying nothing but communicating loud and clear.

That was some weird shit. Breezy moaned as she slid all the way down on my dick.

The moment every inch was inside her, she bit her bottom lip and went to work.

Breezy had a steady rhythm going, but I grabbed her ass cheeks and guided her up and down.

When her head fell back, and she moaned my name, I knew it was over.

Breezy turned me on the point that I couldn't see past her.

It didn't matter what a female looked like, if it wasn't Breezy, nah, I wasn't going.

For the next hour, Breezy and I shared more than sex.

We shared intimacy. We shared a connection that hopefully, would only get stronger and deeper.

We switched positions three times before I filled her womb full of my seeds. When we were done, Breezy and I took turns in the bathroom cleaning up. In her bed, I wrapped my arms around her and slept better than I'd slept in a long time.

That evening, I rode with Maino to Amoure's house.

He was concerned that he hadn't heard from her in two days.

It had also been two days since she confessed to him that the dealer she sold the painting to had been acting funny.

The Nigerian immediately suspected her of the robbery because she was the only one that knew of his whereabouts and that he would have the painting in his possession.

He had moved carefully and discreetly and still managed to get the painting snatched.

Amoure called Maino paranoid two days ago that the art dealer was going to tell the Nigerian our whereabouts.

He was still in town and had apparently been asking around to see if anyone had

come across the painting.

If the dealer confessed about her part in the set-up, she would surely die.

But if he was going to kill her anyway, there was a possibility that she could drop Amour's name.

Amoure was as green as they came, so if the Nigerian pressed hard enough, she'd probably give Maino up.

My first reaction was who the fuck cares let them catch me. I didn't regret getting those M's. I was sure Maino didn't either. However, if I was going to get taken out by the Nigerian, I didn't plan on making it easy for his ass.

"Shorty knows where you live. You think it's safe to play your crib like that?" I asked Maino. The car ride had been fairly quiet. I knew Maino, and he was more than likely in deep thought about how to handle Amoure. If she hadn't already been handled.

"That's a good question."

"Did you tell her who was going to do the robbery with you?"

"Hell nah," Maino frowned. "She didn't need to know all that. She doesn't know you or anything about you. Even when you were at my crib that night she was there, I never spoke your name."

I bobbed my head. "So, you can stay at my crib for however long is needed. That Nigerian might be salty over eight M's, but I doubt he can stay in town forever trying to track down a painting.

Shit, it's really a waste of time attempting to come after us.

The dealer is the one with the painting. We don't have that shit."

"It could just be the principle for his ass. I did hit him in the head with a gun and make him give up something he was about to sell for \$8,000,000." Maino chuckled.

"Muhfuckas want the reward but when the heat comes, they fold like pretzels. The art dealer whoever she is, and Amoure aren't even built for this kind of shit.

I'm certain if he applies pressure, she'll drop my name. "

"How you want to handle that?" I glanced over at him. It wasn't like Maino and I sat back and discussed feelings and shit. I didn't know how he felt about Amoure, but I doubted he was feeling her so much that he wouldn't kill her to keep her from running her mouth.

"I'm probably going to go ahead and dead that situation. Just gotta try to find out if she ran her mouth first."

I gave a curt nod. Whatever he wanted to do I was with it.

There were times when my mind was racing that I still saw Rich's face and how he looked at me right before I pulled the trigger.

I didn't regret killing him. I just didn't expect it to be haunting me.

If I added another body to the list, I was sure that one would haunt me too.

But there were a lot of things haunting me.

The thing that stressed me out and hurt me the most was Tyler. That one was gon' hurt forever.

Maino pulled up at Amoure's house. Her car was in the driveway, and the house appeared to be pitch black on the inside.

If she was inside, she had every light in that muhfucka turned off.

Maino and I emerged from the car, and I followed him to the door.

Before he could ring the doorbell, we both noticed the door was cracked.

Maino looked over his shoulder at me to see if I noticed.

Simultaneously, we pulled our guns from where they were resting underneath our shirts.

Slowly, Maino used his shoulder to push the door open.

The moment I stepped into the living room, I knew what it was.

The stench of something rotten burned the hairs in my nostrils and made me damn near gag.

Maino placed his shirt over his nose as we inched further into the space.

Since we couldn't see anything, Maino pulled his cellphone out and turned on the flashlight.

The living room was spotless and not a thing was out of place.

Quietly, we crept through the house and as we neared the bedroom, the smell became stronger.

I was going to end up passing out from holding my breath or throwing the fuck up from the odor.

In Amoure's bedroom, the light from Maino's phone showed us what we needed to see, but he still flipped the light switch.

Amoure was in the center of her bed, naked, hands tied at the wrists in front of her with duct tape, and her bed was saturated with blood.

Her body had been mutilated. I'd never seen anything like that up close and personal.

It was obvious that she'd been dead for a minute.

I didn't need to see anything else. I pivoted, and Maino was on my heels.

After he started his car, he peeled out of the driveway so fast his tires screeched.

The Nigerian had definitely gotten to Amoure but what we had no way of knowing was if she dropped Maino's name before she took her last breath.

I was willing to bet money that if he tortured her, she had.

Death was an inevitable part of life. No matter how much we loved a person.

No matter how bad that shit hurt, we were all going to lose people for as long as we lived.

Still, it wasn't an easy thing to get used to.

I wasn't ashamed to say that after losing Tyler, if I lost Maino too, it would fuck me up.

We both knew there could be consequences of our actions, but we were going to deal with whatever came.

I just wanted my nigga to come out on top.

I really didn't even give a damn about myself.

But Maino, I wanted that nigga to thrive.

"Is there anything from your crib that you have to have, or you want to come straight to my house?"

"I'll lay low for a lil' bit, but I'm not gon' be scared to go to my crib to get some things. I don't know how deep those niggas are, but my gun busts just like theirs. If they catch me at the crib, then they catch me at the crib."

I shook my head wondering what happened to the two mil that Amoure got from the deal.

There was no way she could put it in the bank.

If it was anywhere in her home and that Nigerian didn't get it, he was dumb.

I had divided mine up between a few different locations.

If anything happened to me, the only person who knew where the money was, was Maino.

I had to think about if something happened to both of us.

The only issue with telling my parents where the money was, was that they'd be worried about me.

After losing Tyler, I was sure the thought of losing me too would be too much.

If I was still with Kiandra, I wouldn't hesitate to tell her.

I didn't think Breezy was foul. Not even for two M's did I want to believe that she'd cross me, but I had only known her a short time.

I couldn't tweak out like that and let her know where I had \$2,000,000 stashed.

I needed to get back to thinking with my brain and not my emotions.

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 8:03 am

brEEZY

I cupped my hands around my mouth and yelled as loud as I could. “You better do your fuckin’ big one, Storm!”

The Hellcat Barbies, a few niggas with Hellcats or Camaros, and some spectators were gathered to see some of the Barbies race.

Just because I didn’t do it didn’t mean I didn’t support my girls when they did.

I could get being competitive and wanting to win, but it was funny when men got mad because they were beat by a woman.

Storm was racing a military guy driving a Camaro.

The engines revved, and the crowd cheered.

I was trying my hardest to enjoy the festivities, but Lucci was on my mind heavy.

The best part about being single and not liking anyone, were the stress-free days and nights.

I hadn’t spoken to him in more than twelve hours.

Not only that, he had his location off. I was tempted to pop up at his house, but I didn’t want to do all that.

No matter how much I liked him or how good the dick was, I wasn't trying to give off psycho vibes.

I had a little too much pride for that. If he wanted to talk to me, he knew how to get in touch with me.

Times like this, made me feel stupid for ignoring Gavin. Even if I wasn't interested in him romantically, I was avoiding being his friend because I didn't want to make Lucci mad. "Maybe the man is busy." I mumbled to myself.

Tired of thinking about Lucci, I focused on the cars as they took off burning rubber.

Even while I was straining my neck to see, I couldn't concentrate on the race.

The urge to check Lucci's location was so strong, my index finger twitched.

I was pissing my own self off acting like I wasn't pressure, and I couldn't get a man if I really wanted to.

Lucci talked about preferring love over loyalty, but nobody was just automatically loyal to bullshit.

At least not me. Imagine me running around acting as if he was the only man that existed while he got ghost whenever he wanted to.

"Storm smoked that nigga!" Aubree yelled.

Trying to force myself to have a good time wasn't working.

I'd rather leave than be a party pooper.

Physically, I was there but mentally, I was a million miles away.

I wasn't even in the mood to tell anybody that I was leaving.

I just got in my car and pulled off. I was supposed to be going home.

I had every intention of it, but I found myself parking right beside Lucci's Maserati after doing exactly what I said I had too much pride to do.

I popped up at his home unannounced and uninvited.

I rang the doorbell with bated breath. When Lucci answered the door seconds later, he had a gun in his hand. His eyes were red, and he looked stressed. Immediately, any anger I felt dissipated. "What's wrong?" I inquired genuinely concerned.

"Just a lot going on. I'm straight though. What you doing here?"

"I haven't heard from you, and I was worried about you. Is there anything you want to talk about?"

When Lucci leaned in the doorway that was an indication that he wasn't going to let me inside.

That made me feel some kind of way. I couldn't even lie.

"Nah. Talking isn't really gon' do shit.

I'm missing my brother. Got other shit going on.

I just have a lot on my mind, but I'll be good. I appreciate you for asking."

If Lucci wanted to be alone all I could do was respect it. Just as my lips parted to tell him that, he pulled his phone out of his pocket with a deep sigh. It must have been on vibrate because I didn't hear it ring. Lucci observed the screen with furrowed brows.

"Hello?" he half barked. After a few seconds of listening, he sighed again. "Where is she? I'm on my way."

Lucci eased his phone back in his pocket and eyed me.

"I need to run and check on Kiandra. I'll hit you up when I get back in."

My brows hiked as I peered at Lucci like he'd lost his mind.

I was real tired of the back and forth. I understood his situation with Kiandra, but I was the one he'd been having sex with every chance he got.

He'd been ignoring me all day. He was so stressed and in his feelings that he didn't want to talk, but he was about to run to Kiandra?

I had to check myself because it could have been an emergency.

"What's wrong with her?" I hated that my tone sounded flat. Like I really couldn't care less, but I was asking anyway.

"Her friend is just worried about her. Says she won't eat. She's been crying for days. Her parents want to have her ass committed. I just want to tell her to get a hold of herself. Doing all that over me isn't necessary."

I nodded my head. He was ready to turn me away, so he could be alone, but he was about to go do what?

Kiandra's heart was broken. The only way he could snap her out of the state she was in was to give her false hope and promises.

Was he going to feed her soup and wipe her tears away?

I really was over the back and forth bullshit.

After he'd been single for at least six months, he could holla at me, and if I was single, we could talk.

"Alright. You drive safe."

I turned to walk away, and he didn't even try to stop me.

Anger made my face flush. Heat radiated through my body as I started my car.

I needed space from Lucci. Real space. Not the kind that I forgot about as soon as he showed up at my door with those puppy dog eyes and sweet words wrapped in his deep timbre.

Maybe loyalty was better than feelings because something was telling me if he had to choose, Lucci would pick Kiandra every time.

Maybe not in the sense of being with her, but in the sense of running to her rescue.

He claimed he wasn't in love with her but for as much as he cared about her and the way he treated her like a delicate flower, he may as well be head over heels in love with her.

I had no desire to compete with Kiandra for Lucci's attention. She could have it.

He damn sure wasn't the first man to ever disappoint me, and I was sure he wouldn't be the last. At least I knew what it was, and I didn't have to wonder anymore.

At home, I took a shower and got in bed.

I needed something to focus on. My house.

I was real close to reaching my goal so I could start the process of looking for a house.

When I got a house, the only thing I was taking with me were my clothes, shoes, and sentimental things.

For my home, I wanted to completely redecorate. That would keep me busy for sure.

I looked on Pinterest for decorating inspo until I had yawned numerous times and could no longer keep my eyes open. Finally, I stopped fighting it and let sleep take over.

My father's mother played a pivotal part in my childhood.

She watched me a lot on the weekend when my dad had to work overtime.

My grandmother did my hair. She taught me how to cook and do laundry.

It was her that taught me what to do when I started my period.

She was the mother the woman that birthed me didn't want to be.

It was also her birthday so despite my mood, I wasn't going to miss the fish fry they were throwing her for anything in the world.

If it was one thing my cousin, Bo could do, it was fry some fish.

I didn't wake up in the best mood, but I got cute and made myself go to my grandmother's house.

For our family to be so big, there was minimal drama, and mostly everyone got along.

When we got together, it was a good time, and that was what I needed at the moment.

By the time I arrived, the street was already lined with cars, and her yard was full of people.

My grandmother had been living in the same house for seventeen years.

It wasn't hers, but the landlord loved her and told her he'd never make her leave.

She was friends with everyone on the street that had been there longer than a year, and when she had large gatherings at her home, none of the neighbors complained about all the cars.

Shoot, they came over to get plates and kick it too.

"Let me drive your car," my little cousin, Rodney, who was only twelve grinned wide.

"Um no. You have to learn how to drive first," I chuckled.

"I know how to drive. My dad taught me, and Jericho lets me drive sometimes."

"Is that right?" Jericho was Rodney's brother. He was seventeen, and I wouldn't be surprised if he knew how to hot wire cars and strip them of their parts. He was bad as

hell and had been since he was old enough to talk.

“Yeap. The other day he let me drive off the street and around the corner,” Rodney reported proudly.

“Well to drive my car, you need a driver’s license. Holla at me in about four more years.”

“Ahh man,” he groaned making me laugh.

I had been around family for less than five minutes, and I felt better already.

“Hey, grandma.” I entered the kitchen and found her sitting at the kitchen table putting icing on a cake. “Why you in here working and it’s your birthday?” I hugged her before handing her an envelope that contained a birthday card with \$500 inside.

My Aunt Monie kissed her teeth. “Child, I don’t know why you asked that question. You know she has to be in here to watch and critique.”

“Damn right,” my grandmother nodded. “Not about to have me eating no nasty food. Y’all always wanting to try some shit you seen on Tok Tik. Messing up good food and shit. I knew how to cook before social media.”

“It’s Tik Tok,” I laughed.

“Whatever. And thank you.” My grandmother placed the card on the table.

“Need me to do anything?” I looked around the kitchen. Monie was making potato salad, her daughter, Jasmine was taking a pan of macaroni and cheese out of the oven, and my cousin, Pam, was taking pieces of chicken out of piping hot grease.

“No, we got it all covered,” Monie answered. “Everything is about done. We’ll be eating in another ten minutes or so.”

I bobbed my head, grabbed a Sprite from the cooler and went outside to join my cousins and uncles at the spades table. “What it do, Breezy?” my cousin, Blake asked as I sat down. “When you gonna introduce me to one of them fine ass hoes in your car club?”

“I know you didn’t just play in my face like that!”

Blake’s eyes almost jumped out of his head as the woman that was pregnant with his child snaked her neck at him.

“Got damn I forgot you were sitting right there,” he genuinely looked stumped.

Blake looked down at the cup in his hand inspecting the contents as if he didn’t know what he was drinking.

The look of confusion on his face was comical.

“You better put that cup down before it gets your head knocked off your shoulders,” my Aunt Connie shook her head at him. She’d been smoking crack for as long as I could remember, and she was a better mother to her kids than my mother was to me.

“It’s all good,” Kacey seethed. “I see the kinds of things that come out of your mouth when I’m not around. Just wait until I drop this load. I got a trick for your ass.”

“Aight. We magicians and shit now, huh? Don’t get fucked up,” Blake warned.

“Spell magician you stupid mother fucker.” Kacey stood up and stormed away from the table while we all laughed our asses off. Blake was lowkey slow as hell. He could

barely read on a third-grade level but was always somewhere in a woman's face.

"That hoe tripping. Anyway," Blake mumbled trying to save face. "Like I said, Breezy. When you gon' stop playing and hook me up?"

"You want me to lie to you or hurt your feelings?"

Blake frowned. "What you mean hurt my feelings?"

"Every single one of The Hellcat Barbies has something going for herself. We don't just have nice cars.

These are educated women with careers and money.

Most of them have boyfriends but the ones that are single are about their business.

You're what? Twenty-six? You don't have a job.

You don't have a car. You have a baby on the way, and you live with your baby mama in her mother's house and after what you just did, you might not even live there. "

My Aunt Connie snickered while Blake's frown deepened.

"I do have a job. I just got on at Wendy's, and I'm about to start helping my homeboy detail cars on the weekend.

I get forty hours a week at Wendy's, and he's going to pay me \$100 per car I do.

Even if I only do four or five cars in a weekend, that's four or five hundred dollars," he stated proudly.

“Congratulations,” was all I said, and I left it at that. I couldn’t knock anyone’s hustle, and him having two jobs was better than not having one at all. But he wasn’t on any of the Barbie’s level, and there was no way in hell he could expect any of them to entertain him.

His credit score probably wasn’t even a 500.

The man didn’t possess anything of his own except clothes and shoes.

I was willing to bet that he didn’t even have a primary care physician, a savings account, or life insurance.

I’d never in life attempt to put anyone that I actually liked and respected down with him.

Shit, if Kacey asked me, I’d tell her ass she could do better, and he was my cousin.

The man had to live in her mother’s house, and he’d still been bold enough to sit in her face and disrespect her.

That was one of the reasons that I’d been so into Lucci.

Even when he wasn’t happy in his relationship, he never cheated, and I respected the hell out of him for that.

I didn’t want thoughts of Lucci to sour my mood, so I finished off my Sprite and went to fix myself something stronger.

I wasn’t going to get drunk. All I needed was a buzz.

A buzz that would probably make me horny...

Stand on business . Inwardly, I had to give myself a pep talk.

I couldn't fold. Not this time. Lucci was going to take as long as he needed to figure things out with Kiandra, and I wasn't accepting anything less.

We'd played a dangerous game by jumping into something too fast. Now, I had to deal with the consequences.

I liked Lucci. I really did. I even liked Kiandra.

But I didn't play second to anybody, so if he wasn't sure where his loyalty lay, and he didn't know who to choose, I'd make it easy for him. He could choose her every time.

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 8:03 am

LUCCI

I laid on Kiandra's bed with her head on my chest and one arm wrapped around her.

I had been staring at the ceiling for the past, shit, I didn't even know.

Maybe an hour. Maybe more. The fact that I was being such a pussy was pissing me off.

Even after I knocked her father out, she still wouldn't eat, wouldn't sleep, and couldn't function knowing that I had moved on with Breezy.

I didn't think seeing my face would be good for her, but her friend seemed to think that it might help.

My stupid ass fell for the okie doke, and now shorty had her head on my chest. That wasn't helping shit, but what was I supposed to say?

We weren't getting back together, and I wasn't going to sleep with her.

If she wanted comfort from a man that refused to be with her, maybe that was the least I could give her.

Kiandra's soft snores stopped, and she inhaled a deep breath through her nose and stretched.

"I didn't even realize I fell asleep." She sat up, and I continued to stare at the ceiling.

Life had gone from sugar to shit real fast, and I hadn't been able to get back right.

Tyler's death set shit off. Everything was wrong.

Nothing was right. Well, my money was right, but that was about it.

Life was a shit show. At the rate I was going, I should have just stayed in a relationship with Kiandra and been bored as fuck.

"You spending the night?" she asked in a small voice. Her question snatched me out of the daze that I was in causing me to sit up as well.

"Nah. I have to get going."

"You're going to her?"

I sighed. "Kiandra," all I could do was shake my head. "I came over here because Ro was worried about you. Your parents are worried about you. I didn't even know if it was good for me to come by, but I'm worried about you too. Baby, I'm not worth it. I promise I'm not."

"You can just get out. I don't even know why Ro called you.

I don't even know why you came. Just to tell me again that you don't want me.

You think I want to be a complete, pathetic mess?

You think I want everyone to know that you broke my heart?

If I could just snap my fingers and make all of this disappear I would.

Don't you know that?" Kiandra was pissed.

I still wasn't used to seeing her upset.

"Were you dealing with her when I talked to her about becoming a Hellcat Barbie? I bet you she laughed behind my back. And I was all at the brunch. Wow." Kiandra clicked her tongue.

"She actually felt bad. She likes you. Said you're a sweet girl and shit."

Kiandra laughed. "I'm even a charity case to the woman that's fucking my ex. Wow. I really need to get my life together."

Standing up, I put my shoes on. If Kiandra needed me, I'd always be there, but I wasn't coming back if I wasn't invited by her. Only time would help her to get over me. Time and maybe a new nigga.

"I hate you!"

I was halfway out of the bedroom when she screamed. Stopping in my tracks, I turned around to face her. "I'm sure you do, Ki. You should."

"Stop acting so perfect! Stop acting like you care! You don't give a damn about me. Go back to Breezy. I'm sure she sucks your dick just the way you like it."

I almost laughed. Hearing Kiandra talk shit was almost comical.

If I laughed, she might grab a knife and slit my throat.

There was no way I could make her understand, so the best thing for me to do was leave.

Kiandra was pissed and so was Breezy. Trying to do a good deed had me in the no pussy zone, but it didn't even matter.

My head was clouded. My judgement was off.

I needed to sit my ass down somewhere and think about my next move.

Maino stayed with me for a night then he went to some chick's house. I wasn't worried about the Nigerian coming to my crib, but anything was possible. If he came, that was just what it was. I was out of weed, so I went to buy some then I went home. Maino was in the kitchen making a sandwich.

"Nigga, about time you came home. I've been itching to tell you this shit, but I didn't want to talk about it over the phone."

"What's good?"

"I was at a shorty's house, and she was watching the news. Why they find an art dealer in her home dead after she sold a painting on the black market for \$12,000,000."

An angry chuckle pushed from my throat. "That bitch snaked us?"

"Looks like it. She sold the shit for twelve M's and had the three of us splitting six."

"At this point, it doesn't even matter. She's dead and so is Amoure."

"That shit was mentioned too. Since Amoure works at a museum, they think the murders are connected. That Nigerian has two bodies so far and no painting. We don't have the painting, so if he's smart, he's on his way back out of the country."

Sticking around to look for me would be dumb on that nigga's part. ”

“Shorty was grimy for that money and didn't even get to spend it,” I shook my head pitifully. “Her nor Amoure.”

“I'm going to give it another week, then I'm going home. Whatever happens after that shit happens.”

“I don't think he's coming, but you know you can stay here for as long as you want.”

“What's the plan man? I understand why you let the real estate thing go. But what are you going to do? You can no doubt make the money you have last for a minute but eventually, it will run out, and this robbing shit is getting real dangerous. It might be time to hang that shit up.”

Running one hand over my hair, I sighed.

“I don't know man. I was thinking about paying for another class.

Most days, my mental isn't on point enough to concentrate on anything detailed and boring as hell.

A part of me just wants to invest in some shit, sit back, and let someone else do the work.

” The moment I said the words, the idea to buy a house popped into my head.

A cheap house for less than \$100,000 that I could put money into and flip.

I didn't need a real estate license for that shit. And some of the work I could do myself.

I didn't know how to do wiring and all that, but I could do enough to save a few thousand on labor. If I could buy a house and fix it up for around \$150,000 then sell it for at least \$250,000 that would be a nice lil' profit.

"Invest in something like what?"

"I think I might try to buy a house and flip it."

Maino bobbed his head. "That's a good idea. You need to get on that ASAP. I'm about to transition out of the weed game. Find something safe to do my damn self." Maino shook his head, and I was sure we were thinking the same thing.

Those two M's Amoure got, and the art dealer's greed got their asses wacked.

I was done taking shit that didn't belong to me.

It was time to lock in on some shit that would get me money the legal way.

My emotions were still fluctuating from my brother's death.

Most days, I still didn't give a damn whether I lived or died, but that super reckless shit was coming to an end.

If I had to be here, I might as well keep my head down and stay out the way.

One thing about life, my time would be up when it was time.

If it wasn't, me or the ones close to me would end up suffering the consequences of my dumb ass actions. It was time to grow the fuck up.

I kicked the shit with Maino for a bit longer before going to the living room to start

my search for houses. I grabbed my laptop and sparked a blunt. It was time to lock the fuck in.

“Three more, two more, one more. That’s a wrap.” Chico bobbed his head as I wondered if I was about to die.

The thirty minutes I’d spent sparring almost killed my ass.

For one, I was out of shape and for two, I smoked way too much.

The way I was gasping for air, I wasn’t even sure if I was breathing.

I was hot, sweaty, and irritated. It had been twenty-four hours since I’d smoked any weed and too many damn days since I’d busted a nut.

In an effort to get my mind right, I was attempting to detox from anything that wasn’t good for me.

Going through marijuana withdrawals while being horny as fuck was some ghetto shit.

It took me about five minutes to be able to breathe normally.

Maino finished up his session while I guzzled down a bottle of water.

All I’d eaten so far was a banana, and I drank a protein shake before hitting the gym.

All I could think about was a big ass steak, and I couldn’t care less if red meat wasn’t good for me.

If I kept having to deny myself things that made me happy, my grouchy ass was gon’

catch a body.

It was bad enough that the entire time I was sparring, all I could think about was Breezy.

It had been way too long since I'd spoken to her.

It had only been four days, but that was too long.

Sucka shit, yeah, I know. The same way I kept hollering that Kiandra was too good for me, Breezy was too.

I didn't have my shit together. Shorty had way too much going for herself, and I was still on that dumb shit out here robbing niggas and waking up every day doing nothing.

On top of that, I was still way too attached to my ex.

It wasn't fair for me to be selfish. Like Kiandra, Breezy needed someone that fit her.

The difference was, I didn't care about setting Kiandra free.

I wanted her to find someone that would give her everything she wanted and needed but Breezy...

walking away from her had a nigga's chest tight.

Every time I thought about her sexy ass grinning up in another's man's face, my teeth involuntarily clenched.

I didn't like it. But there wasn't shit I could do about it.

Grief and stress had me pushing her away and when she came to see what was good, seconds after telling her that I wanted to be alone, I ran to Kiandra's rescue.

That was fucked up. And that was the reason I was going to stop thinking with my dick and leave well enough alone.

"You ready?" Maino was breathing just as hard as I had been.

"Hell yeah. Get my ass up outta here. You'd think I weighed five hundred pounds the way I almost died."

"It's that weed man," Maino chuckled. "I need to join your ass and stop for a lil' bit. If a nigga was chasing me, I'd be as good as got."

"You better if you plan to keep working out. I don't even want to think about that shit right now." Shaking my head, I chuckled. "I feel like a full blown crackhead I want to smoke so bad. It's ten times harder than I imagined."

"Of course it's bad. You've been smoking every day for years. What's the longest you've ever been without it?"

I racked my brain trying to remember. "Probably when I got shot. I was in the hospital for like five days, so four days because as soon as I was released, I smoked a blunt in the car."

"Longest I've been without smoking was when I almost died.

Combining my time in the hospital and when I came home, I'd say I went like two months without it.

It's been on ever since. I can't even lie to you.

Longest I've been since then is probably eight hours if I sleep that long," he laughed as we stepped outside.

"I have to do at least two full more days. The plan was to go seven days, but if I can go at least three, that's better than nothing.

I don't even want anything to have a hold over me like that but this is tough.

I can't even front," I sighed. No smoking, drinking, or having sex.

That was too much stuff to go cold turkey from at once.

Which I could get pussy. Even if it wasn't Breezy's...

"What you about to get into? I'm hungry as hell," Maino glanced at his phone.

"Food," I rubbed my growling belly. At first, I couldn't eat because I haven't smoked, but that workout just did it for me. I'm ready to fuck a steak up." My mouth was watering just thinking about it.

Two men were walking down the sidewalk headed in our direction.

I glanced at them because the way Maino and I were standing, we were taking up a lot of space.

They could have walked around us, but the polite thing to do was to move over.

I backed up, and Maino followed suit. The men were engrossed in conversation with one another but as they passed us, what caught my attention was the fact that they had very thick African accents.

I turned my head in their direction and simultaneously, they both pivoted with guns in their hands.

They continued to walk backwards, but they both let off shots at me and Maino.

We were out in the open. The only thing we could do was run back inside of the gym or hide behind parked cars.

I had my hands on the door of the gym when I felt a searing pain in my calf.

Seeing as how I'd been shot before, I already knew what it felt like.

Those bullets burned. They burned real bad.

The heat was worse than the actual pain.

It felt as if an inferno had exploded inside my leg.

As I pushed the door open, another bullet slammed into my side sending the heat radiating through my core. Just that fast, my leg went numb, and I tumbled into the gym. On the floor, I scooted backward until I was up against the wall.

"Where's Maino?" I panted as Chico ran over to the door. He was about to turn the lock.

"He's on the ground. I got kids in here. I can't unlock this door unless I know those niggas are gone." I nodded my understanding.

The last thing I wanted was for innocent kids to get hurt because of some shit that Maino and I had chosen to take part in. I was getting real sick of dealing with this bullshit.

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 8:03 am

brEEZY

I was more than likely moving super slow for a few reasons.

The main reason was that it was taking way too much effort to keep my anxiety at bay.

Being in a hospital; flashbacks of what happened the last time I was there.

My fear of death. It all had my chest tight.

With each step that I took, it became harder to breathe.

Lucci had to be alive because the registration clerk gave me his room number.

But just because he was alive didn't mean he was doing well.

I was genuinely afraid of what I'd find.

On top of that, I didn't even know if he wanted to see me.

I heard about him and his friend being shot from Lauren.

All I could think about was his parents and how it hadn't been that long since they lost Tyler.

The news that Lucci had been shot literally made my knees buckle.

For a few seconds, I couldn't breathe. I had no clue how Lucci made his money or what he was into, but people didn't keep shooting at him for no reason.

Regardless of whatever, I at least wanted to look him in his face and make sure that he was okay.

Even if he didn't care to see me, I needed to know that he was okay.

Or that he would at least be okay eventually.

The closer I got to his room, the harder my heart beat.

I placed one hand flat on my belly as if that was going to help calm my nerves.

It felt like my insides were doing the electric slide.

My palms were sweaty, and my mouth was uncomfortably dry.

As I approached Lucci's room number, I saw that the door was open.

Holding my breath, I peered inside, and my heart slammed into my ribcage.

Her back was to me, but I knew that Kiandra was the woman that stood at his bedside.

I stood frozen. I couldn't go in. Lucci's face was visible and when his eyes connected with mine, I could see that he was alive and well.

That was enough for me. I remembered how to use my legs and back peddled out of his line of vision.

I'll wait for you .

That was the dumbest shit I ever could have said.

There was no way I could wait for Lucci to sort his shit out with Kiandra.

I had to gracefully bow out no matter how much it hurt.

In the car, my emotions won, and I had a full-blown anxiety attack.

Tears streamed down my face as I gripped the steering wheel and hyperventilated.

I wasn't sure how much time passed, but I cried and struggled to breathe and calm my racing heart for way too long.

Finally, the tears stopped. My hitched breaths slowly returned to normal, and I was able to lift the center console and remove some napkins.

When my cell phone rang and I saw that Gavin was calling, I welcomed the distraction. At that point, I didn't care what he wanted. I just needed something to take my mind off the bullshit. Clearing my throat, I answered the phone and tried my very best to sound normal.

"You good?" I could hear the concern in his tone.

"Yeah, my allergies have been acting up. What's up?"

"I'm surprised you answered. Got me feeling like a lame calling you more than once, when you don't answer or return my calls half the time."

"Sorry," I sighed. "Life has been crazy lately. I'm getting a lot more clientele and

taking these continuing education classes.

That's why I told you we could hang out here and there but for the most part, I have to be locked in right now.

"That was the truth. But that wasn't the reason why I'd been ignoring him.

"I respect it. There's nothing wrong with a woman that has goals.

That's actually sexy as hell. I was calling to see if you could squeeze me in for a bite to eat.

I want to try that seafood boil at Red Lobster, and I don't want to go alone.

I think Red Lobster is considered a cheap date these days, but I really love the biscuits. "

That made me laugh, and I was glad I had answered the phone for Gavin. I didn't have to be looking for a love connection to be cool with him.

"I could go for a seafood boil right now. Which Red Lobster do you want to meet at?"

"You tell me where to go. You know I still don't know much about this city."

"We can go to the one on Golden Waters Way. I'm about ten minutes away. What about you?"

I waited as Gavin put the location into his GPS. "It's saying I'm twelve minutes away. Let me stop and get some gas, and I'm on the way."

“Okay.”

Lucci’s eyes were open. He looked directly at me, so I knew he was conscious.

Hopefully, that was a good sign. As long as I knew he was going to be okay, I would find a way to deal with everything else.

I had been disappointed before. Heartbreak wasn’t anything new to me.

Was it even heartbreak when you hadn’t made it to the love part yet?

I wasn’t sure what it was, but I could admit that it didn’t feel good.

I was about to shake it off, however. I was doing fine before I met Lucci, and I’d be fine after.

The Hellcat Barbies were going to Crescent Falls for the weekend to celebrate the new chapter of our car club.

It would be a nice, quick little getaway.

There were a few races set up, and it was going to be an eventful weekend.

There was some delicious looking eye candy in Crescent Falls.

I had no plans to do anything, but it never hurt a girl to look.

It wasn’t about trying to find someone to help me get over Lucci.

It was about reminding myself that God didn’t stop making men when he made that one.

After I arrived at the restaurant, I checked my appearance in the visor to make sure I didn't look too crazy after my meltdown. My phone rang, and when I saw that it was Lauren I did a quick appraisal of the parking lot. Since I didn't see Gavin's car, I answered. "Hey, boo."

"Hey. Are you still at the hospital? How is Lucci?"

"No. I'm at Red Lobster about to meet Gavin. I didn't even go in his room. His door was open, and I saw Kiandra standing by his bed. He saw me, so he's awake. Hopefully, that's a good sign. I left."

"I know it would have been awkward being in the room with her, so I can't blame you for leaving. They were together for a lil' minute, so I'm sure she was just worried. That doesn't mean they're getting back together."

"It really doesn't matter, Lauren. I walked away from the situation before he even got shot.

Together or not, their situation is fresh and when either one of them is going through, the other runs to them.

That tells me a lot, and I'm not going to hurt my own feelings by inserting myself into the dynamic.

A man can only make me feel like someone else is more important than me once before I get the hint. "

"I get it boo. Have fun with Gavin. I'm in here packing for our road trip. Tell me why I already have six outfits packed, and I'm not even done yet."

Gavin pulled into the parking lot as I laughed loud as hell. "Girl, we're staying for the

weekend and at least one of those days is going to be spent at the track. It's not like we have a whole itinerary filled with adventures planned."

"I know, but if I stay ready, I won't have to get ready. We might do brunch, so I need a cute 'fit for that. I need something in case we hit the club. A girl's gotta have options."

"Well, you go ahead and get that sorted out. Gavin just got here. After we leave, I'm going home to pack myself. I have a full day tomorrow. One showing, and two closings."

"Okay, friend. Have fun. Talk to you later."

Gavin emerged from his car, and I did the same. Even if it killed me, I was going to balance work and fun. I was getting back to carefree Breezy. No more sitting around sulking. I was her, and I needed to start acting like it.

Taking off my seatbelt, I closed my eyes and said a silent prayer. "Sas, if you make me fall out of this car, bitch, I will kill you," I promised as she giggled.

"I got you, boo. But you better hold on tight."

I was in Crescent Falls having the time of my life and clearly making piss poor decisions.

Saskia was about to do donuts in the parking lot that we were all congregated in, and I had the bright idea to sit my ass in the car window with my upper body outside of the car.

Sas drove at a snail's pace as I snaked my body through the opening and perched myself onto the car.

My heart pounded irately in my chest as she increased the speed a bit.

“You ready?” she yelled.

“Let me repent for my sins in case I die,” I closed my eyes and wondered if I had any sense at all.

Once again, Sas laughed before increasing her speed and whipping the car to the left and spinning on the asphalt.

“Fuccckkkk,” I squealed as my heart fell into my ass.

Spectators cheered as Sas stole the show.

She could whip her car with the best of them, and she loved it.

The turquoise vehicle with pink stripes gained her compliments wherever she went.

Sas loved her car, and she loved driving fast. Visions of my body flying out of the car and hitting the pavement flashed through my mind as the car fishtailed before she spun it into another donut.

If I didn’t die from being ejected from the car, I’d surely die from a heart attack.

Closing my eyes, I willed myself not to throw up.

I heard engines revving, and I knew other cars were about to join in on the fun.

Tire marks decorated the pavement, and the smell of burnt rubber infiltrated my nostrils.

Spectators had their phones out recording, and I knew too many people probably had me on camera looking a fool.

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“I’m coming back in!” I shouted, so she wouldn’t jerk the car in a crazy motion while I was moving. The dare devil move had lasted all of two minutes, and I was done. Sas slowed the car down, and I almost snapped my spine getting back inside the car.

“That was fun, wasn’t it?” she looked at me with a huge grin on her face.

“If staring death in the face is fun, then I had a blast,” I stated dramatically.

Crescent Falls had been an entire vibe so far.

I still had moments of thinking about Lucci and growing kind of sad but for the most part, I pushed him to the back of my mind and had fun.

Sas parked her car, and we got out of it, so we could watch one of the street races that was about to take place.

There were mostly cars out, but a few guys and even some females on motorcycles were present.

“You was whipping that car, Love, but I could show you a few tricks.” A fine ass, light-brown skinned guy standing around six feet even called out to Sas. He was standing with a man that was equally as fine as him. There were enough similarities that I gathered they had to be brothers.

Sas stopped walking to respond to him, and I felt his friend’s gaze penetrating me. “You got a joint too?” he asked making me look in his direction.

His eyes were the color of honey, and his skin tone almost resembled a shiny, new penny. Damn he was fine. His hair was in two thick French braids and his accent gave me Louisiana vibes. If he called me behbee (baby) I just might lose my shit.

“Yes. I’m the president of the car club. I drive the blue one.”

His eyes searched the parking lot until they landed on my car. Mr. Handsome nodded in approval. “Nice. Y’all not from here, right?”

“No. We’re from Diamond Cove.”

“Welcome to Crescent Falls. I’m Gutta.”

“Gutta?” my brows hiked. “Interesting.”

He smiled showing off gold grills on his bottom teeth. “Interesting as hell, but I can show you better than I can tell you. How long you in town for?”

“Until Sunday afternoon. We have to be out of the Airbnb by eleven. We’ll probably do brunch and head back home.”

“Take my number. Maybe you can hit me up tonight or tomorrow, and we can all kick it.”

I pulled my phone out to put his number in, but I knew I wasn’t going to call him.

He was fine and all, but I didn’t make the first move when it came to men.

Technically, him giving me his number could have been perceived as him making the first move, but I wasn’t going to call him first. Sas was exchanging numbers with his brother, so if we all ended up around one another it wouldn’t be from me making a

move.

“Girl they were too fine!” Sas exclaimed as we walked off. “Crescent Falls will be seeing more of me for sure.”

I smiled but didn’t say anything. Damson Idris could have asked for my number, and I still would have been somewhat sad.

It was crazy as hell when the heart wanted what the heart wanted.

I walked over to my car and sat in the driver’s seat.

Reaching over on the floor of the passenger side, I grabbed my bottle of 1942.

There was a Stanley cup in my cupholder that had ice in it.

I poured in a nice amount of tequila and a splash of sugar free Red Bull.

I couldn’t babysit grown people, but all of my car club members knew how I felt about drinking and racing.

They were not to do it and let me find out about it.

I wasn’t racing, and I was going to sip slowly, so I wouldn’t get fucked up.

I just wanted something to take the edge off, but I damn sure wasn’t trying to get a DUI.

Not only did I not want to lose my license for thirty days but as a real estate broker, I had an image to uphold.

I sipped my drink and watched everyone laugh, joke, and have fun.

Being around my girls and the cars soothed my soul and made me feel a little better.

Of course, the tequila helped as well. I became lost in people watching and sipping.

My phone rang, causing my gaze to shift downward to my lap.

My father was calling, and I assumed he wanted to see if I had made it safely because I forgot to text him when I arrived.

“Hey, daddy.”

So many people talked about deadbeat fathers and while it wasn’t okay for either parent to be absent, deadbeat mothers didn’t get talked about nearly enough.

My father was an amazing man, but the fact that he stepped in and raised me while my mother lived her life, and he never once complained, I loved that man with everything in me.

“Hey, baby. Did you make it to Crescent Falls?”

“Yeah. I’ve been here for about three hours. I’m sorry I didn’t text you when I got here.”

“It’s okay. Are you driving at the moment?”

His question made my mouth go dry. Something was wrong. “No, I’m not driving. I’m sitting in my car.”

I waited with a racing heart for him to tell me what was up.

“Your um, your mother was rushed to the ER complaining about pain in her arm and head. Turns out she had a blood clot. It traveled to her brain. She didn’t make it.”

Suddenly, the car engines and noise all around me sounded far away. It felt as if I was fading out. My mother was dead? There was silence for a few seconds before my father spoke.

“Are you okay, Breezy?”

I opened my mouth, but no words came out. I cleared my throat and tried again. “Yes, I’m fine. Thank you for telling me.”

“I’m here if you need me.”

“I know. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Ending the call, I sucked down the rest of the alcohol in my cup and stared into space. She was dead. My mother was dead, and I’d never know why she didn’t like me. I didn’t care to ask her while she was alive but knowing that she was dead...that shit hit different.

“Hey. You good boo?” Lauren came over with a look of concern etched on her face.

I continued to stare straight ahead. “My father just called me. My mother died.”

“Oh my God, Breezy. I’m so sorry. Do you need me to drive you back to Diamond Cove?”

I reached for the bottle of alcohol on my passenger seat. “Nope. I’m good. I’m about

to keep drinking and watch these races. I hope they fry some fish tonight. My ass is getting hungry.”

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LUCCI

Everybody around me was walking on eggshells.

Since getting shot, I hadn't been in the best mood, but the way Kiandra was crowding me was annoying as fuck.

Even when she irritated me in the past, being mean to her didn't feel right because she was so sweet and innocent.

I knew she meant well, but how many ways did a nigga have to tell her, I didn't want her?

It wasn't her job to be by my side and nurse me back to health.

If I voiced that, however, I'd be deemed the asshole.

From the moment she got to the hospital, Kiandra had been there every day.

When I was released, she insisted on being the one to take me home.

I was in bed, propped up on two pillows, watching Breezy have the time of her life in Crescent Falls while I was shot the fuck up.

Caring was some stupid shit to be doing, but I was doing it.

My annoyance with Kiandra started when she was all in my personal space at the

hospital and Breezy saw it.

When I came out of surgery, my parents, a few other family members, and Kiandra was there.

My mother had to get home and take her blood pressure medicine, and I had assured everyone that I would be fine. Everyone left except for Kiandra.

It was déjà vu all over again. I do dumb shit, get shot, and Kiandra stopped her entire life to nurse me back to health.

Had the bullet to my side been a few inches to the left, I'd be carrying around a shit bag.

I was still alive, however, and I still had the two mil.

Maino wasn't as lucky as me. He was still alive too, but his injuries were more complicated.

He got shot three times. In the groin, the knee, and the chest. The chest shot almost took him out.

Maino was in ICU for five days. Even though he made it out of ICU, he was still in the hospital.

He no longer needed the help of a ventilator to breathe, but too much physical activity or even talking too much left him breathless.

The moment he could talk, he apologized for bringing the robbery idea to me.

I told him he was my brother, and he never had to apologize to me.

He didn't make me do anything that I didn't want to do, but I'd never again in life take shit that didn't belong to me.

I was done robbing before I got shot, but being shot for the second time in my life and still living to tell the tale had to be a wake up call for my stupid ass.

There was a time or two that I wished I had died.

But I didn't. I was still alive. That had to mean something.

Tyler was gone, but I was still among the living. God had a sense of humor for sure.

Kiandra assumed the same person that shot her was the one that shot me.

I couldn't tell her the man that shot her was dead and that I'd robbed someone else and that was how Maino and I got shot.

I had to be a glutton for punishment, but I wasn't the only one.

Aside from being downright cruel to Kiandra, I didn't know how to get it through her head that we weren't it.

"You need anything before I take a shower?" she entered the bedroom, and I hadn't even realized that I was looking at my phone with a scowl on my face. "Something wrong?"

"Nah, I'm straight. Listen, you don't have to stay here with me. I'm good. Go home." My tone was gentle, but I knew her feelings would be hurt.

As I expected, her face fell. "It's your first day out of the hospital. Why do you want to be alone?"

“Because I don’t need a babysitter. I’m good.”

“Is it that you want somebody else here with you?”

I was so perturbed my lip twitched. It was taking everything in me to keep my cool.

Kiandra couldn’t love me that fucking much.

Not so much that she ignored the warnings of her parents and friends.

She listened to me tell her that I had love for her, but I wasn’t in love with her.

And she was still ten toes down for me. I for sure got the loyalty that I thought I wanted.

“I’m not answering that. I told you that you don’t have to stay here with me, and that’s what I mean. That’s the only explanation that I’m giving.”

Kiandra’s lips set into a hard line as she glared at me. After a brief stare off, she stood tall and looked me in the eyes. “Say no more. I’ll see myself out.”

I looked at the phone I was holding. Refreshing the page, I saw that Breezy had posted a video.

Shorty had a bottle of Don Julio in hand, and she was having a good time.

She did make the effort to check on me. I guess anything after that, she wasn’t obligated to do.

I couldn’t blame her for not sticking around despite her telling me that she’d wait for me.

Attempting to get out of bed to go to the bathroom had me wincing from the pain that radiated through my side the moment I turned my body.

“Two million fuckin’ dollars,” I mumbled.

Was it worth it? I wasn’t dead, I could walk, talk, and go to the bathroom on my own.

Maybe it was worth it because I was up two million.

The best part was, I found a house that I could buy for \$65,000.

I wouldn’t even have to touch any of the two mil in order to buy the house.

I would definitely have to dip into it for the renovations.

I had already estimated that I’d spend around \$70,000 renovating the bathroom, living room, and kitchen.

That included putting in new floors and windows.

If I could sell the house for \$300,000, that would be a nice profit.

The house could have easily gone for \$100,000 even with all the work that needed to be done.

The house had been vacant for three years.

A woman died, and her next of kin lived in Maryland.

He had no desire to move in the house or to pay anyone to keep it up.

The house sat unattended, and he was desperate to get rid of it.

When I told him I'd pay him cash, he jumped on the deal.

Maybe by the time I sold the house, I'd be in the headspace to get back in a real estate class.

Flipping houses was cool, but I wanted multiple streams of income.

I went to social media to try and find some DIY home improvement videos.

The more I could do meant the more money that I could save.

Before I could get to the search bar, I saw a flyer for an upcoming event.

The Five Hundred Families Gala. The Hellcat Barbies had a gala coming up in a few weeks.

The goal was to raise money to be able to help at least five hundred families during the holidays.

It was a black tie event, and from the flyer, it looked like it was going to be a classy event.

Clicking the link, I saw that tickets were \$100 each.

I didn't have a problem with paying especially if it was for a good cause.

The ticket price covered entry into the gala, food, and an open bar.

Inside the gala, there would be an auction where biddings would take place to raise

the funds.

I almost hit the button to purchase a ticket, but I decided against it. Maybe I would change my mind and grab one. Only time would tell.

The next day, my mother had just got done changing the sheets on my bed when I inched out of the bathroom.

A nigga was still walking slow, and I didn't like that.

But at least I could walk. My mother had vacuumed, swept and mopped floors, cleaned the bathrooms, and the kitchen.

She had my apartment smelling like pine sol and bleach, and I appreciated her for that.

With a sigh, I eased down onto the bed and positioned my back against two pillows.

"I made some pasta. You want a plate right now?"

"Right now, is good. Thank you."

My weed and alcohol detox had ended up lasting longer than I anticipated.

My appetite had been fluctuating. I was pretty much past the weed withdrawals, but with the pain I was in the first few days, I wasn't thinking about food.

When the pain medication was in my system, there were times that food made me nauseous.

But I knew I needed to eat. My body needed the nourishment.

My mother fixed my plate and brought it to me along with a glass of lemonade. When she sat down on the other side of the bed, I already knew a talk was coming. I was actually surprised that it hadn't happened before then.

"Lucci, you know I never said anything to you about not having a job. I knew you had to be getting money somehow, but I didn't want to know how.

I'm confident that no matter how much I would have said I wanted you out of the streets, you would have done what you wanted regardless.

But Lucci, baby, you don't keep getting shot for no reason.

What are you into, and please tell me that it's going to stop. "

I didn't have to look at her face to see the pain etched on it.

It was all in her voice. I couldn't imagine what she'd been going through.

Tyler's passing was still fresh, and then there was me getting almost murdered in broad daylight.

I couldn't keep acting as if I didn't know why these things were happening to me.

"I've robbed a few niggas in my life," I explained in a low tone. "The person that shot Kiandra, was someone that I robbed in the past. The person that shot me and Maino was someone that we robbed recently."

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I could feel my mother's gaze on me, but she didn't say anything.

For a minute or two, the room was eerily quiet.

Then, she got up off the bed and walked out of the room.

My mother was hardly ever speechless when she was upset.

She could curse with the best of them, and anybody could get it.

She wasn't mad. She was hurt and disappointed.

I was willing to bet that she was crying.

I hated that, but I was tired of lying. There was also no needed to lie when I didn't plan on stealing anymore. I was done with that shit.

I was tired from the effort that it took me to take a shower and brush my teeth, but I set my plate aside and eased out of bed.

I found my mother in the living room with her hands covering her face.

Sitting down on the couch, I watched the woman that gave birth to me as her shoulders bounced up and down while she cried silently.

"I'm done, ma. I swear to God. I decided a minute ago that this wasn't what I wanted anymore.

That's why I enrolled in the real estate class, but Tyler's death had me in a space where I couldn't concentrate on that.

I was smoking and drinking way too much, and my attitude was bad.

For a second, I got back on my grimy shit. And I paid the price."

Moments later, my mother uncovered her face and wiped her cheeks. "I've never told you what to do," she stared at the floor as she spoke. "Not since you've been grown. But if you have any kind of love for me, please stop doing this. Please."

"I'm done, ma. I promise. Before I got shot, I was looking for a house to buy, so I could flip it.

I don't have legal income, so I need pops to get it in his name for me, but the house is going to be a new start for me.

Watch. I'm going to even do some of the renovations myself and ask pops to help me.

Maybe I could do that three or four times a year. And get my real estate license."

My mother looked over at me, and I didn't miss the flicker of hope in her eyes. "That's a very good plan, Lucciano. I know your father would love to help you. You just made me feel so damn good," she pushed out a shaky breath.

I had been telling myself that I had to stop being reckless. Watching my mother made me realize that I had to stop being selfish too. We all had to go one day, but constantly talking about how I didn't care if I died was selfish as hell when I had two parents that had already lost a child.

"I noticed how Kiandra was around a lot when you were in the hospital? You back

together?”

“Nah. If she had it her way we would be. But I had to stop playing. That’s not what I want, and the longer I stayed the worse I made things.”

I could tell from the way my mother’s face scrunched that she was perplexed. “What do you mean? You and Kiandra had a good relationship. She’s so calm and peaceful. I thought everything was good with the two of you.”

“It depends on what you call good, ma. Kiandra is a wonderful person, and I knew she was what I needed. But she wasn’t what I wanted .

She fell in love with me, and I knew she’d be loyal.

She’s way different than a lot of females her age, and I knew I didn’t have to worry about anything.

I knew she’d never try to set me up, trap me with a baby, sleep with half the city.

I knew she was solid, and that she would be a great person to have on my team.

I felt that as long as we had mutual respect and trust that was all we needed because that was more important than being in love. ”

“And what did you learn?”

I ran a hand over my hair and sighed. “That, that was the dumbest shit I ever thought.” Chuckling, I rested my head on the couch.

“The deeper in love she fell with me, I just used to watch her and think about how she deserved better. I never mistreated her. But I never looked at her and thought about

spending the rest of my life with her. There was never a time that I was away from her that I couldn't wait to get back home to her.

Never, has the thought of her leaving me made my chest tight.

Lowkey, I used to hope that she'd leave me. That makes me a shit ass person, huh?"

My mother gave me a comforting smile. "It doesn't, baby.

I'm sure you know that not every relationship is based on love.

There are a lot of women that are married to and in love with men not because they have an amazing love story but because the situation is beneficial.

Society told them they would grow up and get married and have babies.

A lot of women want a provider and a comfortable life more than they want a storybook romance.

I can't judge and say if it's right or wrong.

I just know that sometimes the person that makes our heart beat a little faster and that sends our emotions into overdrive isn't the best person for us.

So, no you're not a shit person. What you did is more common than you think, but not everyone will admit it. "

I nodded my understanding.

"I also commend you because a lot of men would have treated her like shit to get her to leave them if they didn't have the guts to leave her.

One of the reasons that Kiandra loved you is because of how well you treated her.

Thank you for that. I'm sure her heart is broken, but at least it's not broken because you emotionally or physically abused her.

You didn't take her through hell cheating and lying on her. ”

Talking to my mother had actually made me feel a little better.

I still hated the fact that Kiandra was hurt.

I wanted her to wake up one day and get on her best City Girl bullshit.

I wanted her to get out, have fun, meet people, and come across a man that would be everything for her that I couldn't be.

Someone that she would mesh well with that her uppity ass parents would like.

Shit, maybe part of my punishment should be that I had to suffer alone.

No Breezy. No woman that made me feel things I'd never felt before.

Just keeping my head down, getting money, and staying out the way should have been the only things on my agenda.

Once thoughts of Breezy crept into my mental, however, it was hard to get them out. They would pass. They had to because me focusing on the wrong shit couldn't be tolerated. I was putting my foot on my own neck. My mother was on her best telepathic bullshit because she read my thoughts.

“Is there someone else that made you feel the things that Kiandra didn't?”

A light chuckle tore from my throat. She was on a roll with the questions. “There isn’t currently anyone else, but I had a few encounters with a person that made me see the light.”

My mother nodded. “I want you to have an amazing life, Lucci. You deserve that. Just take the time that you need and figure things out. It’ll all come together.”

I had no clue what the future held because most times, things only went well for so long before life turned into a shit show.

Too many times in the past, I played myself being happy that life was going good only for it to blow up in my face weeks later.

Life caught me off guard one too many times and knocked the grin off my face.

I learned way too early that having expectations for anything was the fastest way to become disappointed.

Maybe flipping houses wouldn’t work. Maybe I wouldn’t pass the real estate class or the exam. Maybe I wasn’t meant to be shit except a person that scammed, stole, and committed crimes. Only time would tell. The one thing I was certain of was that I was more focused than I’d ever been.

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brEEZY

All the drinking, partying, and numbing myself by focusing on cars that I did in Crescent Falls was the calm before the storm.

When I got back to Diamond Cove, it hit me that my mother was dead.

Like, she was dead for real. I never cared for the closure that people used to speak about.

She didn't want anything to do with me, and I didn't want anything to do with her.

I didn't ask to be born. There was nothing that I could have done to her to warrant her behavior towards me.

For that reason, I always felt I was good without an explanation.

But knowing that she was gone and never coming back hit different.

I wasn't sure if I was crying because she was dead or because I would never get answers, but I spent two days alternating between bawling my eyes out and sleeping.

My mind, body, and soul were exhausted. Initially, I refused to cry over Lucci.

'Cus fuck him. But I was almost certain that some of the tears that I shed on my mother's behalf had something to do with him also.

When my aunt texted me and asked if I was going to attend my mother's funeral, a simple no was all she got.

My pain was teetering on the edge of anger, and I was practically praying that someone would hit me with that 'she was still your mother line,' so I could give them the cursing out that I'd never be able to give her.

I was in bed, curled in a fetal position, staring at the wall when my doorbell rang.

I didn't even blink. I continued to lay there still as a statue until the person at the door pressed the bell again.

Kissing my teeth, I pushed the covers off my body aggressively and stomped toward the door.

When I realized who the person on the other side of the door was, my facial muscles relaxed.

"Hey, daddy," I opened the door for him. My tone was somber. There was no need to front for him. He knew me better than I knew myself. I didn't miss the fact that he had a large manila envelope in his hand.

"Hey, baby. How are you?"

I couldn't take the way he was peering at me, so I pivoted and walked over to the couch. I didn't want to get all deep. The heaviness that I was feeling was too much. I wanted to forget about it not talk about it.

"I guess that's a dumb question." He joined me on the couch.

"Why though? Why shouldn't I be okay? She didn't care about me, so why should I

care about her?”

“Breezy, you are a human with human emotions. There’s nothing wrong with that.

You don’t have to be like her. You’re you, and that’s what makes you amazing.

I’ve never tried to speak for your mother.

I wanted her to open her mouth and talk for herself.

I didn’t get that, but hopefully, she chose to rectify something.

I was instructed to give you this. Your aunt called me.

She went over to the house and got it. I’m assuming that it has something to do with money because she didn’t want your grandmother getting a hold of it. ”

I eyed the envelope that my father extended toward me. Curious about what was inside, I took it.

“Unless you need me, I’ll leave you alone to look at whatever it is.”

“I’m good. Thank you, daddy. I love you.”

He leaned down and hugged me tight before leaving.

My heart drummed in my chest as I stared at the envelope.

What could it be? My mother had literally never given me a thing.

Not a birthday card, birthday present, or even change for the ice cream truck.

I never needed for anything, but that wasn't the point.

Nothing. I could never recall one thing my mother gave me, and that was the reason I was pissed that I cried over her.

In my opinion, human or not, she didn't deserve my tears.

With a sigh, I opened the envelope and pulled the papers out that were stapled together.

My eyes darted over the words, and it only took a few seconds for it to register what it was.

A life insurance policy, and I was the sole beneficiary.

My jaw slacked at the amount. Five hundred and seventeen thousand dollars.

I eyed the amount over and over again. I couldn't believe it.

I read every single word typed on the five page document because what the hell?

There had to be some kind of mistake, but it wasn't.

My mother had taken the policy out on herself ten years ago.

That was enough money for me to get my house and fully decorate it with all new things.

I wasn't buying the house cash. Hell no.

I needed a cushion set aside for a rainy day, but I would put at least \$250,000 down

on the house and pay off my car.

I stopped myself from smiling. Was it wrong that I was excited?

I'd never want to benefit from someone's death, but she was gone, and she made me her beneficiary.

I was definitely shocked, but I refused to feel bad.

Her ass had finally given me something. Something that would help set me up in life.

The money that I was going to put down on my house would get me a lower mortgage than I'd anticipated.

I did pretty well on a monthly basis, so having a large safety net in the bank, no car payment for a while, and a mortgage that wasn't too much higher than the rent I was already paying would put me in a very good position.

I peeked inside the envelope to see if anything else was inside and it was.

A smaller white envelope was nestled at the bottom, and I pulled it out.

My name was written on the front in cursive.

Tears welled in my eyes as I realized, I'd never seen my mother's signature.

She had been alive and well for my entire life.

In the same city as me, and she'd never signed one report card or permission slip.

My sadness quickly turned into anger. Fuck feeling bad about being happy.

The moment that money was deposited in my account, I was going on a shopping spree.

I was going house shopping, furniture shopping, bag shopping.

Maybe get a nice lil' Chanel purse. I had been paying off all my debt in preparation for buying a house.

Credit cards with five figure limits were paid off.

I had the cash and the credit, and I was going to have a mother fucking ball. On her dime. I ripped the envelope open and pulled out a sheet of paper. Holding my breath, I took in the words.

Breezy,

If you're reading this, I'm probably dead.

Sounds like something they say in the movies, right.

Only in death could I have the courage for you to know the truth.

Every day of my life almost since the moment your father put me out, I was called a dead beat by someone.

Too many people knew I had a beautiful daughter that I left with her father, and I was shamed for it often.

I'm not complaining. I deserved it. I'm not putting anything in this letter to hurt you.

I just finally needed you to know my truth.

I never wanted children. I got pregnant at sixteen, and I didn't have to think twice about getting an abortion.

After the abortion, I began taking birth control.

I knew your father wanted a child, and he knew that I didn't want kids.

He threw my birth control pills away, and I made an appointment to get on the Depo shot.

Rather than me being smart and refusing to sleep with a man that I knew wanted a child, I gave in to him a few times because my appointment was two months away.

By the time I went, I couldn't get it because I had a positive pregnancy test.

I was crushed, and your father refused to give me money for an abortion.

I felt trapped, and I began to hate him.

It was nothing personal against you, but I felt I had the right to not want kids, if I didn't want kids.

I take responsibility for my part in it, however, because your father never raped me.

I had sex with him willingly. I was livid for the first month or so, but he began promising me that he would take care of me, and I wouldn't have to worry about anything.

I decided to give it a try. I swear I did.

I even got excited. But when you were born, all I saw was him free to do whatever he

wanted to do while I was stuck inside the house every day with a baby that I never wanted, and my resentment began to fester.

Not against you but him. When he told me to leave, I did so gladly.

I didn't feel I was wrong for leaving you because you were the child that he so desperately wanted.

I know I'm wrong. I know I wasn't shit. I probably traumatized you, and for that I am sorry.

I am so sorry. I just need to you to know that it was never ever your fault.

Lia.

I tossed the letter aside and cried like a baby releasing years of confusion, feelings of rejection, anger, and sadness.

All I ever wanted was to know why, and she had damn sure told me.

Now, did I shift the anger to my father for insisting she have a child that she didn't want?

I was tired. Freakin' exhausted. I didn't care to dwell on whatever it was that my parents had going on.

My mother was gone. She had never really been in my life and letting her death bother me was something I refused to do.

She didn't want a kid. She was never a mother.

Cool. There wasn't a thing I could do about it.

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My father knew she didn't want a child, and he insisted that she have me.

He was a great father, but him not making better choices about who he procreated with caused me a lifetime of heartache.

I didn't see the reasoning behind her keeping me to make my father happy only to ultimately neglect me and then get put out by my father and scar me in the process.

Life could have been worse though. That was the only way that I could look at it.

I grabbed my laptop so I could start looking for houses.

My mother wasn't shit to me in life, but at least she did her big one in death.

I cradled my phone between my ear and shoulder while sifting through the rack of shirts in front of me. "What color is your dress going to be? I think it'll be better if we coordinate."

My brows snapped together. "What dress?" I asked Gavin confused.

"Your dress for the gala. You already have a date?"

"Um, what if I did? How are you going to just ask me what color my dress is and say we need to coordinate, and you haven't even asked to accompany me?" I chuckled. I hadn't thought about a date for the gala. I didn't really need one if I was being honest.

"My bad. I guess it was just wishful thinking that you wouldn't want to go with

anyone else but me.”

I rolled my eyes upward. “Gavin.”

“I know. I know, Breezy. We’re just cool. You’re locked in and don’t have time for anything serious. I get it. Maybe that’s why I just assumed you didn’t have a lot of prospects lined up. If you’re busy and make time for me, maybe I felt you weren’t making time for other people.”

My lips turned downward into a frown. “Um okay. I guess.”

“So, will you be my date? I’ll buy my ticket right now.”

“Sure.” The chipper tone that I answered him in was fake as hell. I wasn’t sure why his request to be my date annoyed me. But it did.

I understood that Gavin was new in town and didn’t know a lot of people but no matter how many times I tried to explain to him that I wasn’t interested in dating on a serious level, he acted as if he didn’t get it.

Locked in meant focused on my goals. It didn’t mean ask me out multiple times a week.

There was nothing more frustrating than the man you wanted not applying pressure and the man you didn’t want applying too much pressure.

When you didn’t want a man consistency felt like harassment.

“Ticket purchased. So, what color is your dress?”

“I’m still trying to decide between an olive green one and a wine colored one. I’ll

know for sure by Friday. I need to make my mind up on the dress, so I can buy shoes and figure out how I want my hair.”

“Bet. As soon as you get it let me know which one you chose. I gotta match your fly.”

“I will be sure to let you know.” My irritation grew, and I concluded that maybe it wasn’t really Gavin. It was everything.

Refusing to let myself grieve my mother.

Refusing to sit around and think about how Lucci was doing.

I was forcing myself to be numb and strong.

Maybe suppressing those feelings was making me moody as hell, but in that moment, I just wanted Gavin to stop talking to me.

Gavin made me think about Lucci and Kiandra.

How he said he wasn’t in love with her, but he could trust her, and she was good for him.

I couldn’t imagine being in a relationship with Gavin and feeling like he wasn’t the love of my life or my soulmate.

However, he was a good guy, and he wouldn’t do me wrong, so I chose him. Or settled for him.

It was also frustrating when hints weren’t enough.

You kind of hoped that a person would catch a clue that you weren't really into them and remove themselves from the situation.

But I assumed it was common to put blinders on in certain situations.

Maybe time apart from her made him realize that he actually did love her.

The mere thought of that happening made my chest tight.

I became so lost in thoughts of Lucci and Kiandra that Gavin had to ask me a question three times before I comprehended what he was trying to say.

"My bad. I keep getting emails and text messages from clients," I lied. "Let me respond to everyone and then I'll call you back."

I hated being a liar, but I wouldn't be calling Gavin back.

I just needed some time and some space. My mother's wake and funeral were the following day, and I wasn't going to either one of them.

Certain members of her family had already tried to talk me into going, so I stopped answering phone calls from them.

I also refused to respond to text messages.

Trying to get me to go somewhere that I already said I didn't want to be was crazy.

I refused to entertain it any longer. They'd get the picture when they showed up and saw I wasn't there.

After getting off the phone with Gavin, I breathed a sigh of relief.

Once the gala was over, I was going to make it a point to spend less time with him.

I just wasn't into it, and I didn't want him to become attached to me.

If I couldn't have the man that I wanted, I didn't want anyone.

On the way to my car, thoughts of Lucci and the things he did to my body in the bedroom made my clit pulsate.

"Help me, Lord," I groaned.

The way that man dominated my thoughts were pure insanity.

What was even more insane was how my body reacted when I thought of him.

I'd never been with a man that I craved the way I desired Lucciano Culver.

He was like a drug. It had been way too long since I got a fix, and I was slowly losing it.

The man probably wasn't even capable of sexing me after being shot, but all I could think about was his masculine moans in my ear while he stroked me savagely.

I wanted to stare into his eyes as I rode his thick dick.

The friction between my clit and his skin causing an orgasm that rocked my core.

My face flushed as I exited the mall and walked into the parking lot.

I had been shopping in an effort to distract myself.

Of course, it would take the money from my mother's life insurance policy some time to be deposited into my account.

I didn't need her money to treat myself.

Initially, since buying a house was my goal, I'd been trying hard not to splurge.

Hoping that retail therapy would do me some good, I went against the grain and said fuck it.

I was going to get the house, so why did it matter if I treated myself or not?

Life was too damn short to be frugal all the time anyway.

One day, my mother was here seemingly healthy and the next, she was gone. Unexpectedly. Just gone.

Attempting to take my mind off Lucci, I drummed my fingernails on my steering wheel and tried to think about what would make me happy in the moment besides a thick, dark, veiny, dick. "Ice cream. Ice cream will make me happy," I mumbled.

Starting my car, I put the gear in reverse and started on my way to get a few scoops of temporary happiness. That seemed to be the theme for my happiness these days. Temporary.

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LUCCI

A nigga typically wasn't afraid of anything but walking up in the gala that Breezy's car club was hosting and looking stupid was one of them.

It had been a month since the last time I spoke to her.

After days in the hospital, a week and a half shut up in the house like a recluse, and handling business, I felt like a conversation was needed.

My mind was rested, and I was off to a good start with the things I had planned for the future.

I could have just called her. That was the first thought that entered my mind when I walked into the large space dressed in a tuxedo feeling like a sucka.

At home, I sat in my car for almost twenty minutes contemplating going back inside, taking my clothes off, and just shooting her a text message.

The moment I crossed the threshold into the room, a server dressed in a white shirt and black pants greeted me with a smile and offered a glass of champagne from the tray she was holding.

I hadn't smoked or drank any alcohol since the day I decided to do my detox, but the sobriety streak was going to be cut short.

I nodded my head at the server and took a big gulp of champagne.

When I surveyed the room and my eyes landed on Kiandra standing in a corner wearing a black gown sipping champagne, I emptied the rest of my glass.

I should have done what the hell I started to do and stayed home.

Kiandra didn't even drink, so the fact that she was drinking champagne, was the first red flag.

The second red flag was the fact that she was even there.

Kiandra wasn't a confrontational person.

And even if she didn't like the fact that I had a past thing with Breezy, it wasn't Breezy's fault.

So, why crash her event? There was no way she still wanted to be a part of The Hellcat Barbies.

Kiandra must have felt my eyes on her because her head lifted and even from across the room, I watched her entire body tense when she realized I was there.

We had a brief stare off before she caught a server passing by and switched her empty glass for a full one.

Champagne wasn't going to be enough for me, so I headed to the open bar.

My chest tightened when I thought about the fact that if Tyler was alive, he would have been right by my side.

Maino would have been too, if he wasn't healing from damn near dying.

I wasn't a stranger to loss, and I wanted to believe that if I could survive life without Tyler, I didn't give a damn about losing anyone else, but that wasn't true.

Life without Breezy didn't feel right. I had grown accustomed to her infectious smile.

That good ass pussy. Her soft voice. As I ambled toward the bar, I saw her.

Breezy looked delicious in a body hugging wine colored sequined gown that reached the floor but had a high split on one side.

She was standing in front of a nigga that I'd seen in her face one too many times.

His shoes matched her dress, and my teeth grinded at the revelation that he might be her date.

There were two bars. One on each side of the room.

There were three bartenders working each one.

The bar I'd chosen had four people ahead of me, but I wasn't in a rush.

Turning my back on Kiandra, Breezy, and ole boy, I waited patiently for my turn.

When the bartender asked me what I wanted, I requested rum and coke.

After he handed me the drink, I placed a five in the tip jar.

As I sipped my drink, I watched the crowd.

There had to be about seventy people in attendance.

The room was large, however, so there was still plenty of space for people to mingle and move around without being cramped.

I had never been to a real classy put together event where everyone was dressed up, and ninety-five percent of the people in attendance were black.

I always felt that Breezy's car club was dope but after I got to know her and saw how much they did for the community I gained a newfound respect for them.

My gaze landed back on Kiandra, and when I saw her stumble, all I could do was shake my head. She wasn't a drinker, and something was telling me the situation wasn't going to end well. I inched closer to her even though she was talking to a woman in a red gown.

"You good?" the woman implored, her brows dipped from concern.

"That's a good question," Kiandra giggled.

"I haven't really been good since my man of three years left me for no obvious reason.

Then, less than a month of us being apart, he was already infatuated with someone else.

Just tossed me to the side like yesterday's trash.

" Kiandra drained the champagne from the flute she was holding.

"And he's here tonight," she swayed a bit and chuckled.

"No matter how many times I've stood by his side, he still chose someone else over

me.

Now isn't that something? Do you think I'm good? "

Kiandra eyed the woman who wore a confused expression on her face like she really needed an answer. Her lips parted, but no words left her mouth. I stood in front of Kiandra but smiled at the woman.

"I got her from here."

She gave a slight nod and wasted no time getting away from Kiandra. "I think you need to let me take you home. How did you get here?"

"I drove. How do you think I got here? I saw you watching her. She's here with another man, and you still can't keep your eyes off her. What is it about her?" Kiandra's face crumpled, and my jaw muscles flexed. Next time something told my ass to stay home, that was what I was going to do.

I didn't answer, Kiandra, but when she reached for another glass of champagne, I gently grabbed her arm. "I think you've had enough."

Clumsily, she snatched away from me. "You are not my father, and I'm no longer your concern," she snapped before her face contorted. "Oh God, I think I'm going to be sick." She rushed from the room, and I followed her to make sure she was good.

Kiandra ran into the bathroom, and I leaned against the wall to wait with drink in hand.

When Breezy stepped out of the ballroom, my chest tightened.

"Is she okay?" she walked briskly toward me bringing an alluring scent with her.

My dick bricked up, and I hated that shit.

Fuck, it had been too long since I had sex, and Breezy was looking like she needed me to fold her up and stroke her like a man possessed.

“Had a little too much to drink,” I mumbled.

Breezy’s throat bounced as she swallowed hard. “I didn’t expect to see either one of you here.”

“I’m not sure why she came. Honestly, I’m not sure why I came.”

Breezy stared at me with an expression that I couldn’t read. I braced myself for the words that were about to fall off her lips. After a brief but awkward silence, she spoke. “I’m glad to see that you’re okay.”

“Why didn’t you come in the hospital room that day?”

“Because you clearly had company.”

“Company that I didn’t ask for.”

“Yet, you and her always seem to end up together.” Something that looked like pain flickered in her orbs.

Before I could respond, the bathroom door opened. “I think I need to go home,” Kiandra whined with throw up in her hair. When she noticed Breezy, she snorted. “I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“Kiandra, you don’t need to drive,” I called out as she walked off.

Pivoting, she looked at me with tears in her eyes. “She’s who you want to be with. Her. So be with her, Lucciano. I don’t want to be your charity project anymore. I bow out gracefully.” She turned to walk away, and she tripped.

I knew Kiandra was already in her feelings and adding embarrassment to that wouldn’t make it any better. I rushed to her side, and she stormed away from me. “Just leave me alone, Lucci.”

I understood she was upset, but I refused to let her drive.

With my drink still in hand, I followed Breezy to her car, took her keys from her as she sobbed, and got in the drivers’ seat.

She leaned her head against the window and thankfully, before we were out of the parking lot good, she was asleep.

Once again, Breezy had to witness me prioritize Kiandra over everything else.

I was proving her point without even trying.

Maybe that was simply my sign to leave well enough alone.

Never would I have imagined that breaking away from Kiandra would be so hard to do.

When I pulled up in front of her house, I almost dreaded waking her up. “Kiandra.” She didn’t budge. Raising my voice a little louder, I shook her arm. “Kiandra, wake up! You’re home.”

“Ummmmmm.” She moaned but didn’t open her eyes.

Gritting my teeth in effort to remain calm, I turned the ignition off and went to open her door.

I then walked back to the car and contemplated whether or not I wanted to pick her up knowing that it hadn't been a full month since I had surgery.

I didn't want to risk it, so I very lightly smacked her cheek.

"Kiandra, wake up, ma. You gotta walk in the house."

Her eyes opened, and she looked around bewildered. When her gaze landed on me, she frowned. "I have to throw up again."

Kiandra bolted from the car and into the house while I pulled my phone from my pocket to request a rideshare.

There was one ten minutes away, so I sat on the porch to wait.

I had done my due diligence and made sure she got home safely.

She better be able to handle it from there because I was done.

Being nice was what had my ass in the situation that I was in.

While I waited on my ride, I also made the decision to get my car from valet when I got back and take my black ass home.

My intentions were good with going to the gala, but I was over it already. Maybe it just wasn't meant to be.

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My mouth was watering for a blunt. When I made it back to the venue, the crowd was thinning out.

I gave my stub to the valet attendant and waited on my car.

Visions of Breezy in that dress made my dick brick up.

When her date appeared in the visions, I gritted my molars together.

Once I took the tux I was wearing off and changed clothes, it was a must that I head out and look for something to fuck.

If I didn't relieve some pressure soon, my head was going to pop off my shoulders.

At home, I removed the tux and put on some basketball shorts.

When I was done smoking, I'd get dressed to go out.

I just wanted to scoop something, get a hotel room, and fuck shorty's brains out.

It had been a lil' minute since I got a haircut, so I ran my hand back and forth over my thick coils as I pulled from the blunt.

The ringing of my doorbell made me frown.

Tyler was no more, and Maino still wasn't out and about.

So, if it wasn't my mom or dad at my door, there was going to be a problem.

Blowing weed smoke from my mouth, I checked to see who was on the other side of the door and almost choked on marijuana smoke when I saw Breezy.

I opened the door, and she stood there still dressed to the nines with a look of uncertainty on her face. "What's up?"

Breezy shifted her weight and cleared her throat. "Do you have a minute?"

I stepped back allowing her room to step over the threshold.

After I closed the door behind her she didn't make a move to sit down.

I attempted to wait patiently for her to say what she came to say, but she was taking too long.

Her scent. The way the dress she wore hugged her curves.

Being in her presence. It was all too much, and waiting any longer wasn't an option.

I closed the distance between us, cupped her chin with my free hand and tongued her down like a man home fresh off a double-digit bid.

I'd never enjoyed kissing the way I enjoyed slobbering Breezy down.

Our kiss was so deep and passionate that she moaned in my mouth.

Kiandra and Breezy weighed around the same thing. I wasn't willing to risk hurting myself to carry her from the car, but it was almost a reflex for me to pick Breezy up and carry her into my bedroom. With her legs wrapped around my waist, we kissed

all the way to the bed.

“If you want this dress you gotta take it off,” I warned Breezy. I wanted her bad enough to rip that pretty dress right off her body.

Breezy peeled her dress off while I pushed my shorts and boxer briefs down in one swift motion.

The moment she laid down, I wedged myself between her legs, lowered my body, and inhaled the scent of her peach.

I locked my hands around her thighs and pulled her nub into my mouth simultaneously. Breezy moaned as I sucked.

One thing I could always count on was for her to smell clean and taste sweet.

It was my turn to moan as she bucked against my face.

Writhing from the pleasure, Breezy pulled at her hair as I swiped my tongue down her center and grazed her asshole.

Her sticky essence was plentiful, and I lapped it up like a starved man.

I cleaned Breezy off with my tongue before hovering over her and allowing her to taste herself.

She cupped my face in her hands and devoured my lips.

Breezy sucked my tongue then my bottom lip.

“I missed you so much,” I confessed against her lips. My dick was throbbing so bad

that it hurt.

I pushed myself into her with force that I hoped didn't hurt her. Breezy clawed at my back and wrapped her legs around my waist. "I missed you so fucking much," I confessed again as I began sucking on her neck.

"I missed you too, baby," she panted.

Pulling back, I stared into Breezy's eyes.

Things I never cared to do with other women came naturally with her.

Kissing, oral sex, eye contact while fucking.

I intertwined my fingers with hers and held her hand while I fucked her with aggression.

I was marking my territory. I was done letting circumstances and other people keep me from Breezy.

"Turn over. I'm about to punish that ass for being at the gala with another man." I warned Breezy.

Breezy must have known that the pain would be coupled with pleasure because she didn't hesitate to get on her knees and toot that ass up in the air.

I eased back into her slowly, and we moaned in unison.

Increasing the pace of my strokes, I began to pump in and out of her faster and harder.

Breezy clawed at the sheets and alternated between whimpering and moaning as I fucked the taste out of her mouth.

“Lucci! Lucci, baby, oh my fucking gosh,” she squealed as her body convulsed, and her pussy spasmed on my dick.

“Fuck,” I grunted as I smacked her ass cheeks. “Where you want this nut?”

“In my mouth. I want to suck your dick so bad, baby. Let me taste it.” The way she was damn near begging almost put me in a trance. Even though the idea of head was amazing, it was hard for me to pull out of Breezy’s tight, moist center.

Finally, I snatched out her, and she whirled around and took me into her mouth. Grabbing a fistful of her pussy up do, I thrust my hips fucking her mouth. Breezy moaned greedily as saliva dripped off her chin.

“Do that shit,” I coached. “Do that fucking shit,” I damn near growled as my seeds shot from my dick and slid down her throat.

Breezy cleaned me up with a devilish grin on her face. Clearly. She enjoyed making my toes curl. I collapsed beside Breezy. A nigga was spent, and I just needed ten minutes to catch my breath.

“What made you stop by?” I asked. I almost didn’t want to know why she came. All couples had problems. No relationship was perfect, but I couldn’t help but to wonder if I should include Breezy in my chaotic world.

“I guess I just wanted to hear your voice. Make sure you were okay. Even if I felt like you didn’t deserve it.”

I chuckled. “Funny thing is, I haven’t done anything wrong. On any given day,

Kiandra is mad at me just like you are. Shit is wild.” I shook my head and stared up at the ceiling.

“Hey,” Breezy’s tone was soft. I looked over at her. “Women can be brats sometimes. I honestly admire the way you handle Kiandra.”

“That’s nice to know because she sure doesn’t,” I chuckled.

Breezy ran her thumb back and forth across my cheek. “We need to talk about something.”

“What’s up?” my brows furrowed.

“Why do you keep getting shot at Lucci? Talk to me.”

My eyes traveled back to the ceiling. “You already know I don’t get money the conventional way. My primary source of income over the past few years has been robbing niggas. Sometimes, that shit comes back to bite me.”

“Seems like a lot of times.” I could hear the fear lacing her tone.

“I’m done with that. Had plans to be done with it before I got shot.

I found a house, and I bought it. I’m going to renovate it and sell it.

I’m also giving real estate class another go.

I wasn’t playing when I used to say that Kiandra was too good for me.

But you’re no different than her. I felt like you were too good to get caught up in my bullshit.

That was one of the reasons that when you fell back from me, I left you alone. ”

“I’ve had to learn the hard way that leaving you alone sounds easier to do than it actually is. I probably set myself back further by coming here tonight.”

“Nah, you didn’t because I’m not letting you go this time.

Unless it’s a life or death situation, I can’t keep running to Kiandra.

She has feelings for me still, and she isn’t in the headspace where we can be cordial.

I’ll never just leave her for dead though.

Whatever I gotta do to get this right with you, that’s what I want. ”

The silence that followed was annoying as hell.

Despite Breezy being there in my bed, I had no way of knowing if she still felt the same.

Maybe she was past my shit and wanted one more round before she said to hell with me.

Breezy inched closer to me. She then straddled me and peered down into my face with a grin. “You sure you ready for all this?”

I tapped her ass cheek signaling her to lift her hips. When she did, I placed my dick at her opening, locked one arm around her waist and guided her down. “I can show you better than I can tell you.”

It had been two weeks since Breezy and I got back on good terms, and we had been

almost inseparable.

We both still handled business, but we were together every day.

She had officially placed me on pussy time out for at least three days because I hadn't been letting up off her, and she could barely walk.

I walked into the kitchen of the house I bought, and she was leaning over the counter placing a backsplash on the wall.

With a lick of my lips, I zeroed in on her behind as she concentrated on getting the alignment perfect.

I waited for her to finish before walking up behind her and placing my face in the crook of her neck. "This looks nice." The fact that Breezy was helping me out with the house was another bonus for me.

No matter how soft that shit made me feel, I enjoyed spending time with her.

I had been watching her closely because she shared with me the fact that her mother had died.

She also shared with me that she had cried, but I still felt like she was holding a lot in.

Or maybe she just chose to be sad in private.

I had great parents and couldn't relate to either one of them not being there.

It was possible that she wasn't that affected by her mother's death, or maybe she hadn't processed it yet.

“Don’t get mad at me when you get hard because you can’t get any today, tomorrow, or the day after that and if you try, I’m calling the police,” she giggled trying to ease out of my grasp.

“It’s too late for that.” I held her tighter. “Every time I see your face I get hard.”

“You gon’ let me finish this backsplash or nah?”

Kissing her neck, I loosened my grip on her and let her go. Pulling my arm all the way back, I smacked her left ass cheek as hard as I could making her squeal and jump.

“Bro, you’re an asshole.”

“I’m not your bro. I’m baby, bae, or daddy Lucci.”

“Whatever,” Breezy giggled.

I wanted to focus on one room at a time in the house.

The kitchen was pretty much done, so I had moved to the living room.

A guy by the name of Loyal was referred to me, and homie did excellent work.

He had replaced the cabinets and countertops in the kitchen and put in new windows.

My father and I painted and did the flooring.

Breezy was doing the backsplash in the kitchen, an accent wall in the bedroom, and cleaning for me.

I had ripped up the carpet in the living room and was currently painting.

Loyal was going to do the floors and the windows in the living room.

I could do a little something, but I was nowhere near as nice as him.

I had been watching him though. The goal was to save more money on each project by doing more things myself.

I worked until Breezy was done in the kitchen, then I locked up the house and we left.

“You want leftovers tonight, or we gonna grab something because I don’t feel like cooking?” she asked while pulling the seatbelt across her body.

“I’m good with the leftovers. I’ll stop and get you something if you want.”

“I’m in the mood for seafood.”

“Bet.”

Breezy ordered her food online, and I went to go pick it up.

At my crib, I took a shower, smoked, and then we sat in the living room watching a movie.

It felt good to be doing regular shit and not sitting back plotting thinking about when my next lick would be.

When we were done eating, Breezy went and got her notes and everything she needed to study.

I chuckled when she passed me my real estate textbook and my notebook.

“I’m going to quiz you on chapter one when I’m done studying. You can only miss one question. If you miss none or one, I’ll give you some head.”

“Say less,” I opened the book making her laugh.

My class didn’t start for another two weeks, but it wasn’t a bad idea to go ahead and start refreshing my memory on what I’d already learned.

By the time class started, I should have the first five chapters down pat at least. Nothing could make a person change their way of thinking like life’s experiences because if someone were to ask me now when it came to a woman if I chose loyalty or love, I’d tell them I wasn’t choosing.

If I couldn’t have both, then shorty wasn’t the woman for me.

brEEZY

I was finally able to rest my feet after running nonstop all day.

Watching the kids run around the park with a smile on my face made it all worth it.

The money from my mother's policy had been deposited into my account; I had put in an offer on the house that I wanted, and it was accepted.

I had a fine ass man that couldn't get enough of me, and life just felt right. I was fuckin' happy.

"This was a nice event." A familiar voice wafted into my ear. Looking over my shoulder, I saw Gavin walking toward me.

His words had been kind, but they didn't match the look in his eyes.

Gavin's eyes were glassy and the closer he got to me, I could smell alcohol fumes coming from his pores.

I frowned because I'd never seen him looking like that.

It was only six in the afternoon, but he was wasted. And at an event that was for kids.

"You good?" I asked as he glared at me.

"Yeah, I'm good." Gavin stood in front of me.

“The question is are you good? I know I know you busy and all that, but I’ve called you twice.

You be so hot and cold that shit is funny,” he chuckled.

“Ignore me for a week then let me spend money on you. Ignore me for two weeks then let me spend money on you. I’m a sucka or something? ”

My frown deepened. “Spend money on me? Is you cool?” I was genuinely confused. “You took me out to eat like twice.”

“And I spent money each time.” Gavin had the nerve to look me up and down.

“You can holla all that I’m locked in bullshit, but it doesn’t take much of your time to show a nigga some appreciation.

You can invite me over to the crib, cook for me, or just ask me how my day is going.

Y’all women swear there aren’t any good men out here but when you find one, you play in our faces. ”

Alcohol and whatever else he may have been on had Gavin on one.

He was being a little too aggressive for my liking, and I was ready to end the conversation.

He didn’t ever have to worry about me again.

“What’s your cash app? Zelle? I’ll send you your money back right now, and then you can go on about your business.

” I turned my head to look for my phone, and Gavin walked closer to me.

“I don’t want my money back. I want you to act like you do for those other niggas.” I wasn’t sure what other niggas he was talking about but when he grabbed my chin with his dry, rough, hand I shot up out of my chair and pushed him with everything I had in me.

Gavin was obviously drunk and the fact that my move caught him off guard and was forceful surely aided in him falling on his ass.

I was deep in the park away from a lot of the kids, but people still saw what happened.

Two of those people were Aubree and Lauren.

As Gavin scrambled to get up off the ground, I could see them rushing in our direction.

Despite being drunk, Gavin moved fast and got up before they reached us.

He lunged at me, and I picked the chair up and swung it at him.

Gavin didn’t fall that time, but he stumbled.

Aubree didn’t ask any questions. She jumped in front of him and maced the shit out of him.

Gavin screamed as more people began to look in our direction. I was pissed for a few reasons. The main one being that his antics were possibly going to overshadow the positivity of the event.

“Is this the guy you were with at the gala?” Lauren looked from me to Gavin as he growled and wiped his face with the tail of his shirt.

“Yes. He’s drunk and acting stupid. Grabbing all on me and shit,” I glowered watching him and hoping he went blind.

“Oh hell nah. I suggest you get in your car and leave before I call the police.”

“I can’t see; you stupid bitch,” he yelled.

My chest heaved up and down as I tried to clear my mind and think about how to handle the situation.

A slight sense of relief and a hint of fear washed over me when I saw Lucci and Maino walking my way.

Lucci would save the day, but I didn’t want him getting mixed up in any shit because of me.

He had already been shot on two separate occasions.

“What’s good?” he rushed toward me while looking over at Gavin.

“He showed up drunk out his mind mad and shit because he said he spent money on me, and I ignore him basically. He took me out to eat twice. I told him I’d give him the money back, and he grabbed my face. I pushed him, he fell, then he lunged at me. I hit him with a chair, and Aubree maced him.”

I damn near broke a few fingers grabbing Lucci as he made a move toward Gavin. “Baby, baby,” I begged. Restraining him was taking everything in me. “Baby, please. There are kids out here. And a lot of people. Please. If he leaves just drop it. I’m

good. I'm okay."

Lucci was practically foaming at the mouth as he grilled Gavin. Tears streamed down Gavin's face. Crying must have been helping his vision because when he saw that it was taking all the power, I possessed to keep Lucci off him, he got the hell out of dodge.

"See, he's leaving. I'm good. He's drunk, and I'm not worried about him. Me and my girls were going to beat his ass."

"Definitely the fuck was," Lauren co-signed.

Lucci glared at me with his jaw muscles flexing. I knew he was trying to calm himself down. I wrapped my arms around his waist and after a few minutes, his body relaxed, and his face softened. "That nigga was about to lose his teeth. On my mama."

"I know he was, but it's not necessary. I'm good."

Lucci and I had spent hours talking since making up.

I knew all about his past, and he knew about mine.

The times he'd been shot, the fact that he used to rob people, even the fact that he was sitting on two M's.

I knew it all, and I just wanted him safe.

I wanted him out of the streets and doing something productive with his life.

He was so smart, and Lucci had so much potential.

I refused to sit back and watch him not live up to it.

“I see you had a good turnout.” He looked around the park.

“Yes, it was really nice. I really enjoyed it.”

He wrapped his arms around me and pecked my lips. “I’m ready to enjoy you.”

“I’m ready to be enjoyed.”

We stood there wrapped in each other’s arms and peering into each other’s eyes like two crazy people until Maino spoke up.

“I’m gonna need y’all to get a room.”

We separated with a laugh, and Maino and Lucci got started on breaking tables down for us and helping us to prepare to leave the event. It had been a good day despite Gavin’s antics, and I refused to let his actions take away from how proud I was.

My mother’s birthday was the next day, and I had plans to put flowers on her grave.

I also planned to tell her that I forgave her.

Maybe I could just go ahead and tell her because her body was in the grave, but her soul wasn’t.

I could talk to my mother from anywhere.

Even if she didn’t want kids, the moment she made the decision to keep me, she should have chosen to be a good mother.

But she hadn't. Dwelling on it wasn't going to do anything except make my heart heavy.

So, I was going to release it. Forgive her, release it, and refuse to stress it ever again.

I had a few family members that were pissed because I got my mother's money and according to them, 'I didn't even like her. '

I assumed they wanted me to give them the money.

That was laughable. My mother left the money to the person that she wanted to have it.

The ones talking shit, I had never been close to anyway.

I didn't have time for fake family either.

I was happy. Life was good, and nothing was going to knock me off my square.

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Breezy

Four months later.....

I smiled as I pulled into a parking space in front of my office.

I had one more day until my doors were open to the public.

All of my classes had been completed, and I had the official title of Broker In Charge.

I had leased a building with five offices in it.

Once I got settled in the space, I was going to hire other realtors to work under me.

But the office beside mine was reserved for Lucciano Culver.

My man had taken the real estate exam and passed.

Not only did he pass but within two weeks of getting his license, he had three clients.

The first set being his parents. A trip to the casino had placed a few hundred thousand dollars in his father's pocket, and he chose to buy a house.

Grabbing my purse and a bottle of champagne, I exited my newly purchased BMW truck.

I had a client that was closing on her home in a few hours, and I was taking her a

bottle of champagne as a gift.

After unlocking the door, I pushed it open, and almost had a heart attack.

Standing in the center of the room was Lucci.

He was dressed in black jeans, a red Polo sweater, and black Timbs.

He wasn't alone. My father, his parents, Maino, and majority of The Hellcat Barbies were present.

My eyes darted around the room. Vases of roses, bottles of champagne... What the hell was going on? It was a random Tuesday afternoon. "What is this?" I asked with a racing heart.

Looking so good that I wanted to take him down right there, Lucci stepped forward and maintained eye contact as he eased something from his pocket and got down on one knee. My eyes widened and my heart almost jumped out of my chest as he lifted the lid of the small black box in his hand.

"I love you, and I want you to be Mrs. Culver. No need for long speeches because I tell you every day how I feel. Will you marry me?"

"Yes," I squealed as my eyes filled with tears. I wasn't sure how he pulled it off, but I was truly surprised. The fact that my father was there was everything to me.

Our friends and family cheered as Lucci slid a huge, pear-shaped rock onto my finger. I was in awe. He was in the process of selling his first investment property and already looking for a second one. Life had been looking really good for the both of us.

Lucci stood up, and I tongued him down not caring who was looking. "I love you," I

assured him.

“I know you do. Funny story,” he chuckled. “I was at the florist getting flowers, and I saw Kiandra. And her new man. She has a white guy.”

My jaw slacked. “For real?”

Lucci chuckled. “Yeap. They were holding hands coming out of a bakery. Shorty looked real happy. And that shit made me happy.”

“I know it did.” Lucci really cared about Kiandra’s feelings even if she felt he didn’t.

“Did she see you?”

“Yeap. She spoke and introduced me to her man.”

“Wowwww.”

“I know right. But fuck all that. I know you’re busy and all, but I need you to set a date and start planning this wedding. The moment it’s over, I’m shooting the club up every night until you have my big-headed ass baby in your womb. That cool with you?”

“That’s more than cool with me. Go ahead and start saving for my push gift now because I want something big.”

“Say less.”

The end!