



ATOMIC  
REDEMPTION

NEK MILLS

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# **A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR**

Before reading this book, please make sure you're familiar with Khalil 'Loon' Simmons.

He was introduced in Scars Of A Toxic N\*gga and this story picks up immediately where that one left off.

This book will make you laugh and might even make you shed a tear. In the world of Nek Mills, you never know what you will get. Just know I'm going to take you on a ride and you will enjoy it.

Thank you all so much for rocking with me!

# CHAPTER

# ONE

KHALIL “LOON” SIMMONS

**November 2022**

*Pow!*

“Oh my gosh!” Mia wailed as she jumped. “Are you fucking crazy? You could’ve shot me!”

“Back your ass up then.” Bino scowled as he kept the gun aimed at the ground. “He told you not to come near him, and your sneaky pussy ass was trying to do it anyway. You better be glad I shot the ground and not those corn husks you call feet.”

Unintentionally, I looked down at her feet as I held on to my son. I frowned because in the years we were together, her toes never looked this bad. Baby girl looked as if she’s been kicking cinderblocks or some shit.

“Khalil, are you going to let him talk to me like this?” She turned her nose up as she faced me. “I’m the mother of your child and—”

“Bitch you ain’t shit to me!” I yelled louder than I should have. KJ was still in my arms and grabbed my neck tighter at my outburst. Being as though I was still clutching my pistol, I handed it to Bino so I wouldn’t scare him any more than I already have. “I’m sorry, man.” I rubbed his back soothingly. “You okay?”

“I’m hungry,” he whined and caused us all to chuckle. “Do you have noodles?”

“Noodles?” I drew my head back and smirked as I tussled his curls. “What kind of noodles, man?”

“With cheese, Dada!” he exclaimed as he wiggled out of my arms. “Gotsta have the noodles and cheese.”

“Are you talking about macaroni and cheese, baby?” My mother came and squatted beside us. KJ looked at her skeptically as she held out her hand to him. Looking at Mia, who had yet to take her eyes off Bino, my mother reiterated her question. “Is that what he means?”

“Y-yes,” she stammered and brought her eyes to mama. “He loves it.”

“Well,” mama looked back to his curious eyes. “Nana makes the best you’ve ever had. Come on, sweetie.” She held her hand out to him, but KJ was hesitant about taking it. He looked from my mother to me before he wrapped his small hand around hers. “Jake,” she glanced at my cousin, “I’m trusting you to not let Khalil do anything crazy.” She looked down at Kaine for a moment and shook her head. “Get up and come inside.” She looked to the ladies and smiled, “Join me for lunch, girls.”

“You stay, Dada?” KJ turned and asked as they walked away. His sad eyes almost broke a nigga down. So badly did I want to tell mama to forget the damn food and scoop him back up in my arms. It’s crazy how less than ten minutes ago, I just learned I was a father and now I didn’t want him out of my sight.

“I’ll be right here, man.”

“K!” He gave me a toothy smile before allowing my mother to take him to the food tent. I watched them for a few moments before I gave my attention back to my bitch ass brother and scandalous baby mama.

“I should kill both of you right fuckin’ now,” I gritted as I stepped closer to Mia. “How in the fuck do you have my whole kid and not let a nigga know? He’s almost three fuckin’ years old!” I bellowed.

Unable to help myself, I grabbed Mia by the neck and tried to choke the life out of her. She scratched and clawed at my hands as she struggled to breathe. Watching the life leave her

eyes caused my dick to swell, and I was pissed when my father came over to interrupt.

“Son, let her go,” he pleaded as he tried to pry my hands from her throat. He struggled as he looked to Jake and Bino. “Y’all niggas help me.”

“No can do, Unk,” Bino whistled as he shook his head. “Personally, I hope the bitch passes out and falls face-first into an ant bed. Send that hoe to hell, cuz.”

“Jake,” my father begged. “Grab this nigga or something. He’s going to kill her.”

“Unk, this is one time I agree with Bino.” He shook his head as if in disbelief at what he said. “Fuck Mia.”

“Khalil,” Mia’s attempt to free herself was slowing down as my grip got tighter. “Please.”

“Fuck you—”

“Hey,” I felt a soft voice come from behind me as she placed her hand on my shoulder. “I don’t mean to pry but don’t do this. Not here, not in front of your son.”

Glancing over my shoulder, I laid eyes on Lucky’s sympathetic ones. Even in this moment, I couldn’t deny how beautiful she was. Losing myself in her stare, the grip I had on Mia’s neck loosened and caused her to fall to the ground. She coughed uncontrollably and tried to gather herself as best as she could. She’d better stay down there and kiss Lucky’s feet if she knew like me.

“Who the fuck is this?” Mia stood and wheezed as she caught her breath. “Are you fucking her or something?”

“Girl, you are worried about the wrong shit.” Lucky frowned as she looked her over. “I just saved your hot pussy ass life, and you’re worried about if I’m giving mine to him?” She shook her head as she looked down at Kaine, who was trying his hardest to get up from the ground. “Shouldn’t you be more worried about this half-dead looking one right here?”

“Say, Loon,” Jake interrupted before Mia could start her shit. She had that look in her eyes, and I knew it was coming.



“I know you want nothing more than to kill them both, but she’s right,” he pointed to Lucky, who was in an intense stare-off with Mia. “You need to go over there and get to know your kid. Anything else can wait.”

“No.” Mia shook her head profusely. “I’m getting my son, and we are leaving! It was a mistake coming here.”

“If you feel like you can take him away from a grandmother who went almost three years without seeing him, go ahead.” I smirked as I folded my arms and looked her over. Mia looked like shit now that I’ve taken a good look at her. “Not to mention, I have a Glock .19 that will stop you before you even take a step in their direction. Matter of fact,” I glared over at Kaine, who was now on his feet. He held his side in pain as he looked at me as menacingly as he could, “Get your nigga and get the fuck on. When I want you to see KJ, I’ll give you a call.”

“Nigga, this is my mama’s shit,” Kaine gritted. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“You are.” Bino upped his Glock in Kaine’s direction. “Take your hoe and get the fuck on while you’re still able to do it willingly. You’re his brother, not mine. I will blow your fuckin’ head off your shoulders nigga.”

As bad as I wanted to beat his ass and send him and his bitch to hell, Luck and Jake were right. This wasn’t the time or the place to do what I really wanted, which was to kill them. I couldn’t do it in front of my mother and certainly not in front of my son.

“Come on, Khalil.” Luck nudged me. “Your mother threatened to beat my ass if I didn’t eat, and I don’t want any problems with her.”

“Go ahead, son.” My father patted my back. “I will make sure they leave, and I will get Mia’s information. At the end of the day, KJ is still her son, and you guys will need to talk.”

I looked at Mia and Kaine once more before I reluctantly walked away. I knew that sooner or later, I would have to sit

and have a talk with them both, but the longer I stayed in their presence, the more I was inclined to gut them.

“What are you doing here anyway, shorty?” I asked Lucky as we made our way over to the patio where the others were seated. “Your pussy is good as a muhfucka, but not enough for you to be poppin’ up at a nigga’s house.”

“Kira is my cousin, and she invited me,” she spoke as she placed her hand on my arm to stop my movements. “I could leave if you’d like. Plus, this makes me a little uncomfortable. For what it’s worth, I didn’t know this was your mother’s house until she introduced herself to me. I already feel bad about imposing on an intimate moment.”

“Luck.” I chuckled as I hovered over her. “You beat my ass in a bathroom at a restaurant and fucked the shit out of me with no shame. That was before leaving me alone in a hotel room with forty dollars on the dresser like I was a worthless prostitute. Not only that,” I held my hand up to stop her from speaking, “you fucked the shit out of me in the backseat of my truck in front of another woman and left me after saying to act like I don’t know you if I ran across you again. But this,” I motioned around the backyard and noticed my mother’s eyes on us, “makes you uncomfortable? Would you feel better if I took you in the bathroom and fucked the shit out of you?”

I bit my lip as my eyes roamed her body.

“I really don’t mind.” Grabbing her by the waist, I pulled her closer to me as I whispered in her ear, “I miss the way that pussy grips the fuck out of my dick, anyway. Say the word, and I’ll take you inside and drill the fuck out of you while you spit up all over a nigga. What do you want to do?”

“I-I want you—”

“Khalil, unhand this girl and go over there and get to know your son.” Ma came over to us with her cock blocking ass. “Plus, Bino tells me this is the young lady that whooped your tail and robbed you at the wing spot.” Luck’s face, draining its color, was comical as hell. “Come on, baby, and tell us how my son had you fucked up.”

Shaking my head, I followed behind my mother as she looped her arms in Luck's as we made our way to where the others were gathered. I took a chance and glanced behind me and was relieved to know Kaine and Mia were gone. I don't know how I would handle the situation, but now that I have my son in my life, I have to be careful with how I move. Regardless, they were going to pay for the shit they did to me. Instead of worrying about that, I pulled a seat up beside my boy, my son, and listened to him go on and on about how his new nana made the best noodles and cheese he's ever had in his life.

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*The alleged father cannot be excluded as the biological father of the child. Based on the analysis, the probability of paternity is 99.99999999%.*

I slowly blinked as I held the DNA test results in my hands. It's been two weeks since Mia showed up at my mother's house, claiming that KJ was my son. Yes, he resembled my father and me, but I had to be sure before I became too attached. Knowing that KJ is my son swells my heart and breaks it all at the same time. While I'm happy as hell that he is mine, I'm also enraged at the fact that I missed over two years of his life.

"Khalil, I have been calling your name for five minutes. Are you okay, son?"

I looked over my shoulder as my mother entered the kitchen. Since the day of my party, KJ and I have been crashing with my mother. She didn't want him out of her sight, and neither did I. Plus, with all the women I deal with knowing where I lay my head, I didn't want to chance any of them popping up on me while he was there. So, this is the only sensible place at the moment.

"I'm good, mama." I stood from my spot at the kitchen table. "The results came in. Here." I handed her the piece of paper and watched her closely.

Mama initially felt a way when I told her I wanted a DNA test. She had grown attached to my son just like me and would

have been just as crushed if KJ hadn't been my son. Yeah, it would still have been possible for him to be her grandson through Kaine, but she knows that would cause even more confusion with me and that nigga.

"How does this make you feel, baby?" she asked as she placed the paper on the island beside me. "Where do we go from here?"

"I'm going to do what it takes to make sure my boy has the best life possible." I shrugged as I went to the refrigerator to get a bottle of water. "He will never grow up not knowing what it feels like not to have his father around."

I haven't spoken to Ceaser since the day of the barbecue. With everything that went down, I wasn't in the headspace to talk to him either. That's another conversation that needs to be added to the list. I made a mental note to hit that nigga up so we can get that out the way.

"Have you spoken to Mia or Kaine?" My mother snapped me from my thoughts. "I'm not trying to rush you or anything, but you guys need to have a conversation. I haven't seen Kaine since the day you guys fought, and that's the same amount of time Mia has seen KJ. She needs to be able to access her child, Khalil."

"I know, mama." I grabbed my keys from the counter. It was damn near noon, and I had a few moves to make. "Do you mind watching KJ for a minute? I need to go holler at Jake and Bino. I won't be gone long."

"Boy, get the hell out of here." She waved me off as she followed me to the front door. Once we approached, we both whistled at the brisk air. The weather in Willow Springs was crazy as hell these days, and today it was sunny but cool as fuck. "You know I don't mind keeping him. Just be safe."

Kissing her on the cheek, I jogged down the steps and made my way back to my truck. As I waited for the oil to flow, I scrolled through my phone to see if I'd missed any messages. I kissed my teeth at the number of times Alicia, Allison, and even Persia called my phone. I kind of fell back from them when I found out about KJ. It wasn't intentional. I just wanted

to focus all of my time on him. Deciding not to respond to any of them, I pulled out of the driveway and made my way through town toward our trap spot.

As I made my way through the city, I chuckled as I looked at the workers setting up once again for the holidays. I don't know what exactly God was trying to tell a nigga, but the most fucked up shit happens to me this time of year. From having my brother run off with my bitch to those same two muhfuckas popping up years later with my kid in tow, the holidays have not been that good to me. I will admit that finding out I have a son has been a major adjustment, but I love his little ass more than life already. Lost in the thoughts of my son and how much my life has changed in such a short period of time, I almost missed my incoming call.

"Who is this?" I answered as I looked at the unknown numbers on the dash.

"Is that how you answer the phone for me?" Mia's sensual voice flowed through my speakers. There was a time when my dick would jump at the sound, but now it was taking everything in me not to throw the fuck up. "Where are you?"

"Girl, why in the fuck are you calling my phone?" I frowned as I pulled into the yard of our trap house. It was the first of the month, so the spot was definitely jumping today. "Calling and questioning me like I still won't put two in your chest and in your head. What the fuck do you want?"

"Khalil, I'm sorry, okay?" she cried through my speakers. I felt like a bitch at the way my eyes were rolling. "I made a mistake, and I'm sorry. You can't be mad at me forever. We have a son to raise."

"True," I said as I exited the car.

I threw my head up at a couple of people who were hanging in the streets. The neighborhood was still quiet and decent for the most part, and I appreciated that.

"We do have a son to raise, and that's where it ends with us. I don't give a fuck about any of that other shit you're talking about." I pulled the rolled blunt from behind my ear

and lit it before entering the spot. “Say what you got to say. I got shit to do.”

“It’s been two weeks since I’ve seen my son, and I want him back!” she yelled through the phone. “Yes, I know I was wrong for keeping him from you for two years. I’ve let you have your time, but he needs to come back home where he belongs.”

“And where is that?” I leaned against the banister. “You think you’re about to go back to playing house with my baby and bitch ass brother?”

“Khalil, get over it! The three of us are a family!” she angrily gritted. “You should be happy that I even let KJ know who his real father is.”

“You know what?” I angrily chuckled. “I’ll call you back and let you know when and where to meet me with KJ.”

Without waiting for a response, I disconnected the call. Fuck that bitch and the shit she was talking about. It would be the coldest day in the pits of hell before I let her and Kaine lay up with my baby ever again, and I mean that shit.

“The fuck you out here huffing and puffing about nigga?” Bino asked as he brought his lanky ass on the porch with me. “Who pissed you off?”

“Man, Mia got me fucked up.” I inhaled from the blunt and held the smoke in my lungs for as long as possible before I exhaled. “Talking about getting KJ and shit. I’ll kill that bitch first.”

“We can fa’sho make that happen.” He nodded as he grabbed the blunt from me. “Have you talked to Kaine?”

“Nah.” I shook my head as I looked out over the yard. “I’m going to get KJ and myself situated at the condo first. I ain’t with that nigga coming to the house with us laying our head there.”

“I feel you on that. Just know me and Jake got your back, man.” He held out his hand to me, and when I accepted, he pulled me into a brotherly hug. “Regardless of how shit started

with us, we're family. You need to have that conversation with Unk, too."

"Yeah, man, I know." We detached and took a seat in the chairs on the porch. "I'm going to holler at him this week and see what's up with him—"

*Skurrrr!*

Bino and I both jumped from our seats with our guns by our sides as an old-school, blacked-out Chevy Caprice came speeding down the street. Before we knew what was happening, we were in a shootout in broad daylight, and we didn't even know who the nigga was.

*Pop! Pop!*

"Oh shit," I hissed as a bullet pierced my shoulder.

I continued aiming and shooting at the unknown vehicle, which wasn't letting up. By now, Jake was on the porch, blasting with us. Bino jumped from the stairs and dodged fire as best he could as he shot out the back window. With that, they sped off, but we continued shooting in their direction.

"Man, who the fuck was that?" Jake asked as he turned to me. "Say nigga, your shoulder is bleeding like hell."

"That tends to happen when you get shot nigga," I griped as I held my arm. I was losing blood pretty fast, and my arm felt as if it was falling off. "I got to get this shit wrapped up."

"Come on." He gestured toward his ride. "Kira is at home, and she will get you right."

"I will shut down shop for the day," Bino chimed in as he made his way back toward the house. "Twelve will be here in a minute, and I want no part of that shit."

He made plans to meet us when he had everything here situated, and all I could do was nod to let him know I understood. My arm was burning like a bitch, and I was losing consciousness. Thankfully, Jake drove with urgency, and being that the house wasn't that far from the trap, we arrived in no time.

“Come on, nigga.” Jake shook me slightly. I couldn’t help but groan at the sudden movement. “Kira is in there waiting for us.”

A little lightheaded, I walked up the driveway as best as possible. Making it inside, I stumbled to the living room couch and made a mental note to replace any furniture I had ruined with the blood that was dripping profusely from my body. Dropping to the couch, I threw my head back and tried to take my mind off the pain that was coursing inside me. Closing my eyes and allowing darkness to take over, I felt the couch dip on each side of me as a small body straddled mine. I popped my eyes open because I knew damn well this couldn’t be Kira.

“What the fuck—”

“Shut up and be still, nigga.” Lucky smirked as she held up what I assumed were supplies to get me cleaned up. “I just knew I would have been the one shooting you after our first encounter. Here.” She handed me a pill bottle. Examining it, I realized it was pain medication, so I popped them with the quickness.

“Lucky, get your crazy ass on, man,” I groaned, and I don’t know if it was from the pain in my shoulder or from her waking my dick with the squirming she was doing in her little ass tights. “This shit already feels as if it’s about to fall off.”

“Well, I can’t do any worse, huh?” She smirked as I watched her pour alcohol all over the tweezers. She lifted me slightly so she could tear the sleeve from my blood-soaked shirt. “This might hurt, so try not to move.”

Before I could respond, she laid me back on the sofa and poured alcohol all over my right shoulder. I howled in pain because it was for sure the worst I’d ever felt in my life. I watched intently as she cleaned my wound as gently as she could. The girl was beautiful, although she was crazy as hell.

“Shit, girl,” I hissed as she dug into my arm and removed the bullet. “How do you even know how to do this shit?”

“I spent a lot of time in the hood when I was younger, and I would help the fellas a time or two for a quick fix. There, it’s



out.” She showed me the bloody metal before dropping it in a bowl beside her. “You need to be careful in the streets, Khalil. They don’t love anyone, and you have a son to look after.” She glanced at me quickly. “I’m almost done.”

Once the bullet was removed, the rest was a breeze. Lucky took her time to ensure she cleaned thoroughly, and I was impressed. I was feeling good from the pills she gave me, and I wanted nothing more than to relax and let the euphoric feeling take over my body.

“Aye,” I slurred as I grabbed her by the waist. She was done patching me up and trying to remove herself from my lap. I was in pain, but not just from my shoulder. Baby girl had my dick on brick. “Let me eat your pussy as a thank you.”

“Maybe some other time.” She giggled as she removed herself from my hold. Looking down at the tent on my joggers, she pulled her bottom lip into her mouth and nibbled slowly. “As tempting as that sounds, I have someplace to be.”

“Can you at least tell me your name?” I laid completely flat and adjusted my dick as I got comfortable. Sleep was about to hit a nigga, and this couch was as far as I was going to make it. “Let a nigga know who I’m going to be sniffing after when I leave here.”

Gathering the items that she brought into the living room, she made her way back over to the couch. As she hovered over me, I peered up at her pretty brown eyes through my hooded ones. I was fading fast.

“Devyn.” She leaned over and whispered into my ear. “Don’t come sniffing for me, Khalil. Another shot of this pussy might cause you to overdose. Leave well enough alone because once you become a fiend of what’s between these thighs, your life will never be the same.” She licked my earlobe and raised up with a seductive grin plastered across her face.

I couldn’t move as I watched her ass jiggle as she made her way out of the living room. As I closed my eyes, my last thoughts were not on the nigga that shot me but on how I was

coming for Devyn. I don't exactly know where I wanted to put her, but I had to add her to my team by any fuckin' means.

# CHAPTER

## TWO

DEVYN “LUCKY” WALKER

“WELCOME TO SOUL PIES.” I adjusted my baker’s hat and smiled as my next set of customers arrived. “How can I help you all today?”

“Hey, sweetie,” I was greeted in return.

My smile became a little brighter when I noticed it was Khalil’s mama.

“This one here can’t seem to let me rest without wanting to come for cupcakes.” She gestured toward her grandson, who was now shyly hiding behind her legs. “I was wondering if I could get half a dozen crème cheese cupcakes with sprinkles added,” she requested.

“Absolutely. I will be just a second.” I winked at KJ and went to box up their order.

They’ve come in several times over the past couple of weeks, so I already knew what they wanted. Every single time, KJ would give me the same bashful smile. I would always give him a little something extra just for being as cute as he is.

“Here you go, Bubba.” I smiled and kneeled as I handed him the box of treats.

He looked from me to his grandmother before he stepped forward and grabbed it.

Leaning forward, I whispered in KJ’s ear where only he could hear me. “I put a little some extra in there because you’re sweeter than any treat in here.” I stood back to my full height and tussled his kinky little curls. That granted me the cutest and brightest smile he’s ever given me.

“What do you say, baby?” His grandmother glanced down at him.

“Thank you, Debin!”

I laughed as he butchered my name because no matter how many times he’s told how to pronounce it, he says what he wants to.

I returned to the counter and rang up their treats as I listened to him sweet talk his Nana into letting him have ‘shicken nuggets’ for dinner. After bidding them farewell until the next time, I flipped my store sign to close and began my daily routine before shutting down for the evening. Looking around, I sighed heavily at the scene around me.

I’ve loved sweets since a young girl and getting my first Easy Bake oven. I grew up with only my father, who taught me everything I didn’t teach myself. When I told him I wanted to be a professional baker, he didn’t ask me questions when I decided I wanted to attend culinary school after college. Once finished, I took the graduation money he gave me and put the down payment on a cute business suite here in downtown Willow Springs. Although business is good, it’s not enough to pay the bills.

“You’ve got this, Devyn,” I murmured as I wiped down my counters. “Stop stressing and count your blessings. It’s going to work out.”

I was in the middle of giving myself a much-needed pep talk when the door chimed. Leave it to me not to lock it, knowing I was about to get ready and leave. Lifting my head to let the customer know I was closed, I stopped myself and slightly frowned when I noticed it was my on-again, off-again situation; Montel. I wanted to throw apple custards at his head because he swaggered in here like he knew he was a fine ass nigga. Unfortunately, he was.

Montel and I met through my best friend, and I’ve been cussing her out since. Granted, she didn’t make me give him the pussy, but shit, she knew as fine as he was, it would be hard not to. Don’t get me wrong, Montel is a good guy, but he isn’t the one for me. Being in love and the things that come

from it is a liability, and I'd rather not put myself in those types of situations.

“What are you doing here, Monty?” I wiped the sweat from my forehead. “I'm closed, and if you want to order something, you will have to come back on Monday.”

“I'm good, baby.” He chuckled as he walked my way and leaned over the counter. “I'd rather eat your fine ass instead. I came to see why you've been ducking and dodging a nigga. It's been two weeks. What's up?”

Sighing heavily, I folded my arms and matched his stare. On the outside, this man was perfect — blemish-free mahogany-colored skin, light brown eyes, and the juiciest pink lips that have given me some of the best orgasms I've ever experienced. His body had a muscular build, and he was sculpted by God himself. He was well put together and even had a decent job in sales. The thing is, I wasn't interested in being anything more than what we are.

“Monty, I've told you that I'm not in the running for anything serious right now.” I rolled my eyes and continued cleaning. “You want something that I am not willing to give you. We have fun together. Why ruin that with titles?”

“Dee, come on man,” he began to whine as he followed me around the shop. This is another reason I don't want his ass. “You know how a nigga feels about you, and you can't lie and say you don't feel the same.”

“Oh, it's not a lie, love.” I chuckled as I removed my apron and hung it on the coat rack. “You're a good guy, and the dick is even better, but that's where it ends with me, boo.” I turned to face him, and the look on his expression was the one of a man who'd been done wrong. “You will make the perfect man for a woman interested in having one. It's just not me.”

“Is it somebody else?” he asked as he folded his arms. “You fucking another nigga?”

“Maybe.” I shrugged. He's been dealing with me for months now, and he knows I don't lie. “If I were, I would tell him the same thing I'm telling you. I'm not interested in

anything outside of the occasional sex-crazed nights. I just want a little head, some great dick, and I'm out of there. I thought that's what guys wanted."

Montel looked at me in disbelief as he sighed heavily. I watched as he rubbed his hands across his head and folded his arms to mirror my glare. "Is that all I am to you? Dick?"

"Absolutely," I assured him. "Nothing more, baby."

"Damn." He chuckled. "I thought niggas were heartless, but you take the fuckin' cake." He looked around the store. "No pun intended."

"None taken." I smiled as I patted his arm. "Come on so I can lock my door. I'm ready to go home."

I stepped around him and made my way back to the counter to gather my phone and keys so I could leave. It'd been a long day, and I was glad I was off for the next two days. I loved what I did, but it was tiring at times.

Walking past me, Monty didn't say another word as he made his way to the door and waited for me to lock up.

"If I didn't like your little ass, I swear I'd cut you off." He hovered over me once we made it outside. "I'm willing to wait for you, Devyn."

"That's more of your concern than mine, love." I gave him a small smile. "I'll see you around."

Standing on my tippy toes, I kissed his cheek and made my way over to my navy-blue Nissan Maxima. I didn't bother looking back at Monty because I knew he was probably still watching me. As I sat in my car and allowed the engine to flow, I decided to check my phone for any missed emails, calls, or messages. Seeing that I missed a call from my dad, I decided to call him back first.

"Hello," he happily answered. "How are you, Suga?"

"Daaaad," I dragged out, "you know I hate when you call me that."

"I can't help it, angel." He chuckled, and I couldn't help but smile. "You know you've always been the sweetest part of

my life.”

David Walker had been using that line my entire life, and it warmed my heart every single time. My father was my heart and soul. I would do anything for him. I don't know the first thing about my mother. I literally don't know if she is dead or alive, and I've been okay with that because my father's love is all I've ever needed. This man has sacrificed so much for me over the years, and all I want to do is make him proud.

“Anyway, what are you doing, old man?” I asked as I pulled away from the shop. Monty was still sitting in his car when I rode past, and I blew the horn at him. If he wanted to sit there and sulk like a weirdo, that was on him. “You got a hot date tonight?”

During my entire childhood, I never saw my father with a woman. It wasn't until I was older that he decided to date. It was never anything serious. He told me he never had anyone around when I was a child because he didn't want them or me to think it was more than it was. He sat me down one day and told me he wasn't opposed to love. It was just hard after the things he went through with my mother. For the past couple of years, he's been pretty consistent with this one woman, but I have yet to meet her. He always told me that he would introduce us if he felt the time was right.

“I do, actually.” He chuckled, and I heard a few men saying goodbye in the background. That only meant that he was at work.

For the past twenty years, he's been a mechanical engineer at a manufacturing plant back in Brooksdale, and he's been thinking about retiring soon. At only forty-five, he said he's ready to enjoy the fruits of his labor, and I'm all for it.

“Sasha and I are going out of town this weekend. It's nothing too extravagant.”

“You know it's okay to love her openly, right?” I reassured him as I pulled up to my apartment complex and parked in my designated spot. Although it's been three years since I moved here, I still love this place. “It's okay to want to be more than her sneaky link.”

“I don’t know what that is, baby, but I assure you it’s not sneaking when you’re grown.” I nodded and agreed. “How was work today? Sales good?”

“Yes,” I lied. “Everything is fine, daddy. Business is booming as always.”

Business was good, but not enough to keep me afloat. I was barely making enough to cover the suite rent, but I wouldn’t bother him with that. I’m going to figure it out and hopefully sooner than later. The last thing I wanted to do was fail or have my father worry.

“That’s good to hear, baby. Listen, let me close down here so I can leave. Come visit me soon, or I’m coming to see you. Got me?”

“Yes, father.” I giggled.

We spoke for a few more minutes before we exchanged ‘I love you’s’ and disconnected the call. Making sure I had all of my belongings, I exited the car and made my way toward my unit.

“I thought I left you in the lot of my job, and why did you follow me here?” Monty came up behind me as I unlocked my door. “I told you I hate pop-ups. Plus, I literally just told you what it was with me and you.”

“I know.” He stuffed his hands in his joggers and peered down at me. “Since dick is all you want from a nigga, surely you won’t mind if I make you cum after a long day.”

With a smirk, I unlocked my door, peered over my shoulder, and allowed him in. A nut or two doesn’t sound too bad. Once I’m done with him, I will send him on his way. Maybe this time will be the last. Monty can’t seem to keep his feelings out of the equation. The last thing I need is yet another man crashing out behind this pussy.

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“Lori, I don’t care about any of that. I told Monty what it was when he started dealing with me. Him catching feelings is



more of his problem than mine,” I expressed as I rolled my eyes.

Here, we are supposed to be vibing at her favorite Mexican restaurant, yet I’m sitting in this booth trying to explain to my best friend why I don’t want to date anyone. If I knew this lunch date would turn into a lecture, I would have stayed my ass at home.

“Friend, I just don’t understand the problem.” She paused her rant when the server placed a skillet of fajitas in front of her. This girl ate Mexican so damn much that it was ridiculous, but I was right here taking it down with her. “That man likes you, and he’s a good look for you.”

“He’s a good man, Savannah. a real good man,” I mimicked one of my favorite movies to her displeasure, but I didn’t give a damn. “Monty will make some woman very happy, but it won’t be me. He came over the other night, and before he dropped the draws, he was whining and complaining about us being together.”

I frowned in disgust because he pissed me off that night he followed me home from work. My pussy wouldn’t even get wet because of all the complaining. I sent him on his way without getting a nut, and that was the last time I talked to him.

“When and if I decide to be with someone, it will be because it’s what I want to do and not because of how others feel. Damn, if you feel like the nigga is all that, you be with him.”

The conversation was low-key pissing me off, and I was seconds away from turning up on her ass. If I were to be with this man and dog the fuck out of him, I would end up being the bad guy. Shit, maybe that’s what it will take for her to leave me alone.

It’s not that I don’t want to be in a relationship. It’s just that I don’t want to deal with the heartbreak and lies that come with it. You give your all to a man just for him to cheat on you and have you looking stupid every time you turn around doesn’t sound too appealing to me. Those reasons alone will

have me doing fifteen to life, and I'm way too cute to go to prison.

“Bitch, I cannot wait until the man of your dreams comes along and sweep you off your dusty ass feet,” she huffed as she sipped her margarita. “Anyway, do you want to go out tonight? I want to go pull up on Bino. I gotta keep that nigga on his toes.”

I chuckled as I listened to her talk about dating Khalil's cousin. I'm not sure if you would call it dating because all they do is fuck and argue. That's another reason I don't want to be in a relationship. All the drama and unnecessary shit is a turnoff for me. Seeing what love and the hurt from it can do through my father's eyes let me know it was nothing I wanted in my life.

He would deny it until he was blue in the face, but I know part of the reason my father was closed off when it came to relationships was because of the things he went through with my egg donor. How was it possible to hate a lady I never even met? The way she had my father fucked up was something I would definitely swing on her about if I ever met her.

“Did you hear me?” Lori snapped me from my thoughts. I turned and faced her and was met with an angry glare. “Bitch, what's wrong with you?”

“I'm sorry.” I took a bite of my steak quesadilla. “I was thinking about how I should have stayed my ass at home instead of coming here.” I covered my mouth and giggled at the disdain on her chubby face. “I'm kidding, friend. If you want to go and pull up on Bino, we can. Just know I'm not helping you fight tonight. You two do the absolute fucking most, and I don't have time for it.”

While we ate, we sat and caught up on things we may have missed with each other during the week. Lori was a student at Willow Springs University majoring in nursing, so her schedule was the most hectic out of the two. I acted as if going out tonight was an inconvenience to my life, but deep down, I welcomed it. I've been living here for three years, and I feel

like I barely get out and know anyone outside her, my usual customers and my cousin.

For as long as I can remember, my father, cousin, and best friend tried to persuade me to move to Willow Springs to pursue my dream of opening my own bakery. The drive back from here to my hometown of Brooksdale was a little over three hours, and I wasn't too fond of being away from my father. At twenty-three, he decided it was time for me to branch out and live out my dreams of opening a business. They all initially felt this was the perfect time to do it, so here I am.

“Oh, you know Bino has a cousin.” She glanced my way for a split second as she continued to eat.

The lunch crowd was thinning out, and I was glad. These people were loud as hell for no reason. I guess tequila shots will do that to you.

“He's crazy as fuck, but I think you guys will get along really well. Torturing niggas and keeping them in their feelings is the only time you seem to be at peace.”

“What?” I threw my head back and laughed. People were starting to stare, but I couldn't care less. “I've met his cousin, and he is not for me either,” I barely got out between laughs. “Girl, what was that to say?”

For a moment, she looked at me as if I'd lost my mind. Shit, with tears running down my cheeks, I'm sure it seemed that way. I could barely breathe from the fit of giggles that consumed me. Lori isn't the only one who judges me for using niggas and ditching them like the trash they are, so I shouldn't be shocked at her statement.

“Are you done?” She sported a frown on her pretty face as she mugged me. “You know as well as I do that what I said was nothing but the truth,” she huffed as she removed her loose curls from her face. “I have never in my life seen someone as nonchalant as you when it came to these men.”

“I give them the time of their lives, and I send them on their way.” I shrugged. “What else is it that I'm supposed to

do?”

“Oh my gosh.” She looked around and waved the server over for another drink. “Why do you have to be so fuckin’ hard and nonchalant about everything? It’s okay to let someone love your mean ass, Dee.”

“She doesn’t want that shit for real because she keeps running from a nigga.”

Hovering over our table was none other than Khalil. He looks much better than he did a week ago, and I was glad for that. I haven’t been to Kira’s house since in fear of running into him again. I wasn’t scared because of feelings or anything like that. I’m trying to spare him from the craziness that comes with fucking with me. Yeah, he has his harem, but that’s nothing compared to how this pussy will have him.

“Khalil, it’s nice to see you’re okay.” I nodded toward his arm.

He was wearing a hoodie, and I assume the pain was at a minimum. The olive-green hoodie looked good paired with his denim Levi jeans and a fresh pair of Timbs. His one Cuban and diamond studs shined bright under the restaurant lights. Not to mention the smell of his cologne was causing my pussy to leak.

“Shit, I’m doing better now that I see your fine ass.” He smirked and bit his bottom lip before he dragged his eyes over to Lori. “You’re not a hoe or anything, right? Like, I want to fuck the shit out of Luck, but I don’t want to have to knock your head off your shoulders because you’re trying to suck my dick on the sly.”

“Excuse me!” Lori yelled. “Bino and I are dating.”

“Oh yeah?” He nodded and bulldozed his way into my side of the booth. “Good to know, I guess?”

“He hasn’t mentioned me?” she asked with a raised brow and folded arms. “I mean, we’re not serious or anything, but I thought for sure he mentioned Lori.”

“Girl, me and my cousin don’t sit around and discuss our hoes.” He waved her off as he dipped one of my chips in salsa.

“I didn’t come over to talk to you, anyway.” Khalil put his attention back on me. “I came to talk to Lucky and see when she was going to stop playing with a nigga and let me rub my nose in her pussy like a bloodhound. I’m trying to drown in that tsunami.”

“Friend, you’ve been fucking with Loon’s crazy ass and didn’t tell me?” Lori smirked. “Let me find out this is why you don’t want to be serious with Montel.”

“Who?” He looked back and forth between us. I groaned as I sank into the booth. “Who the fuck is Montel?”

“We’re not about to sit here and discuss our hoes,” I spat as Lori snickered, and she went into her purse, but I stopped her.

“I got it, friend.” I went into my wallet and pulled out my debit card. “Wait for me, and I will walk you out. You know people are crazy on this side of town.”

“Nah, you’re finna sit here while I eat.” Khalil shook his head and looked over the menu. “She can walk herself out. Those wide-ass shoulders are all the protection she needs.”

My hand flew over my mouth as my friend’s face transformed into nothing less than pure horror. Lori is the prettiest thing to me. She’s less than five feet tall with blemish-free caramel skin. She was a little on the chunky side, but she wore it well. Her shoulder-length curls caused people to ask if it was a wig everywhere we went. Not only was she pretty as hell, but lil’ baby was stacked.

“Why did you say that to her?” I slapped his shoulder as Lori stormed out with people looking to see what was wrong. “I don’t even play about my best friend.”

“And I’m not about to play with that pussy. So what’s up?”

The look of lust in Khalil’s eyes let me know he meant everything he said. Leaning forward, I placed my left hand on his left thigh. I moved it upward until I felt the thick bulge that I wanted badly to be buried deep inside of me. Who was I to deny him of the pleasure we would create? Shit, who am I to deny myself?

“There’s nothing on that menu that’s going to fill you more than this pussy, baby,” I whispered in his ear as I rubbed and groped his erection. “Follow me, and I have a five-star meal that will definitely have you coming back for more.”

No other words were spoken as Khalil went into his wallet and paid for my and Lori’s lunch. He rose from the booth and yanked me up with him. Maneuvering through the patrons as if our asses were on fire, I couldn’t control my laughter at how serious he was in this moment. With my hand in his, I allowed him to walk me outside and throw me into the passenger seat of his vehicle.

I hope he was ready for all the pussy he could eat. If he wanted fine dining, I had a dish that was for sure a top-tier delicacy.

# CHAPTER

# THREE

KHALIL

“MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE,” Luck spoke as we entered her apartment. The shit was girly as a muhfucka with pink and gray décor everywhere. Her sitting area wasn’t as spacious as my condo, but it was still a pretty decent size for her. “You hungry?”

“Only thing I’m trying to eat is pussy, baby.” I smirked as I took a seat on her dark gray sectional. “If you happen to cook for a nigga afterward, I’m cool with it.”

“Hmm, we will see.” She pulled her PINK sweatshirt over her head, and my mouth instantly watered at the sight of her pierced nipples. “I’m going to shower and get the food smell off me.” She hooked her thumbs in the band of her leggings and shimmied them down her luscious thighs. I couldn’t help but lick my lips at her freshly waxed mound. “Sit tight for me.”

As she turned and made her way down the hall to her bedroom, I stared at her and imagined all the freaky shit I wanted to do to her. The fact that she talks that hot shit I like makes my dick ten times harder. Removing my hoodie, I winced at the stiffness in my shoulder. It’s been a little over a week since the shooting, but I was healing well. Getting the nigga who did this shit has been heavy on my mind, and I can’t wait to put them niggas in the dirt.

“Hello,” I answered my buzzing phone.

“Where you at, Dada?” KJ’s little, sweet voice came through the speaker. “You getting cupcakes?”

“No, man.” I chuckled as I slouched back into my seat. “Daddy isn’t getting cupcakes right now. Maybe if you’re good for your Nana, I’ll think about it. That means you have to listen to her and do what she says.”

The line went silent, and I know he was pouting, but taking in everything I was saying. From day one, I realized how smart he is. I must admit Mia did a good job with him. He asks about her, so despite how I’m feeling, I know it’s time I meet with her and have a conversation. We have to come to common ground with this parenting shit because I’m not missing another second of his life.

“Deal, Dada.” My son broke my thoughts. “I be good so I can get cupcakes.”

“Okay.” I chuckled but stopped immediately when Lucky’s dripping-wet body came into view. She glistened from the top of her wet head to the tips of her pretty white toes. That slim, thick body of hers was calling out to me, and I had no issue with answering. It made no sense how thirsty I was for shorty in this moment. The sly grin on her face let me know she knew it, too. “I gotta go, baby.”

“I love you, Dada.”

KJ didn’t even give me the chance to tell him the same before he was hanging up on a nigga. All he knew was if he were good, he would be rewarded, and I assume that was all that mattered to him. Pocketing my phone, I slowly dragged my eyes back over to a still-standing Lucky.

“You good, shorty?” I asked as my eyes continued to roam her body. “The fuck are you standing like a statue for?”

“I didn’t want to interrupt you while you were on the phone with your son.” She sauntered toward me and straddled my lap. She wrapped her arms around my neck as I bit my bottom lip. My hands instantly gripped her hips. “I’m not rude.”

“Girl, you moved another woman out of the way so you could suck my dick.” I chuckled as I slapped her ass and squeezed it roughly. “You’re beyond rude.”



“Trust me.” She leaned forward and licked my neck sensually as she began to grind in my lap. The shit was sexy to a nigga, and it sent chills through my body. “I can be the rudest to ever do it.”

Lucky placed a few more kisses along my ear and neck as she slowly wound against my crotch. My dick wanted nothing more than to break free and plunge deep into her guts, but I was going to sit back and let her control the show. When she rose from my lap, leaving a wet spot behind, I knew this shit was about to be amazing.

Dropping to the floor before me, she peered up to me with the look of a woman who was about to change my life. Luck had better be careful with the way she handled a nigga before she had me stalking her ass like a dope fiend waiting on his first-of-the-month check.

She unclasped my jeans and pulled them down along with my boxers. When my dick sprung out at full attention, I could see the drool forming at the corner of her mouth.

“You like this muhfucka, Luck?” I smirked as I fisted my pole and began stroking slowly. “Seems to me like you’re the one that wants to eat. You want to taste... ah, fucckkk!”

“Hmm,” she moaned as she deep-throated me without a warning. Baby girl didn’t even spit start and stroke a nigga before she had my balls tapping her chin. I threw my head back and enjoyed the euphoric feel that was taking over me. You would think lil’ mama was a turkey in a past life with the way she was gobbling my dick.

“How in the fuck is your mouth and pussy good as fuck?” I groaned as I palmed the back of her head, and I leaned forward and peered down on her. That was a major mistake on my part because the moment I did, our eyes locked. She bobbed up and down on my dick with spit sliding down both sides of her mouth. “Gah damn, girl.”

“You like that?” she panted as she raised up. Her mouth was so wet that there was a line of slob trailing from her chin to my balls, and I’ll be damned if my dick didn’t grow ten

times harder. When she stroked my dick and licked her lips, I knew then I had to have her. Right here, right now.

“Come here because I want some pussy.”

I stood from the couch and snatched her up from the floor. Throwing her over my shoulders, I went down the short hallway in search of her bedroom. Once inside, I was pleased at how clean and tidy it was. She had Bath & Body Works candles burning that caused her space to smell as delicious as her. Her king-sized bed was neatly decorated in some type of fluffy purple comforter that I could really care less about. The only thing on my mind was making her climb these fuckin’ walls.

I removed her from my shoulders, throwing her on the bed gently as she slightly bounced. She giggled as she sat up on her elbows and eyed me as I began to undress. I placed my Glock on the dresser beside me, and my gaze never left hers. I slowly removed my shirt, careful not to aggravate my shoulder. I had already stepped out of my shoes, so I was able to remove my jeans and boxers, all while keeping my gaze on her.

“You know,” she said as I climbed onto the bed, “I can see why the Three Musketeers lost their minds over you.” She rubbed her hand through my hair as I hovered over her. “You are fine as hell.”

“With good ass dick, too.” I chuckled as I kissed all over her chest.

Luck hissed and arched her back as I brought her left nipple into my mouth. I always thought the metal would leave a weird taste in my mouth, but the first time I feasted on her, I was proven wrong.

“You ready to be added to the gang?”

“Neveerrr,” she moaned as my tongue dipped in and out of her navel. “The only thing I want to add is my pussy juice on your tongue.” She placed her hand on the top of my head and pushed me lower. “Now slurp on this pussy like you’ve been in the Sahara with no water, baby. Let me quench your thirst.”

I swear you could feel the room shake from the growl that left my lips when I spread Luck's thighs and latched onto her clit. It was a damn shame how every part of this girl was sweet as fuck. Wanting nothing more than to have her scream my name, I ate her pussy like I had a point to prove. I shook my head like a red-nosed pit as I sucked and slurped all over her middle.

"Why the fuck you taste so good, Luck?" I mumbled as I looked up at her. She was gripping the sheets as her eyes rolled into the back of her head.

Placing one of her legs on my shoulder, I spread them as I slid my middle and index finger inside her tunnel and groaned at the way her walls gripped them. Easing them in and out, I used the pad of my thumb to rub her nub. It must've felt good to her because I knew she was close to her release the way baby girl was shaking.

"S-shit," she panted as she gyrated to make my strokes. "I want to cum, Khalil."

"Yeah?" I dug in her faster. Reaching up, I tweaked her left nipple and was rewarded with the most pleasurable cry. I remembered that pain turned her little freaky ass on, and the way her pussy was leaking, I knew she was on the verge of exploding. "What you waiting on then, girl? Let daddy have it."

"I-I-uughhh!" she whimpered as her thighs began to shake.

As badly as she tried to clamp her legs shut, I kept them open and dove back in. As soon as my lips attached to her lower ones, the sweet essence that oozed from her pussy blessed my tongue. Lapping her up like a junkyard dog in the middle of summer, I held her in place while I tried my best to drain her ass of everything that she had.

"I know you're not tapping out on me." I chuckled at Luck, trying to close her legs to stop me from feasting on her. "You don't want to give me one more before I drop this dick off in your chest?"

“Fuck me,” she demanded as she removed her leg that was still on my shoulder. She flipped around until her ass was in the air, and I couldn’t help but slap it. “All I want you to do now is fuck me, Khalil.”

I watched as she laid her arms completely flat in front of her and gave me the nastiest arch I’d ever seen. She peered to the side where I’d yet to move and made her ass clap as if she were inviting a nigga to take her down. Not wanting to be told twice, I slid behind her and mounted her like the fuckin’ dog that I am.

“Damn, girl.” I used my thumb to see if that pussy was still wet for me. I couldn’t help but smirk because I knew it would be. “You ready for a nigga, huh?”

“Stick it in and stop talking to me.” She pushed back and tried her best to fuck my finger. “If not, I’ll call... ohhh, fuck!”

I slammed into Luck as hard as I could to keep her from saying something that I knew for sure was going to piss me off. The last thing I wanted to hear or even think about was her giving this good-ass pussy to somebody else. She wasn’t my girl by far, and I didn’t want her to be, but I feel like this pussy is too good for me to have to share with another nigga.

“Throw that ass back on a nigga, Luck,” I gritted as I drilled in and out of her. “I got three other bitches I can call that will get me right if you can’t.” Gripping her by the waist, I tried my best to hold on because what I seemed to have said pissed her off. That’s exactly what I wanted.

“Them hoes can’t fuck you like me, baby,” she moaned as she twerked on my dick as she slid her fingers between her legs and strummed her clit. “There’s no pussy you’ve had to date that hits like this.”

With each deep stroke that I delivered to her, Luck matched with no hesitation. Spreading her cheeks, I spit down the middle and eased my thumb in and out of her ass. I bit my bottom lip and tried to keep from busting my damn self as milky cream covered my dick. The shit was a sight to see.

“You like that nasty shit, huh?” I leaned forward and kissed up her spine. “That shit turns you on?”

Pulling her up, she angled her head toward mine, and I couldn't help but lean in and kiss her. I reached around and grabbed a hand full of titty with one and choked her with the other without missing a beat. Just when I thought I was back in control, Lucky did some type of trick with her pussy that had her walls pulsing all around my pole.

“You feel that, ‘Lil?” she cooed as she wound her hips. “You feel me pulling you in? Let go and cum with me. I want to feel you lose yourself inside of me.”

She bent back over on her hands and knees and began poppin' on me. Slamming into my pelvis repeatedly, I couldn't do anything but take it as this girl fucked me senseless. The feeling that started at the bottom of my toes and crept to the pits of my stomach let me know I wasn't going to last long. Still doing the clench and release thing with her pussy, she was about to take everything a nigga had.

“You're about to nut, baby girl. I can feel it,” I gritted. “Cum with me, Luck, because a nigga is about to dump all in this pussy.”

Not even five strokes later, we were both moaning and grunting. It felt as if Luck had taken everything I had inside of me. For what felt like minutes, I held her in place until I was completely empty. We both fought to catch our breath from the time we had just had. Unable to stay upright, I fell onto the bed and brought her down with me.

“That was fun, thank you.” She yawned as she tried to get out of the bed. I held onto her to keep her in place, though, because after the work I put in and the release we had, there was no way she had the energy to do anything else. “Will you let go of me?”

“Hell no, Luck.” I pulled her closer to me. “If you think you're about to hoe a nigga and pay me for my services like you did last time, you have another thing coming. Lay your ass down and take a nap. When we get up, I'm going to fuck you again, and you're going to fix me lunch.”

“And what if I have plans for the day?” She mugged me as she folded her arms over her naked breasts. “And why do you insist on calling me Lucky? I told you my name was Devyn.”

“Cancel them.” I shrugged. “If you want to, get a rag and clean me up.” I thrust my hips into her butt. “Other than that, rest the fuck up.”

Lucky looked back at me, and I knew she could tell by the look on my face I was serious as fuck. We stared at each other for a moment before she sighed and wiggled her way from my embrace. I watched as her naked body ambled into the en suite bathroom. The stirring of my lil’ homie caused me to look down, and I shook my head at the sight of him being sticky as hell. Moments later, she returned with a soapy rag and wiped away all the evidence of our fuckin’.

“I’ll give you a few minutes for a nap, but then you have to go,” she huffed as she got back into bed. Lying beside me, neither one of us made an effort to get redressed. “This ain’t that type of party. We fuck, and you leave. That’s the way it works with me.”

“If I were a weak nigga, the shit you’re saying would hurt my feelings.” I slammed her into my chest, and the look on my face dared her to protest. “Now close your eyes and take a fucking nap. I want to wake up getting my dick sucked with a plate of hot wings and fries sitting next to my Glock on the dresser.”

Lucky rolled her eyes, but she laid down and did as I asked. She could say whatever the fuck she wanted, but she’d better not play with me. I felt the smile form on her lips, so I knew when I woke up, she was going to comply with what I said. Closing my eyes, I was more than ready for sleep to take over.

“I call you Luck because God must have brought us together. He knew I needed some bomb and hassle-free pussy in my life.”

Her sweet giggles were the last thing I remember hearing as she snuggled against me. I don’t know what this is that was happening, but this girl was having me do things I usually

don't. Fuckin' raw and reckless, and sleeping at these women's cribs isn't something that I'm accustomed to. Just from the last few encounters, she was changing a nigga, and I'm not sure if it will be for the better or worse.

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"We go play, DaDa?" My son peered down at me as I tied his shoe. "We get ice cream? I like ice cream."

I chuckled at how animated he was as I got him dressed and ready for the day. For him to be almost three years old, he was too damn smart. At times, it's hard to believe I'm a father, but I take pride in the role. I've missed too much time with him, so every day was an opportunity to make up for it. I wanted to create as many memories as I could with him, and I was determined to do it. We'd just come back from a trip to Disney World, and we had a fuckin' blast.

"Yeah, son, daddy will get you some ice cream." I helped him as he scooted from the couch. "You got your bag?"

"Oh shoot!" he yelled and shot off to his bedroom.

It was time for him and me to be in our own space, so I decided to get the condo cleaned out and childproofed. I let the security downstairs know that my mother and cousins were the only ones who were ever allowed access up here. There is no way I would have transformed the hoe room into his bedroom, so I gave him the master until I was able to find us somewhere else to live. My mother wanted us to stay with her until then, but there was no way in hell that would happen.

Since finding out that I had a son, my time and attention have been on him, and I haven't had time to entertain any of the broads I was dealing with. Plus, I'm more mindful about how I move. That rat-ass baby mama of mine still makes it hard for me to trust these bitches. Shit, it's probably worse now than what it was these past few years. Once a DNA test confirmed KJ was indeed my son, I told that bitch to scram, and if KJ wanted to see her, I'd reach out. I went back and forth on it for a while, but I decided today was the day I'd talk to her.

“I’m ready, Da!” KJ broke my thoughts as he came barreling into my legs. “Let’s ride!”

Chuckling, I scooped him up in my arms and gathered my keys from the end table so we could start our day. Most times, he hates it when I carry him, but I don’t care. I missed so much of his life that I can’t get back, and I want to hold him in my arms until I can’t. These past few weeks have been more than I could have ever asked for.

“You want to go see your Nana?” I looked in the rearview and asked him as I drove through the empty streets. “She said she missed you.”

“Hmm.” He tapped his little chin as if he were thinking. He was handsome with his kinky hair, deep chocolate skin, and his mother’s bright, expressive eyes. I hate that bitch with every fiber of my being, but I’m thankful she took such good care of my son. “She make the cheesy noodles?”

I couldn’t help but bellow in laughter because of how serious he was. Any time we were at my mother’s house, all he wanted was her mac and cheese. She was always more than willing to make it for him.

“I will make sure I call and ask her once we get to the park.” He looked to be satisfied with my answer as he continued to mess with his tablet. He was so focused, but I needed to talk to him while I had his attention. “Say, man, are you ready to see your mother?”

If I could have things my way, I’d never let Mia see my boy again for the shit she pulled. She’s his mother, though, and at the moment, I don’t have any legal rights. So for as long as I could, I would play nice and do the best I could to co-parent without killing the bitch.

“I miss her a little.” He shrugged. “She lets me play on her phone and eat the candy when I’m good.” He looked up at me through the rearview mirror. “We go see Mommy and Unkie Kay?”

“Uncle Kay, huh?” I chuckled as I pulled into the park. I was thankful that it wasn’t many people out because I had no



desire to fuck any kids up for playing too rough with or around my son. “I don’t know about Uncle Kay right now, but we’re about to see your mama.”

He nodded and returned to what he was doing, and I left it at that. I’m thankful that Mia and Kaine let him know that he’s his uncle because he would for sure die if he thought my son was going to be walking around calling him daddy.

Parking the car, I looked around to see if I could locate his mother, but I didn’t see her. Her ass had better be here because I wasn’t going to reach out again.

“You dressed like me, Da?” KJ asked as I got him out of the truck and placed him on his feet. We were both dressed in black and white Nike tracksuits, along with a fresh pair of Forces. My plats were fresh, and we both had crispy lineups. I bought him a matching cross necklace to match mine, and we were clean as hell out here. “You want to be like me?”

“You know what?” I laughed as I grabbed his hand and led him to the playground. “I do want to be like you. You’re the flyest guy I know.”

“Yeah, Bino tells me.” He looked up at me and smiled knowingly. “He said he’s my boy. I believe him, Da.”

I couldn’t help but bellow in laughter because the bond he was forming with my cousins was crazy. They have been at my mother’s house daily since the barbecue, and they all love KJ. Even my father calls and checks on him. That particular situation is tricky, and I don’t know what to do about it. Looking at my own kid, I can’t imagine how someone would choose not to be in their child’s life.

“Hey, how about you let me hold your tablet while you go play?” I motioned toward the slides once we reached the tables. “I’ll be sitting right here watching you, okay? Play nice with the other kids.”

“Okay.” He nodded as he slid his backpack from his shoulders. “Bino say I fuck ‘em up if they mean, Da.”

“Son,” was all I was able to get out before he shot off. I shook my head as I made a mental note to cuss that stupid ass

nigga out when I saw him. Mama would lose her mind if she knew KJ was out here cussing.

I took a seat and looked over the area to make sure everything was on the up and up. I had my tool on me, so if some shit popped off at this park, I didn't mind airing it out about my seed. As I sat and watched him play, I pulled my phone from my pocket to check for any notifications. Just like I figured, Allison, Alicia, and Persia were blowing me up. Not only that, but I also had a few missed calls from my mother and even one from my father. It was one text in particular that had me smiling.

**Little Miss Water Park:** *Hey dude, bring KJ by here soon to get cupcakes. I haven't seen him in a couple of weeks. I'm not above coming to Ms. Khalise's home. You know she likes me.*

I chuckled as I read the message from Lucky because she wasn't lying. Ma asks me all the time about her, but I have to reiterate to her how we aren't on that type of time. Luck and I are just friends and nothing more. My people fuck with her, though, for whatever reason. She was cool people, so I guess there was no harm in it.

Since the day I went home with her a couple of weeks ago, we've been keeping in touch with each other. As I requested, I woke up to getting my dick sucked with wings and fries, waiting on a nigga. I was dipping chicken while I dipped in her throat. What was supposed to be me dropping dick off and leaving turned into a fuckin' slumber party. We kicked it all night just talking shit, kind of getting to know each other. I was impressed to learn that she owned her own bakery and that my mother and son were some of her favorite customers.

“What bitch has you skinning and grinning?”

A dark shadow formed over me and in the form of my hoe-ass ex. Mia was pretty as hell. I'd never deny that. She was still thick in all the right places but looked slightly off. I'm used to seeing her hair done, smiling, and rocking the latest apparel. Before me was a simple woman in a t-shirt and leggings. Her head, which would usually be full of expensive

weave, was sporting a simple bushy ass ponytail. All in all, baby mama looked dusty as a muhfucka.

“That’s one thing your sneaky pussy ass doesn’t need to be concerned with,” I spat as I pocketed my phone. “Have a seat because we need to talk.”

“Khalil, why are you talking to me like this?” she asked as she sat on the bench beside me. “There was a time when you worshipped the ground I walked on.”

“Talk to you like what?” I side-eyed her before I put my attention on KJ. I shook my head at him playing in the dirt with some little white girl. I was crazy as hell for bringing him out here with white shoes on. “Like the rat bitch that you are. Girl, you better be glad I’m talking at all because my spirit is telling me to beat your muhfuckin’ ass for the way you played me.”

“I’m sorry.” Her voice trembled. “I fucked up for that, and I wish I hadn’t done it. It was just that we were in a dark space, and I needed attention. You were never around.”

“Never around?” I chuckled and shook my head at the audacity. “I was always working to make sure you lived the life you dreamed of Mia.” I turned to face her, and the tears that streamed down her face didn’t move me at all. “I would have done anything for you, and you know that. I wanted to make you my fuckin’ wife, bruh. If you felt like we were having issues, you could have come and talked to me because I would have moved heaven and earth to fix it.”

“It’s not too late.” She placed her hand on mine. “We share a son now, and I would love more than anything for us to be a family.”

“Girl, if you don’t unhand me, I will break your fuckin’ wrist,” I gritted. “Touch me again, and I will make sure your body is never found.” With the quickness, she snatched it back. I didn’t know if Mia was on drugs or what, but she had me fucked up if she thought we would ever take that route again. “Tell me why you never told me I had a son and how he knows I’m his father.”

“When I got pregnant, I didn’t know who the father was,” Mia hesitantly admitted as she looked around until her eyes landed on KJ. “I wanted him to be Kaine’s because I thought the grass was greener. When KJ was born, I knew he didn’t belong to him. I was too afraid to tell Kaine or reach out to you—”

“But you named him KJ,” I cut her off. “Kaine had to have known he wasn’t his if he was my junior.”

“Well,” she fidgeted, “initially, he was named after Kaine. He felt like his features were too similar to yours instead of his, so he did an at-home DNA test behind my back. So, when KJ was around six months old, I changed his name from Kaine to Khalil.”

“Bitch, you’re pitiful.” I looked up, and KJ noticed his mother and wildly waved before he continued to go down the slide. “Why in the fuck didn’t you get in touch to tell me? You know I would have accepted my son. Kaine talked to mama all the time and didn’t say shit.”

“But would you have accepted me?” she asked as I turned to her. Frowning, she had my answer. “Exactly. I wouldn’t be able to handle you accepting my baby and not me. I love you too much for that. KJ was shown pictures since he was old enough to remember who his father was. That’s why he recognized you. As long as he knew who his daddy was, that’s all that mattered to me.”

“Man, how are we splitting custody?” I stopped her because I didn’t want to hear that shit. She was pissing me off, and I was trying not to spaz out on her in front of these kids. “There is no way I’m letting you leave town with him.”

“Split custody?” she shrieked. “I’m offering for us to be a family, and you want to split custody? I want a family for us, Khalil, and that is why I decided to come back and let you even meet him. Either we’re together as a family, or I’m leaving town.”

I stood from my seat and glared at her menacingly. The people closest to us were beginning to stare, and that was a sign for me to get my kid and leave. It was too many witnesses

out here for me to kill this bitch. So, instead of arguing with her like I knew she wanted me to, I grabbed my son's bag so we could bounce.

"Come on, man." I walked over to the swing set with Mia on my heels. "Let's go get that ice cream you wanted."

"Cupcakes too, Da?" He looked at me with pleading eyes. "I can't have one without the other. Plus, I want to see Debin. She's so pretty, and I like her."

"Who is he talking about, Khalil?" Mia yelled as I picked him up. "You better not have any bitches around my son! You know what? Give him to me!"

Mia reached for KJ and began tugging on him. I snatched away as best as I could so she wouldn't hurt him. Yeah, she's truly lost her fuckin' mind, but I had no issue with helping her find it.

"No, mama!" he cried. "I don't want to go with you! I want to stay with my daddy!"

"Bring your little ass here, KJ," she gritted as she reached for him once more. "You're not staying with this nigga because he doesn't want us."

"No bitch, I don't want *you*," I growled as I pushed her away. "If you ever touch him like that again, I will make sure you're nothing but a memory, Mia. Stop testing me before you flunk out bitch." I am trying my best to keep shit copasetic with this wench, but she is testing me and my trigger finger.

"He's my son, and you will not keep him!" she shouted angrily at my back.

Ignoring her, I rubbed KJ's back and assured him everything would be okay. His cries were breaking me down, and I had to get us both out of here. "I'm going to get you that ice cream and cupcakes, okay, man?" I put him in the truck and made sure he was strapped in. "You ready?"

"Yes, sir," he whimpered. "Is mama mad at me? She hurt my arm."

“She didn’t mean to, buddy,” I gritted as I tussled his curls. “She’s not mad at you either.”

KJ said nothing as he looked down into his lap. I felt fucked up for the way he was looking and feeling. After ensuring he was okay, I closed the door and abruptly turned to face a still belligerent Mia. She was shocked at my suddenness and stumbled back slightly.

“Aight, look.” I pulled my Glock from behind my back and held it at my side. I looked around, and thankfully, there weren’t any kids in this lot. “Make that the last time you ever grab on him like that. I will put a bullet in between your eyes if you ever make him cry again.”

“He’s my son, Khalil.”

“Bitch, he’s my son too!” I growled. “If you want to see him, get in touch with mama. You can meet up with her at the house and visit him. You’re too angry to be trusted alone with him. Also, I want joint custody of him.”

“Khalil, it’s all or nothing!” she cried, shouting, “We are a package deal!”

“Mama will be in touch,” was all I said as I got into my car. The look in her eyes let me know she didn’t like my answer, and I couldn’t give a less fuck. “Don’t piss me off, Mia. I let you slide when you popped back up with my brother. Raising my kid as a single father is nothing for me.” I waved to her with my gun in hand as I backed out of the lot. I looked through the side-view mirror and watched as she stood there until we disappeared from her sight.

Mia thinks the love I once had for her was enough to spare her life. Little does she know, KJ is young enough to where he will eventually forget her ass if I left her rotten in a sewer. If she keeps fuckin’ with me and thinks that I’m going to let her dictate the relationship that I have with my son, I’m going to show her a side of me she didn’t know existed.

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Since I met with Mia the other day, the shooting from a couple of weeks ago has been on my mind. It’s not a coincidence that

as soon as she and my brother come back in town, someone gets to blasting on me. I don't want to think that issues with my brother and me are that bad, but I put nothing past him.

“Loon, did you hear me talking to you?” Alicia tapped my thigh. “I wanted to know if we were going to chill today.”

I inhaled my blunt and eyed her as if she were crazy. We were here in the living room of my condo, and she had just given me some pretty decent head, but that's all I needed from her so she could leave. I believe Lucky puts roots on a nigga because if the pussy ain't hers, it's been mid as fuck. Yeah, these girls get my dick hard, but I'm not satisfied after I bust. For whatever reason, Alicia wanted to be slow today because I have never chilled with these bitches. Well, outside of with Lucky.

“Be fuckin' for real, Alicia.” I blew the smoke out as I mugged her. “You came and offered a service. What, you want some money or something?”

“Are you going to give me some?” Her eyes lit up. I couldn't help but chuckle because I knew it was because I never spent a dime on her before. “Yes, money would be nice.”

“Aight.” I nodded with my blunt between my lips. “You got change for a twenty?”

“What?” she screeched as she hopped up from her seat beside me on the sofa. “You can't be serious.”

“You're right.” I stood from the couch. “That's too much.” I grabbed her elbow and led her to the door. “I'm going to holler at you later.”

“Wait.” She stopped and turned as I reached for the door handle. “I saw baby things on the kitchen counter. Have you had a woman over here with a baby?”

“Girl, if you don't get out of my shit.” I opened the door to let her out. “Questioning me like you've lost your damn mind and shit.”

These bitches were going to run me crazy if I let them, and that wasn't the move. I just wanted to get my dick wet and get

out of dodge. Lucky gets me, which is why she and I click the way we do. Sex with no attachments and understanding is the best thing in the world.

“Loon, please,” she whimpered as I pushed her over the threshold. “Is there someone else? Do you have a baby?”

*Wham!*

I slammed the door in Alicia’s face and left her in the hallway to wallow in her own sorrows. What I have going on is no concern of hers, and she’s been dealing with me long enough to know better than to question me.

As I made my way back to the couch, a knock at my door had me halting my steps. I was for sure about to lay this damn girl out.

“Bit... what the fuck are y’all doing here?”

Furrowing my brows, I looked on as Bino and Jake stood on the other side of my door. Not only that, but they had company.

“Son, why in the hell am I just now hearing about you getting shot recently? Why didn’t you call me?” my father fussed and pulled me into a tight hug, catching me off guard. “Are you okay?”

“Man, let me go.” I chuckled as I shook loose from his embrace. “Dramatic ass nigga. Plus, it’s not like we talk like that.”

Quite frankly, we didn’t talk at all. Yeah, he’s popped up a couple of times over the last few weeks, but we were cordial at best. This is the first time I’ve seen him since the barbecue, and I don’t know what he expected from me. Walking away from the door, I left them standing there to come in if they pleased. I was definitely going to talk to them niggas about showing Ceaser where I laid my head.

“I’m trying to change that if you let me.”

He followed me over to the sitting area and took a seat beside me. The nigga was clean as hell, and from the few times I saw him, he was always dressed in a suit or slacks.



“Tell me what’s going on and what you need from me?”

“Need from you?” I scoffed as I inhaled the blunt. “I don’t need shit from you or anybody else, my nigga. I’ll handle it.”

“Bro, we don’t even know where to start looking,” Jake chimed in. “Unk has the resources to help, so let him. I get you feel a way about him, but you have KJ to think about. What if niggas had done that shit while he was with you?” I frowned at the thought because I would be devastated if anything happened to my kid. “Exactly, nigga.”

“What are we talking?” I sighed heavily as I eyed my father. “You’re like a construction worker or some shit, right? I mean, how can you help me?”

I admit I don’t know shit about my father outside of the fact that he was my cousin’s uncle and didn’t want me as a kid. My mother never talked about him, and I had no idea about what he was into. Even having him here now was frustrating, and so badly did I want to tell this nigga to leave me alone and stay the fuck away from my mama and me. I don’t want having this nigga around bringing her false hope or resurrect feelings she’s suppressed. I don’t want him playing on her mental.

“Let me tell you a few things about your old man.” He sat back and threw his arm over the back of my sofa. “I used to be into some wild shit back in my day, anything from selling drugs to murder-for-hire. If it made me money, I did it. After the shit went down with your mother and me, I moved away for a few years to get my mind right. I came back to town a few years later and went legit. I’ve always been good with my hands and building things, so I founded Monarch Project and Development. I began doing contract work from residential properties before transitioning into commercial. I used my talents to bring a lot of housing and revenue to the surrounding cities and was deemed a community project manager. I was already a self-made millionaire before taking the job, but now...” He chuckled and shook his head. “We don’t even have to go there. Between the state and private contracts, along with my own business, I’m doing well. With the connections I’ve

made over the years, my reach is longer than you could fathom.”

“You think I care about your money, nigga?” I leaned forward from my spot on the couch and placed my elbows on my knees. “Where the fuck was all that money when my mother was struggling to put food on the table? Keeping the lights on or making sure we had a roof over our heads? Do you think I give a fuck about the shit you’re bragging about? That doesn’t make you a man, nigga.” I stood and hovered over him. “That makes you the bitch I portrayed you to be.”

We engaged in a stare-off before he stood to his feet. Standing face to face with me, I could tell he wanted nothing more than to knock my head off my shoulders. He could try it, but I would definitely have his ass laid the fuck out in here.

“Listen to me and listen, good, lil’ nigga,” he gritted through clenched teeth. “I know I dropped the ball on you and your mother. Trust me, I live with the karma of what I did every fuckin’ day. Despite what you think, I loved your lil’ ass. You and your fuckin’ mama. I *still* love you and your mama. Understand that if you ever disrespect me again, I will beat your ass the way I should have done when you were younger.”

“Nigga, what?” I pulled my Glock from the waistband of my sweats. “You threatening me? You and what army?”

“Army?” He chuckled and stepped to the side. I was facing the window that overlooked the city, so I was confused as fuck by the gesture. “Look down.”

After doing so, my eyes were wide in shock. Somehow, there was a red beam pointed directly at my chest.

“I got real shooters around me. The army ain’t got shit on me. Now sit your ass down and tell me what we’re doing.”

For a moment, I stood there in shock about what was going on. I continued looking out of the window because how in the fuck did he do that? This nigga may be more beneficial than I thought.

“Nigga, sit your goofy ass down and talk to your daddy.”

I turned at the sound of Bino's voice and frowned, seeing he had his legs kicked on my coffee table. Not only that, but his grown ass was eating my boy's fruit snacks.

"My gut is telling me it was Kaine that shot me," I shared as I retook my seat on the sofa. "That's the only nigga I got beef with, apparently."

"What about Troop?" Jake asked. "That nigga has been out of the way since he stole from us, not to mention since you popped his girl."

"You offed a lady?" My father frowned. "Women have always been off limits, son."

"I offed a hoe." I held my finger up and corrected him. "That bitch tried to set me up, not to mention her pussy was trash." I was disgusted thinking about how hollow her pussy was. That shit was deeper than a wishing well. "She deserved to die."

"Son," my father exhaled heavily as he pinched the bridge of his nose, "focus. What do you want to do about your brother? He's a problem that needs to be eliminated before he gets out of hand. I know that's your brother, but he's also your biggest threat."

"Fuck them riddles and shit Unk is talking about." Bino stood from the chair, pulling his pants up with him. "You want to kill that nigga or let him kill you? It's you or him." He eyed me intently, and I knew what he was saying without saying it.

Kaine is my big brother. My flesh and blood. Could I really kill him, knowing what it would do to my mother? I don't know, but what I do know is I'm not letting a nigga take me from my son when I just got him in my life. Looking at the three of them, I knew they were waiting for a response.

"I'm going to choose me every time." I nodded before I turned and gave my attention back to my father. "What do you suggest?"

# CHAPTER

## FOUR

DEVYN

“DEE, WHAT’S UP, GIRL?” Bino greeted me when I stepped inside Kira’s house. I swear this nigga thought he was a resident. “What are you doing here?”

“No, B, what are *you* doing here?” I chuckled and turned to him as he closed the door. “Do you not have your own home? Every time I come here, you’re over here, opening doors like you pay bills.”

“Girl, this is my brother’s shit.” He pushed me slightly as we headed to the living room. Once inside, I couldn’t help but smirk as I watched Khalil engage in a conversation with his son.

KJ is the sweetest and most handsome little boy I’ve ever met. The day I met him, all he wanted to do was talk about his cheesy noodles and *Paw Patrol*. When Ms. Khalise found out I owned a bakery, she brought him by, and we’ve been thick as thieves since.

“Hey, Debin!” His father snapped his head in my direction as KJ jumped from his spot and came running over toward me. “You bring cupcakes?”

“Hey, Bubba.” I picked him up and kissed his cheek. “I didn’t know you would be here today, or else I would have.” I couldn’t help but smile at his cute little self pouting. “How about you tell daddy to bring you buy one day this week and get you some?”

“Or *you* can tell daddy to come by and eat—”

“Khalil, you better not,” Kira interrupted as she walked by and mused his head. “Cousin, are you ready to go?” She walked over and kissed my cheek. “I want to see what you’re going to wear on this date tonight.”

“Date?” Khalil and Bino both asked.

Giggling, I placed KJ back on the ground, and he shot off in his daddy’s direction. He climbed back beside him on the couch, picked up his tablet, and went back to whatever he was doing.

“Who in the hell do you have a date with tonight?” Bino asked as he got comfortable in the recliner and popped a few grapes into his mouth. “I know damn well you’re not letting a nigga love on your mean ass.”

“I’m not mean.” I rolled my eyes and placed my hand on my hips. I could feel Khalil’s eyes on me, but I chose to ignore him. “Plus, who said I was letting anybody love on me? It’s dinner and dick, nothing special.”

“Dick, huh?” Khalil asked, making sure KJ’s headphones were secure over his ears. “So is eating food and then eating dick your thing? And here I am thinking I was special.”

“Why would you think that, love?” I smirked as I folded my arms. “Single people do single shit. If I want to go out for dinner and dick on a daily, I can do that. Worry about Larry, Curly, and Moe.” I winked at the mug forming on his face. “I got me.”

“Oh, I get it.” He chuckled as he draped his arm over the sofa. “You’re just a hoe like the rest of them. You’re just out here fucking anything moving.”

“Khalil!” Kira gasped as she walked over and hit his shoulder. “Don’t call my cousin out of her name.”

“Girl, that shit doesn’t bother me.” I waved her off.

Bino and Jake were looking between us as if they knew some shit was about to pop off, and they couldn’t be more wrong.

“If that’s what he feels, he’s entitled to his opinion.” I shrugged as all eyes were now on me. “I’m grown as hell, single, and make my own money. I get dick from these niggas, and I send them on their way. There’s no harm in that. Granted, I could be out here on some scandalous shit. You know, fucking on brothers and hiding babies for almost three years.”

“Oop!” Bino instigated as he held his fist over his mouth. He dragged his eyes over to a fuming Khalil as I looked on without a care in the world. When people go low, I go to hell. I’m not rude by any means, but you will not come for me. “You gone take that shit, Loon?”

“He doesn’t have to take shit.” I chuckled and nodded toward Kira. “Meet me outside, boo. I’m ready to go before I change my mind. You know how I get.” I was not about to stand there and go back and forth with Khalil. He has a lot of pent-up aggression when it comes to women and his baby mother. I get that, but I am the wrong one to take that shit out on.

After a few more minutes of sitting in my car, I looked on and noticed Jake walk Kira over to the passenger side. I felt as if I was imposing as I watched them hug and kiss all over each other, as if she weren’t coming back. If I ever were to take a man seriously, I would hope he loved me as much as Jake loved my girl. Finally, they both came up for air so we could be on our way.

“So bitch, when were you going to tell me you were messing with Loon’s crazy ass?” Kira grilled me as we made our way inside the mall.

Despite the holidays, traffic was light, and now I see why. Everybody and their mama are here. I only wanted to come because I needed an outfit for a night out with Monty. He’s been coming by the bakery apologizing for the way he’s been acting. I told him there was nothing to apologize for, but he insisted on going to dinner. I’m a girl who loves to eat, so why not?

“Because it’s nothing like that,” I countered as we made our way inside of Foot Locker. He gave me money to shop with, and although it was probably for something to wear for our date, I’m a sneaker head. I can never miss the chance to get something new. “Khalil and I are just cordial. We’re not even friends.”

“Girl, please.” She waved me off as we browsed the store. “You were the only one who was able to talk some sense into him the day he wanted to kill his brother and baby mama. It was also you who patched him up the day he was shot. Also, Lori told me about y’all’s little lunch date and how he wanted to fuck you at the table. Tell that lie to somebody else.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle as she ticked away our many encounters on her fingers. Kira couldn’t be more wrong, though. Yes, all of those things transpired, but that’s as far as it will go with us.

“Khalil is not the type of person I would be with if I were in the running for a man.” I pulled an all-black pair of Viper Max from the shelf and took my place on the bench to try them on. “He clearly has some baby mama drama going on, not to mention his harem. Girl, I will hurt all of them hoes fucking with Khalil.”

“Girl, Loon is a good guy despite all of that.” Kira sat beside me and pled Khalil’s case as she tried on shoes of her own. “He just needs a real woman by his side because that baby mama of his did a number on him. I really want to beat her ass.”

“Hopefully, they get it together for KJ.” I finished with my shoe and went in search of the store associate. “He’s so sweet and doesn’t deserve that toxic shit.”

“Yeah, I know.” She stood and followed me. “I was telling Jake—”

“Kira, hey, sis.”

We both turned and came face to face with the Doublemint twins. I don’t know their names for anything in this world because it’s not important to me. Deciding to give them space

to talk, I made my way toward the register. I had no reason to stick behind.

“Hey, girl.” I could hear Kira greet them from behind me. “What have y’all been up to?”

“You’d know if you would let us come to the house,” one of them snapped. “It seems as if you have a new friend and don’t have time for us.”

“Relax.” I could hear the agitation in her voice as she got closer. I was paying for my things and going to get out of their way because I didn’t have time for the petty mess. “I’ve been busy and dealing with family stuff. I talk to y’all all the time.”

“Well, it just seems like since your *friend* came into town, you’ve thrown us away. Plus, I know she’s trying to sink her teeth into Loon.”

“Trust me, teeth are the last thing I use on his fine ass. He doesn’t like that.” I could hear the cashier chuckle as I turned around. “I’m Kira’s cousin, by the way. Even if I wasn’t, what the fuck is it to either of you.” I looked back and forth between Dumb and Dumber. “Y’all got some shit to say?”

“Actually, I do.”

“Allison, be cool.” Kira stood between us and warned. “At the end of the day, this is my cousin. Plus, y’all are not about to be arguing about Khalil. You and Alicia are sisters, and seeing y’all attempt to step down on someone about a man you both share is crazy.”

“He was ours first!” the girl I now know as Alicia chimed in. These girls were really going out sad behind this man. They were both cute as hell, but clearly, that’s all they had going for them because their brains were shot. “So you’d better back off!”

“Or what?” I smirked as I pushed Kira out of the way. “What the fuck you gone do? I will call that nigga right now and tell him to pull up and eat this pussy, and that’s what the fuck he gone do.”

“Yeah?” Alicia stood in front of her sister and asked. “Do it.”



Handing Kira my shopping bag, I went into my purse and dug around until I found my cell phone. As I unlocked it, I strolled past the numerous missed calls and messages from Montel. Finding my contacts, I went to Khalil's and chuckled at him saving his number under *Big Dick 'Lil*.

"You know I'm not fucking with you, Luck," his raspy voice growled through the phone. "What the fuck do you want?"

"Really 'Lil?" I asked as the sisters smirked at his rudeness. "I was calling to see if you wanted to go to the water park, but never mind."

"Waterpark?" he asked, and I could tell he was moving around by all the noise he was making. "Girl, it's cold as fuck... wait. You trying to feed a nigga some pussy, huh?"

"You want to eat or not?" I grinned as the girls fumed. "I'm trying to fuck your nose, baby."

"Ditch Kira's pickle-headed ass and call me later."

"Bye, Khalil." I chuckled and disconnected the call. Both girls looked hurt, and I couldn't help but shake my head at them. There was no need in entertaining them.

"Kira, I need to finish shopping."

"I'll call you girls later." She gave them soft smiles as we left out of the store. We weren't far before we burst into laughter. "Devyn, you're an asshole just like that nigga."

"Cousin, I don't know why I felt inclined to do that, but please keep your friends away from me before I beat their asses." We were rounding the corner to go inside Neiman Marcus, and I groaned at the crowd. "I don't want that man, but I will surely keep that dick occupied on some petty shit if they want to take it there. Now help me find an outfit so I can take a nap before I have to deal with Monty and all of his whining."

I've never been one to go back and forth about a man, and I refuse to start now. Allison and Alicia need to wake up and get a clue when it comes to Khalil. That man disrespects them at every turn, and they still want him. I'm not trying to be

added to his roster, and I have no desire in wanting him for myself. If they keep playing with me about him, I will surely make it so he will be so busy sniffing behind me that they'll be a distant memory.

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“You look really good tonight, Dee.” Monty eyed me lustfully as he sat beside me at the table. “I appreciate you agreeing to this date.”

I silently agreed as I looked over the rim of my glass of sweet tea. Dressed in a red halter dress, my slim, thick frame was turning heads tonight. My loose wave curls were popping, and my makeup was natural and flawless. I never really had to do too much, and even though I didn't want to go on this date, I knew I was going to look my best.

“I appreciate that.” I softly smiled as I sat my drink down and glanced at him. “You look handsome tonight as well.” That wasn't a lie because the crème-colored Armani button-down and jeans looked great on him. My compliment pleased Monty because he peered at me, showing all thirty-two pearly whites. “Thank you for bringing me here, too. I've always wanted to try Japanese.”

To know that he listened to me on one of the rare nights I let him into my mind is shocking. There was this new restaurant I've been dying to try because not only do they make the food in front of you, but they also let you make your own. That's cute for a date night.

“I'm glad you gave a nigga a chance.” Monty draped his arm over my shoulder. “I've been wanting to take you out for the longest, and all you do is fight a nigga on it.” He frowned slightly as if he was in deep thought. “Like I'm some lame ass nigga or something.”

“It's not even like that.” I chuckled as our chef for the evening entered our dining room. A few other people were sitting with us, and I was glad. It made it seem less intimate. “I'm just always busy and not interested in dating anyone.”

“Why, though?” He leaned back and looked me over. “You’re fine as hell, make your own money, and are about your business. You deserve a man who worships you, girl.”

“Hmm,” I murmured, turning my attention to the cook. He was setting things up and greeting everyone around the table. “When the times come, I’m hoping I meet a man that’s equally yoked with me. I haven’t met that one yet.”

“Wow,” Monty huffed and removed himself from my space. “So you’re basically telling me I’m wasting my time?”

“Have I ever made you think this would be more?”

“No, but—”

“What’s up, everybody?”

I snapped my head in the direction of the room’s entrance. Of all the places this man could have had dinner tonight, Khalil ends up at the same restaurant as me. Not only that, but he has Frick and Frack following him. The people around us happily greeted him, not knowing he was as ignorant as they came. What made matters worse, he decided to come and sit on the other side of me. The girls were visibly upset because they wanted him in the middle of them. Being sister wives must be draining.

“What’s up, bro?” Monty spoke and nodded in his direction.

“I’m not your fuckin’ brother, so don’t play yourself.” Khalil grimaced at Montel before he brought his eyes back to me. “What’s up, Luck?” He smirked and one-armed me into his embrace. He smelled so damn good that I couldn’t help but close my eyes as the smell invaded my nostrils. “Crazy running into you here.” He released me and eyed my body. “You look good as fuck.”

“Thank you.”

I chuckled as the cook finally came over and took our orders. The couple across from me ordered some type of chicken, shrimp, and steak combo with rice and veggies, and I had to try it. Feeling eyes on me, I found his women staring at me.

“Hello, ladies.”

The only greeting I got in return were icy glares. Shrugging my shoulders, I gave my attention back to a seemingly bothered Monty. His entire demeanor has changed, but I wasn't going to call him out on it. For a moment, we all sat and watched the chef prepare our meals before us in wonderment. Food and fire were flying everywhere.

“This is so nice,” Alicia chimed in as she laid her head on Khalil's shoulder. “Thank you so much for inviting us.”

“Girl, get off me.” He shimmied his shoulder until she lifted her head. “You and your sister followed me after she finished sucking my dick. She overheard a conversation I was having and told you where I was headed. Don't play yourself.”

“Damn.” I chuckled as the people around us did the same and laughed. “Khalil, could you be any ruder?”

“Rude is what I want to do to you, baby girl.” He winked and tapped my chin. “Maybe I can come over and show you later.”

“Um, I'm on a date.” I pointed over my shoulder at a quiet Monty. “Don't come in here with that. You have two that are more than willing to fill my place.” I looked over his shoulder at the girls. “Ain't that right? You guys made sure to get hold of him after that phone call earlier.”

“What phone call?” he asked as he looked between me and them. “What are you talking about?”

“I called you earlier because they were on me about messing with their man.” I smiled and thanked the cook as he placed my food before me. “It doesn't matter to me, though. I'm on my own date, and so are you. We're both going to enjoy our night.”

“Uh, Dee.” Monty tapped my shoulder to get my attention. “I hate to cut this night short, but something has come up for work.” He stood to leave and pulled out his wallet in the process. “Dinner is still on me, though, and I hope you allow me to make it up to you later.”

“Wait.” I placed my fork onto my plate. It seemed we now had the attention of the eight people in the room with us, and I hated that. “Are you seriously leaving me here to eat alone?”

“I got you, baby,” Khalil chimed in. I peered over my shoulder, and he was glaring at Montel. “Let that nigga go and handle his business. I’m sure his life depends on it since he’s leaving your fine ass here.”

“Dee—”

“Just go, Montel.” I rolled my eyes and went back to eating. “Keep your money. I got it.”

“Nah, *I* got it,” Khalil chimed in. “Enjoy your evening and be safe. I hope you get that business handled, too. Oh, I’m sorry to hear about your girlfriend. Latavia, right?” Khalil shook his head and appeared to be saddened. “I hate that her mother couldn’t have an open casket. My condolences.”

*Girlfriend?* I didn’t even know Monty had one since he’s been sniffing around me nonstop. Asking him about it would be pointless because I was done dealing with him after tonight. I could feel him still standing behind me before he shot out of the restaurant. I could feel the stares coming in my direction, but I couldn’t worry about that. Yeah, I was a little embarrassed that he left me here alone, but it’s over for us. Granted, there was nothing to begin with, but if I was ever thinking of giving him a chance, he surely just lost it.

“Too bad your date left you hanging like that,” Allison chimed in after we’d all returned to eating. People had gone back to minding their business after the mini fiasco, and I was thankful. “It’s gotta suck to have your date bail on you like that. Then he didn’t even pay for your food.”

“Yeah, it sucks.” I giggled as I wiped my mouth. “Good thing I have my own money and can pay for my own. It’s even better that your man Khalil here had already taken care of the tab.”

“What?” she shrieked. “Are you seriously paying for her food, and we’re here with you?”

“Shut up, girl,” he gritted as he side-eyed her. “Didn’t nobody tell your ass to follow me here. Shit, I hope you have money to pay for your shit, or you’re definitely washing dishes tonight, not to mention Luck has the type of pussy that will have a man outside spearing all types of animals just to keep her fed.” He leaned over and whispered in my ear. “You gone let me come over and suck some of this Yum-Yum sauce off of your pussy later?”

“Khalil, move!” I giggled as I pried his hand from my thighs. “You literally waltzed in here with not one, but *two* women on your arm, and you’re trying to go home with me?”

“Man, I didn’t come with them.” He pointed toward them. “Did you not hear me say they followed me? I don’t care about these bitches.”

“Do you not have any shame?” I rolled my eyes and stood from my seat. “You need to work on how you speak to people, Khalil.” I placed my hand on my hip, and I stood over him. That was a bad move on my part. He licked his lips and pulled me by my waist until my pussy was directly in his face. “You’re so disrespectful.”

“Let me make it up to you, then.”

“As tempting as that sounds,” I took a step back, “I’m going to pass. I don’t want you on me while someone’s bodily fluids are still lingering on your balls.” I leaned forward and kissed his cheek. “Thanks for dinner, boo.”

With that, I placed the strap of my purse on my shoulder and switched toward the exit. As I got into my car, I sighed heavily once I was seated behind the wheel. I tried to act as if Monty ditching me didn’t bother me, but it did. That was the prime example of why I didn’t take these niggas seriously. As soon as you give in to them, they let you down. Yes, I may be overreacting when this was only a simple date, but if you could disappoint me over something as small as this, I can only imagine if it were something of importance. This just further proves my point of sex with no attachments or expectations. Love and the things that come with it just weren’t for me.

# CHAPTER

## FIVE

KHALIL

“KHALIL, I’m telling you now, son, that I don’t want any shit out of you boys today,” my mother fussed as we walked into the restaurant. She thought meeting with Kaine in a public place would keep me from acting a fool, but she was sadly mistaken. I will lay that muthafucka out wherever and pay for the damages later. “I mean it, Khalil.”

“Mama, you gotta relax baby.” I pulled her into my embrace and kissed her cheek as we stood at the hostess stand. It sure was crowded for it to be in the middle of the day. “You act like I don’t have home training.”

“I just wish Sean or at least Jacob could have come along today.” She sighed as she peered up at me. “Somebody needs to be here to help me.”

“You talk about home training but want to be in a public space with Bino and Jake?” I chuckled as we followed the hostess to our table.

She decided on a steakhouse, and I was glad. I haven’t had a Porterhouse in a minute, and I was dying for one. Plus, I usually have KJ with me and all he wants is cheesy noodles or chicken nuggets. I was thankful Kira kept him for me today for many reasons.

“Those two young men are something else, but for the most part, they know how to act.” As I pulled her chair from the table, I didn’t even bother with responding. “Have you talked to your father?”

“Here and there,” I answered as I took my seat and looked over the menu. “I can only focus on one fuck nigga at a time,

so he has to wait in line. Owww, mama!”

“Watch your damn mouth, boy.”

Placing my hand over my face, I winced in pain as she hit me in the mouth with a saltshaker. I rubbed the spot and lowly chuckled as we waited for the server to come to take our order. Since she wanted to have this bullshit lunch with her hoe-ass son, I called ahead and requested to be seated ducked off somewhere. I don’t want to embarrass her too much when shit gets out of hand, like I’m sure it will.

“Good afternoon, and welcome to Royale Cuisine.” My head snapped up at the sound of Persia’s voice. It slipped my mind that she worked here, but not that it really matters. I haven’t talked to this hoe since she trashed my car. “What can I get you today?”

“Can I get the biggest Porterhouse you have, medium well, with a side of loaded roast potatoes and asparagus?” I handed the menu back to her with a slight mug on my face. She looked at me with sad eyes. I couldn’t care less about that shit because she knows it doesn’t move me one way or another. “That’ll be all for me.”

“Loon, can I talk to you for a minute?” she asked in a shaky voice. “I miss you and—”

“Girl, do you not see me sitting my ass right here?” my mother snapped as a tear slid down P’s face. “He has enough whores causing him trouble, and I don’t see why you want to be added to the list so badly. Take this damn menu and bring me the same thing he is having before I make you go and get your manager.”

Embarrassed, Persia took my mother’s menu and profusely apologized as she took our drink orders and told us she would return. I didn’t even wait until she was from our table before I bellowed in laughter. Mama sat across from me, mumbling about hussies having no shame as I sat there with tears in my eyes. That lady was a trip.

“Mama, you didn’t have to embarrass that girl like that,” I stated once I caught my breath. “She was already having a bad



day.”

“I’m shocked you only have one child with the way you carry on with these damn women.”

“What can I say?” I popped my collar. “The ladies love Loon, girl. You raised a handsome ass nigga.” We shared a laugh as she rolled her eyes and called me delusional.

“Well damn, what has y’all so tickled? I want to laugh.”

Hearing Kaine’s voice, I paused my banter as the anger built within me. The smirk on his face made me want to take off in his shit. His bruises were healing from a few weeks ago, and I wanted nothing more than to put hands and feet on my brother again. Dressed down in a plain white tee and pair of black Levi jeans, he looked as if he didn’t have a care in the world. The single Cuban link around his neck and diamond studs in his ear made him appear to have a little money. That took me back to the night mine was stolen from me. At that moment, I once again wanted to kill him.

“Hey, baby.” My mother stood from her chair to greet him. Kaine smiled as he hovered over her, pulling her into his embrace. “How are you doing, son?”

“I’m good, mama.” He chuckled and kissed her forehead. They detached as he helped her back into her seat. He brought his eyes to me and stared for a moment before he decided to speak. Extending his fist, he held it out for me to dap. “What’s up, bro?”

“Nigga, fuck you,” I spat as P sat our drinks on the table. She and my mother gasped as he chuckled and placed his order.

Kaine took a seat beside mama, but he never took his eyes off me.

“Watch your mouth, Khalil,” my mother warned. “Respect me at this table, both of you.” She pointed between the two of us. “We’re going to sit and talk like sensible adults, like a family.”

“Family?” I scoffed. “That’s your son, but he ain’t nothing to me, mama. I’m having this conversation off the strength of

you and nothing else. We have until the food comes, and I eat, to talk and then I'm out of here. I have to go get my son."

"Your son, huh?" Kaine leaned back in his chair and smirked. "You know, Mia cried all night because of the way you handled her at the park. You know that's her child, too, right, especially legally? Your name ain't on shit, and if we want to, we could come and get him." He paused as his drink arrived. "Be thankful we even let you see him."

"Let me?" I chuckled and leaned across the table. "If anybody should be thankful, it's you." I palmed the table as I kept eye contact with him. "Be thankful that your mama thought having a conversation in a public setting would spare your life. Be thankful that I didn't put a bullet in you the day you stepped foot in that backyard. Be thankful that I haven't had my real brothers run up in that lil' raggedy ass house a few towns over that you have been laid up in with that stank pussy ass hoe, Mia." I leaned back in my seat and took a sip of my tea. "If anyone should be raining thanks and praises, it's you."

It was taking everything in me not to reach across this table and stab this nigga with a steak knife. Kaine was trying to get under my skin, and I refused to let him. I was going to let him talk all the shit he wanted to because, ultimately, he would get what's coming to him.

"Listen, both of you," my mother gestured between us. "Today, you both will keep the lines of respect open, and I mean that. Now you," she turned to my brother, "what the hell made you do what you did? Khalil is your flesh and blood, and I didn't raise you to betray your brother the way you have!"

Kaine chuckled as he leaned over the table and grabbed his own drink. As he sipped, he eyed me with nothing but malice. During our stare-off, our food was placed on the table, and for a moment, we all were lost in our plates. This conversation was more for my mother than me because there wasn't shit this nigga could say that would make me feel any different about him.

"Khalil has always been your favorite." He started as he broke the silence between us. "He has been the light of your

life ever since the day you brought that nigga home from the hospital. He was always the smart one, the athletic one, the one you could always depend on.” He chuckled and looked over at me. “It was time for you to be humbled. You always felt like you were that nigga. You had all the women after you and felt like you were the shit because you had the finest of them all. For years, I was fuckin’ your bitch, and you didn’t even know it. You’ve paid for trips for both of us and provided us with a lavish lifestyle, so I guess I should thank you for that. That bitch loves me nigga, and that will never change.”

“Why would you think I favored Khalil more than you, Kaine?”

“Because he has a living father, and I don’t!” He slammed his hands on the table.

“Aight, nigga,” I warned as people began to look over and stare. “Watch your tone with my mama.”

“Nah, fuck that.” He dropped his fork on his plate. “She always held you up on a pedestal, and for what? Because your father was above ground and mine wasn’t. That nigga still didn’t want either one of y’all.”

*Whap!*

People nearby gasped as my mother went across Kaine’s face. He smirked as he looked over at our angry mother and wiped the blood that was trickling from his lip. She gathered her things in a haste and stood abruptly from the table.

“Now, what I won’t do is sit here and listen to you disrespect me because you’re in your feelings about your brother.” She pointed in his face and sneered through gritted teeth. “I may have stopped him from bringing you harm, but there isn’t a soul on earth that will stop me from sending my own child to the pits of hell for disrespecting me. Now when you get your shit together and can talk like you have some fuckin’ sense, call me. Pay for our food since you’re living such a lavish lifestyle.” She turned to me and shouted, “Bring your ass on, Khalil!”

I stood from my seat and waved P over to let her know Kaine was paying for our meals and to box our shit up. The food was too good to leave behind. Once she was out of earshot, I decided to leave my brother with a few words.

“Despite what you say, I never felt like I was more than you. In fact, I looked up to you.” I crossed my arms and stared down into his scowling face. “You were my big brother. You never played with these niggas when it came to me and you always had my back. I would have moved heaven and hell for you. To play me like you did was foul as fuck.”

“So what? You think I’m going to say sorry for what I did?” Kaine chuckled as she brought our food back, boxed up. Persia stood off to the side and looked at me with pleading eyes, but I told her to scram because I wasn’t up for her shit. Giving my attention back to Kaine, I mirrored his glare. “You think I’m going to bow out and let you take Mia back because of your son?” he continued as he stood. “It’s because of me that the lil’ nigga even knows you.”

“And it’s because of Khalise that I didn’t kill you.” I pointed in the direction our mother just went. “Know this, though.” I stepped to him. We were so close that I could smell the bitch nigga scent oozing from his pores. “You’re dead to me, Kaine. If I so much as think you and that hoe-ass bitch Mia are even thinking of taking KJ from me again, I will kill you both in the most painful way imaginable. You think a nigga is soft on you because of mama, but I want you to keep thinking that and watch me push your shit back.” I stepped back and turned to walk away before another thought crossed me. “If I find out you have something to do with me getting shot a few weeks ago, I’m killing you. I don’t give a fuck what mama says or how she feels. Thanks for lunch, bitch.”

I grabbed our food and walked out of the restaurant, feeling the same way I did when I walked in. There isn’t a conversation that can be held to justify the shit he did to me. If Kaine’s happy with Mia, cool. I just hope he knows this is the bed he’s made for himself. Going forward, he will be treated like any other nigga on the street when it comes to me. I meant

what I said to him, though. If I find out he had anything to do with that shooting, I'm killing him.

"Mama, you good?" I asked as we made our way to Jake's. I texted him when we left the steakhouse and told him we were back on the way to get KJ. He informed me that my father had just pulled up. I'm not sure how I felt about him being around my son. "You want me to take you home first?"

"I'm okay, Khalil," I looked from the road to her as she sighed and looked out of the window, "I'm just really disappointed in your brother, is all."

"That nigga is selfish, mama, and he's always been that way." I was gripping the steering wheel so tightly that my knuckles were turning white. I was more pissed with the way he was making mama feel than anything. "I'm more concerned with why you didn't want me taking you home. Let me find out you want to see your baby daddy."

"Boy," she snapped her head in my direction and hit my arm slightly. "I'm not thinking about your father. I just wanted to ride with you and get my grandson is all."

"Okay, mama, let me find out." I chuckled as we pulled into Jake's yard. Bino's car was here, along with my dad's and another I didn't recognize. I wasn't tripping too much because I knew they wouldn't let random people around my kid.

"Find out what?" She turned to me and asked.

"You like that nigga."

"Boy, I'm grown." She waved me off as we got out of the car. "If I want to give my baby daddy some ass—"

"Aye!" I shouted and sent her into a fit of giggles. "Mama, I don't want to hear that mess!"

"Hear what mess?" Bino asked as the front door swung open. "What y'all out here talking about?"

"My son thinks his mama doesn't get her back broke." She smirked as she walked into the house. "Ain't that what y'all young people be saying?"

“Nigga, what the hell?” Bino frowned as I held my stomach. A nigga was feeling sick, and I felt as if I was going to throw up.

Instead of answering him, I walked into the sitting room, where I found everyone sitting around and talking. My father was seated in the corner, watching KJ talk in animated fashion with none other than Lucky. Even when she’s dressed in the simplest shit, I want to rip it off and stuff dick in her.

“Wipe that drool from your chin, nigga.” Jake stood beside me and chuckled. “You know she’s just as crazy as you, and we have been having a decent day, so don’t come in here fuckin’ with her. Plus, it seems like your son already staked his claim. KJ loves her ass.”

I haven’t seen Lucky’s little ass since the other night when she left a nigga with a hard dick. Surprisingly, I didn’t fuck Allison or Alicia that night. All I could think about was her ass. That alone let me know I needed to stay the fuck away from her.

As if she felt us staring, she turned in our direction and gave me that sneaky ass grin. Her loose curls were piled on top of her head, putting her beautiful face on full display. KJ noticed she wasn’t paying him any attention and looked to see what she was looking at.

“Hey, Dadaaa!” He hopped up from the floor and ran in my direction. “Look what my Debin got me!” He held up his little ninja turtle toy and smiled. “I like ha, daddy. She my girlfriend. She pretty, too.”

“Oh yeah,” I picked him up and kissed his cheek as I hugged him close. “She is kinda cute, huh?” I asked as I winked at her. “She got you that toy?”

“Yep!” he exclaimed as he wiggled to get down. “I gotta go finish playing with Debin now.”

As soon as I placed KJ’s feet on the ground, he shot off like a rocket back in her direction. The smile that spread across her face when he sat back beside her was a sight to see.

I could tell that she genuinely enjoyed playing with him and wasn't doing it out of obligation.

“What's up, Luck?” I watched my mother speak to my father in the corner of my eye. Her ass wasn't slick at all. “Why is it that every time I come to my people's house, you're here? You must be trying to get my attention or something?”

“You wish.” She rolled her eyes and continued to play with KJ. “Christmas is coming up, and Kira wants to go shopping and plan dinner for a kickback.”

“You can cook?” I walked over and hovered over her. Seeing her peer up at me caused my dick to twitch. I bit my bottom lip, thinking of how it would feel having her in this position with spit seeping out the corners of her mouth.

“Of course I can.” She quickly glanced from me to my dick before she brought her eyes back to me. “You know I love to eat.”

“Y'all nasty as hell,” Bino came and interrupted. “I'm going to tell my brother how you be talking in his house.”

“Emphasis on his.” I mushed his head. “Why are you always here like you don't have your own shit?”

“Watch your damn mouth, Khalil!” my mother shouted from across the room. “I swear between you and your disrespectful ass brother—”

“You talked to Kaine?” Jake asked as he entered the living room. He was dressed in slacks and loafers, so I guess he had business today. I'm not shocked because he's been looking into ways to wash his money. “Why didn't you call us?”

“Because I don't need y'all playing referee.” I folded my arms and shrugged. “That nigga ain't talking about shit, anyway.”

“Alright, come on, KJ,” my mother grabbed my son by the hand and raised him from the floor. “Nana is going to take you home. It's too much cussing over here.”

“Ah, man,” he whined as tears flooded his little eyes, “I want to play with Debin and stay with my daddy.”

“What I told you about that crying, man?” I squatted so that we were at eye level. “Daddy won’t be long over here, and I will come get you, okay? We will stay up all night.”

“And I will make sure he brings you cupcakes and ice cream,” Luck chimed in. “They won’t be from my store, but I will make sure that they are just as good.”

He looked back and forth between us before he smiled and agreed. He hugged my legs tightly and told me he loved me. That was nothing new, but I was shocked when he did the same with Luck. She froze for a moment before she bent down and returned his gesture. Just like that, all was well in his world.

“Aye, where you going?” I grabbed Luck’s wrist when she tried to walk past me. “A nigga trying to chill with you.”

“No, what you need to do is handle your business and go home to your son.” She removed my hand and grabbed her things to leave. “I have things I need to do.” She looked around until she found Kira. “Rain check, cousin. Love you.”

She told everyone goodbye and offered to give my mother and son a ride since they rode with me. I don’t know what her deal is, but it wasn’t for me to figure out. Following the smell of food being cooked, I entered the kitchen right as Kira was opening the lid on a pot. Whatever it was, I wanted some. Hearing someone behind me, I turned, and there stood my father.

“You know, if I were a few years younger, I would’ve made my move on that Devyn,” he spoke as I walked over and hugged Kira. Looking over her shoulder, I could tell she was whipping up what smelled like chili. “You know young girls like older dudes these days, so I might have a chance. Let me talk to you for a minute.”

“Unk, leave my cousin alone.” Kira chuckled as she wiped her hands on her dish towel. “She isn’t in the running for a man.”

“That’s because she hasn’t been in the presence of a real one.”



“What are you doing here?” I cut him off before he could start. “You think it’s cool to just be popping up now? My son is here.”

“And I have made sure to stay out of his way. I don’t want to overstep my role in his life.”

“Role?” I chuckled as I stepped onto the back patio to smoke. “Who said you have a role in his life? Hell, you don’t even have one in mine.”

I know my father and I have shared a few touching moments these past few weeks, but that’s all it’s been. I still feel a way about him not being around for me, and I don’t see that changing. For years, I needed him in my life, and he acted as if I had never existed. For all I care, he can go back to being that way.

“Listen, you haven’t called me or been answering after I told you the information I found on your brother, so I tried my luck and came by here today.” He walked over and stood beside me. “I really want to sit down and talk to you.”

“Talk then.” I shrugged as I looked out onto the manicured lawn. “Speak your peace.”

“Not here.” He stepped back and shook his head. “Come to my home or my office, and we can have a conversation. Two days, Khalil. That’s all the time I’m going to give you before I come looking for you again.”

He patted me on the back once more and left me alone before I could give a rebuttal. The fuckin’ nerve of him to tell me what I needed to do. His words and idle threats don’t mean shit to me. When I feel like having a conversation with his deadbeat ass, then I will. Until then, he better make do with the few words I do have. If it’s nothing for me to cut my own brother off, imagine what I’d do to his ass if it came down to it.

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“I can’t believe this nigga has been back in town, not to mention fucking with Lucky,” Bino spoke from the backseat

as he inhaled his blunt. “I wonder how long that shit has been going on.”

“It doesn’t really matter.” I looked out of the passenger window at tonight’s target, walking around as if he didn’t have a care in the world. “What I do know is that nigga is dying tonight.”

“Facts,” Jake chimed in from the driver’s seat. “Devyn ain’t attached to that nigga, anyway.”

Running into Luck at the Japanese spot the other night wasn’t a coincidence. She called a nigga talking that hot shit on the phone about a nigga eating her pussy, and there was no way she was going to play with my feelings like that. So, after calling and bribing Kira, she let me know where her little date was. I just had to promise not to embarrass her girl. Ultimately, it was the lame ass nigga that she was with that did it to her. Of all the niggas she could have been with, it had to be Troop.

Since finding out I have a son, looking for this nigga hasn’t been a priority of mine, but since getting shot, I decided it’s time to eliminate all possible threats. Do I feel like this nigga is an actual threat? Nah, but I don’t put shit past a scared man. The way he hauled ass out of the restaurant and was currently throwing his shit in his car, I can tell this nigga is spooked.

“How the fuck do you know Dee doesn’t like this nigga?” Bino asked. I wanted to know the same, but I was going to remain quiet and just listen. “You be so far up Kira’s ass that you don’t know what the fuck is going on around you.”

“Oh, the same way that you be up Lori’s?” Jake turned in his seat and faced his brother. “Lie and say you don’t like that girl. Plus, my girl and I are best friends, and she tells her nigga everything.”

“Man, get out of here with your pillow-talking ass.” Bino laughed and waved him off. “Lori is cool people, and her head is fye, but that’s where it ends with me. I ain’t trying to be serious with nobody right now.”

“Yeah, okay,” Jake huffed. “If that girl calls you right now and tells you she’s tired, you’re going to hop out of this car and go running to cater to her. Ain’t nothing wrong with that.”

“Yeah, Stub seems cool,” I chimed in as I watched Troop load up the trunk of his car.

This nigga decided to come back to his mother’s house like this wasn’t where I would look. He ran off with my money and felt as if the shit was cool. He’d better hope his mother wasn’t home at the moment, or her old ass was headed to glory.

“Who the fuck is Stub?” Jake asked.

“His stubby ass girl.” I nodded in Bino’s direction. “She seems like a dope girl or whatever. If you like shorty, just say that.”

“Oh, like you like Devyn?” I snapped my head toward the backseat and wanted to slap that smirk right off his face. The shit with Luck and I wasn’t even like that, but I wasn’t going to waste my time arguing with this nigga. He was going to believe what he wanted. “That’s what the fuck I thought.”

“Man, y’all, come on,” Jake interrupted before an argument could start. “That nigga is about to try to leave.”

Grabbing our guns, we hopped out of an unmarked car parked across the street from his mother’s house. Approaching the door, we didn’t have to knock or kick it in. He’d opened it up to head back outside.

“My man.” I smirked with my gun pointed in his face. The look of fear in his eyes was making my heart smile. “Long time no see.”

“L-Loon...” he held his hands up in surrender as he stammered and stumbled back into the house. “Don’t do this, man.”

“Do what?” I angled my head as I backed him into the living room. Jake closed the door behind us as Bino went and checked the home. “Who else is in this bitch?”

“Nobody, man.”

“Cool,” I shrugged with my gun and eyes still trained on his, “they were going to be dying with you, anyway.”

“Aye, man, y’all got something to eat in here?” Bino came back down the stairs and asked. “It smells good as fuck.”

“Man, sit your ass down,” Jake snapped at his brother. “You just gotta be stupid everywhere you go. We came here to kill this nigga and slide.”

“Kill me?” Troop screeched like a bitch. “What the fuck did I do?”

“Nigga, did you not forget that you ran off with my dope and money?” I chuckled. “I know damn well you didn’t think I was going to let that shit go.”

“I fucked up, man.” He dropped his head and cried. “I didn’t even want to do that shit, but that nigga said he was going to kill my mama. You know that’s all I got out here.”

“What nigga?” Jake asked as he came and stood beside me. “What are you talking about?”

“Kaine,” Troop met my eyes and confessed. “He pulled up on me a few months ago, telling me he would kill my mama if I didn’t help him get some work or money from you. I didn’t know what to do, man. That’s your brother, and we all know how you feel about him, but I couldn’t let that man hurt my mama.”

“Who shot Loon?” Bino asked. I was too stunned at what he was saying to respond. “Don’t lie and say you don’t know because I know you do.”

“Kaine.” Troop dropped his head once more. “I don’t know what you did to that man, but he hates you, Loon.” He raised his head, and there was nothing but sadness in them. “I know you’re going to kill me. I fucked up for helping that nigga run off on you. All I can say is watch your back. Growing up with y’all and seeing where you two are now is crazy.”

“What exactly did Kaine say to you?” Jake asked. “Why did he want the work and money?”

“All he told me was he wanted to break Khalil down to nothing,” Troop somberly stated. “He wants you dead.”

“Does Mia know what this nigga is up to?” I asked. “Has she been in on any conversations with y’all?”

Hearing that my brother wanted me dead was disheartening, like a muhfucka. Never did I ever think we would get to this point of him wanting me dead. And for what? Money? A hoe? Kaine’s issues with me are bigger than I thought, and at this point, I’m not sure if it’s worth finding out why. The thing is, if Mia knew what her nigga was up to, she was instantly dying because they weren’t raising my son if something happened to me.

“Man, I don’t know her role in anything or if she even has one, but she’s never been part of any conversation we’ve had.”

“Aight.” I lowered my gun. “I want you to keep doing what you’re doing with that nigga and report back to me about anything Kaine plans on doing. I’ll make sure your mama is straight. I’ll put eyes on her, but if I feel like for one minute you’re playing with me, I will blow that Corolla up with Nadine inside. Feel me?”

“Yeah, man.” He visibly relaxed. “I got you, and I appreciate it.”

Nodding my head, I motioned for Bino and Jake to come on. There was nothing that needed to be done right now. The only thing that was on my mind was the fact that my brother wanted to kill me, and there was nothing I could do about it.

“Loon, I know you, and I know you’re not going to just let shit ride with Troop,” Jake spoke as we pulled off from his street. “What are we doing with him?”

“For now? Nothing.” I sighed and rested my head against the seat. “When I don’t have a use for him, he will be in the same place as Kaine.”

“And where is that?”

Coming to a stop at a red light, I raised my head and met the awaiting eyes of my cousins. My head was cloudy, and my

mind was conflicted. In this case, there was only one acceptable answer.

“Hell.”

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As I drove through the city, my mind was flooded with nothing but questions that, for the life of me, I wasn't able to answer. Where did Kaine and I go wrong? Why did he hate me the way he does? Was this so-called beef really worth either of our lives? To me, the answer was no, but it obviously wasn't the same for him.

Looking at the incoming call flash across my stereo, I ignored it for the fifth time. My mother was okay, and so was my son. Everyone else would just have to wait until I felt like talking. Tonight, I wanted to be alone. Future's "My Savages" flowed through my speakers, and thoughts of my and Kaine's childhood came to mind.

I remember being the youngest of the crew and having everyone's respect because my big brother didn't play about me. From my first fistfight to getting my first piece of pussy, my brother was always by my side. When I was hungry because mama used all of her money for bills, he ensured I ate. He didn't care who he had to steal from to make that happen. When I wanted to play football and was told I wasn't good enough to be the quarterback, Kaine made sure he was on the field and in the gym with me every day, working to get my skill level and weight up. When I was pissed because my father wanted nothing to do with me, he was my listening ear and shoulder to cry on.

“Fuck, man,” I growled as I aggressively wiped the lone tear that cascaded down my face.

This wasn't just some nigga I ran the streets and got money with. He wasn't some nigga that I would hit up to go chase hoes. He was my blood. My muthafuckin' brother. Kaine was breaking a real nigga's heart right now, and that shit would not be good for anybody. My music, being interrupted by an incoming text, paused and caused me to check the notification.

**Little Miss Water Park:** *Come sop up this pussy like a biscuit dipped in syrup. I want to leave your face dripping and sticky.*

Chuckling, I placed my phone back in my lap without responding to her. Lucky is the type that would consume your thoughts and have you lose focus. Right now was not the time. Placing the song on repeat, thoughts of me and my brother led me two hours outside of town. The area I wandered to was unfamiliar territory, but I didn't care. Right now, my mind was racing, and my heart was aching for a brotherhood that was no more. In my heart of hearts, I knew that the relationship between Kaine and me was over, and at the rate we were going, one of us was going to end up dead.

Facing the rest of my blunt, I sat there for a moment and peered out of my windshield into the night. There's never been any bitch in my blood, but this is the hardest shit I've ever had to do, and the realization of the choices I have to make hasn't been easy. Fuck it, though, because I can't let a nigga take me away from my son. I don't care who it is.

I exited my car and popped the trunk, getting all the supplies I needed. Without closing it, I made the short walk to my destination. Tucked back off the main highway was a small cottage-style home. No one was here, but it was cool because I knew how to let myself in. Breaking the glass on the side window, I reached inside and fumbled around until I was able to find the lock and open the door.

"Funky bitches," I gritted through clenched teeth. "They better hope like hell this isn't how they were living with my son."

Food containers and trash littered the floor. Small bugs scattered all about and ran once I cut the lights on. For someone to be living lavishly, I couldn't tell by looking at this dump. After finding out Kaine was the one who shot me, I was shocked. I couldn't believe things were that bad to the point that he wanted to take me out. I honestly was going to let it ride because shit, like I said, he's my brother. I couldn't bring myself to harm Kaine, no matter what he's done. Ironically, it took my own father to sit me down and explain to me someone

like Kaine will never stop until one of us is dead. He advised me to think about my own son and how KJ would feel if something happened to me. I heard him, and I understood, but I was hoping sending him a slight message would suffice.

Once Ceaser gave me the address to the house they'd been living in, I contemplated what I wanted to do with that information. The more I thought about the fact that they didn't give a fuck about me, my choice was clear.

I took the can of gasoline and doused it all over the red and black furniture. With the way the paint was chipping and the floorboards squeaked, I was doing them a favor. Once I was done with the sitting area, I made my way to their rooms.

"Shit," I hissed when I got to what appeared to be KJ's bedroom.

The only thing in the room was a twin-sized bed and a small dresser. It wasn't the best-looking space, but it was cleaner than the front of the house. I quickly looked around and checked to see if there was anything of value in there, and it pissed me off that there wasn't. My baby didn't even have a decent wardrobe. Everything in here seemed to have come from a discount store. My son didn't even have the first toy in this muhfucka, and that pissed me off.

Deciding not to do anything to his room, I made my way further down the hall to the bedroom I assumed Kaine and Mia shared. For a moment, I just stared at the bed. Flashes of them came to mind, and I was enraged. Like a Tasmanian devil, I tore every inch of that room apart. From pictures of them on the wall to mirrors holstered on the dresser, I smashed everything in sight. Going into their closet, I frowned at the things I saw. There were designer clothes all in here, but there were hardly any for women. Kaine was always a selfish nigga, and it looks like that hasn't changed.

As I poured gas from wall to wall, something at the top of the closet caught my eye.

"Life comes at you fast, my boy." I simpered as I opened the medium-sized duffle bag stuffed with cash. "Give me my shit, bitch."



After also finding a small keepsake box that held some of KJ's things, I poured the rest of the gas through the house and prepared to make my exit. Going back out the same way I came, I stepped onto the porch and took one last look at the raggedy ass shed for a house.

"Too bad you two weren't home," I spoke as I struck a match. "I was going to send you bitches right where the fuck you belong."

Flicking it toward the front door, I watched the house become engulfed in flames for a few moments before I made my way back to my truck. I placed the bag of money and KJ's belongings inside before I hopped back into my ride and left the area. What I did was going to have a domino effect, but I was ready for it. Kaine wanted to start a war, and I was going to finish it.

After returning to the main highway, I reached into my cup holder and retrieved my phone.

**Me:** *Make sure you're face down, ass up when I get there. I want to drown while I eat that pussy from the back.*

After responding to Lucky, I placed my phone in my lap and smirked as I turned up my stereo. My mind was clearer than it was moments ago. If Kaine wanted to beef with a nigga, I was going to bring the heat, literally.

# CHAPTER

# SIX

KHALIL

“GOOD MORNING. MAY I HELP YOU?”

Walking into the office of Monarch Project and Development, I was taken aback at how nice it looked. The marble floors shined, and everything looked brand new. For the past few years, my father has lived a few towns over, and this is my first time visiting this place. Until now, I’ve never had to.

“Um, good morning,” I greeted the receptionist as she eye fucked me. I’m not sure what she saw because a nigga was dressed in a pair of Levi jeans and a hoodie, but I could tell she wanted to rip it off a nigga. “I’m here to see Ceaser Mitchell.”

“Ceaser, huh?” She leaned over the counter, making her breasts sit up to her fuckin’ chin. She was a pretty older lady, but she needed to relax. A nigga wasn’t about to fuck her and get the worms or some shit. “Are you sure that can’t wait? You don’t want to talk to me instead?”

“Ma’am.” I chuckled as I stuffed my hands in my pockets. “If you don’t go get that nigga, I promise you that I have something tucked in my waist that will put holes all in these muthafuckin’ walls.” I smirked as the smile on her face dropped. “Tell him Khalil is here to see him.”

Hurriedly, she began typing on her keyboard as she picked up her phone and paged him. She asked me to take a seat and wait for him to be with me shortly.

I nodded and told her thanks as I looked around the lobby. Plaques hung along the walls with his many accomplishments

and contributions to the community over the years. One that stood out was his donation to a local housing authority. I won't lie and say the shit wasn't dope because it was. I wanted to build a center of sorts for similar kids, so I commend him on the work he's done. Too bad that same time and effort was never put into his own child.

“Khalil.”

Turning around, I was face to face with Ceaser. Draped in a suit that I'm sure was expensive, the man looked like money. Extending his hand out to me, I was hesitant for a moment before I accepted. Yeah, I know we recently shared moments, but I still wasn't fucking with this nigga because of how he did my mother and me.

“I'm happy to see you. Come follow me.” He turned and led me past the front desk. “Cherise, hold my calls and visits until my son leaves.”

“Y-yes, sir,” she stammered, smiling as best as she could. “If you guys need anything, let me know.”

Chuckling, I shook my head and followed my father to what I guess was his office. As I walked inside, even that shit looked dope. It was nicely decorated in black and gold, with an enormous mahogany desk in the middle of the room. The floor-to-ceiling windows that overlooked the city are what I liked the most about it. There was a small kitchenette and what appeared to be a bathroom located inside here as well. Glancing around the room, I appreciated the boss appeal it showed, but what caused me to pause in my tracks were the framed photos on the wall.

“The fuck?” I mumbled as I walked to get a closer look. “I know damn well this ain't—”

“Yeah, it's you up there.” He chuckled as he came and stood beside me. “I was never too far from the major milestones in your life.”

I had no words as I looked at the wall and took in all the photos of me from over the years. From the time he held me when I was born, to my kindergarten graduation, to my first

school dance, to my high school graduation, and everything in between. This man really had me plastered all over this muhfucka, and I didn't know how to feel.

“How in the fuck do you have all of this shit?” I turned to face his awaiting eyes. “More importantly, why? What the fuck does any of this mean to a man who couldn't care less about his child? A child he had access to and never acknowledged?”

“Will you have a seat, Khalil?” Ceaser motioned toward the sitting area located on the other side of the room. “Would you like some coffee or anything to drink?”

“Does it look like I want some fuckin' coffee, nigga?” I crossed my arms and mugged him. “For over twenty years, you've been stalking me like you care about a nigga, and you ask me if I want to talk to you over some fucking coffee? Man, tell me what the fuck you want so I can get the fuck out of here.”

“Aight,” He chuckled as he took a step from me and unbuttoned his jacket. “I've let you disrespect me long enough, and I admit that most of it has been warranted.” He removed his jacket and placed it over the arm of a nearby chair. “What you won't do is continue to disrespect me like I'm some bitch ass nigga.” He removed his cufflinks and never took his eyes off me. “If you want to take it there, lil' nigga, we can most certainly turn this muhfucka out. Shit won't be easy as you think, though.”

Looking at this nigga like he was crazy, I couldn't help but laugh. As bad as I wanted to, there was no way I came way over here to fight this old ass nigga. This was the most pointless ass trip if I'd ever been on one.

“Man, let me get the fuck out of here before I take you up on your offer, and we tear this bitch up. Don't contact me no more nigga, or I'll burn this bitch down to the ground.” I turned to leave toward the door. “I appreciate you trying to help me with Kaine, but I got it. And stop trying to come around to wiggle your way back into my mama's life. I will kill you about that one.”

“She lied to me about you being my son,” he called out as I placed my hand on the doorknob. “From the day you were born, she lied to me.”

“Who?” I snapped my head in Ceaser’s direction as he looked at me with angry eyes. “Are you saying my mama lied to you about me being yours? Because if that’s what you’re insinuating, I’ll kill you right now.” I removed my gun from the inside of my hoodie and placed it at my side. “What are you saying?”

“I’m asking you once again to have a seat, Khalil.” He sighed and took a seat on the small couch. “Please.”

I eyed him for a moment before I made my way back across his office to the sitting area. For a few moments, I watched him as he seemed to be in deep thought. I was growing impatient and needed him to say what he had to say before I flashed out in here.

“Say, my man, I don’t know what’s on your mind, but I need you to speak up.” I rested my arms across the back of the sofa and watched him intently. “You got my mind racing over here, and instead of thinking the worse, I need you to be straight up with a nigga.”

“What I’m about to tell you is the God’s honest truth.” He looked up at me with pleading eyes. “I just want you to hear me out, and I will respect how you want to move forward. Can you just do that one thing for me?”

“I’m listening, man,” I answered, slightly annoyed. “Just spill it.”

“When I met your mother, I was young as hell and in the streets, kind of how you are now.” He chuckled as he stared at me. “I knew Khalise was the one for me, and no one could tell me anything different. I love the ground she walked on. She was meant to be more than a street nigga’s girl, but I loved her, and I was willing to do anything for her. Even though I sat by and watched her have a baby by another nigga, I knew she was mine. When we were finally able to be together, shit got rocky with my family and even her own parents. They never liked a nigga, so they cut her off.”

He sighed as he sat back further on the couch.

“They told her she had to choose between a thug and her family, and she chose me. I vowed right then to love and protect her with everything in me. Shit, I even vowed to protect your fuckin’ brother. When she found out she was pregnant, I knew I had to make a way for us and get out of the streets.”

“So you went after my mama, knowing she had a kid?”

“Hell yeah.” He chuckled. “Your brother was around two at the time, but that didn’t mean shit to me. As long as she wasn’t still dealing with his father, I didn’t give a fuck. I took care of his little ass, too, simply because he was attached to her. My family had an issue with that, but I didn’t give a fuck.”

“So your folks were fucking with my mama?” I leaned forward to the edge of the couch. “What did she ever do to them?”

“Steal my heart.” The pain in his eyes was evident. “They felt as if she was only around for my money and didn’t care about me. She was my world, and regardless of what they said, I wasn’t hearing that. After you were born, the tension was worse than ever between them, and I didn’t know what to do. Hell, at the time, I didn’t even know the cause of it. I loved my family, but I loved my girl and son, too.”

“So you eventually said fuck us, huh?” I dropped my head and chuckled. This man was a fucking joke. “Instead of telling them to stay out of your business, you chose them over the family you created.”

“When you were about a year old, I received a certified letter in the mail.” I brought my eyes back up and found him staring at me. “Imagine my shock and surprise when I got papers saying the little boy I loved more than life itself wasn’t mine. Can you imagine how that fucked with me? You’re a father now, Khalil. Can you imagine spending all that time raising KJ from birth and being attached to him just to find out he wasn’t yours?”

I remained silent because I didn't even want to imagine anything like that. Although I'm just now finding out I have a son, KJ was my fucking world. I'm already at the point of killing his mother so she will never take him from me again, so I can only imagine how I would feel if I had him from birth.

"So that was it?" I asked. "Just fuck us?"

"I didn't know what to fuckin' do!" He shot up from his seat. "Before you were born, I never had a reason to question if you were mine. Hell, even when you got here, I didn't because, to me, you were my twin. The papers didn't lie, though. I even asked your mother, and you know what she said?" He paced the floor and chuckled. "She told me to go to hell. She removed you from my home and cut all ties with me. She didn't deny any of it, so I knew it was true."

"My mama would never have a reason to trap anybody or pin a fuckin' baby on them!" I shot up from my own seat. "You thought that less of her to believe some shit like that?"

"My sister had no reason to lie! You came over one weekend and she had you swabbed behind my back! I was hurt, betrayed, and confused man. When she left, I didn't stop her. I never stopped looking after y'all. I always made sure y'all were okay. I never stopped loving either of you."

"Let me get the fuck out of here." I made my way toward the door. "You sitting up telling me that my mama was some lying ass bitch don't sit right with me, and to keep from blowing your brains all over these walls, I'm going to leave."

"Son—"

"Nah." I pointed my gun at him when he reached out to touch me. "Don't call me that. You don't deserve me or my mother's forgiveness for the shit you put us through."

"I don't," he agreed as he looked at me with watery eyes. "I am completely done with Sheila, and I will never forgive her for the pain she's caused my family. You're my family."

"Sheila?" I scrunched my nose with my pistol still in hand. "Your sister?"

“Yes.” he nodded somberly. “She is the reason I lost you all. A couple of years ago, I found out the documents were fake, Khalil. I knew deep down you were my son, but after your mother denied me access to you and wouldn’t do another test, I had no choice but to... Khalil!”

Opening the door, I made my exit and left him standing in his office. I didn’t want to hear the bullshit he continued to spew. For years, you’re telling me you were absent from my life because your sister was a hating ass bitch. Nah, that can’t be right. I know that’s Bino and Jake’s mama, but they better hope like hell that what Ceaser is saying isn’t true. If I find out their mother is the reason behind the hurt mine had to endure, she’s going to be joining the long list of muthafuckas that I’m sending to an early grave.

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“Dada, what we doing today?” KJ asked as he sat at the island. We were at the condo and just finished breakfast. Christmas was approaching in a couple of weeks, and this year was going to be different from the past three. This year, I had a reason to be happy and celebrate it. “Can we get cupcakes?”

“Son, you’re not tired of eating that shit?” I chuckled as I washed out our bowls from the cereal. A nigga could burn in the kitchen, but if it weren’t Corn Pops, KJ didn’t want it. “All of your teeth are going to fall out.”

“I want to see Debin.” He looked up at me with bright eyes. “She my girlfriend, and I have a gift for her.”

“Yeah?” I placed the rag on the table right as the buzzer on the door went off. I frowned slightly because I knew I made it clear that I didn’t want any of those hoes coming up when I had my son. “I tell you what? Go in the room to get the gift, and don’t come back out until I come get you, okay?”

“Okay!” He jumped from his stool and ran to his room. Once I saw he was in the room with the door closed, I stalked over to the door and yanked it open. The frown on my face was deeper than ever.



“Mia, what the fuck are you doing here?” I asked as she stood at my door with a smirk. “How in the fuck were you able to get up here?”

“You must have forgotten I used to live here, too.” She tried to step inside, but I held my hand out to stop her. “Khalil, what are you doing? Let me in.”

“Girl, how in the fuck did you get up here?” I gritted. “And what the fuck do you want?”

“Fine. I told the guard that I’d been out of town for work and to see if I was still on the list for access. I knew you would always hope I’d come back and would never take my name off the list.” She crossed her arms and smirked. “Looks like I was right.”

“Wrong,” I countered. “I’ve fucked so many bitches in here that it honestly slipped my mind. You’re not coming in here, though.”

“Why?” She frowned and tried to move past me. “Let me in, Khalil!”

“Is there a problem?” One of the guards from downstairs was now at my door. “I was making my rounds and heard the disturbance.”

“Yeah, it is, actually,” I answered. “Take this bitch’s name off of my guest list. I made it clear that I didn’t want hoes having access to where my son laid his head.”

“Yes, sir.” He nodded as he made notes in his iPad. “Sign here.” He handed it to me, and I gave my signature to have her access denied going forward.

“Hello! I’m right here!” she stomped and shouted. “I demand to see my son Khalil.”

“Cool.” I looked at the guard. “Will you stand here until I get back? I don’t want this hoe in my shit.”

After he agreed, I went to the back to get KJ. As I opened the door to the room, I couldn’t help but chuckle at him putting on his Spiderman light-up shoes and coat so we could

leave. When he was ready to go, he didn't give a fuck about what anybody else had going on.

"Hey man," I called out to get his attention. "Your mama is out front and wants to see you."

"I stay with you?" He stopped in his tracks and looked at me with pleading eyes. "I don't want to go with mommy and Unkie Kay."

"You're not." I squatted down and kissed his cheek. "Your mama misses you and wants to see you, though, so come on."

Reluctantly, KJ nodded and walked up the hall to see his mother. I couldn't help but chuckle at his little ass because anytime he felt like he was going to leave me, he would have a fit. Walking into the living room, he did perk up a little when his mother came into view.

"Hey, man." She bent down and hugged him tightly. "I've missed you so much." She let him go and held him at arm's length. "You miss mama?"

"A little," he mumbled. "I want to stay with my daddy, though."

"You don't want to go home with mommy?" She pouted and tried her best to look at him all sad. "You don't want to go home and play your game?"

"No. I want to see Debin and get cupcakes." He shot his head up and smiled. "I like her. She's so pretty."

"Who is he talking about?" Mia snapped her head up in my direction. "Are you bringing bitches around my son?"

"Aight, go get your stuff, man." I walked over toward them and pulled him back. The evil glare on her face didn't move me one way or another. "Kiss your mama and tell her you will see her later."

"Bye, mama!" He waved and shot off to the room.

Once he was gone, I gave my attention back to Mia. "I don't know what the fuck you did when he was home with you, but don't do all that cussing and shit around him." I stepped to her, and she cowered as the security guard eyed us

carefully. “And the only bitch you’ve had around him is your nigga. Get the fuck out of my spot before I forget you meant anything to me and beat the fuck out of you, Mia.”

We engaged in a stare-off before she huffed and turned to leave. I don’t know what home she was referring to, but as of late, her shit was blown to bits. After the guard assured me she would no longer have access to my door, I went into the back room and gathered my son so we could leave. Making sure he had his gift for Luck, we got our things and headed out.

“Daddy, Santa bringing Christmas?”

I looked in the review mirror of my truck as we made our way downtown toward Devyn’s bakery. Had I not called my mother for directions, I would never have known where she was located. Hopefully, she’s not too busy or even closed for the day.

“What do you want him to bring you?” I asked right as we pulled up to the store. Luck had a cool spot in the middle of one of the shopping centers near the mall. I’m sure business was booming for her. “Have you made a list?”

“I can’t write, daddy.” He frowned, slightly confused. “You help me? I need toys for me, my Nana, Bino, and my Debin.”

“Well, kid, I can tell you now that Bino has been naughty all year, so Santa probably isn’t going to get him anything.” I put the car in park and turned to face him in the back seat. “What about me? You don’t want Santa bringing your daddy anything?”

“Hmm.” He tapped his chin in deep thought. “I’ve been good, so I know he brings me whatever I want.”

“I appreciate that.” I chuckled as I got out and opened the back door to let him out. “Who gave you money to get this girl a gift, anyway? Who told you it was cool to buy these women gifts?”

“My Nana.” He smiled brightly. “She said Debin is nice and can have it.”

I left the conversation alone as I helped him out and made sure he had everything he needed. His jacket was secured, so we made our way toward the sidewalk until we reached the door of her bakery.

“Welcome to Soul Pies. I’ll be right with you!” Luck yelled from the back of the store.

Looking around the place, I could tell she took pride in what she did. The little tables and booths were littered with Christmas decor, and it smelled good as hell in here. Walking toward the display case, the cupcakes and various pastries had a nigga’s stomach growling.

“This looks really good son,” I spoke to KJ as I rubbed his curls.

“Thank you.”

Turning around, I couldn’t lie and say the girl didn’t look good as fuck in her work uniform. Her Khaki pants and light blue button-down fit her frame just right, and I licked my lips because I knew the sweetest gift on earth was underneath.

“Debin!” KJ broke free and ran over to her. Wrapping his arms around her legs, he hugged her tightly as she returned the gesture. It was a beautiful sight to see because they really fucked with each other. “I came to see you.”

“And I’m so happy you did.” She lifted him from the floor and kissed his cheek. “I’ve missed you, Bubba.”

“Have you missed daddy, too?” I asked as I grabbed her wrist when she tried to walk past me. “How you not gone speak to a nigga, and I’m the one that brought him over here?”

“Hello, Khalil.” Luck gave me a small smile and pulled away as she led KJ over to the small sink to wash his hands. “Thank you for bringing my Bubba to see me. I’ve missed him.”

“I asked if you missed me, though.” I brushed up against her round ass as she bent over to help my boy wash his hands. “I’ve missed you.”

“You just saw me a couple of nights ago. Now move.” She pushed me off of her as she helped him dry his hands. “KJ, would you like to put the icing on your own treats today?”

“Oh my gosh, yes!” He shrieked as he jumped up and down. I have never seen him so excited. “Oh shoot.” He stood and turned to me. “Daddy, the gift.”

“Oh shoot, son, I left it at home.” I patted my pockets as if I really forgot it. “I’m sorry, man.”

“Ah, man,” his little eyes watered, and I felt bad as fuck. “I’m sorry, Debin.” He looked at her with a sad expression. “Daddy messed up.”

“Damn, son, my bad.” I hurriedly answered before his tears fell. “I was looking in the wrong pocket.”

“Khalil, don’t play with him like that,” Luck gritted through clenched teeth before looking down at him. “You got me a gift baby?”

“Yes.” He ran over to me and snatched it from my hands with his bad ass. “Here you go.”

I leaned against the counter and watched Luck as she carefully unwrapped the small box my son handed her. Her eyes lit up and became misty when she pulled out what appeared to be a charm bracelet. I watched as she carefully placed it on her small wrist and pulled him into the biggest hug. We were all smiles as we listened to him tell her about the baker’s hat, apron, and letter ‘D’ that he picked out for her. I could tell that she genuinely liked her gift.

“Thank you so much, Bubba. I’m never taking it off.”

“Yay!” He jumped and fist-pumped the air. “Now, cupcakes, please.”

I went to take a seat in the lobby and looked on as she pulled a chair to the counter where KJ would be able to reach the items he needed to make the mess that I was sure to come. A few minutes went by before the door chimed in and walked none other than Mia.

“So, is this why you wouldn’t let me spend time with my son today?” She walked in and mugged us with fire in her eyes. “You wanted to come here and play with this Betty Crocker ass bitch?”

“Excuse me?” Luck asked, taken aback. Before making sure KJ was okay, she wiped her hands on her apron and rounded the corner. “You don’t know me like that to call me out of my name. Now, I don’t know what is going on with you two, but that has nothing to do with me. KJ is decorating his cupcakes, and if you want to talk to Khalil about your personal business, you can do it outside of these walls.”

“Khalil is *my* baby daddy,” Mia emphasized and pointed to herself as she stepped into Luck’s space. I got out of my chair and headed in their direction. Mia fuckin’ with Luck in her spot wasn’t going down on my watch. “So you need to back off.”

“Back off?” Lucky scoffed before folding her arms. “You think I want your baby daddy?” She chuckled and threw her thumb in my direction. “Yeah, he can suck a pearl until you black out, but that doesn’t mean I want him. Baby, please.”

“What the hell do you mean you don’t want me?” I frowned as I hovered over Luck. “I’m a good nigga, and I’ve given you some of the best dick you’ve ever had. The fuck you mean?”

Something about this girl saying she doesn’t want me pissed me off. Like I’m some sort of ain’t-shit-ass nigga. I’m a fuckin’ catch!

“Listen,” Luck glanced over her shoulder for a moment at KJ and, like I knew he was a fuckin’ mess, “if you’re not buying anything, you have to go. I’m not about to sit up here and argue with you about a nigga that’s fuckin’ every woman in the city.” Luck turned to head back over to KJ but stopped to address Mia one last time. “But please believe that if I wanted that nigga,” she pointed at me, “he would definitely be mine, and I put my last dollar on that. Surely that wouldn’t be an issue, right?” She raised her brow at a fuming Mia. “I mean, you’re with the brother.” She sweetly giggled as she

rounded her counter. “Relax before I’m introduced at family dinner as your sister-in-law. Good day.”

Luck had better be glad we had my son in here. Otherwise, I’d have her bent the fuck over in here. Talking that hot shit about not wanting a nigga had my dick hard because she knows just as well as I do that she wants nothing more than to have a nigga drown in her ocean. Hearing her say she didn’t want me made me feel as if she was challenging me, and that is something she doesn’t want to do.

“Khalil, you need to go over there and get my son.” Mia pushed my shoulder slightly. “I am tired of playing with you when it comes to him. I did you a favor, and I let you meet him, and now it’s time for us to get back to our lives.” She turned and headed his way. “KJ, baby, let’s go. Now!”

“Aye, Mia, let me holler at you for a minute.” I grabbed her by her elbow and dragged her outside. A few shoppers were out and about, so I didn’t want to bring any unnecessary attention to Luck’s spot. “Have you lost your fuckin’ mind?”

“Me?” she shrieked. “You have some unknown woman around my son, and you ask me if I’ve lost my mind? You’re already trying to replace me in your life.”

“Are you on drugs?” I genuinely asked. “You’re not in my life, Mia. We only share a son, so what the fuck are you talking about?”

Unable to help myself, I looked at her as if she were fuckin’ crazy. Maybe it’s me that’s seemed to have lost my mind. Here I am on the sidewalk in the middle of winter, arguing with my baby mama, who’s dressed in a t-shirt and leggings, looking like she just got out of rehab.

“I don’t know how many times I can tell you that I’m sorry, Khalil, but I am.” She placed her face in her hand and cried hysterically. “I will leave Kaine right now if you take me back. I love you and our son and want to be a family. We lost our home, and we have nowhere to go.” She sniffled slightly before bringing her eyes back to me. “Can KJ and I stay with you?”

“Yeah, now I know you’re on drugs.” I chuckled as I turned to walk back into the building. “KJ can stay with me until you figure your shit out because you’re definitely on your own. Don’t pop up on me at my house again and don’t ever follow me when I have my son. You won’t stop until I really fuck around and do something to you, Mia. I don’t know why you keep testing me, but if you want to fuck around and find out, I have no issue with giving you what you’re asking for.”

Mia really thought that just because she had my kid, I wouldn’t hurt her. Deep down, despite everything she’s done, I don’t want to. It has nothing to do with me having feelings for her. It’s more so of how I know it will affect my son. KJ’s the only one I’m loving and moving for these days, so I try to do everything with him in mind.

“You’re going to regret this, Khalil,” she seethed. “I will allow you to have Christmas with him, but after that, I’m coming to get my boy. You better enjoy all the time you have with him because it will be a cold day in hell before you get him again. Either we be a family, or you don’t get him at all.”

Turning on her heels, I stood outside of Luck’s shop and watched Mia as she walked her mad ass down the street. To know she was brave enough to threaten me was comical, but it pissed me off at the same time. I really wanted to spare her just like I wanted to spare my brother. However, I see now that they both want to sit and play games with Khalil, and it is time that I show them both who Loon really is.



# CHAPTER

# SEVEN

DEVYN

“SUGA, HEY BABY!” my father greeted me as soon as he opened the front door. “I didn’t know you were coming.”

“Daddd!” I giggled as he lifted me from the ground and kissed me all over my face. “I literally called you last night and told you I was getting on the road this morning to head over.”

“Girl, let me pretend I didn’t know, okay?” He placed me back on the ground and frowned slightly as he hovered over me. “Come on in and get out of this cold air.”

Closing the door and following my father inside, I took in my childhood home. Located on the outskirts of Brooksdale, this place would always be perfect to me. The four-bedroom, two-bath brick home was always too big for me and my father, but we made many memories here. I never went without love and affection even though I grew up with one parent, and for that, my father will always have my respect.

“It smells good in here, old man.” I chuckled as I took a seat in my beanbag chair that was located in the corner. “What are you cooking?”

“Well, Christmas is a couple of days away, so I decided to keep it light until then.” He sat across from me on the sofa. “It’s almost noon, but I was thinking we could have brunch if that’s okay with you.”

“As long as we can drink, I’m good.” We shared a laugh because my father knows I love a good cocktail. “So tell me what’s going on with you.”

As I looked and waited for my father to answer, I took in his appearance and couldn't deny how happy he looked. They say behind every spoiled daughter, there was a bald-headed man, and David Walker was proof of that. My father looked good in his Christmas sweater and jeans. His skin looked clear, as if it had a glow to it. His build put the men half his age to shame. The man was clearly living his life.

"Everything has been going well, Suga." He leaned back and draped his arm over the sofa. "In a few months, I'm retiring from the plant. It's time for me to get out of there and live the rest of my life here on earth relaxing, traveling, and spending time with my girls."

"Girls?" I raised my brow as I leaned up in my chair. "What do you mean?"

"Babe, whose car is that outside?" a voice called from the front door. "Is that her?"

I looked toward the entrance of the living room and there stood one of the prettiest women I'd ever seen. She was around the same height as me, standing at five feet four inches. She was thicker than cold grits, and her pixie cut looked good against her round face. Her deep chocolate skin glowed just as much as my father's. The smile that displayed her pearly white teeth began to fade when she noticed I wasn't smiling back.

"Suga..." My father stood from his chair, walked over to the lady, and helped her with some bags she brought in. "I want you to meet my lady, Sasha. Sash, this is my Suga, my daughter Devyn."

"Hi, Devyn." She gave me a soft smile as she hugged herself awkwardly. "It's finally nice to meet you."

Still not saying a thing, I continued to look between her and my father. When I took them both in, I shook my head slightly at seeing them dressed alike. I eased my way up from my chair and stood to my full height. They watched me intently as I made slow strides in their direction. Now standing face to face with Sasha, I took in the scent of her sweet perfume, which was apparently mixed with the smell of my father's cologne.

“So you’re the one who’s been trying to take my daddy away from me? The one who he’s always out of town with and giving his attention to? The reason he wanted me to move three hours away?”

“What?” She frantically looked between me and my dad. “I would never do anything like that. I love your father and—”

“I know.” I gave her a sneaky smile. “I just wanted to give you a hard time. Come here.” I pulled her into the biggest hug I had to give. “It’s nice to finally meet you.” I pulled back from her and was met with glossy eyes. “Thank you for putting the shine back into my father’s eyes and loving my dad the way you do. Please don’t hurt him.”

“Never.” Sasha smiled and hugged me once more before looping her arm in mine. “Now I heard you can appreciate a good drink, and I just happen to be a great bartender.”

“Oh girl, I love you already.” We all shared a laugh and filed into the kitchen. “You did good, daddy.”

“I agree, Suga.” He smiled with pride as he kissed us both on the forehead. “Now come on because I know both of y’all are ready to eat.”

“So, can I call you Dee?” Sasha asked as she sat across from me at the kitchen island. After nodding yes, she continued, “How is everything at the bakery?”

“It’s going well.” I gave her a soft smile and avoided my father’s gaze. “I love baking and interacting with the customers. It’s really been a great experience.”

The truth is that business isn’t always that great. Yes, I get business because of the location I’m in, but the suite owner keeps going up on the rent, which makes it hard at times. I’m trying to save up to purchase my own building, but even that has been a task.

“You would tell me if you needed anything, right?” my father asked as he eyed me. “You’re stubborn as hell, and you’d rather drown than ask for help.”

“If I get too overwhelmed, I promise to let you know, daddy.” I sighed as I took a sip of my tequila sunrise. “So, Ms.

Sasha, do you have any children?"

"Sasha is fine, love." She gave me a soft smile. "But to answer your question, no, I don't have any kids. I never had the chance to meet someone that I was willing to procreate with. You can't just lay down and have kids with anyone."

"Tell me about it," I agreed as I thought about Khalil. Mia was a bitch, and I feel sorry that he had to co-parent with her. The day she came into my shop, I wanted to throw a bag of flour at her head, but I would never do that in front of KJ. I'm starting to really love that little boy, and I don't want to make him sad by hurting his mother.

"What's on your mind, baby girl?" my father interrupted my thoughts. "You're not pregnant, are you?"

"Fuck no... oops!" I hurriedly covered my mouth. "I am so sorry for cussing. That slipped."

"It's okay." They both laughed at my embarrassment. "At least I know your stance on it."

"Do you not want kids?" Sasha asked as she cut into her waffle. "You're a pretty girl, and I know you have to beat the boys off with a stick."

"Sash," my father leaned back in his chair and groaned, "please don't ruin the mood."

"Daddy, grow up." I laughed at his displeasure. "To answer your question, I do want a couple one day, but these guys aren't worth my time. I don't want to be lied to and played with, so I'd rather just steer clear."

That was the honest truth. Every girl dreams of a happily-ever-after with a husband and children, and I am no different. The thing is, I don't want to go through the bullshit just to say I have it. I'd rather continue living my life on my terms and moving the way I please.

"You know, baby, it's okay to love, right?" My father placed his hand on top of mine and looked at me with sympathetic eyes. "I know I have a lot to do with how you feel, but don't let my situation be the reason you're so closed off."

“Huh?” I chuckled, a tad bit uncomfortable at him calling me out. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You do.” He nodded as Sasha sat quietly and listened. “What your mother put me through was hard because I really did love her. I was so mad and closed off to women to the point that I wanted to grow old and alone. I could have missed out on one of my biggest blessings holding on to that hurt.” He winked at Sasha, causing her to blush. “I don’t want that for you.”

“Daddy, I don’t want to discuss this right now,” I mumbled as I drew my hand back. “Can we just finish eating? I want to learn more about Ms. Sasha here because it’s clear to see she’s going to be around for a while.” I smiled when I looked up and caught her eyes on me. “And I’m thrilled about that.”

We sat around the house for the rest of the day and made plans for the next few days. Kira invited me to spend Christmas Eve with her family, and I accepted. I really wanted to spend time with my father, and I was happy when he decided he would join us, too. This holiday season would be different, and I couldn’t wait to see how it turned out.

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“Merry Christmas, cousin!” Kira greeted me as I walked into her home.

It was beautifully decorated, and the Christmas spirit was in full effect. The food smelled delicious, and I think that’s what I was excited about the most. With treats and baked goods in hand, I kissed her cheek and walked further inside. Everyone was here, and I mean everyone.

“There’s my best friend!” Lori shrieked as she came over and hugged me.

They also greeted my father, and I introduced them to Sasha. They helped me with the items I brought as we made our way through the sitting area. Jake, Khalil, and Bino were sitting in front of the television watching some basketball game, which was right up my father’s alley.

“Hey guys,” I spoke to them as I made my way toward the kitchen just as Ms. Khalise was coming out with KJ on her heels. “I want you all to meet my father, David, and my stepmother, Sasha.” I glanced at her, and the smile across her face was sweet and comical. “Guys,” I motioned between them all, “This is Bino, Jake, Ms. Khalise, Khalil, and my little boo KJ.”

“I thought I was your lil’ boo, Luck.” Khalil’s eyes widened as his ignorant ass palmed his chest. “Are you ashamed to introduce me to your father?”

“Khalil please, okay?” I rolled my eyes and turned to my father, whose face held a confused expression. “Trust me, Dad, there is absolutely nothing going on with me and this nut.”

“Nut, huh?” He chuckled as he eyed me. “Speaking of, how about you let me—”

“Khalil Merciano Simmons!” Ms. Khalise shouted as she swatted him over the head and caused us all to laugh. “Let that damn girl alone.” She glared at him before returning her gaze to my father and Sasha. “Please excuse my son. I think I dropped him on his head one too many times when he was a baby. We’re happy you could join us tonight.”

I left them all in the living room to get acquainted with each other as I went into the kitchen to see if the girls needed help with setting up. Kira knows I love baby shower food, so the spread was immaculate, in my opinion. I couldn’t wait to dive in and do my fat girl dance all night.

“Cousin, you didn’t tell me Papa Dee has a lady in his life,” Kira whispered as we plated the food. “She is pretty!”

“She is.” I chuckled as I placed the sweets on the platters. “She’s really nice, and I like her for him. My daddy deserves to be happy and have someone love on him.”

“What about you, though?” Lori asked me. I couldn’t help but roll my eyes, and I didn’t try to hide my frustration. “Never mind. I don’t want to deal with your attitude.”

“Thank you,” I stated as I maneuvered around her in the kitchen. “I just want to have a decent time with my family and

friends and not have to discuss my love life or lack thereof in the process, not to mention the last nigga you wanted me to be with ran off and left me at dinner.”

“Girl, I don’t know what Monty has going on, but that boy has been acting weird lately.” Lori frowned as she made the punch. “I should have known, though. He’s a distant cousin, and most cousins from the daddy’s side are like that.”

“Wait a minute now, bitch.” Kira turned and placed her hands on her hip. “I’m Devyn’s cousin on the daddy side.”

“So are Bino and Khalil,” Lori countered and pointed her mixing spoon at her. “They’re cousins on the daddy’s side. Look at how those niggas act.”

“Well, you have a point.” We all shared a laugh. “Thank goodness my Jacob doesn’t act like that.”

“Damn, it takes y’all that long to make juice and sandwiches?” Khalil’s rude ass burst into the kitchen with a frown on his face. “A nigga is about to pass the fuck out, and y’all in here cackling and shit.”

“Loon, please don’t come in here with that crazy shit today,” Lori pleaded. “We don’t want to deal with it.”

“Go to hell, Oompa Loompa-looking ass girl.” He waved her off. “You were barely invited here, your damn self. Bino must really like your bean pie head ass.”

“Nigga—”

“Khalil, why are you in here?” I tried to stifle my giggle. Lori was mugging his ass, something serious, and I knew she was about to let him have it. “You want to help us or something?”

“Let me holler at you outside for a minute.” He eyed me lustfully. It’s been a couple of days since he last touched me, and I couldn’t trust myself to be in the same space as him. “I need to ask you a question.”

“Unt-unt, nope.” Kira came over and pushed him out of the kitchen. “Not tonight, Loon. Talk to her after the night is over. We don’t need y’all crazy assess ruining the mood.”

“Speaking of that,” Jake came in around the corner, “Kira, you have company.”

“Who?” she asked as she eyed him curiously. “Everyone is here.”

We followed her back into the living room, and I couldn’t help the disdain on my face as I locked eyes on Allison, Alicia, and Persia. They were dressed as if they were about to head to Magic City in their skimpy and revealing clothes. I found it disrespectful to not only be dressed that way around my people’s men but our parents as well.

“What the hell are they doing here?” Khalil frowned and looked from them to Kira. “You invited them knowing my kid was here?”

“Kid?” Persia asked and looked around. “You have a son?”

“When did you have a child, Loon?” Allison asked as she became teary-eyed. “You really made a baby on me? On us?”

“On us?” my father asked as he looked around the room. “All the young ladies are with this young man?”

“Hell naw,” Khalil immediately answered. “I don’t even fuck with these hoes like that.”

“Khalil!” His mother shouted and stood from her seat. “Act like I raised you to be respectful and to have manners. Don’t let me tell you again.”

“I apologize mama,” he looked to his mother and then my father and Sasha, “I apologize to you as well. I’m pissed because I don’t like random people around my son.”

“We’re not random.” Alicia stepped toward him. “You’ve been dealing with me, my sister, and Persia for years now, and we can’t be around your family? Your son?”

“Sister?” Sasha gasped. “Oh my goodness.”

“What are y’all doing here?” Kira stepped in between them and asked. Khalil appeared to have smoke coming from his ears, and I knew it wouldn’t end well for these ladies if they didn’t leave. “I didn’t invite y’all here tonight.”



“Well, I figured it would be okay since we were friends and all that.” Alicia crossed her arms and glared at my cousin. “Since when do we need an invite to pop up?”

“Since I’m the one paying the bills here,” Jake chimed in. “This is a private event for the family only, so y’all have to dip. Keep that hostility out of your voice when you’re talking to my girl. These are problems y’all don’t want.”

“Debin, you got cakes?” KJ came running in from the kitchen with a cupcake in hand. “I get it myself.”

“Hey, Bubba.” I picked him up when he came to me. “How did you get that?”

“The table.” He smiled as he licked the icing. “It’s good.”

“Is that your son?” Allison asked as a tear slid down her face. “She can be around your son, and we can’t? You just met her. Is she the mother?”

“Aight, Y’all have to bounce,” Bino intervened. Khalil had yet to take his eyes off of them. “It’s the holidays, and bro got that look in his eyes.” He tried his best to usher them out of the living room, but they refused to move. “So fuck your lives, huh? Bet.”

“Loon, is that your... oh my gosh!”

“I’m about sick and tired of y’all delusional ass bitches thinking y’all have claims on a nigga.” He placed his gun to Alicia’s forehead. “I have told y’all time and time again that you all are nothing more than a nut to me. To pop up at my people’s house uninvited while my son is here is the final straw.” I handed KJ to Lori because I didn’t want him to see his daddy like this. “From this day forward, don’t call me. Do not text me. Do not come to this house anymore. I don’t give a fuck about y’all being Kira’s friends. I will kill you and deal with her and Jake later. Get the fuck out before I kill you where you stand.”

“Son,” my father stood from his seat and slowly approached him, “put the gun down. You don’t want to do something you’ll regret.”

“Who said I’ll regret it?” He smirked as he looked at the ladies. “I will kill these bitches right here, right now, with a smile on my face and in the same breath ask your daughter out on a date. Trust me, I will regret nothing about my actions.”

“Khalil.” I placed my hand on his arm and stood in front of him. I cupped his face and brought his eyes to mine. “Put the gun down and let’s enjoy the night. Let them go, or you can let them stay, and we can go out to eat. Just me, you, and Bubba. Don’t waste any more time and energy on anything that doesn’t serve you purpose.”

Khalil continued to stare at all the ladies for a moment, and I never took my eyes off him. For some reason, I felt his energy and the power of what he was saying. Something was different about him, and my spirit was telling me that tonight was the night he would actually kill these ladies.

“So you’re going to let me take you on a date for real?” He brought his eyes to mine even though his gun was still trained on them. “Tonight? Me, you, and my boy?”

“Yes.” I nodded. “Come on and let’s go.”

“Y’all really need to thank this girl.” He chuckled as he lowered his gun and placed it behind his back. “She just keeps saving you hoes when all I want to do is leave you all stankin’ in a ditch.” He dropped his head and shook it before he gave his attention back to his harem. “I want to apologize for anything you think I may have done to lead you on. In the beginning, I made myself perfectly clear about what it was with all of you, and now it’s hard for you all to understand that I don’t want any of you.”

“Allison and Alicia,” he looked toward the goofy ass sisters, “I had no business messing with both of you even though you both knew what I was doing. You lowered your standards to a man that used you for nothing more than a nut drainer. And Persia,” he looked toward the other one, “I don’t even know why you’re here. I cut you off the day you trashed my truck, so you’ve been dead to a nigga for weeks. I’m telling all three of you today,” he motioned and pointed to all of them, “do not approach me anymore. Do not think you’re

welcome in my space when you see me out because you're not. This is my last time telling you all this because the next time, Lucky or nobody else won't be able to save you."

Khalil turned on his heels and left us all standing there watching him. Going into the kitchen where KJ was located, we watched as he returned to the sitting area with his son in his arms. The tears streaming down his little face broke my heart.

"Debin, you coming?" he asked in his sad little voice. "Dada, say yes."

"I'm coming, Bubba." I chuckled and grabbed my jacket. "Let me grab my coat, and I'll be out there. Let your daddy buckle you in."

"You're riding with us, Luck."

"Wait a minute." My father held his hand up. "Who is Luck, baby, and are you sure you want to ride with this young man?"

"Sir, I assure you that I won't hurt your daughter. I'd never treat her the way I do these hoes... I mean other ladies." He looked my way and chuckled. "She's kicked my butt once, sir, and I know for a fact she doesn't deal with disrespect."

"Kicked your... Suga?"

"Dad, I promise I'm good," I assured him as I put my jacket back on. "I hate to leave you guys like this, but I really want to make sure they're okay." I looked in the direction Khalil and KJ just walked in. "Stay here and enjoy yourself. Please."

"Baby girl, are you sure?"

"David, let her go, sweetheart." Sasha came over and placed her hand on his chest. "You raised a very smart and headstrong daughter. I'm sure she would never put herself in a situation she couldn't handle."

"Thank you, Sasha." I kissed her cheek along with my father's. "I will see you guys tomorrow. Plus, Ms. Khalise and

Kira are about to get y'all wasted, so you won't have to worry for too long."

"And that's a fact," Ms. Khalise chimed in with a smile. "Plus, my boy likes her, and he wouldn't hurt her."

"What?" I giggled as I got my purse and phone. "It's nothing like that."

"Yeah, it's nothing like that," Persia chimed in. The look on her and her tribe's faces was comical because they were clearly pissed. "Loon has been ours for years, and that's how it's going to be. He is mad right now, but it's a cycle with us. There is nothing you can do that the three of us can't. We have everything he wants."

"But do you have what he needs?" I asked and shocked myself. "You may be the type of girls that fit the bill for Loon, but Khalil needs a woman who will check him when he's wrong and not give in to the bullshit that he spews. Look, I don't want him like that, so you're barking up the wrong tree. Be thankful that you're going home to your families for the holidays because I promise if you ever cause a scene again in front of that little boy of his while I'm around, Loon will be the least of your worries. You can take that however you want," I warned.

I shoulder-bumped Persia and Alicia as I said my goodbyes and made my way outside. It was still early in the evening, so I'm sure we could find several places open to take KJ. If I weren't careful, I would open doors to Khalil that not even I knew existed. I needed to steer clear of this man because I didn't want to be involved in the bullshit that he had going on. The thing is, I don't think that he's going to make it easy for me.

# CHAPTER

# EIGHT

KHALIL

“THANK you for coming out with me.” I looked across the table at Luck as she placed a slice of pizza on KJ’s plate. “You didn’t have to do any of this, but I appreciate it.”

“It’s nothing.” Her cute ass smiled as she continued to help my son. I swear, when she is around, he acts as if he can’t do anything on his own. “You know it’s whatever for my Bubba.”

I nodded as I sat and watched the two of them engage. Spending Christmas Eve at a pizza parlor with my son and a girl I was interested in was not how I envisioned my year ending. Yeah, I’m interested in Luck, but I don’t know what to do about it. I’m not in the running for a woman, but it was something about her that intrigued me.

“What’s on your mind, Khalil?” Luck asked as she looked over at me. “You want to talk about it?”

“Not right now.” I nodded toward KJ. He wasn’t paying us any attention as he looked around the arcade and hummed as he ate. Still, I knew at any moment now, he would take off and want to play everything in here. “Maybe later, before bed.” I winked and smirked.

“Boy, please.” She giggled and waved me off. “When we leave here, you are going to drop me off and home, and we are going to go our separate ways.”

“Dang, you’re not going to let us spend the night?” I frowned as I bit into my own slice. “KJ, do you hear that? She doesn’t love us like I thought.”

“She do love me, Da.”

We looked at each other and bellowed in laughter. KJ was a fuckin' character, but that's my lil' nigga, and I will do anything to make sure he lives the happiest and carefree life.

"So, are you off during the holidays?" I asked Luck as we stood back and watched KJ play basketball. Just like I knew he would, he didn't sit and eat long after seeing all the games in reach. "How long is your dad in town?"

"So you listened when I said I wasn't from here, huh?" She bumped me with her shoulders. "And here I was thinking all you wanted was my honey, but to answer your question, I'll be open for a few days."

"Shit, I want that too." I licked my lips as I stared at her body. "But yeah, I listened. I'm not all bad Luck."

"I know." She chuckled before stopping to cheer on KJ. I couldn't help but stand back and admire them both. She really did fuck with my little man. "But my daddy and Sasha are only in town for a couple of days. We always spend Christmas together, and I wanted to come kick it with Kira tonight, so I said, why not? The plan is for us to chill at my house tomorrow, just the three of us."

"You know you're more than welcome to come eat with us, right?"

"Thank you." She looked back and smiled at me, and I swear my heart skipped or some shit. "Are you okay?"

"Uh, yeah." I shook my head slightly as I rubbed my chest. "I think that pork from the pizza is raising my pressure or something."

"Do you want to leave?" She looked worried. "KJ, daddy isn't feeling good and—"

"Oh, so a nigga's daddy now?" I stepped forward and wrapped my arms around her waist. "I like that."

"Anyway," she simpered and moved from my embrace. "This is the first year with Sasha, and I just want to spend time with her and my father. He really likes her, and I want to get to know her. It seems like she's going to be around for a while."

“What about your mom?” I asked. We were going from game to game, but it was cool. I wanted KJ to wear himself out because if it’s left up to me, I’m ending my night buried inside of this girl. “Is she around?”

“I don’t know shit about the lady.” Lucky shrugged, but I could tell that question bothered her. “I’ve never met her.”

“Oh shit, I’m sorry.” I kicked myself for being insensitive even though I didn’t mean to be. “I didn’t mean to pry.”

“It’s okay.” She hopped onto the back of the motorcycle with KJ. He insisted he needed her help, but I feel like he was playing her ass. “I don’t know if she’s dead or alive. She left me and my father when I was a baby and never looked back. She could walk in here right now, and I wouldn’t know who she was.”

“Damn.” I shook my head in disbelief. “You’re just like me.”

“How so?” She looked back and asked. “Sorry, hold that thought. KJ and I gotta win.”

For the next two hours, I watched those two run from game to game, machine to machine, having the time of their lives. They spent so much of a nigga’s money at that arcade that I wanted to call Bino and Jake to mask up and rob this muhfucka just so I could get some of my money back. Once KJ started to get agitated, I knew it was time for us to roll.

“This was really fun, Khalil.” Lucky placed her hand on top of mine as I drove through the city. “I didn’t think I would have enjoyed myself as much as I did.”

“Yeah.” I glanced at her as we rode through town. The streets were kind of crowded because of the holiday, but it was bearable. “Is it safe to say that we can do this again? With or without the heathen?”

“Khalil.” She sighed as she sat back in her seat. “You’re a cool guy. You’re crazy as hell and have more whores than Hugh Hefner, but I can tell you’re a decent man. I just don’t think that we should do that.”

“Do what?” I asked as I pulled up into her complex. I’ve been here so much lately that I paid to get my own designated spot. “Get to know each other as friends?”

“Friends?” She turned and faced me once I parked. “Nothing more, right?” She looked at me skeptically. “Just kicking it and out to eat type friends?”

“I mean, I want to start spending the night and waking up to your pussy on my face, too.” I shrugged because there was no point in lying about it. “I one hundred percent want to drop dick off in you from sunup to sundown. That’s the kind of friend I want to be.”

“Goodnight, Khalil.” Lucky unbuckled her seatbelt and gathered her things to leave. “I would hate to have to stab one of your bitches, so that’s not a good idea—”

“Give me a goodnight kiss,” I cut her off because the shit she was speaking was null and void to a nigga. I get what she was saying, but I just didn’t care about it. “Just a lil’ peck, nothing major.”

Luck eyed me skeptically before she leaned over the console to peck my cheek. I grabbed hold of her face and brought her lips to mine. She tried to resist me at first and pull back from me, but I wasn’t having that shit. After a few moments of trying to pry her lips apart, she gave in, and a nigga finally got what he wanted. It’s been days since I was able to get a taste of her, and that shit was driving me fuckin’ crazy. We both sat their tongue wrestling each other, battling for dominance and control. Following her lead, I allowed her to have it.

“Wait, we can’t do this,” she panted as she pulled back from me. “We have to stop, Khalil.”

“Why?” I gripped her neck and brought her closer to me. “You know you like that shit.”

“I do.” She sighed as I applied pressure. “Get my baby out of this air.” She nodded her head toward the backseat at a sleeping KJ. “I don’t want him out this late.”



“Let us come in then,” I murmured against her lips. “You want me traveling up and down these unsafe roads at night with my son in the car?” I pulled back and looked into her frowning face. “What if I break down and have car trouble? What if—”

“Okay, Khalil.” She giggled and pulled back. “Come on.”

Cutting the ignition, I helped Lucky gather our things before going into the backseat and getting KJ out. My little man was slumped over and snoring like he’d just worked a double. I hope he kept this same energy when I laid his little ass down because it’s my turn to enjoy Lucky now.

“Are your people coming here tonight?” I asked once inside. Just like before, it was cleaned and smelled good as hell in here. “I don’t want to have to box your daddy because it’s clear that nigga doesn’t like me.”

“He doesn’t know you,” she corrected me, waving me to follow her toward the back. She led me into the guest room and pulled the covers back for KJ. “My father witnessed three women dressed like hoes come into my cousin’s home staking claim to you. Not only that, but you also expressed a false interest in his daughter. He’s a little worried.”

“Who said it was false interest?” I asked as I glanced over my shoulder. I laid my boy down as carefully as I could because by no means did I want him to wake up. “Answer my question. Are they coming here tonight?”

“No.” She eyed me skeptically. “The guest room is all yours tonight.”

“You got me fucked up if you think I’m sleeping in here with this little ass nigga. KJ sleeps wild as fuck, and if I wanted to get assaulted, I could just box your ass.”

“Boy.” She covered her mouth and laughed as we left the room. We left the door cracked and the hall light on so KJ wouldn’t be scared if he got up before me. “Go into the living room and make yourself comfortable.”

My eyes followed Luck as she went into her bedroom. Hearing the shower running, I decided to save water, so it was

only fitting that I join her. I eased into her room and was happy that she was already in the bathroom undressing. I watched like a creep as she lifted her sweater dress above her head and dropped it to the floor beside her. Slowly, she unhooked her black laced bra, and the most beautiful breasts popped free. Her nipple jewelry shined as bright as Cubans, and I wanted nothing more than to run my tongue across each ring. Last, it was time for my favorite thing to be exposed. Sliding her black thong down her thighs, I couldn't help but salivate at the sight of the fat and juiciest pussy on earth. Once she slid that shower door back and hopped in, I knew it was go time. I hurriedly undressed and damn near slipped, trying to make my way to her before she could turn me away.

“Did you enjoy the show?” she asked once I slid the door back. “You're such a pervert.”

“I'll be whatever you want to call me,” I whispered in her ear as I pulled her into my chest, “as long as I still get to end up inside of you.”

Turning around, she lathered the loofah she had in her hands. Like before, she washed all over my body without taking her eyes off me. This girl was breaking me down bit by bit, and I didn't know what to do about it. I know she isn't like the rest, and I can't handle her like she is.

“Khalil, I don't know what you're expecting to come from this,” she spoke as she began jerking my dick, “but we can never be more than what we are. You have things going on in your life that need your attention, and I'm not interested in being in a situation.”

“The only situation I have going on is a hard dick in need of some pussy.” I pinched her nipple as I ran my other hand down her wet body. “All that other shit you're talking about doesn't even matter.”

Hoping to shut her up, I placed my hand on top of her mound and began rubbing on her slowly. Still tweaking her nipple, she threw her head back and allowed her hair to get wet as I brought her to ecstasy. I strummed her pearl at an even pace and was awarded with the most harmonious moans.

“Khalil,” she cooed as she placed her hand against the slippery wall to try to hold herself up. “That feels so good.”

“I know.” I began peppering kisses all over her neck and chest. “I just want to make you feel good Luck. I don’t want a relationship either. Just let a nigga fuck on that pussy and make that pussy cum.” I began to dig in and out of her faster. “Can I do that for you, baby?”

“Oh fuck yes,” she moaned. “Make me cum, Khalil.”

“Say no more.” I pinched her nipples harder and stroked her faster.

Shorty was wet as hell, and it had nothing to do with the water coming from the shower head. When I felt her walls pulsate, I knew she was close. Instead of letting her cum on my fingers, I hurriedly removed them and replaced them with my dick.

“Ughhh,” she cried louder as she wrapped her arms around my neck and held on as best she could. “Right there, Khalil. Fuck me, baby.”

“I plan to.” I palmed her slippery cheeks in my hands and hammered in and out her. I tried my best to be careful and not kill both of us in here, but I couldn’t help myself when I was inside of her. It seems as if every time I was blessed with this pussy, I would lose control. “Gah damn girl.”

“Uhm, hmm,” she tried her best to match my strokes. “Tell me this pussy is good, Khalil.” She lifted her head and brought her eyes to mine. Tracing my lips with her tongue, she placed them on mine and murmured, “Tell me this is the best pussy you’ve ever had.”

“Keep talking that shit I like, Lucky.” I bit her neck and fucked her harder, faster. “You gone fuck around and find out.”

I placed her against the shower wall and fucked her viciously. Baby girl’s pussy was so muthafuckin’ wet that stirring sounds echoed as my dick moved in and out of her. My nut was brewing, and I needed her to give me one more.

“This dick is about to change your life, baby.” I held her ass in place with one hand as I wrapped my other one around her neck. “This is my pussy, Lucky, and if I ever find out you’ve been giving it to another nigga I will kill you both. I will slaughter you and that nigga like fuckin’ hogs girls.”

“Fucckkk, Khalil,” she cried as her pussy clamped on my dick. “I’m about to cum,” she panted heavily. “Cum with me!”

“Where can I nut Lucky?” I asked as my movements became jerky. “Where you want this nut baby girl?”

Instead of answering, she dropped to her knees, wrapped her lips around my dick, and sucked out all I had inside of me. Slipping and stumbling down to the floor with her, I looked on in disbelief as she never stopped sucking and taking her mouth off my dick. Sensitive as a muhfucka, I pushed her off of me and looked at her like the monster she was. It seemed as if my world now revolved around her. Little did I know, it did.

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## **Christmas Day 2022**

“The toys!” KJ screeched as he shot off, running through the living room.

After spending the night fucking the shit out of Lucky, I took a slight nap and left her crib with my kid before the sun was up. I wanted him to spend his first Christmas with me at mama’s house so he could open all of his gifts. The living room was completely covered in bikes, trains, trucks, clothes, and electronics.

“Yeah, I guess you were pretty good this past year.” I chuckled as my mother and I watched him run wild. “You have a lot of cool stuff here.”

“Told you I good!” He tore open yet another gaming tablet. “That’s mine?” He pointed to a mini trampoline and ball pit in the corner of the room. I frowned slightly because it wasn’t here yesterday, and I know I didn’t buy it.

“Who bought that, mama?” I asked her as we watched KJ jump enthusiastically. “As dramatic as you are about him

falling and hurting himself, I know you didn't."

"Well, excuse me for not wanting him to fall on his head and turn out like you." She stuck her nose in the air and swatted my arm. "Your little girlfriend bought the ball pit, and your father purchased the damn trampoline."

Her mentioning my father caused me to stiffen. I haven't talked to that nigga since the day at his office, and I haven't had the desire to speak to him again. I heard the shit he was spewing, and to me it was some Grade-A bullshit.

"Why is that nigga coming through here anyway, mama?" I sighed as I sat on the couch and continued to watch KJ run wild. "You've been keeping in touch with that nigga?"

"Not that it's any of your business," she tightened her robed and glared at me, "but I have been in touch with him if you must know. I know it seems crazy, but—"

"Crazy?" I chuckled, although there wasn't a damn thing funny. "You being friendly with a nigga that said to hell with you and your newborn son is beyond crazy. It's stupid as a—"

"Don't you dare say it!" She pointed in my face and gritted through clenched teeth. "I am grown, Khalil, and if I want to forgive that man for a mistake, that's on me."

"A mistake?" I stood from the couch and stepped to her. "Mama, he left us out here struggling for years, and you want to act as if that shit never happened? He abandoned his family."

How she was so understanding was beyond me, but I can't just up and forgive that nigga. From my father to my brother, all of them could go to hell.

"Khalil..." My mother stepped to me and placed her hand on my cheek. "Baby, I know it doesn't seem right to forgive someone who seemingly wronged the ones he claimed to love. I'm not asking you guys to plan camping trips and go fishing. I'm not asking you to attend sporting events and do all the things that fathers and sons do. I'm asking you to be the type of role model that your son needs in his life."

“What type is that? A man who lets niggas do him wrong and not make them stand on the shit they’ve done to him?”

*Whap!*

“Ouch, mama.” I rubbed the back of my head. “Those little hands hurt.”

“Stop all that damn cussing in my house, boy.” She frowned. “And to answer your question, I want you to show your son that real men make mistakes, but they own up to them. They stand on business, and they right their wrongs.” She stood on her tiptoes and kissed my cheek. “Clean this mess up.” She waved her hands around the living room. “We’re having dinner here today.”

“Who is *we*?” I asked at her retreating back. “Mama!”

Before I could follow her and ask her what she meant, there was an incoming call to my cell. Looking at the screen, I couldn’t help but smile.

“What’s up, baby?”

“Baby?” Luck asked as she giggled into the phone. “You must have thought this was somebody else?”

“Nah.” I sat on the floor beside KJ and watched as he played with his train track set. “I knew exactly who this was. Merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas to you.” I smirked as I heard the smile in her voice. “I didn’t want anything. I just wanted to tell you, Ms. Khalise, and KJ to enjoy your day.”

Instead of answering, I pressed the FaceTime button and waited until her pretty face came into view. Once it appeared on the screen, my breath was caught in my chest. Her face was fresh, her curls were piled high on her head, and she was the prettiest I’ve ever seen. The oversized t-shirt she wore had me envious that it wasn’t me swallowing her body whole.

“Damn,” I mumbled before I could stop myself. Oh well, she was fine as fuck.

“What?” she asked as she frowned. “I know I look a little rough, but I just got up not too long ago—”

“You’re perfect.” I tucked my lip between my teeth. I glanced over at my son, who was still playing before I brought my attention back to her. “Lift your shirt for me so I can say good morning to my friend. I wanna kiss her through the phone.”

“Boy!” she screeched as she fell back laughing. “Anyway,” she simpered as she calmed down, “where is my baby? Did he like his gift?”

“Dada, that Devin?” KJ shot his head in my direction before scooting over to me. “Hey, Devin! Santa came!”

“Oh my gosh, did he?” she asked wide-eyed as she sat up and gave him her attention. “Do you have a lot? Can I see?”

The little nigga grabbed my phone as if it were his and ran around the entire living room and showed her all the things he had received. It was a sight to see KJ talk to her as if they were the best of friends.

“Khalil, who is he talking to?” My mother peeped her head from the kitchen as she inquired about the noise. “Is that Devyn?”

“Yeah.” I chuckled as I got up off the floor. “They both said to hell with me.”

I went into the kitchen to see if she needed help. It smelled good as hell in here, and she had pots and pans everywhere. That alone let me know that this dinner was for more than just us.

“Khalil, I don’t want to bombard you,” she spoke once I came into the kitchen. “I invited Mia, Kaine, and Ceaser to dinner. I’m pissed at Kaine, but he is still my son and your brother. Mia is still his mother.”

“And Ceaser?”

“Your father.” She placed the bowl she was holding in her hand on the counter. “I really want us to sit down and have a conversation today. It’s about to be a new year, and too much is happening for us to hold on to hate. No, I’m not asking you to forgive anyone. Just hear them out.”

As badly as I wanted to say to hell with all three of them, I was going to entertain this conversation tonight. She doesn't know I was shot and that her oldest son was the one who did it. If it were left up to me, she wouldn't. That didn't mean I would forget that shit, though. I was going to hit that nigga when he least expected it. Setting his sham of a house on fire wasn't enough for me.

"Aight, ma," I sighed and kissed her cheek. The smile on her face was going to be worth the drama I knew I was going to endure. "I'm about to go get my phone from this lil' nigga and clean this living room. Oh, check your account, and Merry Christmas."

Winking at her, I left her to do her thing. Mama didn't want me to be in that kitchen with her for real, and I wasn't even mad about it.

As I walked back into the living room, I couldn't help but chuckle at the sight of KJ having the phone propped on one of his toy trucks as he laid out on the floor. Just that quick, his little ass dozed off.

"Even through the phone, you can put a nigga to sleep." I smirked as I picked the phone up. "What can't you do?"

"Sit on this phone and talk to you all day." She stuck her tongue out at me, and I swear my dick bricked in my pajamas. "My dad will be here soon, and we're going to start cooking."

"Can I come over later and get a plate?" I tried to give her my best puppy dog eyes. "I won't stay long."

"Maybe." She smirked and got up off the bed. "Call me later and kiss KJ and your mama for me. Be nice today, okay?"

"Always. I'll hit you later."

We said our goodbyes, and I started to clean up Hurricane KJ's shit. While doing so, I couldn't help but think about how this dinner would play out. I planned to do my part and be respectful because I didn't want to tear up my mother's house. One wrong word, though, and someone wouldn't be bringing in the new year.



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“God, please don’t let me end up sending these niggas to you this evening.” I looked toward Heaven and prayed. “I want you to be able to turn up and enjoy your day in peace. If they come in here playing with me, though, you might have to put your party on pause and come get these niggas. Amen.”

“Son, you need to hurry and take your ass back to your condo because I don’t want lightning to strike my home,” my mother spoke when she passed by the open bathroom door.

I’d just finished showering and getting dressed because, soon enough, the shit show would begin. Sighing heavily, I walked up the hall right as the doorbell rang. My mother and I looked at each other before she shook her head and went to let whoever it was in. I needed to check on KJ, anyway. Plus, she invited these people here. What did I look like being the one that welcomed them in?

“Merry Christmas, Khalise,” I heard my father say as he entered the house. “You look nice.”

“Don’t come in here looking at my mama, nigga.” I snapped as soon as he entered the living room. Every time I’ve seen this man, he was in a suit and today was no different. While my mother, son, and I wore these ugly-ass Christmas sweaters, this nigga was Tom Ford down from his head to the floor.

“Merry Christmas, son.” Ceaser came and stood in front of me. Handing me a boxed gift, I eyed him before I took it. “I don’t want anything in return. I just wanted to give you this.”

“You aight?” I eyed him skeptically as I took the gift. It’s been a few days since I saw the nigga, but he seems a little sluggish. “You look weird.”

“Some days are better than others, and this is one of the bad ones.” He chuckled at me and made his way to the sofa. “Is it okay if I speak to your son?”

Hesitantly, I nodded and watched this nigga light up in an instant. I looked on and watched him and my boy engage in a

brief convo before KJ went back to playing. He's been in heaven all day, and since his nap, he's been on go.

"Ceaser, would you like something to drink?" Mama's friendly ass came into the living room and asked. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"What's wrong with you?" I asked him. "Don't lie to me either. I remember you saying you were sick, but you never elaborated."

"I'm good." He gave me a half smile as he continued to watch KJ. "The doctor says I just have to watch what I eat. Nothing major."

"Yet you came over here to eat mama's dinner." We shared a laugh before we went back to silence. I was now back in my head about our last conversation, and I didn't know if I wanted to bring it back up or not.

"So, how's fatherhood treating you?" Ceaser asked and snapped me out of my thoughts. "KJ seems like a handful."

"At times." I leaned back on the sofa and frowned slightly. His asking about my parenting doesn't sit right with me, being as though he was a whole deadbeat. "I love my kid, though, so it's worth it. Even the part about dealing with his rat ass mother."

"Your brother?" he asked as he eyed me. "Have you done anything with the information I gave you?"

"He's homeless." I shrugged and smiled at his confusion. "I heard the house he was living in burned to the ground."

"Pity." Ceaser chuckled before going silent. After a few minutes, he spoke hesitantly. "And a DNA test for KJ? Did you get one done and make sure there was absolutely no room for error?"

"I did." I leaned forward and stared at him intently. "What are you getting at, man? Are you insinuating he's not my kid?"

"What I'm saying is—"

*Ding Dong!*

The doorbell sounding off stopped this nigga from saying what it was he wanted to get off his chest. He'd better know that before he left here today, we were going to talk about whatever it is he has to say. It's only right since mama wanted to have this fake ass dinner.

"KJ!" I heard Mia's irritating voice sound off when she entered the room. Today, she looked less dusty in skintight jeans, knee-high flat boots, and a crop top sweater. Her hair was in a cute pixie-like cut, and her makeup looked decent. I ain't gone lie. She was pretty as hell in a sneaky pussy bitch type of way.

"I not go with you," was KJ's way of greeting her, and I couldn't help but chuckle. Since the day we met, he has not wanted to leave my sight, and that made me proud as hell. I made a mental note to speak with a lawyer after the holidays because there was no way I was going to let her run off with my kid again. "Hey, Unkie Kay."

"What's up, man?" Kaine dapped KJ up once he came into the living room. He, too, looked a little less dusty than usual. Just like the day at lunch, he looked like he had a little money on him. I guess he had some stashed for a rainy day. He must have felt my glare because he slowly brought his eyes to me. His frown deepened when he laid eyes on my father.

"The fuck are you looking at, nigga?" he asked with a little too much bass in his voice, and Ceaser found it comical. "Why the fuck are you in my mama's house?"

"Because he's my guest, and you will respect him while you're here." She pointed in Kaine's face before looking at Mia. "Merry Christmas to you too." She looked between the two of them. "Where are KJ's gifts?"

"Well, I was thinking that maybe we would sit this year out since you guys are new to this." Mia nervously looked from mama to me. "Plus, our home caught fire a week or so ago. I was also thinking that maybe after dinner, KJ could spend some time with Kaine and me. It's been weeks, and I miss my son."

“Nah,” I stood from my seat and objected. “I don’t trust either of you, and if I think you’re trying to run off with him again, I’ll kill you both.”

“Do it then, lil’ nigga,” Kaine sneered as he stepped to me. “Give me a reason to shoot you.”

“Make sure you aim a little higher than my shoulder this time,” I spoke where only the two of us could hear. I couldn’t help but smirk as his eyes widened slightly. Kaine tried to recover quickly, but he had already shown his hand. “I promise you better kill me next time bitch because if you don’t, I’m going to make you wish you had.”

I could tell by the contorting of his face that my words bothered him. Stepping back, he sized me up, and I did the same. Christmas or not, mama’s house or not, I would give him whatever issue he wanted.

“Son, don’t do this.” My father stood and got in between us. “I know you want nothing more than to tear this man apart, but your mother will be devastated.

“Yeah, listen to your bitch ass father,” Kaine taunted. “You’re a pussy ass nigga just like that nigga—”

*Whap!*

Ceaser decked the nigga so hard that he knocked him out of his shoes as he went flying into the Christmas tree. Mama and Mia came running from the kitchen to see what the ruckus was about. KJ thought his uncle falling into the tree was the funniest thing.

“Baby, are you okay?” Mia rushed over to help him up, but he waved her off. “Your lip is bleeding.”

“What happened?” my mother asked as she looked from Kaine to me. “Khalil, what did you do?”

“He didn’t do anything.” My father answered as he stuffed his hands in his slacks. “Kaine tripped and fell over some bullshit he was spitting. Nothing major.”

“Kaine, go get yourself together, and let’s have dinner.” My mother sighed as she grabbed KJ’s hand. “Khalil, he’s

going with them for a little while after dinner.”

“Nah, ma,” I objected. “I ain’t feeling that. Plus, this girl just said they’re homeless. Where will they go?”

“He’s my son too!” Mia shouted. “I’m his mother, and you’re not even on his birth certificate. You don’t run shit, Khalil!”

“Bitch—”

“Hey, son, come here for a second.” My father grabbed me by the arm as I launched toward Mia. “Let me holler at you.”

As we walked out of the front door, I snatched from him and tried to take several slow breaths to calm down. I’ve never been this disrespectful toward women, but Mia had a way of bringing the worst up out a nigga, and it was taking a toll on me.

“I’m going to end up killing that bitch,” I mumbled as I leaned against the column on the porch and sparked my blunt. “That nigga too. Brother or not, his ass has gotta go.”

“Listen, I get the frustration when it comes to someone interfering with you and your child, but you have to think about what you do before you do it. Your freedom and livelihood depend on it. Now, I can do a few things for you if you would like my help.” He stuffed his hands in his pockets and eyed me intently. “The first thing I can do is get a tail on them. I can assure you my guys will be discreet, and it will give you peace of mind when KJ is in their care. If anything looks funny, they will report it to me right away. Would that be okay?”

“How do I know I can trust you?” I eyed him skeptically. “You just popped up after all these years, and now you want to be deemed a doting father?”

“I know I have a lot of shit to answer for, and I am here to give you and your mother all those answers today. Just please let me do this.” Ceaser looked at me with pleading eyes, and I could tell he was being sincere. “I know I failed as a father, but if I could somehow make up for my shortcomings with KJ, I can leave this world a happy man.”

“Aight,” I answered and tried to ignore the ‘leave the world’ part. “I can let you put a tail on them, but as soon as they think some shit is off, I need to know.”

“Done.” He smiled, pulled out his phone, and began typing away. “They will begin this evening as soon as they leave here.” I nodded. “Also, I will put you in touch with my lawyer. Grayson’s the best in the fuckin’ business and has expertise in several areas. We need to make sure you have and know your rights as the father. You may be asked to submit DNA results or have another test done. Is that okay?”

“I’m cool with that.” I ashed the blunt and pushed off from the post. “I appreciate this shit. For real.”

“No worries, son.” He slapped my shoulder as we made our way back inside. “One more thing.” He turned me toward him so I could look him in the eyes. “If you want Kaine eliminated and don’t want that burden on you, let me know. He’s not my fuckin’ child, and I will blow him away without a second thought. It will hurt your mother, and I will console her as much as she allows me. He’s a snake, and there’s no coming back from that shit. The only way to really get rid of it and the problems it brings is to cut off the head. I have a machete just for the occasion. Just let me know.”

With that, Ceaser went back into the house and left me standing there in my thoughts. I appreciate the help and resources he’s given me, and I will use them to my advantage. As far as Kaine goes, something tells me this is the last time we will break bread together. He’d just better hope it’s not his last meal altogether.

# CHAPTER

# NINE

KHALIL

“CHEESY NOODLES!” KJ exclaimed as mama placed his food before him. “Thank you, Nana!”

We all sat and chuckled as my son smashed his plate as if he hadn’t eaten in days. That boy had the biggest appetite for a toddler. Then again, mama’s food was good as hell. Collard greens, dressing, yams, mac and cheese, ham, turkey, fried fish, and various other dishes littered the counter. This is definitely the best part of the holidays. Well, now, outside of my son.

“So, where are you guys going to be staying since you claim you lost your home?” my mother asked as she looked at Mia and Kaine across the table. My father was at the other end while KJ sat to the left of me. “Will you be living close so Khalil can have access to his son?”

“I mean,” Mia looked from mama to a still visibly pissed Kaine, “we have a whole life back home and will now have to find another place, but we can’t just uproot our son and relocate.”

“*Our* son,” I interrupted and motioned back and forth between me and her. “He is our kid, and I’m not cool with you going back to wherever you were living with him. Shit, you don’t even have a house, so you can live in the front yard for all I care. Be for real for a second, Mia. That shit isn’t fair to either one of us.”

“Like she said,” Kaine chimed in as he continued to eat, “we have a whole life, but no worries. We have a few things to

handle before we leave, so you have a few more weeks with him.”

“Kaine, you’re really making it hard for me not to jump over this table and give you the issue you’re looking for.” I chuckled as I wiped my son’s mouth. “I’m going to keep it cool for him,” I nodded toward KJ as he stared at us, looking like a little chipmunk, “and her.” I nodded toward mama. “But you’re really pushing it.”

“So, you’re Khalil’s father?” Mia asked as Kaine and I engaged in a stare-off. “It’s nice to meet you, I suppose. Khalil never mentioned much about you, and I’m shocked to see you here today. Have you always been in the area?”

“I’ve been around,” Ceaser answered as he eyed her. “I’ve done some wrong that I want to right, and I’m here hoping I can do that.”

“With your son or my mama?” Kaine asked, causing our mother to gasp and mug him. “Relax, mama, I just want to make sure his intentions are in the right place. I mean, he left you once. I don’t want him to reopen old wounds and have you out here depressed like you were last time.”

“KJ, are you done eating?” I placed my fork on my plate and cleaned my son as best as I could. “You want to go play in your ball pit?”

“I call Debin?” He looked at me with bright eyes. “She come play?”

“I will call her and see.” I chuckled as I got him out of his chair. “Come on.”

“Who’s he talking about?” Mia asked as she followed us into the living room. I glanced over my shoulder and Kaine was looking at us through slanted eyes as we rounded the corner. “It better not be that bitch from the bakery.”

“You’re worried about the wrong shit.” I shook my head at her audacity. Placing KJ in his pit, I stood for a moment and watched him play. He was full, so I knew he was going to be sleeping soon.



Mia glanced over her shoulder toward the kitchen before slowly approaching me. Her eyes, which were just holding anger from the thought of Luck being around her son, were now replaced with lust. She licked her lips slightly as she rubbed her finger up and across my chest.

“You know, Khalil, if you say the word, I will end it with Kaine.” She stroked my cheek, and all I could do was glare down at her. “We can be a family, and custody will not even be an issue.”

“Yeah?” I grinned at her, and in return, I was awarded a toothy smile. “You’d leave my brother, and we would raise our kid together?”

“Yes,” she cooed as she ran her hand down my body. Reaching for my jeans, she found my soft dick and began rubbing it slowly. “We can be a real family. We could probably even make another baby. A little girl this time.”

I smiled at her brightly and caressed her cheek. She closed her eyes and leaned into my touch, releasing a small breath. When my hand gripped her neck, she let out a moan that let me know she was enjoying the feel of me.

“Mia, baby?” I rasped.

“Hmm?”

“If you ever try to entice me again with that rancid ass pussy of yours, I’m going to dump your head in a tub full of acid.” I gripped her neck tighter and caused her eyes to pop open. “My dick doesn’t even get hard for you bitch, and if you ever in your miserable ass life touch me again, I will cut your fuckin’ hands off and slap you with them. Why in the fuck would I want to be with you after the shit you’ve done? You’re with my brother now and trying to pass that pussy around like it’s communion. Get the fuck away from me, bitch.” I pushed her off of me and caused her to stumble backward.

Thankfully, KJ was in his own world in his pit with one of his tablets. My son was really unbothered when things didn’t pertain to him. Leaving her in the living room to get herself

together, I rejoined them at the table. Everyone was eating in silence but the stares to me didn't go unnoticed.

“Where's my girl?” Kaine quizzed as he looked over my shoulder.

“Probably trying to catch her bearings.” I looked up at him as I forked my greens. “You know I always had the power to take that bitch's breath away.”

“Okay, Khalil,” my mother warned. “I wanted us to have a sensible dinner, and you both are making it extremely hard.”

“I'm sorry, mama,” I apologized when I saw the sadness on her face. “I'm doing the best I can, but you know how I feel about this nigga—”

“And you know how I feel about you!” he raised his voice and hit the table. “I hate you, Khalil, and nothing will change that. Then mama had the nerve to bring this nigga here today.” He looked at my father, and if looks could kill, we would all be dead. “You're the fuckin' reason I missed out on my own!”

“Kaine, what has gotten into you?” My mother placed her fork down and looked at him. “You have become so angry and bitter, and this is not how I raised you to be. Are you on drugs?”

“He's got to be on something talking to me the way he is, not knowing who the fuck I am,” my father spoke without a care in the world. “I am not the one you want to try, son. Khalise and Khalil care about you, your life, and your bitch ass feelings, but me?” He glanced over at my brother as he bit into his fish. “I will send you into the same pit of fire as the nigga that shot you from his sac.”

“Ceaser,” my mother stood and gasped, “what are you saying?”

“What I'm saying is I killed his pappy, and if your son keeps playing with me, I'm killing him too.” He shrugged and wiped his mouth as if he hadn't just dropped a bomb on us all. “I see that look on your face, Khalise, but listen to me for a moment.”

He looked around at us before he continued.

“Imagine walking into your sister’s home and seeing a man twice her size beating the shit out of her. Imagine seeing him trying to force himself onto her after she wanted to end things with him. She’d just found out he, her boyfriend of five years, had a toddler son by another woman. Imagine me finding out that same nigga that was beating on my sister was also beating on the woman that I was in love with.”

“Nigga, you’re lying!” Kaine jumped from the table and roared. “You took my father away from me because you were jealous of him!”

“Jealous of what exactly?” Ceaser asked and gave my brother his attention. “I’ve loved Khalise since I met her. I didn’t have shit to offer her, so I stayed away from her. Yeah, I was pressed when she got with Samuel and even felt a way when I found out she was pregnant, but I took that shit to the chin. I had no idea he was dealing with my sister, too, because she was always so secretive. Hell, she had the boys by then, and I thought she was dealing with their father.”

“How did you know he was beating me?” my mother asked just above a whisper. I looked over at her and was pissed at the tears running down her cheeks. I never told anyone.”

“I followed him to your home one night.” My father looked at her with sympathetic eyes. “I’d been hearing shit for a while, but I felt like it wasn’t my business to say anything. He had just lost a few bands during a dice game, and he’d been drinking. At first, I followed him to make sure he got home okay. Once he made it inside your home, I left. Something was nagging at me to return, so I did.” He shook his head as he eyed her. “I went around to your bedroom window and saw you crying as you looked into the mirror. He was laid out on the bed, sleeping like a baby, and you were sporting a fresh black eye. As bad as I wanted to kick the door in and kill him, I couldn’t. However, the next day, I approached him without a word and beat the shit out of him.”

“I’m not about to listen to these lies about my dad.” Kaine chuckled as he walked away from the table. “You robbed me of a decent childhood because that nigga had a baby by the bitch you wanted and—”

In a flash, I was on the other side of the table. Before he knew what was coming, I had him on the ground, delivering blow after blow to his face and chest. This is the last time I was going to let him disrespect my mama. He was mad at me. Cool. Felt a way about my father? Understood. But to call my mother out of her name was the last fuckin' straw.

"Khalil!" Mia came into the kitchen and shouted. "What are you doing? Get off of him."

"Pussy ass nigga!" I seethed as I continued to pummel into him. "Call my mama another bitch!" I punched him twice more in the face. "Disrespect her again, nigga!"

Kaine tried his best to swing back, but I had so much anger built up inside of me that there wasn't shit anyone could do to get me off of him. It was the wails of KJ that broke me from my trance. Reluctantly, I eased up off the nigga and left my brother in a puddle of blood on the kitchen floor.

"I'm getting my son, and we're leaving," Mia huffed as she helped Kaine up from the floor. He snatched from her and delivered one final look to me, my mother, and my father before limping from the kitchen. "I can't have my son be subjected to you and your ways?"

"My ways?" I chuckled, still trying to catch my breath. "I would never do anything to hurt KJ, and you know that!" I pointed in the direction that Kaine just went in. "That nigga has been disrespectful to my mother since the day he came back into town as if she did something to him, and you think I'm not going to check him? You think you're going to take my son from me because I beat that nigga ass?"

I chuckled as I stepped to Mia.

"Can you imagine what I would do to a spiteful bitch that had my heart and betrayed me for years? One that is trying to keep my son away from me because I don't want her? I took it easy on him because he's my mother's child. I will fuckin' kill you, Mia, if you keep playing with me, and I'm not interested in telling you again." I lifted her chin so she could look at me. I couldn't care less about her hoe-ass tears. "I will give you time to spend with KJ. You're his mother, like you said, but

hear me when I say this. If I call and you don't answer, or if you don't pull up when I want to see him, it's over for you." I let her go and pushed her slightly away from me. "Let me go calm my baby down and pack his stuff so he can go. Fix the lil' homie some cheesy noodles, too."

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After an hour of trying to calm my son enough to leave with his mother, I was finally able to get him to sleep. He fought me at every turn, but with promises of going to see Luck and getting cupcakes, he was satisfied enough for a nap. Kaine left Mia at the house but had to come back and get her when she saw I wasn't taking her ass anywhere and I definitely wasn't allowing KJ in an Uber. My mother, Ceaser, and I were now in the living room. We were all lost in our thoughts about what had taken place today.

"Well, I wasn't expecting any of that," my mother voiced as she chuckled, although I could tell she was still reeling from the events. "I guess it's safe to say I ruined Christmas."

"Are you crazy?" I glanced over at her. "Do you see how a nigga's stomach is poking out? This nigga here," I pointed at my father, "has dozed off at least three times. This was the best Christmas I've had in a while."

"I agree." Ceaser sluggishly nodded. "Girl, you put your entire foot in that meal. I've been missing out."

Ceaser's statement caused us to go back to silence. There were some things he's been hinting at and now is the time for me to address it. Shit, we were already here, so there was no need to wait any further.

"Check it," I leaned up in the chair I was sitting in across from him and my mother. "We need to talk. You asked if I was sure about the DNA test, and I wanted to know why. You've been saying some off-putting ass shit, and I want to know what's up."

"Khalil, I swear I'm going to knock all of your teeth from your mouth if you keep cussing in my house."

“Give him a pass this once, baby girl.” Ceaser chuckled as he looked at my mother and caused her to blush. I couldn’t help but roll my eyes at the two of them. “He has questions, and as much as I don’t want to answer or talk about them, I have to.” He brought his attention back to me. “I asked you if you were sure about the DNA test because all those years ago, I took the results of the one I received at face value and found it to be untrue.”

“Huh?” I frowned in confusion. “Explain to me what you mean.”

“You remember me telling you I received a test saying you weren’t my son and shit? How I asked your mother about it and she ghosted me?” I nodded my head because how could I forget? “It was altered. That test was falsified to make me believe you weren’t my son. When I asked your mother about it, and she told me to fuck off, I assumed it was real.”

“Wait.” I stood from my seat and began pacing the living room floor. “Didn’t you say your sister is the one that had me tested?” He nodded. “So she had someone fake the results of the test?”

“Apparently.” He sighed and shook his head. “Something wouldn’t let me believe that, though. That’s why I stood deep in the shadows when you were younger. So many times, I tried to approach your mother about it and get you retested, but she denied me. She told me y’all didn’t need me.”

“And we didn’t!” she snapped and glared at me. “I knew Khalil was yours, and you basically called me a whore and a liar when you got those results. If the only way I could prove that I was right about him being yours was to take another test, I wasn’t going to do that. There should have never been room for doubt.”

“So when did you find out I was actually yours?” I folded my arms. “I’m twenty-eight years old, bro, and I went without you my whole life. When did you know?”

“When you were in middle school,” he somberly admitted. “I had Bino swipe some things from your home when he used to spend the night.”

I shook my head because I knew I wasn't crazy when combs and toothbrushes came up missing.

“You guys were so close, and he was more than willing to help. When I found out and asked your mother if I could approach you, she turned me down once again.”

“Because we didn't need you!” she shouted as she jumped from the couch. “There should have never been any doubt! You believed the word of your sister over me, and I hated you for that! At the time, I felt like it was the best decision for Khalil and me!” mama defended.

“Mama, relax.” I walked over and pulled her into my arms. “You felt betrayed by him, and no one can fault you for that. Was it prideful? A little selfish? Maybe, but you protected me, and I thank you.”

There was no way I could be mad at my mother for guarding her heart after this man let her down in the worst way. If anyone were to blame, it was my hoe-ass aunt. Even after all these years, I didn't like her, and it was because I felt as a kid that she didn't like me. I never understood why and didn't care to know.

“I fucked up.” My father stood and approached us. “I was young and dumb and allowed my family to get in the way of my happiness. I lost out on a chance at my own family and the only woman I really loved because my sister had a vendetta against us both.”

“What?” My mother raised her head from my chest and wiped her tears. “Shelia did this?”

“Yes.” He nodded and grabbed her hands. “I took away the love of her life, and she wanted to take mine. Shelia has hated us both for years, and I fear that the hatred is growing more and more by the day. That's another reason I am back. I wanted to warn and protect you.”

“So you mean to tell me my aunt, your sister, wants to cause harm to my mother, and she is still breathing?” I chuckled as I grabbed my keys and phone from the end table. “Yeah, that shit is not happening.”

“I overheard a phone conversation a few months ago of Shelia confessing what I already knew about her altering the DNA results. We fought about it, and we haven’t been on speaking terms since. I don’t trust her, but she’s my sister. My parents would roll over in their graves if I harmed her.”

“I never met those people, and I couldn’t care less about them rolling, flipping, or hopscotching in that muthafucka. When their daughter meets them in the afterlife, she can explain how she got there. I’m out,” I asserted.

“Where are you going, Khalil?” My mother stepped in front of me and placed her hand on my chest. “I don’t want you out there getting yourself into trouble.”

“I’m good, mama.” I placed a kiss on her forehead. “I just need to clear my head and to think is all.” I glanced over at my father. “You got your eyes on my son, right?”

“Of course.”

“Bet.” I pulled away from my mama. “Keep the old lady company for me.” I grinned as a frown came across my mother’s face. “Girl, don’t look like that. I know you still like this nigga.”

“What can I say? I got the juice, son.” We chuckled as Ceaser popped the collar on his dress shirt. This nigga really thought he had it like that.

“You’re definitely his son.” Mama rolled her eyes. “You’re both delusional.”

“Come walk me out.” I nodded toward him, and Ceaser followed me outside. It was nightfall, and the air was brisk as fuck. I almost turned my ass around and went back inside. “Watch out for my mama for me. Mia is going to keep KJ for a few days, and I need to handle some things. Keep her mind off the bullshit for me.”

“You don’t have to worry about her.” Ceaser looked me in the eye, and I could see the seriousness. “I know I fucked up in the past, and despite what Kaine said, my intentions are pure. With both of you.”



“Look, we ain’t gone bond overnight, and I have to wrap my mind around all of this shit. Stuff is coming to me back-to-back, and it’s time I dead all things in my way. This shit is the icing on the cake. I gotta holla at my cousins about their mama, though. Your sister or not, I’ll smoke that bitch.”

I looked Ceaser in the eyes so he could know where I was coming from. It was hard for me to kill Kaine, because he was my brother so I know he felt a way about his sister. I’ve never been a man to let my problems fester, so now it was time for me to face them head-on. He could understand me, or he could lay down with them. The choice is his.

“Just be careful, son.” He patted my shoulders. “If you need me for anything, just know I’m here. I don’t plan on leaving unless you guys want me to.”

“I’m not a dumb ass nigga, and I see the looks you and my mama share. Just do right by her.”

“Say less.” My father held his hand out for me, and for a moment, I just looked at it. Was I forgiving him for the past? No, but I was willing to move on to the future if we could, not for my sake, but for my mama’s.

“I’m going to call and check in tomorrow.” We embraced before I made it over to my truck. “Y’all be easy.”

I watched Ceaser go inside and sat in my ride lost in my thoughts. Shit was about to get sticky for me, and I pray I make it out of these situations with my sanity. If it wasn’t one thing, it was another, but I was ready to face all of this and get rid of anybody who didn’t mean me or my life any good.

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“Fuck,” I hissed as I stumbled out of my car and up the stairs. I know I should have just taken my ass home, but here I am. Today has been one of the most chaotic and stressful days I’ve ever had, and sadly, I know it’s just the beginning.

*Knock. Knock.*

“Who is it?” she yelled from the other side of the door. I remained silent because if she opened this muhfucka up, she

would find out. “I swear to you, this twenty-two doesn’t miss, and if you don’t open your fuckin’ mouth and answer—” She swung the door open and paused, “Khalil, what are you doing here?”

Gently pushing her to the side, I moved past Lucky and into her apartment. The faint smell of cooked food still drifted through the air, and my stomach began to growl. Although I was hungry, the alcohol flowing through me and seeing her in those tiny ass boy shorts made food the last thing on my mind.

“You act like you’re not happy to see a nigga.” I chuckled as I plopped down on her couch. “I told you I was coming through.”

“And I told you I would think about it.” Lucky closed the door and locked it behind me. Folding her arms across her chest, she made her titties sit up higher in her sports bra that I so badly wanted to take off. “Again, what are you doing here?”

Honestly, I don’t know. I intended to go and confront Bino and Jake about their trifling ass mother, but I ended up at a nearby bar instead. One shot led to another, and I was blitzed. Instead of possibly going to start shit with my family or going home like I know I should have, I ended up at Lucky’s apartment complex.

“I just wanted to see you.” I eyed her as I bit into my bottom lip. “You know, kick it with you and see how your day has been.”

“And what if my family was still here? What if I had male company?”

“Your stepmother likes me, so I know she would have gotten pops on board. It’s cool. He’ll love me soon, too.” I winked as she frowned slightly. “As far as male company, I would have definitely beaten his ass and dragged him up out of here.”

“Speaking of fighting...” she arched her brow and took a seat beside me on the sofa. Well, she tried because I eased her

right into my lap. “What happened to your knuckles? They appear to be bruised.”

I simpered as she picked my hands up and eyed them before dragging her eyes back to me. Lucky would notice some shit I wanted too badly to forget about.

“My hands met my brother’s face again today.” I chuckled, although there wasn’t a damn thing funny. The shit was bothering me so damn bad that it was driving me insane. “The nigga was disrespecting my mama and shit, and I couldn’t have that. You would think he would have learned his lesson after my father knocked his ass out of his shoes.”

“Wait a minute.” She reared her head back and looked at me with wide eyes. “I know y’all weren’t over there cutting up like that on Christmas.” She swatted my arm and mugged me slightly. “Your mother told me about her plans, and she was really looking forward to having all of you over. What happened?”

For the next hour, I explained to Lucky what all went down at my mother’s house. She chimed in when needed, but for the most part, she let me vent and get my frustrations off my chest. Once I was done, we sort of sat in silence and let the words I spoke float through the air.

“Uhm, wow.” She broke the silence as she stroked my cheek. Gripping her waist, my dick was hard as a fuckin’ brick. The thing is, though, I didn’t want to fuck her. I mean, I would definitely take her down right now if she wanted me to, but I enjoyed the feeling of having her this close. “That’s a lot of heavy shit, ‘Lil.”

“Tell me about it.” I chuckled and pulled her closer to me. She didn’t even resist as she laid her head across my chest. “What’s bothering me the most is I know I’m going to end up killing my brother.”

“Your mother will be crushed.”

“I know.” I sighed as I threw my head back onto the sofa. “A couple of weeks of being disrespectful doesn’t take away

the fact that he is her oldest son. Her first son. She loves that nigga.”

“As do you,” Luck looked up at me and responded. “Despite the betrayal and what anybody says, you love him, and that’s why you’re so conflicted.”

“You might be right.” I kissed the top of her forehead. “Shit is crazy, man.”

“And your father?” She sat up and stared at me. “How do you feel about what he told you? Do you believe him? What do you want to come from his admission?”

When I was at the bar trying to drink all my troubles away, the thought crossed my mind a time or two. *Could I really forgive him and pretend the last twenty-plus years didn’t happen? Did I really want him to be part of my life? My mother’s life? My son’s life?*

“Shit, girl, you’re asking some tough questions.” We both laughed before going silent. “I don’t know Luck. I don’t want to come off as a weak ass nigga if I forgive him. How can I forget the shit he’s done?”

“You don’t forget it.” She gave me a soft smile as she looked at me. I swear she was the finest girl in the world to a nigga. “You take it one day at a time. You want a relationship with him, and it’s understandable. You both were cheated out of that because of stubbornness, jealousy, and miscommunication. There is nothing wrong with starting anew.”

“Would you do that with your mother?”

She stiffened for a moment before frowning. “Hell no,” she spat. “Our situation is different. Your father was given false information, but he didn’t know the real, so he was misled to believe you weren’t his. My mother birthed me. She literally pushed me out of her pussy and looked me in my face three years later, and decided she didn’t want to be a parent anymore. Fuck her.”

“Do you miss her?”

“Nah.” She placed her head back on my shoulder. “I honestly have nothing for her ass. She’s doing just fine where she is, and so am I.”

I nodded and left the conversation alone. I didn’t want to put her in a bad space by speaking on her mother. We sat in a comfortable silence, with me gripping her ass with one hand and caressing her back with another. Oddly, this crazy ass girl was giving me a sense of peace.

“Can I say one last thing?” Luck mumbled into my chest before looking up at me. “Don’t do anything crazy when it comes to your cousins. I know you want answers, and I know you feel a way about their mother. You guys have a bond, and I’d hate to see it tainted because of someone else’s fuck up.”

“Man, shorty, I don’t want to hear that.” I shifted underneath her and lifted her slightly. “Their mama is the reason I lost out on years with my father.”

“And Karma will tear her ass up.” Luck placed her hand on my cheek and gazed at me. “Don’t be the usual you, Khalil. Please.”

“The usual me, huh?” I chuckled. “Girl, don’t act like you know me.”

“I know enough.” She slapped my chest and slid out of my lap. “I know that despite your crazy and toxic ways, you’re a good guy. You just have a lot going on. I also want you to get shit together with your baby mama and brother. If you guys ever act that way in front of KJ again, it’s me you all will have to worry about.” I sat and followed the movements of her body like it was my favorite movie. The way she yawned as she stretched changed my mind about not wanting to fuck her.

“I hear you, shorty, but I’m going to for sure holla at them niggas.” I stood from the couch and stepped around her.

I felt Lucky’s eyes on me as I walked to the door and around her shit, blowing out candles and cutting off lights. I walked into the kitchen and made sure nothing was on or needed to be cleaned or wiped down. Cutting those lights off as well, I walked back into her living room and found her

standing in the same spot. No words were spoken as I grabbed her by the hand and led her to her bedroom.

“Khalil, what the hell are you doing?” she asked as I sat her down on the lid of her toilet. “Why are you turning the shower on?”

“Because I don’t want to get into your bed smelling like outside.” I gave her a *duh* expression before I pulled my shirt over my head.

My tattoos that she loved so much are on full display, and she could act like she didn’t want a nigga in her space all she wants, but I know the real. “I’m finna take a shower and we’re about to lay down. Talk to me while I bathe.”

Still looking at me as if I’d lost my mind, I couldn’t think that maybe I had. I’ve never moved like this when it came to these women, but it was something about this girl that made me want to be in her space, in her life.

“Luck!” I yelled over the running water once inside. “Tell a nigga about your day. How’s your pops and my girl Sasha?”

“Khalil, be fuckin’ for real nigga.” I could hear the smile in her voice, which in return caused me to smile. “But they’re good. They decided to go back home because they’re headed out of town for New Year’s.”

“What are we doing for it?” I asked as I continued to wash my body. “I mean, it’s going to be the first of many, so we might as well get a head start on it now.”

Lucky went silent on a nigga like I knew she would. Anytime I mentioned anything about us kicking it or being together outside of sex, she would shut that shit all the way down. Whether I was joking or not, that shit lowkey pissed me off. After a few more minutes, lost in my thoughts, I finished my shower and dried off before going into her bedroom.

“Where are your clothes, Khalil?” She eyed me as I waltzed into her room and into her bed naked as the day I was born. “Who even told you to stay the night?”

“Fuck them clothes, and you might as well come out of yours, too. I want to feel your skin on mine.” I yanked the

covers back and climbed in. This girl had the softest mattress and sheets. Just that fast, I was ready to knock out. “And you know a nigga been drinking. You want me to drive home like this?”

Luck didn't say anything, but she did come out of her clothes like I suggested. I eyed her intently as she slid her tiny shorts over her thick ass thighs, and my mouth instantly watered. When those titties came into view with her nipple jewelry blinding me, I wanted nothing more than to sink my teeth into this girl.

“I guess you can stay the night.” She rolled her eyes slightly before getting back into bed. “I have to go back to work tomorrow, though, so no funny shit.”

“I just want to hold you, girl.” I chuckled as I pulled her on top of me. “I got to get up in the morning and handle business, anyway. I need to look into a lawyer and shit so I can get joint custody. Mia ain't keeping my son away from me.”

“Have you ever thought about getting back with her? I mean, you know niggas are always going back home for the kids.”

“Fuck no.” I frowned as I flipped the television to ESPN. If we weren't fucking, I needed the sounds of the TV to sleep. Shit was weird. “That bitch can't even get my dick hard. Trust me, she tried that shit earlier.”

“Oh really?” She lifted her head and smirked. “It seems to me that things are working just fine now.”

While staring at me, Lucky climbed on top of me and eased herself down onto my rock-hard dick. Our eyes never left each other as she lifted her body and began riding me slowly. Reaching up, I grabbed her by the neck and brought her lips down to meet mine. I don't know how to describe what this girl was doing to me, and I wasn't going to try. All I knew was when I was with her, I forgot about all my problems, even if it was just for a moment. Here lately, she'd been my voice of reason. I know I have a lot of things going on, and I know I needed to get that shit under control, but there

was no denying the inevitable. Lucky was mine and it's about time she knows it.



# CHAPTER

# TEN

DEVYN

“GIRL, I can’t believe you let that nigga trick you off the streets. We were supposed to have a hot girl summer, and you fucked around and let that nigga knock you up.”

I couldn’t help but laugh and chuckle at the disdain that flowed through Lori’s voice as she expressed her concerns to Kira. We were just informed that one of the gifts she gave Jake a few days ago for Christmas was a six-week ultrasound photo and a pregnancy test.

“How are you shocked?” I asked as I pulled my red velvet cupcakes out of the oven. “Those two are attached to each other at the hip, so it’s bound to happen.”

“Okay, ladies, get off me.” Kira frowned as she looked back and forth between the two of us. “Leave my man and me alone. The way you and Khalil are acting, you two aren’t too far behind.”

Now it was my turn to frown. Granted, we have been spending more time together since he popped up on me Christmas night, but things remained the same on my end. Well, at least that’s what I kept telling myself.

I’m somewhat in a state of delusion when it comes to Khalil. I like him more than I let on, but there really isn’t anything that can be done about it. He has his harem, baby mama, and brother he needs to deal with. I don’t want any part of that.

“Get that look off your face, Dee,” Lori snapped me out of my thoughts.

I glanced over my shoulders, and she was headed to the nearby sink to wash her hands. I don't know if it was to help me set up for the day or to sample all my treats.

“You know what she is saying is true. I'm happy for you because it's about time you let someone love you. I just never thought it would be that nigga.”

“First of all, it's not like that with us.” I wiped my hands on my apron, and they looked at me as if I were the biggest liar they'd ever seen. “We're just having fun. Khalil has too much on his plate as is, and you both know I'm not one for the games.”

“Girl, please.” Kira waved me off. She, too, was supposed to come by the bakery to help me today, but she has been in the same spot with a napkin or bowl in front of her since she arrived. “Loon's crazy ass is smitten, and that's not good for any of us. Trust me, sis, he's on you bad. I don't know what you've done to him, but when he locks you down, the Three Stooges are going to lose their shit.”

“And that,” I pointed my mixing spoon at her, “is why I don't want that nigga. Now get y'all asses out of the way so I can work.”

For the next hour, we talked shit about our plans for the new year as I set the bakery up for the day. Jake and Kira made plans to bring the year in together, as did Bino and Lori. The latter kind of shocked me because Bino always tried to downplay how he felt about my friend. It just goes to show these niggas be lying to the public but acting like lovesick puppies in private.

“Okay, ladies, I have to get to class. Kira, I will see you later because if I can't find my man after I get out of school, I will be popping up at your shit because I know that's where he will be.” We shared a laugh as they embraced because that was a fact. When they detached, Lori made her way over to me and kissed my cheek. “I love you, best friend, and I will call you later. Tell your man I said I hate him.”

Waving her off, I chose not to respond. Khalil is not my man, and I won't be telling him anything. When those two get

started, there is no stopping them. They argue like fucking siblings.

“Now that Lori’s gone,” Kira glanced over her shoulder before smirking and turning back to me, “tell me the real. You know just as well as I do that as soon as you tell her anything about Loon, she is going to run back and tell Bino.” Kira twisted on her bar stool and continued to eat her breakfast croissant. “What’s been going on?”

I continued icing my cupcakes and pondered on what I wanted to say. Telling her Khalil’s issues wasn’t my story to tell so I could only speak on what I knew and felt about him.

“If we’re being honest,” I wiped my forehead slightly as I sprinkled the pecans on top of the red velvet cake, “I like him,” I admitted but avoided eye contact. “I like him more than I should. Khalil and I can’t take it there, though. He has a lot going on.”

“How do you know if he has anything going on or not if he hasn’t confided in you?”

“We’ve talked about some personal things that are going on with him.” I kept it simple. “He has things coming to him back-to-back and—”

“He’s found a sense of peace in you, cousin.” I paused my movements and looked at her. Kira had a smirk on her face, and if she weren’t pregnant, I’d knock it off. “When his life is in disarray, you’re the one who seems to get his mind together. That says a lot. Loon trusts you, and the aura you have lets him know that when things get crazy in his world, he can trust and count on you to make things better.”

“I’m scared, Kira,” I eyed her and admitted. “I’m not saying I want a relationship, but what if I fall for this man and he hurts me?”

“Then we will beat his ass.” She stood from her stool and cleaned her mess. “Well, we might have to shoot him, cousin. He ain’t all together.”

Talking for a few more minutes, I cleaned behind her as Kira told me her plans to bring in the new year. Jake was

taking her to Jamaica, and I thought it was the sweetest thing because he wanted to start the year off with her and the life they created. We made plans to call each other later, and I continued to set up and get ready to open the bakery for the day.

I finally talked with my dad and told him about the financial woes I'd been enduring since I opened. He offered to give me the money I needed to stay ahead, but I declined. He's recently retired and has Sasha now. He needed his money, and I will make a way and figure things out. The chiming of my door opening snapped me from my thoughts.

"Good morning, and welcome to Soul Pies," I greeted the nice-looking woman when she came in. "What can I assist you with today?"

For a moment, we just stood there and looked at each other. She looked familiar, but I couldn't put my finger on it. She was really pretty and petite with rich chocolate skin, pretty brown eyes, and the baddest symmetrical cut shoulder-length bob I've ever seen. She was dripped in vintage Chanel from head to toe, but the Hermes bag on her shoulder told it all. She was definitely paid.

"Can I help you with something, ma'am?" I came around the counter and asked again as she continued to eye me. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, sorry." She chuckled and shook her head slightly. "You're prettier in person, and I was stuck for a minute."

"Do I know you from somewhere?" I angled my head and asked. "You look familiar, but I can't say where I know you from. Are you a previous customer?"

I had a nagging feeling about this lady, but I couldn't tell why. I don't recall running into her or her stopping by here at one point. She was being weird, and if she didn't hurry up and buy, I was putting her ass out.

"I imagine I do look familiar, love." She stepped toward me and smiled softly. "My name is Dana." She extended her hand for me to shake. "I'm your mother."

Stumbling, my eyes widened as I really took the time and looked at her. She looked familiar to me because our faces were damn near identical, and I don't know how I didn't see it when she first walked in. My mother was here in the flesh for the first time in over twenty years, and I don't know what to say. I do, however, know how to feel.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” I seethed as I stepped closer to her. “How in the fuck did you find me?”

“Now, is that any way to talk to your mother?” she asked as she frowned slightly. “I'd think you'd be a little more happy to see me.”

“Yeah, well, you thought wrong.” I rolled my eyes and headed back behind the counter, and I could hear her walking behind me. “Why are you here?”

There was nothing she could say that would keep me from kicking her out on her ass, but I at least wanted to hear her bullshit before I gave her the boot.

“How have you been?” She sat her bag on the counter and looked around. “I see you've done well for yourself. This place is cute.”

“My daddy always made sure I had my heart's desires. He's the best in the world, actually.” She frowned slightly but tried to recover, but it was too late. “You have a problem with that or something?”

“Why would I?” She took a seat at the counter. “Can I get a cup of banana pudding while we chat? I heard it was delicious.”

“Why in the fuck are you here?” I gritted once more. I was not about to play this game with her ass. “I have shit to do, and you're about to get out of here.”

“You will watch how you talk to me.” She palmed the counter and leaned forward. “You will respect me and—”

“Debin!” The door opened, and KJ's little voice yelled through the bakery. “I'm here!”

“Hey, my handsome baby!” I smiled as I picked him up and kissed him all over his face. “I missed you so much. I didn’t know you were coming.”

“From the time he came back to me last night, he has been wanting to see you. Shit, his daddy too, so I said why not?”

Placing KJ on his feet, I stood upright and took Khalil in. This man had the nerve to be out here in gray sweats like he had the right. The Air Max 97s were straight out of the box from the looks of them, and his hoodie hugged his upper body to perfection. The mere smell and presence of this man had me weak in the knees and I don’t know if I had the strength to continue to fight it.

“Khalil, you just texted me this morning and didn’t mention coming by.” I walked into his awaiting arms. “I thought you had business to handle today.”

“I do.” He kissed the top of my forehead, and chills ran through my body. “I wanted to come by here and see you first.”

“Excuse me.” We looked in the direction of my unwanted guest. “I’m Dana, Devyn’s mother.” She extended her hand to Khalil. “And you are?”

“KJ, let’s get you a snack big man.” I turned and grabbed his little hand. Khalil had that ignorant look in his eye, and I wanted to get my baby away from him. “Have you had breakfast?”

“Yep! My Nana made gwits!” I chuckled as he messed up yet another word. “I glanced over my shoulder and noticed Dana lowering her hand as Khalil just stared at her. “You sit right here, and I’ll be back, okay?” I kissed his forehead as I placed the cake in front of him and made my way back over to his father.

“Devyn, where did you find this one?” She looked him up and down. “He’s rather rude.”

“Lady, you ain’t seen rude yet.” He crossed his arms and mugged her. “What are you doing here bothering my girl?”

From the way she was looking when I walked in, I can tell she doesn't want you here."

"Excuse me?" She reared her head back and placed her hand on her slim hip. "You have no right questioning me. It's not your place."

"Dana, leave." I pointed toward the door. "You've yet to tell me why you're here, and I'm tired of asking. There is no need for your presence, anyway."

"I want us to form a relationship, Devyn," she snapped. "I know I left you and your father all those years ago, but it's in the past. We need to get over that shit and move on."

"Get over it?" I laughed and threw my head back. I literally had tears running down my face. "Move on? Are you crazy?"

"No, I'm serious," she huffed. "I know I left you and David all those years ago, and it's obvious he still has hope for me. He hasn't remarried or had another child, and I know it's because he still loves me."

As if she had three heads, I stared at her in disbelief. The lady had to be on some sort of drug because there was no way she was of sound body and mind speaking like this.

"Lady, my father doesn't give a fuck about you, and neither do I." I glared at her with nothing but pure hatred. "You left him with a toddler, and for what? The only thing you said was you didn't want to be a mother, and you fuckin' left us!"

"I wasn't ready!" she shouted, throwing her arms in the air. "Your dad knew I didn't want to keep you, but he forced my hand. I tried to be there for you but once I saw the love he had for you was more than he had for me, I knew then I had to leave."

"Wow." I chuckled. "Well, as bad as I want to cuss you out and beat your ass for how you played my father, I'm not. That was probably the best thing your selfish ass could have done for me." I grabbed her purse from the counter and shoved it in her chest. "We have been doing just fine all these years

without you and will continue to do so. As far as my father still loving you? Wrong. My stepmother has that on lock.”

“S-stepmother,” she stammered as she held her purse. “You’re lying. He said he’d always love me, so I know there isn’t another woman in his life.”

“Shiddd,” Khalil’s ignorant ass chimed in as he draped his arm over my shoulder, “Sasha is fine as fuck, too. Ouch, Luck.” He winced as I elbowed him in his side. “She ain’t as fine as you, though, damn.”

“Give me his number so I can call him.” Dana stuck her nose in the air as she slid her strap up her shoulder. “I want to sit and have a conversation with him.”

“Pops don’t want to talk to you, and my girl doesn’t either.” Khalil glared at her. “You’re filling the room with negative energy, and we don’t need that, so fly back home on whatever broom you came in on and get. Luck is good.”

I’m glad Khalil spoke up for me because my mind was stuck on Dana saying she didn’t want me. How can you birth a child you carried for nine months and decide she isn’t what you want in your life? How can you abandon the ones you love without a care in the world?

“Do you have more children?” I couldn’t help but ask. “Was it just me you didn’t want, or did you not want to be a mother, period.”

“It doesn’t matter.” She rolled her eyes and turned to leave. “Just know that I didn’t want you.” With that, she turned on her heels to leave, but not before looking at me once more. “You will regret the way you spoke to me today, and your father will regret lying about his love.”

“Bitch—”

“Ahhh!” she screeched as Khalil threw a cupcake that was on display at her head. She stood there in shock, and he hurled another one her way. “How dare you?”

“She look like a clown, Dada!” KJ came running around the corner and laughed. “I want to try.”



I looked on in disbelief as Dana stood there like an idiot as KJ and Khalil threw various treats at her. Seeing that they weren't going to stop, she hauled ass out of my bakery, looking like a frosty mess.

"Oh my gosh." I held my side as I bent over in laughter. "I can't believe you guys did that."

"It was either that or a bullet." He grinned as he kissed my cheek. "Come on, and let's clean this mess before people come in, KJ. We got shit to do today."

"I got it." I took the broom and mop from him before he made a bigger mess. "I don't want you to be late. I appreciate you for stopping by."

"It's nothing, girl." He winked, causing me to blush. "I came by to ask your fine ass if you wanted to spend New Year's with me. We can go out of town or some shit. Whatever you want to do?"

"I don't know, Khalil." I looked skeptical as he eyed me. "I don't want to complicate things."

With my mother coming and saying what she said, she confirmed what I already knew to be true. Loving someone isn't worth the pain and suffering that comes with it. I couldn't do that myself or allow anyone to do it to me.

"Listen..." He pulled me into his chest and kissed my nose. "I'm tired of fronting like I don't want you, Luck. I know you have your reservations about me, and I understand your stance on not wanting to fuck with a nigga. You need to understand that I want you, and regardless of how hard you try to fight it, we will be together. I don't care if I have to hide in your home or car or pop up at your shop every day. This shit is already written."

"What?" I giggled because Khalil was so serious, and his logic didn't make a lick of fuckin' sense. "Are you asking me to be your girlfriend?"

"Not at all." He pecked my lips softly. My heart dropped at his admission. Somehow, my feelings were hurt. "I'm telling you. I will call you later."

Kissing me once more, I stood in place and watched as Khalil wiped KJ down and made sure he wasn't too sticky. After getting themselves together, they both kissed and hugged me before they were on their way. I heard what he said, and somehow, I think I just unknowingly entered the most toxic situation I've ever been in.

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“Aye nigga, get your hands off my girl's hips and shit. I got her!”

I chuckled as I watched Khalil mug and push the instructor out of the way. I wanted to go zip lining, and he made it clear that was a no-go for him. This man wanted to do nothing but sit back like the angry ass nigga he is and stand guard like somebody wanted my ass. I won't lie and say I'm not enjoying the attention from him because I am.

“Khalil, why won't you let this man help strap me in?” I chuckled as he wore a look of confusion as he tried to tighten the belt and harness around my waist and between my legs. “If I get up here and fall to my death, it's your fault.”

He paused his movements and looked at me momentarily. Turning his attention back to the instructor, he waved him over. He looked from me to Khalil before he fully came over to us.

“Yes, sir?”

“Fasten my girl in and make sure she's secure.” He stood to full height and mugged the scared white man slightly. “If something happens to her, I'm killing you, your wife, and the fuckin' dog. Watch your hands and shit, too,” Khalil warned.

I shook my head and looked on as the man nervously strapped me into the seat. Khalil was playing a dangerous game by intimidating this man when my life was literally in his hands.

“Aight baby. I'm going to be on the other side waiting on you.” He kissed me once I was strapped in. “If you die on me, I'ma kill you.”

“Nigga, get away from me!” I bellowed as I pushed him off.

Once he was out of the way, I was pushed slightly by the guy and went flying through the air. It was so exhilarating and fun. It was my first time doing this, but it wouldn't be the last.

“That was so fun... Khalil, let him go,” I huffed once I reached the other side. He had the poor man in a headlock, and he looked to be fighting for his life. I couldn't get out of the restraints fast enough. “Now!”

“This nigga's aight.” He let him go, and you could visibly see the man gasp for air. “Ain't that right, Chuck?”

“Yes, I'm fine.” He grabbed his neck and smiled as best he could. “You guys have a good day.”

Cheesing like he knew he was right. Khalil threw his arm around my neck and walked me to the other side of the park. We made it to Miami a little after noon, and after checking into our room, this was the first thing I wanted to do. It was obviously a mistake because this nigga was insane.

“Your ass is awful.” I giggled as we made our way to one of the food trucks nearby. “This is fun, though, so thank you for bringing me.”

“Shit, thank you for coming. I just knew I was going to have to kidnap your ass.”

When Khalil left the bakery a couple of days ago, I brushed off what he said and took him as a joke. That was until he showed up at my apartment that night with a packed bag and suggested I do the same. He wanted to take me out of the country, but I told him I didn't need some type of elaborate trip to have a good time. So here we were, three days before the new year, and we were about to have the time of our lives in Miami.

“I mean, you almost had to, but I said, why not?” I thanked him as he passed me my bottled water. We found a food truck with the best-looking burgers I've seen, and I had to have one. “I'm glad I came too,” I leaned over and kissed his cheek. “I know this is going to be a trip to remember.”

Before he could respond, his phone began to vibrate. Pulling it out of his pocket, I glanced and saw that it was Bino calling for what seemed like the hundredth time. He and Jake have been calling nonstop, and Khalil hasn't answered or returned a call once.

"Are you going to just ignore them?" I asked as I bit into my burger. "It could be important."

"It's not." He shrugged and bit into his own. "My traps are straight, and my mama is too. Didn't you say them niggas were going out of town themselves?"

"Yes, but—"

"Aight then." He leaned over and kissed my lips. "They need to enjoy their vacation the same way I plan on enjoying mine. Trust me, it will be plenty of time to talk when we get back home."

Not wanting to change Khalil's mood or the vibe of the trip, I left well enough alone. I just prayed that he and his family could work through their issues because I know how close these boys were. For now, I would leave him alone about it.

"Now come on." He pulled me up from my spot on the bench once we were done with our food. "Come and spend some of your nigga's money."

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"Lucky, on God, if you splash me with that muthafuckin' water, I'm going to drown your ass," I warned as he mugged me and stepped on the balcony of our hotel suite. Coming to the beach and not wanting to get wet is crazy, but dealing with Khalil, I expect nothing different. After the sporadic zip-lining, we'd been out shopping all day and decided to come back to the room to relax.

"You're such a party pooper." I rolled my eyes as he took a seat in the chair across from the Jacuzzi I was splashing around in. "Why are you all the way over there, Khalil? Get naked and come here."

With a raised brow, he stood and discarded his ball shorts and boxers as he swaggered his sexy ass in my direction. Although dark outside, his body was a work of art under the moonlit sky. I was in a trance because of the tattoos all over his neck and chest, paired with his third leg that swayed from side to side when he walked. I wanted him inside of me in the worst way.

“You eying a nigga like you want to get fucked, Luck,” he hissed as he slid into the water. “Girl, why is this shit boiling like this? You trying to cook a nigga or something?”

“Stop whining.” I stood in the water and showed that I was completely naked. The way his eyes roamed my body. “I just want to put this pussy on you, daddy.”

“Oh yeah?” He draped his arms over the back of the tub. “Come do that shit then.”

Making my way over to him, we never took our eyes off each other. I placed my hands on his shoulders as I straddled his lap. Leaning forward, I placed my lips onto his soft ones and couldn't help the moan that escaped my lips. We sat there for what seemed like forever, lost in each other's kisses. As I wound my hips, I could feel how hard he was beneath me. Not wanting to waste any more time, I lifted my hips and eased down onto his hardened dick. We both moaned and groaned in ecstasy.

“Shit, girl...” He threw his head back as he gripped my waist. “This pussy man.”

“Khalil,” I whispered as I rocked slowly, “you feel so good.”

“Tell me you're mine, Lucky.” He wrapped one hand around my neck and fucked me back from the bottom. “Tell me that you and this pussy belong to me. I need to hear you say that shit.”

“Ughhh!” was all I could say.

Between being choked and the way Khalil was fucking me, I was in heaven. There was no way he expected me to be

able to answer him right now. The dick was too much, and it was hard to even breathe at this point.

“Lucky,” he rammed in and out of me so savagely that water was splashing all over the place, “you don’t fuckin’ hear me talking to you?”

“I hear you!” I screeched as my body began to shake and seize. “I’m cummin’!”

“Tell me you’re mine,” he gritted through clenched teeth as he squeezed my neck harder. The hand that was once rested on my hip was now placed over my right breast. The sensation of him twisting my nipples was taking me over the edge. “I don’t fuckin’ hear you.”

“I’m yourssss!” I screamed. “This pussy is yours, baby!”

“That’s what the fuck I thought.” Khalil rammed in and out of me harder. “Cum on this dick again, girl. I’m about to nut all in this pussy. I can nut in my pussy, right?”

“Yes! I’m... oh my fuck!”

Thank goodness it was dark out here, but that didn’t matter because I’m sure the world could hear us fucking. We weren’t trying to hide the fact that the other one was making us feel good. Khalil had the type of dick that would have me wanting to live in his skin just so I could be close to him.

“Shit girl,” he groaned as he released. “You gone kill a nigga before the ball drops.”

“The only balls I’m interested in right now are the ones between your legs, my boy.” We both laughed at my statement. “Come on, and let’s shower. I’m not done with you yet.”

After going round for round in the shower, we decided to stay in for the night and chill because we were both drained. So now we were in the sitting area of our suite, smoking and eating.

“You know I wasn’t bullshittin’ with you, right?” Khalil blew out the smoke from the blunt as he eyed me intently. “I want you, Lucky, and you’re mine now.”

“Are you mine?” I asked hesitantly. “I don’t want to have to beat your ass or them bitches you fuck with ‘Lil. I’m not built to share.”

“Listen, mama,” he placed his smoke in the ashtray and pulled me into his lap, “I know you’re not the type of woman that will deal with me and my bullshit. I respect you too much to even put you in some shit like that. Despite what you may think, I’m not a dog-ass nigga. I’m as loyal as they come. Mia just had me fucked up to the point where all I wanted to do was fuck these hoes and send them on their way.”

“And you’re not on that anymore?” I eyed him, and I ran my hands through his plats. “You think you can be faithful to me?”

“Absolutely.” He pecked my lips and smirked. “With pussy like yours, girl, you better be worried about me stalking your fine ass. Have a nigga on some Michael Myers shit for real.”

I heard what Khalil was saying, but I was still skeptical. The shit with my mother made me want to never let a nigga in, but I was willing to give him a chance to stand on what he was saying.

“Please don’t hurt me, Khalil.” I placed my hand on his cheek. “I’m going against everything I’ve ever said, and I’m willing to give you, us, a real chance. Don’t make me regret it.”

“I promise I won’t.” He grabbed my neck and pulled me into a sensual kiss. “We just got to break it to my son that you’re mine now, and all that cute shit be he doing when you’re around is a fuckin’ wrap.”

“Leave my baby alone.” I snuggled into his chest as he wrapped his arms around my body. “He knows I love him.”

“Yeah?” He lowered his lips onto my forehead. “Let’s work on you loving his daddy, too.”

# CHAPTER

# ELEVEN

KHALIL

JANUARY 2023

I won't cap, bringing in the new year with Luck was the most fun I've had in a long time. Between shopping, clubbing, and being buried inside of her, I didn't want the fun to end. Unfortunately, it was time to get back to the money. It's been three months since my world was turned upside down finding out about my son, but I wouldn't change that for anything.

"So I'm going to see you later, right?" I hovered over Luck as we stood in her doorway. "I don't want no shit about it when I pull up."

"You're not tired of me yet?" She peered up at me with those pretty ass eyes of hers. "Don't you think you need to miss me?"

"Girl, my dick misses you already, and I haven't even left your spot yet?" I frowned as I peered down at her. "What the fuck do you mean?"

"So I'm just sex to you?" She frowned as she pushed me off of her. "Got it. Have a good day."

"Aye," I stopped her from closing the door on me, "don't start that weird shit, Luck. We've been having a good ass week, and I want to keep it that way. A nigga got to go handle some business, and I'm coming back. Talk to me and tell me the real."

Leading her to the nearby sofa, I pulled her into my lap and kissed all over her neck and face. We'd just woke up and had breakfast and I don't understand the problem. After



bringing in the new year in Miami, we came back to the city and spent damn near an extra week together. The only time we left her crib was when she went to her bakery. Shit, even then, we didn't separate because my ass was right there beside her, boxing that shit up.

“Are you sure this is what you want to do?” She looked up at me and asked. She twiddled her fingers. It was cute seeing her all shy and shit. “We're home now, and you got all the pussy I had to offer in Miami. We don't have to pretend anymore.”

Luck was nervous and hesitant, and I get that. What she needed to know is when I'm with somebody, I'm with them. Granted, when I was young, I didn't know any better. I thought I found the one in Mia, so I had no issue being faithful and the man she needed me to be. With Lucky, I have no desire to be with anyone else. After the things her mother did to her father, I can understand why she is guarded. Still, she doesn't have to be that way with me.

“There isn't a bitch out here that has anything I can't get from you, baby.” I held her tightly and looked at her with nothing but sincerity. “I wouldn't tell you shit that I don't mean. I won't lie to you just to kick it and get some pussy. Yeah, it's good as a muhfucka, but that's not what I'm after.”

“What is it you want then, Khalil?”

“Your heart.” I placed my hand on her chest. “This is the most precious thing you can give a nigga, and I want it. I'm going to earn it, and I'm never giving it back. Shit with us won't be easy, but you gotta know I'm not going to do anything to intentionally hurt you.”

I know the shit sounded fishy coming from a nigga that was fucking on two sisters but fuck them hoes. Speaking of, I made a mental note to holler at their stupid asses. They've been blowing a nigga up for weeks, and that shit stops now. Lucky is who I want, and that's who I'm going to be with.

“I'm going to trust you until you give me a reason not to.” She smiled and threw her arms around my neck before pulling me into a kiss. “Get those hoes under control, Khalil. I know

they've been hitting your line heavy. I can't believe you posted that damn picture."

I couldn't help but chuckle as I thought about the notifications and messages I received when I posted Luck on my social media. Bitches were hating something serious, but I didn't give a fuck. There was no way I was going to not let the world know who the fuck my girl was.

"You know I'm going to holla at them, right?" I lifted Luck from the couch and placed her on her feet. "You okay with that?"

"As long as it doesn't result with your dick in their pussy, I'm okay with you letting them know who you belong to."

"What about their mouth?" I asked as I followed her toward the door. "Ass? You know those hoes are nasty and... aight, man, damn. Stop hitting me, girl!"

"Get the fuck out, nigga." Slamming the door in my face, I couldn't help but simper at her violent ass. That girl was crazy as fuck, but she was mine.

Vacation time was over, and my lawyer's office was the first place I was headed to. I met Grayson through my father, and we were finally sitting and having a conversation. When we initially spoke, I gave him the rundown on the situation, and he asked for some additional information. Today, I guess it was time to get down to business.

"Yo," I answered the phone as I headed through town. I was so glad that the holidays were over. The streets were empty, and all those non-driving muhfuckas were back home. "Talk to me."

"Hey baby," my mother's sweet voice filled the speakers. "How was your vacation? I'm assuming everything went well since I didn't have to bond you out."

Thinking about how I told my mother about the trip with Luck sent me into laughter. I made it clear that if she didn't agree to be my girl before we left South Beach, she would have to come and bond me out jail. That crazy ass girl had a hold on a nigga, and I didn't even want to shake it.

“Yeah, everything went well,” I assured her. “How’s things with you and your baby daddy?”

“Watch your mouth, Kahlil.” she sassed. “Don’t worry about what’s going on over here.”

“What do you mean?” I frowned as I pulled into the lot of the lawyer’s office. “You’re my mama, and I don’t know that nigga like that. Of course, I’m going to ask questions.”

I know mama is back dealing with that nigga. Every time I called while I was on vacation, she’d hurry and rush me off the phone, and I knew he was the reason why. I ain’t tripping, though. If she wanted to forgive that nigga then that was her business. All I ask is that he treats her with nothing less than the respect she deserves.

“Khalil, you were both robbed of having the other person in your lives. Will you give the relationship with him a try?”

“Mama, can we discuss this later?” I cut the ignition and gathered my things. “I’m at the lawyer’s office, and I gotta get off the phone.”

I know she thinks I just wanted to get off the phone with her, and in a way, I did, but I didn’t want to be late fooling with her. After making promises to call her or come see her later, I was headed inside.

“Mr. Simmons.” Grayson rose from his desk and greeted me with a handshake as I entered his office. “Thank you for stopping by today.”

“Thank you for all of your help,” I expressed as I took a seat across from him. “I appreciate it.”

“Your father is a very good friend, and I was more than happy to help him out, so it’s no big deal.” He shuffled some papers around on his desk before bringing his attention to me. “From the information I’ve gathered, your son’s mother went back and had you listed as the father of her son a year or so after he was born. All you have to do is sign the birth certificate, and we can get that processed and move on with the custody battle and child support Ms. Bell is requesting.”

“Child support?” I leaned forward. “If we’re splitting custody, I don’t want to pay that bitch shit. How in fuck is she already requesting money from a nigga?”

Don’t get me wrong. I have no issue taking care of my son, but by no means will I be taking care of his rotten pussy ass mother. Mia needs to get a fuckin’ job or make her nigga get one. My focus is KJ and KJ only.

“Ms. Bell is requesting twenty thousand a month and nothing less,” he continued as he looked over the rim of his glasses. She also wants you to pay for the medical and dental for your son as well as tuition.

“Twenty stacks? Tuition? The lil’ nigga is only three? She better put his little ass in daycare for about eight hundred a month.”

Mia had the game fucked up if she thought she would run game on me and take all of my money for a son I just found out about. I’d kill her ass first.

“Mr. Simmons—”

“Call me Khalil, man.”

“Khalil, I understand your frustrations, and I know what I’m telling you is the last thing you want to hear.” He looked me square in the eye so I could understand his seriousness. “I am going to make sure I do everything in my power to make this as painless for you as possible. Tell me, what do you want? Be honest.”

“My son,” I spoke with no hesitation. “That’s all I want.”

“Do you want his mother to be in his life?”

I stared at him for a moment to think about what he was asking without technically asking. Mia wasn’t a horrible mother, but the bitch was a pain in my ass. I didn’t want to kill her because my son needed his mother, and I didn’t know how not having her would affect him later, but before I let her play these games with me, I would have him calling Lucky ‘mama’ in no time.

“Tell me my options first.” I ran my hands down my face and signed. “Just let me know what I’m working with before I say what I feel.”

“Okay.” He passed a few pieces of papers my way. “This is just what I already went over with you regarding the tuition and child support.”

I looked over the papers and confirmed what he was saying. What caught my eye was a statement Mia made about me not having any legal income, and that was why she was requesting the outlandish amount.

“I can tell by the look on your face that you ran across the statement she made about your income. I suggest you find a business to wash your money through and soon. Get with your father when you leave here, and he will help you. I’ve recently learned the dynamic of your relationship, but I feel like he is the one that can really help you.”

“Aight, I’m going to holla at the nigga.” I handed the papers back to him and stood up to leave. “I can tell you right now, Mia’s not getting that much money from me. For her to say what she said, though, lets me know she wants to play a dirty game, and I’m with that, too.”

Mia had the right game but the wrong nigga. Tell the law that a nigga was into illegal shit was the type of shit I didn’t need lingering in the air at the moment, but I had a trick for her ass.

“Everything is speculation, of course.” He stood and walked me over to the door. “Just handle your business and be careful with what you do. Keep me in the loop with whatever you do. That’s the only way I can ensure this works in your favor.”

“I got you.” I shook hands with him. After making promises to be in touch and speaking to my father, I was out of his office as fast as I came.

Back inside my truck, I checked my phone and noticed more missed calls and messages from Allison, Alicia, Persia, and Bino. Deciding to hit the latter back, I called my cousin.

“Gah damn, ‘bout time you called a nigga.” His voice boomed as it came through the speaker. “We ain’t seen or heard from you since Christmas dude. That was two weeks ago.”

“I’ve been busy,” I stated simply. “A nigga’s been with KJ, and Luck’s been taking up any free time I’ve had. I’ve just been out of the way.”

Truthfully, I haven’t been wanting to talk to them niggas because I know I have heat with their mother. I know there will be a potential fallout, and I’ve been trying to avoid it. I love those boys more than my own brother, and I’d hate to lose the relationship with them. Even with that, though, fuck that.

“Well, come through the spot nigga.” Bino inhaled deeply, and I could tell that he was smoking. “Plus, your girlfriends are over here looking for you. Now you know I don’t like no mess, but I couldn’t pass up on the chance to see some action.”

“I’m on the way.” I disconnected the call and made my way to our trap spot. Shit, I might as well kill two birds with one stone. I could send these hoes on their way, and I could go ahead and talk to Bino and Jake.

Pulling up to the house, you’d think there wasn’t anyone there. If it weren’t for Jake texting and letting me know about the pickups, I’d swear we weren’t making any money. I loved the fact that we never kept a crowd around our shit. That’s why I hated when these bitches thought it was cool to come around here causing a scene.

“What’s up y’all?” I spoke when I walked into the house.

On the couch sat Alicia and Allison. Alicia looked as if she could spit fire, while Allison looked as if she’d lost her best friend. I hate that for them. Seeing as though they weren’t speaking, I shrugged and made my way through the sitting room and into the kitchen, where Jake and Bino were sitting. I slapped hands with them before making my way back to holler at the girls.

“Why the fuck are y’all over here?” I stood before them, arms crossed. “I know for a fact I told y’all the last time I saw y’all that was the last time. So, tell me why y’all felt it was a good idea for you two to come here today.”

“When the fuck did you get a son, Loon?” Alicia hopped up from her seat like her ass was on fire. “We’ve been fucking for years, and not once have you said anything about a fucking baby with Mia. Yeah nigga, we found out all about the son you have with your ex.”

“Loon, why did you post that girl?” Allison asked as tears ran down her cheeks. “I thought you loved us. I thought we were going to be together. How could you do this?”

I stood there in awe and confusion as these bitches had a mental breakdown over the shit I had going on in my life. Hearing movement behind me, I glanced over my shoulder and looked as Bino leaned against the kitchen doorway with a bag of chips and Capri Sun. He was really tuned in to this shit show.

“Aye, who in the fuck are you talking to?” I grilled Alicia because she was the one that had me fucked up the most. KJ wasn’t her concern. “You got one more fuckin’ time to mention my kid.”

“Or what nigga?” she yelled as she walked up on me. “What the fuck are you gonna do?”

*Pop!*

“Ahh!”

Both girls screamed at the top of their lungs at me shooting Alicia in the arm. It was just a flesh wound, so she would be okay. She needed to understand that her mouth was going to get her in a world of trouble.

“This nigga really shot this girl.” Jake chuckled as he walked into the living room. “Girl, shut up with all that damn crying.”

“I can’t believe you shot my sister.” Allison wailed as she sat on the floor and rocked that crybaby in her arms. “How could you do that?”

“You want a play-by-play bitch?” I asked as I raised my gun. “Because I got plenty more if you want one. Now pick this weeping willow-ass bitch up off the floor and scam. Don’t pop up at my shit no more. This is the last time telling you or the next bullet will be a headshot that neither of you will recover from.”

They both looked at me with tears in their eyes as if they were pleading with me. Saying fuck it, I raised my gun once more and aimed it at both of them.

“Aye, man,” Bino came and grabbed my wrist, “let them make it.”

I snatched away from him, and I could tell it caught him off guard. “Get. The fuck. Out.”

Scrambling to their feet, they did the dash to the front door. Before they could open it, I made sure to leave them with one more message.

“If I think you guys told the police about this, I will have your old ass parents in Mableton killed. They still live on James Street, right?”

“Khalil, please.”

“And when it comes to Lucky, know that’s all me. You can catch a bullet behind her, too.

With sad faces and bleeding limbs, they left out of the door without another word. I was on ten right now and had murder on my mind. I was trying my best to get myself in check before having this conversation with my cousins.

“Loon, you straight bro?” Jake asked as he placed his hand on my shoulder. “You look like you got some shit you want to talk about.”

“Actually, I do.” I nodded as I turned and faced them both. “What do y’all know about the relationship between Ceaser and Sheila?”

They both looked at me with confused expressions as they waited for me to say whatever I needed to get off my chest.



We stood arm's length from each other, and I hope we didn't come to blows.

“What do you mean?” Bino asked. “All mama said was they fell out over some shit, and your father was the blame. She said it was a misunderstanding that he took too far.”

“Misunderstanding, huh?” I chuckled and placed my hands in my slacks. “My father took it too far by not being in my life because your shiesty ass mama faked DNA test results for me when I was a kid? He took it too far when he flaked on me and my mama because your mother was a jealous ass bitch with hurt feelings?”

“Whoa now, nigga.” Bino stepped to me like I knew he would. “Watch what the fuck you say about my mama.”

“Nigga fuck your mama.” I stepped back to his ass. We were so close that we could feel each other's breath. “Your mama is a fuckin' hater! She was mad because her nigga had kids on her. My mama didn't know Kaine's punk ass daddy was her boyfriend. That nigga was beating both of their asses, and my daddy did what he had to do! That shit made her jealous and bitter! She told my fuckin' father I wasn't his!”

“Nigga, you're a fuckin' liar!” He pushed me slightly. “Your daddy was just a deadbeat ass nigga that didn't want to be fuckin' bothered with your ass! My mama didn't have shit to do with that! If your mama weren't a hoe, the paternity wouldn't have been a question in the first place.”

*Whap!*

No other words were spoken as Bino and I went blow-for-blow like fuckin' gorillas in the middle of our trap house. The only thing that could be heard was heavy breathing and our hits connecting. We were wearing each other out, but neither of us was letting up on another. The only thing that stopped us from fighting was the sound of gunshots.

*Pop! Pop!*

“Calm y'all muthafuckin' asses down!” Jake yelled as he kept his gun pointed in the air. “Have y'all niggas lost your fuckin' minds?”

“Fuck that nigga,” Bino breathed out as he held his side. “You heard what this nigga said about mama.”

“I did.” Jake nodded. “I heard what you said about his, too.”

“You know what?” I chuckled as I wiped my lip. “I thought when I lost my brother, I would be okay because I gained two.” I walked over to the end table and grabbed my shit so I could dip. “I didn’t think I’d lose y’all niggas too. I’m out.”

“Wait, man!” Jake called out behind me. “We need to talk.”

“The time for talk went out the window when he called my mother, a woman that’s been good to him despite all the flaw ass shit y’all mother has done, out of her name.” I opened the front door and looked back at both of them niggas before making my exit. “If it’s not about money, don’t hit my line. Fuck both of y’all niggas.”

Slamming the door behind me, I made my way back to my ride and sped out of the driveway. After calling my mother and ensuring she was okay, I did the same with Mia. She was supposed to have KJ call me earlier but didn’t. After speaking with him, she started talking reckless so I told her to call me if she needed me to send anything for my son before hanging up in her face.

Shit wasn’t supposed to be like this with me and those niggas, but it is what it is. I didn’t have Kaine, so I don’t know why I thought I’d need them. Hearing my phone vibrate in the cupholder, I looked down and realized it was Lucky calling. Turning the volume up to my speakers, I blasted my nigga Future and rode the city with no destination in mind. Tonight, it was fuck these niggas. With the way I was feeling, it was fuck these bitches too.

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It’s been two weeks since the fallout with Bino about his mother, and the same amount of time has gone by since I’ve spoken with Lucky. For the first couple of days, I was in my

feelings about my cousin, and I didn't want to be bothered. As time went by, I realized I was wrong as fuck for shutting her out. I tried calling her, texting her, and popping up at her crib, but she wasn't budging for a nigga. Today I decided to pop up on her ass at her bakery. She was going to talk to me one way or another. First things first, though, I needed to holler at my pops.

“What’s up, son?” he greeted me as I stepped inside his home.

This is my first time being at his crib, and I must admit the nigga is living nice as hell. His home was spacious, and although he was a single man, you could tell he took pride in its appearance. “How are you doing today?”

“I’m cool.”

I followed him through the foyer as we made it into the sitting area. Once inside, a middle-aged woman appeared and asked if we wanted anything to eat or drink. While she declined, I remained silent until she was out of the room.

“Who is that?” I pointed over my shoulder in the direction she had gone. “You got a whole woman living with you, and you’ve been kicking it with my mama?”

What I really wanted to do was cuss Ceaser and that lady out, but I didn't come over here for all that. I needed his help and didn't want to ruin any chances with my attitude. However, I was going to tell my mama so she could beat his ass.

“Boy, no.” He chuckled before going into a series of coughs. “Sylvia has been working for me for a few years now. She’s been helping me around the house since I’ve been sick.”

“So you do admit to being ill?” I threw my arm over the back of the couch and eyed him. “You gone tell me what’s up with that or do you still want to blame it on an unhealthy diet?”

I don't know who this nigga thought he was fooling when he said that the doctor told him his eating habits were what was wrong with him. It may have played a part, but it wasn't

the only thing. What I do know is the nigga is starting to look bad, and he needs to tighten up.

“I have congestive heart failure,” he disclosed. “I’d like to think this is my karma for doing you and your mother the way I have for all these years. I know I’m late righting my wrongs, but please allow me to try.”

“How do you plan on doing that? I mean, it’s been over twenty years, and although you were lingering in the background to capture the memories, I needed to feel and have a present father in my life. I watched my mother struggle, and she shouldn’t have had to do that when you were able to help!”

“I did what she allowed me to do!” he shouted as he stood from his chair.

Ceaser walked over to the other side of his sitting room and opened the drawer of a desk that was ducked into the corner. He came back over toward me and dropped a stack of envelopes that he’d retrieved. After opening one of them, my eyes widened.

“What the fuck is this?” I asked as I sifted through the old mail and out-of-date checks. “Where did this come from?”

“It was returned to me over the years.” He walked over and sat back in his recliner. “I sent your mama money damn near every week until the time you were twenty years old, but she would send it right back. That or hand it back to me if I ever saw her in person.”

“So mama had us out here struggling, and you could have been helping us all along.” I chuckled as I placed the items on the table before me. “That was some selfish ass shit.”

I think back to all the times I wanted to do certain things growing up and couldn’t because we didn’t have the money. Or times when mama couldn’t even put food on the table because after paying the bills, her money was slim to none. Knowing that my father was ready and willing to help, but she didn’t take it kind of bothered me.

“Hey, son,” he called out to me, and I looked in his direction. “I get why she did it. She thought I betrayed her and her trust. In a way, I did. She wanted nothing to do with me, and I understand the role I played in it all.”

“But making her kids suffer, though?” I scoffed. “That’s some wild shit if you ask me.”

“I understand that, but you turn out just fine if you ask me,” he shrugged as he sipped his water. He was tired, and I could see it all in his face. “Although your brother is a fuckin’ lost cause, she raised y’all right.”

“I guess.” I wanted to change the subject. “I met with Grayson the other day and he advised I come by and holler at you. He said you could help me.”

Never being one to beat around the bush, I got straight to the point of this visit today. If there was anything he could do to help me with this custody battle with Mia, I was all for it.

“You need legit income, Khalil.” He looked at me sternly. “I know all about the shit you do in the streets, and I know Mia is the type that will sell you out if the price is right. We need you to have legal money and real estate in your name,” Ceaser explained.

“I know, man.” I threw my head back and exhaled loudly. “Shit with me, Bino, and Jake are a little tricky right now, and I don’t know how long that shit is going to last, anyway. Fuck!”

I was frustrated to the max. Not only this custody shit with Mia, but my cousins and I being at odds was fucking with me. Never did I ever think shit would get like this with us, but it is what it is.

“Calm your nerves ‘Lil, I got you covered.” He went into the side of his chair and retrieved a manila envelope. “You obviously didn’t look at the Christmas gift I gave you. Now is a better time than any.”

Eyeing him skeptically, I took the folder from him and skimmed through it. I’m not going to lie the shit that looked back at me brought tears to my eyes. “Is this real?”

“As real as it’s going to get.” He simpered. “You’ve been part owner of my construction business since the day you turned twenty-one. You’ve been a millionaire since you were eighteen because of your trust. I wanted to tell you sooner, but now is as best time as any.”

“Why?” I asked, still in a state of shock. “We’ve never had a relationship, and I’m sure you have other children you can share this with.”

“You’re my only child, Khalil.” He stood from his recliner and came to take a seat beside me. “I’m getting older, and I know I failed you as a father. Money isn’t everything, but I know it can help with the problems you have now. I know all about the center you want to build and the life you’re destined to live. Do it, son. Your time is now. All I ask is you be a better father to KJ than I was to you.”

I couldn’t find the words to express what I was feeling at the moment. Feeling like a bitch for being emotional, I decided to let my actions speak for me. Placing the papers on the table, I stood and hovered over my father. All I could do was stare at him. Finally, he dropped his head as if he were defeated.

“Money won’t make up for the time I missed out on having a relationship with you. For years, I asked myself what I did for my father not to want me, and now I know.” I shook my head slightly and closed my eyes briefly before continuing. “The shit you’re doing now, I appreciate it because you don’t have to. Work with me, pops, and we can take this shit a day at a time.”

“Pops?” he asked as he popped his head up. I know for a fact that bitch snapped. “Are you saying we can work on our relationship? Are you going to allow me to be part of you and my grandson’s life?”

“Yeah, man.” I chuckled as the broad smile covered his face as he hopped up from the couch. “Come on, man, don’t do that gay shit.”

Frowning, I wanted to be pissed at him hugging me and kissing my forehead and shit, but I couldn’t be mad. It’s the

first time my father has ever shown me that type of love, and I won't lie and say the shit wasn't nice.

"Let me have my moment." He chuckled as he wiped away a lone tear from his face. "To be clear, you will introduce me as KJ's PopPop?"

"I'm sure you'll have my mama do it when he's back over there." I crossed my arms as a sly mark covered his face. "Don't piss me off."

"Hey, son," he held his hadn't hands up in mock surrender, "I didn't even say anything."

"Yeah, whatever." I took a seat back on the couch and grabbed the papers to look through them again. "Can you explain to me what all of this means?"

For the next few hours, I sat around and shot the shit with my old man. It felt good to have a genuine conversation with him about his business and what this ownership means for me. He informed me it wasn't just on paper but in real life. I've been part owner of a multimillion-dollar business for years and didn't even know it. All bullshit aside, I could care less about the money. Being here with my father right now is what mattered the most to a nigga. I just hope I don't regret letting him in.

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I don't know when and where it happened, but I fucked around and fell in love with this damn girl. If I'm being honest, I think it happened the day Luck whooped my ass and robbed me of my bread at the chicken spot. Either way, she's got a nigga hooked, and I don't want her to let me loose. So, the fact that I'm following her through the dimly lit city is not unusual for me. She's playing with my feelings right now, and that's not good for either of us.

"What, nigga?" I answered the phone after glancing at the stereo screen and seeing it was Jake. "I'm not finna listen to no bullshit today."

"Man, where the fuck you at?" he called himself questioning me. "I've been calling you for days, and you act as

if you can't answer the phone and shit. We need to talk.”

After going to holler at my father a week ago about helping me with my custody case, I kind of fell into a rabbit hole with his business. The nigga has his hand in so many things as far as construction contracts with the city and state that it was crazy. Knowing that it was now mine was even crazier. Between that and stalking Lucky, I haven't really had time for anything else. I've been keeping tabs on her, though. I get she is mad because a nigga could have definitely handled things a little better, but shit, I told her it wasn't going to be easy.

“Man, I'm out and about thuggin' nigga.” I frowned when I noticed Lucky pull up to the lot of a club. She got me fucked up if she thinks she's about to be out here acting like she's not a kept woman. “Say, man, I got to go. I'm busy right now.”

“Stay in the damn car. I see you.”

He didn't even wait for me to respond before he disconnected the call. Not worrying about what the fuck he was saying, I parked at the end of the lot and eyed Luck as she gathered her things and got out of her car. The bar and grill she decided to visit was a chill spot, so I wasn't shocked that she came straight from work. What threw me off was the fact that she thought she was going to ignore me, and that shit was going to be sweet.

“Nigga, why are you out here stalking this girl on some Michael Myers shit?” Jake asked as he opened my front door.

Upon hearing the back door open, I looked over my shoulder as Bino climbed into the back. Looking at me with a mug, I returned the gesture and mugged his ass right back. Instead of confronting him, I turned back around and looked at the direction Luck was in. I glanced around the lot, and I noticed she was gone.

“Loon?”

“Man, I'm sure you've heard I haven't seen or heard from her in about three weeks.” I climbed out of the car with them on my heels. “I'm trying to see what's up with my girl.”



“Your girl, huh?” Jake smirked as he walked beside me. “So you admit you like her?”

“Way past like at this point,” I mumbled, and I made my way over to her car and placed my hands on the window as I looked inside. Seeing that her door was unlocked, a slow smile spread across my face. “Bingo. Be my lookout, Jake.”

“What the fuck are you doing, Loon?” Jake asked as I popped the hood of the car. If Lucky thought she was going to be out riding around as if she didn’t have a nigga stressed out behind her, she had another thing coming.

“I know you’re not about to do some foul shit to this girl’s ride because she doesn’t want you.”

“Doesn’t want me?” I scoffed as I pulled out my phone to search for the information I was looking for. “This is the real death row over here, my boy.” I found what I was looking for and hopped out of her ride. “You just stand guard. I’ll be right back.”

The shit Jake was saying was irrelevant to a nigga like me. I heard what he was saying, but the day Luck told Mia she didn’t want me made me want to go even harder when it came to her. I admit I fucked up by ignoring her, and I will never do that again. A nigga was just going through some shit at the time. Even though I still have things that need to be worked out, I can do that with her by my side.

“Aight, I’m back,” I announced with my toolbox in hand. “Hopefully, this shit won’t take long.”

Holstering the trunk in the air, I looked under the hood until I found what I was looking for. Thankfully, she was parked near a streetlight, so it made seeing a bit easier.

“Let’s see if she can gallivant around this muhfucka if I remove her alternator.”

“What?” Jake roared with laughter. “Nigga, you’re fuckin’ insane.”

“Luck doesn’t know that, though, but she’s about to see.”

After about thirty minutes, a nigga was working up a sweat, and I rethought my actions. I didn't have a clue as to what I was doing but fuck it. I was too deep into this shit now, so it is what it is. My vibrating phone in my pocket didn't even stop me from the task at hand.

“Move out the way nigga because you don't know what the fuck you're doing.” Bino chuckled as he pushed me out of the way. “Disconnect the damn battery and remove that belt first nigga.”

I mugged this nigga as I stepped to the side and watched him go to work with ease. Bino has always been good with his hands and cars, so I knew this shit would be a breeze for him. The help is definitely appreciated, but I wasn't asking this nigga for shit.

“Thanks,” I mumbled as I watched him work. “Don't try to be funny and fuck up her shit even more because we beefin'. I won't hesitate to shoot you.”

“You don't scare me bitch.” He glanced over and gritted as he loosened the bolts. “Shorty is my lil' sis, and I'd never hurt her. For one, Lori would kill me, and two, it's her nigga that I have the problem with.”

“Do something about it, nigga?” I crossed my arms and leaned against the car while he continued to work. “How in the fuck you gone get mad at me for some shit your mama did?”

I know now probably wasn't the best time to bring this shit up but fuck it. Bino opened the door, and I was going to walk through. It wasn't going to be any tussling this time, though. I was going to bust his ass upside the head with this wrench.

“Listen, Loon, I understand.” He shook his head as he removed the battery and put it on the ground. “At the time, I was pissed because all I heard was you disrespecting my mama, and I blanked out. The next day, I went over there and asked her about it. She denied it.”

“Well, my parents have no reason to lie.” I shrugged and removed my phone from my pocket. I couldn't help but frown at all the missed calls and messages from Mia and Persia. The

sisters have fallen back since I shot Alicia's ass, and I was glad. "What I said about your mama is how I feel, and I ain't taking it back."

"I know that," he threw over his shoulder as he continued to work.

I wish he would hurry the fuck up. A nigga is tired as fuck and ready to lay down. I want to go in there and bust up whatever Luck has going on, but I'm going to relax. If she's in another nigga's face, I'm going to jail.

"The shit you said was true, anyway."

Hearing Bino admit I was right felt good, and as bad as I wanted to brag, I wasn't. I'm sure he didn't want to believe his mother was flawed, but that's what it is. He'd better hope I don't kill her.

After another hour and a half, he'd successfully removed Luck's alternator for me. Bino should really consider opening an auto shop because the way he worked was insane. Since I was really on my petty shit tonight, I decided to go ahead and remove two tire lugs from each wheel. She was gonna be pissed and confused. The thought of her being frustrated made my dick twitch.

"Y'all niggas are sick." Jake chuckled as Bino and I placed the items into my trunk. "Now what?"

"I'm about to head over to the trap spot." I stretched as I started my truck. Thankfully, we were done because people were starting to come out. "Meet me over there."

We all slapped hands and agreed to meet up momentarily. Before I could pull off, I noticed Luck step out of the bar and grinning all in some nigga's face like she was right. I clutched my Glock because causing a scene was on my mind, but I slightly relaxed when they went their separate ways. Seeing her enter her car and look on in confusion was enough to bring a smile to my face and drive away with ease. Being as though I told the guys to meet at the trap, I couldn't sit and wait and see how Luck was going to handle the situation.

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“I bet them niggas stopped to get something to eat.” I shook my head as I pulled up to the spot. How did they leave the bar before me and I beat them here is beyond me but knowing them, they stopped for food. “I’m going to kill this nigga for having my door open like this.”

Grabbing my pistol, I exited my ride and headed up the stairs to the home. We’d left one of our soldiers sitting at the house when we had something to do. The nigga has always been legit, so it bothers me that I may have to kill him for being careless. Easing the door open, I instantly knew some shit wasn’t right.

“The fuck?” As I entered, I looked over the front room in shock. Furniture was overturned, and there was broken glass everywhere. Clearly, there was a struggle that had taken place, and Gee better had at least pinched the bitch.

Letting my gun lead the way, I began checking the entire house. There wasn’t much money here because the pickup was early today. If anything was gone, it was petty change, but the thought of anything being gone pissed me off. Making my way into the bedroom that we would use to stash the money, I couldn’t help but shake my head at the scene. Gee was literally caught with his pants down, and the bullet in his chest proved it. That shit pissed me off and confused me at the same time because I thought he was smarter than that. I searched the room for any work or cash and came up empty. Hearing movement from behind me, I turned quickly with my heat now pointed in Bino’s face.

“Nigga, move this shit out of my face.” He smacked on his burger and pushed my hand away. Throwing his head toward a dead-ass Gee, he asked the one question I wanted the answer to. “The fuck happened here?”

“Fuck if I know,” I huffed in frustration. “Pull up the camera on your phone.”

Following him back into the kitchen, I stood with my arms crossed as he assessed the footage from the security camera. I can’t believe that nigga was caught slipping like that, and if he weren’t already dead, I’d kill his ass. Bino announcing he had

the footage pulled up brought me back to the task at hand. What came across the screen caused me to chuckle, although there wasn't a damn thing funny. Having seen enough, it was time to roll out.

“Aye, Jake, get that nigga up there wrapped up. Bino, come take a ride with me.”

“Yessuh!” he exclaimed as he ate the rest of his burger. “I know this shit is about to be an adventure.”

“Y'all be careful, man.” Jake shook his head and pulled out his phone to call the cleaning crew. “Services or not?”

I was headed toward the door, and I paused at his question. After some thought, I decided, why not? “Gee can have one because I fuck with Miss Gloria. Dump him and make sure he's found. Tell the guys to make it quick and then we gone shut this spot down until after I handle business.”

Making my way to the car, I waited for Bino to get inside so I could make one more stop before I headed home. While he was getting in, I couldn't help but smirk at the incoming call.

“I miss you baby,” I spoke honestly when the call connected. “Let a nigga come eat your pussy.”

“The fuck did you do to my car, Khalil?” Luck snapped. “I know it was you because I thought I saw your car leave out of the parking lot.”

“Girl, I'm with my cousin.” I chuckled as Bino's eyes widened, and he shook his head ‘no’. “Say, what's up, fam.”

“Hey Dee,” he called out. “How you doing, baby girl?”

“Fuck you, Bino!” she seethed. “I see you guys have kissed and made up and that's real cute. Khalil, I know you did that shit to my car, and that stupid ass nigga probably helped. You'd better fix it. How in the fuck am I going to go to work in the morning?”

“Where are you?” I asked as I approached my destination. There appeared to be no one here, but I knew better. “I didn't

know you were having car trouble and shit. I can come to you when I finish handling business.”

“We are over, Khalil!” she yelled into the phone. “Before we could finish good, you ruined us. Whatever business you have to handle, whatever it is you’ve been doing for the past three weeks, continue doing it! I’m moving the fuck on with my life, and I suggest you do the same.”

As I listened to her bang on me, I had no one but myself to blame. Knowing all these issues have damn near cost me my girl pissed me off even more. With the shit I was headed to do, at least I’d get some sort of pleasure before the night was over.

“Damn, Loon, how you lose the girl before you even get her good?” Bino chuckled as we exited the car and walked through the backyard of the small house. “Dee ain’t fuckin’ with you for real.”

“I’m not worried about that shit.” I waved him off as we approached the back door. “She should have thought about that shit before she put her pussy in my mouth, not to mention she let me fuck her raw. That muhfucka is mine until we enter the gates together.”

*Boom!*

I kicked in the door without warning and caused the occupants sitting at the kitchen table to scream. These were some of the dumbest muhfuckas I knew. Why would you commit a crime and come back home as if nothing happened? I’ve fucked with some dumb ass bitches.

“Where he at, Alicia?” I asked as I walked further into the house. What pissed me off is the fact that these bitches have the duffle bag that held around fifty thousand. “Where the fuck is my brother?”

When I watched the video of Persia and Alicia entering my spot, I didn’t think much of it at first because those crazy bitches always popped up, hoping to get at a nigga. What pissed me off was Kaine bomb-rushing Gee and demanding all the money and dope that he had. After Gee refused, they led

him to the back, where the girls stripped him, and Kaine shot him. To know these bitches helped him seal their fate as well.

“I don’t know what’s going on, but you need to leave my house.” Persia tried to boss up and act tough, but the look in her eyes said it all. “Now, Loon! You don’t want me, so get the fuck out of my house!”

*Pow!*

“Ahhh!” Alicia cried as she watched P’s dead body hit the floor. Her ass was next if she didn’t tell me what the fuck I wanted to know. “You killed her!”

“Girl, you’re next if you don’t stop screeching like a banshee,” Bino frowned as he leaned against the kitchen wall. “Now, if you don’t want to end up like your sister wife, you’d better tell us right now where that nigga Kaine at.”

“I don’t know,” she whimpered and looked turned to me with begging eyes. “Kaine approached us and said he knew a way for us to get you back. We didn’t know he was going to kill the guy. He offered us the money to keep quiet about it.”

“Was Mia helping?” I asked, and her face scrunched in disgust. “Yes or no, bitch?” I placed my gun at her temple as she rolled her eyes. “I don’t have time for your bullshit. My girl is already trying to leave a nigga on top of this shit, and I’ve never been the one for games. Y’all have played with me for too long, and it ends now, so answer.”

“No, Mia wasn’t there tonight,” she cried as a trail of tears cascaded down her face. “It was an older lady. He kept calling her Shelia. She told him he needed to hurry and end you so she could get what was coming to her.”

Hearing Bino move to the side of me still didn’t make me take my eyes off this bitch.

“You telling me my mother was with that nigga?” He grabbed her by the neck and shook her. “Is that what the fuck you’re telling me?”

I know this shit was hard for him to hear, but I hope he knows what has to be done. When I said all problems were

going to be eliminated, I meant that. Too bad one was his mother.

“Yes, she was the driver. Please, I will give you the money back and leave you alone, Loon!”

“Where are they?” I asked once more. I had already texted Jake the address, and he was on the way. “This is my last time asking you.”

“They dropped us off without a word. Please, I love—”

*Pow!*

Cutting off the bullshit before Alicia could finish, I watched as her body dropped alongside Persia. Shortly after, Jake arrived. Entering the kitchen, he shook his head at the sight before him. He dragged his eyes over to a noticeably quiet Bino.

“You aight, nigga?” He slapped his chest and broke his brother from his trance. “The fuck you thinking about?”

“Your mother’s burial and if she already has an outfit picked out.”

Jake was stuck in a state of shock as he watched his brother retreat out of the back door. I know the shit was hard for him to hear and was weighing heavy on him. If it made him feel better, I’d be the one to carry the burden of pulling the trigger. Either way, Auntie is out of there. Since she wanted to be an Uber, she could escort Kaine to his final resting place, too.



# CHAPTER

# TWELVE

DEVYN

“IF I KNEW RETIRING WAS GOING to afford me impromptu lunch dates with my daughter, I would have retired sooner.” My father stood and greeted me when I approached the table. “You look good, baby girl.”

“You look well yourself, old man.” I giggled as he kissed my forehead. “Hey, Sasha.” I bent and kissed her cheek. “I didn’t know you would be here.”

I didn’t mean any harm by my statement. It’s just that I wanted to tell my father about his baby mama pulling up on me almost a month ago. Her disrupting my day the way she did haunts me and pisses me off at the same time.

“Is that okay?” she asked as she looked back and forth between me and father. “I can leave and come back to pick you up, baby. It’s not a problem.”

“Don’t be silly.” I waved her off as I flagged down a server.

When I asked my father to meet me for lunch, I was over the moon when he suggested Cheesecake Factory. The Chicken Madeira will always be my go-to entree.

“I don’t mind at all. I just didn’t want it to be weird when I tell my daddy that my egg donor popped up at my bakery.”

Since they had obviously already ordered, they sat there with open mouths and wide eyes as I ordered my drink and food from the server. We sat in silence as she made the short distance to retrieve my drink. Taking a sip of my tea, I peered

over the rim of my glass and waited to see who was going to speak first.

“Suga, what do you mean?” my father asked as he leaned slightly across the table. “Dana came to see you? Why?”

“She claims she wants a relationship with me,” I shrugged as I eyed him. “She also said she wanted to see you.”

“I’m sorry, but what the fuck does she want to see my man for?” Sasha snapped through gritted teeth.

“Baby—”

“I know that’s right, Sash!” I leaned across the table and gave her a high five. “Let her know it won’t be as easy as she thinks.”

“Wait a damn minute,” my father interrupted our moment. “Explain to me what happened and what was said.”

For the next twenty minutes, I ran down the conversation and what Dana said. When I told them about Khalil and KJ, they were both thrown into a fit of laughter.

“Remind me to thank Khalil when I see him again.” Sasha wiped the tears from her eyes while my father went back silent. “I’m not going to overlook you saying he called you his lady, either.”

“That ship has already sailed and sank.” I waved her off just as our food arrived. “Thank you,” I spoke. We grabbed hands and said grace before we were diving in. My father, however, looked as though he had some things on his mind. “Dad, are you okay?”

“Uh, yeah.” He shook his head as if to clear his mind. I noticed Sasha side-eyed him but chose not to say anything. “How long are you in town for?”

“Maybe a day or two.” I covered my mouth and spoke in between bites. “Is it okay that I stay at the house, or do I need to get a room?”

My father had informed me that one of Sasha’s Christmas gifts was going to be asking her to move in with him and I

didn't want to oppose. That's her house now, too, and I don't want to overstep any boundaries.

"Girl, don't piss me off." She took a bite of her salad and glared at me. "That will always be your home, and you will always be welcomed there. Nothing has changed, Devyn, and it never will. I would like to think that we were a family, or at least headed in the direction of being one."

"Absolutely," I assured her and was awarded with a smile from my father. "In this short amount of time, you mean a lot to me. The way you've accepted me and loved my dad is all I could ask for. I'm an adult, and you don't have to deal with me, period. You could have told him you wanted me to get the boot."

"I'd never choose anyone over you, Devyn," my dad chimed in and then put his attention on Sasha. "You either, baby." He looked at Sasha with nothing but love and admiration in his eyes. "I hope you know that. I'm never letting you go."

"See, pops here has the idea." My neck snapped behind me as soon as I heard his voice. "Surprised to see me, baby?"

In all of his fine glory stood Khalil Simmons. He looked so good in a wheat-colored double breast overcoat, cream-colored turtleneck, and stonewashed jeans paired with his wheat-colored Timbs. His plats and lineup were fresh, and the slight jewelry he wore shined like diamonds under the lights of the restaurant. The grin on his face let me know he knew he was fine, and I couldn't help but agree.

"Khalil? What are you doing here?" I asked as he shook hands with my father and hugged Sash. "More importantly, how did you find me?"

"Air tag." He took a seat beside me and shrugged as if it was nothing. "I miss you."

"What do you mean an Air tag, Khalil?" I gritted as he pulled me into a hug and kissed my lips. "Why in the hell are you here?"

“Pop, you see how your daughter is talking to me?” He shook his head and glared at me. “I know you didn’t raise her to be disrespectful.”

“I sure didn’t.” My dad looked on in amusement. “I’m sure her attitude is warranted, though.” They both exchanged knowing looks before chuckling. “Maybe not.”

For the next few minutes, I sat and listened to my father and Khalil carry on a conversation as if Sasha and I weren’t even there. When my dad asked him about his occupation, I was shocked to know he was now in business with his dad, and he was part owner of a multimillion-dollar company. I guess a lot has changed in a month’s time.

“It’s so nice out today, David.” We agreed with Sasha as we left out of the restaurant. Although Khalil didn’t eat, he insisted lunch was on him. For the past five minutes, I’ve been trying to pry and snatch my hand from his, but he is not letting up. “I’d really love to go shopping.”

“Yes, girl. Go spend your man’s money.” I smiled as my father groaned and rolled his eyes. “He knows it goes because I’ve been doing it for years. I guess I have to spend my own money now that you’re in the picture.”

“Never that.” Khalil threw his arm around my shoulder as he walked me to his car. Ironically, it was parked where my rental was located. “You got a new daddy now, and as long as I have it, you do, too.”

“Watch your mouth, lil’ nigga.” My father glared at him.

“I’m saying, pops.” He smiled and kissed my temple. “The world is hers if she wants it.”

“Since you stole my battery and alternator, I want a new car.” I stepped from Khalil’s embrace and glared up as he hovered over me with lust-filled eyes. “I mean, since you’re balling and stuff now, I feel it’s the least you can do.”

“Let me know the year, make, model, and color, love. I’ll have your ride to you by the end of the week.”

“That’s nice and all,” my father interrupted since I was rendered speechless by his answer. “Explain to me what my

daughter meant when she said you removed her alternator.”

We stood in the open lot of the restaurant and listened to Khalil explain his stupid ass logic to my father. It was a ridiculous thing to do, and it still hasn't made me want to be in his presence. The next morning after everything happened, he popped up at my apartment with one of his cars and I've yet to drive it. I got a rental and came to my dad's to get away from him. Well, that's what I thought.

“Well, isn't this a pleasant surprise?” we heard from behind us. “I wasn't expecting to see you guys here today.”

There stood Dana, looking as if she had just stepped out of a magazine. Just like when she popped up at my bakery, she was dressed in designer from head to toe. She looked good. I'd give her that.

“Lady, didn't I tell you the last time I saw you to stay away from my girl?” Khalil gritted as he placed me behind him. I appreciated him wanting to protect me, which made me hate him a little less. “What the fuck are you doing here?”

“Your mouth, Khalil.” Sasha chastised him.

“I'm sorry, ma.” He smiled and winked at her over his shoulder. Her slight blush caused my father to frown slightly. “It's just that I told her once about trying to play with Luck, and I guess she took me for a joke.”

“For your information,” Dana shifted and pushed her strap up on her shoulder, “I live in the area now, and I was stopping by for lunch.” She looked around until she locked eyes with my father. “Hello, David. It's been a long time.”

“Not long enough,” he answered without hesitation. “Listen, I want to make it clear that whatever games you're here to play, I'm not with them. It's funny to me that as soon as I'm happy, as soon as my daughter is happy, you pop your ass back up in the picture.”

At this moment, I knew Dana had messed up. My father was very patient and hardly ever got angry or cursed. However, the look on his face right now screamed murder, and

I believe if we weren't out in the open, he would reach out and touch Dana, but not in the way she wanted him to, I'm sure.

"Excuse me?" She scrunched her face and stepped closer to him. "Devyn's my daughter, and if I want to see her, I will. You act as if I'm not part of her life or part of your life."

"When it comes to him," Sasha stepped in between them and pointed over her shoulder at my father, "you're not. If you want a relationship with Devyn, that's between the two of you. As far as David Walker? That ship has sailed, boo. You lost him a long time ago."

"And who are you?" Dana eyed her up and down. "Look at you and then look at me." She ran her hand up and down her body. "I'm slim and trim. Fine as ever, and you're—"

"His wife." Sasha smirked and held up her ring finger.

My eyes bulged at her confession. *When did this happen? Why didn't they tell me?*

"You two have a grown ass child and have nothing to discuss. You left because you didn't want to be a parent, and you thought you were going to waltz back into my man's life and pick back up where you left off? Think again."

"Talk your shit, ma!" Khalil's ignorant ass cheered Sasha on.

"I did what I thought was best for my family!" Dana shouted, causing people nearby to stop and stare. "Do you know what it's like to be nineteen and pregnant? I had yet to experience life, and I was going to be responsible for her wellbeing. My life wasn't about me anymore. Hell, you didn't even want me anymore! David, you told me to leave and never come back."

"Want you?" my father stepped around Sasha. "I loved you, but you're damn right. I was going to choose my child every time. You wanted to abandon Devyn and give her away, so you're damn right I told you to leave and never come back. What did you think was going to happen?"

They engaged in a brief stare-off. Each one was waiting for the next person to respond. I felt sad thinking that my

mother didn't want to raise me, but at the same time, I could believe how selfish she was based on how she acted now. Well, I wasn't going for it.

"You don't want to be in my life." I looked at her with sad eyes. "If that were the case, you would have popped up before now. You're only here because I'm an adult and require less from my dad. I want nothing to do with you." I shook my head because I was pissed at the tears threatening to fall. "Leave me and my family alone, Dana, because I know people that will have it so that your body is never found."

"It's me, I'm people." Khalil raised one hand and wrapped the other around my waist. "Last warning."

Dana looked between us all once more before dropping her head and walking off. We all stood there by our cars for a moment before deciding to go up the street and do a little outlet shopping. Retail therapy always made me feel better, which was even better when it was not my money.

"So, do you want to tell me what's going on with you and Khalil?" Sasha asked as we walked through the Polo store. Khalil just had to come in here, and since he was funding this sporadic shopping spree, who was I to deny him of going into a store he wanted to go in? "That young man seems to be really crazy about you."

"Like my daddy must be about you since y'all got married and didn't say anything to me about it?" I raised my brow as we took a seat on a nearby bench. "Why didn't y'all tell me?"

I won't lie. My feelings were hurt a little. That was a big moment for my father, and he didn't include me in it. They didn't have to hide it from me.

"It wasn't anything like that." She looked at me with sympathetic eyes. "We wanted it to be a sacred moment with just the two of us when we went out of town for new year's. He asked. I said yes, and the next thing you know, we were headed to a chapel."

"I can tell you make him happy, Sasha." I looked from her to my father, who was engaged in a conversation with Khalil's

delusional ass. I really need to question him about this air tag situation. “I know he would have never done anything like that if he didn’t see forever with you. You love him, and he loves you.”

“Same for you and Khalil.”

“Huh?” I snapped my head back in her direction. “We are not like that.”

*Love? Khalil? I have feelings for him, but was it love? Did he feel that way about me? Surely not.* We haven’t been on the same page since we semi-made things official, and it bothered me a bit. The one time I decided to give someone a chance, it blew up in my face.

“It’s all over your pretty face, Devyn.” She giggled and patted my shoulder. “When I look at how he handles you, I can tell he feels the same. That boy is in love, and there is nothing you can do about it but embrace it.”

As I watched Khalil interact with my dad, I thought about what she was saying. Could he really have those feelings for me? Feeling eyes on him, Khalil looked around until his eyes locked with mine. He held my stare, and that was when I knew. He did love me, and I’ll be damned if I didn’t think I felt the same way.

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“Cousin, I love you, and you know that. I would hate to have to explain to your father how you ended up in a casket.”

Rolling my eyes at Kira’s comment, I continued to apply my makeup as I got ready for my date tonight. Khalil had me fucked if he thought he was going to put me on the back burner and handle me like I’m some simp ass bitch. When I agreed to be with him, I made it clear not to play with me, but here we are.

I know all about the fight he and Bino had because Lori made sure to call me. I played clueless when she asked me what it could possibly be about. If Bino didn’t tell her, it wasn’t my place to do it. When Khalil popped up on me last weekend at my father’s, he really thought spending a bag on



me and dropping off some dick was going to fix everything, but it wasn't. We got back home, and he was back in the streets. He had too much going on, and I refused to be second. I hated Sasha had brought the possibility of love to my attention because it was all I'd been thinking about. Tonight was the first step I would take to get back to my old self.

"I could care less about the things you're saying, Kira." I popped my lips and was pleased with the slight shine from the gloss. "I'm about to go out tonight and have some fun. I thought you were going to be my wingman."

"I am." She sighed as she stood from the edge of my bed. "I'll be downstairs waiting on you and thinking about the speech I'm going to give at your homegoing service. A sad day it will be."

Giggling at her dramatics, I walked to my closet and retrieved my favorite pair of denim ripped jeans I purchased from Fashion Nova. The way they cuffed and lifted my ass should be a crime, but I knew for a fact I was turning heads to night. Since it was chilly outside, I paired it with a long-sleeved body shirt with a deep V in the front that had the girls up top playing peek-a-boo. I brought out a pair of thigh high leather black boots to complete the outfit. My face was beat, my curls were popping, and a bitch smelled like heaven. With a simple pair of diamond studs and the cute Cartier watch that Khalil purchased on our first vacation, I looked and felt like that bitch.

"Alright, let's go," I called out to her as I made my way into the living room. I was ready to get the night started, and since Kira was with child, I had a designated driver. "I can't believe you let that nigga knock you up." I giggled and palmed her small belly. "I just knew we were going to be lit this summer."

"Dee, we have been lit for the past two summers, love." Kira chuckled as she made her way to the door with me behind her. "It was time for me to sit my ass down. Plus, I'm happy to be having a baby with my man. Maybe if you and Loon get y'all shit together—"

“Girl, fuck Khalil.” I frowned as we made our way to her car. “I will never let that nigga sit me down, or any nigga for that matter.”

He couldn't even be a decent boyfriend, so the thought of having a child with him was wild. Plus, he had enough going on with Mia, and she seemed real territorial over a nigga she cheated on. I'd hate to murder that bitch.

“So you say.” Kira side-eyed me, and we headed through town. “I think Loon really likes you, boo, and the last thing you should want to do is play with his feelings.” She looked from me to the road as she headed to a nearby lounge. Although I wanted to go out and shake my ass tonight, I decided to keep it simple. Plus, I don't want any issues with Jake. He was a little on the quiet side, but that nigga was crazy. “Give him a chance.”

“I'm all chanced out.” I sighed as I silenced my phone for the hundredth time. “Khalil doesn't respect me or my feelings, Kira. You know how I feel about relationships, and I feel like he played me. Before I get caught up in my feelings about a nigga, I will leave him where I found him and go on about my business. I don't need the heartbreak.”

“You fell for him, didn't you?” she asked as she came to a stop at the light. “You have real feelings for that crazy ass nigga.”

“It doesn't matter.” I shrugged as my phone rang once more. “I'm back outside and on my bullshit. Fuck whatever feelings I may or may not have. Matter of fact,” I answered my phone this time, “bullshit is calling me right now.”

“A sad day it will be,” she mumbled as I answered my phone.

“Hello?” I spoke through my receiver. “Why are you calling me Monty?”

“I miss you,” his raspy voice flowed. “Pull up on me.”

I haven't seen or heard from Montel since the night he left me at the restaurant. That shit was embarrassing, and I wanted nothing to do with him. His calling tonight was just the sign I

needed to get back to the Devyn that didn't give a fuck about these niggas.

“Are you home?” I asked as I felt Kira's eyes on me. “I'm with someone, but I can get dropped off.”

“Bet.” He disconnected the call.

I know I was playing games at this point, but it is what it is.

“Take me to Monty's,” I informed Kira as I glanced at her. “You know the way.”

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Nothing was said as Kira made the drive to Monty's home. I know she probably disagreed with what I was doing, but I don't care. I'm single, and I will do single shit.

“Enjoy your night,” she spoke as she pulled up to his home. “Call me if you need me.”

Kira didn't even give me time to get out of the car good before she was pulling off. Shrugging her off, I made the short walk to his front door and knocked.

“Damn,” Monty groaned as he stepped to the side and allowed me in. “You look good as fuck.” He pulled me into a hug, which I returned. “You missed a nigga?”

“Not really,” I honestly spoke as I took a seat on his sofa. “I wasn't fucking with you after you left me by myself when it was supposed to be a date.”

“My bad, man.” he apologized as he took a seat beside me. “A nigga had business and shit.”

“Well, I'm here now so—”

My phone vibrated in my purse, and I pulled it out to see that Khalil was calling once again. Suddenly, I didn't want to be here anymore. Although hesitant, I accepted the call and placed the phone to my ear.

“Luck, I don't understand why you think this shit is over with us when we just started,” he growled as soon as the call connected. Thankfully, Monty excused himself when it rang to

give me privacy. “I told you that I fucked up, and I don’t understand why you won’t let a nigga love on you.”

I rolled my eyes as I listened to Khalil rant and rave about me being difficult. I’ve been annoyed since the conversation with Sasha about possibly loving him. That’s all that’s been on my mind, and the more I think about it, the more I think it may be true.

“Khalil, I don’t want you to love on me, okay?” I spoke just above a whisper. My chest tightened as soon as the words left my lips.

Here I was supposed to be on my hot girl shit with one nigga while I was lying to myself about the one I really wanted. I couldn’t afford to get lost in Khalil. He’s shown me how easy it was to be distracted, and I didn’t need that. When we came back home from visiting my father, he thought sex was all I would need to have him back on my good side. I won’t lie. I missed him being inside of me, so I welcomed the feeling. After the love making ended, the way I felt about him hit me like a ton of bricks, and I wanted to distance myself from him.

“Where you at Luck?” He sighed into the phone. “I want to see you.”

“I’m busy,” I answered as soon as Monty reentered the living room with drinks. “I gotta go.” I didn’t wait for him to respond before I disconnected the call.

“Is everything okay?” Monty handed me one as he took a seat beside me. “You want to talk about it?”

“Actually,” I stood with my items in my hand, “Can you take me home? I shouldn’t have come here.”

No longer in the mood to be bothered, I wanted to go home. I needed to think about what was going on with me, and being here with this nigga wasn’t the way to go. I didn’t even want his ass for real.

“Huh?” He stood in confusion. “What the fuck you mean? I thought we were kickin’ it.”

“I changed my mind,” I mimicked Whitney Houston as I angled my head and glared at him. “I’m not feeling the agitation in your voice, so relax. Now again, will you come take me home?”

“Man, sit down.” He leaned forward from the couch and grabbed my wrist. “We’re about to chill and shit.”

“Nigga, get off me.” I tried to snatch my hand back, but he had a grip on it. “Montel, let me go.”

“Bitch—”

*Crash!*

We both jumped as a brick came crashing through one of the windows. We looked at each other in shock at what had happened. Grabbing his gun, Monty slowly walked over to the window and peeked outside. Once he made it over, the power inside the house went out.

“What the fuck?” I whispered, scared shitless. “What is going on, Monty?”

“Shh. I don’t know but be fuckin’ quiet.”

“Who the fuck—”

“Luck, bring your ass out of that muthafuckin’ house!”

Monty and I froze and stared at each other in the moonlit room. The purpose of me not driving tonight was because I didn’t know what type of tracking device Khalil had on me and where it was located, and I didn’t want him popping up on me. I’ll be damned if he didn’t find me, anyway. His ass was outside in the middle of the street with a bullhorn as if he were negotiating a hostage situation. If I find out Kira told him where it was, it was a wrap for her ass.

“That nigga followed you here?” Monty hissed as he scrambled away from the window. “You got to get out of here, shorty. That nigga is fuckin’ nuts.”

“I’m not going out there.” I pushed Monty off of me when he tried to pull me toward the door. “He’s going to kill me.”

“Lucky, a nigga’s trying to be patient with you,” Khalil blared through the horn. “I know I fucked up when I shut you out, but I can’t keep doing this shit with you. Either we’re going to be together or together is going to be us because I’m not letting you go. I love you, man.”

*Love me? He loves me?*

I couldn’t help the smile that spread across my face at his admission. Thoughts of Khalil loving me came to mind a time or two, and I tried to brush it off, but hearing him admit it was a different type of feeling. With love, though, comes pain, even if it’s unintentional. The smile I was sporting slowly disappeared when the reality of it all set in. I loved him, too.

“You have ten seconds to bring your ass out here Lucky before I shoot that bitch up,” Khalil sounded off once more. “You better duck, baby girl, because I count by fives.”

Scrambling, I damn near tore my ACL trying to get out the front door. I bumped into him once I opened it because he was really on his way in. The look in his eye was murderous, and for the first time, I was nervous around him.

“K-Khalil, it’s not what you think,” I stammered, placing my hand on his chest. He had a bullhorn in one hand and a gun in the other. This man really was nuts. “I’ve only been here for a few minutes, and I was about to leave.”

“Leave, huh?” He angled his head as he hovered over me. “You had no business being over here in the first place.” He stared momentarily before bending down to kiss me on the nose. “It’s cool, though, because I’m killing this nigga. Go hop in the truck for me.”

Pushing me to the side, I watched his back as he entered Monty’s house. Was he really going to kill him? I don’t know, but I wasn’t going to stand here like an idiot and wait for him to come back and get me next. Sprinting over to his truck, I opened the driver’s side and slid in. I was about to leave his crazy ass right here.

“Damn, Dee, I know you weren’t going to leave my nigga hanging like that.”

“Bino,” I gasped. He scared the hell out of me because I didn’t know his weird ass was in the back seat. “Why are you sitting back there?”

“Why you ducked off in that nigga’s crib knowing how my cousin feels about you?”

“I literally just found out, dude.” I rolled my eyes and faced back forward. “Plus, he doesn’t mean that. Does he?”

“Girl, that nigga has been chasing you for weeks.” He chuckled and leaned up over the middle console. “He didn’t even chase Mia’s ass like this. He knows he fucked up when he ghosted you. He wasn’t on any bullshit, Dee. Listen, I know that nigga, and if that ain’t love, I don’t know what is. If you haven’t lost him, give him a chance.”

*Lost him?* I heard what Bino said, and the thought of not having Khalil made me sick to my stomach. Since the moment I met him, I knew his ass was trouble, and here I am, in love with him. This shit happened so fast, and I may have lost him even faster.

“Jake is on the way,” Khalil spoke as he opened the driver’s door. Slowly, he brought his eyes to me. “Why are you on this side?”

“She was about to leave your ass.” Bino chuckled as he opened the back door to get out. “I’m going to go in here and wait on my brother. You leaving?”

“Nah, I’m going to stay out here until he comes,” Khalil answered but never took his eyes off me. “Move out of the way, Luck.”

I wanted to press him about the harshness in his tone, but I know I brought it on myself. Instead of putting up a fight, I moved over to the passenger side of his truck. For a moment, we stared into the darkness without saying a word.

“Are you mad at me?” I asked as I dragged my eyes over to him. “Do you still want me?”

Staring straight ahead, Khalil ignored me as if I weren’t there. It bothered me because he had never been this cold to me before. As badly as I wanted to press him, I crossed my

arms and sat back quietly. I wasn't going to pressure anyone to talk to me.

“You're hardheaded as fuck girl,” he gritted. “For weeks, I have been trying to make this shit up to you, but you haven't been trying to hear a nigga. Then what do you do? You come out here and kick it at another nigga's crib.” He locked eyes with me, and I swear my life flashed before my eyes. “Were you going to fuck him?”

“No,” I hurried and answered. “I was ready to go before I was able to sit down good, Khalil. I didn't want to be here.”

“Why?”

“It felt wrong,” I honestly answered. “For weeks now, I've been in my feelings about you dissing me. I get you had shit going on, but you could have talked to me. You know the issues I have with being in a relationship, and I feel like you disregarded my feelings because of what you had going on.”

“Come here, Lucky.”

Khalil leaned his seat back and extended his hand for me to sit in his lap. Removing my boots and jacket, I complied and crawled over to him. Straddling him, he placed his hands on my waist and kissed the tip of my nose before speaking.

“I sincerely apologize if you felt like I neglected you.” He glared at me with remorseful eyes. “That was never my intention. When we went to Miami, and I asked you to be my girl, I meant it. I want you in my life. I need you in my life. You're the peace that I need in the midst of all my chaos, and I never meant to hurt you or make you feel invalid. Can we please give this a chance, baby? A real chance. No more running, no more lack of communication.”

His words, his stare. I felt as if Khalil was speaking to my soul. This man and his toxic ways had stolen my heart, and I honestly didn't want him to give it back.

“You meant it when you said you love me?” I smirked as I traced his bottom lip with my thumb. “I told you this pussy was going to change your life.”



“You did.” He chuckled and pulled closer to him. “And I do love you.” He wrapped his hand firmly around my throat and placed his lips on mine. “More than you will ever know.”

I placed my hands on his shoulders and kissed him with so much passion that it felt as if my juices were seeping through my jeans. I wanted him, and I wanted us. I wasn't going to fight it anymore.

“I love you too, Khalil,” I panted between kisses. “Just don't hurt me again.”

# CHAPTER

# THIRTEEN

KHALIL

“SHIT,” I hissed as I palmed the back of her head. “Suck that shit, Lucky.”

I peered down at her and was met with those lust-filled eyes I’d grown to love with everything in me. For the past couple of weeks, we’ve been staying true and living up to the promises we made each other. I loved this girl, and I would always make sure she knew it.

“Hmm,” she hummed as she slobbered all over my dick. Waking up to head in bed was the perfect way to start the day, and I was thankful because I felt as if it would be a wild one. “You like that shit, baby?”

“Eat that muhfucka up, girl,” I gritted as I lifted my hips to fuck her mouth. “Make it spit for daddy.”

Lucky hollowed her cheeks, flattened her tongue, and did the shit that had a nigga acting like Joe Clark to get her ass back. This demon came into my life and put that voodoo pussy on a nigga, and I ain’t going no damn where. Ever.

Feeling my nut rise, I held her head steady, and my strokes to her esophagus became jerky.

“Fuck mama, I’m about to nut!” I growled. “Swallow that shit!”

It felt like I hadn’t busted in days as ropes and ropes of cum shot from the tip of my dick. I tucked my lips between my teeth and looked on as she drank me down with ease. Not a single drop was spilled. This girl was nasty as fuck, but most importantly, she was mine.

“Good morning, baby,” she moaned as she placed kisses from the tip of my flaccid dick all the way up to my torso and chest. “How are you feeling? Are you ready for the day?”

Today we were finally having the custody hearing for KJ, and I was nervous as fuck. I’d been speaking to my father and lawyer about it, and they assured me everything would be fine. Still, with a bitch of a baby mama like Mia, you could never be too sure.

“I’m ready to get it over with.” I pulled Lucky up my body and kissed her lips gently. “Thank you for going with me.”

“Of course.” She smiled. “Come on, let’s get up.”

“Wait...” I grabbed her wrist as I eyed her naked body, “I want to fuck first.”

Since making our relationship officially official, I’d been living inside of this girl. I wanted her to be reminded of a nigga every time she thought she wanted to walk away from me. From her slow movements these days, I could tell I’d been doing my job.

“Noooo,” she whined as she pulled me from the bed, “I’m sore, and we don’t have time. One round will turn into three, and we’re going to either be sleepy or late. Now come on.”

For the past few nights, I’d been staying at Luck’s house, or my mother’s with KJ. He came over here with me often, but when he did, he wanted all of Luck’s attention. I told the nigga she was my girlfriend, and he had the nerve to cry and said he had her first. Lucky feels so bad and babies him every chance she gets, and he eats it right on up. The lil’ nigga was a hater.

“What all do you have planned for the day?” I asked her as we brushed our teeth. “You kicking it with me all day?”

“I need to go by my bakery and help Kira.” She looked up at me through the mirror. “She’s been helping me a lot, and I don’t want to overdo it. She’s pregnant, and I don’t want to tire her out. Plus, I have an appointment to go look at buildings today.”

When Lucky told me she felt as if she weren’t making any money because of the outrageous new leasing payments, I

suggested maybe she should look into finding her a spot she could own. She didn't really want to, but being as though her man had a little bit of money now, the cost wasn't an issue.

After brushing and rinsing, we stepped into the shower, and I was immediately on her ass.

"You know I love the fuck out of you, right?" I gripped her waist from behind as I palmed her left breast. "You know you got a nigga's head gone?" I pinched her nipple and was awarded with the sweetest moan. "I love you, baby."

"I love you too, Khalil," she threw her head back as I continued to tease her. "Shit," she hissed. "That hurts."

"Hurts?" I frowned and roamed her body until I found her clit. "How about this?" I strummed her slowly.

Easing two fingers into her slippery tunnel, she immediately sucked me in. I know she said her pussy needed a little rest from the damage I've been doing, but this nut won't hurt at all.

"Khalil..." she cooed, "make me cum baby."

"I plan to." I placed kisses all over her neck. "It should be a crime to have pussy this good."

"It's yours, too." Luck began to fuck my fingers back. "Shit, I'm close baby. Right there, Khalil! Oh my... fuck!"

Luck began jerking rapidly, and her essence was running down my hand, mixed in with the water from the shower head. Turning to face me, she grabbed my fingers and sucked her juices off before grabbing my face and tonguing me down. After getting our feel of one another, we quickly cleaned each other off and got ready to start our day.

"This apartment is getting kind of small, don't you think?" I eyed her as she walked around the room in nothing but her panties and bra. "Don't you think it's time for something bigger?"

"It's just me here," she called out from her walk-in closet. "Plus, this has been home for the past couple of years, and I'm not ready to move yet. It's just me, so I have plenty of room."

I nodded my head and remained silent as we continued to get ready. Little did she know, this shit with us was for life, so the shit she was talking was null and void. After another hour of chit-chat and me feeling her fine ass up, we were headed to our destination.

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“Khalil, please don’t show your ass in this courthouse today.” Luck peered up at me as she fixed the collar on my shirt. “Remember why we’re here today. If Mia goes low—”

“I’m going to hell,” I interrupted her. “She better come in here and act like she has some fucking sense, baby. I’m not going for shit strange today.”

For the past few weeks, co-parenting with Mia has been unbearable. She meets me and answers the phone when she gets ready. The thing is, it’s me now that’s trying to get her to spend time with KJ. She got him Christmas Day and kept him for a couple of days before bringing him back. When Lucky and I went on vacation, she found out about it and went nuts. Mia claimed I was unfit because I was out living it up with a whore I didn’t know instead of spending time with my son. The crazy thing was that she took KJ to my mother and didn’t come back to get him. From what I’ve gathered from the people my pops had following her, Kaine hadn’t been around when KJ was with her. This was good because I didn’t want that fuck nigga nowhere near my son.

“Baby, you have to keep the bigger picture in mind,” Lucky snapped me from my thoughts. “We want KJ home with us, right?”

“You said ‘home’ and ‘us’.” I smiled as I bent down to kiss her lips. “See, now you’re getting it.”

“Whatever.” Luck smiled as she swatted my chest. We were standing in the hallway outside our assigned room, waiting for Grayson. He made it clear not to go inside until he got here. “You know what I mean.”

“You meant what you said, and I appreciate it, baby.” I kissed her forehead. “They need to hurry this shit up, though. I

need to holler at the guys at the build site and make sure everything is still on schedule.”

Since my father basically turned over the reins to the company to me, I’d been invested like hell. It’s been overwhelming at times, but the shit was worth it. I’d never known so much went into trying to obtain government contracts, but seeing these low-income communities and families have a safe place to live and have recreation spots was worth it all. Getting the okay to build my center was the first project I wanted to take on my own. My father got me a meeting with the right people in the city, and after pitching the plan to them, we were given the okay to build.

“I’m really proud of you.” Luck grabbed my hand in hers right as Grayson walked our way. “You had a dream, and now it’s coming true.”

“My biggest dream come true is you and my son, though.” I winked at her, causing her to blush. “I’m thankful I have you here with me to share all of this.”

“Good morning, Mr. Simmons,” he extended his hand for me to shake before dragging his eyes to my girl. “You must be Ms. Walker?”

“You’ve heard of me?” Lucky asked as she eyed us both skeptically. She accepted his hand as well.

“Of course. It’s nice to finally meet you.” He gave her a toothy smile, and I wanted so badly to sock this nigga, but I need him here with me today. “You’ve been the topic of many conversations.”

“Nigga, don’t get me an assault charge.” I mugged him and pushed him back slightly. “Don’t get fucked up.”

“Khalil, I swear I did not raise you to act the way that you do,” my mother spoke as she made her presence known.

I gave her a quick hug and kiss as I dapped my father up. Our relationship was better, but we still had a ways to go.

“Can we get this show on the road so we can go get my baby? I dropped him off with Kira, and Bino was at the house.”

“Yes, please, let’s get the ball rolling.” My father spoke. “My nephew has my grandson asking about little honeys, and I don’t like that.”

We all shared a laugh as Grayson escorted us into the room. Mia was already seated on one side of the courtroom with her lawyer, and they were engaged in what appeared to be a heated conversation. For this to be a court hearing, shorty looked disheveled as hell. When she locked eyes on me, she licked her lips and smirked. That all faded when she dragged her eyes over to Lucky. When she looked between us and saw our hands interlocked, the shit show began.

“What the hell is she doing here?” Mia jumped from her chair and shouted. “She is not family, and I don’t want her here. Get her out of here now!”

“Ms. Bell, calm down,” her lawyer warned as she placed her hand on her shoulder. “You’re going to be held in contempt if you don’t.”

“I don’t care,” Mia hissed and shook her hand off of her shoulders. “She is just a whore he’s currently sleeping with, and she has no reason to be here. She will be irrelevant in a week.”

“Order!” the judge called out when she entered the room. “Court isn’t even in session yet, and there is already chaos. I won’t go for it.”

“Your Honor,” Mia’s dusty-ass lawyer approached the bench. “This is a very sensitive time and case for my client, and the distraction for outside members isn’t wanted nor needed. We would like to ask that Mr. Simmons remove his guest. We are okay with the grandparents being here, but his ‘friend’ and her presence are not needed.”

Mia had fire in her eyes as she beamed in on Lucky and me. This girl was more worried about me and what I had going on versus the real reason we were here today. She might as well let that shit go because Lucky wasn’t going anywhere.

“Your Honor, if I may?” Grayson called out as he approached the bench. “My client is here today with the

support of his family. His fiancée will be playing a very intricate role in his life, which means his son's life. She is family as well and has every right to be here."

"I will allow it." The judge looked around the courtroom. "Ms. Bell, one more outburst, and I will hold you in contempt. You two may go back over to your clients."

Banging his gavel, he called court into session and told us why we were all here today.

"Let me handle this," Grayson leaned over and whispered. "No matter what is said about you, remain silent and let me work."

I nodded and kept my mouth shut. Trusting has been a big thing for me with all I have been through, but I was learning to do it with my father and Grayson. So far, they have not let me down.

"So Ms. Bell here is asking for physical sole custody of Khalil Merciano Simmons, Jr. Is that correct?"

"Yes, Your Honor," she spoke from her seat. "I would like to have full custody of my son with supervised visits when it comes to his father. I am also seeking child support payments in the amount of twenty thousand dollars a month."

"I see." The judge nodded as he looked over a few documents in his hand. "What do you have to say about that, Mr. Simmons?"

"Well," Grayson eyed me intently and let me know it was okay to answer but reminded me to tread lightly. "I feel like twenty thousand dollars is a bit much, but I will pay what you feel is necessary. Also, I have an issue with her having sole and physical custody of my son. I won't tell you how I feel about the visitation arrangement she spoke of. If I do, you're going to kick me out of here."

"Tell me what you want, Mr. Simmons," the judge requested.

"I want to be a father to my son," I honestly answered. "I want rights just like any other active parent. I want to be able



to love and provide for my son without restraints and stipulations.”

“I see.” The judge nodded and gave his attention back to Mia and her attorney. “State your case.”

“Your Honor, Mr. Simmons just recently learned that he has a son because the mother felt that if he knew about her being in a relationship with his brother, her life would be in danger. He’s been in the streets for years, and he was even shot recently. He has the money to pay the amount she is requesting despite wanting to refuse.”

Hearing the things Mia’s lawyer was saying was making me want to go over there and knock fire from both of their asses. I know Grayson told me it was possible for her to come here today and do some shady ass shit, but I didn’t think she would take it this far. Mentioning me being shot further let me know she knew what Kaine had been up to.

“Do you have medical records or anything to state this claim?” Grayson asked as he looked from Mia to the judge. “To be making that type of accusation as long as the one about Mr. Simmons being in the streets is pretty serious.”

“I mean, n-no, I don’t have proof,” Mia nervously stuttered, “but look at him.” She gestured in my direction. “He lives in a high-rise downtown. He came waltzing in here, dripped in jewels and designer. Where do you think the money is coming from to afford all of that?”

“I see,” the judge spoke and looked over to me and Grayson. “What do you have to say about that?”

“Your Honor, the documents here show that my client has been part owner of Monarch Projects and Development since the age of twenty-one. He has real estate in his name, as well as various stocks and bonds. Mr. Simmons’ net worth is in the upper millions, Your Honor. These accusations against him are malicious and invalid. What isn’t invalid?” He approached the bench and handed the judge a folder before retaking his place beside me. “Ms. Bell doesn’t have a physical address. She’s been living in a hotel for the past few weeks that has been

known for drugs and prostitution. Now, if we're deeming anyone unfit here today, it is not my client."

I sat there shocked as I listened to Grayson give the run down on Mia and her living arrangement. After blowing up their spot, Ceaser's people always followed her to the nicest hotels in the city. They staked out the place all day and night, making sure they followed her every move. My father even paid people off on the inside to keep tabs on her.

"Because he blew up my home!" Mia exclaimed as she jumped up from her seat. "I know he did. I hate you, Khalil! I hate you!"

"Order! Order!" the judge continuously yelled as he banged his gavel. "Bailiff, remove Ms. Bell from my courtroom and lock her up!"

We all watched in shock as Mia kicked and screamed as she was dragged from the courtroom. On the inside, I was happy as a muhfucka because I knew this shit was going to work out in my favor.

"Your Honor," her attorney began, "please excuse my client. She is under a great of stress and—"

"And that's more than enough reason for that little boy to be with his father. Mr. Simmons is as legit as they come, and I am disappointed that you all tried to take his rights away from him today." The judge shook his head in disappointment before bringing his eyes back to me. "All of your documents and his birth certificate state you're the biological father and have more than enough income and resources to take care of your son. I'm going to grant you full physical and sole custody until Ms. Bell gets her act together. She has sixty days. This court is adjourned."

At the sound of him banging his gavel, I couldn't help the wide smile that spread across my face. Mia thought she was going to come in here and do a nigga dirty today, and thankfully she messed her own self up. *Dumb ass.*

"Congratulations, baby." Luck smiled and kissed me when we headed back into the hallway. "I'm proud of you for

keeping your composure in there.”

“Yeah, son, I’m proud of you,” my father came and patted me on the back. “You went in there and handled business today.”

After Grayson informed me the proper documents were being filed and I was free to get my son, we all decided to head back to my mother’s and celebrate. She wanted to cook, and who was I to turn down her home-cooked meals?

“Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?” I stopped my father before he could get into his car. He’d just helped my mother inside, and I did the same for Luck. I felt her looking at us through the tinted windows of his Bentley, and I couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, thanks to you.” I nodded as I stuffed my hands in the pocket of my slacks. “I appreciate you coming through for me the way you have. You didn’t have to help me with any of this shit, but you did.”

“You’re my son, Khalil.” He placed his hand on my shoulder and smiled. “As long as I have breath in my body, I am going to look after you and your mother.” He looked over his shoulder before bringing his attention back to me. “I love her. I never stopped, and if she lets me, I want to spend the rest of my life with her.”

I wanted to feel a way about Ceaser wanting to marry my mother after all the things that have happened over the years, but who am I to tell them who not to love? I know mama still loves him because if she didn’t, he wouldn’t be around as much as he’s been.

“Just don’t hurt her.” I nodded toward his ride. “I need to holla at you about your sister. She’s been helping Kaine.”

“Are you sure?” He sighed. “I suspected that, but I hoped I was wrong.”

“What do you mean?”

“My men followed him to her house a few times, but nothing was out of the ordinary. I chalked it as their asses being mad and talking shit.” He shook his head as he looked around the lot. People were filing out of the courthouse for lunch, and this wasn’t the best place for us to talk. “I have eyes on her. Give me a few days.”

“Bet.” I pulled him into my embrace. “I’m about to go get my son, and I will see you at the house.”

Since the court hearing was over with Mia and I was awarded custody, I had to ensure this was permanent. There was no way Mia was going to get her hands back on my son. She’d sealed her fate today, and there was no coming back from it. The only thing now was dealing with Kaine. I wanted to spend my days loving on my son and now my girl. I knew I wouldn’t truly be at peace until my brother and baby mama were burning in hell.

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“So listen, we’re going to go in here and just talk, right?” Jake glanced at me from the driver’s seat. “Nobody has to die today.”

I listened to Jake, but I wasn’t hearing him. For the past few days, I’ve been locked up at Devyn’s, spending time with her and KJ. It felt so good with just the three of us being in our own world. I made all types of mental notes on trips and shit to take them on. Valentine’s Day was coming up, though, and I wanted to make sure it was one she never forgets.

Today, I decided to holler at my Aunt Sheila, and it was only right to have her boys with me. I said what I said about the bitch, but I loved my cousins, and I knew what was going to happen to our relationship if I just popped up and off the bitch. Yeah, Bino and I fought it out, but I would be lying if I said I didn’t give a fuck about not dealing with these niggas.

“Y’all mama better have some sense, is all I can say.” I peered over my shoulder at Bino. “What the fuck you got to say?”

Staring at me for a moment, he turned his head and looked out of the window. I wasn't going to hassle him or rag him about the shit. I know he probably had a million thoughts going through his head right now. At the end of the day, this was their mother, and their cousin wanted to knock her shit off her shoulders.

"Looks like Unk already beat us here." Jake nodded toward my father's Benz, which was parked behind Shelia's Buick. "Come on, and let's get this shit over with."

Filing out of the car, the three of us made our way up the stairs to her mobile home. Without knocking, we made our way inside, and we met with the loud voices of my father and his sister.

"What the fuck is wrong with you, Sheila?" he stood in her face and yelled. "Do you hate me and my son so much that you would link up with his brother and try to kill him?"

"Fuck Khalil!"

"Fuck you too." I chuckled as I made my presence known. "Why the fuck is it fuck me, anyway? Kaine is the outside baby because my mama took your man. Why can't you say fuck that nigga?"

I know this wasn't a joking matter, but the video of 50 Cent dissing Floyd came to mind as I asked her that. Shelia stood there for a moment with wide eyes before they turned to slits. It's been a while since I saw her, and she was still the fat ass Ursula-looking bitch I remembered her to be. If this is how she looked back in the day, I can see why a nigga would step out on her sloppy bad-built ass.

"Why the fuck are you in my house?" she seethed. "You're not welcome here."

"Too bad, so sad." I yawned as I took a seat on the couch. "Tell me, where is Kaine? I could kill both of you today and go on 'bout my business. I'm trying to go love on my girl and son."

Before coming in here, Luck had sent me a picture of her and KJ at her bakery, making sweet potato pies and banana

pudding. I made sure security was heavy on the inside and outside of her spot today. With Mia now being out of jail and still no sight of Kaine, I didn't want to take any chances.

“Kill me?” she scoffed as she took a seat in her recliner and smirked. “My brother and boys wouldn't let you hurt a hair on my head.”

“Don't speak for me.” My father glared. “I prayed for ma and dad's forgiveness weeks ago.”

“Ma, I just want to know why?” Bino finally spoke up. Jake was silent, and I could tell he wanted to know the same. “Unk did nothing but look out for you, and Ma Khalise never did anything to you.”

“Fuck Khalise!” she shouted. “That bitch ruined my life!”

“Strike one.” I pulled my gun from my back and placed it on my lap. “Keep it cute and respectful. I have yet to call you the bull you look like, so watch your words when speaking on my mother.”

“Are you boys going to let him threaten me like that?” She looked between her sons. “Your loyalty is to me!”

“My loyalty has always been to my family, mama.” Jake walked closer into the room. “Since we were kids, you always treated Khalil like shit. And for what? Because your nigga was cheating and made a baby with the same woman that your brother was in love with?”

“We had to sneak or pick fights after school just so we were able to spend time with him just so you wouldn't beat our ass,” Bino chimed in as he shook his head. “Even after I stole his stuff so Unk could do another DNA test, you were still mad about us spending time with him. Make that shit make sense, mama. Why do you hate your own nephew so much?”

I looked on as Shelia sat in her chair and breathed heavily in anger. She gazed around the room at each of us before her eyes finally settled on me.

“Your mother always thought she was better than all the girls around town,” she began. “She was always dressed in the

latest fashion and thought she was the shit because she was the one the guys always wanted. She would always pretend she wasn't interested in anyone, but I knew that wasn't true. Samuel was the love of my life. Yes, I had you boys and was dealing with your father, but I loved Sammy. Ceaser didn't like him because he claimed he was too good for me, but that wasn't true. Rumors were going around about him being a womanizer and an abuser, but they were all lies. One night, some friends and I were at a block party he was hosting in the hood. I had been hearing that he was sniffing around her all night, but I didn't believe it because I knew my man."

"Get to the part where your hatred for my mother comes in," I interrupted and yawned. "You're saying a bunch of nothing right now."

"Khalise seduced him! I know she did!" Shelia jumped from her seat and yelled. "Sammy was all over her that night, and he followed her around like a lost puppy. To make matters worse, when I confronted him about it, he told me he'd been seeing her for months and that I had no right to confront him about anything because he was single. That I needed to focus on my kids and their father." Tears began streaming down her face, and I could tell she really did love that nigga and seemed hurt by his actions. "Months passed, and he started coming around less and less. One day, I took the boys to the doctor and found out she'd had a baby. I was crushed, but I knew it wasn't his. Years later, I found out that is what in fact, Samuel's son."

"Mama, relax." Bino walked over and pulled her into an embrace. "It sounds to me the nigga was playing both sides and lied to both of you about dealing with the other. That's no reason to feel away toward Khalil." He tried his best to console her, but she pushed him away and brought her eyes back to me.

"When Ceaser started messing with her, I couldn't have that. My brother was a big deal around here, and I knew she only wanted him for his money. The whore had already claimed my man. I was not about to let her use my brother. He had his own family to look after."

“I went after her.” My dad frowned as he mugged his sister. “I approached and pursued Khalise because I wanted and loved her. I didn’t care about her having a child. I’ve always loved that girl.”

“Taking care of her and her bastard son was taking away from us!” She motioned between herself and my cousins. “When Samuel was killed, I knew it was you. How was I going to take care of myself and my boys? Then, for you to go and have a baby with her? No, it wasn’t happening. I knew you would eventually cut us off because of your makeshift family. I knew if I could get you to see that Khalil wasn’t yours, you would cut them off.”

Never in a million years would I have thought that Jake and Bino’s mother was this fuckin’ delusional. My dad wasn’t her man. He was her fuckin’ brother. He wasn’t obligated to take care of her weird ass.

“So you mean to tell me it was all about money?” I chuckled, wanting nothing more than to blow her brains out. “You caused me, my mama, and even my father all of this unnecessary pain and drama because of your own selfishness and greed? How in the fuck did you end up in cahoots with my brother?”

“She told Kaine about Samuel,” my pops chimed in as he peered at his sister with hurt and anger. “She butt-dialed me one day, and I heard the entire conversation about how she thinks I killed him and how it was because Khalise filled my head with lies about him. Shelia made Kaine feel as though I was the reason his father was dead. In reality,” he stood from his seat and walked toward her, “that nigga was a bitch. He didn’t give a fuck about you, Khalise, or even his own son. Do you think Kaine is the only kid Sammy had on your stupid ass? My boy,” he turned and pointed toward me, “grew up thinking I didn’t give a fuck about him because you’re a jealous and manipulative bitch. Yes, I would have chosen the family I made a thousand times over you, but I would have taken care of you! Why wouldn’t I?”

“You left him everything!” she shouted and gestured toward me. “I know all about your little heart issue, Ceaser,



and I've been waiting for you to fuckin' die. Imagine my surprise when I find out I'm not a beneficiary." She moved her head slowly until her eyes were back on me. The bitch looked demented as fuck. "Everything goes to you. A little nigga he doesn't even know. It's like Khalise wins a-fuckin'-gain! When I told Kaine, he told me he would get you out of the way if I just listened to everything he told me. Once Ceaser died and I got the money, we would get you out of the way, and everything would be okay!" she spewed.

We all watched as Sheila dropped to the ground and damn near had a breakdown over money. Money that I could care less about. I would have chosen a relationship with my father over the bread every time.

"Where is Kaine?" I asked, growing impatient with his conversation. This lady was a lost cause, and I was ready to end this conversation. "I know all about you and him robbing my trap house and killing my soldier."

Rising from the couch, I slowly stalked over to her. With worried eyes, she looked between her sons, but they didn't move.

"Don't look for anyone to save you, Sheila."

"Please don't hurt me." She raised her hands as she cowered in fear. It was a total contrast to the psychotic episode she had just had. "I just wanted to make Ceaser hurt the way he did me. I just wanted to take away the ones he loved, too. I will leave you alone."

"Where. The fuck. Is Kaine?"

"H-he left town with Mia this morning." Her bottom lip quivered as tears fell from her eyes once more. "That's all I know."

I angled my head to the side as I peered at her. She may have been lying to me, and she may have been telling the truth. At the end of the day, life as she knew it was over.

"Okay," I stepped back and placed my hands inside my hoodie, "this is what we're going to do." Just then, three of my father's men came into the house and entered the living room.

“There’s a small warehouse on the outskirts of town. You will be locked in, and it will be guarded until the day you die because you will never be part of the free world again.” Shelia looked at me with wide eyes. “You will have the bare, minimal essentials. Every day while you’re alone with nothing but your thoughts, I want you to reflect on the shit you’ve done over the past twenty years. The actions you made led to you never seeing your sons marry or grandchildren being born. Ask yourself every day if it was worth it.”

“You can’t do this!” She kicked and screamed as they led her through the room. “Jake! Bino! Ceaser!”

“This is the only way to keep you alive, mama!” Bino roared, and he jumped in front of her. “You’ve torn this family apart! Jake and I needed your focus, but it was all on a nigga that didn’t give a fuck about you!”

“We love you, mama.” Jake walked over and kissed her cheek. “We may come to visit you, but not right now.” He looked between the guards and nodded his head toward the door. “Take her out.”

Kicking and screaming, Shelia begged and pleaded for us not to let them take her. If I had it my way, the bitch would have been bleeding out in the middle of her living room floor. My pops and cousins understood my wanting to kill her, but I knew it would be a blow to our relationship. At the end of the day, this was my dad’s sister and the guys’ mama. Regardless of what they said, they wouldn’t be okay with me killing her.

Once she was gone, Bino and Jake sat around and discussed what they would do with Shelia’s home and her things. I tuned them out because that shit didn’t have anything to do with me. The only thing on my mind was finding and handling Kaine so I could get back to life with my son and my girl.

# CHAPTER

# FOURTEEN

DEVYN

A FEW WEEKS have gone by since the custody fiasco with Khalil and Mia. Surprisingly, things have been relatively quiet. It seems as if they have fallen from the face of the earth. Regardless of the reason, I'm just glad that they have gone on about their business.

“Debin,” KJ hopped on the couch beside me, “we go play today?”

Smiling softly, I couldn't help but run my fingers through his kinky hair. KJ was the sweetest and most handsome little boy I had ever met, and I was thankful to be part of his life. I hope Mia gets her act together, or she is truly going to miss out on his life fooling with her crazy ass baby daddy. Speaking of, that lunatic has practically moved into my apartment since I refuse to go over to his condo. He's told me all about his whores popping up on him, and I didn't even want to be put in that position.

“Let me fix you some cereal so I can go wake daddy and see what we're doing.” I scooped him up in my arms and kissed him all over his face. KJ is in his independent and 'big boy' phase and hardly likes to let us baby and love on him. He's in rare form this morning, so I wanted to take advantage.

After fixing his favorite cereal and giving him his iPad, I made my way to the back to wake his father.

Pushing the door to the room open, I couldn't help but stop and stare at the man who had stolen my heart. Stretched on his back with one arm covering his face while his other hand was

stuffed in his ball shorts, I licked my lips, wishing my mouth could take its place.

“Why are you staring at a nigga like a creep, Luck?” he groggily asked, causing me to jump slightly. “Like you want to get fucked or something?”

“Maybe I do.” I smirked as I walked further into the room. Once I approached the bed, I kissed all over his neck and rubbed across his chest. Using one of my nails, I traced his stomach until I got to the waistband of his shorts. I inwardly smiled, seeing the tent rise. “Get up.”

“Girl, I am.” He removed his arm from his face and thrust his hips upward. “Come mount this muhfucka.”

“Noooo.” I giggled as I tried to squirm and get away from him. He pulled me on top of him and started tickling me all over. He knows how much I hate that shit. “Stop, Khalil!”

“Leave her alone, daddy!”

We both stopped and looked back as KJ came barreling into the room. It was so funny watching his little self climb up onto my bed. Once he was on, he went to work whooping his daddy’s ass. Blow after blow, those little fists landed, wilding all over Khalil’s head and chest.

“Aight, lil’ nigga, shit.” He huffed as he grabbed KJ and threw him on the other side of the bed. “You want to fight?” KJ nodded yes as he panted and mugged his father. “Shit, well, let’s fight homie.”

I held my stomach in laughter as the two wrestled and boxed each other. For KJ to be so little, he was landing some really nice punches. He seemed to have the energy of a crackhead because he wasn’t letting up on his daddy at all.

“Okay, baby boy, I think you beat him up pretty bad.” I giggled as I pulled him off of a balled-up Khalil. “It’s funny because I beat him up once and had him lying just like this.”

“Really?” he asked with wide eyes and between us. “Daddy, you got beat up by a girl?” He threw his head back and gave us the sweetest little laugh. “I go call Bino.”

“Nigga—” Khalil tried his best to grab him, but he shot off like a rocket in search of his iPad to call his partner in crime. “I’m going to beat his ass.”

“You’re not.” I leaned forward and kissed his lips. “Get up, though. We’re taking KJ out today. He asked me what we were doing. It’s warmer out, and I want to go out too.”

It’s been so cold lately that all I’ve wanted to do is lay up under my boys and sleep. Business at the bakery has picked up, but I am still looking for a new building. Kira has been helping me a lot, and sometimes, so does Ma Khalise and Sasha. I’m thankful because the break is much needed, not to mention Khalil has been working more with his father, so he’s been tired a lot lately, too. I think a day out would do us all some good.

“I really don’t want to do shit,” he groaned as he got out of the bed. His tattoo-covered chest and building shorts had me in a trance, and if KJ weren’t roaming around, I would take him on the ride of his life. “Devyn!”

“Huh?” I blinked rapidly as I met his devilish grin. “What did you say?”

“Stop lusting over my flesh, and you would have heard me.” He walked past me and slapped me on the ass. “I know that boy is on that tablet gossiping with Bino’s ass.” I followed him with my eyes until he got to the bathroom. He peered over his shoulder and licked his lip. “We’ll leave in an hour, so go find our kid and get him ready.”

Smiling brightly at his reference, I did as he requested. I will never try to take Mia’s place as KJ’s mother, but I won’t lie and say I didn’t love it when Khalil referred to KJ as ours. It just goes to show he’s on the same page as me and sees this relationship as being long term.

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An hour and a cornered dick suck later, we were on our way to Fun Zone Arcade. The mall was the last place Khalil wanted to be because he knew that would only end with us shopping for a bunch of shit we didn’t need. Mainly me, but that’s not

the point. These past few weeks, I've been buying so much matching shit for us, and I thought it was adorable. Like today, we all wore black and blue Jordan tracksuits with a pair of Dunks to match. We were always going to be fly on my watch.

Thank you for this.” He draped my arm over my shoulder and pulled me closer. “I know shit ain't been easy with us these past few months, but I appreciate you sticking it out with a nigga, even though you thought you were going to leave me.”

I laid my head on his shoulder and snickered at his last remark. The night he popped up on me at Monty's was crazy when I think back on it. I haven't heard from that guy since that night, and deep down, I know why. I feel bad thinking I'm being the reason, but I feel as though the cause may be more than what I truly know.

“Thank you for not letting me.” I turned and faced him. We were currently behind KJ, watching him beat the hell of beavers popping out of a gaming machine. “I want to thank you even more for my new car.”

Khalil never got my poor Maxima fixed after he removed my parts. For the longest, I was pissed and emphasized daily that I needed my own way around town. After shutting me up and putting me to sleep with some of the best dick in my life, I woke up with keys to a brand new matte black G Class Benz. I didn't want to accept such a lavish gift, but after reiterating all the money he acquired from his father and threatening to cause me bodily harm, I shrugged and said, why not?

“Never,” he lifted my chin with his index finger, “I love you.”

“I love you more.” I stood on my tiptoes and kissed his lips. “I want to take you out tonight.”

“Oh shit,” he exclaimed as he covered his mouth with his fist. I looked around because I was so damn embarrassed. “I must've really been putting it down if you want to spend some money on a nigga.”

“Something like that.” I chuckled as we watched KJ run around until he found a basketball game.

I stood back and watched his father place him on top of the machine and over the barrier so he could score. I prayed for his safety and for us to not get put out because we were well on our way.

“I just wanted to show you—”

“Wow!” we heard someone gasp from behind us.

Turning slightly, I rolled my eyes and frowned slightly at Allison. She was dressed in some type of uniform, and I assumed she was headed to work since it was early in the afternoon.

“So, the little boy really is your son?”

“And I’m going to have a daughter too because I can’t stop nuttin’ in her pu—”

“Okay, Khalil.” I hit him in the back of the head to cut him off. Kids were around, and I hated it when he talked like that around KJ. “Allison, you need to leave. We’re having family time, and this isn’t the place.”

“Family time?” Her eyes roamed my body. She was probably thinking about what Khalil had just said. “Isn’t the place? When would be a good time? His apparent child takes up all of his time, and it seems you have too. I can’t get him to answer the phone anymore.” Her tears and babbling were starting to piss me off because bitch why are you crying over my man? “Have you heard from my sister and Persia? I haven’t seen them in weeks.”

Ignoring her, he grabbed KJ and told him it was time to go. I had to promise him a movie night with his favorite snacks to keep him from throwing a fit. Grabbing hold of my hand, we let KJ cash in his winning ticket and get a few toys with Allison on our heels. I mugged Khalil all the way out of the arcade because I wanted him to tell that bitch to beat it.

“Loon, baby, did you hear me? I asked you—”

“Look bitch,” I turned abruptly, causing her to stumble. We were now in the middle of the mall, and I could care less about who was looking. “You’re about to piss me the fuck off. Khalil is mine. Always has been, and always will be. Even if he wasn’t, it was never going to be any of you delusional ass bitches that can’t seem to let go. I’m going to tell you this one last time.” I narrowed my eyes and pressed my chest to hers so she could hear me well. Khalil was calling my name and trying to pull me back, but I snatched away from him. “Stay the fuck away from my nigga, bitch, or I swear to you I will show you who the real looney bitch is around this muhfucka. Now get the fuck out of my face and don’t ever approach Khalil or reach out to my nigga again.”

With tears rolling down her cheeks, Allison eyed me for a few moments before taking one last look at Khalil. With her head bowed, she left us standing there with a few people watching to see what would happen next.

“Man, I love this crazy ass girl,” he mumbled as he led us through the mall. “We got lucky with her. Huh, KJ?”

“Yep!” He reached across his dad while still in his arms and hugged me. “I love you, Debin!”

It was KJ’s first time telling me that, and I swear my heart melted. I tried to keep my own tears at bay, but it was no use. This little one made me so happy — him and his father.

“I love you too, baby.” I stopped walking and pulled him into my arms. Khalil smiled at us both as he thumbed my tears. “I love you both. Forever!”

“Yayy!” he shouted and kissed my cheek. “Let’s go get cheesy noodles.”

I placed KJ on his feet, and we all laughed as we continued to walk around the mall hand in hand. We ended up shopping on Khalil’s dime, just like I knew we would, and he was pissed. After promising to model one of my new lingerie sets, all was well again. Never did I ever think this would become my reality, but it is. I just hoped it could stay this way, but deep down, I felt as if things were about to change between us. I just hope we make it through whatever it may be.



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Tonight, I wanted to do something special for Khalil to let him know he was loved and appreciated. He'd been through so much these past few months. Hell, these past few years hadn't been easy for him, so tonight, I wanted him to decompress, even if just for a minute.

I've never been the one to take the initiative when it came to catering to a man simply because I never wanted to. It was always sex and see ya later, but with my man, I wanted it to be so much more. When we first met, I would have never thought it would have been this way with us. Here we were, almost six months later, and I was head-over-heels in love with Khalil Simmons. What made me the happiest was the fact that I know he feels the same way.

"I'm so happy for you," Lori stated as she pinned my hair. I wanted tonight to be nothing less than perfect, so I got my girls to come through and help me get ready. "It's about time you experience true love and happiness."

Looking at her through the mirror, I smiled as she became teary-eyed. I decided to book the penthouse suite at the Riverfront Hotel and spend some quality time with my man. We were going to have a rooftop dinner while we overlooked the water, and I knew the highlight of the evening would be him buried deep inside of me.

"Thank you, friend." I smiled. "It's been a long time coming, but I'm glad Khalil is the one I decided to give my heart to."

"Out of all the niggas," Kira spoke as she wobbled slowly into the bathroom where we were, "I can't believe that you two crazy ass people have gotten together and formed the purest love. I would have never thought."

"Me either." Lori stepped to the side and allowed Kira to come in with my dress.

At five months pregnant with a little boy, she was pretty big. I tried not to speak on it much because she was a little

self-conscious with herself, but my cousin might want to make sure she isn't carrying more than one.

“How are you feeling?” She had just finished my makeup, and I was gorgeous, if I must say so myself. “Have you been able to hold anything down?”

“Yes, can't you tell?” She palmed her belly, and we all shared a laugh. “I've been doing a lot better. This little boy is finally giving mama a break, and I have been eating everything in sight.”

As I got dressed, we made idle chat and caught up with what was going on in each other's life. Everyone was so busy and out of touch these days. I thanked them repeatedly for helping me and let Kira know she and Jake could stay in the room that Khalil was getting ready in if they'd like because they would be decorating this one for me when I left. When Kira and I began to talk about a cabin trip we were planning with the fellas, we noticed Lori was quiet.

“What's the matter with you?” I looked over and asked as I dropped out of my robe. “Why are you looking like you lost your best friend?”

“Bino and I aren't together right now,” she mumbled as she helped clean the room. “I fucked up.”

“Yeah, you did, bitch.” Kira shook her head as she fastened the back of my dress. “I knew for sure it would have been him and not you.”

“What happened?” I turned and eyed them as I adjusted the straps on my dress. “Hello? Is anybody going to answer me?”

“I kind of cheated on him.”

My eyes damn near bulged from their sockets at her admission. Lori seemed to have really liked Bino, and I was shocked that she would step out on him. They weren't officially together, but from what I understood, they were all about each other.

“Girl, what happened?” I checked the time on my phone to see the time. I had about thirty minutes before I had to be on

the roof. “I need to know before I leave out of here.”

“Well, he’s been so distant lately, and it was bothering me. I would continuously try to get him to talk to me, and all he would say was he was going through something, and he needed time.” When a tear slid down her cheek, I walked over and pulled her into a hug. “I thought he was seeing someone else, so I tried to get my lick back. He popped up on me at my house, and a guy from school was over there with me.”

“That’s not cheating, sis,” I rubbed her back, thinking about Monty and me. “You know I went through something similar.”

“Yeah, well, you didn’t open the door in a robe with nothing underneath while the man was still naked in your bed.”

“Gah damn, Lori!” I screeched and covered my mouth. “Did Bino kill him?”

“I almost wish he had.” She sarcastically chuckled. “Bino told the dude to make sure I showed him the trick I did to his balls and left.”

I felt so sorry for her, but she knew better. Lori has never been a tit-for-tat type of person so I didn’t know what would possess her to do something like that. She fucked up big time.

“Well Lori, I don’t know what to tell you, baby,” I sympathetically stated as I strapped my heels, “You should have learned from what Khalil went through with Mia that you can’t play these niggas and expect for them to just forgive you. I know that you and Bino weren’t in a relationship, but he fucked with you heavily. If he told you to chill because he was going through something, you should have believed him.”

Khalil confided in me and told me what was going on with his aunt. I felt bad for them all, honestly, but I understood his stance on it. He missed out on years with his father because of her jealous and spiteful ways. Then, for his brother to be in cahoots with her simply for money? I didn’t want to even imagine how Bino and Jake must feel. Kira hadn’t really

spoken on it, and it wasn't something that we were going to discuss now.

“All I can say is you should have believed your man.”

“But he wasn't my man,” she snapped. “Bino made it clear time and time again that we were ‘chilling’.”

“Well, don't even be mad, boo.” I was over the conversation. Lori can't get upset because she chose to play with him. He told her to relax, and she chose to get fucked. “Take your loss and move on.” After slipping on my last shoe, I stood upright and did a slight twirl. “How do I look?”

The hunter-green mock-necked dress fit my body like a glove. The split going up the left thigh made it impossible to move without showing my treasure. The black heels made my legs look delectable, and I couldn't wait to see what they'd look like holstered on Khalil's shoulders tonight. My hair was pulled into a messy bun with curls cascading all around. I kept my jewelry to a minimum with Chanel studs, and my Cartier watch. I grabbed my Chanel clutch and waited for the ladies to tell me what they thought.

“You look so pretty.” Kira smiled as she dabbed her eyes. She went into her back pocket and grabbed her phone. “Sasha is going to lose her mind.”

“So is David,” we laughed as I headed toward the door. “I'm out, ladies, and thank you again. I'm ready to go enjoy my man.”

As I entered the elevator, I was suddenly nervous. For many reasons, this date was a big deal to me, and I wanted it to be perfect. After what seemed like thirty seconds, I was on the rooftop of the hotel. The night air wasn't that cool, but with how I was feeling and sweating, I needed the breeze to calm me down. Stepping off the elevator, I locked eyes with none other than Khalil Simmons.

He looked so damn good in his Tom Ford suit with a hunter-green shirt underneath to match my dress. His lineup was fresh, and I could smell his Maison Margiela cologne

before he even reached me. Daddy was definitely getting fucked tonight.

“Damn,” he spat as he eyed me lustfully. “I can’t wait to take this muhfucka off of you, girl.” He kissed my neck and roughly grabbed my ass. “Then you smell like peaches. I know that pussy tastes like it, too.”

“Boy, move.” I pushed him off of me when he began to hump my leg. “Let’s eat.”

“I’m trying to, but you’re playing.” He grabbed my hand and followed me to the table. I heard him mumble about my ass getting fatter, and I couldn’t help but simper. Khalil was too much at times.

As we took our seats, I looked around and was happy that my vision had come to life. I wanted the scene to look as romantic as possible, and they did just that. Candles were lit all about with soft music playing in the background. The chef was ducked off in the corner with his little grill, and the smell of lamb chops filled the air. As the hostess brought out our wine for the evening, I couldn’t help but blush under his stare.

“You’re beautiful, Luck.” He placed his elbows on the table, resting his chin on his fists. “Do you know how much you mean to a nigga?”

“I think I have an idea.” I smirked and caused him to do the same. “It’s always nice to hear it, but tonight it’s all about you.”

“Me?” Khalil sat upright when the hostess brought the dinner out. We’ve never been an appetizer type of people. Lamb chops, lobster mac and cheese, and steamed veggies were on the menu for tonight. “What did I do to deserve this?”

“You’re you,” I honestly answered as I cut into my meat. I couldn’t help but close my eyes and moan at the taste. Either this food was delicious, or I was just starving. “Sorry, but yes. You’ve been holding shit together for months since your brother and Mia came back into town with KJ, not to mention you have been kicking ass as a father. I admire you, and I’m

proud of you. You made it easy for me to fall in love with you.”

I meant every word I said to him. I can't pinpoint the exact moment I fell in love with this man, but I do know that when I finally accepted it, it hit me full force. Fighting it was pointless, and I wish I had let him love on me sooner. We weren't ready at the time, but now we are both all in.

“You want me to tell you the moment I fell in love with you?” Khalil asked as he sipped his wine. “You probably won't believe me.”

“When?”

“Three years ago, when I saw you in Xquisite Jewelry.” I frowned slightly because I know damn well this nigga didn't have me mixed up with someone else. “Don't look like that. You were in there trying to get your watch fixed, and I was picking up a ring for Mia.”

When Khalil mentioned the watch, my eyes widened. I remember the moment he spoke of. I had just moved to town and was leaving a meeting at city hall about my new business. I was nervous as hell that day and broke my watch that morning. Now that I think about it, he was there with Kaine.

“Our eyes locked, and I knew then you were trouble.” He chuckled as he continued to eat. “I felt like my world stopped at that moment, but I shook it off because I thought I was doing right by Mia.”

“Do you have any regrets? With her? Us?”

“The only thing I regret is not approaching you three years ago,” he honestly spoke. “Yes, I was prepared to ask Mia to marry me, but I felt like I was drawn to you. Maybe, had I at least gotten your number and befriended you, I could have locked you down earlier.”

I heard what he was saying, but I believe everything happened for a reason. Everything that he went through, that I went through, over the years led us to this moment and to each other.

“Well, regardless of the path we took, I’m glad that you’re here with me right now.” I waved the hostess over so she could bring the gifts I gave to the manager earlier. “Here, I have some things for you.”

Khalil threw his head back and laughed at the sight of the cart being rolled over and littered with gifts. “I must have really put the dick down. You tricking on me now, girl?”

“Something like that.” I smiled while opening the boxes and looked through the bags. There was a variety of clothes, cologne, and gift cards. I even purchased him a few pairs of cuff links since he’s transitioning into a suit-wearing man.

“What’s this?” he asked as he held up a smaller box and shook it slightly. “Why do you look like you’re about to throw up, Luck?” He frowned and turned in his seat. “If y’all made my girl sick with this raw ass meat—”

“Oh my gosh, Khalil!” I shrieked as I threw my napkin at him. “Will you please shut up and open the gift? I am fine!”

“Shit, you better tell me something then.” He turned back around and placed the gift on the table. He slowly unwrapped it as he talked shit. “Gone have me throwing these people off this roof and shit—”

As he eyed the contents of the box, he went silent. He and KJ couldn’t care less about what the weather was like outside. They were going to wear a hoodie. So inside, there was a small heather grey and black hoodie that read *Daddy and Me* with an adult and infant fist bumping. Next, he pulled out the matching onesie that read *Plot Twist*. Last but not least, there were three positive pregnancy tests. For several minutes, all he did was stare. He was so quiet that I began to worry.

“Khalil,” I spoke just above a whisper, “say something.”

Slowly, he dragged his eyes to mine, and in that moment, I saw all the love he had for me. If there was any doubt before, this second let me know this man really loved me. His eyes were glazed over, and I don’t think he would care if a tear fell or not.

“You’re having my baby, Luck?” He palmed the table as he stood up. “Tell a nigga you’re having his baby.”

“I’m having your baby, Khalil.” I smiled as tears slid down my cheeks. “I’m really having your baby.”

“Come here, girl.” He pulled me from his seat and eyed me as if he were seeing me for the first time. He planted his hand on my still-flat stomach and rubbed slowly. “I love you so much, Lucky.”

“I love you more, Khalil.” I threw my arms around his neck and kissed him passionately. We were so lost in each other that we barely heard the host when she approached us.

“I’m so sorry for interrupting, but would you all like dessert?”

“I’m about to go eat the sweetest pussy on earth right now,” he stated before grabbing my hand. “Box this up for me and have it delivered to our room. Come on, Luck, I’m about to see if I can give you a two-for-one special.”

No longer wanting to argue with him about his mouth, I just smiled like an idiot and followed him to the elevator. I knew we were in for a long night, and I couldn’t wait. Having Khalil’s baby was never part of my plan, but creating a family with him was the biggest blessing I could have seen. Nothing or no one would ever come between us and the life we were creating together. They would certainly die if they tried.



# CHAPTER

# FIFTEEN

KHALIL

MAY 2023

It's been three months since Lucky told a nigga she was having his baby, and I have been on cloud nine ever since. We thought KJ would feel a way about another baby since he hasn't been with us a whole year, but he was more excited than anybody. The only thing he hollers about is nobody is going to mess with his sister. It's funny because we decided to wait until the baby was born to find out the gender. I don't care what it is. I just want mama and baby to be and stay healthy.

"This is so nice, Khalil," Luck cooed as she entered our room. The gang has been planning a trip to the cabins in Gatlinburg for a few weeks now, and we just made it in today. "I'm so glad we were able to do this. I haven't been on vacation in so long."

"Baby, if you wanted a vacation, all you had to do was tell me."

I followed her to the balcony located in our room. Overlooking the woods, the scene before us was so beautiful and peaceful. With all the chaos we've had in our lives, we needed this. Kaine and Mia hadn't called or been seen in months, and we were all happy about it. I still have people looking for them because I don't trust their asses. Mia didn't even show up for our continued court date. She's lost all custodial rights to my son, and I thank God every day about it. I know they're lurking somewhere, though.

"You've been so busy working, baby, and I don't want to interfere with that." I kissed her neck and palmed her ever-

growing belly. Feeling the small kicks always does something to a nigga. I didn't experience this with KJ, so I've been up Lucky's ass every chance I get. "I didn't want to distract you or interfere—"

"Hey," I turned her to face me, "you and our kids will always be my priority." I kissed her nose as I pulled her closer to my body. "I'm going to always stop whatever it is I have going on to cater to you guys. If you want to go on vacation on a random Tuesday, let your nigga know, and I will make that happen every single time."

"I love you so much, Khalil." She beamed as she threw her arms around my neck. "I can't wait to spend forever with you and the family we're creating."

"You have no choice, mama." I tapped her ass slightly and detached from her. "Come on." I grabbed her hand and led her inside. "I know you're tired from the drive. Lay down for a minute."

After getting her situated, I called my mother and checked on KJ. My parents had him at the aquarium, and they were all excited about it. My dad was loving every moment with my son, and I fucked with it. Once I knew they were good, I went downstairs and looked for my cousins. The eight-bedroom cabin was a bit bigger than we anticipated, and shit, we were cool with that. Plus, our rooms were spaced out enough so we wouldn't have to worry about others hearing intimate moments. I didn't give a damn, though, because when I dive into my girl's pussy, I want the world to hear me. Lucky be having a nigga singing like Rod Wave around this muhfucka.

"What the fuck y'all niggas down here doing?" I called out as I entered the game room. This bitch was nice as fuck with a pool table, air hockey, and various game machines. They even had the original *Pac-Man* in here. "Where are the girls?"

"Kira is sleeping, and I guess Lori is doing the same," Bino answered as he played *Pac-Man* like the childish ass nigga that he is. "Where is Dee?"

"Sleep," I answered as I sparked my blunt. "You still ain't fucking with Stubs?"

“Not at all,” he answered immediately. “She’s here on the strength of the girls. Like I told them, I don’t care what she does as long as she stays away from me. I know they may think the shit with us is the same as it was with you and Dee, but the shit is different as fuck. Granted, we weren’t official or no shit like that, but I didn’t expect her to just up and do a nigga the way she did.

I sat and listened to my cousin, and I knew he was really hurt by Lori’s actions. Lucky probably would have been at the bottom of the lake right along with Troop had she been in that house fucking that nigga. I knew she wasn’t in that house long enough to even breathe on that nigga because I tracked her from the time she left home until the time she got there. As long as she wore any jewelry I bought her, I would always have tabs on her. I would place an Air Tag underneath her skin if I could.

“You know what I’ve been going through with scandalous bitches, so I get it.” I pulled from my blunt. “You weren’t opening up to her, so she felt like she was being played.”

“I wasn’t about to disclose private information about my mother to this girl, man.” He turned and mugged me. “All she had to do was be patient with a nigga and let me work through my issues instead of opening her legs to the next nigga like a hoe.”

“You fell for her, didn’t you?” Jake asked his brother. “Be honest.”

“I guess we will never know.” He shrugged as he ended the game. “Are we cooking tonight or what?”

We decided that tonight, we would have Karaoke and lounge around. The weather was perfect here, and Jake was mean when it came to ribs, so that’s what we were having. I was going to handle the sides, and Bino was going to be Bino.

“I’m going to be pissed if Smokey tries to run up on a nigga,” I voiced as we left out of the room and went outside to set everything up on the patio. “I got something for his ass, though.”

We all shared a laugh as I pointed to my shotgun, which was located in the corner. The one reason I didn't really want to come to the cabins is because of fuckin' bears. I don't know or care what their laws are up here. I'm killing their asses before I let them hurt me or my girl.

"Jake, how do you feel about having your own kid? Kira has what? A few weeks to go?"

"Yeah, man," my back was turned as I prepped the grill, but I could hear the smile in his voice, "I can't wait until little Jacobi gets here. How do you feel about having another?"

"I can't put it into words." I turned and faced him. "I love the fuck out of that girl, and I'm more than happy and excited. Our parents are more excited than us."

My mother was so excited about becoming a nana for the second time. She is already talking about converting my and Kaine's old bedrooms for her grandkids. My father is just happy to be able to be in their lives. Our relationship has improved a lot, but we are still taking it day by day. Devyn's father was pissed at first. He thought I was just going to get his daughter pregnant and leave her as a baby mama, but once I sat down and told him about my true intentions for Luck, he was on board. Now, you can't keep him and Sasha out of the stores buying gifts. They're even thinking about moving closer so they can be near when the baby gets here.

"Yeah, ma will be missing out, but it is what it is."

"Have you been to see her?" I asked as we headed back inside. The grill was all set up, and Jake was about to do his thing with the meat. Bino was getting the drinks together, and the girls would probably be up soon. "Has Bino?"

"I went and checked on her. She's miserable, man." He shook his head as he began to marinate everything. "She brought that on herself, though. I'm just glad you didn't kill her. I hate that she will never see my baby, but this is a choice she made."

For the next three hours, Jake and I made small talk as we got the food ready for the evening. Bino joined us and pissed

us off along the way. All he wanted to do was talk shit and sample every damn thing. He did inform us about his newest conquest, and all I could do was shake my head at him. As long as my boy was being careful, there wasn't shit we could do or say.

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“Oh my gosh,” Lucky moaned as she bit into her burger, “this food is so damn good. Kira, I might have to move in with y'all sis. Jake, you can grill your ass off.”

“Don't piss me off, Lucky.” I mugged her and caused her disloyal ass to giggle. “You act like a nigga doesn't cook or feed your ass. Over here moaning and squirming and shit.”

We were in the huge ass dining area and eating like we hadn't had a meal in days. I won't cap and say this food isn't good because it is. I just had to give Luck a hard time. Plus, she's been sick here and there, so I'm just glad she can hold the food down because my baby was taking her through it.

“So Devyn, have you found a house yet?” Lori asked from the other side of the room. Bino has made it clear he didn't want her around him and she's been trying to respect his wishes. “With a baby coming, you know that apartment isn't going to be enough.”

“Um, not yet.” She took a sip of her water before continuing. “I really haven't had time because of the bakery and looking for a new shop. One thing at a time, you know.”

“Why are you even thinking about looking for a house when my father has a whole property that's never been lived in?” I asked as I eyed her. “Why not live there for the time being and maybe build or buy something later? Easy fix, baby.”

After the custody hearing, I asked Ceaser about the properties that were supposedly in my name. He took me by the house one day, and the shit was massive. It had seven bedrooms, six baths, a pool, a ball court, and an ass load of other shit. There wasn't any furniture or appliances, but that was an easy fix. On one of our many nights talking, I told

Lucky about the crib with hopes that she would move in with me.

“Do you think moving in with him is a good idea, Devyn?” Lori frowned as she walked back over to the food spread and fixed her something else. “You mentioned early on about how he was shot. Then he already has a child, which means he has a baby mama. Just because you let him knock you up—”

“Wait a minute.” Lucky glared at her friend. I remained quiet and let her handle it because I was going to hurt her feelings if I spoke. “What are you getting at, Lori? This is my man, not some random nigga I’m fucking. Surely, if he and I decided to move in together and raise our baby as a family, it wouldn’t be a problem, right? I mean, if there is an issue, then tell me.”

“There’s no issue, Devyn.” She rolled her eyes as she turned to us, “I just want you to think before you do it if he’s not committed—”

“Oh, I see what this is about.” I chuckled and nodded toward my cousin, who was seemingly pissed and annoyed. “You’re jealous that she has a nigga that is making moves for her and doing for her while you fucked up any chance you had because you wanted to have a loose pussy.”

“Excuse me!” she screeched. “That’s a lie! Neither Devyn nor Kira has anything I want for me to be jealous. What? Being a street nigga’s baby mama is a prize?”

“Lori, I love you, but I’m seconds away from beating your ass.” Luck peered at her friend through slanted eyes. “I get it. Bino and you are over, but whose fault is that? All you had to do was be considerate of what he had going on and be understanding and allow him space.”

“Oh, but when you were caught with Monty—”

“She wasn’t in there fucking him,” Bino chimed in. “Dee knew what Khalil had going on, but he was being a dick to her for no reason. She knew she wanted her nigga, and she got the fuck out of there. You,” he looked at Lori in disgust, “acted on some shit you’ve been wanting to do. Do you know how hard

it is to understand that your mother hates your cousin to the point that she wants him dead?” Lori gasped as he pointed to me and covered her mouth in shock. “Do you know how it feels to beef with a nigga you see as a brother because he wants to kill your mother because she’s caused him and his family over twenty years of pain?”

“Bino—”

“Shut the fuck up, Lori!” he jumped from his seat and roared. “That’s why I could never make you my girl. You could never just shut the fuck up. You want to always be right and have the last word. You think just because you’re in school and have one little degree that you can handle a nigga fucked up, and it’s not happening. Instead of you having my back and giving me space like I asked you to, you fucked another nigga. I told you I loved you, Lori, and I wouldn’t play you, and what the fuck did you do?”

Silence.

“What the fuck did you do?”

“I’m sorry,” she cried as she placed her food on the counter. She tried to reach out to him, but he stepped back. “Bino, please. I just thought—”

“You didn’t think.” He chuckled as he shook his head at her. “And that is the problem. Look, we don’t have shit else to talk about, and after this trip, I don’t want to deal with you. Devyn and Kira are your people, so I know you’ll be around, but stay the fuck from around me, shorty.”

I knew he was feeling that girl more than he let on, but damn. She really fucked up with my boy, and it’s unfortunate. One thing about my boy that I know for a fact is when he’s done, he’s done. She stared at him for a few minutes before leaving us to finish eating. I was going to leave well enough alone because that’s Luck’s friend. Fucking with my girl will have her buried in these woods, though.

“Come on,” I pulled Luck up from the table and grabbed her plate. “I’m ready for Karaoke.”

“Let me find out you want to serenade my cousin,” Kira joked as she wobbled her fat ass into the living room, “Luck, you got this boy going from Future to Luther. I love this for your friend.”

“Man, Kira, shut your wide load ass up,” I snapped on her and caused her eyes to widen before they turned to slits, “You always got something to say.”

“Wait until Dee gains a little more,” Jake chimed in as he helped Kira onto the couch. Bino was setting up the Karaoke shit on the TV. We’ve been drinking since we got here this morning, so this shit is about to be lit. “Let’s see if you call her wide.”

“Oh, I’m sure I will be called much worse.” We shared a laugh just as Lori came back into the living room, moping like a sad-ass puppy. We didn’t pay her ass no mind. “You know that nigga handles me crazy at times.”

“That’s nothing compared to what I do with that pussy,” I whispered in her ear and kissed her neck. “Let me take you upstairs and eat your pussy really quick.”

“That sounds good.” She bit her bottom lip and eyed me. “Come on.”

“Sit y’all asses down.” Bino chuckled right as I lifted her from the couch. “I’ve been waiting to get this shit popping all day. Nigga, she can put your knees to your ears later.”

“Bitch,” I jumped at him as the others burst into laughter, “you got me fucked up.” I looked around the room and mugged them all. “And fuck y’all for laughing. “Who’s up first?”

“Lori, you pulled the short straw earlier,” Kira voiced. “You’re first.”

“Cool,” is all she said as she grabbed the mic and fumbled with the stereo. “Let’s do this shit.”

As soon as the music blared through the speakers, we nodded our heads to the beat. I was confused as to why Kira’s eyes were wide with her mouth ajar, and Devyn glared at Lori as if she wanted to knock her head off.



—”  
“*You put your trust in a nigga stupid hoe how you figure*”

“Aye, cut that shit off and get the fuck out of here,” Jake surprised us and spoke up. “Lori, you need to chill out or get the fuck on. You’re not going to ruin our time here just because you’re in your fuckin’ feelings.”

“I’m just saying.” She shrugged her shoulders as he snatched the mic. “There’s no way I would put my all into a relationship with a man that was recently in a relationship with three other bitches. Who’s to say he’s still not?”

“Because two of those hoes are worm food, and the third is on their way.” I grinned as her eyes widened. “You’ll see them soon if you keep playing on my girl’s top.”

Nothing else was said as Lori scurried her plump ass back to the other side of the room. We were silent for a hot second before the room erupted at her expense. I was serious as fuck, though. I will kill that bitch and fuck away all of Devyn’s sorrow at the loss of her friend.

“Let’s try this again,” Kira giggled. “It’s your turn, Khalil. Please do right.”

“Come on, Bino,” I waved over to my cousin to join me, “let’s show them how it’s done.”

Shocking them all, I cued up Fantasia’s “When I See You”. Never in a million years have I been a singing ass nigga, but Luck brings that out of a nigga. Walking over, I pulled her from the couch as I sang the lyrics to her.

*“I start to stutter when I speak,  
Start to stand, and my knees go weak...”*

*Thud!*

Turning abruptly, I looked down to see this stupid nigga has fallen to the floor. There was no use in trying to finish the song because I was done for.

“Oh my gosh,” Lucky breathed as tears streamed down her face. “Bino, please!”

“Nigga, get your ass up,” I hissed through the mic. I was lowkey pissed because he had messed up my song. “Stupid ass.”

“Come on, Jake.” Kira held her belly as she slid from the couch, “we are the only sensible ones here today.”

“Man, I hope y’all pick something other than Keke and Avant’s ass.” Bino frowned as he limped. “Bro, I think I bruised my hip.”

“Good,” I pushed him away from me and handed the mic to Jake right as Kira began to play “Nothing In This World”.

We looked on in awe and just smiled at them as they sang their hearts out to each other. You could tell they really meant the words to the song, especially Kira. She now had her eyes closed, rocking side to side, not knowing what was happening around her.

*“Listen to me baby, got something to say*

*Is it really what I think don’t take all day*

*Forever is what I want to give to you, so what do you say...”*

Before she could bellow out her last part of the back and forth, Jake dropped to one knee with the most beautiful ring I’ve seen. Bino and I knew what he was going to do, so the girls were the only ones shocked. Well, Devyn was shocked and crying while Lori looked on as if she had eaten an entire pack of War Heads. The look I gave her cleared that mug right on up because if she ruined this for my boy, it was lights out.

“That song was my promise and vow to you, Kira,” Jake began with tears in his own eyes, “Will you—”

“Oh my gosh, yes!” she cried and pulled him from the ground. We cheered and whistled as she kissed him all over the face. Once he slid the ring on her finger, Lucky was all in her grill, trying to see. Even Lori went over and congratulated her.

For the rest of the night, we celebrated the upcoming union and toasted to the future. I was happy for my boy, and looking

over at my girl made me envision what life would be like if I made her my wife. I never wanted that life after Mia, but with Lucky, I didn't see things being any other way. Yeah, I got to make something shake for this girl. She deserves it all, including my last name.

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Last night with the gang with a vibe. Jake, Bino, and I were so damn drunk that the girls left us downstairs to sleep on the couches and floor. My boy was now engaged, and I couldn't be happier for him. He and Kira deserved that shit.

“Baby, I love this mirror,” Devyn gushed over the heart-shaped glass trimmed in rhinestones. “Buy this for me. Oh wait, let's take a picture in it first.”

Like the lovesick nigga I am, I eased up and hugged my girl from behind as she snapped a few pictures of us. Lucky has me doing all the cheesy shit I vowed I never would, and I'm not even tripping about it. Here we were on vacation, and she wanted to go into a home décor store that I'm sure we had back in Willow Springs. Kira pointed the store out to Jake, but he dragged her away before she could step foot in. He said she was a lowkey hoarder, and he wasn't buying shit else for their house. I couldn't deny my girl, though, so when she wanted to browse around, I would tag along.

“You know where it'll look really good?”

“Where?” she asked without looking at me. She really did love this damn mirror, so I knew without a doubt I was going to get it for her.

“In the baby's room at the new house.”

Luck slowly turned to me with a look of confusion on her face. We were about to have a whole baby, so I didn't know why she was shocked a nigga was talking about living together. It's way past due.

“New house?” She faced me. “Are you sure we're ready for that? That's a big step, Khalil.”

“And having a baby isn't?”

“It is,” she hurriedly answered. “Can we just talk about this later? I want to finish shopping. Plus, I’m hungry.”

She gave me a soft smile and continued shopping. Her brushing me off lowkey pissed me off, but I wouldn’t make a big deal about it. We are definitely going to talk later because living under separate roofs when we get back home is no longer an option.

“Look at this cute little dress,” Lucky cooed as she held up the tiny rags. We were now in the last place we needed to be — a damn children’s clothing store.

I looked at the dress, and I couldn’t help but frown because I had no idea who she thought was going to wear that shit. Our baby would be born in a few months. Although it’ll still be warm in September, my kid won’t be walking around here in a halter-top dress.

“Say, baby, you got me fucked up if you think my baby is going to be out here dressed like a mini hooker.” I scowled as she giggled and continued to browse for unnecessary clothes. We’d been out exploring the city, and the ladies decided they wanted to go outlet shopping. “Why do you want to buy this shit anyway when we’re having a son? I can’t make girls.”

“Baby, how do you figure that?” She smirked and turned my way. Luck looked so pretty with her yellow floral sundress on. Her skin was so pretty and clear. The curls she sported were piled on her head in a messy bun, putting her round face on display. This girl was pressure without even trying.

“God wouldn’t do that to me, baby.” I followed behind her and placed my hand on top of her belly. It seemed as if I couldn’t keep my hands off this girl. “He wouldn’t want the murder rate to rise by giving me a daughter.” I smiled when she started picking up shit for KJ. She really treated him like her own. “I’d kill everybody that blinked wrong at my girl.”

“Hmm, you’re scared of that karma?” She giggled as we headed toward the cash register. I’d never heard of Children’s Place before KJ, but this was the main place I shopped for him. It was very rare that I bought him designer shit. He was a kid, so his little ass didn’t know the difference.

“Exactly.” I chuckled as I watched the cashier ring up the items. I didn’t care how much money I had, she’d better give me the advertised prices. “I’ve been dogging bitches for the past three years, love, so I don’t need another nigga doing my seed that way. I’d be in prison, and you’d be alone for the rest of your life.”

The way I ran through women over the years was ridiculous, but those days were behind me. I knew Lucky was it for me, and I was more than happy to spend the rest of my life with her.

“So if you go to prison, I can’t move on?” She placed her hands over her eyes and gazed up at me as we exited the store. The weather was beautiful today, and I appreciated it. “So I’m supposed to never have sex either, huh? If you’re in prison, what am I supposed to do?”

Stopping in my tracks, the daggers I threw at Luck caused her to go into a fit of giggles. I wished she would think about fucking another nigga. I didn’t care if a nigga ended up with life. She’d better find a way to sneak inside my cell.

“Y’all want to go get something to eat?” Bino approached us as we walked toward Bath & Body Works. I was happy as fuck he approached us because I didn’t want to go in there. Luck would walk around sniffing candles like a crackhead for hours and walk out with so much shit it was ridiculous. “A nigga is starving.” He looked at Lucky along with all the bags and smiled. “I know you’re hungry, sis, and you’re going to definitely have to move in with my nigga after buying all of this shit. That little ass apartment is going to be packed out.”

“Fuck you, Bino.” She turned her nose up slightly and walked away. The way her ass jiggled in that dress, I wanted to do nothing more than stick my head up the back of it.

“We’ll meet you there.” I chuckled as he walked me to the car and helped me with all the bags Lucky left me with. “I saw a Longhorn a couple of blocks over.”

Getting into my truck, Luck was on the passenger side, seemingly lost in her thoughts. I know she wasn’t tripping on what my cousin said because they always joke like that. Plus,

if I thought he meant any harm, I would have cursed his ass out.

“Talk to me, baby,” I started my ride and turned to her. “Why are you over there looking long-faced?”

When Luck glanced at me with a hint of worry in her eyes, I felt anger brew inside me. I never wanted her anything less than happy for the rest of her life. She wasn't going to worry about shit on my watch.

“All this talk about us living together is getting to me,” she admitted. “It's your house this and your house that.” She looked down at her twiddle thumbs before bringing her eyes back to me. “If you wake up one day and decide this isn't what you want any more, I will be out on my ass with nothing but my baby. I'm invested in a life with you, this new baby, and KJ. I don't know what I would do if somehow you didn't want that.”

“Come here.” I leaned the seat back as far as it would go and motioned for her to sit in my lap. Thankfully, my ride was pretty roomy, and she wasn't too big to her where she would be uncomfortable. It took Luck a second to get adjusted, but she was able to do as I asked.

“Khalil, what are you doing?” she moaned as I slid my hand up the inside of her dress. “I thought you wanted to talk.”

“Nah...” I kissed her neck as I grazed my finger along the outside of her panties. Baby girl was already soaked. “What I want to do is relax you. You're stressing and worried over stupid shit.”

“Me being scared of us not working out is stupid?” She threw her head back as I pushed her panties to the side and began strumming her clit. “Oh my gosh, baby!”

“I love the fuck out of you,” I whispered in her ear as I kissed her lobe. “Nothing or nobody will be able to take me away from you or our family. If signing over everything I own over to you will give you peace of mind when it comes to us, I will do that shit as soon as we get back home.” I eased two

fingers inside of her, and she gripped my shit immediately. Damn, I wanted to be inside of her.

We were so lost in what I was doing to her that all conversation ceased. I dug in and out of Luck, and her moans had my dick on ten. The sounds of her wet pussy over the hum of my engine were more melodic than any song the radio could ever play.

“Khalil...” she panted as she gripped my arm. Pinching her own nipple, she pulled her bottom lip between her teeth. “Make me cum, baby, I’m so close.”

“Let me have it then, mama,” I growled as I sped up my movements. “Give daddy what he wants, baby. Make it rain all in this bitch.”

“Ohhh fucckkk!” Luck cried as she began to shake and released all over my hands. Baby, for sure, made a mess all over my seats, and I had never been so jealous in my life. “I love you so much, Khalil.”

“I love you more, Lucky.” I slowed my strokes after I made sure she gave me all she had. “Don’t ever forget that shit.”

Easing my fingers out of her, I brought my fingers to my mouth and licked off her juices. She grabbed the sides of my face and brought her lips to mine so she could taste her essence. All of this kissing and squirming had a nigga wanting to bust out of his jeans, but I didn’t want to have her or my kid uncomfortable for too long.

“Thank you for that.” She smirked as she cleaned us both up. When she eased her panties down her thighs just to pull up a fresh set, I eyed her curiously. “I can never be too safe these days.”

“Whatever.” I kissed her cheek and helped her back into her seat. “I meant what I said, baby. Stop tripping because you got a nigga, and I ain’t going nowhere.”

“I know.” She sighed as I pulled out of the lot. The fellas have been blowing us up, so I know they’re waiting on us. “It’s just that what Lori said and what Bino mentioned—”

“Your friend was on some hating shit, and you know you can’t take Bino seriously, so chill.”

“I know.” Luck did her little dance when we pulled into the parking lot at the restaurant. This girl loved to fuckin’ eat. “We can start the process when we get back home. I’m on whatever you want, baby daddy.”

Nodding, I was happy as fuck on the inside. Waking up to Lucky and my son was the highlight of my day, and I wanted it all the time. Helping her out of the car, I ensured her dress was in place before gripping her hand and leading her inside. Once we saw where everyone was seated, we made our way over.

“You look refreshed, cousin,” Kira called Lucky out as we made our way to the table. “You okay?”

“Peachy.” She smirked and shot her a bird. “I am fuckin’ starving.”

“Oh, hello,” the server greeted us as she brought the others their drinks. I caught how Lori was mugging her, but I wouldn’t say anything. “I’m Selena, and I’ll be your server. Can I get you an appetizer and something to drink?”

“Two sweet teas, please.” Luck smiled at her before she turned to me. “Baby, do you want an appetizer?”

“I’m good.” I winked at her as I licked my lips, causing the others to laugh or groan. “You know that pu—”

“We will be ready to order when you come back,” she cut me off like she knew what a nigga was about to say. “Thanks, love.”

“Yeah, thanks, love,” Bino repeated and winked, causing shorty to blush.

That was a bad move on his part.

“What the fuck?” Bino bellowed and jumped abruptly from his seat as Lori splashed her drink on him. The spot was crowded as hell, and all talking ceased. “What is wrong with you?”



“How dare you disrespect me and flirt with another bitch in my face?” she yelled.

“Yo, are you serious right now?” he gritted as he yanked the napkins from the table to dry his clothes. “Are you out of your mind, Lori?”

My phone, repeatedly vibrating in my pocket, pulled my attention away from them and their drama. Lori was beginning to show that she was a nutcase, and I made a mental note to talk to Luck about her friend. The girls were quiet, but I knew they were pissed. As I looked at my phone, I silenced the unknown number just for them to call back. I told Lucky I would be right back because I also saw my mother had called a few times.

“What the fuck?” I gritted as I stared at the phone.

The same number had sent me various pictures of my mother and son out and about over the past week. Some were as recent as today. The shit caused my blood to fuckin’ boil, and I was ready to explode. It was one thing to fuck with me, but my kid was a negative. Before I could call my mother, Lucky came barreling outside in my direction with tears streaming down her face.

“Khalil, we have to get back home!” she cried. “The fire department called. My bakery is on fire!”

“Baby, calm down before you stress our kid.” I held her as she cried against my chest. “It’s going to be okay. I promise.”

“Khalil, we got to go, bro.” Bino and Jake came stalking over. “Now.”

“Yeah, I know. Luck told me about the fire and—”

“Nah, man, that’s not the only reason,” Bino cut me off as he looked at me sympathetically. “Your dad just called me. Kaine snatched KJ.”

# CHAPTER

# SIXTEEN

KHALIL

BOOM!

“Ahhh!” Mia’s parents screamed as I kicked the door in to their home. It’s been twenty-four hours since Kaine and my rat-ass baby mama snatched my son, and somebody was going to feel me until my lil’ homie was back to me.

Her parents lived about an hour away from us, and I wanted to roll up on them in hopes that they know where the bitch was. I had zero patience or time for games, so I hoped they would give me the information I was looking for with zero hassle. I was not above killing their asses if it came down to it.

“Shut the fuck up with all that damn noise,” I seethed at Miranda. Mia’s mom jumped from the couch. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Jake and Bino shoot upstairs to check the rest of the house. “Where the fuck is your hoe ass daughter and her nigga?”

“We’re not telling you shit!” Mia’s father, Melvin, grilled me as he remained seated. This nigga has always hated me, and the feeling was mutual. Apparently, when she got with Kaine, they all felt as if she had won some sort of prize. Imagine that. “You should have never taken KJ away from her and I hope she never gives her back. He’s her son and—”

*Pop!*

The screams of Mia’s mother were getting on my fuckin’ nerves, and I told the bitch to shut up once. Maybe this bullet would pipe her old ass down. Her old ass husband jumped

from the couch and tried to make his way over to her as she bled out from the chest wound in the middle of the floor.

“Now let’s try this again,” Bino began as he returned to the living room. “As you can see, this man isn’t in a playing mood. “Now, if you and the old bitch that’s upstairs asleep want to make it out of here to save your wife and bury your daughter, tell the man where his son is.”

“I don’t know,” he cried as he looked down at his wife as she struggled to breathe. “Mia called me and said that you won the custody battle, but she wasn’t going to let you have her son. When she found out you got some whore pregnant, she went berserk. She said you were not about to be playing house with her son and some other woman.”

“First of all, watch your fuckin’ mouth when you mention my girl. I don’t give a fuck what your daughter may have called her, but you’re going to watch your words.” I went across his head with the butt of my gun and sent him crashing to the ground beside his barely breathing wife. “Call her.” I handed him the cell phone I retrieved from the end table. “On speaker!”

I eyed him intently as he unlocked his phone and went to an unknown number. He stared down at his wife as she struggled to breathe. She reached out to him and tried to speak, but her words were inaudible.

“Hey, daddy,” Mia’s voice came through the speaker, “I thought I told you I would call you when I was able to talk. We’re a little busy and—”

“Your mother is busy too, love,” I interrupted her. “She’s having a hard time breathing. Welp, never mind. The bitch just clocked out.”

Looking down at Miranda, she had, in fact, taken her last breath. Once Melvin caught on, he dropped the phone and burst into tears. Over his ass, I sent two to the head and shut his ass up, too.

“Mama! Daddy!”

“What is up with y’all and the fuckin’ screaming?” I picked up the phone from the floor as I stepped over her dead parents. “Where the fuck is my son, Mia?”

“Khalil? Oh my gosh, what did you...” Her wails sounded off through the kitchen. “Why did you do that?”

“Me? You did this shit!” I shouted. “What did you think was going to happen? You took my fuckin’ son!”

“He’s mine too! All we had to do was be a family! You said fuck me and got that bitch pregnant! It’s been all over social media! How could you do that?”

“It was never going to be you, Mia!” I roared. “Where. The fuck. Is KJ?” I seethed as I pinched the bridge of my nose. “I’m not going to ask you again.”

The line went quiet, and I had to look to make sure she hadn’t disconnected the call. I didn’t know what that bitch was doing, but she was pissing me off.

“Check your phone.”

Pulling my phone from my pocket, I had one unopened message. It was a picture of KJ sleeping peacefully. I was able to breathe easily, knowing he was okay, but I wouldn’t be okay until he was back home with me.

“Mia, where are you—”

“I have to go. Kaine is back.” She was now talking in a whisper. “I will make sure he calls you soon with his demands.”

*Demands?* Before I could ask what Mia meant, she disconnected the call. Throwing it across the room, I watched as it shattered against the wall. Had I killed that nigga months ago, I wouldn’t be going through this shit.

“Cleanup is here, bro.” Jake came into the kitchen and looked at the broken phone on the floor. “You straight?”

“Yeah, KJ is straight. I gotta wait for that bitch of a brother to call. Let’s go.”

Walking back through the house, I stepped over the dead bodies as the crew came in to discard the bodies. I was walking out of the door when Bino called out to me.

“Say, bro, I think that’s the bitch’s granny upstairs. What are we doing with her?”

“Fuck that bitch,” I spat over my shoulder. “She ain’t my grandma.”

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It’s been two days since I found out my son was snatched, and a nigga has been on a rampage ever since. After offing Mia’s parents and grandma, I’ve been working with my dad’s people to get the phone where the photos were sent from traced, but it was impossible since they used a burner. On top of everything with KJ, someone torched Lucky’s bakery. My shorty was so stressed that she was threatening a miscarriage.

“Devyn, you need to rest, sweetheart,” Sasha called out to Luck as she entered the living room.

We were at my mother’s house, where we had been since returning to town. Lucky’s people were here waiting when we arrived because her dad handled the accident at the bakery with the police on her behalf. Baby girl had been up with me for two days straight, and I hated that. Yeah, I know she was worried about my son and her spot, but I needed her and my kid to be okay, too. “Come drink this tea.”

“I’m okay, Sasha. I don’t want anything.” She wiped the lone tear that slid down her cheek. “Thank you for offering.”

“Come here, Lucky.” I motioned for her to join me in the kitchen. “Grab that tea from Sash on the way.”

“Khalil I—”

“Now, Devyn.”

Lucky’s eyes turned to slits at the sound of me calling her by her real name. It was rare that I did that, but a nigga was in rare form right now. I was stressed to the max, and I needed her to ease a nigga’s mind a little and rest.

“I need you to drink that tea and go to the back and lay down, mama.”

“What?” she snapped and reared her head back as if a nigga slapped her. “KJ is missing, and you want me to sleep? No, Khalil, I can’t.” She shook her head profusely as she began to cry. “This is all my fault.”

“Hey, stop.” I pulled her into me as she cried hysterically. I’d never seen Luck carry on like this, and a nigga was worried. Our people joined us in the kitchen after they heard her bawling, and everyone had the same worried expression. “Calm down, baby, and talk to me,” I urged.

“If I hadn’t suggested we go on vacation, you would have been here.” She held on tightly to my shirt and sniffled. “If I \_\_\_”

“No, this is my fault,” my father spoke up. “I thought something as simple as me going to the bathroom and leaving them for a second would be okay, but obviously, I was wrong.”

When I got back home, I was damn near ready to kill my parents when they told me Kaine had snatched my son. They decided to take KJ to a carnival that was a little too crowded. Once my father went to the bathroom, my mother took KJ to a nearby ride to wait for him. KJ got excited and caught my mother off guard when he snatched away and took off running. Before she could scream for help, Kaine already had him and brandished a gun that caused her to remain silent. With that, he was able to leave with my son on his hip.

“Nah, this is no one’s fault but Kaine’s,” I corrected them. “I should have killed that nigga when he first came back to town, but for you,” I pointed toward my mother, “I let him slide. No more, mama. I’m feeling like less of a man because I let that nigga make it time and time again. All I can tell you is if you want to cut me off, do it. I love you and will still allow you to be part of KJ’s life because he loves you, too. Pick out your Sunday’s best because the next time you see your oldest son will be on a fuckin’ slab.”

I didn't even wait for my mama to respond as I left her and the rest of the family in the kitchen and escorted Lucky to my room. Once inside, I sat her on the bed and removed her shoes and jeans. Pulling the covers back, I removed my own shoes and pants as I motioned for her to get in.

"What are you doing?" Luck asked as I gave her the mug of tea. "I can't sleep right now."

"Drink this and lay down, baby. I'm sleeping with you."

Doing as I asked, Luck sipped the tea until it was completely gone. Sasha told me she was going to give her something to help her sleep, and I was thankful. I can't seem to think from worrying about her.

"How are you so calm right now?" She yawned as she snuggled into me. "I'm a fuckin' wreck."

"Kaine wants me or some money, baby." I pulled her closer to my chest and kissed her forehead. "I know he won't hurt KJ. Mia won't either."

"I hope not." She snuggled closer to me, and I couldn't help but chuckle. If Luck could live in my skin, I'm sure she would. "I don't even care about my bakery being destroyed. I'm focused on KJ. I hope they find out who did it, though."

Kissing her forehead, I listened as her breathing changed, and I knew she was sound asleep. With the way she'd been running around, I knew she would be out for a while. Hearing small taps on the door, I slowly eased from the bed and slid on my jeans before answering.

"Is she okay?" Kira asked as she peeped her inside. "I just wanted to make sure she didn't need anything."

"She's good, sis." I peered over my shoulder, and Luck was sound asleep. "You can go home and rest yourself if you need to. We're fine."

She, along with Jake and Bino, have been here since we returned home. We haven't heard from Lori since she acted a fool at the restaurant about Bino flirting with the server. I assume she found her own way home. We packed our bags as soon as we got back to the cabins and dipped.

“I’m good. Bino and Jake want to speak with you. I’m going to lay down with her if that’s okay.” She stepped into the room and walked over to the bed. Turning to face me, she scrunched her nose and asked, “Have y’all been in here fuckin’?”

“No, Kira.” I chuckled as I grabbed my shoes and phone. “Call me if y’all need anything.”

Leaving the girls in the room, I closed the door and made my way back up front to my cousins. The smell of fried chicken floated through the air, and my stomach instantly growled.

“Who’s in here burning up the food?” I asked as I made my way back into the kitchen. David and Sasha were moving around in the kitchen as if they lived there. Mama must have really fucked with them because regardless of the circumstances, she was not going to let anyone cook in her kitchen but her.

“Khalil, your father is outside and wants to talk to you,” my mother sniffled as she came from the patio. “I’m going in the room for a moment.”

I didn’t bother to check on her as I made my way outside where the fellas were. She was in her feelings about me killing Kaine, and I couldn’t let that bother me. She had better go in the room and pray for the nigga.

“Son, is Devyn okay?” my father asked as soon as I stepped out back. Bino had a blunt ready for me, and I was thankful. “Does she need anything?”

“Nah, she and Kira are asleep.” I exhaled the smoke as I took a seat on the steps. It was humid as fuck out here, even though it was nighttime. Summer nights in Georgia will smother your ass. “Your people got any news on that nigga? Accounts? Phone tracking?”

“Not yet.” He sighed, defeated. He looked bad as fuck, and I was starting to worry about him, too. I know he has a heart condition, so he needed to take it easy. “They must be using someone else’s information. I have them checking every single



hotel within a fifty-mile radius. He couldn't have made it that far." He got quiet for a minute before bringing his attention back to me. "Son, I'm sorry. I dropped the ball and let my guard down. Don't hate your mother. This is all on me."

"I don't hate either of you." I frowned as I looked over at him. "This shit is on Kaine and... Pops!"

Grabbing his chest, Ceaser fell out of the lawn chair he was seated in. Sweat formed all over his body as his eyes began to roll into the back of his head.

"Unk! Unk!" Bino yelled. "Jake, call the ambulance!"

"What's going... Ceaser! Oh my gosh!"

My mother and Luck's parents ran out into the backyard and tried their best to help us get Ceaser situated. He was still gripping his chest, and his movements were almost nonexistent. His breathing was shallow, and then it hit me. My father was dying.

"Come on, pops." I kneeled on the ground beside him and begged as tears welled my eyes. "Don't do this to me, man. I just got you back."

"Khalil—"

"Shhh," my mother placed her finger on his lips. "Don't speak, baby. The ambulance is on the way."

"I-I love you, son," he panted. "I've always loved you."

"I love you too, man." I looked up as the paramedics were running through the backyard. "Just hold on, man. Help is here. Don't leave us. Please."

My mother and I were pulled back as the emergency personnel began working on my father. They were moving and speaking so fast that I couldn't make out anything they were doing. All I know is my father wasn't moving, and my mother was hysterical.

"We got to go!" one of the older white men shouted. "We're losing him!"

As everyone scrambled through the backyard behind my father, all I could do was stand there. I was lost. I was numb. My son was missing, my girl was stressed, and now I was losing my father. I was headed toward the house to grab my keys so I could follow them to the hospital when the next three words caused me to stop in my tracks.

“We lost him!”

# CHAPTER

# SEVENTEEN

KAINE SIMMONS

“WHO WAS THAT?” I asked Mia as I entered the room of the house we were slumming it in. As soon as I came in, she jumped and hurried her ass off the phone. “Who the fuck were you sneaking and talking to?”

“I wasn’t sneaking and talking to anyone.” She rolled her eyes and stood from the bed. “I was on the phone with my parents.”

Eyeing her like the lying ass bitch she is as she paced the floor, I let her make it. I had bigger shit on my mind, and beating her ass wasn’t at the top of my list today. When this shit was over, I was leaving her ass alone.

It’s been three days since I snatched KJ from the fair with my mother, and I know that nigga Khalil was about to lose his shit. He thought I didn’t notice the car he put on me, but I was always one step ahead. I switched vehicles with this lil’ bitch I’d been fucking and been coming and going as I pleased for weeks. That was how I was able to get us somewhere to stay without them knowing where I was. Mia knew what was up, but that bitch couldn’t do shit about it. All the money we took from Khalil was long gone. It was either spent or lost in the fire that I was sure he set.

“So what’s next, Kaine?” I laid across the bed as she called from the bathroom. “Are you going to call Khalil?”

I sighed as I scrolled through my phone and texted a couple of my bitches back. Mia was worried about the wrong shit. The only thing she needed to be concerned with was her

son sleeping across the room. Little did she know, I was ditching her ass as soon as this was over.

Mia and I have been fucking around since she first started dealing with Khalil. He always felt like he was *that nigga*, so I took pride in bagging a girl he just knew was all about him. The hatred I have for that nigga runs deep, and I can't wait until I bring his bitch ass to his knees.

Shelia approached me before we got out of high school, telling me all about my father and Ceaser. At the time, Ceaser wasn't living back in the area because if he were, I would have killed him with my bare hands. She told me all about how he was jealous of my dad and how my mother tricked him into thinking my dad was abusing us when we were younger. It seemed to me that nigga was just hating that my mother had chosen a real nigga over his bitch ass.

"Kaine, how long are we going to have to stay here?" Mia whined as she reentered the bedroom. "KJ is starting to get antsy, and I don't want to keep giving him medicine to sleep. He wants to go back with his father, and maybe we should let him."

"Bitch, what the fuck are you even talking about right now?" I raised up and eyed her. Peering over at the pullout couch, I watched the lil' nigga as he slept. He looked just like his father, and part of me wanted to kill him too, but I wanted him to grow up without a father just like I had to. "We're not doing shit until I say so."

As I looked at Mia, I tried my hardest to see the girl I thought I was in love with. In the beginning, I only fucked with her to get back at Khalil. I would get her to swindle money from his ass so we could take trips, go shopping, and much more. Shit, there were times I would even send that nigga out of town on a money mission just so I could lay up in his crib and fuck his bitch. It didn't take much with a hoe like her. All you had to do was give her a little bit of attention, and she would bite the bait. However, she was now more of a liability.

To be honest, I did catch feelings for Mia over time, and I was excited when she told me she was pregnant with my child. I let her know she was leaving that nigga, and I had some of my niggas from the hood move her shit from their spot and mine the day we were in the mall getting her ring. The ultimate slap in that nigga's face was going to be running off with his bitch after I got her pregnant. Imagine the joke being on me when I had to live in the same house with a kid that ended up belonging to my brother.

“I just think we need to give him back to Khalil.” Mia walked over and sat beside him. Rubbing KJ's head, she began crying. Frowning, I looked at her as if she had lost her damn mind. Where the fuck were the tears coming from? “We don't have any money to keep him here. Plus, he misses his daddy and—”

“Does he miss him or you?” I asked as I eyed her. “It seems to me that every time you talk about this nigga, you get this look of sadness about yourself. What? You miss that nigga or something?”

I'm not a dumb nigga. I know she still loves my brother. She doesn't think I know she sneaks and checks his social media. Khalil was never the type to post shit, but as soon as he got with that fine bitch of his, he's always online. Shit, she even follows his girl now. If I find out she wants the nigga, she can die with him.

“No, it's nothing like that.” Mia rolled her eyes as she kissed her teeth. “It's just that when we were in court, the judge said that Khalil has all this money I knew nothing about. I went in there asking for twenty thousand a month because you told me to and ended up looking stupid!”

When I told her to mention the illegal money, I did it in hopes that Khalil would be investigated and end up in jail. Shelia informed me of all the money his father was worth, and we devised a plan to get rid of them both. Killing Khalil would essentially kill Ceaser. The nigga's heart was weak as water and wouldn't uphold losing his son. Khalil wouldn't be able to collect the money his father had if they were both dead, so it would go to KJ. That would be the reason I stayed with Mia.

That plan wasn't working in my favor at the moment, so I decided to use the love of his newfound son against him.

When I followed my mother and Ceaser to the carnival, I just knew it was a lost cause. Apparently, they all got comfortable with me lying low and decided to let their guard down. Catching KJ's eye was pure coincidence. His snatching away and running to a nigga was comical, and I know my mama was shocked as shit. I know she wanted to yell out, but the Smith and Wesson I flashed piped her right on down. I didn't have shit for her trifling ass, either. She chose her side when she had her bitch of a baby father at our Christmas dinner. Knowing she played a part in my father's death landed her a permanent spot on my 'fuck you' list.

"Hand me the phone." Hesitantly, Mia threw it over to me as she went and took her place beside her son. "You can breathe. I'm not about to go through this shit. I know you've been stalking that nigga. Do you think he's having another son or daughter?"

I glanced up at Mia and noticed her entire demeanor changed. She was pissed that nigga was about to have another kid, but I wasn't going to speak on it right now. Instead, I went to her contact list and found her baby daddy's number.

"Who the fuck is this?" Khalil answered as he exhaled heavily. All this nigga did was smoke. "Speak if you got some shit to say."

"That's not the way to talk to someone who has your life in their hands."

I chuckled slightly, waiting for him to respond. I was pissing this nigga off at every turn, and I knew he hated that shit.

"Kaine, where in the fuck is my son?" he gritted after a while. "I'm tired of playing this game with you, nigga. If you want me, come get me. I'm sick of tired of playing this game with you and your hoe ass bitch."

"That's why you're still mad, huh?" I looked over at her as she listened in our conversation. "You're still mad because

Mia chose me.”

“Am I?” He chuckled. I could hear him move around in the background, telling someone he loved them and to chill out. The frown on Mia’s face indicated she heard him, too. “If I told that bitch to come eat this dick right now, she would without a second thought. I was in the middle of killing her parents not even twelve hours ago, and that bitch was trying to profess her love for a nigga. Tell me what the fuck you want so I can get my son and go on with my life, nigga.”

Glaring at Mia, she avoided eye contact. I watched her intently as she moved around the room to clean shit that wasn’t there just to try to keep from looking at me. Once a hoe, always a hoe, but it’s cool. I had something for her.

“Here’s what we’re going to do.” I stood from the bed and hovered over KJ. “You’re going to meet me tomorrow night at the address I send you.” I ran my fingers through his curls before tracing them along his little cheeks. He was handsome, but he wasn’t mine. If Khalil didn’t give me what I asked for, I had no issue killing him. “I want ten million cash and not a penny less. I know you have the money, Khalil. If you try to play with me in any way, I will send your son to your mother’s door in bits and pieces. I have nothing to lose, so try me.”

“If you touch my son—”

“What?” I raised my brow as if he could see me. “You’re not going to kill me, Khalil. Mama would hate you, and we both know that’s the last thing you want.” I walked back over to the other side of the room and locked eyes with a scared Mia. “Keep your phone charged. I’ll be in touch.”

Disconnecting the call, I glared at Mia with nothing but pure hatred. It’s been three years, and this bitch was still pinning after my baby brother as if she didn’t have the best right before her eyes.

“You still love that nigga, Mia?” My eyes turned to slits as I slowly walked her way. “You still want to be with him after all this time, huh?”

“Kaine, please,” she cried as she held her hands up in surrender. “You know I love you—”

*Whap!*

I closed-fisted her. Grabbing her mouth, she wailed into her hands as blood seeped through her fingers. I hit her again once more and caused her to fall to the ground. Once down, I kicked her in the stomach, which caused her to finally cry out.

“Okay! Okay!” she pleaded as she cried in the fetal position. She’d dealt with me long enough to know I wouldn’t stop until she told me the truth. I glanced over my shoulder to make sure KJ was still asleep, and he was. We’ve been doping him with nothing but Melatonin for the past few days, so the nigga will be well-rested when he gets up.

“Say what you got to say, Mia.”

“I-I still love him,” she cried as she looked up at me. “I don’t want him to be with that girl. I don’t want her to have his baby. I want him backkk!”

I looked on in disgust as she cried her heart out over a man who would never want her or love her again. The more she laid there and bawled, the more it pissed me off.

“What the fuck is so special about that nigga?” I roared as I crashed a lamp into the wall. “Why the fuck does he always win? Why the fuck does he always come out on top?”

“Kaine, calm down,” Mia whimpered as she tried getting up from the floor. “KJ is stirring and—”

“Fuck that lil’ nigga,” I hissed as I pulled my pistol from my waist and paused her steps as she tried to make her way over to him. “I’ll kill you and this lil’ bastard right now.” I backpedaled to the nightstand, placed the white-powered substance to my nose, and took a whiff. This was the only way I could think straight. This was the only way I could tolerate this bitch. I was introduced to coke by one of my hoes a few months ago, and it was the best thing a muhfucka has ever done for me. “I’ll kill you both right now.”

“Khalil... I mean, Kaine.” Mia’s eyes widened in fear when she realized her mistake.



Breathing heavily, I charged at the bitch with everything in me. Grabbing her by her scrawny neck, I squeezed and shook until her eyes damn near popped from their sockets. My dick seemed to grow as the life seemed to float from her body. After shaking her for a few more moments, she was dead. Like a sack of potatoes, I dropped that bitch in the middle of the room floor.

“Mommy,” KJ slurred as he awakened from his slumber. Facing him, I saw he wasn’t fully awake, so he had no idea his mother was dead at my feet. “Where are you?”

“Shhh, it’s all good, nephew. Mommy is resting right now.” I picked him up and laid his head on my shoulder. I stepped over his mother and kicked her dead body once more as I grabbed my keys and phone before leaving out of the room.

“Uncle Kaine’s got you, and we’re going for a little ride.”

# CHAPTER

# EIGHTEEN

KHALIL

“GIVE US A FEW MINUTES, Mr. Simmons, and we’ll have your cash bagged for you. Just pull your car around back and wait for us to come out.”

Standing, I shook hands with the bank manager and did as requested. Thanks to my father, ten million wasn’t much to a nigga like me, so when Kaine called and demanded the money, I didn’t break a sweat. Even if I didn’t have the money, I would rob all the muhfuckas just to get it if it would ensure my son made it back home safely where he belonged.

Last night, when Kaine called, I had just got back home from killing two of Mia’s friends and Kaine’s homeboys. See, I found out they were the ones who not only helped Mia and Kaine rob me, but they were also the ones helping them evade me. Once her homegirl told me she had been fucking Kaine and had them stashed at her house, I killed the bitch and went in search of my son. When I got there, I was a little thrown off to see Mia dead in the middle of the floor. At one point in time, I loved the girl, but the hoe was dead and I hoped she burned for eternity. I tore the house apart, looking for my son, but he was nowhere in sight. The only thing left for me to do was wait for his call.

“Thanks, and have a good day,” the staff bid me farewell as I pulled away from Truist Bank. Thankfully, I had no issues getting the money because I didn’t know what I would have done if they gave me problems.

“Call Lucky,” I instructed, and immediately, the phone began to ring.

Luck had an appointment today, and I hated I missed it to make my appointment at the bank. She understood what I had to do, and when this was over, I had to make sure I did something nice for her. She's been dealing with shit left and right since she got with me, on top of losing her shop. Through it all, she stuck by my side, and I appreciated it.

"Hey, baby daddy," she cooed as the call connected. Coming to a red light, I decided to disconnect the Bluetooth and FaceTime her instead. When she came into view, I couldn't help the smile that came across my face. "You look like you miss me."

"I do." I smirked as I licked my lips. This girl was so fucking pretty to a nigga, and my baby growing inside of her amplified it. "How did your appointment go? I hate I missed it, man."

Since finding out she was pregnant, I made it my business to be at every appointment with her. Whether I was working with my father or getting money with my cousins, I was making time to go check on my seed. That's another reason I needed this shit with Kaine to come to an end.

"Don't do that," her voice flowed as I cruised the city. I had some other business to handle while I waited on my bitch ass brother to call. I was getting antsy, and if I knew where he was, I'd pull up on him now. "You have more important things to worry about—"

"You're my important thing, too, baby," I interrupted her as I glanced at the phone. "You and my baby are just as much of a priority as KJ."

"I know." She softly smiled as she repositioned the phone. I could tell she was still at the doctor's office.

I was happy that Sasha was able to accompany her in my absence, so I felt a bit better. Mama would have gone if she asked, but she's not in the headspace for that right now.

"Oh, before I forget. I need to go down to the police station and speak with a detective about the fire. She wants to show me something."

“When?” I frowned as I checked the time on the dash. “I really don’t want you out and about too much right now, Luck. Can it wait until later?”

Being as though my father’s men were incompetent as fuck, the cleanup crew was able to make some extra cash for the holidays. The day I made it home and found out the tail that was following my parents dropped the ball, it was lights out for that nigga. The thing is my pops was the one that offed him. Not only him but also the two others who were supposed to follow Mia and Kaine became distant memories, too.

“No, she said I needed to come today.” She put me on a brief hold to speak with the receptionist. I was eavesdropping like a muhfucka because I wanted to make sure I was in the know on everything concerning her and our child. “Isn’t Bino still out there waiting on us? He can follow us to the station, baby.”

Until this shit with Kaine was handled, I really haven’t been comfortable letting my girl out of my sight. If I was in the streets looking for the nigga, she was locked away at Jake’s. Her folks were still in town, so for the most part she has had them to keep her company in my absence. Since all of my father’s men have been knocked off, I’ve asked my cousin to be the one to follow them on their errands. He was more than willing.

“I just shot him a text and told him to follow you to the station, baby. I’ll meet you there.”

After exchanging ‘I love yous’, we disconnected the call. It wouldn’t take me long to get to the station from this side of town, so I would be there to meet her shortly. Plus, Bino was going to kick it with her until I got there. I needed to make a quick detour before making my way to her.

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“Mr. Simmons,” my real estate agent greeted me as I pulled into the vacant lot. “It’s nice to see you.”

“My man, what’s good?” We slapped hands as we entered the building. “I appreciate you finding me this spot on short

notice.”

With Lucky losing her bakery, I made it my business to find her another building. The one before me was more spacious and, in the end, cheaper than her paying suite rent. I was just here to purchase it because ultimately, she can decorate it and shit the way she wants to.

“It’s not a problem.” He smiled. This nigga knew his commission was going to be huge, so I didn’t blame him at all. “What do you think?”

“Send me the paperwork.” I looked down at the time and noticed I had to go. “I gotta go meet my girl, so I’ll be in touch.” Shaking hands once more, we left just as fast as we came, promising to get this business handled in the next few days.

After leaving Lucky’s new spot, it took me no time to get to the police station.

“Hey, mama,” I greeted her as I helped her from the car and pulled her into my embrace. “How are you feeling?” Peeping my head inside, I spoke to Sasha as well. “Sup Sasha.”

“Better now.” Luck smirked as she eyed me lustfully. “Where have you been looking this fine, Khalil?”

Chuckling, this girl was something else. All a nigga had on was a pair of Versace loafers, black slacks, with a matching shirt. Pops told me once if I was going to be a businessman, I needed to always look the part. I adapted to that mentality, and I’d been rocking with it. Plus, Luck couldn’t stop throwing the pussy at a nigga. Like right now, she was looking like she wanted to get fucked in front of this station.

“Man, come on before I fuck you right here on the sidewalk.” I draped my arm over her shoulder and kissed her temple as we walked through the lot. She giggled like a nigga was joking or some shit. “They better not take all day because I believe Sasha will leave your ass for real.”

“She loves me. Plus, I will call David Walker so fast on her ass.”

We made small talk about the appointment as we headed inside. I was relieved to know that all of Luck's tests and shit came back normal. Outside of a bit of dehydration and fatigue, she was perfect. I was going to make sure I fixed that, though.

"Hello, I'm here to see Officer Sims," Luck spoke once we reached the desk deputy.

The way the nigga was eyeing her, I wanted to spaz out on his ass, but I let him make it. The last thing I wanted to do was get arrested when I knew I was waiting on Kaine's call.

"Will you tell her Devyn Walker is here to see her?"

"Devyn Walker, huh?" The Terry Crews-looking ass nigga stood from his desk and extended his hand for her to shake. "I'm Officer Smith and—"

"And I'm not interested," she huffed. "I'm very pregnant," she palmed her growing belly, "very hungry and slightly horny. Will you go get Officer Sims so I can leave here and go fuck my man, please? Thank you."

Like the proud nigga I am, I pulled her into my chest and smiled brightly. For a minute, he stared at her before he dragged his eyes to me. It seemed he had just noticed that I was with her.

"And you are?" he asked as he began typing on his computer. "What's your relationship with Miss Walker?"

"My and *Mrs. Simmons*' relationship has nothing to do with you, my nigga." I mugged him as I removed myself from her embrace and pushed her behind me. I heard her groan, but I didn't give a fuck. "I can tell you about my relationship with Mayor Jones, though. Call him up and tell him Ceaser Mitchell's son Khalil said what's up."

At the mention of my father's name, his eyes grew wide. I felt a sense of pride and also sadness that he was respected by so many. He had really made a name for himself in this community, and that shit was dope. I just wish...

"Devyn?"

We turned behind us and were greeted by a cute and petite female officer. Although she was easy on the eyes, I wouldn't fuck with her even if Devyn and I weren't together. She was still an officer of the law, and I'd never trust those bitches.

“Yes.” Luck smiled and shook her hand. “This is my—”

“Husband,” I interrupted and peered over my shoulder at the nigga that was still staring at her. “Can we get this over and done with, please? I want to feed her and get her out of this heat.”

“Follow me.”

We made the short trip to her office, where another officer was waiting. We exchanged greetings before Sims offered us a seat and got to the reason for us being here today.

“First, I wanted to apologize for what happened to your business. My co-workers and I have spent a lot of money at your bakery.” The girls shared a small laugh before she continued. “I hope you relocate soon because you and your treats are missed.”

“Thank you,” Luck replied.

“Now,” she slid a folder over to Luck, “the fire was ruled as arson. Someone broke into the building through the back alleyway and set the fire from inside. Nothing outside of smoke damage spread over to surrounding businesses, and that lets us know it was just meant to destroy your property. Is there anyone who may have a problem with you?”

“No,” Luck answered in an obvious state of shock. I squeezed her hand to let her know it was okay. “Not that I know of.”

“Will you take a look at the inside of this and let me know what you think?”

Shakily, she opened the folder, and all you could hear was her small gasp. I peeped over her shoulder and was instantly consumed with anger. Of all the scandalous shit this bitch could have done, this was the most hurtful.

“That’s my mother,” Luck uttered barely above a whisper. The lone tear that cascaded down her cheek pissed me off even more. I was going to murder that bitch for hurting my baby. “I can tell it’s her, even with the shades on.”

We flipped through various photos from different angles of Luck’s mother splashing a liquid throughout the bakery. The other office in the room began to play a surveillance video, and it showed Dana destroying her entire suite, including the office before she set it ablaze. She even appeared to try to open a cash register, but Lucky never left money in her store. To do something like this to your child, regardless of your relationship with them, was downright evil.

“Miss Walker,” Officer Sims gently spoke. “I know she’s your mother, but I must warn you that the owner of the suite is going to want to press charges to the fullest extent of the law —”

“As he should,” Luck cut her off and stood from her seat. Following suit, I’ll do the same. “I, too, would like to press any additional charges if possible.”

“Are you sure?”

“Very,” she spoke matter-of-factly, pushing her purse strap up her shoulder. “She obviously cares nothing about my well-being, and I want to return the favor. You see her clear as day burning my business to the ground without an ounce of remorse. Lucky for her, I’m a mother, or else I’d make sure she burned the same way. If you need anything else, call me. Good day.”

Hand in hand, I followed Lucky’s lead as she led us out of the station. She held strong in front of the officers, but she didn’t have to play that role with me.

“Are you okay?” I lifted her chin as we made it to Sash’s car. “Do you want me to follow you home?”

“I’m fine.” She stood on her tiptoes and kissed me softly. “Go handle your business, baby, and I will see you at home. I will call you when I make it there.”



I helped her into the passenger seat and stood in the lot until they'd disappeared. Making my way back to my own ride, I sent a quick text to the mayor and let him know I needed to speak with him and the police chief as soon as possible. I'd quickly learned that my father placing me in this position would open doors I never thought possible. Mother or not, Dana was going to regret the day she hurt my girl. I was going to make sure of it.

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“Sup, mama?” I kissed her cheek as I came into the room with a couple of shopping bags in tow. “How are you holding up?”

“Doing the best I can, Khalil.” She looked up at me with tired eyes. “Taking it one day at a time.”

Nodding, I took a seat against the windowsill and took her appearance. In an oversized t-shirt and a pair of sweats, she looked like everything she'd been through. I was used to seeing my mother upbeat and vibrant. The lady before me was really going through it.

Taking my gaze from her, I stared ahead at my father as he laid motionless in the hospital bed. By way of a miracle, they were able to restart and stabilize his weakened heart long enough to get him to the hospital. Apparently, there was some blockage, and he needed to have an emergency coronary bypass. Right now, he was resting, and that was for the best. The less straining on himself, the better.

“How was Devyn's appointment?” my mother asked, snapping me from my thoughts. “Did Sasha go with her?”

“Yeah, she went.” I crossed my arms as I continued to stare at my father. With tubes and wires everywhere, a nigga was on edge a little. “She and the baby both are good. We went to the station today, and they told her that Dana was the one who set the place on fire.”

“Dana?” my mother turned and frowned slightly. “Her mother?”

“Egg donor,” I corrected as I pushed off the window. “We need to talk, though, mama.”

She and I have been in a weird space since I let her know Kaine was dying when I saw him. I tried and tried to spare that nigga, but he chose this when he decided to kidnap my son.

“There’s no need.” She sighed and turned back to face my dad.

She held his hand in hers and caressed it slowly. She’d been by his bedside since he arrived, and I’ve often thought if Luck would be the same way with me. Who am I kidding? I’d wake up and make them chain her to my shit so she wouldn’t have a choice but to stay.

“I know what you’re going to do, and there’s nothing I can say to stop you.”

“I’m glad you know,” I pushed from the window. “Kaine did this when he decided to take my boy. Not only that, but he’s also holding KJ for ransom.” I chuckled, although there wasn’t a damn thing funny. “He’s a goner, just like Mia.”

“Are you sure you want to do that? She’s KJ’s mama.”

“Shit, he beat me to it.” My mother snapped her neck toward me with wide eyes. “They’ll be together again soon enough, though.”

Not wanting to say too much, I let my mother know what I found at her friend’s home. I wanted to feel a way about my son’s mother being dead, but I couldn’t. I’m just glad that’s one less body I have to repent for.

“Oh wow,” she sat in disbelief, “that’s awful.” She stood from her chair and stretched her legs. That’s when she noticed the shopping bags I placed at her feet. “What’s this?”

“I got that for you. I know you didn’t want to leave pops and shit, so I figured you need some stuff for a shower.” She smirked and tried to hug me, but I curved her. “Nah, ma, you’re funky as hell.”

“What?” she screeched and swatted at my chest. “You’re a liar.” She snatched the bags up and looked inside. “Stay out here with Ceaser while I shower. I’ll be quick.”

She didn't wait for me to respond before she went into the small bathroom that was located in the room. I made sure to get him the biggest, most private room they had available. As it was just him and me in here now, I took the seat my mama left empty. The only thing that could be heard was the sound of the machines.

“Look, man, I’ve never been one for the sappy shit,” I placed my elbows on my knees and stared as he slept, “but I need you to shake back. You got me out here conducting business meetings and shit, knowing damn well I don’t know how to talk to these white people.” I chuckled, thinking about how uncomfortable I make their asses. “There’s so much shit you need to show me about the business. Not only that, but KJ loves his PopPop, and he needs you. Mama needs you.” I dropped my head as a tear fell into my lap. “I need you. I-I love you, man. I know shit with us is strained in a sense, but I need you to shake back.”

Sitting there, lost in my thoughts, I meant every single word I said to him. It took us some time to get here, but I honestly love my father.

*Buzz. Buzz.*

Feeling my phone vibrate, I pulled it from my pocket to see there were a couple of incoming messages.

**Unknown:** *Meet me at this address in three hours. If I feel like you on some funny shit, I’m killing this lil’ nigga.*

Attached was a picture of my son eating chicken nuggets in the back seat. I was glad Kaine appeared to have sense enough to feed my boy, but I planned to make him regret the choices he’d made.

“Where are you going?” my mother called out to me as she exited the bathroom. “Is everything okay?”

“I’m going to get KJ,” I threw over my shoulder. I reached the door at the same time Kira, Jake, and Bino were entering the room with food. I was thankful they looked out for my mother the way they did.

“I’m going with you,” she scrambled around, looking for her shoes. “I don’t want you going there alone. I have to make sure you guys are okay. Just give me—”

“Ma!” I yelled slightly. She had tears running down her face, and the shit was making this harder than it already was. “You’re not coming with me. I’ll call you when I get KJ back. I have to go.”

“Khalil, baby, be careful,” she cried as Kira patted her back. She looked to Bino and Jake. “Will you guys go with him?”

“Yeah, mama, we’re going,” Bino was the first to speak as he kissed her cheek, followed by Jake. “Call Sasha to bring Dee up here. Y’all can have some girl time or some shit.”

“I’ll excuse that damn cussing this one time,” she swatted at him as she came my way. “Be safe, son,” she cupped my cheeks, “tell your brother I love him.”

Kissing her forehead, I hurriedly left the room with my cousins on my heels.

As we rushed to the car, I said a quick prayer for my son, my mother, and even my brother’s soul. Hell was going to be a paradise for the nigga by the time I was done with him. Jake offered to drive, so I wasted no time retrieving the duffle bags of cash from my truck and getting into the passenger side of his whip, giving him the directions Kaine had given me.

In silence, we rode into the unknown.

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“Where the fuck this nigga got us at?” Bino griped as we pulled up to the deserted building. “It’s dark as fuck out here. Is that nigga even here?”

“He’d better fuckin’ be here.” I looked out of the window and stared at the darkened, abandoned building. “I just know my son better be alright.”

I didn’t have the slightest clue where Kaine had me or what I was walking into, but I knew not a single hair on my son’s head better be out of place. He chose for us to meet at an

abandoned shopping center, and I was thankful for that. There was nothing here but open space and the area was damn near deserted. He had given me instructions to come inside.

“So what’s the plan?” Jake asked.

“The only plan I have is to get my kid and head home to lay under my girl. I’ll be back.” Exiting the car with the bags of cash in one hand and my Glock in the other, I made my way inside. The flickering lights and moldy smell caused a nigga to feel uneasy, but I would do whatever for KJ.

Walking further into the open space, I noticed it was empty, and the nigga wasn’t even here yet. I stood there waiting for thirty minutes before I started to get antsy. Placing the bags at my feet, I pulled my phone from my pocket to see if I could call him back, but the sounds of the doors opening caused me to halt my movement.

“Baby bro, what’s good?” Kaine greeted me as he entered the room with my son walking alongside him. “Nice to see you.”

“Daaa!” KJ squealed. he tried to get loose from Kaine and run toward me, but he wouldn’t let me go. “I want my daddy, Unkie Kaine.”

“Yeah, I know.” He looked at me and smirked. “He has to give me the money first.”

“It’s all there, Kaine,” I gritted through slanted eyes as I kicked at the bags of cash. “Let him go.”

The more I looked at my brother, I knew something wasn’t right with him. His eyes looked sunken into their sockets, and he seemed to be sniffing a lot as if he had a cold. His clothes looked dingy, and he needed a cut. Realization hit me like a ton of bricks. This nigga was on drugs.

“Man, fuck that,” Kaine snarled as he aimed his gun at me. “I have the upper hand, and before I kill you, I got some shit to say.” He adjusted his stance as KJ began to cry and pull away from him. “You thought you were going to walk out of here with your life, huh?” He chuckled as he wiped his nose with

the butt of his gun. “I’m going to kill you and this worrisome ass son of yours. I might even go fuck that fine ass bitch—”

“Ahhh—”

KJ, being snatched from him by Jake, halted the bullshit he was spewing. Thankfully, he took him outside without me having to tell him. Before Kaine could react to what was happening, Bino had a gun to this nigga’s temple.

*Wham!*

I ran up and began delivering blow after blow with the butt of my gun all over Kaine’s head, face, and chest. He tried his best to fight back, but there was no use. I was pissed and had the strength of a thousand crackheads right now. After I became winded from beating him within an inch of his life, I decided it was time to end this shit. I wanted nothing more than to beat this nigga to death and kill him with my bare hands, but I had something better planned for him. Plus, I needed to go make sure my son was okay.

“Bino, hand me that bag,” I panted as I hovered over my brother. He was barely breathing, but the nigga was holding on. “Has the crew made it in yet?”

“You know it.” Bino did as I asked and nodded. “They’re out back waiting on you to let them know the play.”

“Bet.”

On the way over, I had one of my father’s old connects research the area I was coming to. There was no way I was coming here without a plan. I knew Kaine wasn’t making it out alive, so I got Jake to put the cleaning crew on alert and for them to be as discrete as possible.

“T-think about m-mama,” he mumbled just above a whisper. “She’s going to hate you.”

“She might.” I shrugged as I pulled the small machete from the bag. Yeah, the duffle bags held money, but he was never getting it. “She told me to tell you she loves you, though. She can lose one son or both. Either way, it’s a wrap for you.” Peering down at Kaine, I couldn’t help the menacing smirk that spread across my face. “This might hurt a little.”

*Swish Slash!*

“Arrggg!” he yelled out as I cut both of his hands off. “Khalil!”

“Shut the fuck up, nigga!” I gritted. “That’s for touching shit that doesn’t belong to you! Whether it was a bitch, my money, or my fuckin’ kid, you fucked up when you put your hands on anything that belonged to Loon!”

“Ahhh!” Kaine cried as I held his mouth open and cut out his tongue. I’ve never seen so much blood in my life, but the shit was exciting to a nigga.

“You lost your tongue because you called my mama out of her name. She was nothing but good to us, to you, our whole lives, and for you to disrespect her the way you did will never sit right with me. Oh, and don’t ever speak on my bitch.”

Before Kaine could attempt to say anything, his eyes went wide as I sent the knife through his heart. He didn’t seem to have one in regard to his family and the ones who loved him the most, so it was only right that I break it the way he broke ours. I held onto the handle and held his stare until his soul left his body. He was gone. My brother, my first best friend, had died at my hands.

“Bro, are you okay?” Bino placed his hand on my shoulder. “Tell me what I need to do?”

With my eyes still on a lifeless Kaine, I stood slowly and dropped the knife to my feet. Dropping my head momentarily, I felt as if a weight had been lifted. A sense of peace washed over me, and that’s what I needed in that moment.

“I just need the crew to come and clean this shit up for me.” I discarded the blood-soaked shirt I was wearing and made my way toward the door before a thought came to mind. “Dump him where he can be found, for mama.”

With that, I exited the building as the crew entered. The only thing on my mind was getting to my son and making sure he was okay. Killing Kaine hurt more than I thought. The love of money is the root of all evil. That, mixed with jealousy, put us here, and letting him go was the only way to free my

brother from the hell he was living in, that we were living in. I would do whatever was necessary to live a happy and worry-free life with my girl and kids. That was the only thing that mattered to me, and I would choose them over anybody every single time.



# EPILOGUE

DEVYN

DECEMBER 2023

“The girl is crying again,” KJ announced as he came walking into the kitchen. His little head was leaning to the side as if he were exhausted, and I couldn’t help but chuckle. From day one, he has been calling her ‘the girl’, and he won’t stop. The thing is, he doesn’t play about his sister. Scooping him up in my arms, I couldn’t help but kiss all over his little cheeks. Since Khali’s birth, I’ve been trying to give him all the love I had to offer.

Khali (Cali) Joi Simmons was born in September and had been acting like a true Virgo since the day she entered this world. Giving birth was a bitch, and I vowed never to do it again. There was nothing that indicated that she was my child. From her father’s complexion to her brother’s kinky hair, she was their twin. Living with three versions of Khalil wasn’t easy, but I wouldn’t trade it for anything in this world.

“Lil’ nigga, what have I told you about hugging up with my girl?” Khalil voiced as he entered the room with my baby in his arms. “She’s mine, homie.”

Mesmerized, I watched him like a hawk as he swaggered into the room like he knew he was *that nigga*. In my world, he was. He was the perfect father and protector. That alone will have me going back on my word and giving him as many kids as he wants.

“She’s my mommy too, Da.” He hugged tightly onto my legs as I placed his favorite cupcakes in the oven for later. I was careful not to burn him because he had tunnel vision when

his father was around. Looking up at me with sad eyes, he asked, “Right, mommy?”

“Right.”

KJ’s been calling me mommy for a few weeks now, and my heart grows every time he does it. He knows Mia is no longer alive but doesn’t bring her up that much. I made sure I reminded him how much she loved him whenever she came up. I couldn’t stand the bitch, and I wasn’t sad to hear of her death, but I wouldn’t have KJ thinking anything negative about the hoe.

After Mia and Kaine’s death, Khalil was in a really dark space. When we had services for his brother, he didn’t want to go, but I told him he needed to be there for his mom. Ma Khalise didn’t speak to him for weeks, which mentally messed with him. So many times, Khalil wanted to check out on us, but I wouldn’t let him. At the end of the day, he took his brother’s life, and that’s not easy for anyone because, regardless, he loved Kaine.

“Baby, have you talked to Kira?” He walked over and kissed my cheek as he sat Khali’s bottle in its warmer. “Jake mentioned going to get some food or some shit. They want to go to the wing spot.”

Chuckling, I watched Khalil as he got our baby situated in his arms to feed her. She was such a daddy’s girl, and he was going to pay for it when she got older. I thought about the question he asked and remembered Kira did mention a slight lunch. Why were we meeting there when we could do wings at home? I didn’t know. Maybe it’s because her pregnant ass was craving them again.

She and Jake didn’t waste time getting pregnant again after Jacobi was born. When Kira went to her six-week checkup, she was already pregnant. It was funny and disgusting at the same time. She made Jake take her to the courthouse and marry her the following week. He was more than happy to oblige.

“I’ll get the kids ready while you clean up in here. I’ll pack KJ’s shit because he wants to stay with his Nana and PopPop

tonight. Shit, maybe we will get lucky and send Khali with Sash.” He eyed me lustfully as he left the kitchen. “These kids are due for a sibling.”

Rolling my eyes, I continued to clean the kitchen. Khalil can send the baby if he wants, but I’m not hearing any of the other shit. He was right about one thing. Khali would end up with Sasha if I called her. She loved my baby, and I loved that about her.

Daddy and Sasha had the most beautiful destination wedding over the summer. Yes, they were married in a private ceremony New Year’s, but I told him she deserved another one. Plus, I wanted to be there. I loved her for my daddy, and I was glad he finally found the one worth giving all his love to. Dana had done a number on him, and I’d always hate her for that. Speaking of, she tried her best to fight the first-degree arson charges against her, but she failed miserably. So, for the next fifteen years, she would wish she had never popped back up in my life. Khalil purchased me my own building since she ruined mine, and I hadn’t yet decided when I wanted to open things back up. I’m loving being a full-time mom at the moment.

“Hello,” I answered the phone, out of breath from walking up the stairs to my bedroom. I still felt fat as fuck from being pregnant. “Who is this?”

“Damn, you don’t know my number now?” Lori snapped as her voice flowed through the phone. “A bitch gets a baby and a new house and acts different. Anyway, though, who is the girl that was in the picture with y’all in Florida? Is she with Bino?”

Pulling my phone from my ear, I looked at it for a moment before I disconnected the call altogether. Lori had been acting different since Bino cut her off, and she’d been unbearable. It’d gotten to the point where she wasn’t invited into our space anymore. When she found out Khalil and I moved into the house his daddy had for him, the shade and slick shots were so bad that Khalil wanted to get one of the girls from his old hood to beat her ass. I made the decision for my mental and her safety to just place some distance between us.

Looking back on how much that's changed in a year, I couldn't help but thank God for growth. I went from fucking and ducking these niggas to being in love with the most toxic man I'd ever met. Nothing or no one would ruin the vibe and happiness when it comes to my family and me. It had been proven that it wouldn't ever work in their favor.

Never in a million years did I think I would be as happy as I am today. Never would I have thought my girl and my kids would be the reason for it all. Lucky coming into my life has been one of my biggest blessings, and I vowed to always show her that.

Killing my brother was the hardest choice I ever made in my life. Yeah, he fucked me over time and time again, and I let him make it, but he was still my blood. We grew up together, and for him to do me the way he did fucked with me. I didn't want to kill him, but I knew we would never be safe with him alive.

My mother didn't fuck with me after his funeral, and that bothered me. If her husband hadn't sat down and talked to her on my behalf, I didn't think she would have ever come back around. I'm glad he was able to get through to her. Whatever the conversation had been about led her to wanting me to release Shelia. Personally, I wanted the bitch to rot in that house alone, but if my mother forgave her, I'd let her make it. Plus, I knew my cousins missed their mother being in the free world. I let her loose, but the bitch had thirty days to leave the state. I didn't know where she went as long as she was nowhere near my family.

"Have you talked to your father today?" Lucky asked from the passenger side. We here headed to the wing spot, and I was anxious as fuck for some reason. "He called me earlier looking for you, and I told him you were at the center."

"Yeah, baby." I kissed the back of her hand as we rode through the city. "He stopped by to tour the place."

The relationship between my father and me was everything I wished it could have been when I was younger. We talked and hung out all the time along with working together at his

contract business. Almost losing him put things into perspective for me, and I no longer had any ill intent toward him. It doesn't matter if I did or did because Khalise made it clear she wasn't leaving her man again, and she married him. I swear our parents were ridiculous. Everyone around us was happy, and that's all I wanted.

Well, almost everyone. Bino was back out here wilding with the ladies and didn't look to be slowing down anytime soon. That Lori hoe really hurt my nigga, and for her to try to keep tabs on him only irritated him more. All I knew was she had one more time to piss off my girl, and it was lights out for her ass.

"Baby, it's so damn empty here," Luck asserted as she sat up in her seat. She looked around the parking lot and was confused because the place usually had a decent crowd. "Are they open?"

"Girl, you see these damn cars out here." I chuckled as I cut the ignition. "Come help me with the kids."

While Luck got KJ, I got my lil' mama. Khali Joi was a nigga's heart, and I loved her as much as I loved her brother. When she was born, I just knew God was punishing me for giving me the most beautiful baby girl in the world. I could already see the lil' niggas that KJ and I were going to have to fuck up behind my baby.

"Hurry up, baby, it's cool out here," Luck whined as we made our way in. "I should have known better than to get my kids out in this damn weather. Just give me the keys, and we will go back in the truck—"

"Surprise!"

"The fuck?" she yelped as we entered the wing spot. "What the hell is going on?"

I handed the kids off to our parents and grabbed my girl as she took in the scene around us. I rented out the place and had our family decorate it for me. Pink and yellow roses with matching balloons littered the entire restaurant. I even made

sure we had a variety of wings because, at the end of the day, we still wanted to eat.

“Lucky—”

“Baby, what is... oh my god!”

Tears immediately fell down her cheeks as I dropped to one knee. I knew it was a little ghetto for a nigga to have as much money as I did to propose to my girl in a chicken spot, but this place held a special place in my heart.

“From the moment I laid eyes on you three years ago in that jewelry store, I knew you’d be trouble.” I chuckled, thinking about her having me stuck when I knew I was going to propose to Mia. “The moment you beat my ass down that hallway was the moment I knew I wanted you in my life. From day one, I’ve called you ‘Luck’, but it’s me who’s lucky. God knew what he was doing when he sent me through a whirlwind with my ex. All roads led me to you and our kids, baby, and if I had the chance to do it all again, the only thing I would change is meeting you sooner.”

“Baby,” she cried. Grabbing her hand, she was shaking like hell. Luck had no reason to be scared or nervous because I’d never let a thing cause her harm ever again. “What are you saying?”

“I’m saying be a nigga’s good luck charm for life, baby.” I pulled an eight-carat princess-cut diamond from my pocket. This is the most expensive purchase I’ve ever made, but it’s also the best investment. “Will you do me the honor of being my wife?”

“Yes!” she cried uncontrollably as I slid the ring on her finger. Standing to my feet, I kissed Luck with all I had as our family cheered and congratulated us. I pecked her a few times more before letting her go so she could show the ladies her ring.

As I stood back and watched the happiness between our families, I knew all the bullshit was worth it to get to this point. I’ll always miss and love my brother, but this moment is what I want to live for. Regardless of what’s happened or the

wild shit I've done in life, I'm at peace with the man I am today. Even the most scarred and toxic nigga deserves redemption.

THE END!