

SHIVONNE LATRICE PRESENTS

King
& Queen + OF THE
HOOD

2

SHIVONNE LATRICE

KING & QUEEN.OF THE
HOOD 2

SHVONNE LATRICE

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She's Gotta Have It 1-2

Me & My Dope Boy 1-3

Yazir & Nina 1-3

Forbidden Love with a Thug 1-3

You Needed Me 1-3

Shorty is in Love with a Real One 1-4

I Got Your Back 1-2

My Baby Is a West Coast King 1-4

Our Love Is the Realest 1-3

She Got It Bad for a Heartless Gangsta 1-4

She Got It Bad for a Heartless Gangsta: An AK Christmas

Hood Boyz Fall In Love Too 1-3

Nobody Can Love You Like Them Roughnecks Do 1-4

She Gave Her All to the Hood's Finest 1-5

Deeply In Love with the Illest 1-2

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CONTENTS

1. Kapri “Krucial Tha Great” Hendricks
2. Moriah “Moe” McCullough
3. Andreka Nicholas
4. Kapri “Krucial Tha Great” Hendricks
5. Iyanna DeSoto
6. Jory Thierry
7. Andreka
8. Lance “Lolly” Adams
9. Taissa Hill
10. Krucial Tha Great
11. Odie “OD” Kippling
12. Iyanna
13. Jory
14. Andreka
15. Lolly
16. Taissa
17. Krucial Tha Great
18. Andreka
19. Iyanna
20. Jory
21. Andreka
22. Krucial Tha Great
23. Maissa Hill
24. Taissa
25. Lolly
26. Krucial Tha Great
27. Donnica Meyerson
28. Iyanna
29. Jory
30. Andreka
31. Chanel Reeves
32. Lolly
33. Taissa

34. Krucial Tha Great

35. Iyanna

36. Jory

37. Krucial Tha Great

38. Od

39. Andreka

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KAPRI "KRUCIAL THA GREAT"
HENDRICKS

“*T*his shit better be good, Abe. You said it was urgent, and I been paying you top dollar for fucking scraps. The more time that goes by, the more torturous yo’ death may be,” I spoke as soon as I got in the room. This nigga had me hot... Well, the fact that the McCulloughs had airtight ass lives had me hot.

“It is, Mr. Hendricks. I realized I’d been focusing too much on the mother because it seemed she was the most problematic, so I decided to check on the father just because I was coming up short.” Abe walked closer, holding a folder. Opening it, he showed me photos of Barry McCullough and some woman.

“What the fuck is this? Get to explaining this bullshit, Abe! ’Cause it look like to me the nigga getting his old dick wet, and I don’t give a fuck about that shit!”

“Yes. Okay. You see, Barry meets this woman at the same time every few weeks, and they exchange an envelope. I, too, thought it was an affair, so I decided to follow her and find out who she was. I was able to follow her long enough without being caught and ended up at a house.” Abe switched pictures. “I saw this person in the window.”

I looked closely, trying to make it out, but I wasn’t getting shit. I knew too many muthafuckas, and the picture wasn’t clear enough.

Pulling my gun from my waist, I took off the safety and put it to Abe’s temple. “It seems like you don’t understand

when I say get to the fucking point. I'm not here to challenge you in a game of Clue. Tell me what the fuck is going on and in plain English, or I swear to God I will murk you right here and have you replaced in less than an hour."

"This is Moriah McCullough, or better known as Moe!" Abe answered quickly like he had gunpowder in his ass.

Dropping the gun from his head, I looked again.

"You sure? Nah—"

"Yes, I am, Mr. Hendricks, and the woman is his wife, Sisi McCullough. Her husband isn't dead..."

My phone began ringing as Abe talked, and when I checked my burner, I saw it was Quay. I hit ignore, but when he called right back, I answered.

"What!"

"Biri got hit! He dead! A fucking head shot!"

"You at the scene? How the fuck you know?" My heart thumped out my chest, thinking about my girl. And how the fuck he get blasted in a bulletproof truck?

"One of these females I fuck with saw a bunch of police in the intersection and then peeped Biri being put in a body bag."

Hurriedly, I asked, "Did she say anything about a woman in the truck or anything else? Andreka was with that nigga!"

"Nah. He was the only one in the car, bruh."

My worst fear had come true. Somebody had been able to touch something special to a nigga. If anything happened to Andreka, this whole damn city would go down in flames.

"What's the cross streets?" I asked, trying to keep myself calm so a nigga could actually think. The shit was hard to do when worrying about my baby, but I knew if I stressed too damn much, I couldn't come up with shit.

After Quay gave me the information I'd requested, I hung up and ran out the fucking building with Abe on my heels.

"Mr. Hendricks, I—"

“Give me this shit and keep working.” I snatched the file from Abe and slipped into my car. I didn’t even put on my seat belt or anything before I sped out that muthafucka.

About fifteen minutes later, when I got to the intersection, I saw the truck I’d provided Biri with was still there, along with plenty of policemen and not a bullet hole in sight. I did notice the driver’s side window was down, pissing me off a little bit because I’d strictly told his ass not to roll them down, especially when he had Andreka. I didn’t give a fuck how hot it was in that bitch; cut the air on or thug it the fuck out.

Without getting too close to the shit, I attempted to survey the scene for any damn thing that would let me know who had my girl. Deep down, I felt it was Moe, but on the other hand, how the fuck would he know where Andreka was gon’ be? And secondly, why the fuck he wait so damn long to snatch her ass up? A part of me felt like this was bitch ass OD’s doing, but as big shit as the nigga thought he was, he wasn’t bold enough to touch the first woman I’d ever claimed as mine. Nah. The nigga wasn’t that out of his fucking mind. Moe was a scary muthafucka too, but he had feelings for Andreka, and everybody knew when a nigga was in love, it made him do shit; shit that a lot of times would even get him killed.

Andreka was a hell of a woman too; shit, a nigga knew that, and I knew damn well I wouldn’t allow another muthafucka to be smashing her, not unless I was dead and gone. And shit, even then, I was resourceful. I was gon’ find a way to fuck that shit up and get her back with me.

These past few months I’d spent with her ass, a nigga had been feeling like he was in love. And the Andreka I knew was done with that nigga Moe, so I wasn’t worried about her wanting his ass back now that he was alive. I’d kill his ass anyway, and then she’d have no choice but to come back to daddy. So, either way, Andreka was gon’ be Mrs. Hendricks, whether she wanted me, Moe, his muthafuckin daddy, or whomever else. She was stuck with a nigga, and shit, overtime, she’d begin to fuck with me again.

Leaving the scene, I made a call to one of my niggas on the inside that I kept on retainer. He worked for LAPD, but he wasn't one of them boisterous niggas that made a name for himself, and that was what made me want him on my team. I needed a muthafucka that was low-key and could feed me information; a nigga nobody paid attention to, and that was Emerson Mercado.

By the time I got to my warehouse, Emerson was already there; the nigga was prompt too, another attribute I fucked with. A pet peeve of mine was a muthafucka who was late, especially a muthafucka I paid good ass money to.

“Good morning, Mr. Hendricks.” Emerson half smiled at me, speaking in his thick ass Latin accent.

I said nothing, not in the mood to be cordial, warm, or pleasant in any type of fucking way, as I waved for him to follow me inside. Unfortunately for Emerson, he'd better have the shit I'd asked him for, because a nigga was in a real bad mood, and if a muthafucka so much as put the wrong bun on my burger, I'd probably kill his ass.

“Where it's at?” I inquired as soon as we got inside of one of the rooms.

“Just one second.” He placed his computer down, waited for it to power up, and plugged his phone to it.

“Just in case,” I replied with a smirk when Emerson glanced my way at the sound of me twisting the silencer onto my gun.

“Okay, here it is.” He turned the brightness up on his computer and stepped back some so I could get a good look at the street camera footage I had him pull.

As I watched Biri pull up to a red light with his window down, my blood boiled again. I hated to be mad at a dead muthafucka, one I had love for, but that shit bothered the fuck out of me. Fuck was the point in a bulletproof truck if a nigga was gon' roll around with his windows down? Stupid ass.

“Can you zoom in or some shit?” I frowned.

“Uh, let me see.” Emerson moved around on the mousepad.

“I don’ seen niggas do shit like that on TV all the fucking time. I know you can zoom the fuck in.”

Moments later, Emerson figured the shit out, allowing me to see just what the hell I needed to in order to get my girl back. I chuckled to myself momentarily, slightly excited that a nigga had finally been bold enough to test my gangsta. It’d been a minute since I had to make an example out of muthafucka, so I was about to show out with this one.

MORIAH "MOE" MCCULLOUGH

Few weeks after the raid arrest...

I stared at my fucking hands as I sat at this dirty ass table, feeling like a damn bum. In a matter of weeks, I went from living lavishly to being served meals that I wasn't even sure were edible. I missed the nights I could lay up with something soft that smelled nice, because these hard ass bunk beds in jail accompanied with the smell of big musty ass niggas wasn't for me.

Keeping my eyes out on the room I was in, which was swarming with niggas who weren't even on my level, I tapped my foot impatiently, waiting for the phone. I was going crazy in this muthafucka and needed to reach people on the outside to stay sane.

I'd never been arrested in my damn life, and stupidly never even thought about possibly going to jail. I admit I'd gotten comfortable over the years. The money was coming in so effortlessly, and it was like no matter what the fuck I did, even when slightly sloppy, I never got caught. I felt invincible.

I'd been coming up with all types of theories and hypotheses as to how I'd gotten caught up, but nothing hit me. I hated to believe my baby mama Andreka was behind this shit, but hell, who the fuck else?

"Aye, it's all you." This dude that went by the name Case gestured the phone to me.

He and I had been cool since I'd been promising him a walk on position with the Yobs, and plenty of cash if he worked

hard. Honestly, I was just talking out the ass, saying whatever to get niggas out of my face or willing to do favors for me. I was too worried about my damn self to be thinking 'bout putting niggas on to my gang.

After paying, I dialed up my girl and put the phone to my ear, praying that she answered for me.

“What?” Sisi snapped into the phone. She accepted the charges though, so I clearly still had a chance.

“Baby, come on now. I’m alone in this muthafucka, and this is how you gonna do me? Don’t shut me out. We got too much history,” I pleaded.

“That same history that we had when you decided to fuck around on me and have a child? I thought you left that bitch alone!”

Shutting my eyes and pinching the bridge of my nose to alleviate the headache I was getting, I said, “Baby, it wasn’t even like that. She got my son, so of course I put her up in housing and shit. I went over there to see him, and that’s when I got caught up.”

Even though the words flowed smoothly as hell from my mouth, I was lying like a muthafucka. I loved Andreka, but that was never the plan. When I met her six years ago, she was supposed to be a little something on the side for me.

I wasn’t a cheating type of nigga, but Andreka was way too beautiful for me to pass up. I knew I wouldn’t be able to stomach seeing her on another nigga’s arm, so I did what I had to do to make her mine. I thought once I hit the pussy a few times, I’d get over her, but somehow, she and I created a bond I couldn’t let go of. It was different than the one I had with Sisi. I had to have them both because a nigga got different shit from each woman.

However, I knew Sisi was the one for me, so I married her. She’d always been down for my ass and was much more than a pretty face. She bore my first child, and when I was just a nigga slanging on the block, barely making enough to take her to the movies, she fucked with me. Hell, our first few dates, she

paid, and never looked at a nigga differently. That shit alone had her in the number one spot. And now that I was 90 percent sure Andreka set me up, it would be back to Sisi and I alone.

“Moriah, what the fuck!” Sisi cried hysterically, breaking my fucking heart. “What the fuck are you gonna do? I am not going to be bringing three damn kids down to the prison to visit you for the rest of my fucking life! And what about money? My job cannot afford all of this, and you said not to spend any of the safe money because it’s being tracked!”

I felt like shit and less of a damn man. My sole income was drug money, and since I’d been raided, I was essentially broke. Yeah, I had a boatload of cash at the home I shared with my wife, but as soon as a dollar of it was spent, the FEDS would come knocking. I had no legit bread due to the lack of money washing and no businesses in my name to do it through.

“Listen, I got a plan, so you ain’t gon’ have to come down here for the rest of ya life. I’m gon’ be home. Shit is gonna be different too; it’s just gon’ be me and you.”

No damn way was I about to stay here and wait for no fucking trial. I had the best lawyer money could buy, thanks to my well-off parents, and even that nigga was telling me the judge was gon’ throw the book at me. Nigga said I’d be lucky to see my kids on their fortieth birthdays with all the shit them niggas found. It was so much that me not having a record meant absolutely nothing. I was twenty-six years old, and the last thing I wanted to do was rot in jail.

“Home?” Sisi sniffled. “How?”

“Don’t worry about all that. Just know we gon’ be back together soon.”

Present Day... Days before Biri’s murder...

“Want some company?” Sisi knocked on the shower door with a soft, sensual smile on her face.

I tried to offer it back, but I had a lot on my damn mind. For the past few months, I’d been living like a prisoner, not able to go any fucking where or do shit for myself in order to stay under the radar. Don’t get me wrong, I was thankful I’d

been able to break out in a sense, but I was starting to go insane and wonder if this shit was worth it.

Thanks to a money hungry ass guard, I was able to fake my death and slip out without anyone noticing. My parents paid his ass a lot, and he was able to get me into a uniform so I could walk right out of that muthafucka like it was nothing.

Shit was wild to me how in this day and age, them jails weren't as up on game as they should've been. Whatever the fucking guards told them higher ups, they went with, not even verifying the body that was passed off as mine. Although everything had gone off without a hitch, I still wondered if them niggas would catch on, just at a later time.

“My bad, baby. I ain't really in the mood.” I pecked Sisi's forehead since she was now in the shower with me, and after rinsing the rest of the soap off, I got out.

Just as I finished brushing my teeth, she was done washing off, coming up behind me in the mirror with a frown on her fucking face. It seemed like every damn day, we argued as of late.

When I initially came home, it was constant fucking, playing with my kids, and relaxing, but the shit had gotten old. I was a street nigga, and I wasn't used to not making constant bread or being able to spend frivolously. Even worse... I missed the fuck out of Andreka and my baby boy.

Although Sisi had spent time with Cooper in order for him to be close to his siblings, I hadn't been able to. My little man was old enough to spill the beans to his mama about me being alive, so my mom didn't want me around him. The most I'd gotten was seeing him in the front yard from the window as he interacted with my wife, kids, and parents. Shit had me sick. However, as soon as my parents got full custody to where Andreka couldn't see his ass anymore, at that point, I would be able to spend time with him. I was yearning for my kid and his mama, even though I wasn't supposed to be fucking with her.

That time in that jail cell, I was able to convince myself I was no longer fucking with Andreka after setting me up. I wasn't worried about my little man, Cooper, because my

parents had him. However, all that shit I'd been able to feed into my brain had disappeared. I was still in love with the bitch, and I missed her ass. Initially, I just put the shit to the back of my mind, but when my parents let me know she was fucking with Krucial, my thoughts began to drive me fucking crazy ever since.

I didn't wanna believe it, but they had photo evidence, and I ain't gon' lie—the shit hurt. I was jealous as fuck, angry as fuck, and hurt as fuck. Andreka was that precious diamond no nigga on earth had touched but me, and now a nigga I hated more than the devil himself was walking around with her on his arm... just like he told me he would.

I couldn't eat, sleep, fuck, or nothing knowing he had my woman. What did she even see in that ignorant ass nigga? After all the shit she knew about the Lunatics, how the fuck could she switch sides? That shit supported the fact that she'd set me the fuck up. Maybe she'd been fucking with Krucial the entire time. That whole gas station fiasco was embedded in the back of my mind and had been suspicious to me from the start. Even still, I wanted her ass, maybe because I just didn't want Krucial to have her.

“You haven't been in the mood to do shit ever since you found out about Krucial and Andreka!” Sisi screeched.

“I told you that wasn't the fucking reason I was bothered! I don't wanna hear that shit again!” I barked, storming out of the bathroom, towel wrapped around my waist.

Hearing the shit come out of Sisi's mouth made it even worse for me. I was cracking and knew I wouldn't be able to act unbothered for much longer.

Meeting me in the bedroom as I sat on the edge of the bed in distress, Sisi sat next to me, rubbing the shoulder closest to her.

“Moriah, I didn't mean to upset you, but can you blame me? We were good, and then as soon as your parents brought that stuff to you, you've been acting funny. Who gives a fuck about who she's with? Her being with Krucial just shows what

type of woman she is and also hinders her from getting custody of Cooper. You should be happy.”

I felt my teeth grinding so hard my jaw seemed like it was going to pop out of its socket.

“She set me up. I can’t let her get away like that,” I damn near mumbled, still staring straight ahead.

“Moriah, this lifestyle is the reason you’re in the shit you’re in now! Take that setup as a lesson learned, and let’s move on! I am tired of this shit!” Sisi shot up from the bed, fixing her robe.

“You tired of this shit? What the fuck you think I am!”

“I have stuck by you since high school, even when you weren’t even about shit, yet you continue to piss on me! When you stayed out all night, dedicating more time to your fucking gang than me and our children, I supported you, even though you were too damn old for that shit! When you made a fucking baby on me, I forgave you, and when you got arrested and were looking at phone book years in jail, I still had faith in you! I did all of that shit knowing I could do better!”

“Do better?” I got up, looking her stupid ass up and down with disgust. “Do better than who?” As I stepped closer, she cowered a bit, and I could see her tenor change from bold to fearful. “Everything I promised yo’ ass, I came through on, and you complaining because I fucked around on you with one bitch! I had years to fuck as many hoes as I wanted to, but I didn’t! Plenty of bitches in my face looking one hundred times better than yo’ ass, and I turned ’em down!”

“Fuck you, Moriah! All them hoes with nice bodies and faces but no substance! I’m the only one you could have a conversation with, so you couldn’t do better!”

I chuckled. “Oh, I forgot I had you thinking Andreka wasn’t nothing to a nigga. I lied. I was in love with her ass, and every night I wasn’t here, I was laid up with her ass, promising to make her my wife.” Oddly enough, it felt good to tell the truth. This shit was like a weight being lifted off my shoulders. “She was fine as fuck, and we had a bond you and I

could never achieve. Fuck this.” I rushed to my closet to look for something to wear.

“What the hell are you doing? Where are you going?” Sisi chased after me.

“I’m stepping out.”

“You cannot leave to go anywhere other than the damn backyard! You know that!” Sisi trailed me all over the room as I got my outfit together. “I’m calling your parents! Where the fuck are you even going!”

“To get my girl back,” was all I said as I left the bedroom to make shit happen.

“Moriah! Moriah, you piece of shit!” Sisi hollered at the top of her lungs, but my tunnel vision had tuned her ass out.

Andreka was mine, and I’d be damned if Krucial spent another fucking second with her. The thought alone had consumed me.

Getting into Sisi’s Rav-4, I started it, feeling like a bum ass nigga as I drove off. The last time I’d been in a whip under \$100,000, I was probably nineteen years old. Even the Beamer I drove before I became leader of the Yobs was \$120,000.

I didn’t have a choice right now though, because I feared if the cops spotted me out in one of my nice ass cars, or in one of the vehicles I’d purchased for my wife, they’d pull me over. Muthafuckas thinking I was dead didn’t put my fucking mind at ease like I thought it would.

As I pulled up to OD’s residence, my phone started jumping, and I looked down to see it was my meddling ass mama. I hit ignore, not interested in hearing shit she had to say. I already knew what she was gon’ be on.

Like Sisi, she didn’t want me leaving the crib for shit and was accusing me of still having feelings for Andreka. Although the latter was true, I hated how they made it seem like I was some bitch ass nigga out here. Of course I felt some type of way about Andreka getting fucked on by another nigga, one I couldn’t fucking stand at that; we’d been together for six long ass years and had a son. I wasn’t no fucking robot.

“Who this?” OD’s voice poured through the speaker in front of the big ass gate that secured his mansion.

“It’s me.” I didn’t wanna say too much, but I figured my right hand would recognize my voice.

“Nigga, what? Who the fuck is this! Quit playing on my shit!” he spat, making me snicker softly.

“It’s me, muthafucka. I know you recognize my voice. Let me in the gate.”

Silence.

Moments later, the gate opened, and before I was even up the miniature hill he called a driveway, OD was coming out of his home shirtless, wearing a look of confusion and weirdly enough... fear. The fuck was he afraid of?

“Moe?” he questioned as I slid out of the car.

“Yeah, nigga, who else?” I neared him, reaching my hand out to slap his.

Slowly, he complied. It was obvious the nigga was in shock, which was understandable since he knew nothing about my damn escape.

“Wha-what the fuck you doing here? I mean... nigga, I went to yo’ damn funeral!”

“Lower ya voice. And I know. Let me in so I can tell you all that shit.”

Hesitantly, he stepped back inside to allow me in his spot. His shit was fly, and it was obvious OD had been making a lot more bread since I’d been gone.

“Follow me.” He waved me in the direction of his office, and once inside, he said, “Aight. What the fuck is going on?”

“I’m out and I’m alive.” I laughed but he didn’t. “All it took was knowing the right people and a little bit of bread.”

I hated to say it, but OD looked everything but happy to see a nigga, and I didn’t know why. He and I had always been tight, yet here I was, alive and well, but he looked disappointed as fuck.

“So what the fuck this mean? You head of shit again? How the fuck you gon’ run the gang while having to lay low? I’m sure if you supposed to be dead, you can’t be out like that!”

“Calm yo’ ass down! You should be happy as fuck to see me! You looking real suspect to me right now, nigga!” I got in his space, sizing his ass up.

“Suspect? How the fuck am I suspect when I been taking care of yo’ bitch like you asked me to, even after yo’ ass *died!*”

“Oh word? Well how the fuck she end up in Krucial’s hands, huh? Why that nigga still alive any fucking way when he shot up my muthafuckin memorial service!” I roared. “Y’all haven’t done shit for me! It ain’t no way that nigga should still be breathing long enough to fuck my bitch!”

Having to sit up in the house and hear of all the shit Krucial was doing had me heated. I’d let that nigga get away with far too fucking much for too damn long, and I was tired of the shit. Nigga had me out here looking like a bitch, even after death.

“We tried to kill that nigga! It ain’t that damn easy!”

“How muthafuckin hard is it to put a bullet in a nigga? Is he invincible?”

“Then how come you ain’t do the shit when you was ‘alive’, huh? Nigga was all up in Los Castile, posing and shit, making fun of our gang, fucking our bitches, and killing the homies all while yo’ ass was breathing! Not one time did you send somebody to off that nigga!” OD seethed, chest heaving.

Nigga had some deeper hate for Krucial than any of us ever did.

He was right though. It wasn’t that I was scared; it was just that I was more focused on myself and what the fuck I had going on. Long as he hadn’t fucked any of my personal bitches or came at me, I wasn’t gon’ give a damn, which was my mistake. The one time he did press me, I got hemmed up later that night, so I couldn’t get back at him.

And I wasn't gon' lie, Krucial wasn't exactly some hoe ass nigga that you'd wanna touch and be able to sleep soundly at night. Fucking with him would have you looking over ya shoulder while playing at the park with yo' kids. That shit wasn't ever worth it to me, especially when he hadn't fucked with me specifically.

“Look, calm down, aight. I'm not even here to take back the crown or no shit like that. All I need is a few Yobs to help me get my girl.”

“Yo' girl?” OD's brows dipped.

“Andreka. I—”

“Nigga, what about Sisi? What the fuck you gon' do with her ass? Have you even thought about that shit?”

“Why the fuck it matter to you, nigga? You want my bitch or something?”

“Nah. I got a few on rotation, so I'm good. Just none of the shit you saying is making fucking sense. You can't even live regularly, but you think you about to have Andreka and Sisi under one roof? And from what I'm hearing, she really fuck with Krucial.”

Shoving the shit out of him, I hollered, “Don't you ever in yo' life say some shit like that to me again, nigga!”

Was he crazy? Telling me my girl actually fucked with Krucial? If I had some heat on me, I'd smoke his ass right here!

“Fuck you!” OD pushed me back before we started tussling, banging into shit all over the office.

“Hey, hey, what the fuck—” Essence had stormed in, and when she laid her eyes on me, they widened as far as they could go. “Moriah?”

“Get out!” OD shouted. When she didn't move, he screamed, “Bitch, I said get the fuck out!”

Like always, Essence did what she was told, leaving OD and I in silence as we panted heavily from our short-lived fight.

“OD—”

“Look, I’m gon’ get some niggas for you, but after that, I can’t fuck with you. I got a whole gang and businesses to run. I can’t risk shit being fucked up because of you.”

“That’s all I want.”

Once I got settled with my life and my women, I was coming back for all of my shit. OD would be the first muthafucka I took out too. I was itching to do the shit now, but the timing was off, and I needed his influence over the Yobs to get shit handled. His muthafuckin days were numbered though, because something wasn’t right with his ass.

ANDREKA NICHOLAS

The Kidnapping...

Although I'd had such a horrible custody hearing, I felt a bit at ease on the way to meet my new lawyer that Krucial had obtained for me. Initially I wasn't fucking with him because I felt like he was way too damn mum and quiet in the last hearing, but after Krucial promised him that there were a few bullets with his name on them just waiting, he all of sudden came up with a game plan. The thought made me smirk as I texted with my cousin Chanel.

I loved the way Krucial helped me and got in my business but not to the point where I felt like he was taking over. He knew I had PTSD with that type of shit and knew just how far to go. I didn't want to believe it because we'd only been together for a short period of time, but I was in love with him. Hell, how could I not be?

"You doing okay, Miss Nicholas? You need anything?" Biri asked me from the front seat in his husky voice.

"No, I'm okay," I replied as he coughed a little bit before rolling the window down.

"Damn vents must be dusty or some shit. They fucking with me." He shook his head, clearing his throat some as he came to a red light.

I simply smiled, not really able to focus on the tea Chanel was sending me about her husband's campaign manager, nor whatever the fuck Biri was saying at the same time.

PHEW! PHEW! PHEW!

“Oh my gosh!” I screeched, watching Biri’s head explode like a watermelon in the front seat as we sat at the red light. “What the fuck!” My heart pumped rapidly as the car began to roll through the intersection.

Frantically, I looked around to see if I could find out where the bullets came from, before reaching on the side of Biri to hurriedly roll his damn window up, only I couldn’t quite get it. I wanted to hop out but feared who ever had killed him would soon come for me.

I dropped down to the floor of the back seat as I watched the truck head towards a pole, while praying repeatedly for God to watch over me. The truck crashed loudly, and as soon as the sound of what seemed to be every part of this car cracking had stopped, I rose up some to get out. I heard the back door open at the same time but couldn’t react quickly enough due to the tight space I’d put myself in.

“Time to go!” Some nigga growled through his obviously clenched teeth as he grabbed me from behind.

“Help! Help! Let me go!” I rammed my elbow into this nigga’s stomach, using every bit of strength I had, and caused him to drop me.

“You stupid ass bitch!” He chased me.

I couldn’t believe this shit was happening in broad daylight.

Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the guy gaining on me, but he wasn’t fast enough. As soon as I turned my head to face forward, I ran right into another masked dude.

WHAM!

I punched his ass immediately, but it didn’t keep his big ass down. Snatching me up, he placed a white towel over my mouth and nose, holding it as he dragged me backward. My cries for help became quieter and quieter as I fought the urge to pass the fuck out.

“Crazy ass bitch... I better get paid extra for this bullshit!” I heard one of the men say just as I drifted off.

About an hour or so later...

I woke up to the sound of slightly muffled voices bickering. My head was pounding, making it harder to recognize my surroundings. I'd never been in this bedroom before, and as what had happened prior to me being knocked out started to come back to me, I became scared.

I didn't want to speak because I was hoping that I could sneak out of here and get back home. Tears pooled in my eyes at how weak I felt. I wasn't the scary type, but being kidnapped and waking up in an unfamiliar place, slightly incapacitated, worried me. I could tell by how heavy my body felt that I was in no condition to truly protect myself. My mind immediately drifted to Krucial. I missed him and needed him more than ever at the moment.

Just as I peeled the blanket from my body, I heard the door to the medium sized bedroom come open. The person who walked in told me either I was tripping the fuck out, or I'd died and gone to heaven.

"How you feeling?" he asked, closing the door behind himself and looking exactly as he did the last time I saw him. "Relax, baby." His tone was soft as he came closer to the bed, reading the horrified look I was probably wearing.

"What the hell is going on?" I asked quietly, looking over the man who was identical to Moe.

Sitting down on the bed next to me, he sighed dejectedly, peering down into his linked hands before focusing back on my face.

"I'm back, Dreka. I got out of jail, and—"

"Got out of jail? You're dead! What the hell are you talking about?" I searched his face, looking for anything that would tell me this wasn't the real Moe.

"Yeah, about that. I did what I had to do to get out. Had I stayed, went to trial, I would've never seen you nor Cooper again."

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

“Open the fucking door, Moriah!” a familiar voice shouted. As my mind started to clear up, I matched that voice to Sisi... his fucking wife.

Looking over his shoulder at the locked door, he yelled, “Calm yo’ ass down and hold on!”

WHAP!

Before Moe could even turn back to me, I slapped the dog shit out of him.

“You had a wife this whole fucking time!” I took off on his ass, punching him so many times in the face that he began to howl.

Moe wasn’t exactly a small man; smaller than Krucial, but he was still much larger than me. I didn’t care though. I was gonna beat his ass for playing me. He just didn’t know how many damn nights I begged God to give me a chance to confront his stupid ass, and right now, I had it.

“Dreka! Dreka, get the fuck off me!” Moe hollered, but I kept on until he was able to restrain me, pinning me to the carpeted floor that we’d fallen on.

“Let me go so I can get the fuck out of here!” I attempted to wiggle free, but he was way too damn strong.

“Baby, just listen to me, aight? I know what I did was fucked up, but that don’t mean I ain’t love you. Every fucking thing I said to you was real and from the heart.”

“Moriah, I am not Sisi. I’m not gonna fall for that sweet talk like she does.”

Wiping his bloody nose with his shoulder since his hands were occupied with holding me down, he replied, “Look, what I did was fucked up, and what you did was fucked up. Let’s move past this shit and come together.”

“I’ve never done shit to you but be loyal! You fucking played me! And let me go!”

“Loyal? Loyal!” He shouted in my face, making me turn away. “What about Krucial, Andreka? You fucking the opp

now?” He looked hurt, but sadly for him, I didn’t give a fuck. “Yo’ nigga dies, and you go fuck his enemy?”

“He’s the opp to *you*. That’s my nigga.” I smirked. “Yep, that’s my man, and I love his ass too. I haven’t thought about you since I got with him. And you wish he was your enemy; you gotta be on his level to be considered an enemy, Moe.”

WHAP!

Moe’s hand went across my face with so much force that it burned. I felt the blood filling my mouth as tears unwillingly seeped from my eyes.

“Don’t you ever in yo’ life talk to me like that.” His teeth were visibly grinding together as he hovered over me angrily.

Turning back to face him slowly, I growled. “When my nigga finds you, he’s going to kill the fuck out of you.”

“Open this fucking door!” Sisi shouted before toying with the knob until it finally came open. I wanted to pounce on her ass, but getting away from here was more important. “Now look what the fuck you did! She’s gonna tell, and you’re gonna go right back to fucking prison!”

Letting me go, Moe hopped up and damn near dragged Sisi from the bedroom. I got up quickly and tried to leave, but the door wasn’t working, although I could clearly see it was unlocked.

“Chill out. She ain’t gon’ have a chance to do shit!” I heard Moe fuss as I looked for a way out. I checked the bedroom window, but it was too high up. However, maybe if I jumped the right way, I could land well enough to not break anything.

“You’re gonna have to kill her ass!” Sisi barked as I tried to lift the window as quietly as I could.

“I’m not killing no fucking body!”

“Like always! You’re the only fucking gang banger I know that’s always scared to pull the fucking trigger!”

WHAP!

I flinched hearing how hard Moe had slapped Sisi, and I knew he was doing the slapping because she barely finished speaking before it sounded off.

“What the hell,” I murmured, still working on the window. Finally, it came open some.

“Fuck you, Moriah! It’s obvious you love that bitch, and all the shit you told me about her ass was a lie! She was more than a fucking fling, and I knew it, but I loved your ass too much to face the truth! I don’t care anymore! You’re not worth the fucking trouble!”

“Sisi, bring yo’ ass back here!”

I pushed and pushed until the window that hadn’t obviously been opened in years was finally up. Peering down, my stomach dropped seeing how far up from the ground I was. I said a quick, short, prayer to God and then put one leg out, just as the door came open. Scared, I tried to quickly put my other leg over, but Moe had already gripped me into a bear hug from behind.

As much as I swung and tried to fight, I was no match for him as he pinned me to the bed face down, yanked my arms behind my back, and cuffed me.

“Moe, please do not do whatever you’re about to do,” I pleaded. He said nothing in response as he began packing a duffel bag up with clothes and other things. “Moriah!”

“We leaving town.” He continued packing.

“No, what about Cooper? I am not leaving my baby! You’ve been with him probably twenty-four-seven, and I haven’t!”

“Once shit cools down with ya little boyfriend, we can come back. And you’ve spent more time with him than I have,” he said, confusing me.

“His primary residence is with your mother. I know damn well you’ve been spending loads of fucking time with him! That’s why she’s going so hard for custody!”

I wanted to fuck him up again. I couldn't believe he'd been behind his mother's efforts this whole time. A part of me used to feel like if he was alive, he would be on my side in this custody shit, but I was completely wrong. The more I learned about Moe, the more I realized he was nothing like the man he'd portrayed himself to be or the one I'd built up in my head.

"That's not why. You don't know what the fuck you talking about as usual." He put the bag on his shoulder.

"No matter where we go, I will find a way to leave and get back to my baby and my man. I don't love you. You're a liar, cheater, and you know nothing about the stuff you're deep into."

"Keep talking boldly, Dreka. Keep talking."

He pulled me up roughly and escorted me from the room, down the stairs, outside, and into a black Hyundai sedan. Getting into the driver's seat, he buckled me in then pulled off.

"You just better hope I don't get free from these cuffs, or I'm gonna bust your face up more than I have!" I screamed at him. I was so fucking angry.

"You know, it's a reason why you was always gon' be my baby mama and nothing else. You run yo' fucking mouth too much and think you a nigga. Don't no man wanna give an aggressive ass, loud ass, manly ass bitch his last name. You so damn pretty until you open yo' mouth."

"My boyfriend likes it, so you don't even have to worry about it. Then again, he's manlier than you, so when in his presence, I naturally act more submissive. When I'm around a bitch, I act tough."

"You gon' stop fucking talking crazy to me!" Moe banged on the steering wheel, making me jump damn near out of my body. I'd never heard him shout that loudly.

"Watch out!" I shouted, since he wasn't looking at the street.

At the end of the quiet ass, deserted road appeared to be a bunch of black trucks, causing both Moe and I to panic as he

swerved a little bit since he was most likely driving over one hundred miles per hour. As we got closer, a calmness came over me seeing Krucial climb out of the driver's seat of the truck in the front.

I smirked seeing Moe panic, as niggas began to pour out of every truck parked, and not empty handed. You could hear a pin drop as my man started toward us, his face calm but very irritated, I could tell.

“You called that nigga?” Moe looked to me.

“How? I have no phone, dummy!”

POP! POP! POP! POP! POP!

Moe attempted to make a U-turn, but Krucial shot out his tires before he could even turn part of the way. Coolly walking like it was nothing, Krucial came to my side of the car and opened the door after he put his gun up. He was still in the dress shirt and slacks I'd seen him in when we parted ways this morning.

Smiling at me as if we were standing at the damn altar of our wedding, he asked, “You aight, baby?”

“Yes,” I whimpered with a nod as he helped me from the car, picking me up bridal style.

“Oh, you can try to run, muthafucka, but these niggas gon' light you the fuck up before you get both feet out,” he told Moe who had opened his door.

As Krucial carried me, he nodded for his niggas to snatch Moe, which they did, before putting him into the back seat of one of the trucks. I heard Krucial punk Moe for the handcuff key, before he angrily walked over to free my wrists. I could tell by the look on my man's face he had nothing nice in store for Moe.

Watching my son's father get treated like a little bitch was embarrassing to say the least. I couldn't believe at one point I actually thought he was *that* nigga. It made me wonder how many punks were making their wives, girlfriends, and baby mamas think they were about something in the streets.

We all drove off, getting onto the freeway, but as the other vehicles kept going, Krucial exited and pulled over. Coming around to my side, he opened the door and pulled me into a hug that I didn't know I needed. I even started to cry a little bit, because I just didn't understand what the fuck was going on. Crazy that I used to think my life was so simple.

"How did you find me?" I sniffled, looking up into his handsome face.

It was dusk by now, but how fine he was still shone through.

"I got resources in a lot of areas, baby." Pecking my nose, he added, "A nigga always gon' know where you at though. We connected in a different type of fucking way. Wouldn't you know where a piece of yo' heart was?"

I nodded because I couldn't find the words to speak to him. Although I was attempting to piss Moe off when I spoke on how much more masculine Krucial was, it was the truth. I was feisty, I was aggressive, and I sure would fight a man if he made me mad enough, but all of that seemed to go away when I was around Krucial. I went from a grizzly bear to small kitten.

"I love you," I finally whispered.

"I love yo' ass too." We shared a few kisses before he let me go and gestured for me to return to the passenger seat of the truck. Getting in, he said, "You gon' be at my house tonight, you and Coop."

"Cooper? How? I can't take him with me. My sleepover rights were taken." I kept glancing from the road to Krucial.

"I ain't worried about that."

"Kapri, do not do anything to piss off the McCulloughs. They already—"

"Now why would I do some shit like that? I'm sure once I explain the situation, they'll be more than happy to let little man come through for the night." Sitting back in my seat, I thought deeply until we pulled up to the McCulloughs' residence. "I'll be right back." Krucial slid out of his car.

I watched as he swaggered sexily up to the door with his tall, fine ass, before he rang the doorbell. Slowly, I got out of the car to see what was going on but stayed behind enough so that I wouldn't interfere. Hell, if shit hit the fan, I'd need to hide as if I had nothing to do with Krucial's crazy ass.

"Can I help you?" Mr. McCullough questioned with a frown as his dusty ass wife stood behind him.

"Came to pick up Coop. He gon' spend the night with his mama," Krucial answered matter-of-factly. "Go get him. You got less than a minute since he don't have to pack shit."

"Excuse me!" Emily screeched.

"Young man, I don't know what kind of drugs you're on, but *you* have *less than a minute* to get off of my property before I call the authorities."

Krucial laughed, confusing all three of us.

"When you call 'em, tell 'em how you helped yo' criminal of a son escape from jail and been harboring his ass this entire time." Again, all three of our faces dropped. I knew Moe was alive and out of jail, but I didn't know how he'd gone about it, so this shit was news to me. "I ain't think so. Go get my girl's baby, and don't even try no funny shit. It's nothing for me to have yo' ass smoking on a barbecue pit and yo' bitch selling that sandpaper ass pussy for me in the streets. You got less than a muthafuckin minute."

"One night," Barry conceded, shocking me.

"Barry—" Emily was cut off when her husband put his hand up to halt her words.

"Stay right here."

Shortly after the McCulloughs left the front door, they came back with Cooper, who surprisingly lit up upon seeing Krucial.

"Copy!" he shouted excitedly, as Krucial picked him up.

"Y'all folks have a goodnight." Krucial walked off, and I met him in the middle of his path.

“Mommy!” Cooper damn near jumped to me.

Hugging him tightly, I closed my eyes, enjoying his childish scent. A few moments later, we were in the car and on the way to Krucial’s.

“Thank you, baby.” I reached for his free hand as he drove, while Cooper sat in the back seat.

Picking my hand up to kiss the back of it, he replied, “Anything for you.”

KAPRI "KRUCIAL THA GREAT"
HENDRICKS

When I got to my crib, I made sure Andreka and Cooper were straight before I quickly changed clothes. I was gon' shower since I'd been on some '007 shit all fucking day, but I knew I was gon' end up being bloody again, so it wasn't even no fucking point. And thankfully my mama had dipped, because right now wasn't the time for Andreka to have to meet her and put a smile on her face, nor did I wanna hear her mutahfuckin mouth about what I was about to go do.

I rode out in my Chevy Caprice, and because I was flooring it the whole damn time, I made it to my far-out ass warehouse in less than thirty minutes. As soon as I walked in that bitch, I removed my heat from my waist, ready to kill Moe's ass for real.

"Aye man, let me talk to you." Moe spoke up as soon as I'd entered the soundproof room that Lolly had been holding him in. The homie and I exchanged nods as he stayed by the door. "Wa-wait, le-let me say some-something," Moe stammered as soon as I pulled on the lever attached to the wall that revealed several types of knives, bullets, drills, and guns. I couldn't remember the last time a nigga was worthy of me dipping into this shit, but Moe was.

He continued to plead and complain as I set out everything that I'd need or possibly want to use.

Annoyed by the sound of Moe's whiny ass voice, I frowned. "How the fuck you get to where you did being a

bitch?” I took a seat on the edge of the table, right by my weapons.

“Ain’t nobody a bitch! You the one about to kill over some pussy! She not even worth it! That bitch set me—”

WHAM!

Before he completed his sentence, I’d knocked the shit out of him, using my gun. Blood along with a couple teeth flew from his mouth as his head snapped to the left.

“Watch who the fuck you call a bitch, nigga. I always knew you was moist, stupid as fuck, and clueless, but got damn.” I laughed. “You dumb enough to think Andreka set you up? Nah. That ain’t what you said. Did he say that?” I turned to Lolly.

“That’s what the fuck I heard.” Lolly shook his head, obviously slightly amused at how dumb Moe was, just as I.

“She did do that shit! Who else— Ah!” He damn near hit an operatic note as I hit his face in the other direction.

“That’s for being a muthafuckin fool. I don’t know if yo’ punk ass really believes that, or if it’s what you need to tell yaself so you wouldn’t have to ride out on the niggas who actually did it.”

The Yobs had always been some bitch ass niggas, but truthfully, every gang was only as strong as the muthafucka running it. Moe was a bitch, so his gang was a bunch of a bitches too.

“Nah—”

“OD got yo’ ass raided, sent yo’ soft ass to jail, and assumed yo’ spot. Shit like that is simple to figure out to a muthafucka with some sense, but that ain’t you.” As I spoke, it was almost like he was realizing the damn truth. “You should’ve stayed undercover like you’d been doing these past couple of months, because that little stunt you just pulled, coming in contact with my woman, is gon’ cost you ya fucking life.”

“I wouldn’t do shit to me if I was you. If I don’t make it home to my wife, my family is gon’ report that shit. How long you think it’ll take the cops to connect the dots and lock yo’ ass up!” Moe spat.

I stared at him for a little bit then went back to where my tools were, grabbing the drill.

Chuckling, I responded, “You got a little sense on you, *Moriah*. But do you really think yo’ people gon’ report a nigga that’s supposed to be dead already? You think yo’ uppity ass peoples gon’ wanna explain why the fuck they know you ain’t been dead this whole time?” Walking closer to him with the drill, I added, “See, you dead already, so I can do whatever the fuck I wanna do to yo’ ass. It’s not good to lie, *Moriah*. You find yourself in some shit you can’t get up out of.”

“Arrgghhhhh!” He cried out as I drilled a hole in his head, just deep enough to hurt like fuck but not kill him. “Wait, wait—arggghhh!” he yowled when I drilled another.

Cracking up along with Lolly, I said, “Got damn. You too big to be crying like that, my nigga. You cried a lot as a baby, huh?”

“You one psycho ass nigga, bruh,” Lolly guffawed. I could tell by Moe’s facial expression that he agreed with him.

As I loaded up my shotgun, ready to shoot Moe’s face off, he begged, “I got kids, man. My kids need me.”

Not even giving him eye contact as I focused on my gun, I said, “I don’t give a fuck about yo’ kids. Only one I do have love for is Coop, and he don’t need a little hoe like you raising him.” Walking closer and aiming at his face, close range, I continued. “My girl way harder than you; that’s all little man needs. Oh, and me.” I smiled. “Didn’t I tell you a minute ago I was gon’ be raising ya son?”

“Kruci—”

POP! POP!

I was gon’ go for a third shot, but his head was practically gone off his fucking shoulders. What little brain he did have was covering the wall behind him.

“Smize already got the crew here.” Lolly opened the door.

“Cool.” I put my shit up, minus the drill since it had to be cleaned. As I slipped out of the room, leaving the cleaning crew to do their job, I got Smize’s attention.

“Sup, boss.”

“Have them chop his ass up and save a few parts for the freezer. I may need the shit.”

“Bet.”



A few days later...

I let the top down on my old school, playing my music as loud as the shit would go as I cruised through Los Castile. Every muthafucka I drove by had their jaws on the floor, shocked like I hadn’t been up and through this bitch plenty of times.

The wannabe tough niggas but not tough enough to say shit, just watched, and the punk muthafuckas attempted to nod their heads to say ‘what’s up’, but I ignored each and every one of them niggas. I was here on a mission, so it was the only thing I’d been focused on.

The sun had set in Los Angeles already, so the streetlights were on, making it an even worse time for a nigga to be over here, but I didn’t give a fuck. Turning down the street I needed to handle business on, I pulled right up in front of the block these niggas named Ronnie and K-Dog worked on.

Parking, I hopped out, and seeing their faces switch almost made me laugh. These wasn’t no little ass niggas, but from their demeanor, I could tell they were some bitch ass niggas who pretended to be about their shit.

“What’s good, Krucial?” They immediately spoke in unison.

These muthafuckas hadn’t been taught right at all. If a Yob, especially a nigga in my same position, rolled through

Rumwood, not one Lunatic would be on some cordial shit. And whomever was would be in the dirt that same night. These niggas were so weak, they were damn near about to kiss my feet upon seeing my ass.

“Y’all starting early. Must not be making the right bread if you gotta put in all these hours,” I said, causing them to look at one another.

“I mean, we do aight,” Ronnie replied. “What you doing over here though?”

“Chilling, kicking the shit. I go wherever the fuck I wanna go. Only punk ass niggas stay away from certain cities and neighborhoods.” I lit the blunt I’d pulled from my pocket. “Nice night out, huh?” I blew out smoke.

It was obvious these niggas were uneasy but trying to play it cool.

“Yeah, I mean, I can’t complain. LA been good to me as far as weather.” Ronnie laughed.

Looking at K-Dog, I said, “Nigga, I asked a question. Is you deaf?”

“Yeah, it is a nice night.” He nodded begrudgingly. I could tell he was struggling internally on whether he should speak to me or be loyal to his gang.

Chuckling, I shook my head, taking another toke. “Well aight. Let me get from over here before I kill a nigga.” Seeing a nigga across the street staring, I asked, “You know me from somewhere? If you do, come tell me to my face.”

“Nah, man, nah.” He shook his head, power walking off since he already knew what was up if he brought his ass over.

Getting into my whip and cranking up, I let the blunt hang from my lips as I twisted the silencer on my gun. Rolling down my passenger window, I waved for Ronnie and K-Dog to come closer.

Once their heads were just about in my window, I asked, “Aye, you wouldn’t happen to be the muthafucka that helped kidnap my girl, is you?”

“I—”

PHEW! PHEW! PHEW!

Before Ronnie could reply, I sent three into his forehead. K-Dog was able to quickly dart off, so I floored it to catch up with his ass. Once he dipped into an alley, I steadied my shot through the passenger window and let off, watching his body gyrate and eventually drop. Leaving my engine running, I got out then ran up and put another into the back of his head for good measure, before calmly treading back to my whip. And the same way I rolled into this muthafucka was the same way I left.

When I got to my spot, I immediately took a hot shower, brushed my teeth, and then climbed into the bed with Andreka. Like always, she was soft as fuck, skin smelling like dessert right along with her hair. She was trying to play sleep on a nigga so I couldn't get no pussy, but she wasn't even good at the shit. I knew Andreka like the back of my hand, and when asleep, her ass looked innocent. Right now, one of her eyebrows was lifted the way black women's did when they were waiting on a nigga to say some shit before getting slapped.

Getting close to her ear, I kissed it then quizzed, “Is this a weave?”

She burst into laughter, proving that her lying ass was wide awake.

“Kapri! No, I don't have a weave right now. That's why it's in two Dutch braids.”

“Shit, I seen a bitch the other day with that look, and she said the shit was a wig.”

“What bitch was you talking to the other day?” She turned to face me.

“I wasn't talking to her; I overheard the shit. I don't converse with other females. I only talk to you.”

Giggling, she rolled her eyes. “You only talk to me?”

“Is you deaf? Fuck I gotta talk to other bitches for?”

“That makes me happy.” She cuddled up to me, laying her head on my chest. “I don’t know what you did, but the McCulloughs let Cooper stay again tonight.”

“I don’t know what the fuck I did either,” I lied, knowing damn well I had one of my niggas put Moe’s hand in their mailbox with a nice little note. “Maybe them niggas is coming to their senses.”

“Maybe so,” she said like she was pondering. “Said I could have him for a whole seven days. It’s nice, but eventually, I want him legally all of the time.”

“You gon’ get him.”

“I didn’t wanna ask right away, but you got rid of Moe?” She looked up at me.

“Why? You wearing a wire?”

“No. I figured you had but just was wondering. Why haven’t you gotten rid of OD?”

“Fuck you trying to say, I’m soft?” I glanced down at her. She was on her stomach now so that she could see me better.

“What? No. I just wondered because I see how much of a no-nonsense guy you are, with a bit of temper.”

Looking off momentarily, I sighed, wondering if I should tell Andreka. I didn’t feel the need to, but then again, you just never knew when that information would come in handy.

“OD and I go way back.”

“Like best friends?”

“If a grown ass man got a best friend, that mean he sucking that nigga’s dick. I ain’t got no best friend.” I smirked, seeing my baby crack up.

“Fine, good homies?”

“Closer.”

“Cousins? Brothers? Can’t be brothers. You guys are nothing like each other and he’s short!”

Laughing, I said, “Yeah, I don’t know what happened there. I think God intended for his bitch ass to be a girl, hence the height. But yeah, we brothers.”

“You don’t even act like it.” Her brows dipped between her big brown eyes.

“We never been cool, even as kids. We weren’t raised together, just shared a father. We don’t feel like brothers, and outside of DNA, he ain’t my family. I would’ve been murked him, but out of respect for my mama, I haven’t.”

In a minute though, mama was gon’ have to suck it the fuck up and let me dead that nigga. He hadn’t gotten too out of bounds yet, but I knew it was coming. And if it came down to me or him, the choice was obvious.

“What about you guys’ father? Is he still around?”

“Nah. His mama shot our pops in his sleep. Put two right in the back of his head.”

“Wow. Do you think he’d be sad to know his sons hate each other if he were still alive?”

“I don’t know, and honestly, I don’t give a fuck.”

I didn’t like no nigga who didn’t like me, and I especially didn’t fuck with a nigga who ran with the Yobs. OD being my brother meant nothing to me. If the muthafucka dropped dead right now, I’d feel no different. I didn’t give a fuck about being family or respecting my father’s legacy. Whatever muthafucka had a problem with me, I had a problem with them... simple.

“What do you give a fuck about?”

“You.” I put her on her back, smoothly removing the short gown over her head.

“You better, because I love you.”

“I know.” I half smiled before kissing her.

IYANNA DESOTO

I heard my mother pounding on my bedroom door, waking me up and reminding me of my current state. I hadn't slept in this bedroom since I was a senior in college. The night I graduated, I moved in with Jalen and hadn't slept in this room since.

I didn't want to be here for more reasons than one; it was tiny, my retired parents were here 24/7, and the decor reminded me of the days when I was deeply in love, planning my future with a man I thought felt the same way about me.

"Iyanna!" my mom hollered.

"Alright!" I shouted back. "Come in!" I sat up, feeling lightheaded, hungry yet bloated, and not in the mood to do so much as brush my teeth.

"What's the plan for today?" She closed the door and then sat down at my writing desk.

"I'm gonna go by my shop this afternoon, but that's about it. I still haven't quite figured things out." I rubbed my eyes, but when I stopped to make eye contact with my mom, she was shaking her head. "What?" I turned my lip up.

"I don't get how this all happened, Iyanna."

"I told you already, Mama. It's really not that hard to process, and I don't want to keep talking about it."

"I know you told me, little girl, but what you fail to understand is that none of it makes sense. Men cheat all the

time, but to actually leave his woman for a mistress, it's unheard of."

"No, no, not really. Some women are actually lucky enough to lose their husband or boyfriend to a side chick." I tossed the covers off of my lap to stretch out.

"You mean *unlucky*."

"No, lucky. Any woman who no longer has to deal with a weak ass man that can't keep it in his pants is lucky in my book." I got off the bed to begin looking through my horribly packed suitcase that Jalen had sent over.

It was silent for a moment before my mother softly inquired, "Nothing happened before this? No arguments? You were complaining a lot about his career; maybe that drove him away."

"Are you serious? I complained to you and Dad. I never gave him a hard time because I was trying to be understanding. But maybe I should have because half the time I thought he was working, he was really working on his relationship with his new bride!"

"I just think you and Jalen should sit down and talk. If you both start to remember the love you had for each other, it will come back."

"Mama, the man is married and has a child on the way. And even if he wasn't, I do not want him back."

"If you don't want him back then you never loved him. It hasn't been long enough for you to be over him, Iyanna," she fussed.

"No, it hasn't, and yes, I do love him, but that will go away over time. I don't want him back because that is not the type of man I want to call my husband. Additionally, I would never feel secure in our marriage because of how easy it was for him to randomly leave me. The Jalen and Iyanna saga is over, and you need to come to terms with it like I have."

My mom was annoying the hell out of me. I knew she just wanted me to be happy and felt I was making a mistake, but I knew I wasn't. The only person who'd made a mistake was

Jalen. And in my mom's defense, she didn't know all the details.

"Baby, just try for me," she begged.

"Mom, he has a baby mama named Melba; their son is three years old. He's *been* cheating on me and *been* making babies behind my back. So no, I will not be trying anything; not for you or anyone else."

The shocked look on her face said it all as she rose slowly. Coming toward me, she pulled me into a tight hug, rubbing my back for a little bit.

"Why didn't you tell me, Iyanna?" She pulled back some to look into my eyes.

"Because by the time I found out, it didn't matter. The relationship was over. Now, I have to get ready to handle some business today. Excuse me." I removed my mom's hands from my body and left the bedroom with my toiletries.

Getting over Jalen was something that I'd been working hard on, and being around my parents was setting me back. I had to move out of here as soon as possible, but I wanted to wait until I had my income back going.

Yes, I had a little bit of a savings, but I knew where I wanted to live and in LA, that would be ate up by rent in about five or six months. I'd already decided that I needed to do something with my swimwear line, Agua Soto, in order to get my money flowing again.

After brushing, flossing, and using mouthwash, I hopped into the shower for a nice deep clean. Once out, I kept it simple with my skincare, as well as my hair that was in dire need of a new straightening job. Putting on a dress that was conveniently loose around my abdomen, I grabbed my car keys and slipped out while my dad was taking his afternoon shit. I didn't wanna hear his mouth or opinions about me and Jalen either.

I did have a physical location for Agua Soto, but I hadn't been by in months. I was just never as focused as I should have been, and looking back, I was disappointed in myself. I

could've been making my own money, good money, had I taken it seriously and put less focus on my relationship with Jalen and when he was coming back into town, 24/7.

My store was in a bomb area too, right on the strip leading to Manhattan Beach. When opened, I used to get a lot of business during spring break and summer, because people often forgot swimsuits, and since I was right there by the beach, it was convenient. Also, people just loved my designs, patterns, or colors, and felt the need to splurge on a one-hundred-dollar bathing suit. Lately though, when I did work, I'd been making most of my money online.

After arriving to my shop, I waited for traffic to decrease before I slid out my Range, and as soon as I stepped up onto the curb, a big ass *For Lease* sign caught my eye. Confused, I reread it a few times, confirming that this was the same nigga who had been getting paid for my damn lease that I hadn't agreed to give up yet. Pulling my iPhone out, I dialed his ass.

"Vince Whitney." He picked up almost immediately.

"Vince, this is Iyanna DeSoto. Why is there a 'for lease' sign outside of my shop?"

This shit was embarrassing, especially because it wasn't even emptied out; it was still full of my stuff, and my store name was still at the top. I'd never seen some shit like this before, and I was livid.

"Yes, I've been trying to call you, Miss DeSoto, but you haven't been answering."

"Negro, please. You haven't tried to call anybody!" I pulled my iPhone from my ear to check my call log, and sure enough, he had tried to call me a few times this week. However, I was not about to admit it as I placed the phone back to my face.

"Maybe I have the wrong number. Is three-two-three—"

"Vince, why is my shit up for lease!"

"Mr. Coolidge let me know he'd no longer be paying the rent on it, and when I attempted to reach you, I couldn't get

ahold of you, so I had to do what I had to do, Miss DeSoto. We cannot let you occupy the space rent free.”

“I know you can’t let me occupy the fucking space rent free,” I replied mockingly. “I’m not dumb. How much is the rent?” I felt foolish for asking.

This was something I should’ve known about my own damn business, but I didn’t. Like I said, it was always just something to do and never a true passion. Don’t get me wrong, I enjoyed creating bathing suits and wearing them, but I had a tendency to be lazy and procrastinate, especially when something wasn’t a necessity at the time.

I had Jalen’s funds at my disposal, so I didn’t feel the need to really grind. Every day that went by, I was reminded of how stupid I was with that nigga and just how much I depended on him, even in ways I didn’t realize. Women prayed for the opportunity to run their own business, and I fumbled mine being dick dizzy and in love.

“Sure. The monthly rent is sixteen thousand five hundred, or if you wanted to do it yearly, it would be one hundred ninety-eight thousand dollars.”

I wanted to cry hearing those astronomical ass numbers Vince had just spewed out like it was nothing.

“Okay. Give me about an hour, and I will call you back,” I lied and hung up before he could say anything back to me.

I did have savings but not enough to pay monthly rent here, get my own spot, and then invest in my business for new bathing suits. As I stood there looking stupid, I heard some voices coming closer. Looking to my right, I spotted a group of girls, four, clearly dressed for the beach, and headed in that direction.

As I stepped closer to my shop to allow them to walk by, the one in front said, “Damn I love this place. You moving?”

“Oh, umm, I was, but I just love this place so much that I decided to stay.” I smiled.

“Ooohhh, okay.” She stared at me in a way I didn’t particularly like.

“So is that really what happened, or did your ex cut you off? I know this spot cost a lot; it’s prime real estate.” Another girl with a short haircut chimed in.

“Yeah. I doubt you can pay for all of this on your own.” The initial girl with a long red weave or wig on hopped back in.

“Look, I don’t know what problem you hoes have, but I suggest you keep walking before you have to leave this beach with an ass whooping instead of some cute trinkets,” I warned. I was definitely in the mood to fight, baby in my stomach and all.

Laughing collectively, they strutted past me but not without giving me some stank ass looks in the process. I was frustrated, embarrassed, angry, and in the mood to throw down. So like always, once I got in the car, I called Andreka.

“Hey,” she answered happily, completely opposite of how I was feeling.

“Hey,” I replied somberly.

“What’s wrong? He did something else?”

Damn, was it that obvious Jalen was ruining my fucking life?

“Stopped paying for the lease on my store, and the shit is a little over sixteen thousand dollars, so I definitely can’t pay it my damn self. I had to play it off like I could. Then even worse, while I’m standing outside, some stupid bitches walked up on me talking shit about Jalen not supporting me anymore because they saw that big ass for lease sign. I swear I wanted to just start fighting them hoes,” I ranted.

“Where are you right now?”

“I’m still sitting outside, trying to see what I’m gonna do. Why?”

“I’m on the way.”

Andreka didn’t even give me time to ask why she was coming before she ended the call, so I just waited. About twenty minutes later, I spotted her Range Rover slide into a

park across the way, so I got out to rush across the lightly trafficked street to meet her.

“What you come over here for?” I quizzed, confused by the attire she was wearing. Even when she didn’t have the funds, Andreka looked presentable. However, currently, she was wearing sweats, a cropped short sleeved t-shirt, and some Nike Zooms. Her hair was in a bun on top of her head, and she wore no jewelry.

“Where are the hoes at?” She shut her door and started walking as if she already knew the answer to the question she’d just asked.

Following, I replied, confused, “I assume they’re down at the beach. They were headed that way. But why? Where the fuck are you going?”

“To show them hoes something really funny.”

Giggling at her crazy ass, I said, “Andreka, no, it’s not that deep. I don’t want you fighting for me. Trust me, I have no issue beating a bitch up if needed.”

“I know, but you’re pregnant, so for now, I’m your bodyguard.”

Shaking my head as we continued down to the beach, we paused to scan the humongous area to see if I could spot the women. I couldn’t at first but then noticed that they’d removed their coverups and jean shorts, making them not as recognizable.

“Right there by the bridge.” I pointed.

Andreka removed her shoes and socks then handed them over before heading over with me in tow.

Coming to stand in front of them with her back to the water, she smiled softly then asked, “Which one of you bitches was talking shit to my best friend?” The four of them looked at each other as if they didn’t know what the fuck she was talking about, even though I was sure they remembered me from less than a damn hour ago. “Oh, they’re scary now, so, Iyanna, who was it?”

Trying to hold in my laughter, I pointed at the two who made comments, and the ones who hadn't done anything looked relieved.

“No, it was just a joke. We shop there all the time.” The red head finally found her voice.

“Stand up,” Andreka ordered.

“Like she said, it was a jo—” The other one with a short haircut, who'd also made little snarky comments, attempted to defend herself.

“Stand up so you can have a fair advantage, or I'm taking off on you as you are.” Andreka got closer to the bunch, fists balled.

The red head got up, but not like she was willing to fight, more like she was about to leave. However, she had no choice but to engage in a brawl as Andreka began knocking her head around. She tried to swing back, but since she was getting punched from every which way in her face, she wasn't coordinated enough to actually land them in places that would hurt Andreka.

The other two girls hopped up so they wouldn't get bumped into, and when I saw the short haired girl about to sneak away, I snatched a handful of what little bit of hair she had, yanking her back as her friends jetted off.

People around were looking, but this was an area heavily populated by white folks, so I guess they didn't want to interfere. The few black people were recording, of course.

Andreka was putting in work to the point where I began to feel bad for the chick. She'd gotten the red head on the ground, and after a few more painful looking haymakers, she let up off the girl who sat there looking like she was from another dimension. And from as many head shots as she got, she probably did actually lose her memory.

“Please, I apologize. I was not trying to be rude!” The short-haired girl damn near cried as I kept a hold on her hair.

“Kiss her feet then.” Andreka pointed down to my feet as I let her hair go. “Do it or fight me,” she reiterated when the girl

glanced at my feet then back up with dipped eyebrows.

Without another word, she got down to peck both of them, causing me and Andreka to burst into laughter.

“Girl, you’re probably the biggest punk I’ve ever seen. Don’t talk shit if you this scary,” I said.

Andreka and I walked off, still laughing at how soft that chick was. Hell, I didn’t care how well someone fought or how scared of them I was; I would never do no shit like that.

“I haven’t fought in a minute, so it felt good to get her and Essence.” Andreka laughed.

“Your ass is crazy, but thank you for that. It felt good to see them hoes go from laughing to begging and getting their asses beat.”

“Now they can spread the word that you’re not to be fucked with.” We trucked it uphill where our cars were, grabbed some food, and met at her house to eat. “So sixteen grand, huh? Damn, Jalen was blowing money on you.”

We were seated in her living room, food spread across the coffee table.

“I know. I mean, I knew it was expensive because it’s a beach area, but damn. No way I can make payments on that shit. I wanted to slap the realtor’s ass when he mentioned me paying one hundred and ninety-eight thousand dollars yearly. Sir, normal people don’t have that type of money to just spend on a space.” We giggled in unison, but it ceased. “I don’t know what to do though.”

“Yes you do, Iyanna. Move out of that space, and just focus on your online sales for now. Once you start making enough, you can open back up for yourself. Don’t let that nigga get you down. That’s what he wants, to see you needing him and drowning without him. If he thought you could get it on your own, he wouldn’t bother being petty. He’s doing it because he thinks you’re a weak bitch, and you don’t wanna prove him right.”

I nodded, listening and getting a surge of energy. I needed to stop feeling sorry for my damn self and be more positive.

Normally, I wasn't even like this, but I think the hormones mixed with all of this shit going on had me bugging. Andreka was right though. Jalen was only doing this shit to break me and make a fool out of me, and I was not about to let that shit happen. From now on, anything he did, I would act as if it didn't bother me.

"Enough about me. Tell me about you and your happy life." I drank some of my lemonade.

"There have been a few speed bumps, like the fact that Moe was alive and decided to kidnap me." She ate a piece of bread like what she'd said was normal.

I chuckled but soon realized she was serious.

"Wait, what?" I turned toward her all the way. "Alive how?"

"Hell if I know, but I do know his parents lended a helping hand, with their conniving asses."

"Wait, you said *was* alive."

"Yeah, when he kidnapped me, but he got handled by my baby, if you know what I mean."

"Bitch, when the fuck did this happen? You haven't been MIA once."

She laughed heartily. "Girl, a couple weeks ago. His ass didn't even know how to kidnap me effectively for more than a damn day. Krucial nipped that shit in the bud."

We chuckled in unison.

"That's fucking hilarious. I wish I could've seen his face when Krucial saved the day."

"Like this." Andreka bucked her eyes, holding her mouth open, causing us to guffaw loudly.

As funny as this shit was, I wanted no parts of that lifestyle. This among other things was exactly why Lolly would never have a chance with me.

JORY THIERRY

*A*lthough it'd been over a month since I'd seen that damn email on Maissa's phone, and she and I had been straight, it still circled my mind. Coupled with the fucking fact that Taissa's story and demeanor was shaky as hell, I just couldn't forget about the shit. By saying that, I did some digging, well as much as a nigga could without alerting Maissa.

For a minute, I got nothing I could really work with, until something told me to look over the menu from SLS hotel.

Hearing Taissa come in, surely with a bunch of laundry, I left the den to go approach her ass while Maissa was in class, thank God. Shit had been weird between Taissa and I ever since we fucked, mainly because I didn't want to appear too close to her in front of my girl. I kept conversation to a minimum and made sure that whenever she came through, I left the house if Maissa wasn't present. I wasn't the type of nigga to cheat, and because Taissa had caused me to do so, I felt some type of way toward her ass.

"What's up?" I entered the laundry room, already getting flashbacks of banging her out not too long ago. Of course, my dick swelled up.

I noticed Taissa had been dressing a bit differently, wearing dresses, little ass shorts, and tops that I assume wouldn't look right with a bra because she never had one on any damn more. And although she was tiny, seeing her in that shit still turned me on, especially since I knew how good,

tight, and wet the pussy felt. I wasn't shit, out here fucking on and fantasizing about my girl's sister.

"Hey." Her eyes fell on me but quickly darted away.

"Let me ask you something, Tai. You said when y'all went to SLS, y'all had pasta?" I leaned up against the shelf holding all the washing detergent pods, dryer sheets, and other shit Maissa swore she needed for her clothes.

"I did. Is that a crime?" She came back a little snappy as she kept on sorting her clothes by color. I wasn't gon' address that at the moment, because I had more pressing matters to focus on.

"I mean, nah, but I checked out the menu, and they don't have any pasta, so how was it that y'all got some?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's just not showing up, but that's what we ate. I don't see what the big fucking deal is."

"The big fucking deal is that you lied about some shit so small, and the only time people do shit like that is when they're covering up something bigger!"

"Something bigger like what?"

"That's what the fuck I'm trying to find out!" I shouted, not liking how she was coming at a nigga. When she began snickering, I asked, "Something funny?"

"Yeah, you niggas. You come in here trying to find out what Maissa is up to when you're doing dirt as well. I guess it's okay for you."

"Look, that shit was the first time I've ever done anything with another female, and it won't happen again."

"I figured. Just used me for sex, knowing how I feel about you. But I can't be upset. I had no business fucking you anyway."

Going closer, I said, "Aye, I didn't use you. I'm not even that type of nigga. We both got caught up in the moment and did some shit we had no business doing. That's exactly why I'm not gon' do the shit no more. I don't want you thinking

I'm on some bullshit, just trying to take advantage of you and get a nut."

Dropping her head momentarily, she nodded. "I know. I guess I'm just angry because you don't even talk to me anymore. I can tell you avoid me."

"Yeah, I'm avoiding yo' ass because I fuck with you. I like you. If I don't avoid, I may slip up again, and I can't do that shit, Tai. I've prided myself on being faithful, so it fucks with me that I failed after doing good for years."

"You like me?" She got closer, making my hard-on return in seconds. Fuck.

"Hell yeah. How could I not?"

I did like Taissa, and even fucking worse, I felt like I connected with her muthafuckin ass in a way I couldn't with Maissa. Nothing worse than a bitch with good pussy and a brain to match.

We let out suppressed laughs before it got quiet. Next thing I knew, my lips were on hers, and my hands were all up the back of her dress. Like last time, my dick was so hard that if I didn't relieve myself, I'd be dealing with some serious blue balls.

Turning her around, I bent her over the dryer but realized I ain't have any more condoms after using that one I kept in my wallet. Taking Taissa's hand, I led her out of the laundry room, upstairs, and into forbidden territory: the bedroom I shared with Maissa.

We resumed kissing once the door was closed, undressing completely in the process, and seeing Taissa completely naked had a nigga ready to do some things.

Laying her down, I grabbed a rubber from my stash in my nightstand drawer and slipped it on. Climbing between Taissa's legs, I tongued her down slowly before placing her thighs in the nooks of my arms.

"Mmm." She cooed as soon as the head was in. I felt chills rush down my spine at the feeling as I went deeper inside the shit.

Fucking in this bed made the feeling even more euphoric, because it was wrong as fuck.

“Damn,” I grumbled, hitting the shit slowly in order to make sure I’d last long enough to make her cum.

Watching her, I hadn’t realized just how beautiful she was. She’d always been cute, but at the moment, it was some other shit. Her small titties bounced as I glided in and out of her walls that had a death grip on my dick. I didn’t know Taissa’s sign, but she had to be a fucking water baby with the way her shit was leaking, dampening the sheets.

“Shiiiiittt.” Her voice trembled right along with her body as I began to beat it up, making her bust in seconds.

I was disappointed in myself, because usually, I could last for a few positions, but not with Taissa. The pussy felt so good I didn’t wanna stop feeling the shit long enough to switch.

Palming the headboard, I hammered between her legs, making her damn near scream out and wanting to do the same shit. Moments later, I was nutting so feverishly that my legs shook, shaking the bed a little bit.

“Fuck.” I dropped my head back as she caressed my abdomen, breathing heavily herself.

Pulling out, I went to clean myself, and she did the same in Maissa’s bathroom. The entire time I was in that muthafucka washing my dick, I felt like shit. The thought alone made me have ill feelings toward Taissa, and I didn’t want that.

“I guess I should finish washing clothes.” Taissa giggled happily as she pulled up the last remaining strap of her dress. Her joyful look irritated me. How was I feeling bad as Maissa’s boyfriend, yet she wasn’t, and she was her fucking sister?

“Yeah, and hurry up because I have shit to wash too,” I replied, not even giving her my attention as I sifted through the many texts I had, only in a pair of boxers.

I felt Taissa staring at me, but I refused to look, checking the time so I could know how much I had before Maissa made it back from class.

“So is this how you’re always gonna be? Have sex with me then become an asshole?” she finally asked.

“I’m not being an asshole. I simply asked you to hurry up with *my* washing machine and dryer so that I could use it. If that’s being an asshole, you need to get out more.”

Tittering with her tongue in her cheek, Taissa replied more so to herself, “Yeah, this is how you’re always gonna be.” She started for the door.

“It’s just weird to me that you seem so excited to be fucking ya sister’s boyfriend. Maybe I pegged you wrong though.” I finally put my iPhone down to give her my attention.

Pausing, she looked at me over her shoulder briefly before fully turning to face me.

“I’m not *excited* to be fucking my sister’s boyfriend. I’m not that type of woman. Yes, maybe I’m a little giddy because I actually like you, so being in your presence is a mood booster. And pegged me wrong?”

I wasn’t hearing none of that shit about her actually liking me. The Taissa I’d grown to know would never be all jolly and merry about betraying the sister she claimed to love so much that she didn’t mind slaving for her. The shit was a huge turnoff.

“Yeah, pegged you wrong. For a while, I thought you loved ya sister to the point where hurting her would hurt you. I also thought you had more standards, but seeing you light up like a Christmas tree after betraying her don’t sit right with me. I’m not even her blood and I feel like shit.”

Occasionally, I forgot who I was around these parts. I wasn’t just Jory; I was a paid nigga with pull in these streets, a nigga that a lot of females wanted to fuck with. Maybe Taissa’s ass was no different and had fooled the fuck out of me. What attracted me to her was how genuine she was, but now I was feeling like that was a facade. Her lying about what she and Maissa had at SLS didn’t help her case either.

“How do you know I don’t feel like shit? I—” Taissa began chuckling. “You know what? I’m not about to explain myself to you. You don’t even know what you’re talking about right now, so I’m gonna let you think what you want. I will text you when I’m done and leaving.”

“Please do.”

Annoyed and confused, I hopped in the shower, and once out, I made a few phone calls before deciding to chill since Taissa hadn’t texted me yet. I didn’t wanna even see her ass, so I was gon’ kick it in my bedroom. This shit was decked out, and as much money as I spent on it, I was never really here to enjoy it. I legit slept and dressed in here, never using the big ass TV screen or anything else.

Noticing it was 1 p.m., around the time Maissa had a nice one-hour break in between classes, I called her.

“Hey, baby!” She picked up excitedly, like always, boosting a nigga’s ego a bit.

“You on break, right?” I inquired.

“I am, but I’m gonna get some food. Why?”

“Let me ask you something really quickly. On the day you went to the spa, and you and Taissa ate at the SLS, what you have?”

“What did we have? Why?”

“Just answer the fucking question please.”

“Dang, why all the attitude? We had Alfredo pasta. Is that okay with you, daddy?”

“Don’t get smart. Tell me why when I looked at the menu, they didn’t have Alfredo pasta on there.”

“Wow, you seriously checked the menu? May I ask why all of a sudden you’re checking up behind me? Maybe I should start doing the same with you when you claim to be working twelve and fourteen hours.”

“Don’t try to turn this shit around on me. It’s not gon’ work. You know damn well when I’m out I be working, and

when I'm not, I let you know. I even invite yo' ass to come."

"That's probably because you—"

"Why the fuck don't they have Alfredo past on the menu, Maissa?" Her muthafuckin ass wasn't about to weasel her way out of this shit.

"Ask them! We wanted pasta, so we asked if it was possible, and they made the shit! Why is it such a big damn deal!"

"Because—"

"No! You have no fucking reason to be accusing me of lying or anything else! What the fuck have I ever done to make you believe I was unfaithful? I am *always* there for you, give details on my whereabouts, unlike you, and go out of my way to make you happy! Then you have the nerve to come at me with some bullshit about not really having pasta! Only time niggas do this type of shit is when *they're* the ones fucking around!"

"Maissa—"

"I beg you to let me sit up in the fucking house and be a 'housewife'! You're the one always trying to make me go out and start shit up!"

"Aight! Calm the fuck down!"

Low-key, I was getting nervous. Maissa wasn't no dumb female, and the last thing I needed was her being suspicious and starting to sniff behind me, leading her right to Taissa and me.

"I have to get me something to eat and then calm down before class, because you've pissed me off. I will see you later."

I couldn't think of shit to say, and she hung up anyway, so I just sat there pondering for a minute. Was I accusing her because I was doing dirt? Going to the safari app, I searched SLS hotel and started to call and ask about the menu but stopped myself. I was doing way too fucking much, acting like

a psycho ass female, when Maissa truly had never done shit to make me think she had other niggas.

After about twenty solid minutes of going back and forth with myself and thinking hard, I texted her.

Me: Baby I apologize for coming at you like that. And just so you know, I'm not fucking around I was just thrown off by the misinformation.

She didn't reply right away like usual, so I went to my call log and hit her nickname in my phone to call her back.

"Hello?" A nigga answered.

"Who the fuck is this?" I spat. That shit made me stand up off the bed.

The line suddenly went dead, so I called back but got no answer. I called a few more times, but when she ain't pick up, I dipped out to head to her school.

It took me about fifteen minutes to get there, and right when I did, I noticed Maissa calling me back.

"Jory—"

"Who was that nigga that answered the fucking phone!" I roared.

"That was my friend! Why—"

"Yo' friend? Bring his ass to the car with you. I'm outside."

"No, I'm eating and—"

"Come to the car right fucking now, or I'm walking in that bitch!" I snapped, hanging up.

About five minutes later, I spotted Maissa, walking with an obvious attitude. Hopping out, I stepped onto the sidewalk to meet her.

"Jory, I'm hungry, and my class starts in ten minutes. Please stop with this shit. That was my friend who picked up. He attends class with me."

“Why you ain’t bring him? Let’s go get his ass.” I started to walk, but she grabbed my arm.

“For what? So you can try to knock him out in front of the school? Go ahead and look like a damn homophobe for beating up my gay friend over something stupid!”

“Stupid? Why the fuck he picking up yo’ phone?”

“It was a joke. He didn’t think you were gonna go the fuck off! I always told him how cool my man was, despite being a banger, and you just proved me wrong.”

“Go get his ass. Prove he gay.”

“How? You want to see me shove something up his ass or down his throat? You sound ridiculous! And you scared the fuck out of him. He ain’t gonna come out here!”

“We leaving, come on.”

“No, I have a class.”

“We leaving. Let’s go right now! You gon’ miss today!” I got in on the driver’s side. Maissa watched with a hateful stare before stomping off and soon returning with her food, laptop bag, and purse. The ride had been quiet for a minute, her ass staring out the window the entire time. “Maissa.”

“Jory, don’t talk to me. Let me find out you’re fucking some other bitch. Oooh, I swear to God.” She kind of laughed before nodding and saying, “Yep. I’m gon’ start watching your ass now. Soon as I see any little thing, it’s gon’ be prison time for me.”

On the outside, I was playing it cool, but on the inside, I was praying she didn’t find out about me and Taissa. Cheating was one thing, but with her sister was gon’ be some other shit. I knew from this day forward though, I’d never touch Taissa again.

ANDREKA

*O*ne week later...

I stood in the doorway of my baby boy's bedroom at my house, smiling as he played with his toys so heavily that he didn't even spot me. I noticed he was happier here with me, and that shit made me feel so good as a mother.

Part of the issue I had with the McCulloughs having custody was that I was afraid Cooper would begin to see them as his home and not be comfortable when he came to live with me. So it was nice to see that although he'd been with them for a minute, I was still normal for him.

Walking into the room, I made myself known, sitting down on his big colorful mat that had his toys spread all across it.

"Having fun?" I asked, chuckling a little bit at how focused he was.

"Yes. I need one more," he replied, referring to his toy trucks.

"No, those are brand new, and you don't wanna be greedy, okay?"

Looking up at me, he nodded sadly but then said, "Copy gets the money."

Laughing, I frowned a little bit. "How do you know?"

"He-he have in his pants lots of money."

I was only finding this humorous because my baby was dead serious and truly trying to get a new toy.

“Oh, okay, but that’s his money, not yours. If you want a bunch of new toys, you’re gonna have to make your own money. Okay?” Again, Cooper nodded while bearing a sullen look. “Let me ask you something.” I pulled my iPhone from my hoodie pocket then searched a month and year that I knew I’d taken a photo of Moe before turning the device to face Cooper. “Who is this?”

Looking briefly like he didn’t need much time, Cooper replied, “Daddy.”

“Good. Good. You’ve been with him?” I knew Moe was lying about not having seen my baby. The nigga was dead so not like I could confront him once Cooper proved me right, however I still needed to know this for myself.

“No!” Cooper’s small brows furrowed as if I should’ve known better. “Daddy is gone, so now we gots Copy.”

“Grandma told you to say that?” I raised a brow, but Cooper shook his head ‘no’. “When is the last time you saw Daddy, Cooper?”

“Ummm,” he grabbed something from his toy chest, “years and years!”

“How many?” I pulled him to my lap, realizing that Moe had actually been honest for once; his parents had kept him from Cooper like they were trying to do to me.

“Eight!”

“Eight? You weren’t even born!” I began tickling him, causing him to squeal loudly. “What about her? Have you been with her?” I showed him Sisi on social media just to be sure he wasn’t giving me rehearsed responses. I knew for a fact he’d seen her recently.

“Yesssss.” I could tell he was getting irritated, so I decided to leave him alone.

Getting up, I headed out and toward the bathroom since I heard Krucial getting out of the shower. Not knocking, I walked right in to see him wrapping a towel around his waist. Water droplets had adorned his sexy dark complexion that laid perfectly over his chiseled abs.

“Yo’ damn shower too fucking small.” He gave a disapproving look.

“It’s actually a pretty nice size, Kapri. How much room in the shower do you need?”

“A lot. Shit. I like to think while I’m in there, walk back and forth, let my dick swing as I do the shit.” He put some face lotion on rather roughly, just like a nigga would, but I appreciated that he even wore any. “I can’t do shit but stand there like a bitch in this one.”

Giggling, I asked, “How is standing in the shower something a bitch would do?”

“Because real niggas use the shower as thinking time and need to pace back and forth. By saying that, you need to come live with me.” He smirked, yanking me closer by the hand before pecking me.

“Nice try, but I can’t right now. Maybe after Cooper is with me twenty-four-seven.” I embraced his slightly damp torso, admiring that handsome face of his. “Speaking of Cooper, tell me for real how you got the McCulloughs to be so understanding to the point where I get him for whole weeks sometimes.”

“The shit with Moe and them helping him.”

“Kapri.” I’d come to know my man pretty well, and I was sure he’d done more than that. Although upstanding citizens, the McCulloughs couldn’t be swayed that easily. It was something else his ass had done.

“I’m dead ass. But on some real shit, I can go toe to toe with them muthafuckas for as long as I’m breathing. Shit, I can kill their asses if you want me to. I’ll do anything for you, but at the end of the day, you need the fucking courts to give you little man back for real. My way is cool, but you ain’t never gon’ be comfortable until it’s on papers.”

I processed his words, knowing they were true while nodding my head to show him I agreed. His intellect was just as sexy as his physical, and that was a dangerous combination.

Most men in his position thought a gun solved anything, and sometimes it did, but in this case, not so much. Yes, killing the McCulloughs or threatening them might do the trick for a while, but it also may open a whole new can of worms. I didn't want any of that shit. I just wanted my baby back. I didn't even mind him having a relationship with his grandparents. I wasn't selfish. I was just trying to be his fucking mother.

“Thank you.” I gave Krucial another peck, or attempted to, but of course, he turned it into something freakier. “Kapri, no, I have to go.”

“Just let me put the head in.” He groped my ass aggressively while sucking on my neck.

When my eyes closed unintentionally at how good all this felt, I quickly put a stop to it.

“Later.” I winked before leaving the bathroom.

After putting on some shoes and earrings, I went to grab Cooper before we headed to his grandparents. I didn't want to drop him off, but they'd let me have him for a whole week without protest, so a few days with them wouldn't hurt. Plus, Cooper liked it over there, and I didn't want to deprive him.

However, depending on how they acted today, I just might take Cooper back with me. I smirked at the thought as I helped my son buckle up; I loved having the upper hand this go 'round.

When we got to the McCulloughs', it was around 3 p.m., and unfortunately for me, Emily answered the door.

“Grammy!” Cooper beamed, and seeing her light up at the sight of him made me feel good. I hated that we hated each other, and I also hated that my own mother didn't have this type of bond with my baby.

“Hey, cutie pie. I missed you.” She scooped him up, hugging his small body against her.

“Heyyy, who is this grown man hugging my wife?” Mr. McCullough appeared, causing us all to laugh.

He gave me a soft smile, and his energy toward me was different, so I knew he wasn't happy with me. I was sure it was because of how Krucial had been handling him, but I didn't give a damn. If I had to choose between having my baby with me for lengthy time periods or being buddies with Mr. McCullough, there was no competition.

Mr. McCullough took Cooper in his arms and started off toward the backyard, while his wife looked me over like she was ready for me to go.

"I need to speak with you, Emily." I stayed put.

"About?"

"This whole custody issue. I want this to be over, and I'm sure you do too. So I think it's best you stop with trying to paint me as worst mother of the year, allow me to get him back, and life can be like it was before all this shit went down with Moe. I have no problem with allowing you guys in his life or letting him be with his half siblings in a mutual space."

"You think it's best for whom?" Her extra thin eyebrow went up. I hadn't been able to see through all the wrinkles and age spots before, but Moe looked a lot like her dusty ass.

"The both of us. Because now that I know you assisted a criminal who committed several felonies, escape from jail under false pretenses, I have just as much dirt on you as you do me."

Thank God Krucial hired that P.I., or I might've never known this.

Laughing like she was at a comedy show, Emily sighed. "Child, you don't know anything. I didn't assist anyone, and neither did Barry. I know nothing about Moe escaping jail or any of these fairytales you speak of."

"Emily... you did help, and I have proof. How else would I have known that Moe was alive this whole time?"

"You listen to everything that hoodlum tells you, don't you?"

“First off, don’t start with the name calling. You don’t know shit about him, and that’s a way to piss me off, which you don’t want. Secondly, I find it funny that you act as if Krucial is so beneath you when your son literally had the same career as him. Wait, no he didn’t.” I chuckled. “Moe was a gang member, drug dealer, cheater, liar, and punk I later learned. At least Krucial has more testosterone and enough sense to have a legit business. Hell, even OD is doing a better job than him! If there is anybody you should be talking down on, it’s your own offspring.”

“That boy you run behind and praise so much is nothing but a damn murderer! He killed my son, the father of your child, and the man who did a lot for your used to be poor ass! You should be thankful for him instead of still being upset over some petty ass infidelity! Newsflash, people don’t deserve to die just because they cheat on you or lie to you!” Tears streamed her face, but I wasn’t moved.

“Wow, you think I’m upset because he cheated? Like his wife, you are so delusional! Niggas cheat every day. I do not care about him sticking his dick in another bitch! What I care about is the fact that he jeopardized my freedom and most importantly is the reason I lost custody of my son! Moriah is not some hell of a man for me to be still fuming over him cheating! And he is dead because he’s stupid as fuck! That’s just part of the game that he chose to play, dumbly at that!”

“Listen you—”

“Mommy! Mommy!” Cooper came running in from the backyard, and I noticed his siblings behind him, causing a delayed response from me.

“Hey, baby. What’s up?” I squatted down.

“We all go ice cream? They like ice cream too.” He pointed behind him at his brothers and sister. I wanted to say no, I wasn’t taking them no damn where, but they were cute and innocent.

“Okay, come on.” I sighed.

“Andreka—”

“It’s just ice cream, Emily, and she’s coming right back. We have to be fair.” Mr. McCullough entered the room.

Without another word, I took the kids out to my car and made sure they were in, buckled up safely. On the way to the pricey ice cream parlor, which was about fifteen minutes away, I listened as my baby interacted with his siblings, who I learned were Moriah Jr., Ezra, and Avah. They were well spoken although young, just like Cooper, and got along as if they’d grown up together, which made me simper at them in the rearview mirror.

It was gonna take a little longer to get them back to the McCulloughs, simply because I wasn’t about to let them little ass kids fuck up my brand-new Range with ice cream, so we decided to eat there.

While we dined on our ice cream that came to a whopping \$40, I noticed Avah staring at me. At seven, she was the eldest of the three of her full siblings and Cooper as well.

“How is it?” I decided to make conversation with her. She was adorable, and I kind of wanted a baby girl in the future.

“It’s good.” She smiled gently. “Are you married to my daddy too?”

“No, I’m not.” I chuckled.

“Oh. Then how are you Cooper’s mommy?”

“I’ve been trying to figure that out myself. I will let you know when I do, okay?”

She nodded, smiling, then shoved a spoonful of blue ice cream into her mouth.

The sun was starting to set a little bit, and I noticed I had a missed call from the house phone of the McCulloughs’, so I cleaned up the kids’ trash, wiped their mouths and hands, then loaded them back into the car.

When I got back to the grandparents’ residence, I noticed Barry, Emily, and fucking Sisi standing outside and by her car. It was obvious from the look on her face that she was furious. I had an inkling as to why, but I didn’t care. If it was okay to

take my child places, I should have the same privileges, like Barry said, especially now that I knew she hadn't been letting Moe see him all that time.

As soon as I got out and began letting her children out of the back seat, Sisi screamed, "Do not ever take my fucking kids without permission!"

"Oh, but you can take mine?" I kept my eyes on her since she was coming closer, just in case we had to take it there.

"That is different! I am his stepmother! You have no fucking relation to my children!" She started yanking on the three of them as soon as their little feet hit the pavement.

"Bitch, please! You're really trying to take that stepmother card too fucking far! You're just as much related to Cooper as I am to your kids, so kill it!"

"Ladies! Not in front of the children!" Barry yelled, coming over to stand between us, even though we were some ways apart.

"It's her, doing shit because she's jealous!" Sisi pointed.

"Jealous? What the hell would I be jealous of? All I did was take them for ice cream. You act like I took their asses out for family photos!" I snapped.

"You're jealous because everyone's last name in this driveway is McCullough except yours! Get over it!" Sisi screamed.

"Wow." I laughed. "I see why you guys like this hoe better. Look how loyal she is to a dead nigga and one who don't even fuck with her like that. He was out of jail, living with you and the kids, but the nigga still wasn't content. That's why he came after me. You weren't enough for him when he was popping, and you still weren't enough for him when he was down. That must feel terrible, riding for a man who clearly don't love you."

"He does love me!"

"Right. That's why he kidnapped me and was willing to leave town without you. Sounds like a real love story."

“He married the one he loved, Andreka. I know in the ghetto, marriage is a foreign concept, but typically when a man loves a woman, he locks it down,” she fussed as Emily helped Moriah Jr., Ezra, and Avah into the house.

“Yeah, sometimes, but they also marry the mule, the bitch who is gonna stay through any and everything that they do, no matter how disrespectful it is.”

“Hoe—”

“Call me one more name, and I’m gonna fuck you up right here,” I threatened. “I tried to be chill, but from now on, my son cannot be here when she is or when she is about to come over.” I put Cooper back into my truck.

“Andreka, she is gonna be leaving soon and—”

“I said what I said.” I opened my driver’s side door, cutting Mr. McCullough off. Looking to Sisi before I got in, I said, “Next time I see you and you’re on some tough shit, I’m gonna make an example out of you. I promise you.”

She flicked me off in response, and it took so much for me not to drag this bitch with my son watching.

Getting into the car, I took a deep breath before looking into the back seat at Cooper. When he started to laugh, so did I as I pulled off.

Even with Moe dead for real this time, his actions while alive were still heavily affecting me. I couldn’t wait to be done with all of this shit for real.

LANCE “LOLLY” ADAMS

That my engine... Ridin' super legal, I ain't even pass admission... Can't have snitches 'round me, you can't even be suspicious... Interior designer, I like all of her dimensions...

Smoke flowed through the air of our section heavily while the hoes in our area along with a few on the lower levels of the club rocked to “In The Kitchen” by Pote Baby. Like always, I was crossfaded and feeling too damn good to do anything but sit up on this couch looking like the handsome, paid nigga that I was.

The Lunatics were in this shit thick tonight, so of course it was packed with females who'd heard we'd be in the building, and only a few niggas since most muthafuckas didn't wanna run into us.

“It's crazy how off the percentage of bitches and niggas be when we come to the club.” Jory sipped his drink, seemingly reading my damn mind.

“I don't know why. We ain't no bullies.” Quay laughed before taking a pull on the blunt. He was standing on the other side of the short table in front of me that was covered with weed, food, bottles, juices, and a bucket of ice.

“Exactly. Long as you mind ya fucking business, even if ya bitch is up here with us trying to get chose, won't be no problems.” Krucial agreed.

We all laughed at his statement, because it was highly unlikely a nigga wouldn't have an issue with his woman being

in our section. And every time a nigga tried to step to one of us, he got his ass beat or worse if he kept talking shit.

“I don’t know why y’all bringing that shit up. I’m the only player left in the fucking group. Y’all niggas out here wifing females up or trying to in this nigga’s case.” Quay pointed to me.

“You damn right, and I love the shit. You gon’ learn, muthafucka, when you end up with five kids by five different crazy ass hoes,” Krucial replied then shivered slightly like the thought scared him.

“What’s wrong with five kids? God said be fruitful and multiply.” Quay grinned, sending us all into a fit of laughter again.

“I’m pretty sure God meant with the same woman, not several females, nigga.” Jory shook his head.

“Andreka fine as shit though, so I get it, bruh.” Quay shook his head like Andreka’s looks did something for him.

“Don’t compliment my woman; last time I’m gon’ tell you,” Krucial spoke coolly.

“Damn, nigga, but if I said she was aight, you’d be mad about that shit too!” Quay frowned.

“Exactly, so moral of the muthafuckin story is just don’t speak on her.” Krucial sat back in his seat.

“Mannnn, wait until I get me a fine ass bitch. Y’all niggas bet not even speak to her when I bring her ass around. And y’all gon’ wanna speak to her,” Quay ranted with his bratty ass.

“Man, shut the fuck up.” Jory chuckled along with everybody else.

As the three of them niggas continued talking, I just stared out, really too under the influence to participate much in conversation.

Scanning the club, I swore I spotted somebody that I knew, so I sat up some and wiped my eyes. It was dark in here, and I wasn’t exactly at my strongest, so it took me a minute to locate

them again and focus. At first, I thought it could've been anybody, but the mannerisms alone told me it was Lea's ass. She had the audacity to be holding some nigga's hand that looked like a fucking square.

"Aye, is that Lea or am I tripping?" I asked Jory.

Looking with squinted eyes, he replied, "Looks like her to me, but then again, it's dark and I'm high."

That was all the confirmation I needed as I hopped up and stormed that way, pushing the shit out of any niggas in my path.

"Damn, long time no see." I cut off Lea and her nigga's path. Seeing her roll her eyes pissed me off even more.

"Lance, not right now." She tried to nudge me out of the way, but I stood still.

"Not right now? All I'm doing is saying 'hi'. I can't do that?" I quizzed.

"Aye, man, we don't want no problems. We just trying to have a good time tonight like you and yo' peoples." The nigga finally said something, causing me to look his ass up and down with disgust.

"I wasn't talking to you, muthafucka. I was talking to my girl." I closed the little bit of space between us.

"I am not your girl! We broke up because you couldn't stop cheating, remember? What the fuck is wrong with you!" Lea hollered.

"Bitch, who you hollering at! I'll beat yours and this nigga's ass!" I was so loud that I could see out the corner of my eye that my whole section had started to pay attention to me, as well as the one I was currently in.

"She's not your girl, and what you need to do is back up so we can leave." The nigga spoke up again before pulling Lea with him. When I grabbed her arm, she quickly yanked it back from my ass.

It was surreal as fuck seeing Lea walk off with another nigga. I'd been her man for the longest, and no matter what I

did, one thing I knew for sure and for certain was that she was gon' be at home waiting for a nigga.

“Stupid ass bitch! You can have that cornball ass nigga, and he can have yo' dry pussy ass too!” Turning around, I stumbled a bit, bumping into another nigga. “Move, bitch!” I pushed his ass back hard as fuck, making him fall as I returned to the section with my niggas.

Plopping down, I let my head fall back, and even though I had my eyes closed, I felt someone watching me. Opening them for a little bit, I noticed it was Krucial. His expression was serious, but I couldn't truly read it. And if he wasn't gon' say shit, I was gon' go back to relaxing because in a minute, I was gon' hurt somebody if they said anything to me.



The next morning...

Me feeling like shit was an understatement. I had already been drunk and high as a kite before the altercation with Lea, but after that, I ended up taking more than a few double shots. That shit was a bad idea for a few reasons, and if I didn't slow up, I was gon' lose these abs I'd been sporting for all of my adult life.

My phone rang again, the first time waking me up, so I grabbed it since it was lying next to me where Lea used to be. Seeing it was Krucial, I exhaled heavily before answering. I wasn't in the best condition for any type of work today, but I was never the trifling type, so flaking or making an excuse wasn't something I was about to do.

“What's good?” I answered, eyes still closed as I enjoyed the warmth of my bed.

“Come to the spot. I need to chop it up with you.” He sounded serious.

“Aight. Is everything good? Everybody good?” I sat up, tossing the covers off me.

“Meet me in an hour.”

His response caused me to jerk my neck back because he was being secretive as shit. Then again, maybe it was because we were talking on our normal devices, and he didn't wanna say too much.

I sat there for a minute, stretching and reminiscing about last night and how Lea played me for a little bit, getting myself mad all over again. I swear I didn't want her ass, but I wouldn't mind snatching her back to prove a fucking point.

Thirty minutes later, I had showered, brushed my teeth, and was on the way to the warehouse to see what was up with Krucial. When I pulled up, he was waiting outside for me, so I didn't waste any time getting out of the whip before we entered the building together.

“What's up, bruh?” I slapped hands with him.

“We gotta talk about yo' behavior last night.” He took a seat on the edge of the table nearby. That was his favorite position when conducting business, so I already knew this conversation was serious... but why?

“What? I thought the club was for drinking and smoking. What's the issue?” I was already on the defense because this nigga wasn't my damn daddy.

“I'm referring to that bullshit ass argument you sparked up with Lea and whomever that nigga was. Let me make it clear that I don't give a fuck about the shit you got going on in ya personal life, but when you in public, you repping the gang. You a Lunatic, and Lunatics don't talk shit without backing it up.”

“Without backing it up? I back up every fucking thing I say! The fuck is you talking about, nigga!”

“You ain't back up a muthafuckin thang. You sat there hollering like a bitch, not busting one fucking move. And you not no low-level ass Lunatic, so niggas see you and think you an example of how we move. If you gon' run up on a nigga about yo' bitch, make it count; bust a nigga in his shit or put two in his ass.”

“It ain't—”

“You talking too fucking much. We ’bout action, not bickering and bullshitting with another nigga in the club. If you not ready to knock the shit out of a nigga or do worse, leave the shit alone.”

“Lea ain’t even worth all that energy.”

“Yet you went over to start some shit about her.”

Laughing since I was getting heated and about to swing on this nigga, I said, “Everybody ain’t like you, ready to fight or pull a gun on a nigga in every situation.”

“Like me? Nigga, I’m a banger in every sense of the word. I live and die by the shit, and I back up what the fuck I say. Niggas know when I got an issue, somebody gettin’ hurt ’round this muthafucka. All Lunatics should be like me if they call themselves banging, but if you not about it, let me know what’s up.

“And relax yo’ ass. The energy you giving me right now is saying you wanna square up. I’m trying to put you on game about how you looking and making us look, not beat yo’ ass, but I will.”

“Aight. Let me get out of here before I do some shit you ain’t gon’ like.” I turned to leave.

“Don’t let it happen again, or it’s on sight,” Krucial let me know, and I knew he was serious.

Truthfully, I agreed with what he said. I dropped the ball, but I wasn’t about to let his ass know that. I didn’t even know why I didn’t whoop old boy’s ass last night; wasn’t like I was scared or didn’t think I could win. I guess I was too caught off guard by the fact that Lea had actually had the fucking gall to move on.

I sat in the car for a bit, lighting one up to relax my nerves before the drive back home. On the way there, I thought about Iyanna, which was nothing new. I hadn’t talked to her since she basically cursed a nigga out and said I wasn’t ready to fuck with her.

Initially, I was cool off of her, but she stayed crossing my mind. She was so damn beautiful, and I hated to admit it, but

the way she snapped on me and acted like my street fame and money meant nothing to her, made her intriguing. I honestly didn't know if I wanted her so badly because I liked her or if it was the challenge pulling me in.

My thoughts of her brought me to her house, but not before stopping to get some flowers for her. Maybe a gesture like this would soften her up, show her I wasn't just about fucking different females and being unfaithful. Shit, I didn't know.

After checking myself out in my visor mirror, I climbed out, keeping my walk together in case she had one of them cameras and was already looking. Once I rang the doorbell, I stepped back some to wait.

“What the fuck you doing at my house?” To my surprise, Jalen Coolidge answered the door.

“First off, nigga, relax. I was looking for somebody.” I tried to keep calm, but with all this pent-up anger, if he didn't chill out, I was gon' fuck him up.

“Iyanna? Oh yeah.” He acted as if he recognized me. “She don't live here no more, bruh, thanks to you.”

“Thanks to me?” I frowned.

“Yeah. What you thought, y'all was about to be living it up in my crib together?”

“Muthafucka, this house ain't even about shit, and secondly, I got my own shit. You not the only rich nigga checking for Iyanna. Keep that shit in mind.” I gestured behind me so he'd see what I pulled up in. “That's just one of many.”

I could tell my second comment hit him where it hurt because that stupid ass smile on his face was now gone.

“Watch yo' mouth, short stack. I'm not the one.” He had the muthafuckin nerve to step outside.

“Nah, actually, you are.”

WHAM!

As soon as I set the flowers down, I connected with his jaw, and we got to fighting all in his driveway. I may have been shorter than the nigga, but he was slow as shit, so it was nothing for me to hit his ass in the face multiple times. After a while, he caught on, blocking his mug, so I dropped him and continued beating his ass until I heard a female's voice.

"Stop! I already called the police!" she yelled, and when I peeped her, I remembered it was the bitch he married.

"Next time you talk shit, player, make sure you can back it up." I gave him one more kick before grabbing my flowers to leave. I didn't want no smoke with the police.

As quickly as I'd pulled up, I was out of there, flooring my Lamborghini until I felt comfortable. It was prime traffic time, so it took me almost an hour to get home, and right when I pulled into my seven-car garage, I saw Iyanna was calling me.

"What the fuck is wrong with you!" she screamed before I could even greet her. And I already knew what she was talking about.

"Me? I ain't do shit! That nigga pressed me, so I beat his ass!"

"Why were you even over there! All you're doing is making shit worse for me!"

"What's worse than him cheating, dumping yo' ass, and kicking you the fuck out!" I regretted the words as soon as I'd said them muthafuckas.

"Lance, Lolly, whatever you go by, leave me the fuck alone. I am not interested, and I never will be. Please act like you don't know me, and if you see me on the street, look the other way."

"Aight, and fuck you too." I hung up.

Lea and Iyanna could go straight to hell. It was too many bitches in the world for me to be dealing with all this fucking stress.

TAISSA HILL

Sitting back in the chair at my home office, I blew out hot air. I was so drained from working all day long, coming up with new scents for the candle store I ran. Some days, it was so exhausting, and others extremely rewarding to be doing my own thing. However, on the exhausting days, Maissa's words regarding her being a pampered queen always circled my mind and sounded rather nice.

Just then, my phone rang, and I looked down to see it was Maissa, as if she'd been listening in on my inner thoughts.

"Hey, you okay?" I quizzed since it was 7 p.m. in the evening. Maissa was usually laid up, online shopping, and unreachable by this time.

"Yes. Come open your door. I'm outside."

"You are? Outside of my place?" I frowned.

Maissa came by maybe once a year or even less, because I lived in downtown, and she hated how dirty it was. I loved it though, because you could get a nice ass apartment for a little less than other nice apartments around Los Angeles. I guess because downtown was so damn filthy. Long as you didn't do too much walking or hit the wrong block, you'd be okay and wouldn't be robbed by a homeless person or run into disgusting trash-filled sidewalks.

"Yes! Isn't that what I said! Now hurry up and open the door. I got on fifty thousand dollars' worth of shit!"

"Okay, calm down." I laughed, hanging up.

I felt relieved because I initially thought she was here because Jory's conscience had gotten to him, and he'd spilled the beans about us. But I knew Maissa wouldn't be mentioning her clothing, purses, and shoes if she was here to fuck me up. She wasn't exactly the type to hold in her feelings. As soon as I answered that phone, she would've been screaming her head off, threatening to kill me.

"Oh my gosh. This place isn't even that big for you to be taking so long." She barged in.

"I didn't think it took me that long. Are you okay? What possessed you to come down here with the peasants?" I watched her take her Chanel coat off as I closed my front door.

When she sat down on the couch and sighed, I joined her, thinking maybe Jory did tell her. Whatever it was, I knew something was wrong.

"What all did you say to Jory about the SLS Hotel?" She adjusted her body to face me a little bit.

"Nothing. Just that we ate there because we didn't want to deal with the traffic of driving home while so hungry." I fidgeted nervously; I felt it. "Why?"

"Because he's fucking obsessed with this hotel visit, and it's freaking me the fuck out. Since when has he ever been on my bumper like this? I literally do whatever the fuck I want, and he never checks behind me."

"Yeah, I don— why are you looking at me like that?" I turned my lip up.

"I just find it weird that he spoke to you for one, and secondly, that after he did, he's all of sudden suspicious."

"Maissa, what the fuck! You honestly think I snitched on you? Wouldn't Jory have taken your damn head off by now if he knew about your little side piece?"

Her scowl dissipated as she seemingly began to ponder on my words.

"Why did he ask you? And how did he even find out about the SLS? You brought it up?"

“Because I was with you, that’s why, and I mean, yeah, because he asked me all suspiciously what we’d done that day. Usually when people do that, they already know the answer, but they’re testing you. I didn’t wanna lie about visiting the hotel when it was obvious he knew something. That’s what lying ass men do which is why they always get caught.”

“I know that’s right.” She giggled.

“And, Maissa,” I grabbed her hand, “if I wanted you to get caught or I wanted to snitch, why would I have let you know to say you had Alfredo pasta if Jory asked what we ate at the hotel? I would’ve let you drown yourself.”

“I know. I’m sorry. I’m just paranoid because he’s acting like the FBI, popping up at my school. Do you know he made me leave class? I admit, his jealousy is flattering because it shows he cares, but damn! I can’t have him catching me. Jory would kill me and has a whole gang to back him up for whatever he needs.”

Hearing that Jory was so jealous bothered me. What was he doing with me if he was still so in love with Maissa? The way he talked to me made me feel like I was more than just a fling, but then again, after he got his nut, he’d change up.

I understood that after sex guilt, but I guess I didn’t expect such immaturity from Jory. He was years younger than me, so maybe he just wasn’t on my level yet, hence why I didn’t understand his moves. I did not want to see Jory as some lowlife ass player, but he was surely coming off that way.

“I know, but he won’t find out.” I usually would tell her to stop cheating, but I kind of wanted her to keep going. Maybe Jory would find out and then be with me...

“You’re around him... Does he ever act suspect? I feel like he’s cheating and that’s why he’s acting like this with me.”

“No. He seems normal.”

“Well same way he’s keeping an eye on me, I’m gonna start doing that to him too. I feel it in my gut. The only time a nigga gets like this is when he’s viewing you as a reflection of

himself.” Maissa grabbed my remote from the coffee table and reclined. “Can you make some tacos? I’m starving.”

“Yeah, sure.” I got up and started on the food.



I didn’t really have any clothes to wash today, but I was going to pretend I did so that I could run into Jory. I hadn’t seen him in a few weeks, and he hadn’t even tried to reach out to me. I felt pathetic pining after a taken man, one taken by my baby sister, but I couldn’t help it. Plus, she didn’t really love him anyway, because if she did, she wouldn’t be cheating on him.

Like the past few weeks, I’d decided to wear a cute little dress that showed my rather skinny legs, sandals since I’d opted to get my feet done, and my wash and go was fresh so I didn’t have to worry about doing anything to my hair. After putting on some of my new Gucci perfume and then a little bit of Fenty gloss, I grabbed my purse to leave.

The whole way to Jory and Maissa’s, I couldn’t stop myself from smiling. Maissa was in class and wouldn’t be out or free for the next few hours, so that was plenty of time for me to spend with Jory. I’d already let him know I was coming to wash, and usually, he’d mention if he wouldn’t be home, but he didn’t say anything about leaving, so this was perfect.

I couldn’t get out of the car fast enough, and within seconds it seemed, I was in the house, carrying my laundry basket.

“Damn, how many outfit changes you do a day?” Jory quizzed me, heading to the kitchen shirtless.

I got lost in my thoughts for a second at the sight of him, light complexion glistening as if he’d put body oil on. His cologne was very prevalent, and I couldn’t keep my eyes off those thick lips he’d run his tongue across. His short, curly hair was beautiful like always as well. Jory was your typical light-skinned pretty boy, and I loved it.

“Huh?” I frowned, truly confused.

“You stay having to wash clothes. I don’t know no damn body that wash this much and don’t have kids or a nigga.”

“Oh. I’m always on the go, so I guess I run through my things faster than others.”

“Yeah, okay.” He let out a chuckle that I didn’t like at all. He knew I was lying, and now I looked thirsty.

Not having anything to say, I went to the laundry room and threw in the clothes I’d brought, which were just some old things I hadn’t worn in forever. Once they were in motion, I left, following the sounds Jory was making in the kitchen.

“Wow, freezer pizza? How do you keep in shape with the way you eat?” I frowned, looking over the disgusting ass pizza he’d pulled out of the oven.

“I’m a man. This ain’t gon’ hurt. You act like I’m eating McDonalds every day.”

“You might as well, and I am sure it tastes better.”

“Not everybody is a chef, Taissa, and sometimes you want something quick. Sure you don’t want a piece?” His chiseled arms flexed as he cut the pizza into slices.

“Ew, no. I ate before I came anyway.” I watched, actually turned off, before grabbing a canned iced coffee from the fridge.

We exchanged more banter in the kitchen, and then we walked together to the den. I already felt myself getting hot inside and blushing foolishly at every little joke or jab he made.

“You can pick something to watch. I ain’t gon’ be rude.” He gave me the remote.

While looking through all these damn streaming apps and subscriptions they had, probably courtesy of Maissa, I ran across *Jason’s Lyric*, so I chose that. Everything was cool, not awkward at all, until the sex scene between Jason and Lyric came on. I could feel the tension, and I believe Jory and I were both avoiding eye contact with one another.

Placing my hand on top of his, I caressed it gently, making him look over at me. I smirked shyly, and next thing I knew, his hand was caressing my thigh. Deciding to take the lead, I straddled his lap just before we began kissing intensely.

“Wait, Taissa, nah—”

“It’s okay,” I wanted to assure him.

“Nah, it’s not okay. It’s fucked up to do to Maissa, and you know that.”

“Why did you sleep with me if you don’t like me?” I inquired. I wanted him to tell me I was wrong, which I knew he would do.

“I do. I do fucking like you, but I *can’t* like you. That’s the problem. I love Maissa, and I’m not this type of nigga.”

“Then maybe I shouldn’t come around much anymore, because I’m starting to have feelings for you, but it seems everything is one sided.”

I could feel his dick hardening under me. He was horny as all get out, and me threatening to leave right now would hurt his ass.

“Taissa.” He let his head drop back while caressing my backside as I stayed in his lap.

Getting out of his lap, I dropped down to my knees and wasted no time pulling his penis from his gym shorts. With lustful eyes, he watched as I took him into my mouth, moving nice and slow in order to get some lubrication. Once my mouth was full of saliva, I went to work, slurping and sucking him like I was in a contest for biggest hoe.

“Mmm.” I moaned on it as I let the head of his dick hit the back of my throat.

I kept up my momentum, and even when he was grumbling while holding a handful of my hair tightly, I didn’t let up. After what felt like twenty minutes straight of hardcore dick sucking, Jory’s grip tightened just before he let go right down my throat.

“Fuck.” He eyed me as I wiped my mouth and rose to my feet, adjusting my dress. “Where you going?” he asked, out of breath.

“If you want that again or anything else for that matter, you better start acting like it and come to me. Like I said, I won’t be over here much anymore.” I left the den, feeling myself a little bit.

At first, I was happy with what little bit I’d gotten from Jory, but now I wanted all of him. He was either going to give me that, or it’d be nothing else between us... if I could help it.

KRUCIAL THA GREAT

Grabbing the manila envelope from my passenger seat, I exited my Bentayga dressed to the nines. Although today I was gon' be on some gangsta shit, I still wanted it to be about business as well. You always needed to look the part. Fact of the matter was, people swore up and fucking down they didn't judge a muthafucka by their cover or whatever the fuck the saying was, but it was a lie. A muthafucka handling business or making high-end threats got more respect when people respected his appearance.

"Good morning, sir. Do you have an appointment?" the bitch at the receptionist desk asked.

"Nah, I ain't got no fucking appointment. Ain't this a gynecologist?" I frowned, sizing her ass up a little bit. Hoe was trying to be funny or some shit.

"Right, yes, but maybe your girlfriend or wife was coming with you." She swallowed so hard it was visible.

"Oh shit." I chuckled, leaning on the elevated desk a little bit. "My bad. I ain't got no kids or no shit like that yet. I just need to see the doctor."

"Oh, alright." She giggled nervously. "Eh... let me phone him for you to see if he is in his office."

"I appreciate it." I stepped back to give her some room.

She kept her eyes on me the entire time that she spoke, before placing the phone to her neck and asking, "What is your name?"

“Mr. Hendricks.”

She repeated what I said into the phone and then hung up with an uncomfortable smile as I kept strong ass eye contact with her ass.

“Okay, Mr. Hendricks, Dr. McCullough will see you in a few minutes. He’s just finishing up with a patient. Would you like something to drink?”

“Not unless it’s some yak. I don’t fuck with tea and all that other shit y’all be usually having.”

“Yak?” She smiled with her smiley ass. She was aight looking. I didn’t like whatever the fuck was going on with the middle part of her face though, and she was weird as fuck for a black woman.

“Cognac.”

“Oohhhh!”

“You need to kick it with yo’ people more,” I let her know, growing impatient. In a minute, I was gon’ bust off in one of them rooms while one of them hoes had their pussy out. A nigga was trying to be respectful of the bitches in here, but shit, it wasn’t nothing I hadn’t seen before.

“Mr. Hendricks.” Barry McCullough showed up in the hallway, making me smirk at the look on his face that let me know I was the last muthafucka he wanted to see, especially on the job.

As I started past the receptionist desk, old girl tapped my wrist and grinned. “I’m free in about an hour if you wanted to start me up on kicking it with my people more.”

Smirking, I leaned down just a little bit in order to keep the conversation between us. “Get ya hand off me.” Once she did and promptly, I continued. “You a little too meek for me, but I got a few square ass niggas I can send yo’ way. Stay up.”

Walking down the hallway, I passed Barry and went straight into the first room I saw.

“This isn’t my office, Kru—”

“I don’t give a fuck. Now it’s gon’ go like this. I’m gon’ do the fucking talking and you listen, unless I ask you a question that’s not rhetorical. If you answer a rhetorical question, you gon’ piss me the fuck off.”

“Yes, okay.”

“Now I need you to do me a very simple favor: Make your wife look bad so my future wife can have her fucking kid. How do you do that? We gon’ pin this harboring a fugitive shit on her, as well as his death. We’ll then say when Moe attempted to be out in the free world, she murked him.”

Yeah, my PI had that photo of Barry’s ass, but it wasn’t enough to pin the shit on him, and definitely not enough to pin it on his wife. It wasn’t hard for the McCulloughs to play dumb, saying they had no idea what Sisi had in that house.

“How the hell am I supposed to do that?” Barry bucked his eyes.

“Hell if I know, but you better figure it the fuck out, then get up on that stand and sing like a cockatoo.” I smiled. “Because if not, you gon’ have some major problems on yo’ hands.”

Chuckling as if something was funny, he replied, “I am not pinning anything on my wife, and why would I? Are you gonna kill me? So what. As soon as I die, the courts will know exactly who to look at, you.”

“Damn, I like you, *Dr.* McCullough.” I pointed at him. “You really be using that muthafuckin noggin of yours, huh?” I laughed as he watched me like I was insane. “Let me show you something.” I set the envelope down and began removing the contents. “This is just some paperwork I received, can’t reveal my sources so don’t ask, and from what I see here is a bit of medical insurance fraud.”

Watching that nigga’s face turn was euphoric, even though he’d attempted to play it cool.

“This isn’t true. Any procedures I’ve been paid for were actually done.”

“It’s not?” I played confused. “So do a lot of your patients endure surgical abortions and hysterectomies in the same day?” I ain’t know what this shit was when Abe brought it to me, but I wasn’t no dumb nigga, so after I made him break the shit down to stop me from smoking his ass, I had all the knowledge a nigga needed. “You been doing this for years too, all kinds of shit, running up about forty-five million dollars.”

“No one will believe this or you.”

“They don’t have to believe me. I don’t fuck with the law. But I know people they will believe, and once they start investigating, they’ll find out it’s true, and I can’t say what’s gon’ happen to yo’ ass, Barry. Hopefully you don’t end up like yo’ bitch ass son, crying to get broken out just to end up dead anyway.” I shrugged, putting my shit back up into the envelope. Chuckling, I added, “You must’ve let Emily raise his ass solely, huh? You seem too smart to have a son like Moriah.”

“Don’t you ever—” Barry rushed me, but I grabbed him by the throat tightly as fuck, lifting him a little bit.

“Yeah, that’s what we want. Get mad, muthafucka, but not with me. This ain’t a battle you want. I’ll ruin ya whole fucking life and have yo’ saggy ass wife topping my gang off right after pissing on you and yo’ son’s grave.

“Keep that energy with yo’ bitch, and do what the fuck I said so my woman can get her kid. It’s simple. You fuck this up, I fuck you up.” Dropping him, I slapped the envelope into his chest. “You can have this copy; I got plenty. We good?”

“Yeah.” He clutched the envelope.

“And have that bitch up front spray something in here. It’s smelling like ass. I should knock you the fuck out for letting me open my mouth in this bitch.”

Without another word, I dipped, hoping for his sake he did what the fuck I said. I never played games or made empty threats, and I especially didn’t when it came to my woman and Coop.



Just a day and a half later...

“Aight, Coop. We almost to yo’ mama. I gotta say a little prayer before I pull up in hopes I don’t see no niggas talking to her. I don’t like that shit.”

“I don’t like either!” Coop replied, making me chuckle as I pulled over.

I was serious. I was trying to have a chill day, pick my lady up from her classes, go eat with her and little man, then slide up in that later. Although a nigga did enjoy beating a muthafucka’s ass, I was trying to change my ways a little bit for my girl. Additionally, I already had some niggas on today’s hitlist and didn’t wanna overwhelm my fucking self.

“...Amen.” I completed my prayer then continued on, hitting the corner to pull up on Andreka’s school.

After parking, I scanned the area to see if I saw her but didn’t. Picking up my phone, I pressed her name just as I looked up to see her walking toward me.

“Aye! Aye, why you so mean!” Some nigga shouted from the driver’s side of his car to Andreka, making me hang up expeditiously and hop out. Keeping my eyes on him, I stepped onto the sidewalk to greet Andreka, kissing her on the lips.

“Hey, baby.” She beamed, trying her best to wrap her arms around my neck with her short ass.

“Sup. Get in the car before you hurt a nigga’s back.” I squeezed on her ass, snickering as she rolled her eyes. “You know if my back go out, I can’t put it in ya stomach how you like.” Whole time I talked to my girl, I made sure old boy was still around, which he was, chilling in the driver’s seat of his Bentley like he was that nigga.

“Kapri.” She shot me a look as I held the passenger door open for her. “Where are you going!” she shouted after I closed her door, but I ain’t reply.

Walking straight up on this nigga, I leaned down and knocked hard as fuck on his now rolled up window.

Brows furrowed, he rolled it down. “Can I help you?”

“Get out the car. I wanna chop it up with you.” I stepped back. When he hesitated, I added, “Get yo’ muthafuckin ass out the car ’fore I pull you out this bitch. I asked yo’ ass nicely, but in a minute, I ain’t gon’ be as courteous.”

This time, he’d done as I’d asked, looking puzzled.

“What’s up, bruh?” he asked.

“You go to this school?” I quizzed, and he nodded, all skittish and shit like the bitch I’d peeped that he was. Andreka would eat his ass up and spit him out, so he had no business trying to fuck with her mean ass anyway, even if I wasn’t her pre-husband. “Aight, look, the woman you was just hollering at, that’s me. Now my first mind told me to come over here, snatch you up, knock you the fuck out, and have the homies pick apart this whip for a come up, but I’m working on myself.” I palmed my chest. “Also, that’s a beautiful ass woman, so I don’t blame you, and you ain’t know she was taken. But now you know, ’cause I don’ took time out of my fucking day to tell you personally, so don’t do the shit again. You picking up what the fuck I’m putting down?”

“Yeah, yeah.” He nodded again with enthusiasm.

“Aight. Come on.” I grabbed him by the ear and started walking him to my car. I gestured for Andreka to roll the window down when I got to it.

“Kapri, what the hell?” She giggled unintentionally. “Let his ear go.”

“Apologize for yelling the way you did at my girl. A woman like this, you get out the car and approach her. She ain’t no muthafuckin streetwalker.”

“I wanna sincerely apologize for the way I came at you, and for disrespecting yo’ relationship. It wasn’t my—”

“Hold on, nigga, you got a lisp?” I frowned, dropping my hand from his ear. I didn’t waste time on niggas who had lisps.

“Man, if you don’t get the fuck from ’round me. Sylvester the Cat ass nigga.” I shoved him a little so he’d get the fuck on.

“Kapri, why did you do him like that?” Andreka quizzed once I was in the whip. “Stop, what are you doing?” She swatted me when I wiped her cheek off.

“That nigga spit on you.”

“Move!” She burst into laughter, and Cooper followed suit.

Leaving the school, I took Andreka and Cooper out to eat, then we headed to my crib since I always felt safer with them there while I was out. After dropping some dick off in Andreka that had her ass knocked with her mouth open, I got dressed and bounced.

It took me about twenty minutes to get to my warehouse for one of my work whips and my favorite spray a nigga gun, my M16. Once that was loaded up, I headed out to my destination in the heart of Los Castile.

Tonight, them fucking Yobs were gon’ feel my wrath for thinking it was cool to kidnap the queen of a king like me. Yeah, I’d murked the muthafuckas who had actually participated in the shit, but that wasn’t enough. I had to teach these pussies that messing with Krucial had deadly consequences, and not just for the niggas who were involved.

I wasn’t the nigga to be fucked with, and I wanted to show that Andreka wasn’t either. I didn’t give a fuck if the president told these muthafuckas to touch my bitch; if they did it, they’d better kill me first or be ready to die. We were a packaged deal around this muthafucka; you fuck with Andreka, you fuck with Krucial.

I could hear the music from one of the parties the Yobs were having tonight, making me smile at the fact that the information given to me was correct. Some of them Yobs were so hard up for cash or simply my approval that they’d sell out their own gang for a quarter or to be cool with Tha Great. What they failed to realize though was once I got what I needed, I had a bullet for their asses too. Fuck I looked like being cool and keeping a snitching ass Yob around?

Double parking, I grabbed my M16 and started up the street with my black beanie pulled down enough for others not to recognize me, but for the Yobs to know who it was. Quieting my steps, I played it cool as I treaded down the skinny walkway leading to the backyard.

Slipping through the gate, I yelled, “All the hoes better get the fuck out the way!”

“Ahhh!” people screamed and yelled.

Not having to repeat myself, the women, spotting my big ass gun, scattered. I wasted no time letting off every single one of the thirty rounds in my shit, being quick but efficient enough to be sure I was only popping niggas. It wasn't hard since the few females that were here had run for their fucking lives. By the time I was done, every muthafucka back there was laid out, chest showing that no life was left.

Turning around, I walked coolly to my whip, got in, and drove back to my warehouse to switch cars before driving home. Hopefully this would be a lesson well learned for them niggas.

ODIE "OD" KIPPLING

*B*red to Hate...

"What the fuck are you talking about!" Jeanette shouted at her husband Kilian as he stood in their bedroom, expressing his love for another woman.

"Jean, stop yelling before you wake the boy up," Kilian replied sternly.

Usually, Jeanette would recoil when her husband gave her orders and fall in line, but tonight, she was over it. They'd been together for seven years, married for four, and had a six-year-old son, but it seemed none of that mattered to him anymore.

All the late nights and early mornings he'd be out of the house, Jeanette never complained and never thought once that he could possibly be laid up with another woman long enough to fall in love.

"I do not care! He needs to hear this shit anyway!" she yelled, pissing Kilian off.

He understood that this would be hurtful to her, but he had to follow his heart. He was thirty-one years old and still had plenty of time to start anew with his new love. He planned to still be in his son's life. He'd never abandon him, but he and Jeanette were through.

Kilian loved Jeanette but not in the same way he did Catrina. They were two different types of women. Jeanette was usually docile and resigned, whereas Catrina was feisty, full of life, and spoke her mind whenever she felt like it.

Kilian couldn't stand a woman that didn't speak up for herself or couldn't forge her own opinions, and that was Jeanette. However, a one-year long sex situation had turned into more when she became pregnant with their son. Always one to do the right thing and yearning to have the family he never had, Kilian proposed and married Jeanette. He hadn't regretted that decision until three years after their son was born and he met Catrina.

"We will tell him at a different time. It's ten p.m.; let the boy sleep." Kilian loosened his tie and went to his drawer to pull out something else to wear after his shower. He'd been in the streets all day, making a living the only way he knew how and the way that had been supporting his two families for the past four years.

It'd been hard keeping Jeanette and their son up in this fly ass house, all the while buying his wife whatever she desired on top of taking care of Catrina who he planned to move out of crooked ass Rumwood ASAP. The latter wasn't the type to wish to be taken care of and was doing just fine hustling on her own, but when she got pregnant with a son from Kilian as well, shit had to change in his mind.

"I fucking hate you!" Jeanette hopped up and rushed Kilian who was twice her size. She was a tiny woman, standing at four feet eleven and about 110 pounds soaking wet. The two tussled but not for long since her husband obviously had an advantage over her. Finally, pinned to the bed, she cried, "Who is she?"

"It doesn't matter, Jean." He sighed, not sure if he wanted to tell her the rest of his news. Her reaction to him simply loving Catrina was bad enough; the rest may send her over the edge.

"Cut her off. If you stop now, we can save our family, and I will forgive you," Jeanette begged, prompting Kilian to let her go and plop down onto the bed. Most men in his situation would jump at the offer, but that just turned Kilian off more.

"I'm not only in love with her, I'm leaving. I want a divorce so that she and I can get married. Once things settle

down, I want you guys to meet so everyone can be cordial,” he explained without making too much eye contact.

“No, no, I will not, and you will not! And there is no reason for me to be cordial with that whore!” She sat up.

“We have a child, Jean, Catrina and I.”

“Catrina.” Jeanette repeated to herself, taking in the shock of her husband having a baby with another woman. Just yesterday, everything was perfect. Now here he was trying to run off with his new family.

“Odie needs to know his brother. The only way he and Kapri can get along is if their mothers do so that they can be around each other.”

“You are fucking insane if you think I will allow that bitch around my son or that bastard of yours around my son. Odie does not have a brother, and it’s going to stay that way unless you and I have another child.”

Standing, Killian responded, “Well we won’t, because the relationship is over, and we’re getting a divorce. I know this shit is a lot, and I apologize, but life is too short for me to be unhappy. I love her. I’m still gonna take care of you and my son, don’t ever think I won’t, but we ain’t gotta be together for that shit.”

Feeling like her heart was literally breaking, tears streamed Jeanette’s face as she eyed her handsome soon to be ex-husband. His chocolate skin, low cut wavy hair, trimmed goatee, stocky build, and that six-feet four-inch height that made women everywhere look and stare when he walked by. Even better, Kilian was a real nigga in the streets, making him even more desirable off his demeanor alone.

Jeanette had taken pride in making him her husband at only twenty-five years old, and there was no way she could lose that. Nope, not with the way she’d bragged about it and stunted on bitches. She’d be made a mockery of if Kilian dropped her for another woman, one who, too, had his son.

Enraged, but knowing she couldn’t take it out on Kilian in the way that she wanted to at the moment, Jeanette growled,

“If you leave me for that woman, you will not only never see your son again, but you will regret it, Kilian Hendricks.”

Looking her deeply in the eyes so that she understood every word clearly, he replied, “If you even attempt to keep me from my son, a year from now, he won’t even remember you.”

Kilian didn’t stick around for a rebuttal from Jeanette. He simply got up and went to take his long overdue shower.

The next day...

Odie had definitely heard his parents arguing throughout the night, but he was too afraid to go see what was wrong. His father was a large man, very authoritative, and when angry, Odie wanted nothing more than to be silent. However, as his mother got him ready for school, he noticed his dad was not around, giving him a little bit of courage to speak up.

“Are you okay, Mommy?” he quizzed softly, seeing her eyes bloodshot red and still glossy from the night before.

Focusing on adjusting his uniform collar, she replied, “I think so. I want you to know that I love you, and no matter what happens, it will always be us two.”

“And Daddy,” Odie corrected her with a smile. His dad may have been intimidating to the little boy, but he loved him. They always had fun together, and there was nothing Odie wanted that Kilian wouldn’t buy for him.

“Right.” Jeanette offered up a faint smile.

Just twenty minutes later, Odie was being dropped off at school, getting a kiss from his mama, and waving goodbye to her as he rushed inside to his first-grade class. The day so far had gone so normally that Odie had forgotten all about the argument between his mother and father as he played roughly with the other little boys at lunchtime.

“Whoa, a police!” One of his friends pointed, causing Odie to look back and see Principal Evan Howe walking alongside two policemen. Odie became nervous as they neared him, not knowing what for. He wasn’t too familiar with the police, but he knew they took people to jail, and that was somewhere he did not want to go.

“Odie, please come with me.” Principal Howe grabbed tightly onto his hand and began escorting the young boy through the blacktop and into the front office building with the officers trailing. Once all three men and Odie were in the medium sized principal’s office, Principal Howe said, “Odie, we need to pull you out of school today.”

“But why?” The little boy’s squeaky voice bounced off the walls.

“Your mother and father have gotten into an accident.” The officer swallowed hard, not wanting to have to say such a thing to a boy of Odie’s age. “Your father was shot... shot by your mother.”

“Is he okay?” Odie inquired. Kilian had been shot before and recovered quickly, so this news didn’t exactly frighten Odie like it may have another little boy.

“No, son, he’s not.” The other officer piped in. “Your father unfortunately did not make it, and we want to allow you a chance to see your mother before we finish booking her.”

Silent because he didn’t know how to feel, Odie was taken to his classroom to gather his things before getting into the patrol car with the officers. He was hoping his mother could explain things, make it all better, because he just knew his father wasn’t gone.

As soon as they arrived at the station holding Jeanette, Odie was taken inside and passed off to the detective that had been talking to his mother. Quickly, he escorted the boy to a room where Jeanette was seated at a table, cuffed and crying.

“Mommy!” Odie attempted to rush toward her, but the detective gripped his small shoulder before slowly taking him over to her, but not too close.

“You have two minutes,” he instructed Jeanette.

“I didn’t do anything—”

“I said two minutes!” the detective barked, making both Odie and his mother jump.

“Where is Daddy?” Odie began to cry, realizing what was happening. How could he live without his mother and father? He was only six.

“Don’t worry about him. He didn’t care about you or me; he told me so. Said he wanted a new family. He was gonna get married to someone else other than mommy, and they have a little boy together who calls him daddy just like you!” Jeanette wanted to make sure her words stung so her son wouldn’t waste time mourning her philandering asshole of a husband.

“No.” Odie shook his head, not believing it.

“Yes, baby. But know I love you. I would never give you up for another little boy the way your father tried to do. That’s why he’s gone, and that’s why they’ve got me here. Everything is his fault, his new family’s fault.”

“Thirty seconds, Mrs. Hendricks.” The detective rolled his eyes, annoyed by her theatrics.

“It’s Kipling. I never changed my last name,” she corrected the over-the-top detective. Focusing back on her son, she said, “Promise me something, Odie.”

“Okay.” He sniffled.

“For as long as you’re alive, you will never associate with those people he left us for. Those people who got your mommy locked up and your father killed.”

“Okay, time’s up.” The detective began dragging Odie out since he was resisting.

“Mommy!” he yelled, crying hysterically by this point.

“Catrina and Kapri! Remember those fucking names!” Jeanette shouted at the top of her lungs, seeing her son be pulled out of the room.

However, by the look in his eyes, she knew he’d heard everything she’d said.

Present Day...

Mass Shooting Takes Place at Los Castile Home, Killing Fourteen. Victims Allegedly Associated With Yob Gang.

Suspect Unknown.

I read the headline of the online article *and* could literally feel the heat from within. I knew exactly who'd done this shit, since one of my niggas who got killed made it to the hospital, living long enough to confirm for me.

Of course, we would never be on some snitch shit; that's not how you ran in a gang. Everything was based on get back, retaliation. Them muthafuckas came at you, you came back at them, and it would continue until whomever was in charge put a stop to the shit.

"We need to ride out on these niggas!" my right hand Shoki yelled to me. "I'm tired of that nigga Krucial!"

We were in my office, along with my other right hands, Curly and Taro.

"Calm down," I said to Shoki, trying to think, but he was making the shit hard, pacing constantly and hollering at the top of his fucking lungs like a child.

"Calm down? How! Them niggas killed Skook, my sister, and now a third of our damn gang! The shit was all orchestrated by Krucial!" Curly went off the handle. Skook was my other right hand that got shot in the club one night, which I also knew was done by Krucial.

Yeah, I was angry and sad that my people were being dropped left and right, but to be honest, what really bothered me was how Krucial looked in the streets. I was tired of muthafuckas acting like he was so much tougher and harder than me, and when he did shit like the mass shooting, it only made comments like that worse. I was even starting to feel like my own niggas felt that way.

I'd hated Kapri, or Krucial as that nigga liked to be called these days, ever since I could remember, when he and his hoe ass mama ruined my family. I made sure I kept my promise to my mama and never fucked with Kapri. I didn't care if my life depended on it.

The first day I met his ass at my eighth birthday, I told that muthafucka then he'd bet not ever talk to me, and he wasn't

my brother. To my surprise, his five-year-old ass remembered the shit, and once my grandma made it clear to his moms, Catrina, that Krucial and I just didn't get along and that she wanted to respect her daughter's wishes, we'd never spoken again.

I still remembered having to pack up all of my shit and move in with my damn grandma who didn't have half the bread my father did, so shit was a major shock to me.

My grandma lived in Los Castile, and it was the first time my young ass had seen the hood. I went from sleeping peacefully at night to sometimes being woken up by the sound of gunshots. I'd gone from being in a private school, where they served freshly cooked meals for lunch, to eating nasty ass ham sandwiches with questionable meat and cheese wrapped in chemical smelling plastic, courtesy of my new public school. Every day that I woke up to my new life with Grandma Toni, I hated Krucial a little bit more. Eventually, the shit began to fester, especially as I started to get into the street life running with the Yobs.

I'd gone from a little boy to a thug ass nigga by the time I was fourteen, making my own money, although not much. Niggas throughout the hood and my gang began taking notice, namely Harm and Moe, so we started kicking it heavier than I did with anybody else in the gang, causing me to rise in ranks over the years.

When I linked up with them, I put them on game to a brother I had that I hated, and almost as if God wanted me not to fuck with Krucial, I found out then that he ran with our enemies, the Lunatics. I had no idea though that he was the hotheaded, arrogant, disrespectful, gun happy muthafucka I'd heard the gang talk about before. Shit, last time I'd seen the nigga, he was small as hell. Then when he became top dog, my hate for his ass doubled, and the shit he talked was louder than ever.

"Yeah, calm down!" I snapped at Curly. "You can't just hop up and do shit like him! That's why he got a record, and I don't!"

Krucial had made me look like a bitch on several occasions, I could admit. That's why I attempted to avoid him at all costs. I wasn't afraid to just go kill his ass or have his ass killed, but whatever hood training they offered, that nigga had it. He was hard to take out, and a lot of the niggas under me didn't want the job because they knew if they failed, Krucial would have their family choosing caskets less than twenty-four hours later. Killing Krucial would take a group effort, and it'd have to be executed successfully.

I didn't wanna do it personally, because truthfully, I knew Krucial hadn't off'd me because of our relation to one another. But if he saw me try to murk him, he'd say fuck it, and I couldn't confidently say I would be successful in a one-on-one war with that nigga. I told my gang that Krucial hadn't tried to take me out because he was afraid, but that wasn't the truth.

"Man, I knew you was gon' be on some bullshit." Taro waved me off, making me dart my eyes in his direction.

"Aight then, nigga. You go get that nigga Krucial. Tonight, pull up on his ass and pop him," I replied.

"I don't know where the fuck he at to just do the shit." Taro shrugged.

"Hit his ass up on social media. You know he gon' show up," I spoke honestly.

It was like Krucial wanted to die with his dumb ass. I'd never known a nigga to run his mouth like he did but be out in the streets like people didn't hate his ass. Not to mention, he'd pull up if you wanted any type of problems.

"Nah, so he can set me up with the cops or some shit?" Taro frowned, and the whole room laughed at his scary ass.

"Nigga got every excuse in the book. Krucial the last nigga to fuck with the police." Shoki spoke what was on my mind.

Standing from behind my desk, I said, "You just proved my fucking point, Taro. We can't just ride out on that nigga. We've tried that shit before and lost several members of our fucking gang over it."

“So then what? We can’t keep letting this nigga dog us out. He been acting a fucking fool since he got to the top.” Curly shook his head. “Can’t stand his ass.”

“He been acting up before that. Even when he wasn’t running the Lunatics, he talked the *most* shit. Nigga even talked shit to the nigga running the Lunatics,” Shoki responded, making us chuckle at the fact.

“We gotta use our resources, also known as connections and cash, to get a muthafucka on the outside to handle this shit. Someone outside of the Yobs ain’t gon’ be afraid or nervous to knock that nigga off. That way, we preserve our gang *and* get the shit done.” I smiled at my own words as my niggas nodded in agreement.

“I hope the shit works, because the gang is starting to feel uneasy, and they’re also starting to doubt you.” Shoki looked at me.

Before he’d even said that I already felt it. Being on top was way harder than the shit looked. I now understood why Moe just kicked back and broke bread. He never dabbled in that get back shit. He’d just tell us to do whatever we wanted if somebody came at us. At the time, I felt like he was a bitch, because that wasn’t how you ran a gang. If someone fucked with us, they were supposed to feel our wrath, not go on about their life as fucking normal. So it baffled me how Krucial even slept at night.

“Plus, we need to do this for Moe. We know that nigga Krucial got him killed in jail.” Taro nodded. “And if he wasn’t an enemy of the cops, I’d believe he set him up to be raided too.”

Hearing Moe’s name made me nervous. I let the Yobs believe Moe just got a case of bad luck being raided, but I set the shit up. He wasn’t meant to be in that position like I was, and that was the only way I could get him out. Killing him crossed my mind, but I didn’t have the right team for that. When I saw that nigga was alive recently, murdering him crossed my mind again but once he mentioned kidnapping

Andreka, I was 100 percent sure Krucial would have his ass, so less work for me.

I'd never told the gang he was really alive either. They needed to forget about Moe altogether.

"Exactly." I kept my answer short.

"Then after he's gone, we can get our bitch back." Curly licked his lips like he didn't have a whole girl.

"Who?" Taro inquired.

"Fine ass Andreka." Curly slapped hands with Shoki.

Later that night...

"Thank you for all of this, baby." Donnica laid on my chest as I tried to catch my breath from that fuck session.

I needed to butter her ass up, so I'd set it out for the night at the Waldorf hotel in their governor penthouse suite. I had Essence hit the mall for some nice shit to gift Donnica, and then complemented everything with good food, chocolate dipped strawberries, and some Ace.

"I told you I was gon' spoil you, didn't I?" I looked down at her as much as I could while we lay in the bed.

"Yes, and you kept your promise."

"Since I do so much shit for you, I was wondering if you'd extend the same courtesy."

"Of course, baby."

"I need you to contact ya baby daddy, have him come out here because I got a job for him."

"Uh—umm, why him?" she stammered.

"Because I need him, and he owes the Yobs. I haven't forgotten about his ass."

"Right... Well, we don't talk like that." She tried to sit up. "Ah!" she whimpered when I yanked her ass back down by her hair.

"Don't play with me, aight? I know yo' every move, and you do still talk to that nigga. Now this is an order, not a

request. Get the nigga out here and send him right to me.”

Looking like she was about to cry, Donnica nodded, whispering, “Okay.”

“Thanks, boo.” I pecked her forehead, shutting my eyes.

Once Krucial was gon’, my life would be so much smoother. And Curly had the right idea; maybe I’d finally get a piece of smart mouthed ass Andreka since she wouldn’t have that nigga to protect her. She owed the whole gang some pussy, ever since the first night we met her.

IYANNA

She *he very next week...*

“Okay, Miss DeSoto, baby looks very good. I can’t quite accurately tell the sex yet, but as soon as I see something during one of your visits, I will let you know, if that’s what you want.” Dr. Giles smiled at me before using a clean towel to wipe the jelly off of my belly.

“Yes, I’d like to know as soon as possible.” I nodded.

“Also, if you’d like to bring another person to your next visit, that’s okay too.”

I knew what she was getting at, and I was a little taken aback that she hadn’t heard about Jalen leaving me. I seriously doubted this white woman didn’t know who I was and who I used to date. I hadn’t run across a person yet who didn’t look me over sympathetically or give me that stare that let me know they were well aware of what had happened to me. That was the downside of dating a well-known, top NBA player.

“No, I’m okay. I like coming to them by myself.” I sat up as she trashed her gloves and began washing her hands.

“Well alright, sweetie. Do you have any questions?”

“I don’t. Thank you.”

“Okay, well I will see you in a month. Have a good day.” Dr. Giles pranced out happily. Why was everyone so fucking happy all of the time?

I quickly fixed my clothes and then left out to the front desk to schedule my next appointment in a month. Leaving

out, I passed several couples in the waiting room, some holding hands, and others had the men gently rubbing their backs as they sat uncomfortably in their chair.

I always thought that would be me and never gave having to do this shit alone a second thought. I didn't even know anyone who had done it alone. My mom was married, so was her sister, their brother, my cousins, and everyone else in my family who had a child.

Shaking that shit off since I promised myself I would be more positive, I hurried out to the elevator so I could get to my car. As soon as I was inside my truck, I pulled out my phone to set it on the wireless charger but saw that I was tagged on social media. When I went to see what it was, my heart sank at the photo of Tisha and Jalen at their gender reveal, excited about their little boy on the way.

What bothered me as well, which I didn't expect it to, was seeing all the women who had smiled in my face, had lunch dates with me, and invited me to all of their get togethers, in the comments congratulating them and expressing how happy they were for the two of them. Granted, it's not like they were Andreka or someone I looked at like a sister, but it was still grimy and didn't sit well with me. Some of them had even texted me how fucked up Jalen was along with other things. I couldn't see myself doing this shit to one of them out of respect for their feelings and as a woman, but maybe I just saw shit differently.

I sent the photo to Andreka in her DM.

AndrekaNic: Yours will be better.

Me: I won't be having one.

AndrekaNic: Yes you will.

Locking my phone, I shut my eyes for a little bit, just to relax myself and calm down. I didn't want to constantly be stressed while carrying my baby. I'd be mad if I miscarried over Jalen and his whore of a wife. Just as I was about to start my car, my phone rang but through social media.

“What, Lance? Are you slow?” I frowned so hard my cheeks hurt.

Snickering, he replied, “Nah, I’m very intelligent, actually.”

“Then why are you calling me? Is it an emergency that involves me? Otherwise, I don’t see the point in this call when I’ve told you several times I do not like you!”

“Damn.” He chuckled at my rant which irritated me. “Iyanna, I’m calling because I want to apologize for whatever I did to fuck up what you had going on with Jalen. I like you, and I just popped up over there to give you flowers and spend time with you. I didn’t know his ass was gonna be there, nor did I know he’d be talking shit like he could fight when he couldn’t.”

I giggled a little bit at the last part. I’d never seen Jalen in a fight because he was always super popular and loved amongst most people, dating all the way back to high school, so I never knew if he could get down or not.

“I guess I accept your apology then. I’m sorry, too, for blowing up on you. It’s just when he called me yelling about how my lover had showed up and put hands on him, I assumed the worst.”

“Lover? Oh shit, what you say?” I could hear the smile in his voice.

“Sir, no. He just assumes that because one of his nosy ass neighbors took photos of us kissing. So now Jalen claims I was cheating the whole time and that’s why he put me out of the house and took my store.”

Lolly laughed, which caught me off guard.

“Okay, I get it.”

“What the fuck is so funny?” I sucked my teeth.

Just when I was starting to see him as a normal human being, he had to revert back to the immature asshole that he was.

“Just... I’m a man, and I know how we think. That nigga knows you been faithful, but to make himself feel better for how he did you, he gotta make you look bad. Trust me, I know; I’ve done all the tricks he’s trying to pull. When we fuck up royally, the quickest way to stop feeling like shit is to blame yo’ woman for any little thing, no matter how stupid or unfounded it is.”

“You did that to Lea?”

“All the time. When she’d catch me cheating, I’d say shit like ‘well you ain’t been fucking me, and I know it’s because you fucking another nigga’. Stuff I knew was bullshit.”

“Well, I’m not weak minded enough to fall for that shit.”

“I know, that’s why I laughed. He trying shit that only works on weak females. A weak one would be spending all hours of the day trying to prove to a nigga she ain’t do what he claim she did, and he gon’ let her, even though he know damn well she innocent.”

“Glad you recognize.” I was feeling myself a little bit. “I guess ain’t shit niggas be knowing everything, huh?”

“I guess so. I am a little wise, huh? Might start a side hustle.”

“You’re pushing it now.” We laughed in unison. “Well thank you for the apology, I have to go.”

“Would it be too much to ask to go get some food?”

“I already ate, but maybe this weekend, okay?” Why did I feel bad for declining? I didn’t even like his ass.

“Aight. I’ll be popping back up then.”

Tittering softly, I said, “Bye,” before quickly hanging up.

For the next few hours, I had some appointments with leasing agents for some two-bedroom apartments. I needed a bedroom for myself and the baby, and then I’d use the extra room as my office until my child got big enough to need its own space.

Although I'd only had four appointments, by the final one, I was exhausted and couldn't even remember certain details about them all. What did stick in my mind though was those constant three- and four-thousand-dollar price tags. I had enough for first and last then three months after that, so I was banking on doing one hell of a relaunch of my bikini company to keep me afloat.

"Find anything, sweetheart?" my father asked as soon as I walked in the door of my parents' home.

"I did. I just need to take a minute to choose." I leaned down to kiss his face since he was seated on the couch watching TV.

"Alright. Let me know if I can help."

Heading to my room, I got ready for a shower and then set the bathroom up for me to relax. While in the shower, all I could think about was how angry I was, no matter how much I tried to just get over shit. I didn't want to appear weak, and being upset or bothered by my situation made me feel like I was.

As thoughts of Jalen, Tisha, the gender reveal, and other shit crossed my mind, I began wondering why I was penalizing myself by staying cooped up in the house, wallowing in my negative thoughts, when I could be enjoying my last little bit of freedom before I got big and then had a little human keeping me up all night.

Getting my phone once I was in the bedroom, still dripping wet, I messaged Lolly via social media with my phone number. Homeboy wasted no time calling me; I didn't even have a chance to pull some panties from the drawer.

"Hey, damn." I laughed, answering my ringing iPhone.

"What? I thought maybe it was an emergency or some shit. Thought you wanted me to beat that nigga's ass again."

"You feeling yourself I see. Keep talking like that and Jalen just might beat your ass or at least step on you."

"You funny. You got jokes I see."

“I’ve been told. So I was wondering if you were busy, and if not, did you still want me to come out.”

I felt nervous, but I didn’t know why. If he turned me down, I would block his ass and never speak of this again.

“Shit, I’m home already, but if you wanna come through here, I don’t mind. I can have food delivered from wherever you want.”

Even though I didn’t like Lolly’s ass, his urgency to please me turned me on. Jalen was very sweet when he wanted to be and definitely spoiled me, but Lolly acted as if I was a literal princess, which I enjoyed.

“I’m in the mood for PF Changs, something spicy. Oh, and get me that coconut drink but without alcohol.”

“No alcohol? Then what the fuck you getting it for?”

“I’m just... I don’t want you trying to get me drunk or slip something in my drink. If it doesn’t have alcohol, I’ll know something is up ’cause it’ll taste funny.” I fell back onto my bed after talking. That was close, but thankfully I didn’t lie much, so it was easy as pie when I needed to.

“What kind of nigga do you think I am?” He let out a suppressed laugh.

“Send me the address.”

“Got you.”

We disconnected, and I basically ran to my closet to find something cute but that wouldn’t be doing too much. I had a slight pouch, but nothing that didn’t look like I’d just been eating heavier than usual.

I opted for a dress that clung to my breasts but spread out just above my stomach, even though I didn’t need it to. It was off the shoulder with a split at the bottom, giving a little bit of sexy but not like I was trying too hard. I applied some BB cream to my face then put on some gold jewelry to complement my glow. Grabbing my Chanel, I slipped my feet into the matching sandals and was on my way.

Lolly's address was in the Hollywood Hills, so I already knew his place was lit. It took me a little minute to get there since I hopped onto the freeway at the tail end of rush hour traffic.

My jaw dropped as I pulled into the driveway of his all-glass house. I studied it for a little bit, realizing just how much money this nigga had. Taking my phone from my purse, I sent him a text, letting him know I was outside, and he instructed me to come to the door.

Walking up to his door was magical since there were little pools of water on each side with pretty marbles and rocks in them.

"You look nice." He complimented me as he held the door open.

"Thank you. I've had this on all day though."

"Well, I'm enjoying it. The food is in the dining room." He waved for me to follow him, and I surveyed his house on the way.

"Damn, did you buy every item on the menu?" I looked over the big table covered with so many dishes that I couldn't even really make them out.

"Ain't like you told a nigga what you like, so I had to do what I had to do."

"Touché." I giggled, taking a seat adjacent to him.

We prayed together and then began building our plates up to our liking.

"Why you change your mind about seeing me?" He licked his lips, feeling himself per usual.

"Just felt like getting out, and you're pretty cool most times, so I hit you up."

"Okay." He chuckled, eating some of the orange chicken. "You gave me your number too, so I think it's a little more than that."

"Like what?"

“That you like me. You know it’s not a crime to wanna fuck with me.”

Yes it is.

“I didn’t say that it was. If I liked you, I would say it. I just think you’re a cool dude, nothing more, Lance.”

“Understood.”

We continued eating, talking about nothing that really mattered, and then went for seconds. By then, I was stuffed and with a full bladder, so I requested to use the bathroom. Like the rest of his home, the bathroom was big, luxurious, and beautiful.

Wanting to kill the narrative that I was some poor little ex-girlfriend of Jalen Coolidge who was probably soaking her pillow with tears every night, I took a mirror photo. I was sure that people who actually knew me would not recognize the bathroom, which would then alert Jalen. He’d know damn well I couldn’t afford a place with a bathroom of this caliber, making him jealous. And for the people who didn’t know me, they’d see I wasn’t too damn sad; plus, it was almost 9 p.m., and I didn’t look like I’d be hitting the sheets anytime soon.

Leaving the bathroom, I went to find Lolly in the dining room, but he was waiting for me out in the foyer to lead me to the den. Like everything else in this house, it was huge.

“So you really do have money like you’ve claimed in the past.” I smiled as I sat down on the big comfortable couch.

“No need for me to lie. I ain’t no liar.” He laughed when I gave him a look. “Aight, I only lie to females.”

“Wow.”

“That’s not what I meant.” He laughed harder. “I don’t lie about shit like money or material things. Is that better?”

“Yeah, I guess, but it’s your third damn answer.” I shook my head. “And you really thought I was gonna set myself up like that and be with you.”

“I’m telling you I wouldn’t do you like that.” He touched my hand.

“And I told you I don’t believe that bullshit. All niggas say that, then once they get you where they want you, they start acting up.”

“Why don’t you let me show you then? You never even gave a nigga a chance. All you do is spend my money, talk shit, and run off whenever I try to make a move because you know what’s up.”

“Because I know what’s up? I’m sure that sex game is subpar at best.” I playfully rolled my eyes.

From day one, I had been intrigued by Lolly’s sex game since he was so damn cocky and slung that shit any and everywhere. However, by the time I even contemplated giving him some, I was pregnant, so it couldn’t happen. Just the thought of fucking a man while carrying another’s baby felt weird to me.

“You think my ex was staying with me over some subpar shit?” His brow went up.

“When we’re in love, we will stay, even when the dick and or head game is trash.”

He chuckled cutely.

“You keep talking but ain’t making no moves.”

“I’m not fucking you, so stop with the reverse psychology. This is not high school.”

“That’s not the only thing we can do.”

Feeling a little hot and bothered, I replied, “Okay. Hurry up before I change my mind.”

Getting down onto the floor, Lolly reached up under my dress to tug on my panties. I hadn’t felt a man’s hands do that in so long that it immediately made me throb down below.

Placing my panties on the couch next to me, he put one leg on his shoulder and dove right in. I was going to do my best to stay unmoved, and in the beginning, I was doing pretty okay. But once he got comfortable, licking and sucking better than my toy I had at home, I had to let out a moan. My nails clawed at his butter leather couch when I came right into his mouth,

which didn't even slow him up. Rubbing his bald head like it was a crystal ball, I cried out, knowing I was on edge and feeling myself leak on his couch.

"Damn," he commented, starting his way up my body with kisses.

"No. I said that was all." I halted him. It felt weird when he kissed the lower part of my abdomen. "I have to go." I grabbed my panties, shoved him out of the way lightly, and slipped them on before standing.

"Iyanna, you can't be fucking serious." He stared up at me, still on the floor.

"I told you I wasn't fucking you."

"I can't get a reciprocal?"

"What? Hell no!"

"I wish you had have made that shit clear before you had me down there giving my best!"

"Nigga, please. It was alright," I lied, grabbing my purse.

"Not with the way you was moaning and about to cut a damn hole in my fucking couch."

"Bye, Lance." I started out, needing to go home and shower.

"Iyanna!" He followed me.

"I will call you, okay?" I glanced at him over my shoulder. "I just have to work in the morning." I kept walking with him behind me.

"Keep playing with me, Iyanna."

"Goodnight." I pecked him gently before rushing to my car.

I needed to slow down. I definitely almost let him put the tip in.

JORY

“*A*ye, nigga, you got about ten more minutes on that last stack, or you can get the fuck on somewhere,” Krucial spat.

“I’m finishing now.” I counted the money with a smirk because I *had* recounted this shit about seven times due to my damn thoughts wandering in the middle of the shit.

Focusing so I could wrap this up, I finished it then placed a sticker band around it to confirm the amount before putting it in the bag.

“Aight, nigga.” Krucial reached to dap me up, and I complied but slowly.

“Let me talk to you about some shit before we go.” I’d been wanting to all fucking day, but Lolly and that nigga Smize were here, and I couldn’t really say what the fuck I needed to in their presence. “You can’t tell nobody though.”

“Man, get the fuck out of here.” He started to leave as I laughed heavily. “Talking like we some muthafuckin schoolgirls. Fuck I look like gossiping with the next nigga? That’s Lolly.”

“Aight, aight. Shit.” I chuckled softly thinking about the homie Lolly. He was the only hood nigga I knew that had everybody’s business and couldn’t wait to tell us. I admit, some shit was interesting, so in those times, I appreciated his gossiping ass. “I fucked Taissa.”

“Who?”

“Taissa, nigga!”

“Who the fuck is Taissa? I don’t keep up with every bitch in LA.”

“I forgot if her name ain’t Andreka, you don’t know who the fuck she is.” I shook my head, annoyed.

“You damn right. Fuck I need to remember the hoe for? If she ain’t fucking me or making me some bread, I couldn’t give less of a fuck. Also, Andreka is a hard woman to forget.” He cheesed, causing me to snicker irritably.

“Anyway. Taissa is my girl Maissa’s sister and—”

“Who?” He started cracking up when my face changed. “I’m fucking with you. I know Maissa is that skinny hoodrat you got for a girlfriend.”

“She not a hoodrat, and she ain’t skinny no more nigga; she thick.” I raised my brows with a smile.

“Any hoe walking around with Fix-a-Flat in her ass is not thick, muthafucka.”

“Fuck you.” I chuckled. “Well, I’m *fucking Taissa*, Maissa’s sister.”

“So.”

“Fuck you mean so? I’m fucking my girl’s sister.”

“Just proves you don’t love her ass like you claim you do.” He leaned on the counter we used to count the cash.

“What? Yeah I do.”

“Then why you fucking her sister? You said fucking, which leads me to believe it wasn’t no one time thing.”

“Nah, it was twice, and then she gave me some head. But it just happened... has nothing to do with how I feel about Mai.”

“Keep the details and shit to yaself. I’m not interested in what the fuck y’all be doing and how. Shit like that don’t just happen, my nigga. You choose to fuck her every time you do it. You don’t black out then wake up in some pussy, do you?”

“Nah, man, that’s not what the fuck I meant.” I glanced off. “I be having no plans to hit, and then I do. Also, Maissa been acting suspect. She claimed she had lunch at this hotel, but the place don’t even sell what she ate. Taissa confirmed it though, but she didn’t seem confident in her answer.” I stared at the wall for a bit, thinking.

“You need to drop both them bitches. If the hotel don’t sell the shit, then she didn’t have what she said, it’s simple. Then the other hoe fucking you yet lying for her sister at the same damn time. You ain’t no dumb nigga, Jory. Quit acting like it.”

“I know. Shit, I know.” I nodded. “I just wasn’t sure if it was my own guilt driving me to do shit.” I pondered on what Maissa said. She was right. Sometimes the fact that you were doing dirt made you paranoid as fuck. “Some nigga answered her phone, but she said he was her gay homeboy—”

“Nigga, what? She lying like fuck, but even if the nigga was gay, I would’ve checked the muthafucka. Let him know don’t touch my bitch’s phone. I don’t give a fuck what he put up his ass.”

We both guffawed loudly for a nice little minute.

“I can’t stand yo’ ass, bruh. You right though. I appreciate it.”

We both left the counter room, and once in my whip, I started to think about all kinds of shit. Maissa had never done shit, so what the fuck would make her start cheating now? It just ain’t add up, which made me feel like it was just me, despite the SLS shit happening before I even touched Taissa.

And if Taissa was lying to me for her sister, I wouldn’t know how to feel. At the end of the day, blood was thicker than water so I understood, but Krucial was right; what kind of muthafucka would be lying for their sister while fucking their sister’s nigga? It made Taissa look less innocent and angelic in my eyes. Still, I liked her ass, and the pussy was unforgettable. I could tell nobody had been in that shit in probably a damn decade.

Me: Have a good day.

I shot Taissa a text.

T: Thanks I wish. My car broke down so now I'm at this shop seeing what I can actually afford to get fixed.

Me: Damn, what shop?

T: Jef's Auto Repair on 1st street in DTLA

Me: Aight I'm on the way.

Shaking my head at myself, I started my car then set up my GPS to get to the shop all the way in downtown. It took me about forty-five minutes to get there, so I was hoping Taissa hadn't made any decisions without a nigga and let the mechanic scam her ass.

Right when I pulled up, I saw her sitting on the bench outside of the garage, wearing a big ass grin upon seeing me. That shit did make me feel good. Getting out, I greeted Taissa with a light hug that felt awkward, since the last time I'd seen her ass, she had my dick in her mouth.

"Where he at?" I asked before following her into the garage and up to an older Asian man.

"Hey, this is my... brother. He just wants to talk with you." Taissa introduced me in a way that had me puzzled for a little bit, leaving me silent momentarily.

Of all the things she could've said I was, she chose brother. I felt like homeboy was just fine; wasn't like this nigga had a policy on who could get the details on your vehicle or some shit.

I chopped it up with old boy for a little bit, and although I assumed he was trying to get over, he was right about Taissa's car; it was a bucket with a lot of fucking problems. Also, he wasn't fucking with me on dropping the price for a deal. I was used to working with Mexicans or my own race, so unfortunately, I didn't know how to finagle a good price with these hard bargain driving ass Asians.

"Come here." I pulled Taissa to the side. "The shit is gon' cost more than it's worth to fix. I say you let him keep the car and get like fifteen hundred dollars."

“Hello, then what the fuck am I gonna drive? That car has no note, and I like it that way. I’m not trying to add an extra bill right now. I’m saving for a house and working on a new business venture.”

That shit was attractive hearing about a woman willing to hustle and build her own wealth. Wasn’t a damn thing wrong with a woman who wanted to stay home, raise the kids, cook, clean, and all that shit though; that shit was a job too. However, Maissa was neither. She wasn’t a homemaker, and she wasn’t a hustler like her older sister.

Knowing I shouldn’t have even been thinking the shit, let alone saying it, I replied, “I got you.”

“Jory, no. I’m not letting you buy me a car.”

“You can pay me back then, but nobody should be driving a fucking car from the nineties right now unless the shit has been kept up and in good shape. Let me help you; ain’t gotta be expensive.”

Her eyes darted away momentarily before she looked back up at me, reddish-orange hair blowing in the wind. It was a nice ass day in LA, the sun was shining brightly, yet it wasn’t too hot.

“Fine. Is a Toyota Prius too much?”

“A Prius?” I laughed. “Tai, you ain’t got no husband or kids yet. Pick something flier.”

“No. I’m paying you back, meaning this has to be in my budget. Plus, I like Prius’. They’re cute and efficient.”

“Fuck it. If you wanna drive around looking like you a soccer mom, then that’s your choice.”

“Yep.” She smiled, and although I wished she would pick something else, if a Prius made her this damn happy, I was cool with it.

I let old boy know what the plan was, and he printed out a check for the \$1,500, which Taissa told me to keep. Leaving from the shop, I went to get some money from one of my safes, and then we headed straight to Toyota. On the way

there, I saw Maissa was trying to FaceTime me, so I instructed Taissa to keep quiet.

“What’s good, baby?” I grinned, trying to keep my eyes on the road as my phone sat face up in my lap.

“Hi, daddy!” she squealed. “I’m just on break, so I was seeing what you were doing. We haven’t talked all day it seems.”

“We talked this morning.” I chuckled.

“Doing sixty-nine is not talking, Jory Thierry.”

Awkward.

“You good though? How is class?”

“Yeah, I’m okay, just tired. I wanna go to The Lobster tonight.” She pouted playfully.

“Whatever you want, baby.” I peeped Taissa out the corner of my eye, but she was staring out of the window on her side.

“Thank you. I just love you so much.”

“I love you more, but you know that already.” I smirked down at my phone since the light was red.

“I do. Well, okay. I will see you later for dinner. Bye.” Maissa hung up, and it was dead silent in the car. The only thing that could be heard were the other cars zooming by us.

“Sorry about that,” I apologized.

“No, no, it’s fine. I understand.”

Without knowing what else to say, I continued on the route to Toyota, and we arrived about fifteen minutes later, but it felt like an hour because of the quietness.

Soon as we got there, Taissa was firm with her choice. No matter how much shit I talked about the damn Prius the entire time we were there, Taissa wouldn’t budge, so an hour and some change later, she was driving off the lot with one. Even worse, she chose this ugly, loud ass blue-green color that was popular in the nineties. Clearly, she fucked with that decade.

Since it'd been a pretty long day, we decided to grab something to eat from this place named Woodspoon that Taissa claimed was fire. It was small and intimate, but nothing romantic or anything, thankfully. Since it was midday and mid-week, we easily found parking before heading inside, where we were seated immediately.

"You sure this shit is good? I can't even pronounce some of it." I felt my forehead wrinkle as I eyed the strange menu.

"It's Brazilian food, that's why.

"I always get the crispy chicken and yucca fries for an appetizer, then the frango com quiabo for an entrée. It's really good."

"Say what?" I quizzed, causing us both to laugh.

"I'll just order for you. I promise it's good," she replied just before the waiter tended to us, taking our drink orders and food too.

"I see I'm gon' have to stop at McDonalds after this." I rubbed my stomach, feeling it grumble from hunger.

"You eat so poorly."

"I know, but I'm usually always on the move, so it gotta be something quick."

"Maissa should be making something for you so that you can have leftovers to take on the go."

"Where am I gon' store leftovers in the streets?"

"You're telling me Krucial doesn't provide a break room?" She smiled.

"Yeah, in our fucking cars where I tear a McDonalds cheeseburger meal up." I chuckled when Taissa scrunched her face in disgust.

"Oh wow, Jory and Taissa..." Maissa's homegirl Erica paused at the entrance of the restaurant. It was a small place, and anyone walking along the sidewalk could see everyone in here.

“Oh shit, what’s up, E?” I asked, feeling the pressure. Already I was trying to come up with a reason on why I was here with my girlfriend’s sister.

“Hey, Erica. What are you doing over here?” Taissa adjusted herself in her seat, somewhat nervously.

Entering, Erica responded, “You know I own a boutique. I’m downtown looking for fabric for some new designs. Where is my girl? Is she skipping class?”

“Uh, nah, nah, she’s in class. I umm... Taissa was helping me with some shit... so we stopped for food.” I lied worse than I ever had.

“Right. He’s throwing a surprise party for my sister, and we didn’t wanna go over the details around the house because Maissa is nosy and sneaky, so we decided to do it at my apartment. You know I live downtown,” Taissa lied flawlessly, making me stare her down skeptically yet thankfully.

“Yes. If she suspects anything, she will be all in the business. So what’s the occasion?” Erica inquired.

“Well, she’s completing this current semester soon, so Jory wanted to congratulate her, you know, keep her motivated. Maissa never finishes anything, so the fact that she did at least partially is reason for celebration.” Taissa chuckled along with Erica, again just lying like she did it for a living.

“Well alright. Let me get back to work because in a minute I’m gonna be wanting some of this good smelling food. Don’t forget to invite me, Tai, and nice seeing you, Jory.” Erica left, making me feel like I could breathe.

“I will, girl, and remember not to tell Maissa anything.” Taissa waved to Erica as she left. “That was a close one.” She sighed with a half-smile.

“Yeah, it was.” I sipped some of the Mexican coke I had. “You know you pretty good at lying and shit.”

“No. I was just trying to think quickly, especially because you were doing a horrible job.”

“It’s a little weird you asked to come here, and then we run into Erica.”

“Weird? Like I set this up weird?”

“I mean... I’ve never in life seen one of Maissa’s homegirls out, and I be all over LA constantly.”

“Jory, please. What would be the point in me setting this up?”

“I don’t know. Same reason you lied about having pasta at the SLS.” I shrugged.

“I did not lie. That’s what we ate.”

“Yeah... I don’t believe you. They don’t even have it on the menu. Then the way you just sat up here and told a whole fucking story to Erica like you J.K. Rowling or some shit? Nah.” I scooted my chair back.

“Where are you going? I did not lie about the pasta.”

Standing, I peeled off \$100 for the food, knowing it should cover whatever we ordered.

“I get you gotta look out for yo’ sister, but don’t be sucking my dick in the meantime. I lost my appetite. I’ll get at you sometime next week or so about payment arrangements for the whip.” I left out.

“Jory! Jo—” Taissa halted her yelling, and when I glanced back, she was still at the table, looking bewildered.

I didn’t know what I was thinking. Krucial spoke some real shit; Taissa either needed to be loyal to Maissa, or fucking with me, but doing both was some snake shit. And this Alfredo pasta fiasco was about to haunt me until I really got to the bottom of it.

ANDREKA

I'd been enjoying my unlimited time with my baby due to the fact that Krucial had strong armed the McCulloughs, and the next custody hearing wasn't for months, but the day I always knew would one day rear its ugly head had come: Cooper was begging to see his damn siblings.

As badly as I wanted to tell him no and buy him something to forget about it, I couldn't do it. I felt cruel keeping him from them, when all four children were innocent. And after seeing how estrangement went horribly for Krucial and OD, I didn't want my son to have to endure that, nor did I want him to resent me for not being able to play with them. I knew how kids' minds worked, and Cooper might begin to associate being with me as boring or restricted then see his grandparents as fun and carefree.

By saying that, I'd agreed to allow him to spend the weekend with his brothers and sister since Sisi had dropped them off to the McCulloughs this morning. Additionally, Krucial assured me I didn't have to worry about the McCulloughs pulling anything because Barry wouldn't allow it.

"Look, baby, are you ready for your sleepover?" I asked excitedly once I'd put my truck into park outside of the McCullough's mini mansion.

"Yay!" He threw his little arms up.

I laughed at his excitement, admiring how cute he was, and then got out to get him and his overnight bag. We walked hand in hand to the front door and didn't wait long after ringing the doorbell.

"Wow, is that my grandson?" Barry cheesed down at the sight of Cooper who nodded with a grin.

"Hey, hey, let me get a kiss!" I stopped Cooper from running inside to go find his siblings. Leaning down, I hugged him tightly and kissed his face several times, making him whine, then I freed him. "So I will be back Sunday afternoon to get him," I said in an emotionless tone to Barry once Cooper had darted to the den where I could hear Moriah Jr., Avah, and Ezra causing a ruckus.

"That'll be just fine. Hey, can you do me a favor?" He stopped me from turning all the way around, just as I heard a car pulling in. Checking to see if I recognized it, I rolled my eyes when I realized it was Sisi.

"Umm, what kind of favor?" I finally replied.

"Let your boyfriend know that I'm handling it, just give me a little bit more time."

"I'm not really sure what you're talking about," I lied, "but I will pass along the message, I guess."

I knew all about what Abe found on Barry and how Krucial was using it against him to assist me in the custody case. I'd never been as happy as when he showed me that shit, because Emily harboring a fugitive or assisting one in any way would surely have the judge leaning toward my side in the case. But I didn't know if Barry was being genuine right now, or wearing a wire and hoping I confirmed the blackmail, so I played stupid.

Krucial wanted me to do that anyway, just in case Barry stupidly snitched. That way, Krucial would get blamed, and I'd be deemed innocent in the mess. I didn't know how to feel about my man possibly going to jail for trying to help me. It just didn't sit well with me, but I appreciated him.

“Thanks so much. Have a goodnight.” Barry offered up a closed mouth smile.

“She better not be staying here, or I am taking Cooper. I said I don’t want them here at the same time.” I raised my brow at him, referring to Sisi.

“No, no, she forgot Ezra’s hooded blanket he loves and won’t sleep without. She’s just dropping it off.”

“We’re about to see,” I said just as I turned to leave.

I’d almost made it to my car without having to even look at or speak to Sisi, but of course her hating ass wouldn’t let that happen.

“Good evening, Mrs. Krucial,” she teased with a smirk.

“You sound so stupid.” I chuckled at that dumb ass nickname.

“You know, I’d never really paid attention to him, but the way you were all up his ass before Moriah was even in the ground good, convinced me to take a closer look.” I’d had my back turned since I’d passed by her, but that statement made me do a 180 and quick. “He’s super fine. A little rough around the edges, but I kind of like that.”

“Sisi, do not start. I am warning you not to start.”

“Start what, Andreka? I gave you a compliment. Your man is sexy. Good job.”

“Goodnight, hoe.”

“Since we have this thing going where we share men, what do you think of sharing Krucial? That’s some hood dick I wouldn’t mind riding all night.”

Just as I darted toward her, that bitch surprised me by taking off running. I had on some slippery ass Dior sandals with no support, while she was booking it in a pair of running sneakers. I wanted so badly to snatch her ass up, but she was getting away from me, rushing into the McCullough’s residence and slamming the door.

“Open this fucking door!” I banged on it, fired up. “Open the fucking door!”

“Andreka! Andreka, stop before the neighbors call the police.” Barry stepped outside.

“I don’t give a fuck!” I attempted to get around him, but he was blocking me.

“Andreka, you hit Sisi, and she will press charges. That is the last thing you need right now.”

As much as I wanted to tell Barry to kiss my ass, he was right. At the moment, beating Sisi’s ass to a bloody pulp sounded nice, but when I calmed down later and lost my son for good because of it, I’d regret it. I would beat Sisi’s ass, that was for sure, but just not tonight.

Without saying a word, I snatched from Barry and went to get into my car. Pulling out of the driveway, I waited for a little bit to be sure Sisi was leaving for the night, because I didn’t want her spending time with my son. She was too ignorant and sneaky.

When I saw her get in the car and leave after waiting for about ten minutes, I drove home myself, getting some good dick to calm me down.



I could barely focus on the words in my book as I sat in the library, still seething over Sisi’s comments from yesterday. I knew Krucial wouldn’t touch her with a ten-foot pole; however, her words just irked the fuck out of me. I didn’t want her even in the same building as my man. I just hated that hoe and couldn’t wait until all this custody crap was over and I could give her the ass whooping she so clearly had been begging for.

“Okay, ready for a pop quiz of section three?” my classmate Luz asked me.

I typically liked to keep to myself, but Luz was nice, harmless, and very smart, so I didn’t mind getting together

with her occasionally to brush up on things, especially because I had so much going on that it was extremely hard to put my all into studying. Frequently I would zone out, thinking of Cooper, his grandparents, havoc-causing Moe, his busted ass wife, and then this whole rival gang stuff that still had me feeling uneasy here and there.

“No, girl. I don’t even remember what I read. Give me another ten minutes.”

“No problem.” She laughed, focusing back on her book while taking notes.

“Library is closed, bruh.” I heard a familiar voice, and when I looked, I saw Krucial talking to a guy at the far end of the same table Luz and I were at. He looked hood as hell in a wife beater, gray cloth sweats, socks, and corduroy slippers. His few jewelry pieces looked nice, shining right along with his freshly braided hair and line up in the front.

Checking his watch, the guy said, “It’s not supposed to close for another two hours and—”

“Who you gon’ listen to, me or the fucking school?” Krucial frowned down at him. When the guy began packing his stuff up, realizing he was dealing with a fool, Krucial added, “My man. You have a good day, my nigga. You look smart.”

As the dude hurriedly left out, Krucial focused on me, making me blush as he smirked, licking his lips. I wanted to reprimand him for being ignorant, but he was too sexy, and the only thing I could think about was feeling him wrap his arms around my body. Plus, Krucial was gonna be Krucial no matter what I said.

“Hi, baby.” I grinned so widely my cheeks felt tired that quickly as I rose up. He slipped his arms around my frame tightly before pecking my lips and then neck. “Kapri!” I squealed when he gripped a handful of my ass, probably right in Luz’s face. I had a damn dress on too. “What are you doing here?”

“Came to visit you. I missed yo’ ass.” He brushed his pointer finger under my chin before he kissed me again. My insides were hot, and my stomach was filled with butterflies.

“I missed you too.” I gave him one more kiss then sat back down next to my classmate. “Oh, Kapri, this is my classmate Luz. Luz, this is my boyfriend, Kapri.”

“Nice to meet you, Kapri.” Luz adjusted in her seat for a better view just as Krucial came around to stand behind us in order to speak back. However, his next seven words had me ready to face palm myself.

“Sup. I don’t mean to be disrespectful,” there it was, “but ya braids is smelling foul. Had you not been somewhat cool with my girl, I would’ve shook you the fuck up. I don’t hit women, it ain’t in me, but when they disrespect me like you just did, all them rules go out the muthafuckin window.”

Luz’s jaw was on the floor as her eyes darted to me then back up to Krucial. I could tell she was wondering if he was serious or not.

“How did she disrespect you, Kapri? What the fuck?” My lip turned upward in irritation.

“Turning around to face me all fast, knowing the wind from them braids was gon’ be stank as shit.” He scowled at her, actually upset and seemingly offended. “You seem like a nice lady and shit, but first impressions are everything, aight? Now when I see you, you gon’ always be the bitch— excuse me, the female with them foul ass braids. I think it’s time you take a little study break and go handle that before you meet a nigga that’s not as nice as me who might put hands on you for what you just did.”

“Kapri!” I gasped, truly bewildered.

“Uh—” Luz was cut off when Krucial pulled her chair out. Looking at me once more, she then began putting her books and notebook into her crossbody bag she always wore.

“Luz, I am so sorry.” I had my hands in prayer mode.

“What about my fucking apology?” Krucial looked her up and down as she got up.

“Sorry about that. I wasn’t aware.” Luz nodded nervously.

“It’s all good, little mama. Now handle ya business.” He nodded toward the exit and sat down where she’d originally been seated.

“Kapri Hendricks.” I bucked my eyes at his ass once it was just us.

“What? How you mad at me when she started the shit.”

“Her braids were not *foul*. They just needed to be washed really quickly. Old hair or a dirty scalp always smells a little funny, baby.”

“All I know is I got a whiff of fart and vomit, and I didn’t deserve that.” He stared at me seriously.

I tried to remain stern, but I couldn’t help but to laugh while smacking his broad chest.

“Stop, what are you doing?” I whined when he started to rub on my thigh and kiss my neck.

“Let me get these off.” He reached under my dress.

“Kapri, we are in a library!” I shouted in a whisper.

“So, shit, I don’t even see nobody right now. You wasting time when I could’ve been in that shit.” As he spoke, he continued caressing my inner thigh while tending to my neck, so moments later, I was horny.

He made me get up and slowly bent me over the table. Gently, he raised the back of my tight dress while planting kisses down my back, and that really did something to me.

“Damn,” he commented before I felt his lips peck my pussy from behind once he had my thong pooled around my ankles.

“Kapri!” It was no time for the extras.

Not listening, he started to suck on my clit from the back, causing my legs to tremble as I looked for an imaginary handle to grip on the wooden table. My nectar began to dampen my inner thighs as he went to town, sucking my pussy and fucking

me with his tongue here and there. In no time, my knees were buckling, and I was gushing right into his mouth.

Coming up for air, he released himself, saying, “You be forgetting you don’t run shit.”

I wanted to say something smart back, but he was working his way inside of me, rendering me silent. He started off slow, breaking me in for a little bit, but once I came just off of that, he sped up, hammering my g-spot. All I could do was whimper and moan with my teeth clenched, as Krucial showed me no mercy, pounding my pussy that was so wet it could surely be heard right along with my moans.

It was feeling so amazing that I no longer cared if we got caught. The secretiveness of the tryst accompanied by his impeccable stroke game had my eyes rolling back a little bit as I released down his shaft twice more. He let out a soft almost inaudible grunt, trying to be gangsta, but I knew what I was doing to him. I came again, clamping down on his dick and causing him to grip my hips tighter while groaning.

“Ka-pri, I lo-love y-you,” I stammered, eyes open yet closed. I was sure I looked in-fucking-sane. Soft moans, skin slapping, and the sound of someone stirring creamy pasta was all one could hear right now.

Finally, just as I experienced another orgasm, he released as well, holding it deeply inside of me as he did.

“I love you too.” He gave me a smack on the ass as he pulled out slowly.

After we gained a little bit of composure, while kissing for a little bit, we hurried to the bathroom to clean up and wash our hands. Returning to the library wearing coy smiles, we stayed there for another hour, sharing kisses and with Krucial attempting to help me study. That little session had given me some much-needed energy and concentration.

LOLLY

Currently, a nigga was laid in bed feeling good as hell after busting one hell of a nut with this bitch lying next to me. I didn't even really remember her name, but she was beautiful and willing to do whatever I wanted her to, to please me.

As I sat there with my eyes closed, waiting for my body to relax a little bit, I heard my phone jumping on my nightstand. Looking over, I grabbed it and was shocked to see Iyanna's name on it. All she did was run from me and play games, so I was over the shit, to be honest.

Ever since I'd started fucking, I'd never had to chase a woman. Shit, there was no need to. As soon as I asked a bitch for her number, I had it, then shit was on and popping. Iyanna seemed to get a kick out of using a nigga or fucking with me, and I was too boss for that shit.

I hit ignore on her, but seconds later, she was calling again, so I answered, letting out a huge ass sigh.

"Sup?" I quizzed dryly.

"Hey, stranger. I thought you may have been dead or something." She giggled.

"Why would I be dead?" I frowned, feeling the girl I'd just smashed caress my back slowly as I talked.

"Because I haven't heard from you in two whole weeks... that's not like you."

"Oh. What's up though? What you need?"

“Damn, attitude much? I was just bored, and since Andreka was in class, I figured you were the next best thing.”

“Oh, well I’m busy right now, so nah, I can’t get up with you.”

“Busy doing what? If you were handling Lunatic business, you wouldn’t have answered the phone, so I know it’s not that.”

“Hey, I’m gonna go to the bathroom and then order food. You want something?” the girl in my bed asked as she got up.

“Nah, I’m straight,” I replied then focused back on the phone call. “I’m just busy—”

“Wow, clearly. I see you’re busy with another hoe, or is this one of your old ones that you’ve been had?”

Laughing, I replied, “Why do it matter, Iyanna? We not dating, and according to you, you will never be interested. So who I’m fucking shouldn’t be any of your damn concern.”

“You’re absolutely right. Bye.” She hung up quickly as a muthafucka.

I sat there for a minute a little shocked that she’d gotten so bothered by me being with another bitch. Last time one of my hoes approached us, she thought the shit was funny, so this was a new side of Iyanna.

Brushing her flip-flopping ass off, I went to my spare bathroom to piss and take a quick shower before brushing my teeth. Feeling clean and fresh, I got dressed then went in hunt of that hoe I’d just had in my bed, who I eventually found in the den.

“Aye, I’m about to go handle some business, so you gotta go,” I let her ass know.

“I’m in the middle of ordering food though. And—”

“Here.” I pulled a wad of money from my pocket and peeled off a few hundreds. “Get you something good to eat and with ya homegirls, or shit, another nigga. I don’t care.” I handed it to her.

Happily, she hopped up and rushed right out of the den, through the foyer, and out my damn door. I scanned the area, making sure everything was in place and nothing looked like it was missing. Krucial stayed on my ass about letting random females come to my main residence, but I felt like it was no big deal. What the fuck was a bitch gon' do? If she got out of pocket, I'd shoot her ass just like I would a nigga.

Pulling out my iPhone, I called Iyanna back, but she didn't answer. Just as I was about to dial her again, I got a text message from that messy hoe Victoria with a photo. Tapping it, I saw it was a picture of Lea with her new nigga.

Me: Bitch I don't give a fuck about none of this coupled up shit.

Deep Throat Vicky: You read the caption dumb ass?

I swear to God I couldn't stand this girl.

Tapping the photo to enlarge it, I read the caption typed up by the nigga which read *Said her ex was a bitch but I ain't believe it until I seen it.*

Me: Thanks.

I didn't send shit else to Victoria, even though I was hot as fish grease. I was regretting not beating his ass in the club that one night more and more. It was gon' be on sight if I ever saw that muthafucka again, and I was praying the homies didn't see this shit before I got to touch that bitch ass nigga. I knew stupid ass Quay and crazy ass Krucial would have a field day with this shit.

Taking a deep breath, I called Iyanna again and she picked up.

"What!" she barked.

I couldn't help but to laugh at how angry her ass was when she loved pretending she didn't fuck with me or didn't like me.

"Damn, baby." I chuckled. "Is this a bad time?"

"What do you want? I'm busy."

“Oh, you busy now? Well I was about to go to the mall, do some shopping. You wanna come?”

Initially, I wanted to just get something to eat since that’s the only thing Iyanna’s ass wanted to do, but when I peeped old boy’s story on social media, I saw he was in the luxury mall not too far from where I stayed. I didn’t know why because I was pretty sure his bum ass didn’t even live in the fucking area.

“Shopping? Am I gonna get something?” she quizzed.

“Yeah, I got you. So is that a yes?”

“It’s a hell yes. I need a few bags and some shoes too.”

“I don’t know about bags with a fucking s, but we gon’ see. Maybe get you a few Coach purses.”

“Nigga, don’t make me change my damn mind. If we going to Coach, I need ten of them thangs.”

We laughed in unison.

“Send me your new address. I ain’t trying to have to beat yo’ ex nigga’s ass again.”

“K.” She chuckled. “Bye.”

By the time I was in the whip, Iyanna had sent me her address, so I plugged it in then drove straight there. She let me know it was her parents’ spot and to just wait outside, so I did that when I pulled up, texting her to let her know I’d arrived.

“You look nice.” I complimented her when she hopped in, wearing the same kind of dress she had on when she tricked me into eating her pussy.

“Thank you. I don’t have to try too hard.” She put her seat belt on. “What?” she snapped when she caught me still watching.

“Relax. You just pretty as fuck, that’s all. A nigga can’t look?”

“Yes, you can, and thank you.” She pecked my cheek. I was loving this new Iyanna. Shit, maybe by the end of night I’d finally be feeling her insides.

We cruised to the mall, chopping it up a little bit while listening to music, so even though the mall was a ways away from her parents' spot, it didn't feel like it.

I only shopped a little bit, stopping at a few stores for some new sneakers, and then hit Saks for some clothes. Iyanna then took over, wanting to go to Chanel, Dior, and then Louis Vuitton. Her ass had cleaned up, but she wasn't as bad as I thought, only getting one purse from each brand. I was just thankful she ain't want a damn Birkin, but it wasn't like you could walk into Hermès and just buy one anyway; you had to work for the shit. I knew because I got Lea one years ago, and the shit was like a side job obtaining it.

The whole time though, I was keeping an eye out for Lea's nigga whose name or nickname I now knew was Chain. I did check his page again, and the nigga was still here. I just didn't know where.

Iyanna wanted something to eat, and since the mall was surrounded with restaurants, we decided to stop and eat at one of those after dropping our shopping bags off at my car.

Lo and behold, as we were walking into the seafood place, Chain was coming out, holding Lea's hand.

"What's up, nigga?" I quickly blocked his pathway, causing him to drop her hand.

"Man, move out my way." He tried to step around, but I wasn't having it as we stood in the lobby of the restaurant.

"Or what, nigga?" I asked but shoved the shit out of him before he could even respond.

He pushed me back, and that was all I needed to punch the shit out of his ass.

"Lance!" I heard Iyanna yell as Chain and I fought like we were in the streets. The nigga could hold his own, I admit, but I was coming out on top.

Going across his face for the fourth time, I dropped his ass, ignoring the restaurant staff's warnings to call the police, as well as Iyanna and Lea screaming for us to stop. However, when I heard the manager actually calling the police, I let up

off that bitch ass nigga, rushing out and pulling Iyanna with me.

I couldn't get into my whip fast enough, and without even buckling up, I sped off with a smile on my face.

"Whew shit!" I shouted excitedly. "Bruh did get me on my cheek, but it ain't shit compared to how his ass looked, huh?" I glanced at Iyanna as I drove. She was pouting with her arms folded. "You good?"

"No I am not, but just take me home, please."

"Why? What happened?"

"You were just in there fighting like a fucking hoodlum! Y'all were going crazy, bumping into shit and knocking people down, not even paying attention!"

"So what! You don't even know the fucking backstory! I been looking for his ass all day! I had to have him when I saw his ass!"

"All day? Wow, so that's what this little mall trip was about, you trying to fight."

"Nah, Iyanna. I wanted to spend time with you, and I did need some shit. It just worked out perfectly that he was already here." I tried to soften up my previous statement. "Why do it matter anyway? Not everybody is Jalen. Some of us niggas fight our own battles."

"You don't know shit about me, or Jalen for that matter, to make that comment. The problem is not that you fought him. I will beat a bitch down too if I need to. The issue is how out of hand it got and how you had no regard for anyone's safety around you!"

"When I'm fighting, I don't think about shit like that."

"Okay. Well the next time you want to go into a jealous rage over your ex-girlfriend, please do not invite me."

"I ain't jealous. He was running his fucking mouth."

"Whatever."

The next twenty minutes of the ride was silent, and I started to feel a little bad for what the fuck I'd just done.

Turning down the radio, I said, "Iyanna, I apologize. I should've done that shit on my own time." She stayed quiet, munching on some gum she'd pulled from her purse.

"It's fine. I just want to go home."

"We can't ever just have a good outing, huh?"

"Nope, because we're not compatible. I shouldn't be thinking about dating any damn way."

"Here you go with this shit."

"I'm serious, Lance. I have other problems that I need to be focused on. I just thought that I deserved a break from life sometimes and that was when we could hang out, but this is too damn much. I can't be too mad though, because you just broke up with Lea. Of course you're gonna be mad about her new man."

"Iyanna, I'm not mad about that shit. I swear I don't give a fuck. He came at me, and I had to show his ass. I got a reputation to upkeep, not just for myself but for my gang. I'm at the top of the food chain within the Lunatics. I can't allow a nigga to bitch me out. And even if I wanted to, Krucial won't allow the shit."

"So every time anyone talks shit to you, you have to fight them? Seems immature."

"Nah, not everybody. Some niggas just want clout. But that nigga back there is on the gram with my ex, running his mouth, and he was on the same shit when I saw him in the club."

"Well, unlike Andreka, I'm not okay with the whole Lunatic thing, so it's best we just be cordial anyway."

"Say no more." I continued driving her ass home.

I liked Iyanna, but I wasn't about to change who I was or the shit I rode for just because she didn't understand it. Like the homies, I did my best to keep my personal life away from gang activities or my street persona, but occasionally, the shit

did blend. If she wasn't with that, I understood it, but I couldn't fuck with it.

TAISSA

That same day... around an hour later...

Ever since that horrible lunch experience with Jory, I felt depressed. He and I hadn't talked, and I really didn't want to go over to his and Maissa's house, even though my laundry was piling up. I could afford a washer and dryer, but I liked having a reason to possibly see or be around Jory.

I honestly didn't know what I was expecting out of this relationship, if you could call it that. He was with Maissa and never even gave me a hint that he would be leaving her anytime soon. Maissa as well had made it clear that she was holding onto Jory, and he was number one on her list despite there being another.

My feelings were a mixture of jealousy, anger, and defeat. Why did Maissa always get what she wanted when she wasn't even that good of a person? I loved my baby sister even though it seemed as if I didn't, but she didn't deserve a lot of the shit that she got.

There were women out there who would love to have a man like Jory, and to make it better, he was balling. Yet, here she was, complaining because he wanted her to make something of herself and not just depend on him for every cent she'd need. And Jory was too foolish to see that a real woman was right in front of him. He just wanted what looked nice; it was obvious.

As I turned on my back, I heard my cellphone going off, and to my surprise, it was Jory. I couldn't help the smile that

had covered my face nor the warm feeling my body started to have on the inside.

“Hey,” I answered softly.

“Sup. Are you busy? I wanted to discuss the payment plan for the car.”

“No, I’m off today. Where did you wanna meet?”

“I think it’s best we stay *inside*. Maissa is at home today getting her nails done with her homegirls, so I can come through there.”

“Okay, whatever time you want is okay.” I was trying to be as nice as possible, happy that I was even hearing his voice after what felt like forever.

“I’d like to come now because I have business to tend to in a few hours.”

“Okay. Just text me when you get here.”

“Aight.” He ended the call fairly quickly.

I hopped right up to change into something cuter, like this new dress I’d gotten from one of those social media boutiques. It looked similar to one I’d seen Andreka in on her page, and I loved the way she dressed. She always looked cute but never over the top or like she was vying for attention like with Maissa’s clothes.

After struggling for a good twenty minutes to get my hair up into a ponytail on top of my head, I spread some lotion all over the exposed parts of my rather pale complexion. I thought of covering my freckles with makeup, but last time it came out looking weird, and you could still see them anyway. With my earrings on and Skims house slippers, I tread to my living area, but before I could finish doing a quick clean, Jory was calling to let me know he was here.

Since he wasn’t on my visitors’ list, I had to go down to get him because the front desk people would not allow him up. The elevator ride to my floor was beyond uncomfortable. We didn’t say two words to each other, nor did we make any eye

contact. The silence between us lingered until we were inside of my place, seated on the couch.

“Wow, this is serious business, huh?” I chuckled a little seeing him place documents onto my coffee table.

“Yeah, it can’t just be something verbal; it has to be legit.” He spread the three sheets of paper out. “I figured \$250 a month would be affordable for you. Is that cool?”

“Yeah, yeah, that’s great.” I thought he was gonna come over here with something outrageous.

“Cool. Just sign here after you read them, or you can have somebody look over it and get back to me.”

His demeanor was very cold, and I wasn’t used to him being this way with me.

“Nope, I can read it myself. It all looks legit. Do you prefer checks or what?” I smiled.

“Yeah, that’s cool, but if the shit bounces once, I’m gon’ need cash from then on out.” He didn’t return my smiley gesture, just kept a stale facial expression.

“No problem. That’s never happened to me, and I make pretty good money, so not having two hundred fifty dollars a month isn’t an issue.”

“Glad to hear it.” He scooped all the papers up after I signed them and got ready to stand, but I touched his forearm.

“Jory, let me talk to you for a second.”

“I got a lot of shit to do. I don’t really have time to talk.”

Shutting my eyes briefly so that I wouldn’t get an attitude with him, I said, “This will not interfere with whatever that is. It’s just a second of your time.”

“Go ’head.” He looked straight ahead, although he knew I was looking dead at him.

“I want to apologize for lying to you about the pasta and SLS.” That shit got his attention, because now he was looking deeply into my eyes. “You were right. We didn’t eat there, and

I made up what we had then let Maissa know so she'd be aware."

His surprised expression shifted to one filled with anger.

"Why the fuck you lie? And why the fuck was she at the hotel then? I saw the email asking for feedback meaning she got a room."

"I lied because I promised Maissa I would keep it a secret." I took a deep inhale then let it out before continuing. "Promise me you won't mention this to her."

"Taissa, get to the fucking point." He seemed to be breathing hard like he was nervous as to what I had to say. He really loved my sister, and if it wasn't obvious before, it was now. I actually believed he'd be heartbroken if he knew the truth, and oddly, that upset me.

"She's starting a new business, and she had a meeting there. She got the room for me so I wouldn't just be a sitting duck during. I was exhausted from work and driving all over jammed ass LA, so I needed a nap.

"I was not supposed to say anything because she wanted to surprise you. She told me you've been on her back about making her own money and generational wealth, and although she acts as if it goes in one ear and out of the other, it doesn't. She felt like showing you that she has been listening and even going out to start things up would make you happy."

I couldn't do it. I couldn't break this man's heart, and I couldn't just out my sister, as badly as I wanted to. Maissa wasn't shit sometimes, but she was my blood, and I had no right breaking up her relationship, especially when I had fucked her man.

"I—"

"You cannot say a word, Jory, or she will kill me. This is a huge thing to her, and I just ruined it, starting with my pasta lie; she wanted to kill me then."

"I don't know, man. Shit just don't feel right. From that hotel shit to some nigga she claims was her gay homie answering her phone."

“Oh yeah, she told me about that,” I lied. Lord, I was fibbing more than Satan himself.

“Nigga’s voice was deeper than mine.”

We laughed together, and it was nice seeing Jory’s sexy smile versus that stoic mug he’d been wearing since he got here.

“Again, I apologize. I wasn’t going to tell you until she surprised you, but I just couldn’t bear the thought of you hating me.”

“I don’t hate yo’ ass. I got love for you. I was just upset. I’ve always felt like you were more genuine than Maissa, so to think you’d been lying just had me confused.” He placed his big hand on my small knee, giving me goosebumps. “But I should’ve never doubted you. You a good girl despite this situation I got you in.”

“It’s not just you, it takes two. I’ve always had a thing for you, and I guess when given the opportunity to act on it, I couldn’t help it.”

“I guess I couldn’t help the shit either.” He ran his thick pink tongue across his bottom lip as his eyes ran amuck over my frame.

“If you were single, would you date me?”

“Hell yeah I would. Shit, sometimes I wish I met you first.”

“Me too,” I basically whispered, causing him to make intense eye contact with me.

Milliseconds later, we were kissing hard, then got right down to business on my living room floor.



*L*amb chop, I just pulled up in some food... I told lil’ mama, “Tie all my shoes”... Showed her two million cash, now she woozy... Twenty watches and I’m still snoozin’...

Tonight was Maissa's small get together that I had to help Jory organize last minute due to my lie to Erica. I told him Erica would probably forget, but he didn't want to take any chances of her mentioning it or asking Maissa about it, even though I'd told her to keep it a secret. I guess he was right, because if the party never happened, Erica may have brought her suspicions to my sister.

Only a few people were here tonight, eating some of the fancy food, downing the expensive champagne and cocktails, and mingling while slightly swaying to "Ski" by Young Thug.

Across the room, I spotted Jory looking as fine as ever, and it was hard to take my eyes off him. Ever since I'd apologized, we'd been at it like rabbits on the low, and I'd never been happier. Long gone were the days where we'd sleep together then not talk for weeks at a time. Truly, I felt like his main side chick... or whatever that was.

He caught me watching and gave me a wink that sent chills through my body, leaving a nice little tap on my clit, even though his arm was hugging Maissa's waist as they chatted with Quay and one of his flings.

"I love your nails." Andreka's voice pulled me back to reality. When I looked at her, she was eyeing Iyanna's fancy ass acrylic job that was pretty nice.

"I wish I could get my nails done like that, but I don't think I could function properly," I half joked.

"You get used to it, and you can get them shorter or in different shapes," Iyanna replied.

"Wow, I don't know anything other than getting a gel color set on my normal nails."

"You need to come with us one day if I can get our nail lady to book all three of us," Andreka offered.

"Just let me know. You don't even have my number, so let me give it to you guys." I excitedly reached for my phone from my bag.

I'd never had friends that lived or looked like Andreka and Iyanna, so right now was so surreal. Maissa was the closest,

but she never invited me to hang out with her unless it was to cover up her cheating. For some reason, she didn't want her best friends Erica and Sabrina to know what she was up to, but I didn't know why. Also, Sabrina wasn't here tonight because Jory, for some reason, was adamant that she not be invited... Weird.

The three of us exchanged numbers, and just after I locked my phone, a text from Jory popped up.

Jory: Come upstairs.

I peered upstairs at the balcony of the mansion the party was in with a smile, before excusing myself to go find Jory. As soon as I got up to the deserted second floor, he peeked his head from the bathroom, waving me over. I happily obliged.

"You look beautiful." He complimented me, wasting no time placing me on the sink in the small but plush half bathroom.

"Maissa is downstairs," I whispered before chuckling, feeling his lips grace the tender parts of my neck.

"We'll be quick, and she ain't paying no fucking attention to me while Erica is here." He reached up to pull my panties past my thighs.

Going with the flow, I picked his head up to kiss him nastily as he undid his bottoms to reveal himself. I listened as he covered it with a rubber before placing my legs over his forearms.

"Mmm," I moaned softly, feeling him inside of me. My body had gotten used to him as if he were my man and my man alone.

It felt so good, so right as we fucked right there on the sink, kissing like we weren't doing something illicit.

"Oh shit." A voice startled me, and right when I looked, I spotted Andreka hurriedly shutting the door.

"Who the fuck was that?" Jory panicked, yanking himself out of me and helping me down.

“It was Andreka. I will be right back.” I put my panties on while taking a few steps toward the door.

Rushing out of the bathroom like a chicken with its head cut off, I scanned the area for Andreka. Through the balcony pillars, I could see she was back at the table with Iyanna, as well as Krucial.

Me: Hey can you come upstairs so we can talk.

“I’m about to rejoin the party.” Jory finally emerged from the bathroom.

“Cool. Hurry before Andreka comes up.”

Andreka: Umm... okay.

Jory nodded in response to my statement before rushing down the stairs just before Andreka hit them. I waited, pits starting to sweat and all, for Andreka to make it to me. I could tell by the look on her face that she was feeling some type of way about what she’d seen, and I couldn’t blame her.

When she got to me, I pulled her into the nearby bedroom, shutting the door.

“I’m not gonna tell if that’s what this is about.” She folded her arms, putting a barrier between us that wasn’t there before.

I didn’t know why I felt queasy at the thought of her being angry with me or not wanting to be cool. I was too old for this shit. But I guess I’d gotten excited at the thought of finally having girlfriends.

“No, I didn’t think you would. I just wanted to explain a little bit. It’s not really what you think.”

“So you’re *not* fucking Jory, your sister’s boyfriend?”

“No, I am.” I looked off momentarily then focused back on her. “It’s not like they had a good relationship and I just came in like a wrecking ball. Maissa is cheating on him and has been for the last few years.”

“What does that have to do with you fucking her man? She’s your sister, and trust me, I know she’s not the nicest person, but Taissa, I didn’t see you as this type.”

“What type?” I frowned.

“To fuck someone’s man that you know. If you’d do that to Maissa, I’m sure you’d do it to me.”

“What? No I wouldn’t!”

“What makes it different? Why wouldn’t you do it to me?”

I was speechless at the moment.

“Be-because you and Krucial are in love and—”

“You’ve only been around us together maybe three times or less. How do you know how we feel about each other? And you’re telling me Maissa doesn’t love Jory and vice versa?”

“She does, but she doesn’t care like I do. Jory is a good man, and I’ve liked him for a long time. This wasn’t just something I randomly did, Andreka. And he likes me more than he loves Maissa, I believe.”

“Then why is he still with her? If he felt the same as you did, he’d leave her and be with you.” She came closer to me. “I know Jory is a nice guy, I’ve met him, but even nice guys have ain’t shit actions sometimes. You being his side piece in particular does not make you better than the next side chick.”

“Jory is not like that. He would never cheat on Maissa unless feelings were there.”

“And that’s what you want? A man that can develop feelings outside of his relationship?”

“Maissa—”

“Taissa, there is no excuse for cheating. If you’re unhappy, move on. If there are issues but you love the person, talk it out, and if that doesn’t work, move on. But I don’t care how good Jory is, how much he likes you, how much Maissa mistreats him, him fucking her sister is dirty. And you fucking your sister’s man is even worse.”

“I guess I got so caught up with how good of a guy he was that I only saw what I was doing and what Maissa was doing as bad. I really like him though.” I palmed my face.

“Y’all are all messed up.” Andreka chuckled softly. “I believe you like him, and I believe what you say Maissa is doing behind his back. When she talked about Jory, she never mentioned how she felt about him or anything of that nature. Everything was how much money he had, how fine he was, and how much he spoiled her. But that doesn’t give you the right to sleep with him, and it doesn’t give him the right to sleep with you. If you really like him and he likes you, he needs to break it off with your sister, and if he can’t do that, you need to find someone else.”

Moving on to someone else was easy for a woman like her, but for me, not so much. I didn’t have her looks, her body, or confidence, so when a man like Jory gave me even a little bit of attention, I had to take it.

“I don’t look like you, Andreka, so that’s easier said than done.”

“It’s not about looks. How many beautiful women have you seen getting cheated on or are single every few months?” We chuckled together. “Yes, men are initially attracted to looks, but personality and how you think is what keeps them. You don’t think Kapri has run across women better looking than me?”

“Maybe.” I shrugged.

“He has; the man has been a lot of places. And hell, some of them are right there in Rumwood, but how I carried myself is what stuck out to him. Men are attracted to confidence more than anything, and little boys take advantage of low self-esteem, remember that.”

“Is that why crackheads and the people on 600-pound life are never single?”

“Exactly.” She giggled along with me. “Do better for yourself, Taissa.”

She said nothing else as she left me in the bedroom to muddle through my thoughts. Maybe she was right. If Jory really liked me, he’d leave Maissa for me. And if not, we didn’t have what I thought we did.

KRUCIAL THA GREAT

“*R*ight, you think you can have everything ready by then?” I asked my uncle Depp. He was providing most the food for the Lunatic cookout party, excluding the barbecue.

Like always, it was gon’ be fun as fuck until some niggas got mad and threatened to shoot. I thought about having a no gun policy, but all it took was for one Yob to hear about that shit, and it’d be a wrap for a lot of these niggas, not me though. Unlike a lot of muthafuckas, a nigga with a gun didn’t scare me. I’d knock the shit out of a nigga with a gun pointed at my chest. Shit, ask about me.

It was crazy how the Lunatics could do shit like this, but the Yobs never would, scary muthafuckas. They especially wasn’t fucking with public get togethers after I sprayed fifteen of them niggas for fucking with my bitch. One nigga had a whole ass gang shook, and it was pitiful.

“Yeah, it’s no problem.” Depp closed his menu book and then sat back, staring at me after peeping the small TV on his desk that displayed the front eating area of the fish spot.

“What’s up? You good?” I inquired.

“Young lady has been coming here every day, and I believe she’s looking for you.”

“Why me?”

“Niggas know you frequent my spot and who I am. I’ve never seen her over here before, she doesn’t work at any of the businesses on the street, so that’s the only conclusion I’ve

come to. I initially thought she was about to ask me if I was her daddy.”

We guffawed loudly.

“You was spreading that shit like that?” I frowned.

Shrugging, he replied, “I mean, I may have had a few ladies back in my day. I would’ve denied sleeping with her mama though if she had. I don’t want no kids.”

“Hell nah, nigga. That’s why I’m only choosing one fucking woman to nut in. If a bitch pull up to me on some bullshit, I’ll already know what’s up. I can put one in her chest right there.”

Last hoe that lied on my dick got her muthafuckin house shot up. I didn’t play that shit, because some hoes took it too far. I’d had a lot of homies that had to pay top dollar and hella court fees all because a bitch lied about them fathering their kid. Shit, muthafuckas had even been capped or jailed from a bitch lying, so I wasn’t having it.

“Sound like yo’ damn father.” Depp smiled.

“Anyway, let me go see who the fuck this is.” I got up and left Depp’s office, walking through the back. I peered out of the small window that gave a view to the front, to see Sisi, Moe’s bitch. Coming out, I went straight to her table and asked, “Fuck you doing in my people’s spot?”

“Oh, Mr. Krucial—” She dusted the remnants of the fried fish from her hands.

“It’s just Krucial. Save all the fucking formalities and get to explaining in less than sixty seconds as to why you in my family’s shit.”

“I wanted to offer my assistance, but I’d need something in return.”

“Assistance?” I quizzed.

“Yes. Why don’t you have a seat?”

“Nah.” I kept my eyes on her ass, letting her know the clock for the minute I’d given her was still running.

“Well, I know that I can help you, or Andreka for that matter. She wants her baby back, and I know a lot of information that can get her what she wants.”

“Like what?” I admit she’d piqued my interest.

Although I’d put the battery in Barry McCullough’s back to get shit on the move, a part of me felt like I might have to kill the nigga instead. The results of that shit would be the same though; Andreka legally would not have custody of Cooper, and every muthafucka in law enforcement would be looking my way as a suspect.

“As you know, I was married to Moriah, so I learned all about the scheme they planned to get him out. Additionally...” She picked her styrofoam cup up for a sip, but I snatched the shit. Grasping the point, she continued. “I was with the man for a long time, far longer than Andreka, so there are things I know.”

“And what you want in return?”

“Protection from you and the gang for me and my kids.”

I laughed. “Damn, all my enemies’ bitches wanna get fucked, huh?” I sat down across from her, smirking.

“Excuse me? No, I do not!”

“Aight. So why not get protection from OD? He know you well and would be happy to do the shit.”

“Because OD is not as well equipped as you. Your gang is stronger, smarter—”

“Cut the bullshit, aight? I don’t know what type of drugs yo’ big chin having ass is on, but you keep playing with me, and the Lunatics gon’ be sprinkling ya muthafuckin ashes in the blunts they smoke.

“Right plan, wrong muthafucka for ya games. You fuck with me, Andreka, or her son, I promise to God, I will butcher you and yo’ kids. And whatever plans you got to possibly get fucked, toss them muthafuckas, ’cause the only thing that’s gon’ be going up that pussy or down that throat is a hollow tip.” The slight amusement in her eyes that she’d been wearing

since she saw me emerge from the back had disappeared. “I’m really the nigga these muthafuckas say I am, and when I’m fucked with, the whole city gon’ feel it.”

“Y-yes, I understand.” She attempted to keep a straight face while constantly trying to blink her fear away. “How can I prove it to you?”

“Bring me something good, not no fucking malarky, some shit I can use, and we’ll talk.”

“Sure thing.” She got up and turned to leave out.

“Aye, yo’ kids still go to James Rhodes Private Academy?” I called out, and Sisi paused for a long ass time before looking back at me to nod in slow motion almost. Grinning, I added, “Just checking. Must be some smart-ass kids.”

Sisi gave me an uncomfortable ass smile before leaving the fish spot.

I wasn’t the type of nigga to hurt kids, or even females for that matter, but if you came for the people I loved, I didn’t have a choice. So if Sisi did anything to worsen my woman’s situation with her baby, all bets were off.



A few days later...

While looking over the sales for my taxidermy store, I heard my burner jumping, so I quickly tended to it. As I said before, the only times I got calls on it was when some shit went wrong.

Seeing the number caused a frown to form on my face because it was from Martín, the nigga who stuffed the animals with product before shipping it to me. If some shit had gone awry on his end, this was a whole other issue of a different fucking size.

“What?” I picked up, already on ten.

“What’s up, Krucial,” he replied in his heavy accent. “How are you?”

“A nigga was fine until you hit my line. Skip all the niceties and shit. What’s up?”

“We need to meet for this. I’m in town and I can come to ___”

“You can meet me in Barstow at two p.m. You should see me a little behind the sign in the dirt. When you do, pull over.”

“I—”

“Martín... two p.m.”

As soon as I ended the call, I shut the computer down, let the manager Sandy know I was out, and jumped in the whip to head to the location since it was about two hours away, and it was already five minutes until noon.

By the time I’d gotten to Barstow, it was 1:50, and that was because I’d floored it basically the whole damn way. Driving off the road onto the dirt area, I parked then got out to lean up against this large sign just in case some shit popped off, I’d have a shield along with my heat. The last thing I wanted to do was be sitting inside my whip and get blasted.

Martín pulled up six minutes later, parking right next to me before getting out to approach with a warm smile that I didn’t fuck with.

“Krucial, my friend.” He stuck his hand out which I shook.

“Aight, talk.”

“I have some good news and some bad news, my friend. Bad news is, Jeronimo is dead. He had a heart attack earlier this week.” Martín shook his head.

Jeronimo was my plug and basically the nigga who supplied me with the shit that had gotten me wealthy as fuck. Without him, shit was sure to crumble, so this nigga Martín had better have a solution for a nigga.

“My condolences. What’s up with my shipments?”

“The latest one is still on time. The team got that out before I came to the states. As far as future shipments, Jeronimo’s eldest son Cesar is now in charge of the Quintero empire, so everything has to run through him.”

“Cool. Let his ass know the schedule and that don’t shit need to be changed. He know how the fuck I get down, or do I need to let him get familiar?”

“Eh, he needs to get familiar. He wants to meet you. I must warn you, he is a bit full of himself at the moment, and he says he has to approve of anyone he’s supplying.”

“You don’t need to warn me about shit. You need to let that nigga know I’m not about to be dealing with no toddler type bullshit. If he wanna meet, I’ll give his ass that, but he not about to bitch me out. He’ll be right where his father is trying to fuck with me.”

“I know... I know how you are, which is why I am worried.” Martín sighed.

“Worry about that nigga. And if he don’t heed to ya warnings, I’d be happy to show his ass when I pull up.” Walking to my car, I threw over my shoulder, “I’m a bougie ass nigga when I travel, so make sure the amenities are up to my standards when I pull up, or we gon’ get off on the wrong foot.”

My words caused Martín to exhale heavily like he was nervous about me meeting Jeronimo’s son. Shit, he had every right to worry though because if that muthafucka was gon’ be poking his chest out, trying to show who was king, it was gon’ be a father-son funeral around that bitch.

I sped off, heading back to LA so I could rest and lay up under my lady. However, about an hour into the ride, Depp called to let me know Sisi was back at Supreme Fish waiting for me. I wanted to advise him to tell her ass to kick rocks, but I was interested to see if she brought me some real shit or if I was gon’ have to snatch her up by that broad ass chin. I shook my head thinking about her masculine ass features, making me question what type of time Moe was really on.

By the time I got to Uncle Depp's spot, I was hot and exhausted, so I removed my dress shirt, leaving on just my wife beater, slacks, socks, and shoes. Getting out onto the busy street, I stepped onto the curb before entering to see her ass right there. When Sisi spotted me, her heavy ass jaw was on the damn table basically as her eyes bounced all over a nigga.

"Hey," she whispered almost.

"Close ya mouth and come to the back." I kept walking, and she was soon following me. The dining area was too busy at the moment for any type of meeting. "What you got?" I asked once we were in the back with the trashcans and torn up boxes.

Handing a blue leather folder to me, she said, "Book of Dr. McCullough's checks. It shows the ones being written out to the guards who helped Moriah escape."

When my eyes landed on them fucking checks, I admit, a nigga was shocked. I didn't think Johnny Bravo here was gon' come through, but she had and with some good shit.

"Damn," I spoke lowly as I sifted through the hefty ass amounts.

"I need that back though because he will notice that it's gone." She reached for it, but I moved the book.

"Let me get what I need out right now and you can put the folder back. I'll get this other shit back to you after I get some copies."

"That's fine. Should we exchange numbers?" She smirked, gleam in her fucking eyes.

I chuckled.

"You think I'm a fool?" I removed the sheets of checks I needed from the book while keeping my eyes locked on Sisi. "You think you about to get my number on some faux business shit, then send a late-night text one of these days?" I laughed at her ass. "I know the game."

"No, I—"

“I thought I explained that any type of flirting or moves you think you about to make on me would get you smoked, literally. You don’t need my muthafuckin number. I know where you and yo’ chin lay y’all heads at if I need to get a message to you. And if I catch you looking at me like you wanna suck me up again, I’m gon’ put something hot in ya mouth. We clear?”

I’d learned long ago you couldn’t be nice to certain females. A nigga being nice often translated as flirting, and the last thing I needed was this bitch and her chinny chin chin thinking I wanted to fuck, or worse, Andreka thinking I wanted to. I still had to run this shit by her ass.

“Yes, we’re clear. So, I will be back to get those next week?” Sisi questioned.

“Yeah, that should be good. I’ll holla at you about the deal we made, as far as my peoples having ya back.”

“Oh my gosh, thank you!”

“Mhm. Get up out of here after you break my uncle off by purchasing some fish for ya family.” I nodded in the direction I wanted her to go.

“Oh, no problem.” She quickly turned and rushed through the establishment, folder in hand and leaving me with the checks.

“Nephew, everything good?” Depp had walked into the back to throw out some boxes.

“It’s perfect.”

“Cool, cool.” He nodded. “You know I’m always here to help you. I was in the streets before I started whipping up fish.”

“I know, but I don’t need help; never have, never will.” I examined the checks some more.

“True, you never have, but now that you have a girlfriend, you got a lot more on ya plate.”

His comment made me look up from the documents.

“Andreka is a peace of mind, my nigga, not another burden on a plate, aight? I’ll holla at you.” I turned to leave, walking through the establishment just like Sisi had.

What a fucking day.

ANDREKA

“Stay right in here with your toys while Mommy finishes lunch, okay?” I instructed Cooper who nodded. The look on his face told me he was waiting for me to leave so he could cause a ruckus, but there was nothing I could do about that at the moment.

Leaving his bright and colorful bedroom, I padded on my beautiful wooden floors to the kitchen, just as my doorbell sounded off. No one really knew where I lived besides Skyler, Iyanna, and of course Krucial. I hadn't even felt comfortable enough to give the McCulloughs my address in fear of what they'd try to pull to make me look bad.

Not saying a word, I went to peer through the peephole to see none other than Jada, my egg donor, and Skyler. Yanking the door open, I stared at them both with a frown, wondering why the hell Skyler had given my address to this woman.

“Hello to you too.” Jada walked in, already about to break her neck looking at every crevice.

“Seriously, Skyler?” I hissed.

“She said she missed you. What was I supposed to do? And she's our mother, Dreka. You can't just cut her out like that. I promise you she is not on that stuff anymore.” Skyler smiled as if what she was saying had any facts to support it.

“Jada is never not on that stuff, Skyler.”

“I can hear you.” Jada fell onto my huge couch. “This is nice, and Sky says you have extra bedrooms. My apartment

lease is coming to an end, and I was thinking about letting it go.”

“Oh, well where will you live if you let it go?” I played dumb, walking over to where she was on the couch. Skyler had joined her, deep into her iPhone like a typical girl in her late teens.

“I was thinking I could come live with my lovely daughter. I know you have the funds to support me, and if you don’t, that new boyfriend of yours does.”

“He is not about to be doing shit for you, just like I won’t.”

“See, that’s why I liked Moe better than this new cat.” She pulled a pack of cigarettes from her faux Gucci purse. “He took care of me because I was your mother. This new guy... uh—”

“Krucial,” Skyler replied, not taking her eyes off the phone.

“Yes, Krucial, he hasn’t even tried to meet me. As much money as I hear he has, I should have a new car and fancy home like this one.” She was about to light the cigarette, but I snatched it, causing her to stare up at me in shock.

“Cooper is here, if you care, and I also don’t want that nasty ass scent in my furniture. As I’m sure you’ve peeped, it’s expensive.

“And Moriah took care of you despite what type of mother you were to me because that was his choice. Krucial doesn’t have to share a dime with your ass. He takes good care of me and my baby, which is all that’s needed.”

“You’ve always been selfish, Andreka, and that’s why no good is ever gonna come to you.” She stood up. “Look at Sky... She’s beautiful, in college, childless, and will turn out to be a much better woman and daughter than you.”

“Yet you’re here in *my* house, asking *me* for money and a room.” I chuckled, upsetting her.

“Fuck this, I am leaving.” She stormed past me, bumping my shoulder purposefully. When she got to the door, she left

out, leaving my shit wide open.

“What?” I turned my lip up at Skyler who was staring me down.

“Dreka, can you just give her a loan so we can stay in the apartment?”

“No. You can stay here with me; I have plenty of room. I’ve told you that.”

“And I appreciate it, but I don’t hate Mama. I wouldn’t be able to sleep at night knowing she was homeless and possibly doing God knows what to survive.”

“Skyler, she doesn’t give a fuck about you! Why do you consistently try to make her out to be some shit she is not!”

“She has changed, I promise! Look, I know she was horrible to you, but she hasn’t been to me. I love you, Andreka, but I cannot turn my back on her because of something she did to you. I can’t help my heart. I love my mama. And that’s not to say I don’t understand why you don’t, because I do.”

As Skyler talked, I stared through my front door at my mother smoking a cigarette next to Skyler’s car. She paced back and forth, moving her head up and down every now and again.

I think the reason I hated her ass so much was because even after everything she’d done to me, I, too, loved her still. How the fuck could I love a person that treated me the way she had and talked to me like a whore on the streets? I didn’t know but I did.

“I didn’t say I don’t love her; I just refuse to overlook the things she does,” I finally replied. Pondering, I sighed and asked, “How much is the rent?”

“It’s eighteen hundred dollars a month, that’s it.”

“That’s it? That’s a lot of damn money.”

“This is LA. You know that’s the cheapest we could find, and it’s only eighteen hundred dollars because of all the government assistance she gets.”

“Be right back.”

I left the living room and went into my bedroom, closing the door. Going into my closet, I reached up top where my safe was then put in the code. Pulling out some cash, I counted up three months of rent and then shut the door, putting my safe back in hiding. Returning to the living room, I discreetly put the money in Skyler’s open tote purse.

“Thank you, Dre—”

“Make sure it goes to the rent. If I find out it was spent on anything else other than necessities, I will not give another dime. Are we clear?”

“Yes! Yes!” Skyler hugged me tightly but then yanked from me to run. When I looked back, I saw she’d scooped up Cooper who had wandered into the living room.

“Mommy, where is my chicken nuggets?” he quizzed as Skyler pecked his plump cheeks repeatedly.

“They’re coming. Let me get you a snack.” I walked by, giving Skyler a look to let her know I was serious about my previous statement.

“Okay!” Cooper shouted happily as Skyler set him to his feet so he could follow me.

“Thank you again, Dreka, and it will go for rent. I promise.”

“Come the fuck on!” Jada hollered loudly from outside before continuing to rant and curse.

Shaking my head, I said my goodbyes and grabbed an Uncrustable that had been thawed out already for my baby.

As I listened to Skyler shut the door, I hoped that all she’d said about our mother was true, no matter how hard it was for me to believe.



oday was Cooper's birthday, and now that he was a little bit older, he had requests. Long gone were the days where I did all the choosing; my baby boy now had a little bit of say. I wasn't willing to grant every wish on his list, but of course Krucial's ass did, so now here we were in this big ass house Krucial owned and made money off of renting out to people who visited California.

Decorations were all over the big backyard, including but not limited to balloons, tablecloths and runners, plates, gift bags, birthday hats, a photo booth, game stations, bouncy house, cotton candy area, and a projector. Initially, I felt like it was too much, but for the last thirty minutes, Cooper and his little friends from daycare school were having a blast, which made me smile. A few parents were here too, and I was praying that Krucial didn't do some ghetto shit to embarrass me or scare them into never allowing their children over again.

Just as the pizza was being devoured, I went to fetch the big Disney cake from the kitchen. Entering the backyard, I felt someone grab my ass, causing me to smirk.

"Not at this function, okay." I chuckled as I set the cake down, keeping the top on since the kids were currently enjoying pizza.

"Copy, you gots hat?" Cooper pulled a triangular birthday hat from the stack with his tomato sauce covered fingers.

"No, baby, he doesn't want one." I tried to save Krucial.

"Nah, I'll fuck with it, Coop." To my surprise, Krucial took the hat and strapped it on, causing me to laugh heavily.

"I thought you were too gangsta for something like that. You look crazy." I couldn't control my giggles as I stared up at him.

"Anything for Coop, and I'm still gangsta. Shit, if I hit the streets right fucking now, niggas wouldn't say shit to me about it. I'd probably start a muthafuckin trend."

"Yeah, okay." I laughed. "Alright, guys. Are you ready for the special guest?" I quizzed, making the kids cheer loudly.

Since they were just about finished eating, it was the perfect time for him to come out.

Krucial was able to get Lion Boy, this character that Cooper was obsessed with. He had all the books, the comforter set, backpack, t-shirts, and hats. The special guest was expensive to get, but my man didn't mind.

"Come out, my nigga," Krucial instructed Lion Boy while eating a breadstick, making me nudge him for his language.

The kids hopped up abruptly as Lion Boy appeared into the backyard. They surrounded him to the point where he could barely walk, but he was finally able to make it over to where the projector was. Once he did, the other parents and I were able to settle the babies in order to allow him to do his show.

He performed for the next thirty minutes and then began taking pictures with the kids, while all the parents as well as myself were able to get some of the pizza finally.

"So are you Cooper's father?" one of the white mom's, Marlene, asked, staring at Krucial. Every mom here was white except for me and one other lady.

"Are you that little muthafucka with the bangs's father?" he retorted, wiping the pizza residue off his hands with a napkin. Lord, why did she ask that? But white people were naturally nosy, simply because they didn't mind telling all of their business and secrets.

"Uh," Marlene chuckled, "I'm his mother. He has a father." She looked confused, and hell, so was I by his question. However, I knew Krucial, and something rude or abrasive was coming next.

"My bad. The peach fuzz on ya lip and swole ass back threw me off. You make sure little man ain't as confused on who you are as I am, aight? Probably why ya nigga ain't here. I wouldn't be either if my bitch looked like a truck driver—"

"Okay!" I interjected, listening to the light sniggering of the other parents, excluding Marlene.

“I just asked a question!” Marlene, who was cherry red by now, exclaimed.

“Well, I ain’t like yo’ fucking question. Watch what the fuck you say to a nigga like me. I don’ already told you how much you resemble a nigga, and if you keep at it, I might fuck around and forget you not one, knock the shit out yo’ buff ass.”

“Kapri—”

“Mommy!” Cooper came running over. “Can I wear the Lion Boy stuff?”

Thank God he interrupted.

“Sure, if it’s okay with him,” I replied.

“He say no.” Cooper dropped his head.

“Let’s ask him again.” Krucial got up to walk over to where Lion Boy was, now carrying Cooper, so I got up as well to hopefully stop whatever he was going to do. “Aye homie, my son say he wanna try yo’ shit on.” Krucial gestured to the vest and hat. “He told us you said no, but I figured he little and didn’t understand.” He smiled at Lion Boy.

“Oh well, yeah, I can’t let him wear it,” Lion Boy whispered.

“Why?”

“Well, it’s just not something I can do. I must keep this on at all times. I never let kids or anyone wear my vest and hat.” He chuckled somewhat nervously as I stood there watching.

Lowering his voice, Krucial said, “Look, bruh, I would hate to have to beat yo’ ass or shoot you in front of all these kids and while you on the job. It’s two pieces of cheap ass clothing. Let him wear the shit for two seconds, or we gon’ have a problem.”

“I don—”

“Ahhh!” Everyone including me gasped when Krucial pulled his gun out.

“Come up off the shit and give it to him. I’m done talking,” he said calmly as ever as if he wasn’t holding Lion Boy at gunpoint with one hand and holding Cooper with the other. Was this really happening?

Quickly, the man removed the vest and hat, handing it to Cooper who began jumping up and down along with the other kids as soon as Krucial put him down. It was as if they didn’t see a gun out.

“Kapri, put that away!” I pinched his bicep.

“Preciate that, bruh. Next time, just do what the fuck I ask you to, and it won’t even have to go there, aight?” He grinned and roughly patted Lion Boy’s back. As we walked off to go back to the table where the food was, he murmured, “Fake ass Simba. Should’ve shot his ass.” Krucial tucked his gun back in his waist, letting his short-sleeved Dior button up drape to cover it up.

“Why did you do that?” I asked angrily.

“Look how happy his ass is.” He pointed to Cooper. “And fuck that nigga. I’m paying him; he need to do whatever the fuck I ask his ass to. If I tell him to get out on that curb and sell dick, he better do it.”

Laughing at his crazy ass while watching Cooper jump around in that simple hat and vest made me thankful for my crazy ass boyfriend. Slipping my hand into Krucial’s, I leaned my head back for a kiss.

The rest of the party went so smoothly that occasionally I’d forgotten how Krucial had embarrassed Marlene and poor Lion Boy. I was sure the two of them would never be guests of ours again.

IYANNA

I was looking in the mirror trying to see which one of my new purses that Lolly got me would match best with my outfit for tonight. I was surprised he hadn't taken anything back from me, especially after how I went off on him, but maybe he forgot. Either way, he wasn't getting this shit back. I'd never had to return gifts, and I wasn't about to start now.

Speaking of Lolly, I was a little shocked he hadn't texted or called me since I'd seen him a few weeks ago. It was at that Maissa girl's party that I saw him, and he gave me a simple head nod and nothing else.

Usually, no matter how much I attempted to run him off or let him know I didn't like his ass, he never gave up. He would always give me some space for a few days to a week, and then be flirting with me in some way.

The fact that him not talking to me bothered me so much, was something for me to worry about. I never cared before whether Lolly came and went, so I wondered if his antics had finally worked. I sighed because the last thing I needed was to be attracted to or lusting over a man who couldn't keep it in his pants like my ex.

I heard someone knocking on my bedroom door, so I yelled, "Come in!" while focusing on myself in the mirror, posing.

"Hi, sweetie, you have a visitor." My mother was smiling weirdly.

“Visitor? Who is it?” I never had visitors over here, so this was strange. The last time I did, it was Jalen, surprising me by coming home from college one week.

“Jalen!” she whispered excitedly, which I didn’t know why.

“You let him in? Why? And if you didn’t let him in, tell his ass I do not want to see him!”

“Iyanna, he looks sorry. Why don’t you just hear what he has to say? Plus, he’s already in the living room.”

“He always looks fucking sorry because he’s a sorry ass nigga; that’s just his face. Get him out of here. I am not talking to his ass.”

My mother nodded, slowly closing the door as I turned to reface the mirror with a deep scowl on. Before I could even let it dissipate so I could finish choosing an outfit, the door came open again, and when the person’s head was too tall for the mirror, I knew exactly who it was.

“I pick that one,” Jalen said, closing the door.

Whipping around to face him, I spat, “I told her not to let you in here. There is no reason for you to be here.”

“Isn’t that my baby in there?” He reached to touch my small yet rounded stomach, but I slapped his hand down.

“Last time we talked, you wanted a DNA test, so why don’t you wait for the results of that. Oh, and I’m not paying for that shit either.”

Jalen snickered softly.

“I always loved how spicy you were.” He took a seat in the chair in my room that was covered with clothes. I guess they didn’t faze his big ass, so he was comfortable.

“What do you want? I am occupied at the moment.”

“Iyanna, breathe. I just came to see how you were. You think because I got married, I don’t still have love for you?”

“Does Tisha know you still have love for me?”

“Of course.” He smiled the smile he always did when he was lying. However, usually behind that smile was him holding back a surprise for me of some sort; now he was just being a dog. “I never once said I didn’t love you anymore. I just had to make a choice. I’m not the type of man that wants to have multiple women in his life.”

“But you did. There was Melba, Tisha, and me, so you were definitely performing a juggling act.”

“Melba is a clout chasing ass liar. I hope you don’t believe that shit she told you. The only kids I have are the ones still baking inside of you and Tisha.”

That last statement disgusted me. I went from being the only one to being one of two pregnant by the same lowlife ass man.

“Jalen, I have plans today so…” I gestured for him to speed it the hell up as I sat on my bed.

Rising, he came over and sat right next to me, and too closely.

“While being in a relationship together, you and I also became good ass friends. I ain’t realize until we broke up that you was my only true friend at that, Iyanna. Them niggas on the team is cool, but they only fuck with me because I’m at the top. If I fell off today, them muthafuckas wouldn’t answer the phone. I miss getting shit off my chest and having someone who understands me,” he said and looked... genuine?

“That’s what your wife is for, Jalen.”

Scratching his eyebrow, he let out an exasperated chuckle. “I know. I know.” For a second, he stared into the distance then regained eye contact with me. “I think because Tisha and I were so focused on the romance and the secrecy and shit, we didn’t really get a chance to build the kind of bond you and I had. I love her, but it’s different.”

“Well, I wish you guys well, and maybe over time, you’ll grow closer. That’s kind of why you don’t rush into something binding like a marriage.”

“Hopefully. I don’t think she gets me like you though. I don’t have to be perfect and shit in front of you. I can relax. You’ve known me since I was fifteen years old. Shit, before I had any of the stuff I got. You knew me when I was just a sophomore on the varsity basketball team.”

“Yeah, the only one too. I knew then that you’d make it.” I smirked, thinking back to high school.

“Hell yeah. All them other sophomores was on JV; I wasn’t fucking with that shit.”

We shared a laugh but then it got quiet with us just looking at one another.

“Jalen, no!” I shoved him back and stood up when he tried to kiss me. “We are not having some kind of moment!”

“Oh, so now that you got some new nigga with deep pockets, you don’t fuck with me, huh? We just broke up. How you already fucking with somebody else while pregnant!” he hollered, shooting up off the bed as well. He was so tall that my neck hurt to look up at him.

When he mentioned the person’s pockets being deep, it made me smirk on the inside; the nigga or someone he knew was keeping up with my social media. As soon as Lolly dropped me off with my new items from the mall, I’d taken a photo for my story.

“What I do is none of your business. The only thing you need to be worried about right now is your wife. When the baby comes, we will have it tested, as you requested, and go from there, that’s if you’re still interested in being a father.”

“Iyanna, I—”

“So this is why you came over here trying to be nice and sweet talking me.” I shook my head, realizing it. “You thought you could convince me to what, be your side chick? As well as you know me, Jalen Coolidge, you should’ve known that shit would’ve never worked with me. I may be pregnant with your child, and I may have been in love with you, still have a little left, but I would never entertain a relationship of any kind with you.”

My words appeared to have stung, because he physically twitched after hearing them.

“You gon’ regret this shit one day. You think any man with some money can replace me? Well, he can’t.”

“No, sweetie, I never thought that. You were the one who thought any bitch with something wet and warm between her legs could replace me, and now look at you; got a whole wife you barely even know.” I laughed. “You probably liked her better before you guys started living together and you got to know her, huh?”

“Fuck you, Iyanna.”

“You wish. You probably daydream about me,” I tittered, knowing it was true. Jalen may have had an ulterior motive behind his kind words, but he meant them. “Time’s up.” I opened my bedroom door for him and waited with folded arms for his ass to bounce.

Staring me down angrily, he shook his head before storming past me.

“Leaving already? I was making dinner, Jalen,” my mom cooed, rushing into the living room to greet him.

“Yes, he is leaving and not coming back. Also, if he shows up again, Daddy, shoot his ass.” I slammed the bedroom door back.



I’d finally signed the lease on an okay little apartment, with two bedrooms. It wasn’t even close to where I wanted to spend the next year or two of my life, but I had to get what I could get. Since I had a few months in my savings, I was at least good for a while until my business got back up on its feet. I just missed having a nice place.

Initially, I was going to just stay with my parents until I’d saved up enough to stay somewhere to my liking, but my mother was driving me crazy. It was almost like she was in

competition with Tisha herself, wanting me to win Jalen back as if he was some sort of prize.

I didn't want to be too hard on my mother because I understood she was from a different era and she also loved Jalen like her own son, but she was gonna make me curse her ass out.

The last thing I wanted to do was speak foully to the woman who carried me and gave birth to me, because I was now realizing how tough this shit was. So if she could give up her body for my ass and go through such agony for months just to bring me here, I could show some respect. Also, I knew my mother meant no harm and loved me. She felt like I'd been wronged and wanted it to be made right.

Anyway, I was currently shopping for some cute little things for my apartment since I still had the black card that was tied to Jalen's account. My name was on it and everything, so I would have no issue. His accountant Ted was an idiot, I'd met him, and hadn't alerted Jalen to the purchases I'd made so far since we'd been broken up, so why not get a little more? Lucky for Jalen, my father paid for all the big stuff, so I all I needed now were things like decor, dishes, and such.

"Oh." I quickly tried to turn my shopping cart around when I saw I'd walked onto an aisle Lea was on. Was this a damn joke?

"No worries, I'm about done looking." She smiled softly.

"Oh, okay. Thanks." I tried to hide my stomach. I knew she was still in contact with Lolly or could be and would probably tell all she saw.

"So you and Lolly are an item?" she questioned.

"Nope, no, just friends." I gave her a fake smile then focused back on the glassware sets.

"Were you his friend when he and I were together? You know we only recently broke up."

"No, I was not his friend when you guys were together, but yes, he told me about the breakup."

Why the fuck did I add that last part?

“Oh, he did?” Her brow went up. “You know what, I know you’re lying, but I’m in a new, happy relationship, so I won’t even get upset.”

“Girl, I don’t care if you get upset. What is you getting upset supposed to do to me?”

She laughed like she was trying to keep calm, but she had the wrong one.

“I used to be like you, all territorial over him, but he ain’t even about shit.”

“I told you before that he is not my man.”

“Oh, so you just happened to be kicking it with him at the mall and restaurant? I’d seen you guys before you dropped off those bags, and you had a few. I know Lolly, and he don’t pay unless he’s playing too.”

“Sorry, you’re wrong, and if you’ve so called moved on, why do you care so much?”

“Because I’d like to know just how much of a scumbag he is. He’s always had women, but he’s never gotten one pregnant on me.”

Her words floored me, and I’d realized I’d been so into going back and forth with her that I’d stopped concealing my tiny bump in this dress.

“No, I’m not—”

“Deer in headlights look says it all. Good luck to you, boo.” She gave me the hand and switched off with her handheld basket, leaving me shell-shocked.

I quickly finished my shopping and then loaded up my car to head home. When I got there, I was so anxious I paced for a little bit before running a bubble bath to relax my nerves.

Grabbing my phone from my bath tray, I dialed Lolly to see if Lea had spilled the beans about my unborn. I didn’t know why I didn’t want to tell him.

At first it was because he was nothing to me, and I didn't expect to build anything, but now it was the opposite; I was interested and knew once he found out I was pregnant, he'd run. Lolly seemed like the type of nigga to abandon his own child, let alone one that *wasn't* his.

"Hello?" His deep voice poured through, making me smile, which was new.

"Hey... how are you?" I tested the waters.

"Straight like always, I can't complain. How you doing?" He sounded calm and normal, not like he'd been told by his ex-girlfriend that a potential boo he'd never bedded was pregnant.

"I'm alright. I did run into your ex today."

"Who?"

"Negro, how many of your exes do I know? And you don't seem like you have many, just a lot of hoes."

Chuckling, he replied, "Sorry. I'm high as shit."

"Yeah, I can tell. Anyway, from how she came at me, I can tell she still likes you, even though she says otherwise."

"Shit, I could've told you that shit."

"Someone else likes you too..." I shut my eyes, already feeling dumb for saying anything.

"And who is that?"

"The lovely Iyanna. Don't start feeling yourself. I know I have that effect on niggas."

When we laughed in unison, I felt relieved.

"Iyanna, huh? I don't know about her ass; she gives a nigga a lot of mixed signals and the run around. Plus, last time we talked, she said she wasn't with the whole Lunatic shit, and that's a part of my life."

"I know I've been terrible, but that's why I didn't want to talk to you freshly out of a relationship. I was confused, hurt, angry, and just a bunch of other shit. I wasn't in a place to

date. Jalen and I haven't even been broken up for a year. Also, you just got out of a long-term relationship as well. I'm not rebound material."

"I get it, and I apologize for being so aggressive. I guess I just wasn't used to not getting the females I wanted, so I was pushing the issue. Yes, I did just get out of a long-term relationship, but it wasn't the same as what you had with that nigga. Lea was a fuck buddy and just turned into my girlfriend because she stuck around. It was never no deep bond or anything like that."

"Then why did you care enough to beat up her new boo while with me?"

"I told you, he was talking shit, and I couldn't go out like that. I got a reputation to protect, mine and my gang's."

"I guess I understand..."

"So you gon' give me a real chance or what?"

"I mean, you did buy me some nice purses, so I guess I can do that. You are a little fine too."

He let out a raspy chuckle in response.

"Aight, cool. Now what you got on?" he asked, making me roll my eyes.

I didn't know when I was going to break the news to Lolly, not like I could keep it a secret forever, but for now, I was gonna enjoy him. He was a nice distraction, physically and mentally.

JORY

“**S**hit,” I grumbled, letting off a boatload inside of Maissa in the shower. We stood there panting for a little bit, then I let her down to her feet. “Fuck,” I groaned, making her giggle as she began to wash off her body. I used to think I wasn’t a fan of that surgery shit, but it looked nice as fuck on her.

“I still got it, huh?” She flashed her pretty smile as she continued to scrub her body with some vanilla scented soap.

“You never lost it.” I began to lather up myself.

We finished our showers then brushed our teeth in the double sinks before walking into the bedroom together.

“I wonder is it hot out.” She sighed.

“What you got planned for the day?” I frowned.

“Just gonna go have drinks and light snacks by the pool at SLS with Erica and Sabrina.”

I watched Maissa for a minute as she picked out her outfit for the day: a short ass dress, heels, and the purse to match. She was so meticulous with how she put herself together that she even laid out her fucking jewelry and shit before stepping back to eye it all together.

“You love that hotel, huh?”

“I do. It’s super nice, and other than the Waldorf, it’s my favorite.” She started to spread lotion all over her frame.

I wanted to pick her brain on the business Taissa mentioned to me, but I knew I couldn't. I didn't wanna ruin Maissa's surprise, especially one of this nature because I was really worried in the past that her ass just wanted to spend her days shopping and fucking off. Now that I knew she was actually working on something behind the scenes, outside of her classes that she frequently skipped, it heightened my attraction to her. I'd started feeling a disconnect between us and shit, but lately, I'd felt it returning.

However, that didn't diminish the feelings I had for Taissa. I liked her, a lot, even more than I realized, because she'd been ghosting me ever since Andreka caught us, and it bothered my ass.

"Aight, well, you need some bread?" I offered.

"Of course. You know Rodeo is very close by, and I need some accessories." She came closer to me, running her soft hands across my damp abs.

"You know the drill."

"You still don't trust me?" Maissa pouted.

"I trust you, but I also know you got a fucking shopping addiction, and I ain't trying to come back to an empty safe because a new summer collection dropped somewhere."

"Fine." She rolled her eyes before snatching her outfit and going into her walk-in closet, shutting the door.

After making sure the door was actually shut, I tilted my dresser and pulled the small door of the wall open to get to my safe. Grabbing some cash after unlocking it, I secured everything back and let Maissa know she could emerge.

"It better be a lot for my troubles too, Jory."

I handed her four knots that had her squealing, then pecked her lips before going into my own closet to get dressed for the day. By the time I was done and ready to dip, Maissa was long gone, so I took a moment to call Taissa's ass.

My pride had been getting the better of me the past few days, so when she didn't hit me up or randomly drop by to

wash clothes, we didn't talk. I guess a part of me felt less guilty if she was the main one initiating shit.

“Hello?” Taissa answered, obviously moving around.

“Hey, you occupied?”

“Just doing some work; can't really talk on the phone.”

“Damn, did I do something?”

“Nope. I just can't lift heavy boxes, unpack them, and organize my store while on the phone. Maybe we can chat later.”

I paused for a minute before replying, “Yep, just let me know.”

“K.” She hung up quicker than I could process her reply.

I stared at my phone for a minute like the shit had grown ears then pocketed it. I had business to handle, and I wasn't about to put pussy first.

I ran the streets for the next few hours, but once I got an open window, I decided to pull up on Taissa since talking on the phone was too much for her ass.

Parking right in front of her candle shop, I cut down my loud ass music and then hopped out to walk in. Other than Taissa, it was only one customer checking out different scents, so I felt comfortable walking up on Taissa as she arranged a table.

“Can you talk in person?” I smiled, but when she looked up at me, she wore a sullen expression. “You sure I ain't do nothing? Fuck is wrong with you?”

“I can ring you up right here.” She ignored me, helping the customer with her basket full of candles.

I stood there like a fucking dope while they chatted, laughed, and discussed all damn one hundred scents this lady decided to purchase. Hearing the amount she spent made me wonder just how good business was for Taissa. Baby girl was making money.

“Sorry about that,” Taissa said after the woman left. “What’s up though?”

“Why you acting funny? I don’t have time for games.” I folded my arms.

“I’m not acting funny. I’m just trying to keep my distance; that way, any feelings I have for you will go away.”

“And why the fuck do you want that?”

“Because I know for sure that you’re never going to leave Maissa to be with me. Even if you did, I don’t know how cool I’d be with dating my sister’s ex. So it’s best we just cut it off now.”

“Why do I need to leave Maissa? I thought you were fine with how the fuck everything was going?”

“I was fine with it initially, but then I realized I was accepting less than I deserve because I thought I should’ve been thankful to have a man like you interested in me. But that’s not true. I’m a great woman, and a lot of men would feel lucky to have me.”

Fucking Andreka must’ve gotten in her damn head because this didn’t even sound like Taissa. A part of me wanted to check Krucial’s girl for being in my business, but I wasn’t trying to have beef with my nigga over a female that wasn’t even truly mine.

“Taissa.” I grabbed her hand to pull her closer to me since she was standing so far away behind the counter. “How you gon’ penalize me for yo’ thoughts? I never said you wasn’t good enough for me or whatever the fuck you just said. I been told you if it wasn’t for Mai, I’d be with you.”

“Yeah, and that sounds nice, but the fact remains that Maissa does exist and is your girlfriend. I am thirty-two. I am not gonna be your side chick until I’m forty, wishing I could’ve gone back in time and found a man of my own. I want a husband, children, a family. Being on the side with you is not enough.”

“Taissa, I can’t just let you be.”

“Break up with her then. Call her right now and tell her you wanna be with me, and then we can keep this going.” She cocked her head, I guess waiting for me to do what she’d said, but I wasn’t; I couldn’t. “I didn’t think so.”

“You asking for a lot.”

“Which is why I need a man of my own, because asking him to take me seriously and just be with only me is not a lot for him like it is for you.”

“Taissa—”

“Jory, I am already behind in today’s work, and I can’t risk losing any more time to discuss a dead end situationship. So unless you’re interested in purchasing some candles, right now, I cannot talk because I am on the clock.” She turned to leave to the back.

“How you on the clock and you own this muthafucka?”

Stopping, she replied, “Because these are my store hours; therefore, I am on the clock. While on the clock, I need to be working in order to pay my bills. I’m not Maissa. I don’t have a cushion to fall back on if money ain’t right.”

I decided to let her smart-mouthed ass keep walking because in a minute, I was gon’ say something I might’ve regretted.

When I got in the car, I was still heated, so I hit up Krucial to find out where he was. When he told me was eating at Supreme Fish, I headed straight there. I was a little hungry myself, and that good ass fish always hit the spot.

Upon entering, I spotted Krucial seated in one of the booths throwing down. After saying what’s up to him, I placed my own order then sat across from his ass.

“I gotta talk to you, it’s not no business shit though.” I got right to it, damn near salivating watching him dip his fish in that fire ass Yami sauce.

“Go ’head,” he stated calmly, keeping his eye on his meal before slowly giving me eye contact.

“It’s about Andreka, but chill out,” I said when he sat back, folding one arm across his chest and taking a sip of his drink in the white cup.

“Hurry up then, nigga, because I ain’t gon’ be chill for too much longer. I can’t think of any reason why you’d need to speak with me about my bitch, other than you fucking her, and although I wouldn’t believe it, I’d knock the shit out you.”

“Wait, you wouldn’t believe me? Yo’ right hand?”

“Nah, you not on her level; she’d never let you fuck. And you may be my right hand, but she’s my fucking everything; there’s a difference.”

“I fuck with that.” I nodded. “Aight so, you know I told you about me messing with Maissa’s sister? Well, Andreka saw the shit, caught us, and I guess she gave Taissa some female empowerment pep talk bullshit, so now she don’t wanna fuck with me.”

“And?”

“*And* I need you to control ya girl, get at her about sticking her nose in my muthafuckin business, bruh. I don’t like that shit. Telling her she too good for me or some shit Taissa was talking about. I *know* she got it from Andreka.”

He sat up, brows dipped as he set his drink on the table.

“So let me make sure I understand. You want me to check my woman because she convinced yo’ side chick, who is also yo’ bitch’s sister, not to fuck with you?”

“In so many words.” I stood my ground.

“Nah. What *you* need to do, nigga, is get a bitch that got a mind of her own. If she don’t wanna fuck with you because of what Andreka said, that ain’t got nothing to do with my girl. How you mad ’cause one of ya hoes smartened up and got some self-esteem?”

“It ain’t even that! I don’t mind her having confidence, being demanding and shit, but she ain’t choose to be. Andreka did it for her.”

“Sounds like you got a personal problem.” He started balling his food up just as mine was brought to me. After trashing his stuff, he came back by me and tapped my shoulder, saying, “Get yo’ shit together, Jory. I don’t wanna have too many more conversations about ya fucking love life, nor do I wanna have anymore that involve my woman. If you want that side hoe so bad, pick up ya nuts and go get the bitch. But word of advice: Whenever you out here juggling females, you always gon’ have problems whether there’s an Andreka in her ear or not. Tighten up and keep yo’ muthafuckin eyes on this bread and not familial pussy.”

I didn’t even get a chance to say anything back before he strutted out, responding to a few people outside who’d said what’s up to him.

All I knew was Andreka needed to mind her fucking business, at least when it came to my personal life. If the shit happened again, there would be an issue which meant me stepping to her ass myself. I tried to be respectful this time, letting the homie know so he could get at her, but that was a one-time thing.

I sat inside of Supreme Fish, eating my food and chopping it up with Depp for a little until I was done. I bought one of them brownie-donut desserts to eat at home, then said my goodbyes.

“Oh shit, is that, Jory?” this nigga named Shoki, a Yob, walked past me with a smirk.

“I ain’t in the mood today, nigga,” I responded calmly. I was irritated enough, and if he kept trying to be funny, I couldn’t say I wouldn’t put a bullet in his ass.

“My bad, bruh. Hopefully you off yo’ period soon.” He laughed.

“Last time I’m gon’ tell you to watch yo’ fucking mouth, muthafucka.” I walked off, feeling myself getting too damn angry for even my own good.

I put my food in my passenger’s seat through the driver’s side, and as I was about to get in, my phone chimed. Pulling it

out, I started to read the text as I heard a car pull up on the side of me and stop. Looking back, I saw it was Shoki, showing off the engine in his Maserati by revving the gas to get my attention.

“Aye, Jory, one question!” he hollered through his passenger window. I ignored his ass, responding to my texts. “How Maissa doing? I like that new body she got.”

I flipped around fast as fuck, but his bitch ass sped off, knowing there was no way I could catch him, even if I hopped in my whip right now. On foot wasn't even an option for a fast ass car like he was driving.

Angrily hopping in my shit, I slammed the door, fuming and wishing I'd just popped his ass when he first started talking to a nigga. I was typically a chill muthafucka though, so I didn't let everything rile me up, but this was the one time I regretted not just laying a nigga out immediately. Him speaking on my girl crossed the fucking line. I wouldn't be able to sleep good until I got my hands on his ass.

ANDREKA

I'd been studying all damn day and felt I deserved a break. I usually did my hardest studying when Cooper was with his grandparents, because although we were beefing harder than the east and west coast in the nineties, I knew deep down my son would never be harmed. Also, they cared too much about their reputations, not only in the medical field but their little social groups to do anything foolish like kidnap him or worse.

I had them by the balls in so many words, and I took advantage of the shit. After all they'd done to me, I didn't feel bad at all either, especially not for Emily's ass. Her husband was just collateral damage.

As I lay across Krucial's big ass bed since I was at his house, I texted a little bit back and forth with Iyanna before sending one to my man. He'd been busy all day, clearly, because he'd only texted me a few quick check-in type messages. I appreciated it though, because with Moe, he'd go a whole day and not say shit to me. I accepted it then because I figured it was hard to be on your phone while running the streets, but now that I saw it was possible, I just shook my head at my former naive self.

While reading a reply from Iyanna, telling me about how Jalen tried to smooth talk her into being his side chick, I saw I got a text from a number that wasn't stored in my iPhone. It looked like a photo was sent, so I backed out of the conversation with Iyanna to see it in full. My heart dropped seeing Sisi and my nigga in Supreme Fish, seated across from

one another like some sort of fucking date. I was so baffled that I looked at the picture upside down, upright, to the left, and then right. No way Sisi McCullough, who was just talking about Krucial like he was a dessert she couldn't wait to dive into, was chilling with my man.

Once I was able to pull my eyes away from the photo, I read the message that came with it.

+1(213) 555 - 7754: And this isn't the first or last time :)

Studying the number, I figured it was probably from one of those burner apps, but I'd store it just in case; you never knew. I wasted no time getting off the bed and slipping into my sandals before rushing out to my car.

Krucial didn't live exactly close to Supreme Fish, so I had to drive at record speed if I wanted to get there in time to catch his ass in the act. Unfortunately for me, it was midday, after 1 p.m., so it took me a whole hour to get to the fish place. Parking, I got out in a hurry, leaving my purse in the passenger seat as I stormed into Supreme Fish.

"Hi, is Kapri around?" I asked the girl up front.

"Oh, I'm not sure—hey!" She shouted after me when I went past her into the back where the kitchen was. The older black men and one Mexican in there cooking, gaped at me like I was a madwoman, but I gave no fucks. Rushing into the back area, all I saw was trash, boxes, and Krucial's uncle Depp.

"Hey, pretty girl, what you doing back here?" Depp frowned out of confusion.

"Hi, Depp." I attempted to be respectful. Depp was like Krucial's second father, so I didn't want to be off-putting in his presence no matter how pissed I was. Even worse, Depp was Krucial's mom's brother, so if he wasn't fond of me, she probably wouldn't be either. "Is Kapri here?"

"He was, but he left about twenty minutes ago. Is everything okay?"

"Umm, yeah, it is." I felt defeated as I remembered my phone was in my purse so I couldn't text Krucial. "Thank

you.” I turned to leave, but Depp grabbed my hand very softly, making it a bit uncomfortable.

“You know if you ever need anything, I’m here for you. I love my nephew, and since he loves you, I gotta have that in my heart for you as well.” He smiled.

Maybe I was overreacting. He seemed to have good intentions, but his touch said something else. I’d been flirted with since I was probably twelve years old, and sometimes the flirtation came from men much older than my underage ass, unfortunately. By saying that, I pretty much had it down pat as far as being able to tell when a man was trying to be fresh with me.

“I appreciate that, thank you.” I slowly removed my hand from his grasp.

“Sure thing, pretty girl.” Depp winked.

I damn near ran back through the restaurant to get to my car just because of how awkward I felt, but I also wanted to find Krucial. As soon as I was secure in my vehicle, I called him.

“Sup, beautiful.” I could hear him smiling; I could picture it too, which made me blush. The simple sound of his voice had washed away the uncomfortable feeling still lingering within me from my interaction with Depp... Damn, my man was powerful.

Quickly, I had to remember that I was angry with him.

“Hey, where are you?” I wanted to sound calm so he’d give up his location with ease.

“Rumwood apartment, why? You good?”

“I need to come there, it’s urgent.”

“Uhh... aight.”

“Unless you have some company that you don’t want to know about me,” I snapped unintentionally, not liking his answer.

“What? Fuck is you talking about?”

“Nothing. See you in a few.” I hung up on his annoying ass.

Again, I was back on the road, dipping through LA traffic and using the hell out of this immaculate engine in my Range Rover. I eased up a little bit when I got to rugged ass Rumwood though, not wanting to alert niggas who were hugging the block and on edge. Just the looks I got from the few I drove by was enough to make me nervous, and I wasn't even the scary type.

Finally, I'd made it to Krucial's apartment out here and saw he was with a few other dudes, one of them being his friend Quay. I could tell they weren't just kicking it by the way the men listened intently to whatever Krucial was explaining.

Everyone's eyes locked on me as I parked right next to Krucial's Bentayga, watching him come over then open my door for me.

“What's up?” He leaned into the car to kiss me with his soft, thick lips before helping me out of the truck. All them niggas he was talking to were watching. “Why the fuck you hang up on me?” he inquired straightaway.

“I said bye. I guess you didn't hear me,” I lied, feeling a bit intimidated by him in the moment.

He was wearing a simple white Balenciaga t-shirt, black track pants, and some Off-White Jordan 1's. A nice silver Patek adorned his wrist, and he smelled scrumptious.

Krucial nodded at my answer, looking at me like he didn't believe that shit, but I couldn't care less.

“What's so urgent?”

“What is this about?” I whipped out my phone with the picture pulled up on the screen.

Opening his mouth then closing, he said, “I been meaning to talk to you about that shit. Come on.” He turned to go to his apartment.

“Talk to me about what, Kapri! Why the fuck are you meeting up with this bitch!” I barked, standing still.

“Aye, y’all niggas get up out of here. I’ll holla at y’all in a little bit to finish up,” Krucial let the men know, and they did exactly as instructed, leaving in less than a minute. Soon as they were in their cars, Krucial closed the space between us. “Don’t yell at me. I ain’t yell at yo’ ass. I’m not yo’ son, and I’m not whatever niggas you used to dealing with, so when you speak to me, check yo’ muthafuckin tone. Same respect I show you as my woman, you show that shit to me as ya man, or we not gon’ get along too well, and I’m the last nigga you don’t wanna get along with. Aight?”

“Yes,” I replied in a snappy tone, not wanting to surrender too much. “Come on.” I switched past him toward his apartment unit. It was the top one out of the four in this lot. I heard him chuckle at me from behind, taking my anger as a joke like usual.

Upon walking into the apartment, he closed the door and said, “Quit with the attitude, switching and shit. You know that shit gets my dick hard.” He flashed me his beautiful set of teeth accompanied by a raspy chuckle that would’ve had me floating had I not been furious with his ass.

“Explain the fucking picture, Kapri.”

“Old girl came at me asking for protection, and in return, she’d give me what I needed to help you gain custody of Coop.”

“How the fuck is she gonna help my custody case!”

“Andreka, relax yo’ fucking tone. I ain’t gon’ say it again.” He paused and waited for me to adjust my body and face before continuing. “And I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but she was married to the muthafucka that the McCulloughs helped break out of jail. You show the courts they had a hand in a whole ass felony, it’s gon’ be on some open and shut shit. She’s just backup in case Barry don’t come through.”

“No, uh uh, I don’t want that bitch’s help.” I shook my head.

“Baby, I know you don’t fuck with her ass, but if you can use the bitch, then why not? All I gotta do is throw a few of

my niggas on her to so-called keep her safe until we get what the fuck we need.”

“No, Kapri. She wants to fuck you, and this is just a way for her to do it. You’re a man, so you don’t get it. This is what we as women do, look for a reason to get close to a nigga we like!”

Pulling me in and wrapping his arms around my body, he pecked me gently.

“I’ve been around bitches that wanna fuck me for years, and unless I wanna fuck them too, it don’t matter. I’m yo’ nigga, and just because a bitch is in my face offering me some pussy, don’t mean I’m gon’ take it. I may be a man, but I peeped game that she wanted to get her cheeks clapped from day one. I let her know straight up that shit’ll get her rolled up and put in the air.”

I processed his words as he kissed the side of my face then my neck. I had faith in his words, and it was nice to hear that he was mine. I already knew it, but I would never get tired of the reassurance.

“I don’t know. She told me to my face how fine she thought you were.”

“Most hoes think that.” He smirked.

“Kapri, I’m serious. I could hear and see the lust when she said it.”

“I’m serious too. Just like I know a lot of niggas think you fine as fuck, ’cause you are. But I know you mine, that pussy definitely mine, and so is yo’ heart, so I don’t give a fuck what them niggas think. Unlike Moe, I could be dead, and you still wouldn’t fuck with one of them.”

“Oh, you think so?” I chuckled as he caressed my ass in these thin tights. I was getting super horny feeling them strong arms and hands on my body.

“Nah, I know.”

“Let me guess, you’ll haunt me from the grave?”

“Hell nah. I’m gon’ be in heaven, living life. A nigga ain’t got time to be worried about yo’ ass. Can’t be having sexual thoughts while I’m up there with my nigga God. That’s gon’ stress me the fuck out.” We both laughed heavily for a minute. “You’ll just never meet another muthafucka like me. I don’t spoiled you. So you naturally ain’t gon’ want shit else.”

“You’re right.” I got serious, kissing him.

Our lip locking session soon turned nasty, and he was picking me up to carry me to the back bedroom shortly after. I guess I had no issue using Sisi while enjoying the dick she wanted so badly but would never have. But if she even tried, I’d put her in the same place her husband currently was.



*C*artagena, Colombia...

A smile spread across my face as I lay on the front of the yacht in my bathing suit, basking in the sun. I was so relaxed and had been for the last three days, thanks to my man.

He kept it real, saying he had business to tend to in Colombia, but before we got to Cali, we stopped here in Cartagena to enjoy ourselves. Ever since we got here, via private jet, and checked into our fly ass two-bedroom suite at this beautiful hotel that gave us our own private jacuzzi, there had been nothing but good food, even better conversation, and phenomenal sex. And now, for the first time, I was on a big, beautiful yacht with plenty of food, champagne, and fresh fruit. I could get used to this shit.

I wanted to bring my baby boy along, but when Krucial let me know how dangerous Cali, Colombia, our main destination, would be, I opted not to. Instead, I paid Skyler a nice chunk of change to watch my baby for the five days we’d be gone. It didn’t take much convincing since she’d have my whole house to herself and had kept Cooper for me plenty of times when I was still with his father.

“It’s so pretty out here. I’ve never been out of the country, but now I think I’ve been bitten by the travel bug.” I sat up, beaming as I felt the perfect temperature of the weather on my face.

Krucial was still laid back, looking just as sexy as ever, shirtless and in some Louis Vuitton swim trunks. I had the matching two-piece bathing suit on, with the sandals and purse sitting right next to me. I chuckled eyeing my man who thought couples that matched were corny but went along with it for me.

“We gotta go plenty more fucking places that ain’t for work for a nigga so we can bring Coop too.” He ran his large hand down my thigh. I loved how he always thought about Cooper as if he were his. “Can’t believe you’ve never been out the country.”

“Or on a yacht.” I sipped my champagne. “What?” I asked since Krucial was watching me closely.

“You beautiful, baby,” he replied softly like he was busy admiring what he saw.

“Thank you.” I became flushed in the face.

“You gon’ see a lot of shit fucking with me.” He brought me over to him so that I was straddling his lap. Sitting up himself, he wrapped his arms around my body. He smelled like he’d been freshly pulled from the oven of Dior. “Before I met yo’ ass, I ain’t realize how bad I needed a woman to spoil.”

“Well, I have no problem being that one.” I winked before pecking him, causing us both to laugh.

“Then I got Coop too, so he can teach me some shit before we have another one.”

“Another one? Claiming Cooper now?”

“I been claiming him since I saw you at that muthafuckin gas station. Don’t act like you ain’t know.” Tossing my head back with a laugh, I nodded. “But I got love for that little nigga already ’cause he a part of you. He funny as fuck too, and don’t even know it.”

“Yeah, he is. I just love him.” I reminisced. “I love you too.”

“I love yo’ ass more.” He kissed my neck.

“You know I can spoil you too.”

“Word?” His brow shot up.

Nodding, I set my champagne glass to the side and climbed off of his lap, grabbing a cough drop from my purse. I bought a bag of them just for this trip, and not for medical reasons, so I kept a few on me even when we left the room.

I giggled when Krucial’s facial expression changed to shock as I reached to reveal his long, thick, dick. Just from touching it he was already hard, flattering me and making my mouth salivate. There was nothing like a handsome nigga with a beautiful big dick to go with it.

Wasting no time, I took him into my mouth that I knew was nice and warm by the way he moaned softly. I started off slow, gliding my mouth up and down while allowing my saliva to coat his dick. Every time his head hit the back of my throat, he moaned because I let it go deep without gagging, thanks to the cough drop. My mouth was like a heated faucet as I sucked and slurped while toying with his balls.

“Mmm,” I hummed, enjoying the performance myself.

“Dreka,” he groaned in a tone I’d never heard before, motivating me to keep up the momentum.

I continued sucking him off, twirling my tongue around the head occasionally and deep throating it at others as the boat we were on continued to sail across the beautiful waters. The music we had playing continued, with “Shoot My Shot” by IDK currently blasting from the high-quality portable speaker.

Suddenly, I felt Krucial grip my hair so roughly that he accidentally removed the Louis Vuitton scarf I had on. I’d tied it across the top of my head, letting my fresh weave flow down my back. Moments later, he was grunting yet again, spilling warm fluid down my throat and breathing hard after.

“See.” I smirked, sitting up and tossing my hair.

Shaking his head at me in disbelief, he commanded, “Come ride this shit.”

And I did just that.

That poor captain had gotten an eye full this afternoon, but I enjoyed every minute of it.

Once Krucial and I climaxed, him for the second time and me for the maybe sixth, we went down to the bottom part of the boat to shower together. The shower took a minute since we were playing around, feeling one another up, him doing most of the groping with his freaky ass.

“How many asses have you licked, Kapri?” I quizzed once we were out and in the small bedroom area. He’d surprised me when he did it, but I didn’t stop his ass.

“Fuck out of here. That was a first-time thing, and only for yo’ ass ’cause you was looking edible in that shower. You better stop repeating that shit ’fore I throw you over into that muthafuckin water,” he fussed, cracking me up.

We were only in our towels still, and I saw a mirror by where Krucial was seated, so I stood in front of him but between his legs, strategically blocking his face. You could surely see his body, especially when he wrapped one arm around my waist, but I didn’t want to expose too much of him. Snapping a photo with my phone, I posted it to my story with a lovey-dovey caption then put it down to chat with my man while we got dressed for dinner.

My phone chimed once Krucial was back in the bathroom doing something, so I went to check it. It was a text from that same number that had exposed him and Sisi.

+1(213) 555 - 7754: You just don’t listen do you. Lol.

+1(213) 555 - 7754: I guess you like playing dumb and getting played. Get some self-esteem.

I was gonna find out who the fuck this was, and I wanted to do it before Krucial did so I could beat their ass. I knew if I told him, he’d take over, and I didn’t want that. I wanted to be

very much a part of this person's demise. Also, it was nice having someone keep an eye on Sisi for me without asking. I needed the little gems this person dropped... for now. I trusted Krucial, but I didn't put shit past anybody.

KRUCIAL THA GREAT

*C*ali, Colombia...

Now that Andreka and I were at our final destination, it was time to take care of the business that this trip was for. I'd only be in this muthafucka for a day and some change, not wanting to expose too much of my personal life to these niggas. I would've come alone, handled this shit then bounced, but I ain't feel right leaving my girl behind and going to a whole other country. Shit, she got kidnapped when I was still in the same fucking state, so nah. And even though I wished a muthafucka would and doubted a nigga would even try me again, I ain't wanna take no chances.

"Wow, you look so handsome." Andreka came up behind me to look in the mirror I was dressing in.

Currently, we were in a rented mansion, so we'd have some privacy. I did make Jeronimo's son foot the bill by giving me the bread though. I didn't trust his ass enough for him to set up any type of accommodations for me and my lady. From the sound of shit, the nigga was ignorant, and I'd hate to have to murk my plug because he was essential in how I made so much cash.

"Fuck you mean 'wow'? Don't a nigga always look handsome?" I brought her to the front of me, hugging her shapely frame from behind and kissing her neck.

"Yes, you do. I can still compliment you, can't I?"

"Shit, anytime, and follow it up with this." I brushed my hand between her legs, making her squirm. She had on some

tight ass short one piece that she called pajamas.

“Kapri! Stop, you have to go. It’ll be here when you get back.”

“Aight.” I let her go then made sure my AP was fastened tightly. “You bet not fall a-fucking-sleep either, Yami.” I kissed her before heading to leave the big ass bedroom we’d been in all day, fucking and eating.

“I won’t,” she cooed, playing with me.

I left out the house to see the car service Cesar had sent for me.

“Evening, Señor Krucial.” He smiled.

Nodding my head to the nigga who was holding the back door open for me, I climbed in and got comfortable. Waiting for the driver to get back in, I loaded my Glock. By the time I was finished, we were on the road.

“What’s ya name, man?” I questioned the chauffer, wiping my shit off.

“Samuel, señor.”

“Just so you know, Samuel, you try any funny shit, and one is going right in the back of ya muthafuckin neck.” I tapped the area with my heat. “You won’t die, but you’ll be paralyzed and wishing every day that someone would just put one between ya eyes. Understand?”

“Sí, señor.” He nodded, licking his lips nervously.

“Cool.” I sat back, locking my gun back in my waist.

The ride lasted for about thirty minutes before Samuel pulled into a large ass estate. I already knew Jeronimo and his family were balling out of fucking control, but seeing the shit again always motivated a nigga. I couldn’t wait to have damn near my own land and shit. We made it to the house portion, where Samuel finally came to a stop.

“We are here.” He unbuckled to get out.

“I got my own door, just get me to this nigga,” I said before hopping out the truck, peeping my surroundings.

Once Samuel made it around to me, he guided me inside the big ass palace-like mansion, until we ended up at double wooden doors. Knocking softly, he stepped back to wait, and soon, another Hispanic nigga I didn't recognize answered the door.

"Señor Quintero, I have Señor Krucial," Samuel announced as we walked in, before the nigga I didn't know shoed him off, closing the door behind him. When I looked to the right, I spotted my stuffer Martín who spoke by lifting his glass of liquor. I responded with a simple ass nod.

"Well, well, well, the man of the hour." The muthafucka I assume was Cesar stood up from behind a big ass brown desk. The office alone was the same size as my entire Rumwood apartment.

"We don't need any guests privy to this conversation," I replied, referring to the muthafucka that had answered the door.

"Oh, Emil is my little brother. It's okay." Cesar gestured toward him. Emil was now eyeing me in a way that was gon' get his ass killed in a minute.

"I don't give a fuck who he is. This ain't no family reunion, this is business. Unless he's directly involved with this deal, he needs to get the fuck out," I snapped.

"Hey, man—"

"Emil!" Cesar cut his brother off. "Just step outside until we finish the business, okay?" The whole time Cesar spoke, he kept his eyes on me. I could feel his energy; he didn't like me and vice versa.

"Listen to ya brother before you piss me off, Emil," I added to Cesar's statement.

Emil stared me down then shook his head at his brother like he'd been betrayed, before stepping out.

"Getting off to an interesting start, huh?" Cesar laughed, gesturing for me to sit down, and I did.

“I told you, he’s not one of the soft ones,” Martín chimed in.

“Yes. Did you want a drink?” Cesar offered.

“Nah, I won’t be here long. I leave tomorrow night, so I wanna get this shit done and over with so I can get back to the states. You wanted to meet me, now you have, so what needs to happen for my rotation using your product to continue?” I got straight to it.

I wasn’t here to kick it or make friends around this bitch. Mixing business with pleasure was never some shit I did.

Sitting down with his freshly poured drink, Cesar nodded like he was thinking.

“You’ve made my father a lot of money, and I have no doubt that you will do the same for me. However, I did want to meet you, feel you out, and see if I like you.” His accent was thick, causing me to take a moment to make sure I understood every word.

“See if you like me? Nigga, do you wanna make money or not? I’m not trying to marry ya fucking daughter. I’m trying to keep money in everybody’s pockets. Fuck whether you like a nigga or not.”

Cesar began laughing like something was funny.

“I love money, mi amigo, and I cannot wait to see how much you make me. But there is something else, and it’s funny you mentioned marriage.” He took a sip of his drink. I wanted to speak but I was more interested in his weird ass continuing. “There is one new stipulation in this deal you initially had with my father.”

“Get to the point, muthafucka.”

“Mariana!” he called out, and moments later, a woman around my age entered wearing a dress that was so tight, I could see every part of her anatomy. She was a pretty bitch, very fucking pretty, reminding me of Eva Mendes. “Krucial, meet Mariana.”

“Buenas tardes (good afternoon),” Mariana purred sort of, and I ignored her ass.

“One of my father’s dreams was always for my baby sister Mariana to get over to the states to make something of herself and to be far away from the cartel. And the best way for that to happen is with an American husband,” Cesar explained.

“Cesar—” Martín attempted to interject, but Cesar cut his eyes at him, rendering the nigga silent.

“Well, I hope she finds the nigga, but I don’t know what the fuck this has to do with me.” I played the fool. I knew exactly where he was going with this bullshit, and he had the wrong nigga.

“I’d like to think she already has, my friend.” Cesar polished his drink off. “I think you’d be perfect, and you’d only have to stay married long enough for her to get the green card.”

“Unfortunately, I don’t give a fuck what you think. I came here to talk business, none of this other shit. So if everything is squared away, I’m gon’ see myself out.” I rose up, and Cesar did as well. “Watch ya moves, my nigga. Anything too abrupt might get you hurt.”

Cesar threw his hands up, chuckling, “I will say this. If you don’t agree to marry Mariana, there is no deal. I will give you some time to think about it.” He winked.

“Ain’t shit for me to think about. Tell that muthafucka who drove me here to hurry the fuck up and take me home ’fore I put a bullet in everybody in this room.” I started to walk off.

“Krucial—” Cesar grabbed me, and I swiftly put my gun to his head. Like clockwork, three big niggas burst into the room, guns drawn on me, but unbeknownst to them, very little put fear in a nigga’s heart.

“Tell that muthafucka bring the car around,” I repeated, gun stuck between Cesar’s eyes. “Tell ya boys death ain’t something I fear, so the big gun shit ain’t moving me.”

A few moments passed before Cesar directed his men, using his hands only, to put their heat away.

“Samuel! He’s ready!” Cesar called out.

I kept the gun in his face for a couple more seconds before putting it back up and treading out. As soon as I left the room, I heard someone behind me, and when I looked, I spotted Mariana.

“Am I not attractive?” she asked with a salacious smirk once she was walking alongside me toward the front doors.

Stopping in my tracks, I turned to look down into her face.

“Let me explain some shit to you, because you come off like a nigga ain’t never turned you down in ya life. I’m not them muthafuckas. The tight ass clothes, winks, smirks, and flirty laughs ain’t gon’ do shit for me. If I walked in a room and you had ya pussy out, I’d probably put two in you. I’m not sane, I’m not intrigued, and I’m not easily swayed by whatever sexual prowess you believe you possess. I’m a grown ass man about my business, so I’ll murk you and ya fucking brother for trying to toy with me or my money. Pass along the message, and keep that shit in mind when and if ya brother tries to put a battery in ya back, aight?” I continued walking when I was done speaking, leaving her ass standing there looking stupid and having not a damn thing to say.

By the time I got outside, Samuel already had the engine running, so I hopped in. The ride back to the crib was silent, and I wasn’t worried because Samuel already knew the drill. If he tried some shit, he’d be dead.

When I got inside of the home, I heard Andreka in the shower, so I quickly undressed to join her fine ass.

“You scared the shit out of me!” She jumped before wrapping her arms around my neck as I scooped her up.

“Ain’t shit to be scared of when I’m yo’ nigga.”

“That’s true. I am invincible now, huh?”

“You are.” I started to kiss on her neck.

“My man will really shoot shit up or knock a nigga out for me. I love it.”

“You about to have me in all types of shit, but I ain’t tripping. I like a little confrontation and bullet slanging to improve my day. Shit is like my fucking vitamins.”

“Oh my gosh.” She simpered before we started kissing.

I couldn’t help myself with Andreka’s ass, so that kissing soon turned to me pounding the pussy until I was letting off a load so heavy, I almost dropped her ass.

Getting out, we went onto the large ass balcony with some champagne and cigars, her ass only wearing a robe. I brought a gift for her though.

“You can’t be wearing shit like that.” I opened the cigar case on the small table next to me, shaking my head.

“A robe?” she frowned.

“Yeah, but I know yo’ ass is naked under the shit. My mind wanders, and I’m attracted to you like a muthafucka.” I brought her over to straddle my lap.

Blushing, she pecked me then gasped. “You for real are hard. Kapri, we just had sex. That’s not good.”

“Why not?”

“That means even after I fuck you, another woman could entice you still.”

“Another bitch couldn’t do shit to entice me. This type of shit only happens with yo’ ass,” I spoke honestly. “You think I was ready to slide up in one of them hoes after I’d *just* got done fucking ’em? Nah, I was ready for them to dip.”

“Good.” She hugged my neck while watching me light the cigar. “Let me try.”

“Who you think you is?” I laughed and so did her ass.

“I’m a thug too, just the more feminine kind.”

“Oh, like OD, huh?” We both burst in laughter as I blew the smoke out. “Take it easy.” I placed the cigar to her lips.

She did as I’d told her, and after choking once, she had it down.

“For your information, I am not like OD.” She gave me a delayed reply.

“Nah, you harder. You harder than a lot of niggas who claim to be about that shit. You soft for me though.”

“Only you.” She smirked.

We puffed on the cigar for a little longer, and then I put it out, removing the small wooden box I’d placed under the glass table.

“This for you. Keep it close when you can.” I put it in her direction.

Opening the handgun, her eyes widened before she looked up at me.

“I don’t think I need this, Kapri.”

“I hope you won’t, but just in case. I taught you how to shoot for a reason. I expect to always be there to protect you, but just in case, I want you to be able to put some hot shit in a nigga or scare him off by threatening to.”

When Andreka got kidnapped by Moe, I wanted to whoop my own ass for her not already having this shit.

“I have weapons.”

“You do, and I love that shit, but you need a big dog, ’cause some of these niggas couldn’t care less about a stun gun, pepper spray, or whatever. Shit, if he like me, a gun ain’t gon’ even do it unless you pull on that muthafucka.”

She nodded as she eyed it for a little bit longer then shut the case.

“Thank you, daddy.” She kissed me. “I got a gun and been smoking cigars. I’m that nigga.”

“Chill out.” I chuckled. “Ain’t good for a woman to be all hood and masculine.”

“Why not?”

“Makes the pussy dry up.”

Guffawing loudly, she replied, “Well I have plenty of feminine energy, so no need to worry.”

“Good. I can’t do without that yami sauce.” I gripped a handful of her ass as she leaned in to kiss me.



*B*ack in the states...

An unintentional closed mouth smile covered my face as I watched the shipment from Cesar be taken off of the delivery truck, already inside of the animal’s bellies. I’d cut open a few already to be sure the nigga hadn’t sent cane sugar or some shit, and happily confirmed that my product was there.

A nigga was low-key worried I wouldn’t get my shit after our meeting, but I guess the muthafucka realized that he wasn’t gon’ find another nigga to make the kind of bread I made, and most importantly, Krucial couldn’t be strong armed into shit.

“I thought you said the meeting went terrible?” Quay asked as he watched along with me.

“It did, but I guess the nigga peeped game.”

As I said the shit aloud, it didn’t make as much fucking sense to me as it did inside my head. Cesar didn’t seem like the type of nigga to just fall in line. He was a spoiled muthafucka, used to getting everything he wanted in life and never had to work for shit due to his wealthy ass father; I could tell by his demeanor and the abundance of fucking audacity he had.

“Shit, I guess so.” Quay smiled to himself as he kept an eye on the unloading process. “So what time you pulling up tonight?”

“Around midnight. You know I gotta lay up with my girl, then once she passes out, I’ll be in that shit.” We started walking off now that everything was loaded into the warehouse.

I started thinking about how Cesar sent more product than usual like the nigga was testing me. Wasn't shit though, just more money for me. However, if he kept increasing it, we were gon' have an issue. I knew just how much I could pull off and sell in a certain amount of time, and that muthafucka wasn't gon' have me scrambling and looking crazy as fuck because he wanted to play games. He was the plug, not my fucking boss or a nigga I took orders from, so he could get dumped in a lake just like any other nigga.

“Damn man, Andreka just be running shit,” Quay joked.

“Nah, she don't. But I'm not leaving pussy at home to sit up in a club with a bunch of niggas and dirty foot ass females who think me buying 'em a couple drinks is enough to let me fuck.”

Quay laughed before slapping hands with me since he was leaving.

“I feel you. If I had something solid at home, I just might be on that type shit myself, but all I got right now is hoes, and they don't deserve the treatment.”

“That's right.”

“See you later, bruh.”

I nodded to say 'bye' then got back to work.

A few hours later, all the shipments had been unpacked, and the animal skins had been repacked into boxes so they could be transported to my taxidermy store for my employees to begin cleaning, stuffing, and posting for sale.

Transportation only happened overnight between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m., and if it ever happened before or after those hours, someone wasn't gon' live to see the next day.

Nah, I wasn't crazy or over the top, but everything I did had a reason behind it and had been tested for success. Doing the opposite or not listening to instructions would upset a nigga, and when I got upset, I got to wanting to kill niggas. Simple math.

As I was leaving, Lolly pulled up, making me wait before I got into my car. He had no reason to be here, so I knew it was some shit.

“Fuck,” I mumbled to myself as he hopped out and rushed to me. “Jay got robbed.”

“Who?”

“Jay, and yes Jay-Jay,” he confirmed for me.

“What? How the fuck he get robbed? Where is he?” I quizzed, wondering how the hell one of my niggas got hit. Jay was no wet behind the ears ass muthafucka. He was one of the tops among the little niggas in the Lunatics. I knew if he got taken for, he put up a fight.

“I don’t know how, but he gone, Krucial.” Lolly shook his head.

I could feel the heat from my blood boiling, but I needed to keep calm to think.

“Aight. Let me think on the shit.”

“I guess no club tonight then.” He started back toward his car.

“Nah, we going. If we don’t show up, niggas gon’ know we on their scent. We gon’ go, and we gon’ act unbothered.”

Nodding like he agreed, Lolly replied, “Aight, see you later.”

It was around 7 p.m., so I went home to kick it with Andreka and Cooper. Cooper was passed out by 9 p.m. though, and right after that, Andreka and I got to fucking in the shower.

Like clockwork, by 11:30 p.m., Andreka was knocked, so I dressed in a Gucci polo, Amiri jeans, and some Jordans, along with a bulletproof vest, my heat, and some jewelry.

I got to the club half past midnight, skipping past valet and opting for the parking lot. Just in case some shit popped off, I wouldn’t have time to wait for one of these little niggas to get

me my whip. Hopping out, I hit the corner to tread to the front of the club.

“Krucial, you know you fine!” one bitch in line shouted.

“I am, huh?” I smiled, watching her blush with her funny looking ass.

“Krucial, you gon’ buy me a drink once I get inside?” another female asked, wobbling like a toddler as she attempted to strut a little for me.

“You learn to walk in them heels, and I might fuck with you on a congratulatory tip. I’m straight on the pussy though.”

“Fuck you then!” she barked, even though I tried to be somewhat nice to her busted ass.

“Fuck you too, newborn horse walking ass.” I frowned, just as I approached the bouncer, while listening to damn near the whole line roar with laughter.

“Krucial, we don’t want no shit tonight. I already told ya homies before they came in.”

“Won’t be no shit long as you cut the chatter and let me in, nigga.”

“I’m just trying to—”

“And I’m just trying to keep calm, so cut the muthafuckin chatter and pull the rope ’fore I lose the calm demeanor, aight,” I stated coolly.

The bouncer shook his head while removing the velvet rope to let me inside. I scanned and quickly found my niggas on the third floor VIP, so I headed up. Once inside, I greeted the ten to fifteen Lunatics in this shit and spoke to the few females I actually knew.

“Look.” Jory pointed to my left as I made myself a drink with an unopened bottle that I knew had been saved for me. When I looked over, I saw a few Yobs in the section below, and more to the left of us.

“Them niggas bold, huh?” I watched, sipping.

“I guess. It’s like forty of them and only fifteen of us,” he replied. “I been holding back from fucking up that nigga Shoki.”

“Why?” I focused back on Jory.

“Nigga made a slick comment about Maissa, saying he liked her body.”

“To yo’ face?” I scowled.

“Yeah, sort of. He said a few things then hopped in his car, commented on Maissa, and sped off.”

“Why you ain’t drop him when he spoke period?”

“Because it wasn’t that deep, aight?”

“He probably fucking yo’ bitch.” I bobbed my head to “Rule #1” by DDG.

“Fuck is you talking about? Nigga ain’t fucking shit.”

“Yeah, aight. Ain’t you say some nigga answered her phone and that she been acting funny? Ain’t no coincidence the nigga mentioned her.”

“Nah. Them niggas is enemies. Of course he gon’ say some shit about my woman. Niggas know who my girl is, just like they know who Lolly’s is or was, and who yours is. He was trying to get under a nigga’s skin.” Jory shook his head. “You don’t know what the fuck you talking about, aight? So stop it.”

I laughed.

“You a little testy ass nigga, huh? Why you so upset if you sure it ain’t true? If that nigga mentioned my bitch, he’d be in a funeral home getting his makeup done right now, not in the club with me.” I shrugged.

“Yeah, I’m out. You tripping.” Jory hopped up, making Quay, Lolly, and a few other niggas look at him.

“Bye. I hope Shoki let you lay up with Maissa tonight!” I called out, but Jory kept it pushing as I chuckled, polishing off my drink.

I continued smoking and drinking for the next hour before deciding to bounce. The club would be closed in about thirty anyway. Quay and Lolly followed suit, so we left the drinks and shit to the remaining Lunatics since it was already paid for.

“Why you have to run the homie off?” Quay laughed with his drunk ass as we walked to the parking lot.

“You know Jory be sensitive about Maissa and people testing his manhood.” Lolly shook his head.

“Ain’t my fault that nigga Shoki piping his hoe and I pointed it out.” I ran my hand down my face since I was tired.

Once we got to the lot, we heard someone behind us, and I noticed it was Shoki, wearing that smug smile he always wore. Shoki was an ignorant, cocky nigga who always walked around with his chest out like he was with the shits.

“What’s good, Lolly and Quay?” He spoke to the homies, already knowing I wasn’t the one.

“Man, fuck out of here.” Quay waved him off as Lolly ignored his ass.

“Yeah, that’s what the fuck I thought.” I chuckled. “You don’t speak to me unless you get spoken to, bitch.” I already felt a way by him coming at Jory.

“Who you calling a bitch, homie?” Shoki paused, frowning like he was tough.

“Oh, you hard?” I moved toward him, laughing. “And I’m calling you a bitch, you and ya mammy.”

“My mama is dead, like yo’ daddy, so have some respect,” he shot back.

“Oh, well rest in peace to her *bitch* ass.” My comment made him rush toward me angrily, so I pulled my gun out, halting his steps. I cracked a smirk, seeing him pause. “Take one more step and you gone.”

“You ain’t even take the safety off.” He moved my way.

“You don’t keep shit on safety when you use it as much as I do.” I lifted the gun, and just as his eyes widened with shock, I hit him in his chest with two, then one to his head, dropping him before he could reply.

I wasn’t Jory. He wasn’t about to say every fucking thing in the world to me and live to tell about it. Nah. And with how bold he was coming lately, it had me feeling like he was the one that got at Jay.

“Oh shit!” Quay shouted.

“Nigga, what the fuck!” Lolly commented as I swiped Shoki’s jewelry.

“Let’s go.” I hurried to my car, started the shit, and sped off, the homies doing the same.

If the nigga was fucking Maissa, he wasn’t no more.

MAISSA HILL

“You leaving already?” Austin asked me, coming up behind and hugging my body tightly. The feeling of being in his arms was different than that of Jory’s. I felt safe and calm at the moment.

“I am. You know I can’t stay long once it starts to get dark. I don’t have a reason to be out like you.” I turned my head just enough for him to kiss me.

“Yeah, the school shit ain’t working too well for us. Buddy is like a female, always sniffing behind you.”

“Tell me about it. And it is not attractive.” I shook my head thinking of Jory and how ridiculous he’d become. Part of his jealousy flattered me, but on the other hand, it was a turn off. The Jory I knew was confident in himself and our relationship enough to let me do me. “You didn’t have to answer my phone that day though with your messy ass.”

Chuckling with that sexy deep voice, he replied, “I ain’t think he was gon’ act up like that. Jory the softest banger I know. I almost wanted to applaud his ass for actually showing out. Nothing he do should be attractive to you anyway.”

Turning in Austin’s swole arms and admiring his sexy chocolate complexion, I replied, “Oh and what about your baby mama? Don’t tell me you’re not still fucking her.”

“I do, but out of duty. You know women get suspicious if you turn down pussy, but I promise I do my best.” He stared

deeply down into my eyes, licking his blunt stained lips that I loved so much. “Maissa...”

“What?” I got nervous because his face was filled with concern.

“I want you for real. I’m willing to say fuck all of this shit, and let’s dip out somewhere, leave the country.”

“What about your kids?”

“I’ll send for them when we get settled. I’d never leave my seeds behind. But I can’t do this on the low shit no more. I hate seeing you on that nigga’s arm. Only reason I ain’t just killed his ass is because I know you wouldn’t fuck with me if I did.”

“Austin.” I dropped my arms from being around his neck and walked further into the hotel to grab my purse. “This was supposed to be fun. What are you talking about?”

“I know, and I feel like a bitch for trying to change shit up now.” He came over to me, slowly snaking his arms around my body. “But you can’t tell me shit ain’t deeper than what we planned. Who you think about when you by yaself? Me or that nigga? When you hear some exciting shit, who you wanna tell first, after ya friends?”

“You,” I replied somberly, realizing I actually had feelings for another man. “But I love Jory. Yes, I like you, but he’s the one I want to be with forever.” As I talked, I didn’t fully believe my own words.

I used to think about Jory all day, wondering when he’d be done running the streets, but now I couldn’t wait for Austin to have some free time in order for us to be together. And every time Jory told me he’d be out late, I no longer wanted to scream and cry like a toddler to make him stay. I simply wondered if I could get out to see Austin while he was gone. What the hell had I done?

“Say no more.” Austin backed off of me, going to grab his shirt to put on.

“Are you mad now? Baby, don’t be mad.”

“Nah, I could never be mad at you.” He pecked me slowly. “I’m disappointed as fuck, but that’s the game. I knew what I was getting into messing with a taken woman.”

That was something I loved about Austin. He wasn’t as high strung and emotional as Jory. He let shit ride, but at the same time, he was about that life and had no problem pressing another nigga about an issue he had with them.

“I love you,” I said to him like I always did. When it first happened, I told him it just meant I had love for him, but right now, I knew it meant more.

“I love you too.” He tucked his gun then took my hand in his to lead me from the hotel room.

If only I wasn’t so damn scared of what would happen to me if I left Jory for Austin, maybe I could be truly happy.

Present day... The next afternoon...

Standing in the nail shop, I half smiled at the Asian lady waiting for me to pay my \$200 bill. I was irritated beyond belief already, and Jory was only making it worse. He was supposed to be picking me up so he could pay, but the nigga wasn’t even here. To make matters worse, my side boo hadn’t been answering, and my homegirls flaked on this nail appointment we’d booked together.

Babe: *I got private jet access... it’s whatever you wanna do. I just need you for good and out in the open.*

A grin covered my otherwise angry face as I reread a text I’d gotten yesterday morning from my side, Austin.

Finally, my phone vibrated, and I looked to see that Jory had sent me \$300 through Zelle and let me know a driver should be here in a few, within in the notes. I usually wouldn’t care, but I felt some type of way that he didn’t even have the decency to return my calls or reply to my texts to explain himself.

He’d been acting weird the past week, not paying me much attention and not bothering to call or text when I’d be out for hours on end. Jory usually wouldn’t let a good two hours pass

without checking in on me, but lately, it was like his mind had been elsewhere.

“Thank you, Mai. Have a good day,” Lily, the nail tech replied after handing me my receipt. She was nicer now that she’d seen I was actually planning to pay.

Stepping outside, I spotted one of Jory’s drivers that he often sent to take me places when he couldn’t and when I didn’t feel like driving. I had three expensive ass cars, but driving in LA was a disaster and extremely stressful, so anytime I could, I opted out. I’d rather be texting and on social media while someone else dealt with that mess.

“Straight home?” Brian inquired.

“Is Jory there?” I quizzed.

“I’m not sure, Miss Hill. He phoned me to come get you.” Brian awaited my answer as he peered through the rearview mirror at me.

“No, take me to my friend’s house.” I read off the address to Sabrina’s since when I texted and asked her where she was earlier, she dryly said she was home.

As Brian started on the route to her house, I stared out of the window wondering why shit just didn’t feel right. Everybody was acting funny, even down to my older sister Taissa who I could honestly say never showed me anything but love. She hadn’t been over to wash her damn clothes, which I knew was an excuse to be up under me, and she didn’t send me good morning texts or inspirational quotes throughout the day like normal, even though I’d stopped replying maybe two years ago.

Finally arriving at Sabrina’s, I climbed out with Brian’s help and tread past Erica’s car, which confused me even more. She didn’t even reply to my message wondering where she was, yet she was here with Sabrina. Hesitantly, I rang the doorbell, and Erica came to answer wearing a somber look.

“Hey, girl.” She pulled me into a hug, which I wasn’t expecting.

“Okay, so I guess I was wrong about you being upset.” I turned my lip up as we pulled away.

Closing the door, Erica spoke lowly. “No, I’m not mad. I just didn’t show up to the nail appointment because of Sabrina.”

“Is she mad? She was dry with me when I wanted to know why she ain’t come.” I folded my arms.

“She didn’t tell you about Shoki?”

“What about Shoki?” My heart sank. The look in Erica’s eyes told me what I already knew. When I woke up this morning, I felt like a dark cloud had been following me.

“He got murdered last night in Hollywood at Palms Nightclub.”

“Are you fucking serious? I—wha—by who?” I searched her eyes.

“I don’t know, but of course Sabrina is broken the hell up. You know she loved that nigga.”

Not as much as I did, I wanted to say.

Shoki was my nigga, and yes, in that type of way. I met him through the friendship I’d built with Sabrina years ago. Initially, when she and I became cool and I later found out her man was a Yob, I was turned off, letting her know there was no way we could be friends. That’s just how loyal I was to my man’s set.

However, we clicked so well that it was hard to let the bond go, so we agreed to keep out of that gang banging shit and to also keep it out of our relationship.

Of course, at the beginning, Jory had a damn baby with a bonnet on it finding out I was buddying up with an enemy’s girlfriend and baby mama, same way Shoki didn’t approve of Sabrina’s friendship with me, but when both men noticed it didn’t cause any issues and we minded our business, they laid off.

Jory made me agree to be low-key with our friendship, but as the years passed, he became more lenient. As you know,

spending time over Sabrina's house eventually led me to the tall, muscular, dark skinned, perfect fade and teeth having ass Shoki.

Shit happened just like the movies, meaning I came over one day while Sabrina was still out, and he agreed to let me wait for her. We chatted for a little bit, him making asshole comments about my man who I quickly defended, and surprisingly he liked it, appreciating my willingness to stand up for Jory, even in the face of possible danger.

From there, we'd talk a little whenever I came over, then one evening he slid into my DMs. Talking on social media soon progressed into meeting up in secrecy at hotels, and then finally fucking. It was the way he talked to me, and when he did say some freaky shit, it actually did something to a bitch. I had no choice but to see what that dick was like.

Shoki kept it real. He was only trying to fuck me in the beginning to mess with the Lunatics, but we fell in love. Shit, I only fucked with him at the start because he spent money on me and never pressured me about investing it, nor did he lecture me about how designer and other nice things weren't as important as securing my future. Shoki was just chill; chill, fine as fuck, paid, and had a dick game that surely competed with Jory's.

After a while, my interest in him only as a sponsor heightened to the point where I contemplated leaving Jory. But I never could because bouncing from one gang to another was a death sentence. That Andreka chick was bold, but then again, the Lunatics had always been a more ruthless and heartless gang than the Yobs, even back in the seventies. So her moving from a Yob to a Lunatic was safer than me doing the opposite.

"Uh umm, damn. How are the kids?" I attempted to mask my sadness. I wanted to scream and cry at the moment. I wanted to beg God to rewind back twenty-four hours when I had the chance to be with my man but was too much of a coward.

"They don't know yet. She dropped them at her mother's house so she could have some alone time."

“Oh, right.” I nodded before following behind Erica who was headed to the den where I assume Sabrina was.

I didn’t even wanna see her because I was just as broken up as she was, maybe even more. No way she loved Shoki as much as I, because if she did, she would’ve kept a closer tab on him like I did with Jory.

“Maissa is here,” Erica announced, and Sabrina looked up at me with bloodshot red eyes.

“Hey, boo. I am so sorry. I can’t believe this happened.” I rushed to her and sat down, hugging her closely.

“Me either, even though that’s dumb to say. I don’t know what I expected when dating a damn gang banger, but Austin has been doing this shit for so long, since we were teenagers, so I guess I got used to him escaping death.” Sabrina twiddled her thumbs.

“What happened? Do you know?” I quizzed.

“Them fucking Lunatics, who else?” She gave me eye contact. Wiping her face, she added, “Austin wasn’t even worried about them niggas, that’s OD’s ass, and they still took him. I fucking hate them jealous ass niggas!”

At the moment, I hated them too. My love for Jory was nowhere to be found right now, showing me that my feelings for Shoki were much greater. I was angry, furious as hell that they’d taken him. Sad to say, I’d much rather Jory be dead than him.

“They’re saying Krucial did it. Nobody saw anything, but Curly says Shoki left the club right after Krucial, Lolly, and Quay to fuck with them a little and never came back. When he went to the parking lot, Shoki was laid out,” Erica explained for Sabrina.

“How you know it was Krucial then? It could’ve been Quay or Lolly.” I felt good knowing it wasn’t Jory, but that didn’t make me feel any stronger toward him.

Sabrina made a face that said, ‘girl, get real’ then replied, “Krucial is the only psycho that would murder someone for probably no reason at all.”

She had a point. None of them Lunatics were exactly team world peace, but Krucial was on another level. He was crazy, disrespectful, and known to be similar to an M80; you never quite knew what would set him off or how he'd react when pushed.

“Jory is on me to get back home, so I have to go. Shit is probably hot right now,” I lied. It was starting to get hard to hold my tears in, and in a minute, Sabrina was gonna be wondering why I was sobbing hysterically over her baby daddy.

“Sure, okay. Let us know anything,” Erica threw out as I rushed past her.

Brian was still waiting outside for me, thankfully, so I got in and let him know I was going home. I took deep breaths the whole way to keep from breaking down, and bolted out of the black truck once there.

Hurrying inside of the house, I rushed up the stairs and into my bedroom before crying like my life was over. I loved that man and never thought of what my life would be like without him. I always assumed if he left me or if I got tired of him, I had the real love of my life which was Jory. However, I quickly realized Jory didn't have my heart, and the man who did was no longer breathing. I'd never wished to go back in time more than right now. I felt like the past few years I spent with Shoki were wasted on still playing house with Jory's ass.

Pulling out my phone, I read over Shoki's and my last conversation which tore me up even more. My face was drenched, my stomach was in knots, and my body jerked; I was in horrible fucking shape. I needed my nigga. Death was better than this.

“Aye, aye, what the hell is wrong with you?” Jory came into the bedroom, surprising me. I was so focused on getting in and to the room for a good cry, I didn't pay attention to see if he was home.

“What—what are you doing home? It's four p.m.?” I tried to wipe my face enough to look presentable, but it was no use.

The look of concern on Jory's face was etched in and there to stay.

"Baby, don't worry about that. Tell me what's wrong with you." He came closer, but when he touched me, I jumped and pulled from him. I was disgusted by him at the moment. "Maissa." His brows dipped between his eyes, and his forehead wrinkled severely. "Baby." He sat down and caressed my back as I began bawling heavily again into my hands.

"Jory, leave me alone," I whimpered. "Just get out the fucking room!" At this point, I didn't care. Shoki was the only thing on my mind.

"Maissa, I know the shit sounds bad, and baby, it is, but that shit meant nothing to me. I can't even say why I did it."

My tear-filled session halted as I listened to this man talk. Was he confessing infidelity? No, not Jory, not my Jory. If I trusted any man on this earth it was him, not even my own damn daddy.

"Why did you do it?" I picked my head up, playing along and wanting more information.

"The shit just happened. She was over here a lot, and I felt bad for her because she didn't seem to have any people to kick it with. Shit went from there, and we fucked a few times."

Taissa? This muthafucka had fucked Taissa?

"Are you fucking serious?" My face was dry as I looked this man over. I was even more disgusted by his ass. He could've fucked anybody, but he chose loser ass Taissa.

"Listen, baby, whatever you need me to do, I'm ready to do the shit. Just don't leave me, aight?"

"You fucked my sister? You love that bitch or something?" I scowled, shoving his ass roughly.

"What? Hell nah! Only person I love is yo' ass! I ain't never cheated on you, but she was right there, and I fucked! It meant nothing!"

"You better make sure you tell that bitch that, and as far as her coming over here, it's a wrap! As far as me trusting you as

much as I did, that's a fucking wrap too! Hell, this relationship might be a damn wrap!" I ranted. "I cannot fucking believe you!"

I was pissed. Even though I loved Shoki more, Jory was mine. I wasn't stupid; Jory was fine as fuck, had a lot of money, no kids aka no baby mama drama, was intelligent, and all that good stuff, so I'd be a fool to think other women didn't throw themselves at him. But Taissa? She was one person I never felt I'd have to worry about in the presence of my man, not just because she wasn't that cute, but because she was my sister and portrayed herself to be this person who had my best interest at heart.

At the moment, while Jory talked my ear off about how much he loved me and how Taissa was just something he did, I sat trying to convince myself that him fucking Taissa was even feasible. What the hell did he even see that got his dick up and hard? And multiple times? If anything, this broke my self-esteem more than my heart. Here I was getting my body done to look better, when my man was cheating on me with a bitch who had my old body.

"...but like I said, baby, cutting her off is nothing to a nigga. She's like any other bitch on the street." Jory was finishing up as I came back to reality.

"You'd be willing to tell her just that?" I eyed him. When he hesitated, I almost slapped the dog shit out of him. "Would you be willing to tell her just that!" I barked.

"Yeah! I would, aight!"

"Accusing me of fucking cheating when it was you! Oooh! I knew I was fucking right!" I stood up, pacing back and forth. I really wanted to swing on his ass.

"Where the fuck you going?"

"Out for some fresh air! I may be back tonight, and I may not! You don't deserve to sleep next to me." I snatched my purse up and left the bedroom quickly.

"Aye, wait!" Jory chased me. "Take this. I don't want you out there hurting. You can cool off tonight, but I want you

back in the fucking house by tomorrow night.”

Saying nothing, I snatched the knot of cash he'd reached out to me. Bitch ass nigga.

Sitting in my car toying with the knot, a smile spread across my face. I was about to milk this nigga's cheating for everything it was worth. It was the least he could do for causing me to lose time with the love of my life and for having sex with my sister.

TAISSA

A bout an hour later...

My phone had been blowing up for the past forty-five minutes, but I wasn't really in the mood to talk to anybody. I'd tried everything in my power to think about something other than Jory, but it was hard.

Every time I saw a movie or TV show, hell, even a commercial with a couple, he crossed my mind. And as much self-esteem that Andreka attempted to pump me with at my sister's party, it'd worn off quicker than expected. I was back to realizing that I would never find a man of Jory's caliber that wanted me. I was a breath away from forty, well eight years, which was no time for me to find someone. If I hadn't done it by now, it was never gonna happen.

As I stretched a little bit, body aching from lying in a ball for hours, my doorbell sounded off. I was ashamed at the hope that filled me up thinking it was Jory coming to chase after me, because ever since our conversation at my store, he'd actually left my ass alone. I hadn't gotten one text, phone call, or even a message in a bottle from him. That quickly, he was over me, I guess.

"Okay, okay!" I shouted, rolling from my bed in only a robe. Whomever this was, was either upset or running from their drug dealer, and I had no time for either.

I padded through my apartment, enjoying the scenery of downtown LA through my floor to ceiling windows as I did.

When I got to the door, I saw Maissa through the peephole, and sure enough she was angry as she beat on my door again.

“Taissa!” she growled angrily.

“Alright!” I hurriedly unlocked the door. “What the hell, Mai? Is everything... okay?” My last word trailed off as she stormed inside, bumping the shit out of me.

“So you’ve been fucking Jory?” She turned to face me with her arms folded and eyebrow raised to the high heavens. My stomach dropped hearing her question.

“No... no who—”

“Stop the lies, Taissa! I already know the truth. Jory’s ass confirmed it for me!”

Why the fuck would he do that? Was this payback because I’d dropped his ass?

“I don’t know why he told you that, but I never had sex with him or even kissed him, Maissa!”

WHAM!

She slapped the shit out of me, causing anger to soar through my veins. As I turned my face to look at her, fuming, I slapped her ass right back, making her yelp out of what appeared to be shock.

“You ugly ass bitch! You got some nerve hitting me when you’re in the wrong!” she screamed.

“Why the fuck do you even care! You have a side nigga! If you loved Jory so much, you’d talk shit out, not cheat!”

“Oh, and he’s so much of a better person than me, even though he fucked my sister!” She laughed. “It’s so crazy, I never saw you as one of those weak ass, delusional, pick-me bitches, always ready to go to bat for a nigga!”

“I am not one of them. I’m just speaking facts! Yes, he slept with your sister, but maybe because we had an actual connection that you two didn’t have!”

“Oh, is that so? Don’t tell me you think Jory loves you or sees a future with your ass.”

“He might.” I shrugged one shoulder.

Maissa’s laughter made me want to hit her again, but I was afraid she’d wanna fight at that point, and I wasn’t the type.

“No.” She chuckled, shaking her head. “He doesn’t have any feelings for you. Taissa, I may be the younger sister, but understand I have way more experience with niggas, and I’m here to tell you that they’re all the fucking same when it comes to pussy.

“I know you worship the ground Jory walks on and thinks he’s God’s gift to the earth, but he is not. He fucked you because you made it available to him. No matter how nice, mature, smart, or whatever a nigga is, when pussy is in his face, he’ll be tempted to take it. You could have everything a man claims he wants, but if the right pussy becomes available, he will succumb to temptation. Jory is no different than any of these other men. So you may think that you can stimulate his mind or connect with him mentally more than I do, but that won’t stop a nigga from fucking around on you.”

“Sorry, but that’s not true. If I was his woman, he would be with only me because I care about more than bleeding his pockets dry and looking expensive on social media,” I retorted, although feeling like some of what she was saying was true. Andreka had said similar words... basically Jory wasn’t shit for fucking with his woman’s sister no matter how much he liked me.

It was just hard for me to believe that about him. It sounded bad, but this was different, our connection was different, and Andreka nor Maissa understood that.

Maissa smiled sympathetically like she thought I was dumb.

Glancing off briefly before looking back at me, she asked, “If Jory is so smart and one hell of a man, why has he spent so many years with a woman who does nothing for him but spend his money?”

“He—” I couldn’t think quickly enough. “He was young, and you don’t think the same when you’re young.”

“He’s not so young anymore though, and he’s still with me. He was just begging me not to leave him. Why would he do that when he can have you, the woman who stimulates his mental and who he has such a great connection with?” She cackled too hard for my liking. “Oh my gosh, you gullible hoes make it too easy for a man to get in between your legs.”

“He would leave if I asked him to,” I shot back.

“Let’s see.” She took her phone out, did something on it, then next thing I knew, I heard it calling someone on speaker phone.

“What’s up, baby, you good?” Jory’s heavenly voice poured through. Hearing him call her baby hurt a little.

“I will be. I’m here with Taissa, your little fuck buddy.”

“Mai, come on, man, what the fuck!” he snapped.

“No, you don’t dictate what happens after you fucked up, okay? Now this bitch is telling me y’all got some real shit between you two, but I told her ass it was all in her fucking head. Now correct me if I’m wrong so I can move the fuck on, Jory, because that is surely not what the fuck you told me!”

“Maissa,” was all he said, so I smirked at her.

“Fine, then I will be there in a little bit to start packing my shit, and make room for Taissa’s ass.”

“Ain’t nobody said shit for you to be doing all that!”

“Then tell her what you told me, or I’m packing my shit, Jory Thierry!” she screamed her head off. “I got you on speakerphone!”

Sighing, he replied, “Taissa, I apologize for taking advantage of you, for real, but it ain’t nothing between us. I love Maissa. That’s the only woman I wanna be with and the only woman on this earth I got any type of fucking connection with, aight?”

I blinked back tears listening to him. He’d used me just like they said, and now I felt stupid. This had happened to me before, but I was much younger and stupider. Now I was a grown ass woman still falling for the same games.

“Thank you. See you *maybe* tonight.” Maissa hung up then focused on me with a smug smile. “So, what were you saying?”

“Whatever. He’s only saying that because I broke it off with him before you even found out.”

“Yeah, okay, Taissa.” She started for the door.

“I did too. My homegirl told me straight up I should make him leave you if he truly cared and when he couldn’t choose, his own words, I dropped him.” I talked to her back, making her stop walking abruptly.

“What homegirl was this?”

“Andreka. I’m sure you thought y’all were gonna be friends, but you’re not. Looks like you didn’t get the popular vote this time, sis.”

“That bitch told you to make Jory leave me?”

I could see the fury in Maissa’s eyes which was exactly what I wanted. If I was gonna be broken, so was she.

“She said if he truly loved me, he would do it; all I had to do is ask.” Going closer, I continued. “And trust me, he was going to, but I didn’t even give him a chance because I would’ve felt bad for you. I’m sure whatever side piece you have isn’t nearly as much a catch as Jory. You just wait until I tell him about your cheating. He’ll be running to me then.” I felt good after speaking, causing me to smile in her face. However, when she smiled back, I became worried.

“Will he? When you expose me for cheating, you’ll expose yourself for being the conniving liar that you are, big sis. Did you forget the deceitful web you weaved to protect me? The whole pasta thing he let slide, but then lying to him again about my so-called business? Nah. Jory is God’s gift to earth, remember, and I doubt he’d want a woman who is in her early thirties and can’t stop lying. Whatever way you slice this, you won’t have him.”

I then remembered how uncomfortable I’d made Jory when lying to Erica. If he found out I’d lied yet again, that

would be my third strike, and like Maissa said, he'd wash his hands of me.

"Get out of my apartment."

"That's what I thought. See you." Maissa pranced out of my apartment, leaving me feeling worse than I already did.

Although she irked me and I could say I hated her sometimes, knowing I'd lost my sister hurt me to the core. And there was no way for me to explain our fallout to anyone without looking like the villain.



A few days later...

My sulking was now at its worst. I'd only worked at my store for a total of about fifteen hours this week because I couldn't get my mind right to stay any longer than a little over two hours a day. Even worse, I had constant dreams about Jory, and when awake, all I heard were the horrible things he'd said to me via Maissa's phone.

Currently, it was 4 p.m., and I was bored out of my mind, so I grabbed my iPhone to dial Andreka.

"Hello?" she answered weirdly.

"Sorry, am I bothering you?"

"No, what's up?"

"Oh, you answered a little off." I giggled to lighten the mood.

"You never call me or anything, so I figured something was wrong."

"Right... yeah. I guess I just work too much, and I'm not really used to talking to anyone other than my sister and parents."

"Makes sense, so what's going on?"

“Nothing, actually. I wanted to maybe have a drink, if you’re in the mood.” I felt nervous, hoping she said she’d come.

“Sure. My son and Kapri just fell asleep, and I’m not the least bit tired. Wanna meet at The Spare Room?”

“Uh... yeah, sure.” That was a little more upscale than I’d wanted, but whatever. “How about 5:30 p.m.”

“See you soon.”

Right after ending the call, I hopped up to search my bedroom drawers and closet for something I could wear. Finally, I ran across a dress that would do and some heels I’d gotten for a job interview. Shaking my head at myself, I put my hair up into a fluffy ponytail then slipped on my outfit. After sliding a bangle down my wrist, I spritzed on some perfume then grabbed my purse to leave.

By the time I got to The Spare Room, it was 5 p.m. on the dot, so I waited in the car for around fifteen minutes. I got a text right then from Andreka, letting me know she was here, so I got out to meet her at the door.

I felt even worse about my outfit after seeing her in hip hugging jeans, a long-sleeved crop top, some expensive looking red heels, and with the Chanel bag to match. Her hair was braided up in some fancy ass cornrows, and her makeup looked professionally done.

Here I was in a damn Sunday go to meeting dress and lawyer pumps with a ponytail that was in dire need of some edge control.

“I love this place.” She smiled as we scooted into the booth we’d been walked to.

The Spare Room was pretty nice with low lighting, a fancy ass bowling alley, and good music. You usually had to make a reservation, which I was glad Andreka had.

“Yeah, it’s pretty nice. I’ve never been but heard about it.”

“You’re gonna like it. The drinks are so good.”

We ordered cocktails, and I just got what Andreka ordered since she'd been to the place before.

"Wow, this is different." I stared down at the cocktail named Birds Aren't Real. It was strong but had a somewhat light and sweet taste to it.

Chuckling, she inquired, "You don't like it?"

"No, I do, it's just—"

"Excuse me, ladies, I don't mean to interrupt, but I just had to come over and ask your name." Some large and very fine black man approached the table, eyes glued to Andreka, of course.

"Monique," she replied, catching me off guard. "And I'm very taken, but thank you."

"I'm Toby. Are you taken as in married or just a little boyfriend?"

"Don't even worry about it. Just know he shoots people for fun, so you should probably go." Andreka waved the man off.

"He don't scare me, I'm sure. So if you're—"

"You probably heard of him if you're an LA native; Krucial?" I interjected, seeing homeboy wasn't catching on.

The way he paused, looking down at me, let me know he was very aware of who Krucial was.

"Oh." He covered his mouth once his eyes landed back on Andreka. "I ain't mean no disrespect at all. Krucial, that's the homie."

"He is? I never heard him mention you. I'll ask him about you tonight." Andreka sipped her drink.

"Nah, no need. I knew him a minute ago, so he probably won't remember. Have a good night."

"Wow, what a scaredy cat," I said once Toby left, causing Andreka and I to laugh. "He was cute though."

"He was." She nodded.

“You know every attractive black man in here has looked at you and only you. Some of the white ones too.”

“Yeah? I didn’t notice.”

“Maybe because you’re used to it. I think if I had that many men paying me attention, I wouldn’t care about Jory anymore.”

“You cut him off?”

“I did.” I nodded, looking around the luxurious lounge. “So I will probably be single forever.” I laughed it off.

“Taissa, Jory is not the only man in the world.”

“He’s the only one that looks like that *and* is interested in my ass.” I shook my head while taking a big sip of this drink.

“What makes you think that?”

“Umm, well I haven’t been on a date or catcalled in probably a decade.”

“What do you do outside of work?”

“Watch TV, cook, sometimes I bake, or run my sister around town when she needs it.”

“How are you supposed to meet a man or give yourself a chance to be catcalled if you don’t get out? Have you ever thought that Jory seems like the only man because he’s the only one you allow to see you?”

“No. I never realized it.”

Damn, it was true. I really went nowhere. I didn’t even go grocery shopping; I ordered it online.

“And don’t be so covered up and shy.” Andreka scooted closer. “Here.” She pushed the shoulder areas of my dress down so it’d appear as an off-the-shoulder look, then she reached to take down my puff.

“Wait, no, it’s gonna be everywhere!”

“So what, it’s sexy. It gives a lioness appeal.” She fluffed my hair out. “I told you men like confidence more than anything. That means more than a pretty face, perfect teeth, fit

body, and anything you can think of. Low self-esteem attracts fuckboys. It's like they can smell it on you, similar to a shark with blood."

We guffawed in unison as she scooted back to where she was before.

"Yeah, I'm trying to remember that."

"Please do, along with getting out more. How can someone approach something they've never seen?"

I nodded, taking it all in.

Andreka and I grabbed a bite to eat after drinks and then went our separate ways. What I noticed while getting food was that I did get a couple stares, from the few men we ran across, with this different look.

As soon as I got home, I took a few selfies and mirror flicks before hopping into the shower. Once I was in bed, I downloaded a few dating apps, along with some social media ones since I only had one. I was definitely about to put myself out there to see what I'd catch. Fuck Jory.

LOLLY

A bout a week and a half later...

“Damn, nigga, how you still garbage at this game?” I laughed, whooping Jory’s ass as we sat in my den.

“Because I don’t sit up and play this shit all fucking day. A nigga be working,” he spat.

“Shit, I be working too. How you think you in this nice ass crib right now? Don’t make excuses. You just a trash ass nigga.”

“Aight.” He shook his head, visibly irritated as Quay laughed.

“You can always tell what niggas ain’t getting no pussy; they sit up and play this shit like they’re getting paid for it.” Krucial, who’d stepped out to make a phone call, reentered the room and plopped down on my big ass sectional.

“You see I ain’t playing the shit. If it’s one thing I get, it’s pussy.” Quay spoke seriously.

“I ain’t hurting for the shit either. Krucial know.” Jory smirked, trying his hardest to beat me in the game at the same time.

“What that nigga know?” I was interested. The way he made the shit sound let me know it was more than just him fucking his bitch. “What he know?”

“Damn, muthafucka. Gossiping ass.” Krucial inhaled on the blunt before laughing. “Jory, tell these niggas you been fucking ya hoe’s sister.”

“What!” Quay and I exclaimed in unison.

“Nigga! Why the fuck you tell?” Jory paused the game to stare at Krucial over his shoulder.

“Because the way you said ‘I knew’ made it sound like some gay shit. Wasn’t gon’ have these niggas thinking we was into some freak shit.” He blew out smoke. “And why it matter? I thought you said Fix-A-Flat found out?”

“Stop calling her that, nigga.” Jory blew out hot air as Quay and I doubled over in laughter. “I ain’t wanna tell these niggas because they’re childish as fuck.”

“We childish but you fucking siblings. I can’t believe it. Pastor Jory, the one who always preaching about staying faithful, did the ultimate backstabbing.” Quay shook his head, lighting his own blunt.

“It wasn’t like that, aight? Y’all making it sound like I enjoyed hurting my girl. It just happened.” Jory made himself a drink, I guess since his ass had already smoked twice.

“I forgot you said you tripped and fell into the pussy.” Krucial sat back, eyes low.

“She not even fine though, bruh.” I shook my head. “Wasn’t even worth it.”

“It ain’t always about looks, and she’s beautiful in my opinion. But how she look ain’t none of ya fucking business.” Jory attempted to check me, but I ain’t give a fuck. The bitch was busted, and I stood by that.

When the three of us started clapping sarcastically in response to his looks don’t matter speech, Jory shook his head and sat back down irritably.

“Speaking of sex, I’m going insane fucking with Iyanna’s ass. We be kissing and shit, but when I go to touch her, she damn near be about to bite my muthafuckin hand off,” I complained.

“She a man,” Quay quickly replied, eating some of the fried chicken we’d ordered, free hand still holding a blunt.

“Nigga, what? She ain’t no damn man. I know that shit for a fact.” I frowned.

“How you know? You said you ain’t never hit, so what proof you got that she ain’t a man?” Jory raised a brow.

I didn’t wanna tell these niggas how Iyanna had played me by convincing my stupid ass to eat her pussy, but the man talk wasn’t cool either.

“If she a man, Andreka a man, because they hang together.” I looked at Krucial.

“Watch yo’ mouth, nigga, ’fore I bust you in yo’ shit. Andreka ain’t got nothing to do with that fucking she-male you been kissing on. Last time I’m gon’ tell any of you niggas not to speak up on my woman. Next time I’m shooting, and I ain’t gon’ give a fuck how long we been riding; she come first,” he explained seriously, blowing out smoke.

“She ain’t no she-male, aight?” I retorted, leaving Andreka out of it because I could tell he was serious; plus, he was cross faded and stayed strapped.

“Then what other reason could she have for not allowing you to touch on her?” Jory asked.

“It’s just certain areas. I’ve felt the pussy before, so I know she A1 as far as gender.”

“Them nigga-bitches be having pussies and titties now too, nigga. Shit, you can’t even trust baby pictures the way niggas let their sons put on dresses at age three and shit. Only way to tell is to fuck with a bitch who got a kid or kids,” Krucial explained.

“They sure can, bruh. Them surgeons handing out pussies now.” Quay nodded.

Now a nigga was afraid. But even if Iyanna had been a man, which I didn’t believe for two seconds, she had a pussy, so why not let me feel her up? None of this shit made sense. And I knew it wasn’t her body because I’d seen it all on social media in shit that was no more than a shoestring occasionally. She hadn’t been rocking that as of late, but then again, she hadn’t been on vacation and had been going through it.

“Ain’t no way Jalen Coolidge was fucking a man for almost a decade.” I shook my head.

“Why not?” they all asked in unison.

“Them ball players be the gayest ones, them rap niggas too. They was together that long and not one kid? He gets with this new bitch and she pregnant like that?” Jory snapped his fingers. “Hell nah, that shit is suspect.”

“She a man,” Quay repeated, causing them niggas to laugh, but I didn’t find shit funny. “Get ready to grab them ankles, Lolly.”

“Krucial, you honestly believe that girl is a man?” I looked to him. He was smirking after laughing at Quay and Jory’s stupid ass comments.

“Nah, I don’t, but she ain’t my problem. She don’t want you to touch her ’cause she either ashamed of her body or she pregnant,” he responded.

“Nah, hell nah. If she was pregnant, she wouldn’t be fucking with me, I’m sure. Iyanna not even like that.”

Shrugging as he blew out smoke while ashing the blunt, Krucial said, “Only time these hoes act funny about being touched is if they got some shit to hide, low confidence, or she’s a nigga. You pick what the fuck you want it to be.” Sitting back, he added, “If she a nigga, just accept the fact that you gay and be one with it.”

Again, Quay, Krucial, and Jory’s immature asses cackled loudly as I sat there rummaging through my fucking thoughts.

That nigga was right about it being one of those things. I’d messed with plenty of females, and when a bitch got to acting shy about getting touchy-feely and shit, something wasn’t right. Thankfully, I’d never run into a nigga, and right now, I was hoping I still hadn’t.



ext day...

A nigga could barely sleep through the night thinking about the shit the homies were saying. I was pretty sure Iyanna was all woman, I'd tasted her, but with the way surgeons and technology was today, wasn't no fucking telling what them niggas was able to send out into the world. It wasn't like I kept up with the fucking process, so them being able to give a perfectly looking wet pussy to a former nigga wouldn't be too farfetched.

"Fuck." I grumbled because thinking about the encounter I'd had with Iyanna's ass got my dick hard. I shook my head at the sight of me pitching a tent under my comforter.

Sitting up, I checked my phone, replying to a few messages, then powered on my burner to see if anything came through. When it didn't, I shut the shit back off. As I stood up for a stretch, my iPhone chimed, letting me know I had a direct message on social media.

I frowned seeing it was from Lea, replying to a story I'd put up last night. Taking a seat back down on my bed, I opened it up to try to even remember what my ass posted. I was so muthafuckin drunk and high after a while, it wasn't no telling. I prayed it wasn't no sad ass simp shit because a nigga was feeling low thinking about Iyanna and her possible Adam's apple.

BigLeaG: *You always been fine.*

She'd replied to a simple photo I shared.

Me: *Thanks.*

BigLeaG: *Damn that's all I get?*

Me: *I wasn't gone even reply so... yeah.*

BigLeaG: *Dannng. I miss you TOO.*

BigLeaG: *You clearly miss me because you're so salty. Lol. I told you to cherish what you had.*

Me: *Have a good one.*

I sent her the peace sign emoji then locked my phone so I could brush my teeth and then hop into the shower.

As I washed off, I wondered what the fuck Lea's motive was. Bitch hadn't said two words to me since she dipped on my ass, and even had her family members block my phone number and social media. Her all of a sudden being nice had me feeling like she was gon' try to set a nigga up for her broke ass new boo, but little did she know, I was over her. So him attempting to use her to get to me was gon' be a fail.

Stepping out in my towel, I tread into my big ass plush bedroom and asked for Siri to call Iyanna. I was gon' find out if her ass was a man, and I was gon' know today.

"Hello?" Her soft voice came through.

"Hey, how are you?"

I listened intently to see if I could hear anything funny, like if she was putting on with the soft ass vocals.

"I'm fine. How are you?"

"Fantastic. You got plans today? I wanted you to come through, eat breakfast with me, and chill."

"Hmm, breakfast does sound good. What's on the menu?"

"Whatever you want. Text it to me, and I'll have a chef make it by the time the driver brings you to me."

"Ooh, a driver and food? Is there another purse involved?" She laughed sexily.

"Nah, you gotta do a little more than you been doing for another fucking purse."

"Oh." She got quiet, like she was thinking. "Well, okay, I will get ready now then."

"Cool." I ended the call.

After sending a driver to Iyanna's, I hit up the homie who worked as a professional cook to see if he was free. When he said he wasn't, I doubled whatever the fuck he was getting paid to show up anyway, which he agreed to.

I dressed up a little, making sure I was looking good and smelling good, and by the time the food had about fifteen minutes left, the driver had arrived with Iyanna. As soon as I

opened the front door to see him helping her from the back seat, all the shit I'd been pondering on had temporarily dissipated.

Iyanna was beautiful as fuck in them jean shorts that went well with the oversized ass button-up top she was wearing. Heels were on her pretty ass feet, her hair was flowing down her back that I knew was sexy as fuck, and her face was without any flaws. I watched closely as she strutted toward me, throwing her purse over her shoulder with a wide smile.

“Hi, is my food ready?” She chuckled before I hugged her. When she didn't let me grip her like I wanted, I felt defeated yet again. I did, however, get a kiss.

“Yeah, it's about ready. Let's go sit down.” I nodded to my driver then took Iyanna by the hand to show her to the dining room.

Just as we sat down, the chef, my homie Terrell, greeted us with orange juice and champagne.

“I'll just have the juice. I don't want to have a headache since I need to get some work done later,” Iyanna quickly said.

“You on ya own with that one. And shit, I work with a little liquor in my system occasionally.”

“Of course you do.” She laughed.

The food started coming in, so we filled up our plates with all of her damn favorites and started eating.

“Can I ask you a personal question?” I watched her grub like she was on death row and had ten seconds left before she hit the chair.

“Anything, babe.”

“Why you didn't have any kids with yo' ex? Y'all were together so fucking long, just seems natural.”

She wouldn't look at me for the first few moments as she stabbed her food.

“We both decided that we wanted to be married first. Overtime, I got a little anxious, wondering when our life

would start for real, but as you know, it never happened.”

“I feel that.” I fucked with her answer. It made me feel better about what Jory’s stupid ass said.

“Why didn’t you get your ex pregnant? Y’all were together a nice little while too.”

“Because I ain’t wanna be a father. I mean, I do in the future and shit, but it gotta be with the right one. I slang dick here and there, and I usually try to be careful, but I have slipped up in the past. I thank God for keeping me childless though.”

“You are disgusting. Having unprotected sex with other people while in a relationship.” I ain’t like the frown on her face, so a nigga needed to think fast.

“Yeah, that shit wasn’t cool. To be honest though, Lea never felt like my actual girl, so I did what I wanted. I think if I had something real, I wouldn’t be on that tip.”

“Something real, huh?”

“Yeah, like with yo’ ass. And I know you’d keep me in fucking check; I like that.”

When she blushed, I leaned over to peck her pillow soft lips a few times.

“You better like it, nigga.” She got back to eating.

“Don’t get me wrong though, even though I asked that shit, I’m happy you ain’t have a baby with that nigga. Gives us a chance to have our own shit, you know?”

“Right.” She gave me no eye contact.

Once we finished eating, Terrell cleared the plates, and we left out to the backyard.

“I got this for you.” I picked up the gift I’d left on the table out by the pool and jacuzzi.

“Ooh, is it expensive?” She beamed, already opening it.

“To some people.”

She kept at it until the box was revealed to show it was from Fendi. Bucking her eyes at me with a smile, she set it on the table and lifted the top to expose the bikini.

“Oh wow, thank you. This is so cute, baby.” She grabbed my face to kiss me, but when I reached to grab her ass to pull her closer, she moved. Fuck.

Ignoring the constant jumpy shit, I said, “I knew it was yo’ style. Put it on and let’s get in the pool.”

“No, my hair.”

“Then we can just chill by the pool and relax.”

“No, I’m okay. I can chill by the pool in what I have on. No need to change.”

“Aight, Iyanna. What the fuck is up?”

“What do you mean?”

“I can’t fucking touch you, I’m getting church hugs all damn day, and now you won’t even do some shit I know you love; I seen it on social media. You stay in the pool or on the beach whether here in the states or out of the fucking country. What’s yo’ deal? ’Cause I can’t take too much more of this shit.”

“Sorry. I hadn’t realized you weren’t enjoying our time together. I will let myself out.”

“Aye.” I grabbed her wrist to stop her from leaving. “I enjoy the fuck out of the time we spend together, but I also like yo’ ass a lot, and I wanna be able to hold you, hug you tightly, feel on you, do shit with you that you like to do.

“You hot and cold. One minute you wanna fuck with me, then when I make a move, it’s a problem or you only let me go so damn far. Then you play me by letting me give you head just to dip. Give me some shit back that I can work with, Iyanna, because I ain’t no loser ass nigga that chases females just for the hell of it.

“Not to sound cocky, but I can get any woman I want, well most until you. So if a bitch ain’t feeling me, she needs to make that shit known, ’cause I ain’t hurting for a relationship.

But I like you, and if you feel the fucking same, I'm willing to try some shit I never have."

Not saying anything, she grabbed my hand and led me to the chair that was at the table her gift was still on. Sitting me down, she leaned over me and kissed me slowly. Already, my dick was swollen, and as we sucked one another's lips, before introducing our fucking tongues, it only got harder.

"I like you too." She dropped down to her knees and began unbuckling my jeans. "You get tested regularly?"

"I'm too wild not too."

"Good." Nodding, she took a deep breath as she released my dick.

My jaw hung open watching her take it into her mouth and begin sucking, twirling her tongue once enough saliva had built up. She looked even more beautiful as she slobbered on my shit like she loved it.

"Iyanna, fuck," I grumbled, not able to keep my eyes open as she sped up, doing some freaky shit that had me wondering what the fuck Jalen was thinking choosing to leave her ass. I had a mind to send the nigga a thank you card, however.

Not long after, my toes were curling, and my teeth were clenching as I tried to hold back my nut. Feeling like I'd black out if I didn't just bust, I gave her a warning.

Iyanna grabbed the bathing suit and used her hands to finish me off.

"Feel relaxed now?" she quizzed.

"Yeah, but why the fuck you use that damn bathing suit for me to nut on?"

Laughing, she replied, "It was either the bathing suit or these expensive ass jeans you have on."

"You right."

"We can wash this," she added as I pulled her into my lap after putting my third leg away.

"When you gon' just be my girlfriend?"

“Already?” She smiled.

“Hell yeah. I can’t let another man enjoy that shit. What’s the hold up anyway? You wasted enough time with the last nigga; time to speed shit up.”

Smirking down into my face for a little bit, she said, “Okay, why not.”

The way Iyanna gave head, I knew the pussy was even better. Shit, my ass would never complain about her not fucking with me again. I’d keep being patient and keep enjoying them toe-curling nuts.

KRUCIAL THA GREAT

“*A*rrgghh!” Barry McCullough groaned in pain when I met his ass in the parking lot of his practice with a right hook. I didn’t bother to take my gun out my fucking hand either.

“How you doing, Dr. McCullough?” I grinned widely at him when he peered up at me, slightly tapping his lip to check for blood. “Oh, you bleeding, fasho. Stand up,” I ordered since he was bent all over like a bitch. “Every day that I’m around yo’ ass, I see more and more Moriah. Typically, when you a bitch ass nigga, so is ya offspring. Should’ve worked harder to keep his light-skinned ass out the streets.”

“Mr. Krucial—”

“Hendricks, if you wanna be formal.”

“Mr. Hendricks, I’m working on it. I told Andreka to let you know that,” he replied, teeth clenched a little bit.

“You got a attitude?”

“Huh? No, no, of course not.” He shook his head to prove his point.

“Sound like you getting smart or some shit, so I wanna make sure. And don’t send no muthafuckin messages about some shit we working on through my woman. She don’t know shit about this arrangement,” I half lied. “You a grown ass man. Send them messages to me yourself, aight?”

“Yes, yes, of course.”

“What’s taking so fucking long? I’ve been patient, but I’m becoming impatient, and once I’m fully impatient, I start fucking shit up. And I don’t give a fuck about doing life. I been to prison before.”

Barry’s demeanor shifted a little after my last sentence.

“Between work and my actual life, it’s been hard to... work on Emily. Also, you must remember she is not exactly a dumb woman. But it’s coming along, I swear to you, and in the next couple of weeks, everything should be in place.”

I had some gum in my mouth, so I chewed on it for a little bit as I stared down at this muthafucka, reading him. I could tell by his heavy ass breathing that if I made any sudden moves, he’d shit on himself.

Although Sisi had given me some good shit on Barry’s ass, that would only get rid of him, and Emily would still be free as a fucking bird to continue to torture my girl in court and shit. I needed either both of them muthafuckas gone, or just her.

Barry was easy. He was doing underhanded shit within his practice, but Emily came off like of a muthafuckin American Dream. She had a good ass job, shitload of money, a spotless record, and had plenty of connections with niggas on the up and up. To take her ass out would be hard as fuck, unless you could find some unforgivable shit, which I was willing to do. By saying that, I needed this nigga Barry to gather evidence and then testify on Andreka’s behalf.

I’d fuck up my own shit just to get Andreka her baby, for real for real. At this point, I didn’t give a fuck about me. I loved her ass, and her being happy was most important. So if a nigga had to kill, steal, and lie, I would. Wasn’t no reason for my baby to suffer when she had a nigga like me by her side.

“You got exactly two weeks. So...” I checked my watch, “Wednesday, two weeks from now by seven forty-five p.m., if I haven’t gotten what the fuck I need, or you ain’t got the white folks sniffing behind yo’ bitch, ready to lock her turkey neck ass up, you gettin’ sniped. You won’t know when, where, or any fucking thing else, but before the sun rises, you gon’ be with ya fucking son.”

“I won’t let you down. I promise I’m working. I just have to go easy since my wife isn’t exactly a fool or the easiest to get over on.”

“Spare me the muthafuckin details. Clean up ya face before you head home. Shit looks broken.” I walked off, leaving the lot and hitting a couple blocks to my whip.

I was tired as fuck from being in meetings and shit all day for a new business venture since I was currently making more money than usual. My taxidermy spot wasn’t enough to wash all that fucking money anymore, and I didn’t trust no other nigga to help me with that shit.

I knew a few muthafuckas with clubs that would do, but I liked to keep the circle small or Lunatic based only. That’s how niggas got fucked up, including too many in on their shit. That was too many personalities, and I already knew if a nigga got slightly out of line or if I was simply having a bad day, I might crack his shit or worse... kill his ass. And remember, I was trying to change.

Pulling up to one of the traps in Rumwood, I climbed out. I was the only nigga willing to push a Bentley or Lamborghini truck through the hood, and park my shit, leaving it for hours. And nah, I didn’t just do it in the Wood because it was my city. I did it all through the hoods of LA, even Los Castile. Everybody knew what was my shit too ’cause it was always a shade of green. Still though, niggas wouldn’t dare touch my shit, but like a normal black person, I stayed *wishing* a muthafucka would. There was nothing better than having a reason to smoke a bitch ass nigga. My classic and vintage whips were more important to me anyway though.

“Krucial Tha Great.” Roddy smirked, slapping hands with me.

Like Jay, he was one of my top niggas, and when I put them together, I had no problems. Although I always paid attention to my shit, most days I could let Jay and Roddy rock without too much supervision. Them niggas always showed respect, was never on no bullshit, and repped the gang no matter where the fuck they were. I liked that shit. It seemed

like the generation after mine had bred some bitches, so it was good to see a few real niggas come up out.

“Run it down.” I slipped my hands into the pockets of my slacks, waiting for him to tell me how the fuck Jay got caught slipping. The cool breeze of the LA night felt good at the moment.

“Aye, boss! You look sharp!” One nigga named Markie burst out the house grinning.

“Get yo’ knucklehead ass back in the house ’fore I shoot it off,” I spoke calmly. “Groupie ass nigga.”

Nodding without saying a word, Markie slipped back in.

Chuckling, Roddy shook his head.

“It was a normal day as usual, then some nigga pulled up wanting to buy but on some hostile shit. Jay already knew he was bullshitting, and he was right. Anyway, before he could even discuss a price or whatever, the nigga pulled out a gun, asking for some money. You know Jay, told the nigga to basically go fuck himself, and when he turned around, dude lit his ass up and took the money.”

“You saw all this shit?” I glowered.

“Hell nah. I would’ve murked the nigga if I was here. Markie was, and he told me word for word.”

“Call his ass out here.”

“Aye, Kie!” Roddy yelled over his shoulder.

“What’s good?” Markie returned, hanging in the doorway. Roddy said nothing, just gestured toward me to let Markie know I wanted his attention.

“Why you let a muthafucka get away with robbing and killing Jay?” I folded my arms, waiting and hoping he had a fucking reason, but there wasn’t one.

Looking off briefly, he replied, “I panicked, Krucial, and just ran in the house to call an ambulance, thinking he could be saved. By the time I came back out, the nigga was gone.”

Pulling my gun from my waist and preparing it, I asked, “I thought I always said to shoot a nigga first and do that other shit later.” When I lifted my eyes from my gun, Markie looked like a deer in headlights.

“Yo-you did, but I freaked the fuck out! I ain’t want him to die! I thought I could catch the nigga!”

“Who the fuck you hollering at? Keep yo’ muthafuckin tenor in check when you talking to me, nigga.” I grimaced.

“My apologies, boss.” He palmed his chest.

“You see what he look like?”

“Nah, I didn’t. I wasn’t even paying attention until Jay got blasted. But he’d never been by before. He was new and didn’t even look like an addict, to be honest.”

That not looking like an addict part was suspicious as shit.

“You ain’t kill the nigga, and you didn’t see what the fuck he looked like?” I laughed then said, “Boy, what the fuck is you good for? Huh?”

“I learned my lesson. Jay was the bro. I just reacted like a brother not a Lunatic.”

“And that’s the problem, nigga.”

“I know but—”

POP! POP! POP!

I shut Markie’s ass up, putting two bullets in his head and one to the chest. Roddy moved out of the way as I walked up the stairs to make sure the muthafucka was dead. When I was positive Markie was in the upper room, I called the crew to come scoop his body.

“Get Kiff to replace his ass by five a.m. tomorrow,” was all I said to Roddy who nodded in response as I tread calmly back to my Lambo truck.

I was angrier now knowing this shit was definitely a setup. My first thought went to the Yobs, but in all the years I’d been a Lunatic, they never did no shit like that. If a Yob killed one of us, they usually just did the shit. Yeah, them niggas were

scary, but sending a fake-out ass addict to kill one of us, that was even far for them hoe ass niggas. Something wasn't right, and I didn't know what, which pissed me the fuck off even more.

Like always though, I would find the fuck out.



“Which ones you think?” I held my phone out and waited for Coop to respond.

“This.” He pointed to one of the sneakers on my screen.

“I fuck with those.” I nodded. “They got a tiny ass pair too.” I gave him a look, causing his little ass to giggle uncontrollably.

“You can buy.”

“Yeah, I know. You ain't got no damn money, or do you?”

“Nope! I can ask Mommy.”

Chuckling, I replied, “That's cool for right now, but when you get to be big like me, you can't say shit like that. The hoe — women like niggas with their own money, aight?” I put my hand out for him to slap, and he did with a nod.

“Just when that conversation started to get cute, you had to fuck it up.” Andreka walked in, dressed up a little more than usual. I knew she was about to take Coop to his nursery school class, but she never put on more than some fucking tights and a top. “Come on, baby,” she called to him as she put shit in his bag.

“Where the fuck you going all dressed up?” I frowned, helping Coop down from the big ass couch.

“Dressed up? Baby, I have on a damn romper and sandals.” She laughed as if some shit was funny.

“What the fuck is a romper?”

“Like a one-piece thing, see.” She spun around.

“Well, that fucking romper is clinging to yo’ ass and hips like you advertising them muthafuckas. I’m coming with you to drop his ass off.” I got up.

“Why?” She continued laughing.

“I don’t see shit funny. And I’m going because you clearly trying to catch one of them pre-school teacher’s attention, and I’m about to let that nigga know you taken, and I’ll kill his ass.”

“No! Uh uh! You are not about to embarrass me at my baby’s school!” She chuckled. “And I am not trying to catch anybody’s attention except yours. I just made myself look a little more presentable because I have a gig after I drop him off.” She put Coop’s backpack on as he tore up the Uncrustable she’d given him.

“A gig?”

“Well yeah. I can’t find a barbershop I enjoy working in, so I gave up on that. Once I get all my credentials, I’m gonna open my own shop. But for now, I will do my own appointments.”

“Who is the appointment?”

“I don’t know. Just some nigga who booked with me.”

“What’s his name?”

“Kapri.”

“Tell me his name, or I’m following you there and ’causing a muthafuckin scene on yo’ job,” I stated sternly.

Grabbing her phone from her big ass purse, she scrolled around on it for a little bit with an attitude then said, “His name is Arlen Gill.”

“Black?”

“Yes, and leave him alone, Kapri! I need my reputation if I’m gonna do my own thing. I can’t have niggas scared to get cut by me because of my psycho ass boyfriend.” She rolled her eyes when I started laughing. “What?”

“Nothing, just niggas really be scary. I wouldn’t give a fuck how crazy yo’ nigga was. You’d be cutting my hair and sucking my dick too.” I leaned down to kiss her, but she turned away. “Give me a kiss or I’m killing him.”

Smirking slightly, she turned to peck a nigga, holding my face in the way she liked to do. I liked the shit too, but I’d never admit it.

“Something is really wrong with you.” She ushered Coop out.

“Aight, see you later, little nigga!”

“Bye!” Cooper shouted to me before taking off running to Andreka’s car.

“I’m serious, Kapri.”

“Man, fuck out of here. I got shit to do. My life don’t revolve around yo’ ass,” I snapped.

“Yeah, okay, nigga.”

I watched my woman walk her fine ass to the car and kept watching until her Range Rover was peeling off. Soon as I shut the door, I hit up my nigga Percy on the burner, asking him to send what the fuck I needed on bitch ass Arlen Gill and how it had better be quick.

While I waited for his ass to hit me, I got my gun as well as a backup and made sure the shit was ready to go. By the time I was heading out in one of my underground whips, dressed in all black and with my heat on me, Percy had come through like he always fucking did.

I was racing against the fucking clock, so I drove straight to Arlen’s crib. Any muthafucka with that name was a bitch, I already knew. I chuckled to myself as I confirmed my thoughts, seeing his little single family hoe ass crib.

Hopping out, I jogged across the street and rang the doorbell. I waited, but nobody came to answer the shit, which was seemingly perfect.

“He’s not home,” a nosy ass old lady came out of her home to tell me.

“Oh, I must have the wrong house. I was looking for my cousin. You sure she don’t stay here too?” I quizzed, making sure she couldn’t see much of my face thanks to the hoodie I was wearing.

“No, just the young man.”

“Preciate it.” I walked off and hit the corner back to where my whip was.

Now that I knew nobody was inside, it was go time. I moved to the end of the block where I could still see the house and waited patiently. About twenty minutes later, I spotted Andreka’s truck trailing another car, causing me to laugh. Of course, he drove a punk ass A-Class Mercedes. That car was for females, and any nigga pushing that shit as a grown ass man was definitely the muthafucka getting his head shoved around in the hood by the big dogs.

Andreka’s ass had driven right past me and didn’t notice, but that was expected since she didn’t know this old school. It was a 1971 Oldsmobile and the only one of my whips that wasn’t green, for obvious reasons. It also had police tint, so you wasn’t seeing shit going on this muthafucka.

Getting my favorite bitch ready, my M16, I started my shit and crept down the street. Just as I got close to the house, I pulled my ski mask down and started letting off rounds into Arlen’s crib just as he was about to take my bitch toward it. He and Andreka were still in the driveway, but they rushed to their fucking cars anyway, him screaming louder than she was. I strategically shot out his car’s back window and two tires, before speeding off on damn near two wheels.

“Shit.” I smiled, driving fast as fuck so I could get back to the house. I knew Andreka, and she’d be hitting me about this shit soon.

I went to drop this car off at my warehouse where it originally belonged, and when I got to her crib, I quickly changed clothes. As soon as a nigga sat down on the couch, I heard Andreka using her key to get in.

“Oh my gosh,” she said upon seeing me.

“What’s up? You aight?” I frowned out of fake ass confusion.

“You’ve been here? All day?”

“I mean, it’s still pretty early, but yeah. I been here since you saw me this morning. Why? Fuck is wrong with you?”

Sighing, she came around to sit on the couch.

“My appointment went horrible. As soon as the client and I got to his house, it got shot up.”

“Shot up? Fuck kind of niggas is you working with?”

“Right! He seemed legit, even a little bit corny, but I guess I was wrong.”

“So you ain’t even cut his hair?”

“Hell no! I was too scared by then. I wasn’t about to be cutting his hair and get shot. He swore he didn’t know what was going on and asked me to cut it still but elsewhere. I didn’t feel right though, because clearly, he’s in some shit. I told him he’d need to find somewhere else, yes, but on another day.”

“Damn, baby, I’m sorry.”

“Me too.” She looked off, defeated. “Maybe I just need to get a desk job. This barbering thing isn’t working.”

“Nah, what you need to do is have your own shop. You gotta understand you beautiful and niggas is grimy. A bald muthafucka will book you just ’cause he know he can get you in his crib. I know you tough and shit, baby, but you still my woman, and I gotta protect yo’ ass. And you not that big; you little as fuck.”

She chuckled softly.

“A shop is too expensive, and I need all my money going to the lawyer fees for Cooper. I agreed to let you secure him, but I need to keep up with any new payments.”

“I got a little bread on me.”

“No, Kapri—”

“Yeah, Andreka. I like that you independent, and I get it, you don’t want a nigga helping you get shit, but I ain’t no random nigga; I’m yours and you mine. Shit is gon’ be like that for life. If you knew for a fact you was gon’ be my wife, would you trip this fucking hard?”

“Maybe not.” She shrugged.

“Aight then. You know I’m gon’ marry yo’ pretty ass.” I kissed the side of her neck, making her blush. “Yo’ woman should be invested in like any fucking thing else. I got a lot of money, more than you believe I do, and I ain’t about to be watching you struggle. Everybody around know you a hard ass worker. Time to stop trying to prove the shit when you’ve already done it. Kick ya feet up and let yo’ man take care of you while making you rich.”

“Thank you, baby.” She hugged my torso, leaning over for a kiss. “I guess I need to stop acting like this is temporary and you’re anything like Moriah. Even if you wanted to leave, I wouldn’t let your ass, and you’re miles away from being like that man.”

“Exactly. Let a nigga get you wealthy, ’cause you ain’t gon’ be using my bread to buy them hoe ass rompers.”

Bursting into laughter, she kissed me again before getting up to go to the bathroom.

When she did, I powered on my burner and made a phone call.

“Hello?” the nigga Arlen answered, sounding like he’d had a bad day.

“Aye nigga, just letting you know yo’ crib getting shot the fuck up wasn’t no coincidence. If you ever in yo’ life try to get my girl to yo’ muthafuckin house or anywhere else on some privacy shit, haircut or not, I’m gon’ spill ya fucking brains on ya pillow that same night. That’s on my mama, and I love the fuck out of my mama.”

“My bad, bro. I swear I ain’t mean no harm.” His voice damn near trembled.

“She need the money for the haircut though.”

“Huh? I ain’t even get the cu—”

“Oh, you right.” I chuckled. “My fault, *Arlen*. I’m ’bout to come over there then and line you up myself.”

“She take Cash App?”

“Nah, muthafucka. Cash only. Head to Jim Bradley park, the one around the corner from yo’ crib in the next fifteen, and give it to the nigga in a red shirt. Try anything funny, and you’ll be dead by midnight.”

I hung up, and five minutes later Andreka emerged, but in a different outfit, more relaxed.

“Who was that?”

“Just business. You take Cash App?” I questioned since I didn’t know the answer.

“No, only Zelle. Why?” She sat down.

“Just curious. You look good.” I started to kiss on her ass, but nastily this time since that romper had gotten my dick hard. On my life, she would never wear that shit in public again.

DONNICA MEYERSON

“*T*hat nigga gotta go! ASAP!” I jumped hearing OD yell like I never had before, as I stood in his humongous kitchen making some food.

My fairytale life that consisted of laying up in OD’s seven-million-dollar mansion, going to work when and only if I felt like it, shopping excessively with his cash and credit cards, as well as getting main chick perks around town, was slowly coming to an end. I could feel it.

Being with Krucial, I never paid much attention to OD nor his actions. To me, he was always just the enemy and nothing to think about. I paid more attention to Essence just because I couldn’t stand her ass and the way she got down.

Nevertheless, being over here with him, I realized he was obsessed with Krucial. Everything he did was because of him, even down to the things he spent his money on and how he moved. I didn’t ever remember him being such an important factor to Krucial, like Krucial is to him.

Whenever OD and I went out, someone at the top had to be paid to make sure Krucial nor any other Lunatic could come in and possibly bother us. He hated the color green so much that I was surprised he was even able to look at the cash he kept on him. Whatever car, pair of shoes, or even clothing he bought had to be something Krucial didn’t have, and if he did, it needed to be newer. And yes, he’d have his little minions check on Krucial’s outfits and whatever cars he did show, to

be sure OD didn't have the same or less. It was funny at first, but now it was annoying and a wee bit unattractive.

"Hey." Curly came into the kitchen.

It was odd to me that OD stayed having gang meetings in his actual home. I'd never been to Krucial's mansion, so I knew the Lunatics hadn't outside of his close homies. Yes Curly, the late Shoki, and Taro were to OD what Lolly, Jory, and Quay were to Krucial, but OD would have niggas over here that I knew at the most ran errands for him.

"Hey, what's up?" I put the salad dressing I'd been using into the fridge. As I did, I caught Curly eyeing my ass in these shorts that were damn near panties.

"Boss man wanna see you."

"Right now? I'm about to eat."

"Yeah, right now, and he mad as hell, so I suggest you bring yo' ass on."

"Watch how you talk to the boss's woman, nigga. I don't wanna have to cause you to lose your fucking ranking," I shot back, annoyed.

"Yeah, aight, *Essence*." Curly cracked himself up as he walked his rotund ass back to OD's office.

Rolling my eyes, I took a couple bites of my salad and then went to see what this nigga wanted.

"You asked to see me, baby?" I cooed, entering the office to see Taro and Curly on the couch, and OD pacing angrily.

"What's the update on yo' baby daddy?" he asked. I was hoping him wanting me to do that was no more.

"Oh... well I told you he wanted something in order to even agree to meet up with me, and I couldn't do that to you. You even said you didn't want me to."

"Yeah, well that was before that hoe ass nigga Krucial killed my damn brother!" he shouted, referring to Shoki. As mad as he was, you'd think he and Shoki were actually related.

And these niggas swore women were emotional. “Then now the muthafucka got the nerve to be making fun of the shit!”

“He is?” I acted shocked.

I still followed Krucial and other Lunatics on social media from a backup account, so I’d seen how the young boys of the gang had been talking shit while wearing some of Shoki’s jewels. Krucial had surely swiped them from Shoki when he murdered him and then obviously passed them off to the little homies to make fun. He was still ruthless.

“Hell yeah he is!” OD hollered.

“He stay doing shit like that. Next he gon’ be trying to fuck Sabrina. How far we gon’ let this nigga go? What, he gotta put a baby in Shoki’s bitch for us to ride out?” Taro frowned.

“Nah, we not letting him get away with shit no more. Calm down,” OD replied.

“I’m trying to, shit, but I’m tired of talking about it! You said her baby daddy was gon’ handle the fucking job, and that was before he shot Shoki. Now the homie is dead when Krucial’s ass should’ve been!” Taro fussed.

I was standing in the room, trying to be invisible because I wanted no parts of this shit. Being the woman of a gang banger was getting too real for me. I needed to switch to an old rich white man as soon as possible.

“Yeah, well ain’t shit else ’bout to happen because Donnica ’bout to set the shit up with her baby daddy.” OD turned to look me in the eye. “If he wanna fuck, you fuck him. Whatever that nigga wants, you do it and get his ass to me.”

“Can’t you just have your goons kidnap him? Or why can’t you do it? Krucial always—” I stopped myself, wanting to just disappear as the room got dead silent.

“Bitch, I know you wasn’t about to compare me to another nigga whose dick you was sucking?” OD’s eyes were filled with venom as he stared me down, looking like the devil himself.

“No, no, no, I wasn’t.” I shook my head. OD may have been tinier and weaker than Krucial, but the nigga was still very intimidating.

“What was you about to say then?” OD cocked his head slightly. His lips were pursed so tightly, making it obvious that he was angry as hell.

“That he...” I couldn’t think of anything in time.

WHAP!

Before I could even try to get my thoughts together, OD slapped them right out, causing blood to seep from my lip.

“You ever disrespect me like that again, and I swear to God, I will put you in the ground. Now you take yo’ ass to Las Vegas, and you come back with that nigga Alton. You hear me?”

“Yes sir.” I spoke softly, tears running down my cheeks uncontrollably.

“And no need to worry about him fucking Sabrina; he too up Andreka’s ass.” OD shook his head.

“Why don’t we get at her? Get one of our young niggas to do it.” Curly licked his lips. He clearly was thinking with his other head.

“Yeah? Who? Have you forgotten that nigga exterminated half the fucking gang at a party over us helping Moe’s ass? You touch that bitch again using a known Yob, he might get yo’ ass next,” OD scolded Curly.

“Man, fuck that nigga. I don’t care about dying. He’ll have to live with knowing I fucked his bitch regardless.” Curly slapped hands with Taro who made it known that he agreed.

When OD smirked, I knew he was on board.

“Check into that shit for us,” he said then looked to me. “Get up out of here; you got work to do.”

I hurried out of that office because I needed to tend to my damn lip. Rushing, I ran into Essence who was back from what looked like a massive shopping spree.

“Damn, that fall from grace must’ve been from the top floor of the building, huh?” she laughed, eyeing my lip.

“Bitch, fuck you.” I moved around her.

“Oh, and I bought all of this myself. I’m sure you wish you didn’t have to suck dick to get some of this!” she hollered at my back, but I paid her no mind.

I was irate as I cleaned my beautiful face. No man had ever hit me like that. My baby daddy wasn’t around enough to, my boo that got murdered would never hit a woman, and the most Krucial did was shake or hem my ass up. OD had gone too far.

Once I was clean, I went to my bedroom here that I slept in when OD wanted to be alone or on a rare occasion wanted to spend the night with Essence. I changed into a nice tight dress that was pretty short, and then slipped my feet into some Tom Ford padlock heels. After switching my things into my all white Bottega bag, I combed my fresh weave down out of its hair clip, put on some jewelry, and then spritzed myself with Bitter Peach by Tom Ford as well.

I was looking amazing, despite having had a busted lip a little bit ago. Grabbing the keys to the Bentley OD got me, I left out without him even noticing, which was as easy as walking out of the front door. In seconds, I was on my way to the fish spot Krucial’s uncle owned. I was hoping I ran into Krucial there, because occasionally, he’d stop by for lunch.

That was why whenever niggas pretended Krucial was so hard to find or catch, I knew they were just scary. That man was a hood nigga and stayed in the hood either handling business or kicking it. He never hid or kept four guards on him like OD did. Everybody knew where his Rumwood apartment was too. The *only* thing he kept hidden and well, was wherever his million-dollar home was. That was like classified information. By saying that, if you wanted to find Krucial, it was fairly easy, and I think he wanted it that way; he enjoyed confrontation.

My gut churned and my body heated up upon seeing him outside of Supreme Fish with a styrofoam cup, sipping out of it every now and again as he talked with some nigga from the

Lunatics. I parked and checked my appearance before getting out sexily. His friend's eyes immediately landed on me, causing Krucial to look over to where I was. Nervousness took over, knowing he was watching, and I had to be extra careful so I wouldn't fall.

“Good afternoon, fellas.” I smirked as I got closer. When Krucial ignored me and kept talking, I was floored. “Krucial, can we speak a moment?”

“I'm already fucking speaking. When I'm done, you can get at me if I feel like it.” He frowned down at me.

He was so fucking fine. That mahogany complexion, juicy cornrows, NBA worthy height, and lean build was something else. It didn't help that he was in a revealing ass wife beater and gray sweats. And his arms weren't the only bulges I paid attention to. I missed that dick, even though OD's was fire too. It was just something about the way Krucial's big ass man handled me in a way OD really couldn't, due to his small stature.

“Damn, someone is mad at me.” I giggled.

“If you gon' wait, wait over there. Next time you interrupt a conversation, make sure yo' ass ain't got funky ass blunt breath. You not doing the best at convincing me to talk to you.” He embarrassed the fuck out of me as the boy he was conversing with laughed too heartily for my liking.

I had smoked a blunt, but that was well before I made my salad. I guess being in a rush, I forgot to handle my oral hygiene. I was currently mortified as I went to stand off to the side.

What felt like forever had gone by, before Krucial came over to me. Well, more like he started walking past me and made me talk while I walked alongside him.

“I have some information for you,” I started.

“Keep going.”

“Is there somewhere we can speak alone?”

“No.” He handed me a piece of gum, making me want to slit my throat. My whole point in dolling myself up was to turn him on, and I’d failed.

“Dang, Krucial!” I was frustrated and missed him. OD was not all he’d been cracked up to be. “Since when you don’t like me no more? ’Cause of OD? I only went to him because you were playing me to the left. I used to always be able to get some damn time from you.”

“This shit you doing right now is a waste of my fucking time. I don’t care who you fuck. That’s what you do, use ya pussy to get what you want and where you want. Ain’t shit wrong with that, but I couldn’t give a fuck less than I do.

“Now you pulling up, breath stank as fuck, yelling about some bullshit is what’s gon’ piss me off in a way you don’t want it to.” Moving a bit closer to me so only we could hear, he added, “You show yo’ face to me again, especially with that halitosis, I will put a bullet in yo’ ass and do the same to whomever the fuck got a problem with it. Don’t even respond, because if I smell that shit again, I’m liable to slap the shit out you.” He backed up and then stepped off the curb to get in his car.

“I love you,” I told him, speaking my truth.

“Fuck you say?” His tone and facial expression matched that of someone who’d been insulted. That caught me off guard because I’d done the opposite... I professed my love to him.

“Nothing.” I shook my head. I could tell by his body language that he was on edge, and I wanted no parts of his wrath.

“I ain’t think so,” was the last thing he said before getting in his car and peeling off.

If he didn’t want me, then maybe it was a good idea for my baby daddy to take his ass out. That way, neither Andreka nor I would have him. I smirked as I processed my thoughts.



*L*as Vegas, NV...

“Damn, that pussy still good,” Alton groaned as he fell to the side of me after carefully removing the condom.

It was weird using protection with a man I’d spent so long with and had three kids by, but I wasn’t about to let him put a fourth in me. This shit was for my man, OD, and I doubt if I came home with a seed in me, he wouldn’t kick my ass out.

Plus, Alton was a horrible father to my children. No, I wasn’t mother of the year, but at least I provided for them. So, it didn’t feel good giving some ass to a nigga who wasn’t helping me raise the kids he went half on.

I got up and went to the bathroom to take a quick hoe bath and then came out to put on my dress. Alton was still under the covers of the bed inside of this motel, lighting up a cigarette.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, I said, “Now that I gave you what you want, you need to give me what I want.”

“Oh yeah, what’s that? Come to LA? I got some business deals I’m in the middle of making,” he lied.

“Alton, please. If your business deals are because you think I want you to come back to LA and be a father, you can stop now. I gave up on that a long time ago.”

“I am a good fucking father! Reason I don’t like coming around is because how you be acting, talking shit every second. And you know why I don’t like coming to LA.”

“Yeah, I do, and OD says if you do this one favor, the Yobs will take the price off your head.” I calmed down, not wanting to upset Alton since I needed him to handle this. Not only did OD want Krucial dead, but so did I.

“Huh.” Alton sat up, putting out the cigarette. “OD the bossman now?”

“Yeah. After Moe died, he came up.”

Listening to me, he nodded then quizzed, “What’s the favor?”

“Kill a Lunatic.”

“That’s it?”

“Yep, and not only will the price be taken off of your head, you’ll get one hundred thousand dollars.”

“Hold up, hold up. Either this a fucking setup, or this is some werewolf beast anaconda type Lunatic y’all want me to kill.”

“No, not at all.” I chuckled nervously. “It’s just Krucial.”

“Krucial?” Alton just about jumped up from the bed. “Fuck, man. No wonder the reward is so sweet.” A few moments of silence passed, and he smirked. “OD still hate that nigga, huh?”

“Yep, can’t stand him. Plus, Krucial killed his right hand and is making fun of it.”

“I get it, but OD always hated his ass. Shit is low-key sad seeing brothers go out like that.”

“Brothers? Who the hell are brothers?”

“OD and Krucial! You telling me you fucked both them niggas and ain’t know they was related?”

“I didn’t fuck them.”

I was so puzzled at the moment because if anybody was supposed to know some shit like that, it was me.

“Yeah, aight. You get a pass though ’cause only niggas that’s been in the gangs from way back know that shit.”

Now it all made sense why Krucial hadn’t killed OD. I knew he wasn’t scared of him, but it always confused me how Krucial would shoot someone for something so simple, yet the most he’d done to OD was whoop his ass.

“So you down?” I asked.

“What he do?”

“Who?”

“Krucial, Donnica.”

“I told you. He—”

“Nah, to *you*. You think certain shit don’t get back to me ’cause I’m out here, but it do. I know all about how you was one of that nigga’s hoes and bowing at his feet when he graced ya presence. Now you with his bro and want him dead? Fuck he do? Fell in love with another bitch, huh?”

“Umm, no. He was getting too clingy, so I had to end it. Then I started being cool with OD, and I didn’t like how disrespectful Krucial was. It’s some shit you don’t do, and he continuously crosses the line,” I lied. “So are you down?”

“Yeah, but only if you keep letting me hit that.” He touched my thigh. “I’m gon’ make an example out of that nigga. He fucked my baby mama, and he too fucking arrogant for my liking. After I bring his ass down a notch and put him in his grave, niggas gon’ be calling me Alton Tha Great.” Alton flashed his nice smile.

I prayed he was right, because it was time for Krucial to meet his maker. Let’s see how much he’d like it when we made fun of his ass while in the funeral home.

IYANNA

“*I*’ll see you later then, sexy,” Lolly said into the phone, making me grin.

“Can’t wait.” I hung up, stomach filled with butterflies.

Ever since Lolly and I made things official, it’d been great. The relationship was nothing like what I assumed it’d be, aka a bunch of hoes coming for me about their man because of how much of a player he was. I still did have moments where I wondered if giving him a chance was naive of me, but for the most part, I was in paradise.

We had a good time together, despite never having actual sex. We went out to fancy dinners, on shopping sprees, or sometimes just chilled at home, mainly inside of his big ass one. Every day, I hoped he wouldn’t become frustrated due to the lack of sex, and every day, I had to do the most to conceal my belly. Thankfully, I hadn’t gone rogue as far as my eating, as advised by my doctor, so I wasn’t too large. I had an undeniable pudge of course, but nothing the normal woman didn’t have when she was bloated.

It wasn’t just Lolly who wanted sex though. I was beyond horny due to all the hormones and my feelings for him. I just couldn’t bring myself to sleep with him in my condition. I was a freak, but that was downright nasty.

Anyway, Lolly and I had gotten so close that I went as far as posting him on my story. It took an hour of self-pep talks and listing pros versus cons, but I eventually just said fuck it.

My life had been made a mockery of this far, so it really didn't matter what happened next.

"Someone is blushing hard." Andreka unbuckled her seat belt as valet came around to get the door for me.

"I know." I snickered, peering through my rearview mirror at her since she was in the back seat.

I spotted my mom, who was in the passenger seat, roll her eyes. She didn't like Lolly and for good reason, I guess. She had her heart set on an NBA player who made legit money as her son-in-law, not a gang banger who could end up in jail or have her daughter in jail. No matter how much I tried to explain to her what type of man Lolly was, she didn't like him.

"Let's go, ladies." My mama sighed, getting out of the car.

The three of us were having lunch at The Ivy in Beverly Hills. Andreka and I used to love coming here when we were with our exes and hadn't been in a minute. My mom loved flowers, pink, and anything girly, so I thought it'd be nice to invite her. Also, maybe seeing that Andreka's man was in the same profession as mine would help smooth things over.

After checking in, we were seated at one of the tables on the slightly elevated balcony. We had a view of busy ass Robertson Street, where all kinds of nice ass cars drove up and down. The sun was shining brightly this afternoon, and that combined with being able to let my belly sit free since Lolly wasn't around felt nice.

We placed our drink orders in and chatted lightly over the bread that was given to us, while scanning the menu. And just after we ordered, my phone rang. Looking down, I saw it was Jalen, making me hit ignore. Sadly, he called me back straightaway.

"What?" I frowned, feeling my mama who was beside me and Andreka who was across, look at me.

"Hey, what you up to?"

"Why?" I threw my hand up as if he could see me. Jalen's voice, the way he breathed, and everything else about him irritated the hell out of me.

“Iyanna, you doing too much.” He spoke with an authoritative tone as if he was running something. “I wanna meet up when you free.”

“For?”

“To discuss some things. You forgot we having a baby? Whether you like it or not, I’m in ya life forever.”

His comment made my skin crawl. I knew some women got pregnant and were happy to be able to stay in that man’s life, but I was the opposite. I loved my child, but I wished it wasn’t his so we could have a clean break. He’d broken my heart into one million pieces, and I couldn’t even have the luxury of erasing him from my life because of our baby.

“No, we don’t need to meet up anytime soon. Closer to when I’m due, we can talk it out. Good day.” I hit the red end button.

“You okay?” Andreka asked as the waiter set our drinks down. I was so envious of the cocktails she and my mom had.

“Yeah, I’m fine.” I sighed.

“Was that Jalen?” my mother inquired, and I nodded, taking a sip of my pineapple and orange juice mix. “If he was asking to meet up, you need to go.”

“Ma, no. I still have some time left before I give birth, a nice amount actually. Us talking this instant is not necessary.”

“Just do it when you’re ready, if you even want to,” Andreka chimed in, making my mom snap her head in her direction.

“Andreka, you’re a sweet girl and I like you, but please do not advise Iyanna on what she needs to be doing. She is having a baby with that man and does not need to avoid him. Waiting until the baby arrives to make amends is not a great idea. You two need to start coming together now. Hell, he needs to help you with some bills and things the baby needs,” my mother fussed.

“I wouldn’t say I advised her of anything, Mrs. DeSoto. I simply wanted to assure her that she didn’t need to force

herself to meet with him right away. I do agree he needs to help financially, absolutely, and especially after what he's done, but if seeing him this week is going to stress her out, it's not worth it. It's better to do it when she's ready, not when you are and not when he is," Andreka replied.

"Okay, guys. Thanks to the both of you. I appreciate the advice, but I will make my own decision. No need for the two of you to argue." I broke it up. Both of them were crazy, and I wasn't trying to have my mother fighting my best friend.

"Iyanna, just talk to him." My mama rubbed my back gently.

"Ma, you're just hoping we rekindle." I looked at her. "I don't want him. I have somebody."

"Oh please. How old are you, and you're entertaining a gang banger like you're a sixteen-year-old girl? I thought I raised you better than to deal with a man who is immature and can't even make his money legally." She shook her head as Andreka watched quietly, texting here and there.

"Jalen is much more immature, trust me. And Lance has legit money. You don't listen to anything I tell you. You just assume from what you see in the movies."

"That boy showed up to your old home and put his hands on Jalen."

"Ma..." I waited for the server to finish putting our plates down, and when he left, I continued. "You don't know the whole story. Jalen started—"

"I do not care. Jalen is the father of your child. What if this Lance character had have injured him to where he had to retire? How would he be able to provide for you and that baby plus the wife of his who is also having his child? You need to think, Iyanna, and with the head up top." She took a huge gulp of her gin cocktail.

"Would you at least meet him and see?" I asked, taking a huge bite of my pizza with spicy shrimp.

"I don't need to. I know what I know."

I looked to Andreka who thankfully didn't say anything at all. However, we'd been friends long enough to where I knew what she was thinking and vice versa.

The rest of the lunch, we didn't talk about Jalen or Lolly anymore, so my mom definitely loosened up enough for us to go take a look inside of the Chanel store that was only a few steps away.

After we left there, I took Andreka home, and of course on the way to my parents' house, my mother again tried to talk me into meeting up with Jalen.

"Ma, do you seriously want me to see him because of the baby, or is this your way of trying to keep us together? Because I've told you, that ship has sailed. He not only cheated on me, humiliated me, and broke my heart, but he's a married man now, to someone else." I pulled up in front of their home.

"I want you to go because having a small baby that needs 'round the clock attention and trying to get along at the same time is gonna be hard on you. I was married to your father who was there with me from day one, and it was still hard.

"You two need to figure out how to co-parent *before* you're in that fragile and stressful stage. Also, him giving you a little lump sum so you'll go on your way is not okay. Either he needs to be willing to support you and the baby fully, or you need to put him on child support. You invested almost ten years of your life into that relationship, and you will not be forced to take care of a child he willingly helped you make while he lives happily ever after with that other woman. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am." I nodded as my mom thumbed the lone tear that traveled down my cheek.

"Good. Iyanna, I only want the best for you. I may sound harsh, but I'm not trying to be. You're my baby, and the thought of you being forced to struggle or be a single mother financially is hurtful. Also, dating a man who could potentially leave you a single mother again by getting himself killed or

imprisoned because of his lifestyle isn't something I want either."

"I know."

"Okay. See you later." She pecked my cheek and got out.

I sat in the car for a little bit and then took my phone from my purse. After taking a few deep breaths, I dialed Jalen back. It seemed to ring forever before he picked up.

"Hey, Iyanna. Everything okay?"

"Yes. If you wanna talk, we can talk tonight, but within the next hour."

"Uh... I can't. It's a little late, and I'm already home. I don't have room to—"

"Jalen, you're a master at making excuses to leave the house at all times of the day. Trust me, I know. Figure it out and meet me at my apartment in the next hour or forget it." I hung up.

As soon as I did, I texted him the address to my place before heading there myself.

Walking into my new luxury apartment that ran me \$7,000 a month, I smiled, dropping my purse on the couch. As far as my savings went, I had enough for first but not last, so Lolly helped me with that. As badly as I didn't want him to, I needed my own place and I was used to nice shit, so the place I'd been staying in prior to this just wasn't cutting it. Plus \$6,000 in addition to the first few months of rent was nothing to Lolly.

I made myself a little snack, and by the time I was done, I heard a knock at the door. I chuckled to myself before going to open it, wearing a straight face. Just like I thought, Jalen's mouth was agape as he walked in.

"What's up?" he asked softly, too occupied by my plush apartment with large windows that overlooked West Hollywood.

"You tell me, and make it quick. I have plans."

“I uh... You paying for this shit?” He frowned. “Or is it that nigga that’s paying for it.”

“Why is that your business?”

Inside I was laughing at how jealous this man was right now.

“Because you pregnant with my baby but got a nigga paying your rent. Don’t think I don’t see you on social media, posted up like you in love. You not in love, Iyanna.”

“Uh uh, do not confuse my situation with yours. You’re the one that’s unhappy with your significant other, not me. I’m having the time of my life. He’s good to me and takes care of me. He makes sure that I’m not stressed during this time. You should be thankful to him. You don’t want me stressed while carrying your baby.”

“Unhappy?” He laughed. “I’m not unhappy. I love Tisha, that’s why I made her my wife.”

“Oh, was that supposed to bother me? Maybe if I didn’t have a nigga ten times better than you, I’d be bothered.”

“Better than me?” Jalen bent over cackling. “You don’t even believe that midget ass nigga is better than me.”

“That midget beat your ass, didn’t he?” I smirked, and I swore I saw fire in Jalen’s eyes.

“Aight, look. Enough with the games and tit for tat shit. You win, okay?”

“I win?”

“Yes.” He dropped down with his big ass. “Baby, I get it. I’ve realized what I’ve been missing. If you tell me right now you wanna work this out, I can have papers filed by the morning.”

“Jalen, no—”

“Iyanna, I’m sick. Seeing you with another nigga got me off my game. I can’t even focus.” He tried to grab my hands, but I pulled away.

“Oh, so you didn’t care until I met someone else. I see. Jalen, get up off my floor!”

“I always cared, baby, but I took the shit for granted. The grass ain’t always greener, and I see that. I’m mad as fuck at myself for leaving some shit that was real and true for what I got now. Don’t get me wrong, Tisha is a good woman, but she ain’t for me.”

If he’d have said this months ago when he first left me, it would’ve been music to my ears. Despite how angry I was, I loved him. But he’d foolishly given me time to get over his ass, so now his speech did nothing but confirm what I already knew. I wasn’t moved in the slightest, and I surely wasn’t about to leave Lolly for him. Beyond the fact that Jalen had done the unthinkable, I could never be comfortable building a life with a man who could so easily throw me and what we had away.

“Jalen, get up.” I spoke in a gentler tone. When he did as I asked, I looked up into his eyes. “I appreciate everything you’re saying because, for the longest, I thought it was me. But you ditching me was a blessing in disguise. I learned how to be alone and how to be okay with it, meaning I will never allow someone to mistreat me in order to have a warm body next to me. Our relationship has been damaged beyond repair. The trust is completely gone, and no matter how hard you try or even I try, the feelings I used to have for you will never be the same.”

“It’s that nigga. I’m better than him, Iyanna.”

Was this fool crying?

“It’s not him. Whether I had him or not, I couldn’t and wouldn’t be with you. Does he make it easier, yes, but I honestly like him. I want to be with him, and I want to see where it goes.”

It was the truth. As much shit as I talked about Lolly, I liked him. Outside of his caramel skin, nice but short build, smooth bald head, swag, and ability to always smell good, he was fun to be around. The nigga had *me* sexually frustrated which I’d never experienced. It felt different with him, like he

actually liked me as a person and saw me as more than a girlfriend or someone to spoil and show off. I'd be a fool to end something so promising now for a man that was never satisfied with what he had.

“You like him, but you love me, baby.” Jalen sniffled.

I actually felt bad for the nigga, but not enough to be with his ass. I felt bad because he was twenty-five years old, married, and a pending two-time possibly three-time father, yet confused as they came. Tisha could have his ass, Melba too if she wanted. I'd happily let them spend the next few decades with a nigga this unreliable. Hopefully, Tisha was simply with him for his money, because putting your heart into a man like this was a bad investment... I'd learned the hard way.

“No, I don't.” I shook my head. “But when I did love you, it didn't matter, so unfortunately, you loving me doesn't matter to me either. We need to move on and worry about the baby. I find out the sex next week, and we can come together on some names. I think that's a good start on us being friends enough to co-parent.”

Dropping my hands, he replied, “Nah, I don't wanna be friends. If we not gon' be together, I'm not gonna be a father. I told you what it was. Only one child gets me. So I hope you tell your son or daughter that you the reason they don't have a father.”

“I'd rather us handle this amicably, because I'd hate to file for child support. You know how California is.”

“You don't need me or child support; you got that nigga. And shit,” he laughed while opening my front door, “seem to me like he got plenty of bread.”

“Jalen—” I called but he slammed the door before I could finish.

Shaking it off, I went to shower and then called Lolly so he could have his driver pick me up. As nice as my place was, I still enjoyed kicking it at his.



A few days later...

*Get that money, dollar-dollar bill, oh yeah...
Gotta hold it to the light, make sure it's real, oh yeah...*

Today I was having a pop up for Agua Soto, hoping to reel in some cash. I wasn't in the place to have a storefront yet, even though Lolly had offered. An apartment which was temporary was one thing, but I couldn't let another man be in charge of my business again. I still had nightmares of how embarrassed I was pulling up to my old shop with a For Lease sign out front while my shit was still inside. It got even worse when damn near all of them social media blogs posted about it. That was a low time in my life.

Anyway, I was hoping that a few of these pop-up shops would get my brand and name back out there. Then once I generated some steady sales online, I'd try to get a store again.

Currently, everyone here was scouring the racks of bathing suits, coverups, and cute bags that I'd had stored up for the longest, as "Eenie Meenie" by Yung Baby Tate played. I hadn't had the funds to get new shit made, but I would soon.

There was champagne, water, juices, and light snacks, as well as a cute photo booth for the ladies to take pictures in. From the colorful decorations to all the amenities I'd just named, I'd spent a pretty penny on my credit cards to fund this, so I was banking on it paying me back.

"This is really nice, Iyanna." Taissa complimented me as she sipped some champagne. She looked a little different than usual.

"Thank you. I like your dress." I eyed her tiny body, missing when I didn't feel and look like a whale.

"Thanks." She winked just as Andreka came over, holding a few bathing suits.

"From the looks of things, you're about to make a lot of money." Andreka grinned.

“Well, I need it. One second.” I hurried to the back of the store because I had to pee. “I’m in here!” I shouted since while washing my hands, someone knocked on the door then jiggled the handle. They kept on, so I quickly dried off then yanked it open to curse them out but spotted Lolly.

“Damn you rude.” He stood there cheeing while holding some flowers.

“Oh my gosh. You didn’t have to come, but thank you.” I took the flowers to keep some space between us as we hugged then kissed. “You smell nice.”

“I try. So they buying shit up or what?”

“So far, yes. I’ve had about sixty transactions since we started.” I walked out with him following me.

“Then yeah, you making money, ’cause yo’ shit ain’t cheap.”

“How do you know?” I was surprised.

“I checked you out. How you gon’ be my woman and I don’t know shit like that?” He took a seat behind the register where I was.

“True.” I was flattered. “So umm, what business of yours can I look up?”

“Well, I ain’t internet bound just yet.” He sat back sexily with a conniving smirk.

“Whatever, nigga.” We laughed it off.

I swayed to the music, watching my friends and other customers enjoy their time while shopping. And then a very familiar face suddenly walked in, making it quite obvious she had no interest in my swim line by how she almost broke her neck looking for someone in particular. When her eyes landed on me, I got nervous, heart beating out of my chest.

“Aye, I think—”

“Baby, can you go in the back and get the extra case of champagne?” I frantically asked Lolly.

His face changed to one of concern as he responded, “Yeah... you cool?”

“I am. I’m just nervous about this whole thing, and it has to be perfect. The more these hoes drink, the more they’ll spend.” I tried to keep calm, but I was anxious.

I couldn’t let Tisha approach me because there was no telling what would come out in front of Lolly. This was not how I wanted him to find out that I was pregnant. Not only would he be shocked, he’d hate me for lying. What started out as something that he didn’t need to know, had now turned into a big ass, fat secret I was holding in that kept me up at night.

“You right.” He chuckled, getting up and going to the back where there was no damn champagne. I knew that would keep him occupied for long enough.

Coming from behind the counter, I rushed to meet Tisha in the middle of the store.

“Is there something I can help you with?” I blocked her pathway.

She was a pretty girl, even while pregnant. Her perfume was nice, and everything about her from her hair to the expensive heels told that her man was rich. I thought when this day came, I’d immediately punch her ass in the face, but at this point, I didn’t care enough about Jalen to act out in that way.

“I’d like to have a word with you, but not with your posse.” She looked over my shoulder, and I realized Andreka was there as well as Taissa.

“Bitch, don’t look at me. I fight pregnant hoes,” Andreka’s crazy ass warned.

Obviously wanting no parts of my best friend, Tisha turned to walk out with me trailing her after I let my friends know it was fine.

Once out on the sidewalk, Tisha went off. “Look, I know you used to have something with Jalen and our relationship came as a bit of a shock to you, but he is a married man, and you need to let that hurt go. Do not call him to come out late in

the night. I don't care if you're pregnant. I am his wife, not you, and therefore, I come first. That may be difficult to accept, but you need to and very soon so that we won't have any problems."

I couldn't help but to laugh at her ass. If she only knew her man had been on his knees, begging me to take him back. Granted, Jalen could've been bullshitting me, but the fact of the matter was, he said the shit. Whether my husband was just saying he'd divorce me or really meant it, either way, I'd be hot.

"Well, unlike you, Tisha, I have a life, career, and other things going on, so I can't hop up whenever Jalen calls and wants to speak. Therefore, when I do have time to squeeze your husband in, I do. Let me also make it clear that any hurt I had over Jalen leaving me, I've definitely gotten over. If he and I talk, it's because he's reached out to me."

"Before you try to imply anything, Jalen already told me when he got to your place you weren't even trying to talk, if you know what I mean. He definitely let me know you were working to convince him to get back together and everything else."

Chuckling, I said, "Yeah, I'm sure that's what you want to believe, girl. Nobody wants Jalen but you and all the other gold diggers of the world. But I know him, and I've learned that he's nothing more than a simple-minded ass man with money at his disposal. He has no loyalty, no morals, and no sense."

"Listen—"

"No, you listen. Whether you like it or not, your husband has a child on the way with another woman. You are lucky, baby girl, that it's me, because I'm independent and don't need that nigga for nothing. I've gone to every doctor's visit alone and have been working my ass off to prepare for my child's arrival *alone*. I've had plenty of opportunities to force myself into you guys' lives via my baby, but I haven't. I've left you the fuck alone so you can at least attempt to be happily married.

“Don’t you ever show up to my business or anywhere that I am conducting business to discuss this petty shit again. Same way I’ve let you be, you better start doing the same, or I’ll have to fuck you up. Not only will I do that, but I will gladly take Jalen up on his *recent* offer to leave you for me, then pass him off to the next bitch, won’t even give him back to you. So we can either be cordial strangers or I can be the baby mama from hell; take your pick, but think on it somewhere else.” I turned and left her ass standing out there.

I checked on some of the people shopping and then rushed behind the register to ring up a few that were waiting for me.

“Baby, wasn’t no champagne back there.” Lolly returned from the back.

“Dang, okay. Guess juice will have to do for the next hour.”

The parts of my life that I was trying to keep separate were definitely beginning to mix.

JORY

“*A*hh!” I jumped up damn near to the muthafuckin ceiling, feeling ice cold ass water fall all over my ass, waking me up from the warm bed. “Maissa, what the fuck is wrong with you!” I hissed, ready to knock fire from her. A nigga was shivering and every fucking thing considering I was only in a pair of boxer briefs.

“You bought that bitch a car?” she growled, teeth clenched together tightly as fuck. “Did you!” She hit me with the bucket.

“Hold the fuck on. I’m freezing and half asleep! Hit me with something else, Mai, and we gon’ be fighting like two niggas in the street, on God,” I warned her. “I didn’t buy nobody a car—”

“Then why did that hoe tell my mama that you did? You saying she lied?”

I could choke slam Taissa right now for being messy and telling some shit I did out the kindness of my damn heart. One of the reasons I even felt comfortable entertaining her ass was because I knew she wasn’t messy and would never try to throw shit in Maissa’s face like she was doing now. Her ass knew damn well I didn’t buy her no car but wanted to make my girl think I was spoiling her ass or something.

“Stop yelling and sit yo’ ass down. Learn to talk shit over like a fucking adult, Maissa.”

“Me being an adult went out the window when you decided to fuck my sister, nigga! Quit dodging the fucking

questions and give me an answer!”

“I ain’t buy her no whip. I bought the car, and we signed a contract stating that she would pay me monthly instead of the bank. I wasn’t on no gift giving type shit, especially one of that caliber.” My voice was calm, not only because I felt like Jack’s ass in *Titanic*, but because I was ready to Hulk the fuck out on somebody.

“Where is the contract then, Jory?”

“It’s in my office.” I finally stood up, awake enough to go take a piss.

“Show that shit to me!” Maissa trailed me to the bathroom.

“I’m not showing you shit right now. I’m about to piss, check my fucking messages, clean up, and then I’ll show that shit to you. It’s seven thirty in the god damn morning. Take yo’ ass down there and make some breakfast instead of starting shit!” I barked, slamming the door in her face.

“Fuck you!” she hollered back.

I took a piss, flushed, washed my hands, and then brushed my teeth before calling Taissa’s phone. I didn’t give a fuck how early in the morning it was; she was gon’ hear from me. The line rang and rang, but she didn’t pick up. I called her ass three more times with the same result, before I gave up, getting into the shower.

Once out, I put on some comfortable shit—boxers, sweats, and a t-shirt—before coming out of the bedroom. Although my house was on the larger side, I didn’t smell shit coming from the kitchen, causing me to shake my head.

I missed Taissa’s cooking, but jeopardizing my relationship with Maissa and being a fucking cheater wasn’t worth it. I clearly couldn’t control myself as much as I thought I could around females, so I had to keep the distance. The last thing I needed was for this thing with Taissa to become some gateway type shit where I was unfaithful all the fucking time.

I knew a lot of muthafuckas took pride in bedding several females—case and point, Lolly or Quay—but I ain’t fuck with that shit when I was in a relationship. Niggas being faithful

came a dime a dozen, so I prided myself on being a needle in a haystack. I wasn't any longer though.

I found Maissa in the kitchen grubbing on a big ass plate of biscuits, sausage, eggs, and grits, making me scan the kitchen for the leftovers.

“You ain't make me none?” I questioned.

When her eyebrow shot up, giving off attitude, I already knew the damn answer.

“Nope. Plus, I ordered this. I didn't cook, as you can see.” She kept her eyes on her phone while scrolling with one hand and eating with the other.

“Maissa, I did not buy yo' fucking sister a car.” I palmed the table she was seated at to look down at her.

As angry as a nigga was, I had to remember I was the one who fucked up and couldn't be trying to dictate shit.

“Where is said contract?” She still hadn't looked at me.

Sighing dejectedly, I left out and went to my office for the contract between me and Taissa. While in there, I checked my phone on the low to see Taissa still hadn't returned my phone call. I didn't know why that woman was pissing me off just by doing something so simple, but she was.

Returning to the kitchen, I placed the papers on the table and sat down while Maissa wiped her hands with a dinner napkin before scooping it up.

She read it for a little then asked, “You got this while fucking her? Or was it before?”

“Why it matter—I got it during. But like I said before, it wasn't on no gift giving, I really like you type shit. Her car broke down, like it always does, and I offered to get—”

“You offered!”

“Maissa—”

“No, leave me the fuck alone, Jory.” She hopped up. “I don't know if I can do this shit with you anymore. I don't see you the same as I did. Now when I look at your ass, I'm

disgusted. I'm sad as hell all the time unless I'm shopping, and I don't want my life to be that way."

"Baby," I stood, "it don't have to be that way. I know I fucked up, but I'm not gon' let the shit happen again. I can promise you that."

"If you're truly sorry, prove it." She left the kitchen.

I sat there thinking for a minute on how I could show Maissa's ass since me talking wasn't working. I knew the only other option was to dig deeply in my fucking pockets. Maissa always lit up when she got some new shit, especially when it was expensive. So after making myself a bowl of cereal, I contacted my jeweler as well as my personal shopper.

While waiting for them to hit me back, I took my food and phone to my office for some privacy and dialed Taissa again.

"Yes?" she answered with a tone I'd never heard her ass use before... well, not until Andreka's smart-mouthed ass got in her ear.

"Don't start with no attitude. Why the fuck you tell ya mama about the fucking car?"

"I had no idea that you were in charge of what I could and couldn't say to my mom."

I couldn't stand this new Taissa that had all this muthafuckin attitude. I missed the old one that was chill and wasn't trying to roll her fucking neck after every statement she made.

"You know exactly what the fuck I mean. You told yo' moms that shit so she'd tell Maissa, which she did, and now you don' started up something. You know damn well I ain't buy you no fucking car. I loaned you some money for a whip that you've agreed to pay back in installments."

"Do you offer every woman with a broken-down car a new one? I don't think so, Jory, so stop acting like your gesture was innocent. You did it because you liked me, and there is nothing else to it."

“Nah. I don’t extend such a fucking courtesy to every bitch with a broken-down ass car, but you my woman’s sister, and yo’ shit has new problems every month, so I thought I’d help yo’ ass out!” I snarled. She had me irate.

“Bitch? Nigga, who are you calling a bitch? You can pretend all day that you did a favor for your girlfriend’s sister, but we both know you did it because you enjoyed fucking me!”

“Yeah, *enjoyed* with a fucking pas-tense! I wouldn’t touch yo’ stupid ass now! I don’t know who or what the fuck got you feeling yourself, but you better come correct when you talk to a nigga like me!”

“Nigga like you?” She laughed. “Jory, please. You getting laughed at in these streets and don’t even know it. You ain’t nobody for me to come correct to.”

“Bitch—”

Click.

She for real hung up on my ass. It was time I showed Taissa that I wasn’t just her sister’s boyfriend. I was about that fucking life.

I saw my jeweler and personal shopper had replied, so I let them know to use my card for whatever before leaving the crib. Maissa was already gone somewhere, I didn’t know, but I wasn’t trying to smother her too much after our conversation. Additionally, our relationship was on thin ass ice.

Hopping into my blood red Trackhawk, I cut my music up and drove straight to Taissa’s whack ass candle store. I knew she was there because of the background she had while we were on the phone.

It took me almost an hour to get to that muthafucka downtown because of all the people on the damn freeway trying to get to work. Finally, I made it and parked right behind the ugly car I’d gotten for her lying ass.

I couldn’t get out of my shit fast enough, and was storming inside of the store in seconds, the strong ass scented candles smacking me in the damn face.

“I ain’t nobody to come correct to?” I burst off into her little back office, causing her to hop up from her chair in fear.

“Get out before I call the police!”

“How you gon’ call the fucking police? You think I’m gon’ stand here while you dial them niggas?” I snapped, backing her ass into a wall. When she tried to grab her phone, I pushed it off the table, making it slide across the shiny white floors. “Let me tell you something, Taissa. Don’t you ever come at me sideways like you did today. You don’t know shit about the streets, let alone what the fuck they’re saying about a nigga. Next time you run ya mouth like you tough, I’ll have some bitches pull up on you. You not Andreka. You can’t do what the fuck she do; therefore, you can’t talk crazy to muthafuckas like she do. You understand?”

“Yes.” She nodded, eyes glossed over.

Even though I was pissed, seeing her scared and about ready to cry made me back up off of her.

“My bad for dropping by on you like this, but I don’t allow people to talk to me any kind of way. I dealt with that shit coming up in the Lunatics, and as I got older, I deaded that shit.”

Growing up in Rumwood was bad enough. You had no choice but to be on some tough shit or you was gon’ get fucked with every day of ya life. When people said the Lunatics ran that neighborhood, it wasn’t a joke. If the mayor told you to do some shit but a Lunatic said not to, it was best you listen to the latter. That was just how much control them niggas had.

For a lot of niggas like myself and the homies, it was either join the Lunatics or be against them niggas. We wasn’t in no lucrative ass science programs or anything that was promising to get us out of the hood, so if we wanted to make money and not worry about pissing them niggas off at the same time, we had to link up.

This gang shit wasn’t just so we could look tough; it was a way of life in LA. Every nigga joined for their own reasons,

but in most cases, it was for protection, money, and respect. By saying that, I'd been trained to not allow people to come at me a certain way. And I'd gotten so used to automatically being shown respect by my peers due to my status, that Taissa's ass had delivered somewhat of a culture shock with the way she'd talked to me.

"I shouldn't have said what I said, and I shouldn't have told my mama about the car in the way that I had. But Jory, I have feelings for you, and I can't help them. Believe me, I have been trying to move on and put you in the past, but it's been hard. Not talking to you feels just as bad as talking to you. You don't feel anything?" She searched my eyes.

I knew what I should've said, and that was the truth, but I couldn't. I wasn't about to go out as the nigga who left his woman for her sister. Maybe because in the past I'd always judged muthafuckas who did shit like that. I always saw them as immature ass, weak-minded individuals. So even though I did have some strong ass feelings for this girl, telling her wasn't the way to go.

"Nah, I don't." I shrugged. "I like you as a person, and the sex was good, so I think that's why it was easy for us to gel and shit. But when I really step back and look, I don't see you in that way. Maissa is the woman I wanna marry, who I wanna wake up to, and who I want to have my first child. It's been like that since I met her," I half lied.

Everything I said about Maissa was true; however, I could see myself with Taissa as well. But Maissa and I had years in, that was my girl, whereas Taissa could've just been some shit I found intriguing at the moment. As the saying goes, never leave some shit you love for some shit you like.

Taissa glanced away briefly while nodding her head like she understood.

"Okay, well I guess knowing how you feel about me is helpful."

"Time heals all, aight? In a minute, you won't even give a fuck about me." I chuckled. "So we cool? No more petty shit?"

“Yeah, we’re cool. Hopefully Maissa can forgive me.”

“She will; just give her some time.”

Again, Taissa nodded. The silence that lingered was awkward as we stood far apart, waiting for the other person to speak up.

“Well, I’ll catch you later.” I turned to leave.

“Catch you later,” she mumbled.

I didn’t know why, but as I left, shit felt heavy. I didn’t feel relieved like I should have.

Shaking the shit off, I scheduled reservations for dinner tomorrow night with Maissa once I was back in my truck. It was time I turn the fucking heat up and get my girl back.

ANDREKA

Just a few days later...

I'd gotten addicted to visiting the spa at least twice a month, especially for that full body massage and facial. It helped me to relax dealing with all the stress, especially because my court date with the McCulloughs was coming up soon. And even though Mr. McCullough said he had everything we'd need to put his wife behind bars and would testify on my behalf, I was still nervous. He'd had her back all this time and for some reason seemed to be in love with that woman, so him turning on her just didn't sit right with me.

"Okay, you are all set, Miss Nicholas. Would you like some water before you go?" the esthetician offered as I sat up in my robe.

"No, I'm okay. Thanks."

She nodded with a smile before leaving the room so that I could get dressed.

Feeling refreshed, I left to check out in the front then headed out to my car. I felt someone following me in the covered parking structure, causing me to pause for a second then turn around. When I saw Maissa, I frowned out of confusion. I knew she frequented this spa as well, so that wasn't the weird part, but her trailing me like a stalker was.

"Hi, Andreka." She folded her arms, poking her hip out. She had an attitude, and for the life of me, I didn't know why. However, regardless of how angry she was, if she said the

wrong thing, we'd be in this lot tussling, or better yet, she'd be getting her fake ass beat.

"Hi, is there something wrong?" I inquired.

"Why would something be wrong?" She cocked her head.

"Well, you followed me through the damn parking lot and only said something because I turned around and saw you. Now you're standing here with an attitude, acting all weird."

"I just wanna know..." she stared up at the ceiling, "why you felt the need to advise my skanky ass sister, who was fucking my boyfriend, to make him dump me?"

"What? I didn't tell her to make him do shit. And how the fuck could she make a grown ass man do anything?"

"That's not the damn point. The point is that you were sticking your nose into some shit that was none of your damn business. Jory is my man, not Taissa's, okay? If anybody needs to be getting dumped, it's her!"

"First of all, *bitch*, you're telling the wrong fucking person. Maybe you need to remind Jory that he's your fucking man because, clearly, he forgot, which is why he was smashing your damn sister! Secondly, all I told Taissa was that he wasn't shit for cheating on you, despite how tempting I'm sure it is due to your whack ass personality, and that if she felt he really had feelings for her, he needed to prove it."

"I don't give a fuck what you said!" she roared.

WHAM!

I hit her ass dead in the face with a tight closed fist, making her head snap back.

"Hoe, don't be hollering at me! I told your centaur looking ass that your shit has nothing to do with me! If you wanna be mad at somebody, be mad at your man and your fucking sister! Do not bring this shit to me no more, or I will fuck you up!" I turned to continue walking to my car, but that hoe jumped on my back.

For the next few minutes, we twirled around with me trying to get her ass off of me. Finally, I rammed my back into

one of the concrete pillars in this garage, making her cry out in pain. Once she was off of me, I turned to face her and began giving it to her ass.

“Andr—” She tried to call my name, but I was punching her in every open spot that I could, especially her damn face.

She did get a good slap in, but it did nothing to deter me from beating the dog shit out of her ass. I was fucking her up so, that she’d crouched down and was only shielding her face at this point. I was strategic with my moves, however, so I was still able to access certain areas.

“Hey! Cut it out or I’m gonna call the police!” someone yelled, and when I looked, I spotted some middle-aged white man with his phone out like he was recording.

WHAM!

“Ah!” Maissa yelped when I hit her in the eye one last time.

“Keep me out of your shit! I mean it!” I barked one last time as she sat there crying like a child who’d gotten their ass beat.

“I’m calling!” the man yelled, standing very far away with his scary ass.

“Fuck you!” I yelled, hurrying to my truck and jumping in.

I sped out of the structure, anger on one hundred while telling Siri to call Taissa.

“Hey, girl!” she picked up happily.

“Don’t you ever in your fucking life put me in the middle of your hoe activities! If you wanna fuck people’s man, you do so, but do not go around acting like I’m advocating for your ass!”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

Slamming my fist on my steering wheel as I drove, I shouted, “You told your fucking sister that I suggested you make Jory leave her! You know damn well that’s not what the fuck I meant! I gave you advice as a friend, thinking it’d boost

your self-esteem enough to get your own nigga! But now you running around town with lies, and I just had to beat that bitch's ass! I have a custody case!" I screamed. "I cannot be getting into any type of altercations, especially because of another bitch!"

I was so mad and yelling so loudly that my throat was sore.

"I'm sorry! I swear when I told her I wasn't being malicious; well, not in that way. I just wanted her to see you were my friend and not hers."

This was the most childish bullshit I'd ever heard. But I knew when it came to your sibling, shit like that could happen. Your brother or sister could bring the immaturity out of you.

"I get that, Taissa, but you need to grow up and stop always competing with your sister. I get that you feel like she doesn't deserve all that she has, but it's not your duty to take it away. If God gave it to her, that's His business. God gave her Jory, her looks, her lifestyle, and whatever else you're envious of, but he gave you some things too. You need to focus on what you have and not what you don't have and Maissa does. But like I told her, do not bring me up in that shit again."

She was silent for a little bit, then she said, "You're right, and I apologize. I would hate for this silly mess to jeopardize whatever you have going on with your case."

"You have a good day." I hung up.

Like always, I called Krucial right after to vent to him. My baby didn't too much care for gossip, especially girl drama, but he always listened, which I appreciated. I could tell how uninterested he was, but he would still ask questions, comment somewhat, and never interrupt as to not be rude.

"Jory just hit me a few minutes ago, hollering and crying about Maissa getting fucked up." Krucial chuckled lightly and sexily.

Giggling myself, I replied, "She must've snitched on me. What did you say?"

"Told him get that hoe some boxing classes and don't call me yelling like a bitch no more."

“Oh my gosh, Kapri.” I gasped to keep from cackling. “Then what?”

“I hung up, baby. Fuck I look like arguing on the phone with another nigga? If it’s that deep, we need to link up and fight either with fists or guns, don’t matter to me.” I could tell he’d inhaled on a blunt.

To be honest, I had enough shit going on and didn’t need a love triangle that wasn’t even making me cum, causing drama in my life. I liked Taissa; she was sweet and chill, although she did have a sneaky side to her. But if she got me in anything else or mentioned my name where it didn’t belong, I was gonna give her an ass whooping that matched her sister’s.



Pretty bitch... Yeah, he know that I’m with the shits... My friend got a nigga and trickin’ your nigga... But I really ain’t see the shit...

Earlier this morning, my cousin Chanel had come into town, and because she always complained to me about how boring her life was up in Illinois, I promised her we would go out the night she got here. And because she hadn’t seen Skyler in a while, I promised I would bring her too. Skyler wasn’t even twenty-one, but after being extra nice to the bouncer and him finding out through big mouth Skyler that Krucial was my man, we were in this bitch.

Like always, we had a section overlooking the club, seeing everyone dance to “Do A Bitch” by Kali.

“I haven’t been to the club in so long that I forgot how loud it was in here!” Chanel laughed, holding her hands over her ears.

“Girl,” I snatched them down, “You’re gonna have to get used to it, especially if you plan on moving here.”

“You go to the club that much?”

“No, but I do like to, occasionally. Also, my boyfriend’s... organization throws events sometimes,” I half lied.

I didn't know how or when I was gonna tell Chanel I was with a gang banger. Chanel was my maternal uncle's daughter, and my uncle Antony had always had his shit together more than Jada; he owned a construction company. Therefore, Chanel grew up better than I did and never had to want for anything.

Back in the day, Uncle Antony would help out, but once he saw that Jada was never gonna get clean or use the money for me and Skyler, he stopped. From then on, my mama had to depend on boyfriends and her pussy to get what *she* needed.

Although Chanel sort of grew up with a silver spoon in her mouth, we were always close; well, as much as we could be with her living across town in a fancy neighborhood. When I did see her, she would always give me a little money from her allowance or job when she got older. So when she moved away to Chicago, I was devastated, but we kept in touch, me updating her on my life and vice versa.

Even though I knew Chanel wouldn't judge me for being with Krucial, I didn't want to come off foolish. She knew all about my relationship with Moe and how it turned out, so I felt if she saw me with the opposing gang, seemingly with the same type of guy, she'd frown down on it. Plus, Chanel's husband was a lawyer running for mayor, a far cry from Krucial.

"Oh, does he? What does he do?" Chanel inquired on Krucial, swaying a little bit to the music.

"Hey, Skyler, no!" I snapped my fingers at my sister who was trying to make herself a mixed drink with the bottles and juice that came with our table.

"Just one! I'll be twenty-one in no time! Would you rather me drink it with you or my friends from school?" Skyler looked deeply into my eyes.

She had me there. I'd much rather her get tipsy or drunk with me than those hoes from school. You had to be careful in college. A lot of girls were jealous, and having more freedom than in high school gave them the ability to do some shady,

sometimes awful shit. And as stated before, Skyler wasn't exactly good at protecting herself.

"Just one." I caved.

Happily, Skyler filled her glass up, and thankfully, Chanel had forgotten about the question she'd just asked me. I'd rather her just meet Krucial and she'd find out for herself exactly what he was.

We stayed at the club for a few more hours, so once it got to be about 11:15 p.m., we decided to go. Krucial wanted me with him by midnight, and since I learned from last time, I was making sure I had enough time to get home.

"That was fun, but I can't say I would do it all the time. I think it's nice here and there." Chanel chuckled as she, Skyler, and I walked to the car.

"I could do that every night!" Skyler exclaimed excitedly, jumping up and down a little bit.

"Oh God," Chanel and I spoke in unison, rolling our eyes.

Just as we hit the corner that the parking lot was on, I spotted four girls in my peripheral come out of the burger place across the street like their asses were on fire. They confirmed my suspicions that they were on some mess when they jolted across the street and blocked our pathway. I could already see the scary looks on Chanel and Skyler's faces. However, at least I knew if I needed, Chanel would fight. I didn't want my baby sister jumping into whatever this was anyway.

"Andreka, right?" one ugly ass light-skinned girl asked.

"I suggest you ladies move so that I can continue to my car," was all I said, but when we tried to walk by, they only allowed Skyler and Chanel through.

"What's the issue here?" Chanel quizzed all professionally just like a soon to be mayor's wife should.

"Not with you," the light-skinned one replied, keeping her eyes on me. "The problem is with this hood hopping ass hoe!"

the girls surrounded me. None of these hoes were short, and I had on heels.

“She think she the shit now that she with Krucial,” another girl sang. “Who you gone fuck next once he get shot? ’Cause he def ain’t making it another year.”

They all laughed at her comment. Somebody’s breath was very unpleasant.

“Krucial Tha Dead is what his new nickname gon’ be. Let me guess, you gon’ either fuck one of his right hands or come back to the Yobs.” Again, they all laughed. I couldn’t place who said what since some were behind me in the circle.

“She not coming back to us! Our niggas ain’t gon’ want that ran through ass pussy!” A bitch to my right seethed, looking me over like I fucked her baby daddy. These bitches were some real haters.

I’d never had to fight in a tight ass dress and heels, especially not ones this expensive and with a purse that was equal to a car down payment, but I would.

“I’m gonna give y’all ten seconds to get from around me.” I removed my white Gianvito Rossi sandal heels while speaking. I wasn’t about to sit here and trade insults back and forth; we were about to get down.

“Or what, bitch?” A brown-skinned girl with honey-colored eyes shoved me.

That was all I needed to punch her ass in the face. After that, it was a rumble right there, moving from the sidewalk to the middle of the street. As I wailed on the bitch who pushed me, I felt punches raining on the back of my head, my back, and someone pulling my hair. Even though the shit hurt, I continued pulverizing the chick with the light eyes, hitting her as hard as I could and making her cry. I pounded her face so hard that her yowls could be heard all through the somewhat quiet Hollywood streets.

“Get the fuck off of her!” one of the bitches yelled, letting me know I was tearing their homegirl up.

I felt a punch to the side of my face, so I left the one I was beating up alone since she was now on the ground, not even fighting back anymore. I took off on the one who hit me, and she was pulling my hair so hard that I felt it would rip. However, it wasn't enough to stop me from landing several punches on her face.

Out the corner of my eye, I saw Chanel running into the street barefoot, before I heard commotion behind me, letting me know she was now fighting too.

Minutes later, as we all fought in the streets, me now fighting a third girl, I heard police sirens. As if we were all criminals, we disbursed, Chanel and I running to my truck and those hood rats running elsewhere.

Once we got in the car, I calmed down a bit seeing Skyler in the back seat with my shoes and purse. I got scared for a minute thinking she'd hopped her little ass into that fight.

"Who the fuck are those bitches?" Chanel yowled as I sped out the lot.

"Just some fucking haters." I was still angry, and my scalp was throbbing from them pulling my hair so hard. So was my head from all the head shots I initially took, but I was proud of myself for fucking up at least three of them.

"Haters? Andreka, what the fuck! How old are you, and you have bitches running up like that? That's more than some haters!" Chanel hollered. Her dreads were looking a bit wild from being out there fighting.

"It's just haters, that's it. I'm sorry for having you in the middle of this, and thank you for getting Skyler to the car and helping." I kept my eyes on the road, feeling glum.

This was not the life I wanted. I loved Krucial, but I wanted nothing to do with this gang bullshit. I wanted to be successful in my career and take care of my baby, nothing else. I had no issue fighting when I needed to, but I wasn't about to be doing this shit every fucking week. I had other shit I needed to be focused on, so getting into street fights with gang banging bitches wasn't at the top of my list. I was fucking

tired! My thoughts caused tears to stream my cheeks, and suddenly, I felt a hand rubbing my back.

“Don’t apologize, Dreka. I know you wouldn’t have me in that purposely. And don’t thank me for helping. You are insane if you think I would let some busted ass hoes beat up my little cousin.” Chanel leaned over to kiss my cheek gently.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you cry before.” Skyler leaned up between the passenger and driver seats to kiss me as well, causing Chanel and I to laugh. “And you look too pretty to have just been in a fight. I wanted to help but Chanel wouldn’t let me.”

“‘Cause I knew she’d kill me if I let you get out there,” Chanel replied, speaking facts. Everyone knew how I felt about Skyler and Cooper. “Plus, you see how her ass fights. I am not trying to be on the receiving end.”

Together, we snickered as I flew down the freeway.

“I know! You could’ve taken them all by yourself!” Skyler shouted with wide eyes and parted lips like she was amazed. “I can’t believe we have the same blood!”

Again, we chuckled in unison and continued talking as I drove to my house. Skyler was spending the night, and since it was late, I offered for Chanel to, but she said she couldn’t because of her daughter. After agreeing to a playdate for her baby girl, Kaia, and Cooper, she left.

Skyler went to the guest room, and I went to my bedroom, happy for the first time in a while that Cooper was with his half siblings at the McCulloughs for the night.

Grabbing my phone as I sobbed softly, I texted Krucial.

Me: I got jumped.

He didn’t respond, just called me, and from the sound of his background, he was in the car driving.

“I was just driving to the club to act a fool on yo’ ass for not being at my crib. I know yo’ ass is joking.”

“No.” I sniffled, and it sounded as if he’d stopped breathing at the sound of me crying. “I’m serious... by some

Yob girls.”

“Baby,” he said sullenly, but followed it with nothing. “You home, right? I’m on my way.”

“Okay.” I hung up.

Lying down, I winced because my body was sore as fuck from them stupid hoes doing God knows what to me while I focused on that one bitch. It didn’t take long for Krucial to arrive, and I could smell his cologne all the way in my bedroom as soon as he entered the home.

I waited impatiently for him to show up, and when his tall stature appeared in the doorway, I sat up. He didn’t say anything as he neared me, but he touched my face gently to inspect it before kissing me softly. Making me stand up, he held me tightly, causing me to cry into his broad chest. I felt like such a punk right now, even though my tears weren’t due to the fight in particular.

Kissing me deeply, Krucial made me lie back down, then he left to go into the bathroom within my room. I heard him turn on the bath water, and moments later, a sweet aroma flowed into my bedroom, letting me know he’d used my Whipped brand bubble bath. He soon reappeared from the bathroom then stood me up to remove my tight-fitting dress.

“You know you still fine, right. That means you won.” He smirked softly, removing every article of clothing from my body.

“Of course I did.”

“I’m still gon’ kill them bitches.” He spoke seriously, waiting for me to step out of my lace thong.

“I thought you didn’t kill women.”

“I don’t. These is bitches though, ones who fucked with my woman, and I ain’t having the shit.” He scooped me up bridal style and carried me to the bathroom.

Carefully, he lowered me into the warm bubble bath that felt nice against my sore muscles.

“This feels amazing. Thank you, baby. I was just gonna go to sleep.” I shut my eyes, letting the water soothe me.

Krucial was silent for a little bit then replied, “My fault, baby, I know this shit is my fault.”

“No,” I opened my eyes to see the regretful expression he wore, “it wasn’t you. I should’ve let Smize drive me like you suggested.”

“Nah, that shit ain’t got nothing to do with it. You should be able to go out without muthafuckin security. You too beautiful, inside and out, for this type of shit.”

“Are you breaking up with me?”

“What?” he scowled. “Hell nah I ain’t breaking up with yo’ ass. Some shit just gotta change. I’m a banger for life, and I’m dedicated to that shit, but you shouldn’t have to suffer because of the fucking choices I make.”

“It’s a choice I made too. I chose to date you, knowing you were from Moe’s rival gang.”

“It’s my job to protect yo’ ass though, as yo’ man. If you choose to rob a fucking bank, it’s on me to make sure you don’t suffer for that shit. Ever since I met yo’ ass, my goal was keep you happy. This type of shit wasn’t part of the plan.”

“I am happy, Kapri. I love being with you, and you’ve been helping me get more time with my son than I’ve had in I don’t know how long. I haven’t smiled every day like I’ve done with you in a long ass time either.”

“You ain’t ever came as hard as you do with me either, huh?” He nibbled on his lip, and even though his comment annoyed me, I was able to admire his sexiness.

“Yes, baby.” I giggled before we shared a juicy kiss.

“Well shit, if you happy, then I’m happier. I’m gon’ make this shit right though.” He gave me deep eye contact, and I felt bad for them hoes already.

He washed me off and then helped me out, not allowing me to put on clothes before placing me in the bed. Undressing himself, he got in with me and wasted no time kissing me so

hungrily my pussy got wet. Putting me on my back, he trailed his soft lips to my neck and gently went down my entire body, making sure to hit my scar on my side. His hands caressed me everywhere, feeling like a nice massage, as he sucked and kissed in different areas. I was burning up and leaking already as he turned me over, doing the same thing, tending to every crevice of my frame. I was so relaxed yet horny, and it was a feeling I couldn't explain.

Spreading my legs a little as I lay on my back, Krucial got between them and entered me slowly, causing us both to moan. Hitting it deeply but gently, he sucked on my neck with the perfect amount of pressure.

Our hands intertwined as he dug me out, hitting me in my stomach until I was shivering and cumming down his thick shaft. Once I did, he sped up, beating it up so that I'd cum in record time. The sheets already had a wet spot like always when we had sex. Krucial was the only man that had me embarrassing myself by drenching the sheets like a potty-training toddler. Although I'd only had one other sex partner, I could tell the difference.

Turning me over, he slipped back inside of me and whispered, "I love the fuck outta you."

"I love the fu-fuck outta yo-you... too," I whimpered, on the verge of releasing.

Krucial continued making love to me for the next thirty minutes before we both passed out. But in the middle of the night, I heard rustling, making me look in the direction of the sound. When I did, I spotted him dressing, the smell of his soap so prevalent that I knew he'd just taken a shower.

"I'll be right back," he said once he'd noticed my eyes were open.

"Where are you going?" I grabbed my phone from the nightstand to see it was now 3 a.m.

"Going to ride out, find out some shit about what happened."

"Kapri, no. It's late; you don't have to do that right now."

“I do.” He slipped his hoodie over his head and locked his gun in his waist. “I’ll be back before yo’ ass even wakes up.” He came and leaned down to kiss me quickly before leaving.

Too tired to continue to protest, I passed out.



The next morning...

“I think psychology would be a good major for me. Maybe I will double it and do business too,” Skyler rambled, eating the breakfast that Krucial provided while he cleaned up.

I was actually shocked he knew how to make pancakes, sausage, eggs, and hash browns. He did say that breakfast was all he knew how to make, with the exception of fried chicken which he swore was a breakfast item as well.

“I’m so proud of you, Skyler.” I smiled, placing a napkin in my finished plate. “You really are doing your thing.”

I always gave Skyler a hard time for being impressionable and easily influenced, but she wasn’t as gullible or as much of a follower as I thought. She could’ve easily followed in my footsteps, but she hadn’t.

“Thanks.” She grabbed the glass of orange juice, wearing a bashful smile.

“Aight.” Krucial entered the living room/dining area. “You ready?” He looked at me.

I chuckled softly watching Skyler stare up at Krucial either in amazement at his size, who he was, or because he was so fine... it could’ve been any of those.

“Ready for what?” I inquired, letting my chuckle cease.

“Handle some business. It’s only gon’ take a second, then I’ll bring you right back, and we can do whatever the fuck you wanna do.”

“Me too?” Skyler chimed in.

He stared at her for a little bit then replied, “Yeah, yo’ ass can come too. Shit, might as well pick up Coop then.” He came over to help me from my chair as I simpered.

“Wait.” I stopped him when he tried to walk off. He frowned in response but allowed me to tug him closer for a kiss.

“If you wanna fuck, just say that.”

“Kapri!” I hit his arm while listening to Skyler giggle.

He flashed Skyler a grin, letting me know he’d gotten a kick out of making her laugh and embarrassing me. It was cute, and I definitely wanted him developing a relationship with my baby sister.

After a little more back and forth, Krucial and I left. We drove to a weird car garage and then got into this Cadillac. I wanted to ask about our intended destination, but I decided to just wait and see. Finally, we made it to a humungous warehouse basically in the middle of nowhere.

“Come on.” Krucial opened my door for me then slipped his hand into mine.

“What is this?” I cheesed.

“Fuck you smiling for?” He tried not to laugh but did.

“Is this a surprise for me?”

“Calm yo’ ass down. When I do that, it’s gon’ be way flyer than a dusty ass warehouse.”

“Oh,” I replied somberly.

Entering the warehouse, I immediately got a scary feeling seeing how dark and cold it was. There were all types of tables, machinery, huge rolls of plastic, and a bunch of other stuff, but still roomy.

Krucial led me to a room, and when we walked in, I saw Lolly, Quay, and five women tied to chairs, looking desolate.

“Aww, look at the happy couple,” Quay joked, pointing at our hand holding.

“Nigga, shut yo’ ass up and wipe that shit off yo’ chin. Looking like somebody don’ busted on yo’ face,” Krucial snapped. “Don’t ever talk to me with white shit around yo’ mouth again. I swear to God I’ll shoot the fuck out of you.”

Lolly and I laughed at Quay’s expense, totally forgetting about the hostages in here.

“Man, fuck you. I just ate a filet-o-fish. You know they put all that damn tartar sauce on it. Why the fuck you have to say that shit in front of her?” Quay complained, pointing at me and making it even funnier. Looking at Lolly with furrowed brows, he added but lowly, “Fuck you ain’t tell me I had sauce by my mouth?”

“Y’all two bitches can argue later over dinner or in bed. Focus ’fore I get pissed the fuck off.” Krucial broke up Lolly and Quay’s light bickering. He then led me over to where the women were. “Now y’all claim y’all don’t know shit about who touched my girl, so we gon’ see.” He turned to me for confirmation.

“I—who are they?” I questioned, causing Krucial to look puzzled.

“You said them hoes were Yob affiliated, baby.” He gestured toward them.

“Yeah, they were... I mean, judging by what they said. They referred to the Yobs as ‘us’, but these aren’t them.” I shook my head, looking at the women who stared back at me like they wanted to praise me for saying such a thing.

Krucial immediately looked at Quay and Lolly, who threw their hands up.

“Bruh, these the only bitches affiliated with the Yobs,” Lolly spoke up. “Them hoes is lying.”

“How is the shit a muthafuckin lie when Andreka just said she don’t know them bitches! These ain’t them!” Krucial roared angrily in a way I’d never seen.

“Nigga, I know my fucking job! I wouldn’t bring no females down here on some half ass shit. It ain’t like they’re

niggas, where killing them don't matter. I know how you feel about murking females," Quay explained.

Krucial seemed to relax as he turned to stare the women down.

"I'm gon' ask y'all hoes this once. I want each one of you to answer separately but in a complete sentence. If I feel like yo' ass is lying, you getting three to the dome, I don't give a fuck what my girl say. Is that shit clear?" Krucial spoke sternly. "Don't respond," he quickly added when the girls were about to speak.

I'd never seen Krucial at work really, but I was getting turned on in a time that I needed to be focused.

"Think wisely," Lolly suggested to them as he and Quay came closer, guns trained on the ladies.

"Are there any other bitches affiliated with the Yobs that could've done some shit to my woman?" Krucial quizzed slowly and steadily.

I swallowed a lump in my throat, hoping none of them had to die, because they surely weren't the ones from last night.

One by one they answered, and in complete sentences like Krucial said. He kept his eyes on each one as they spoke, arms folded like he was processing it.

"Let 'em go," he finally said.

"Bro, these bitches is ly—"

"Let 'em go, nigga. This ain't no fucking discussion." Krucial got in Quay's face, speaking through clenched teeth.

Shaking his head like he felt this was a bad decision, Quay untied the women with Lolly's assistance before escorting them from the room.

"Baby, it's not them. You did the right thing." I neared Krucial as he sat on the edge of the long wooden table, staring down at the ground like he was thinking. "Hey, you alright?" I touched his lustrous braids.

“Something ain’t right,” he simply said, not taking his eyes off of the ground, clearly in deep thought.

Usually, I didn’t understand the inner workings of this street life stuff, but I agreed. As the saying goes, something was rotten in the state of Denmark.

CHANEL REEVES

“*M*ommy, you look pretty!” My daughter Kaia squealed as she sat on the bed of this rental property my husband Grant had gotten for our visit to Los Angeles.

Like me, Grant was originally from here, and his campaign manager thought it'd be wise to run for mayor out here versus Chicago since this was where his roots were. Initially I was against it because he and I had built a life out there, but the upside to possibly moving back for good was the ability to be near my family. I'd made a few friends in Chicago, but it wasn't the same as having my cousin Andreka or my parents nearby.

“Thank you, cutie,” I finally replied to Kaia as I eyed myself in the mirror.

This damn Spanx was as tight as ever, but after having a baby, for some reason I couldn't get my core back tight like it used to be. I wasn't walking around here with a beer belly, but my abdomen was nowhere near flat, so a little help from some shape wear was always my go-to.

Checking my watch, I noticed Grant wasn't here yet. He'd left out at 5 a.m. in the morning, and it was now 10 a.m. with no sign of him.

If you're wondering why I wasn't as up in arms as I should be, it was because he did this a lot. I had a feeling of what he was up to, but at the moment, I wasn't strong enough to do anything. When I say strong, I didn't mean I was afraid to be

alone or be a single mother, because those didn't scare me at all. I'd unfortunately succumbed to the disease of caring what people thought.

On the outside looking in, especially from my family and friends' point of view, Grant and I were a perfect pair. He was the intelligent, successful, and handsome young black man, and I was the intelligent, beautiful, home making black woman. I never complained about him to anyone, because it wasn't anyone else's business what went on in our relationship, so I always spoke highly of him. Because of that, things just always looked rosy between us.

Our relationship had started to fizzle for the normal reasons; things became strained once we had a child. He swore I spent every second with Kaia when she was a baby and never made time for him, and I argued that that's what I was supposed to do. In hindsight, I was just a new mother and didn't want to be anything but perfect for my daughter. However, I should've balanced things more. I could admit now that I was quite neglectful to Grant, even when he'd go out of his way to spend time with me.

For example, he'd put Kaia to sleep and then cook dinner just for us to spend time alone together. I'd always decline though, then go get Kaia from her crib and lie her next to me so I could watch her sleep instead.

Now... it sounded insane, but at the time, the simple thought of me enjoying time with my husband while my baby could've possibly stopped breathing drove me crazy. Anyway, overtime, Grant gave up, so when the new baby haze had lifted off of me and I was yearning for those thoughtful things he used to do, it was too late. His loneliness had, I guess, forced him to put his work first, so for the past few years, his career was his world, and Kaia was mine.

"Chanel!" I heard Grant call out after walking through the front door.

"Daddy!" Kaia jumped from the bed to run out. She was another reason I was hesitant to leave. I'd gotten used to having my baby girl 24/7, and the thought of having to go

some days or even weeks without her due to some custody agreement made me shudder.

Following Kaia out, I stopped at the top of the stairs to see my sexy husband but in gym attire. Grant was about six feet three inches, kept his hair cut in a low fade, had beautiful, deep caramel skin, with caramel eyes to match, and never missed a day at the gym, so his body was amazing. The nigga was fine, and no matter how turned off I'd become from seeing his ways, my attraction to him hadn't quite wavered.

"Honey, we are supposed to be leaving at 10:30 a.m. The driver is already here," I complained, coming down the stairs where he was now holding Kaia.

"Well, if I'm not ready, then sounds like he's going to have to wait." He kissed Kaia's cheek and placed her to her feet before jogging past me to hit the stairs. "I'm the one all this campaigning is for, so I think I dictate what time we leave."

"Where were you?" I got the courage to question him, knowing I didn't want the answer if he was willing to give it to me.

Stopping on the stairs, he replied, "At the gym. Where does it look like I've been, Chanel?"

"You worked out in the gym from let's say five thirty a.m. until about nine thirty a.m.?" I felt the wrinkles form in my forehead.

"Yeah, I did. You should try it sometimes." He turned back around to finish running up the stairs.

Sighing, I took Kaia's hand in mine and escorted her to the truck where the driver was. He let us in the back seat, and we just sat there waiting. By the time Grant came from the house looking like the lead in a nineties black film, it was 11:30, and I was beyond pissed. So when he got in the car, no words were spoken unless you counted he and Kaia's conversation.

We finally made it to Grant's designated campaign building, which was a pretty nice size since he'd spent plenty of money on it.

The one thing different about Grant versus other rich men married to women who didn't work, was that he valued my opinion when it came to spending money. Ever since we met, he'd always told me how smart I was when it came to financials, so even though our relationship had experienced a downward spiral, I was still his in-house financial advisor. He trusted no one else with his money, our money.

After the driver parked, he let us out, and we filed inside of the back part of the medium sized building.

"Good morning, Mr. Reeves." Brenda, Grant's campaign manager smiled. "Mrs. Reeves." She offered me a grin as well.

I couldn't stand her ass. Granted, I was only thirty years old, but this young hoe made me feel like a grandma. She was twenty-three with a body tighter than spandex, smooth, pimple-free dark skin, perfect teeth, and was smart as a whip, hence her being a campaign manager at such a young age. I also didn't like the way she looked at my husband and tended to him as if he were hers, like she was right now.

"Brenda, I got it." I moved her hands from Grant's tie.

He smiled down at me as I took her position, adjusting his tie the way that he liked it.

"Chanel, don't start, okay?" He spoke lowly.

He and I had gotten into plenty of arguments about Brenda when they worked late nights together or when she acted as if she were the one who'd married him and birthed his child.

"I'm not starting anything, honey, just fixing your tie," I replied.

"Good." He held my sides but dug his fingertips in them, which eventually made me jump back due to the pain. My eyes bounced around his, questioning the reasoning behind such an action, but he gave me stern eye contact. "Let's go."

"Yes, everyone outside is waiting for you, Mr. Reeves, as well as cameras. Remember your main objective is to rid the city of gang violence." Brenda dusted him off. "Gangs have taken over Los Angeles, people are scared, businesses are afraid to stay open past six p.m., and those who can't afford to

live in the safer areas are moving far from the city just so their kids can play outside.”

“What would I do without you?” He smirked at her, and I swore I saw her ass blush. Looking down at Kaia, he asked, “Ready, baby girl?”

“Yes, Daddy!” She beamed cutely.

Grant picked her up and then took my hand into his, giving me a look that said behave, before we walked into the front area of the building. Camera flashes blinded me as I tried to get a good look at all of the reporters and posters with my husband’s face on it.

I stood there amazed at how well-spoken he was, especially when it came to issues of gang violence. I supported his motive because the shit had been ridiculous here, just as it was up in Chicago. It may have been worse in LA as far as people who moved here with no knowledge of how things went.

People pictured California as this sunny place with sandy beaches, palm trees, celebrities, mansions, and no rain, because that’s how it was portrayed on TV.

I couldn’t tell you how many people moved to LA and were shocked to see so much violence and murder. Not to mention the ones who were unknowingly moving into the hood, not even realizing it because they didn’t see any project apartments around. That was the thing about Los Angeles; you could be surrounded by nice family homes and be deep in the hood and gang territory. At least people knew before moving to Chicago that it was possibly dangerous.

“All in all, my beautiful family and I just want to make this place safer for other families like ours, like yours, and anyone else who just wants to be able to enjoy their neighborhood without hearing gunshots, being robbed, or fearing for their life every time they walk to the corner...” Grant continued.

I saw a few women smiling at him in awe, probably thinking he treated me like gold and was wishing he was theirs. If they only knew.

Finally, the speech was over, so Grant, Kaia, and I had to pose for photos and speak with a few people before we were able to leave.

“How about we have dinner to celebrate? You did so good out there.” I smiled at Grant. We were back in the backroom again.

“I have more work to do. Some things Brenda and I need to go over.”

“Grant, come on. It’s just one damn day.”

Pulling me closer, he whispered, “Do not piss me off, Chanel. I said I have work to do, and you need to respect that. Now take Kaia home and wait for me to get there.” He pecked my cheek then walked over to where Brenda was seated.

I stared for a little bit until Brenda and I made eye contact, then I left. On the way home, I tried to think of what I wanted to cook or if I was gonna have an early dinner out with my daughter, when I got a phone call. Looking down, I saw it was Andreka.

“Hey, are you busy tonight?”

“I’m not, but I have Kaia all night since Grant is working.”

“I wanted you to come somewhere with me. Skyler is babysitting Cooper for me; you can bring Kaia to my house, and she can watch them both.”

“I don’t know. What is it you want me to come to?”

“It’s a little get together, nothing major. I know you don’t like the club scene or anything, and I wouldn’t ask, but my friend Iyanna isn’t feeling well.”

“Oh, so I’m second choice?”

Giggling, she said, “Only because you don’t like to do anything fun.”

“Woow! Well yes, I will go if Skyler is okay with watching Kaia.”

“She is. I will pay her extra. See you later.”

“Wait, what is the dress code?” I quickly asked.

“Casual but sexy. So don’t come looking Golden Globes ready, more like floor seats at the Staples Center.”

“Got it.”

“Mommy, we going out?” Kaia’s little nosy self inquired.

“I am, kind of, but you’re going to spend time with your cousin Cooper and Skyler. You remember Skyler?” I asked, and Kaia shook her head ‘no’. “She’s a big girl and pretty,” I said, knowing my daughter was in that phase where she was obsessed with teenage girls and young female adults who she called big girls.

“Yay! I go now?”

“After I get dressed, bathe you, and pack a bag.”

We got home about fifteen minutes later, and I gave Kaia a bath after making her a quick grilled cheese sandwich and fries. While she watched a video on her iPad in the bedroom, I showered with the door open to keep an eye on her, brushed my teeth, and then slipped into some tight black Alexander Wang pants, a silk Balenciaga blouse that was oversized, and some Alexander Wang heels. I used a simple skin tint on my flawless brown complexion, put my dreads up into a bun, and then threw on some jewelry, before Kaia and I hit the door.

I dropped my baby off with Skyler and then plugged in the address to where I was meeting Andreka. It only took me about half an hour which wasn’t bad for LA.

I texted her as soon as I was parked, and she let me know to come to the front since she had just walked up as well. When I hit the corner, I got the shock of my life seeing Andreka not only holding hands with some well-dressed but clearly thug ass nigga, but a crowd damn near behind him. There were a lot of men, and a nice mix of women too.

Slowing up my stroll as I got closer, I noticed Andreka’s man conversing with the big ass doorman who looked like Terry Crews with hair. Her boyfriend looked quite familiar, but I couldn’t remember where from.

“So how many, because we got a capacity regardless of if you rented the place out,” the doorman said, looking over the large amount of people behind the guy my cousin was attached to. The bouncer was about the same height as the one Andreka was hand in hand with, both standing at about six feet six.

“I don’t give a fuck ’bout no capacity. Move the fuck out my way ’fore you start some shit the coroner gon’ have to finish,” Andreka’s man snapped, and something in his tone made me a believer as I stood way off to the side as not to be noticed.

The doorman hesitated but finally unhooked the rope, saying, “Alright, but behave yourself, Krucial.”

Krucial. Krucial. I knew that damn name. Where have I—

WHAP!

“Ah!” I gasped right along with a few others when Krucial backhanded the big ass doorman so roughly that he stumbled over, dropping his clipboard.

I stood there astonished while people laughed, talked shit to the bouncer, and made jokes. LA niggas were the worst.

“Watch yo’ muthafuckin mouth, nigga. I’m a grown ass man. Don’t you ever tell me to behave my fucking self.” Krucial hissed.

I was so caught up watching him that I didn’t notice Andreka waving for me to come on as they began entering. Deciding if I even wanted to stay here with her and that crazy nigga, I paused but eventually blended in with the large crowd to enter the spacious and luxurious lounge.

“Ball If I Want To” by Da Baby was playing as everyone found tables to sit at, started dancing, or went to the bar to order drinks. I knew Krucial had money because renting this place was not cheap. I could tell by how it looked.

“Hey, I’m so happy you came. Let me introduce you to my man.” Andreka rushed up to me.

“Umm, I don’t know if I want to.” I laughed but was dead ass serious.

“Why? He’s sweet.”

“Sweet? Then he must not be the one who just slapped the dog shit out of that big ass nigga outside?” I pointed over my shoulder as Andreka and I shared a hearty laugh. The shit was funny and scary at the same time. “I mean, he backhanded the nigga. Could he be more disrespectful?” We continued to chortle.

“That’s just how he is.” She shrugged.

“He frequently goes around slapping other men and is still alive?” I raised a brow.

“Girl, dudes are lucky if all my nigga does is slap them.” Damn. “Come on.” She pulled me over to where he was at the bar. “Kapri, this is my cousin, Chanel.”

He turned to look me over, and I must say the nigga was fine as fuck but in that rugged kind of way. He looked exactly the way he acted.

“I seen yo’ ass before,” he said what I’d been thinking.

“I’ve seen you before too.” I squinted my eyes.

“Where the fuck you seen me before?” Krucial stood up off of the bar, towering over me.

“I—I don’t remember. I didn’t mean it in—” I stopped talking when he began cracking up, Andreka hitting him lightly.

“Relax yo’ ass. I know I slapped the shit out of that big ass nigga, but I don’t hit females. I’ll only knock the shit out of a bitch.”

Lord hammercy.

“Okay, Kapri.” Andreka interjected.

“Oh shit, you used to get fucked by the homie,” he said, mouth dropped open like it’d just hit him.

“Me and one of your homies? No, I don’t think so—”

“Aye! Quay! Come here, nigga!” Krucial hollered out, and the sound of that boy’s name made my esophagus sink down

into my stomach.

“I have to go.” I turned around to rush out before Andreka could protest.

Before I knew it, I was out of the door, almost scot-free, until I heard Andreka yell my name.

“Chanel, I know you fucking hear me! You better not make me run in these boots!” she spat.

I stopped my speed walking, took a deep breath, and turned around to face her as I adjusted my purse.

“What’s up? I have to get Kaia and then head home.” I folded my arms.

“You used to date Quay?”

“No, I have no idea who that is. And frankly, your boyfriend is quite rude. Saying I got *fucked* by someone is inappropriate.”

“You are a such a prude sometimes. So then why did you run out like your ass was on fire when he called Quay over if you don’t know him?”

“Because I didn’t want him... thinking that... maybe he could fuck me if... he sa—met me,” I lied horribly.

“Okay, bitch, spill it.”

“Come to the car. I will drive you back to the entrance.” I led her to my four door Maserati. Once we were inside, we both turned a little in our seats to face one another. “Yes, I dated him, but a very long time ago when I lived out here. We haven’t talked since I moved, and that was years ago.”

“What the hell! You dated a Lunatic!” She cheesed as if this was a good thing.

“Yes, when I was young and dumb, and the shit bit me in the ass. Had I known you were messing with one, I would have not come tonight! Dreka, I thought you were done with those types, and wasn’t Moe a Yob?”

I loved my little cousin, but she was being stupid right now and playing a dangerous game.

“I was done, but he’s different—”

“He seems worse! I don’t ever remember Moe slapping people up, and the Krucial I remember from back in the day was a maniac. You are trying to get custody of your son from his well-to-do grandparents. Baby, this isn’t a good look.”

“I’ve already dealt with that. Right now is not about me. It’s about my uppity ass cousin having messed with a gang banger. Why did you guys break up?”

“Because he couldn’t keep it in his pants. End of story.”

“Why didn’t you ever tell me?”

“He really broke my heart, and I wanted to forget about him. The best way to do that was to not talk about him. I said end of story, Andreka. I am happily married now, and I’d like to get my daughter then go home to my husband, if you don’t mind.” I cranked up my car.

My stomach felt queasy just thinking about almost having run into Quay. I hadn’t seen him since the last time I caught his ass fucking another bitch, eight years ago, and I honestly couldn’t believe hearing his name still fucked with me after so long.

“Fine. But we aren’t done. I want more tea.” She straightened up to sit correctly.

Shaking my head, I left the parking lot and drove up to the front to let her out. After making sure she was safely inside, I chuckled softly at that damn doorman, getting flashbacks of his huge ass flying from being smacked.

I drove as fast as I could back to Andreka’s to pick up Kaia, and then we started home. She was knocked out on the way there, so when I got her inside, I placed her in bed before going to my bedroom to get changed and relax.

“Oh shit, you’re home.” I jumped seeing Grant in bed, but in the dark. He was sitting up.

“Yeah, I’m home and you wasn’t. Where were you with my daughter?” He got out of the bed slowly, coming over to me.

“I just went to see my cousin.” I removed my earrings.

“You went to see yo’ cousin dressed like that?”

“It was at a lounge.” I tried to walk to our bathroom, but he blocked my pathway. “Grant, mo—”

“Where was Kaia while you were out whoring with that hood rat cousin of yours?”

“She was with my cousin Skyler who was already watching Andreka’s son. And do not call my cousin a hood rat!” I snapped. “Ah!”

“Bitch, don’t you ever talk to me like that!” Grant went across my face. I was horrified.

“What the fuck is wrong with you!” I screamed through tears. Grant had only ever done something like this once, but it was a year and half ago, for which he apologized. “Are you high?” I asked, remembering last time he’d dabbled in some cocaine.

“Who are you hollering at?” He started wrestling with me until we ended up on the bed. Pinning my hands above my head, he clenched his teeth tightly together and said, “Bitch, you will not ruin my political dreams with all this ghetto bullshit. You will be home at a decent hour, you will show up for all photo ops, and you will stay far away from whatever that *hood rat* cousin of yours invites you to.”

“Get off me!”

“If you fail to do any of that... Chanel, I will kill you. Mark my words, woman. I will kill you.” His stare was so intense that it felt like he was looking into my soul. “Now go clean the hell up and come back to bed.” He let go.

Getting up, I soundlessly trucked it to the bathroom, sobbing quietly. My dream of a life that everyone thought I had was nothing short of a nightmare.

LOLLY

“*I*’ve been working so much that I forgot to eat.”
Iyanna smiled brightly, and for a little bit, I just stared to admire the shit.

“That’s what I’m for. Shit, that’s how we got cool, me feeding you.”

At the moment, we were in her living room eating some chili cheeseburgers since that’s what her ass was in the mood for. I’d honestly never had the shit, but it sounded good, so I thought why not. Milkshakes and onion rings accompanied the meal, and I had to say, even though my girl wasn’t no big greedy bitch, she had some good ass tastes.

“That’s so true.” She sat back. “I am so stuffed. Thank you for this. I’m not really used to having a man that tends and takes care of me in this way. I mean, Jalen did but with money, not with time or something so simple as making sure I had a meal, like you.” She pulled me closer by my chin to kiss me. “Nothing to say?”

“Nah, I was just thinking. My bad.” I watched her as she gathered our trash from her coffee table and went to put it away.

Dating Iyanna’s ass was different from most shit I had experienced. All of my past relationships were built on fucking and really nothing else. I cared for Lea, of course. I’d been fucking her ass for the longest, but this shit with Iyanna was new.

I didn't think about hitting the club to see what was available in that muthafucka no more, and I wasn't as meticulous with my appearance in case I ran into a fine bitch while out. Don't get it twisted, a nigga stayed fly, but I relaxed a little bit more knowing I had something I wanted already.

Before her, I never understood how niggas woke up to and went to bed with the same bitch every fucking night, but now I got it. Females were more than wet pussies or some nice perky titties; some of them had minds and personalities too that could be enjoyable outside of the bedroom. By saying that, I was feeling some shit I never thought I would and for the past two weeks had been scared to admit to myself.

"So you spending the night?" Iyanna sat back down on the couch, handing me some tea. This woman had a gang banger drinking tea; I knew I was off some shit.

"Preciate it, baby. Yeah, I can do that. I just need to run by my crib and get some clothes."

"Noooo! You can do that in the morning." She set her mug on the coffee table.

"Nah. I wanna take you to this breakfast spot, and if you get there late, with late being nine fucking a.m., you'll be in a line stretched around the block." I gulped some of the tea with its perfect ass temperature.

"Damn, it's that good?"

"It is. It won't take me long to get my stuff." I took a sip from the mug. I never knew what kind of damn tea she gave a nigga, but it was hitting.

"Okay. You should bring stuff to store over here so this won't happen again. I hate you have to make such a drive this late at night."

I smirked, seeing the worry in her pretty face as I pushed her dark hair behind her shoulders. She was only in a big ass t-shirt with a drawing of Cocoa Pebbles cereal, and some dark brown shorts that matched the color. But when you was as fine as she was, anything you put on looked good. If only I could get inside her, but then again, I feared I may nut quick due to

me being so damn attracted to her plus having actual feelings. I wasn't sure if I was ready to be a daddy yet.

“You know something?” I asked, and she raised her eyebrows while taking a sip of the tea. “I love you.”

As soon as the words left my lips, I felt weird, and Iyanna just staring me the fuck down didn't help ease that feeling at all.

“Love me like you care about me or...”

“Nah, like I wanna marry you one day, have some kids and shit,” I corrected her, giving strong eye contact. I'd struggled with the feeling alone for a minute, so now I was a bit more confident despite the uneasiness I felt saying the shit out loud.

Her pretty caramel face was blank, but then suddenly, a grin spread across as she scooted closer to me, pressing her thick lips against mine.

She did that shit a few more times then said, “I love you too.”

“Why you nodding?” I laughed.

“Because I didn't realize it... but I do. So is this a proposal?” She bucked her eyes, clasping her hands together in excitement.

“Iyann—”

Laughing, she rolled her eyes. “I'm fucking with you. Hurry up and go get your shit so you can come back. I got something for you.”

“Oh word?” I caressed her thigh. I'd noticed they'd gotten thicker.

“When you come back.” She knocked my hand away.

“Aight.”

I gave her one more kiss and then hurried the fuck up because the way she was looking at my ass gave me the impression that whatever she had for me was some pussy. And as proud of myself as I was for being strong and not cheating despite my drought, I wasn't gon' turn down no ass, especially

not from Iyanna. If I nudded too fast, we'd go another round, and I'd just prepare for the next upcoming Father's Day.

Turning up my music once I was in my Bugatti, I sped home, dipping down the freeway since it was clear. I had a boost of fucking energy knowing Iyanna felt the same way and was about to let me fuck.

Halfway to my house, my music was interrupted by a phone call, and when I saw it was Lea, I hit ignore on her ass. She called back again, and I hit her with the same response that time as well as the next three times she called me.

Her ass had been acting weird toward me. Lea had never been no thirsty bitch for as long as I'd known her, and she was the one who broke up with my ass but was acting like I left her at the moment. But whatever she had in mind for us, I wanted no fucking parts. For the first time in a minute, a nigga was happy and happy because of a woman... not from money, busting a fat nut, or beating a nigga's ass like usual.

I got to my crib and then made a dash for it inside. Before packing up some shit to wear for tomorrow and a few other nights like Iyanna suggested, I checked my whole house to make sure everything was straight.

As I brought my bags out to my car, deciding to take my Rolls truck, I spotted someone pulling uphill onto my driveway, headlights blinding the fuck out of me. As they came more into view, I saw Lea in the driver's seat. Continuing on, I put my bags in the trunk, and before I could shut the door good, her heels were clacking against my pebbled driveway behind me.

"Damn, you clearly are alive, so why didn't you answer the phone?" She came to stand in front of me.

"Because I ain't obligated to answer for you or anybody else I don't fucking want to."

"Dang, what the fuck is your problem?"

"Nah, what's yo' problem? One minute you done with my ass, can't stand me, and got the whole family blocking me, then next you on my shit like you wanna be back together."

Her frown dissipated as she looked down at her feet momentarily.

“I do want to be back with you, Lance, that’s why. I thought I was over you, but I realized I was using Chain to get over you and it wasn’t working. I think if you can really change, we can make things work, because we love each other.”

“That’s mature as fuck for you to admit that, so I can admit I was a fucked-up ass nigga towards you. You deserved better, and I was jealous at first when you moved on, but not for the right reasons. I wasn’t used to you having the upper hand and making decisions like that.

“I want you to know that I have changed, but us getting back together ain’t gon’ work. I got love for you, but I’m not in love.”

“Who the fuck are you in love with then? One of them hoes?” Her brows furrowed.

“Whether I have somebody or not, I don’t wanna be with yo’ ass, Lea.” Sighing, I continued. “But if you must know, yeah, I have somebody I’m in love with and who inspired me to be a different type of nigga.”

“Oh, so I just wasn’t good enough.”

“Has nothing to do with that. You just wasn’t the person for me, ’cause if you was, I would’ve changed.”

It was quiet for a little bit, so I felt like that was the end of the conversation and started past her to try to get in my whip.

“Well since you’re in a relationship now, I guess I can be one of the little friends you always had.” She rubbed my arm softly, but I moved her hand.

“Nah, I’m good. I’m not on that shit no more. I’m a one-woman man, aight?”

Lea’s neck jerked back like she was having a seizure as she stared me down with wide ass eyes as if she didn’t recognize me.

“You not on that shit no more? Excuse me? So it was fine for you to cheat on me, but you won’t fuck around on that bitch?”

“It wasn’t fine for me to cheat, that’s why I just apologized to yo’ ass. It was fucked up. But I learned from the shit. I got somebody I don’t wanna lose.”

“Maybe I can change your mind.” She reached for my belt with a seductive smirk.

“I said I’m good, aight!” I yelled, tossing her fucking hands back rougher than I’d intended.

“I fucking hate you!” She roared loudly enough for all the neighbors on this affluent ass street to hear. “You stay doing me fucking dirty, and I always make a fool of my fucking self because, for some odd ass reason, I love you!” She was already tearing up. “I have never been disrespected or treated the way you treat me, and I still have love for you! You are a piece of shit! I should’ve known when I found out you got that bitch pregnant that it was time for me to move on!”

“Fuck is you talking about? I ain’t never got nobody pregnant!” I barked back.

“Negro, I saw her damn stomach when I ran into her ass at the store, and I know for a fact you’re fucking with her because you had the bitch at the mall with you when you jumped on Chain!”

“What the fuck are you talking about? She ain’t pregnant!”

“I know a pregnant bitch when I see one, and her stomach is usually pretty flat. I’ve seen her ass damn near naked on social media, and that was more than some damn bloating!”

She don’t want you to touch her ’cause she either ashamed of her body or she pregnant...

Krucial’s words entered my mind, and all of a sudden as if I’d discovered the cure to a disease, shit was starting to connect and make sense. Iyanna never wore anything tight or revealing, and that was her go-to judging from her social media page, just like hitting the beach or pool in a little ass bathing suit. Sucking my dick but never letting me fuck, not

allowing me to touch her ass freely, and most obviously, that damn appetite.

“I gotta go,” I mumbled, getting into my car.

“Lance! Lance, you stupid ass nigga!” Lea beat on my car as I reversed, trying to turn around and leave.

I paid her ass no mind as I backed up and then sped out of my driveway. I was pushing this muthafucka fast as fuck out of rage.

Iyanna had been playing me, and in hindsight, I’d been one gullible ass muthafucka. I was so blinded by my attraction to her ass and trying to convince her that I wasn’t some fuck nigga just trying to get his dick wet, that I let a lot of shit slide, no matter how weird or strange they appeared to be.

“Fuck!” I hollered out, pissed at myself for being so damn dumb.

I was far from a stupid ass nigga. It was the reason I’d gotten as far as I had in the streets, and that bitch had played me like some soft ass, wet behind the ears ass nigga. I was hot!

I parked in one of the two-hour spots outside of her apartment because I wouldn’t be in that bitch long. Nodding my head to the front desk people who already knew me since I had funded her stay so far, I got on the elevator. Riding up, I tried to calm down a little bit so I wouldn’t put my hands on her. Not only was she a female, but she was pregnant, and the last thing I wanted to do was to end up in jail or prison for laying out a pregnant bitch.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

I beat on her door with all my fucking strength, and when she didn’t come, I did the shit again so hard that her neighbor peeked their head out.

“Lance, what the fuck?” Iyanna opened the door wearing a silk robe.

When I walked in, I saw she had the mood set, but I wasn’t on that tip no more.

“Why the fuck you ain’t tell me yo’ ass was pregnant?” I seethed. The shocked look on her face confirmed what I’d been told. “Speak up!”

“Okay!” She jumped. “It was different reasons why, baby.” She touched me, but I moved back. “At first I didn’t say anything because you were just some guy I was never gonna give the time of day to. Then next thing I knew, I did like you, and I was sure if I told you, you wouldn’t have wanted to date me. So I just held onto the information, trying to find the best way to tell you, but I was a coward and it never happened.”

“Oh my God, bruh.” I covered my eyes with my hand and paced the floor. “I just told you I loved you! You got me out here looking like a fucking fool, Iyanna!” I peered down into her glossy eyes.

“I know, and I didn’t mean it. I swear. When you told me you loved me, I knew I had to come clean, and that was my plan tonight. I love you too, Lance, I—”

“Nah, you don’t love me, because if you loved a nigga, you wouldn’t have me out here on some dumb shit! Why I got my fucking ex telling me about my bitch? Huh?” I slammed my hand down on my chest. If she was a nigga, I would’ve decked her ass by now.

“She—”

“Is it Jalen’s?” I cut her off.

“Yes, of course. I wasn’t just out here sleeping around. I got pregnant, I told him, and that was the start of the end for us. I tried to tell you I was having some issues and couldn’t date, but you were persistent.”

“Oh, so it’s my fault I went after some shit I wanted?”

“No, it’s not. I should’ve told you regardless. Lance, please understand I wasn’t trying to be malicious; I was scared. I really liked you and knew I would lose you.”

“No, you didn’t know. You didn’t know shit, just like you didn’t know me as a man but judged me.”

“I judged you off of what I saw—don’t go there. You were a trash ass boyfriend, and I didn’t want that after just having had a trash ass boyfriend. And you know once I told you I was pregnant, you would’ve been gone, same way if you told me you had a bitch pregnant, I would’ve been gone.”

“Well that’s the difference between you and I, Iyanna. I actually fuck with you and just may have given the shit a try for a good woman.”

“I don’t believe that.”

“Well now we’ll never know, right?” I started for the door. “You had him over here?” I lifted a sports water bottle I hadn’t peeped when I was over earlier. It had his team emblem on it, and it didn’t look like something that could be bought.

“We just had to talk one night and—”

“Woowow!” I set it back down and shook my head. “Good luck, and congratulations on the baby.” I yanked the door open to leave.

“Lance!” Iyanna screamed down the hallway. “Lance, we need to talk! Where are you going!”

“Ain’t shit for me to say. That ain’t my baby, and you not my girl,” I threw over my shoulder then hit the corner.

The one time a nigga tried to be on some good shit, I got played. That wasn’t nobody but God telling me to keep it player, and from now on, I would. I didn’t care how much potential I saw in a bitch; she would never be nothing to me other than a warm body to make me nut. She could thank Iyanna’s scheming ass.

TAISSA

*S*ame day... same time...

I was frustrated looking in the mirror at my outfit, wondering if I was doing too much. It'd be nice to be able to text or FaceTime Andreka for input, but our relationship was in a fragile state after she fought my sister.

I felt bad, mainly because I did namedrop her in attempts to be spiteful, but I didn't think it would go that far. For Maissa to be upset over a simple conversation between friends, when that conversation didn't even lead to anything happening, was ridiculous. I honestly think she ran up on Andreka because she was mad and jealous that she wasn't the one laughing, conversing, and hanging out with her. For once, I had won something she wanted.

But like Andreka said, I needed to focus on my own life and not what I didn't have and Maissa did. I didn't realize until I took that advice and applied it, how my obsession with my sister had taken over my life and made me miserable. And because I wasn't like her, it made me look at myself in a bad light when truthfully, I wasn't that bad at all.

I owned my own business, I made pretty great money to be a fairly new business owner, I had a college degree, I was healthy, and could cook my ass off. I was a catch, and I had a good life; I was just being too envious to see it. I thank God that He didn't have to snatch all that away from me to make me see it more clearly.

“Yep, this is cute.” I complimented myself, liking the way the dress fit me and how well it matched the heels. Both were red, and my curly reddish hair was loose and wild, the way I liked it now.

I put on some of my natural perfume from this company named Whipped, then added some jewelry to complement my fit. I was looking so good that I decided to take a photo and finally upload my first picture to social media. I’d been afraid to, knowing how evil the internet was, even though I’d only gotten ten damn followers. My profile was public, however.

I left my apartment, and once I got into my freshly washed and vacuumed Prius, I set up my GPS to lead me to this restaurant named The Nice Guy.

Tonight, I had a date with this guy named Darin that I’d met online. I wasn’t expecting to find love on the damn thing, but I needed to put myself out there more. I was never gonna meet anyone and fully get over Jory by only going to work and staying cooped up inside.

I made it to the restaurant and gave my keys to valet. While I had a moment alone, I took a few selfies to upload and then a cute video for my story before heading inside. The hostess escorted me to the correct table after I told her who I was here for, and I was so happy to see Darin was just as good looking as he was online.

“Wow, Taissa, right?” he asked to be sure, and I nodded.

“In the flesh. I hope you’re not disappointed.”

“No, not at all.” He eyed me as I scooted into the booth seat. “You are beautiful.”

I was caught off guard hearing him say that, so it took me a minute to respond.

“Thank you. That’s really nice.”

“Anytime. Just speaking the truth. So I told the waiter I wanted to wait for my company to arrive before we ordered drinks.”

“I appreciate that.”

Darin got the waiter's attention, and we both ordered a cocktail then decided on an appetizer. I snapped a photo for my story, letting people know it was date night, and then slipped my phone into my purse so I could get to know Darin's cute ass. And so far, he wasn't an arrogant asshole like I thought he'd be, something I'd assumed since he'd said he was a high school football star.

"So a woman like you being single must be because you were being saved for me." He sipped his drink, never taking his eyes off of me.

"Is that what it means?"

Laughing, he replied, "I'm not sure, but I hope so. I've been on that app a while and I've never gotten this far."

"Seriously? Not even a first date? Why not?"

"Let's just say I've run into some strange creatures. Either they have a lot of baggage or are just not my style."

"Give me an example; you may just be overreacting."

"Well one—"

My phone ringing interrupted him, and I was so embarrassed that I'd forgotten to turn the ringer off.

"One second." I took it from my purse and tried to quickly hit ignore, but seeing Jory's name made me freeze for longer than intended. Finally, I snapped out of it, hit the red button, and then put it on do not disturb. "Go ahead. Sorry, I am still not used to how these phones work."

"No worries. I was saying that one in particular, I guess she was into swinging and asked me if that would be a problem."

"What?" I giggled, trying my best to not think about why Jory had called me as I drank my gin cocktail.

"Yes." Darin smiled. "Another told me she did cocaine but only in certain settings like out with her friends and such. Then another had about six kids and didn't want anymore."

“Wow, okay. No, you were not overreacting at all! Also, I am glad to let you know I am not into swinging or occasional drug use, and I don’t have children and do want some for the future.”

“Whew.” He pretended to be relieved. “So is this your first dating app—”

“What the hell?” I murmured, hearing my phone ring again, even though I specifically put it on DND. I then remembered I’d favorited Jory’s number when we were heavily into our little affair and forgot to remove it, so he was able to break through the DND feature. “Sorry, give me one moment. It’s a family member and must be an emergency.” I excused myself and went outside. By that time, Jory had gone to my voicemail or hung up, so I dialed him back.

“Aye—”

“Why are you blowing my phone up and at almost nine p.m.? It better be an emergency with Maissa or something.” I was so irritated. Here I was trying to move on with my life and he wouldn’t let the fuck up.

My chest heaved as I waited for him to tell me some news I didn’t want to hear about my younger sister.

“You on a date?” he simply asked and in a rather dry tone like I hadn’t just gone off on him a little bit.

“Yes, I am. Now what is the issue? Why are you calling?” He was quiet, so I shouted, “Helloooo?”

“I don’t know why I’m fucking calling. I’m in my fucking backyard, half naked, blowing you up because I saw that shit you posted on social media, and a nigga can’t sleep.”

He found my social media?

“What the fuck does that have to do with me?”

“A lot... I... think I made a fucking mistake letting you go, Tai—”

“No, sorry. You made your choice, and that was the one you wanted. I do not have time for this. I’m busy. Go back to bed where I am sure Maissa is waiting for you.”

“Taissa—”

“No! You are selfish! You want to keep Maissa and me at the same time, but I am not gonna allow you such a luxury anymore! I cannot even believe I was okay with that pitiful ass arrangement we had! You are a great guy when you want to be, Jory, but you are not great enough for me to willingly subject myself to your emotional abuse. I just ask that you please leave me alone and do not call me again tonight. I would hate to have to block you.” I hung up then went back inside where Darin was waiting.

“Everything okay?” he inquired as I sat back down.

“Yes, I’m so sorry. My sister was having a first world crisis, and since I never go anywhere, she thought it was okay to call me in the middle of the night about it.”

“I see.” He chuckled. “Are you ready to order?”

“I am, and thank you for being so patient with me. I hope you don’t add me to your strange or weird list.”

“Not quite. Let’s see what you pick out to order before I decide.”

We shared a laugh just as the waitress returned, taking down our food orders.

Letting Jory have it outside over the phone made me feel better, so I was able to actually talk and enjoy my date with Darin. The great conversation made the food taste better, and by the time we’d gotten to dessert, my cheeks were hurting from smiling. This was not what I’d expected while getting ready for the night.

I wasn’t waiting for it to be over like I thought, and I was surely looking forward to more dates with him, so I was happy and slightly shocked that he’d asked for another. We exchanged numbers, both feeling comfortable talking outside of the dating app now, then parted ways.

I felt good on the drive home, heat blasting, belly full, and a possible new prospect who was more of my speed. I liked Jory, but a man with a normal job who wasn’t out in the streets all day and most nights was truly what I needed. I wanted

someone who when they clocked out for the day, work was done, and I didn't have to worry about them getting shot or locked up.

I never understood how some women built whole lives with men like that. It was like building a house on a rocky foundation. Next thing you knew, you had four kids and a husband you had to drive hours to visit behind bars. Some women could deal with that, but I wasn't one of them. So Darin one, Jory zero.

When I got home, I texted Darin to let him know, then we exchanged goodnight texts before I took a hot shower and brushed my teeth. Just as I slipped into my pajama pants and top, I heard my doorbell sound off.

Suddenly I became freaked out, wondering if this nigga had followed me home. Hell, I was so up in the clouds as I sped through the streets, I surely wouldn't have noticed a car trailing me the entire way. But then again, my building was pretty good about not letting strangers or new people up here without calling.

Slowly and carefully, I made my way to my door and soundlessly peered through the peephole to see Jory's ass.

"Seriously!" I yelled as I opened the door. "What the hell are you doing here?" I questioned as he barged in, hitting me in the face with his familiar Versace cologne.

"I gotta talk to you." He sounded just as stressed and confused as he did over the phone.

"We already talked, Jory." I let the door close as I folded my arms over my breasts.

"Nah, *you* talked. You ain't give me a chance to say shit."

"Alright, humor me. But I'm gonna tell you right now, if you came over here thinking I'm gonna fall for your sweet talk and games, don't even waste your breath."

"Just stop running yo' fucking mouth for one second, please," he begged, hands in prayer mode. I rolled my eyes but kept quiet. "Taissa, I lied. I lied when I said I ain't see nothing with you because I was trying to be a good nigga, or what I

thought would be a good nigga. I had already been unfaithful, some shit I've forever been against. I couldn't dip out on her and for her sister on top of that shit."

"Okay, so what now?"

"Now I've had some time to think, and I've come to the conclusion that Maissa and I don't mix like we used to. Shit she do now was cool when we first started kicking it, but now I'm trying to be more serious. I thought I would be aight having a girl that didn't want shit out of life but to look good and spend my money, but I need more. Maybe being around you made me realize the shit."

"Oh." I laughed.

"What's funny?"

"The fact that you're only here because you saw I was out on a date. You haven't talked to me since you came to my store like a madman, then just as you see I'm trying to move on, you all of a sudden have feelings for me."

"It ain't no all of a fucking sudden." He glared, sizing me up a little bit as if I'd insulted him. "I just told you I been had them shits but was denying it to preserve my girl's feelings."

"Preserve her feelings or make yourself feel better about your part in this? Look, Jory, I appreciate your speech and you being able to express your feelings, but I am not interested in this little game you're trying to play. It's been the same since we started being intimate; one minute you're all over me and wanting me, then the next you're cold, pushing me away. We both had a great conversation and decided we'd be done. Why the hell are you trying to be in this merry go-round again?"

I jumped back a little when he closed the space between us abruptly.

"I ain't trying to be on no merry go-round. I'm not on no bullshit either. You asked me if I would leave Maissa for you, and I couldn't decide, but I'm telling you right now I will. If you want me to—"

"If I want you to? You need to leave because *you* want to, no other reason."

“I do want to. I been wanting to, but a nigga was scared. I been with her ass for a long time, and it’s hard as fuck letting some shit go that you don’ gotten used to.” He looked sad, and I didn’t know how to feel about it.

“You’re saying you want to leave but you don’t look like you do.”

“Tai, I do, but I’m being honest with yo’ ass. Am I gon’ miss her? Is she gon’ cross my mind a lot at first? Is it gon’ be a fucking struggle trying to forget all them good years we actually did have? Hell yeah to all that, but at the end of the day, I can’t keep holding onto some shit I’m not happy with for memories or out of fear. I always say I ain’t scared of shit, so I gotta practice what the fuck I preach. I can’t be scared to lose some shit that don’t make me feel good no more.”

I nodded to signal that I understood as I glanced off, thinking. I wanted him to be jumping up and down about wanting to break up with my sister, but there was an attachment there, as it should be after dating for so long. I’d only messed around with Jory for a few months and was attached; I could only imagine if for a few years.

And I wasn’t dumb; what Maissa said was true. If Jory was truly not compatible with her and never had a good time with her, he wouldn’t have been her man for so long. All in all, my ass needed to accept and get over the fact that Jory did in fact like and love Maissa at one point, no matter how I tried to make it look.

“Did you tell her yet?”

“Nah, I came straight here. She was asleep when I left. But you asking me that for a reason. Does that mean you gon’ give this shit with me a try?”

“Yes... but you need to tell her before we make any moves.” I turned my head when he tried to kiss me. “I mean any and all moves, Jory. No kissing, touching, going out, phone calls, especially not sex, and anything else that would be considered flirting or cheating while with her. Once you tell her what’s up, we can go from there.”

“I’ll tell her tomorrow morning.”

Opening my front door, I said, “Then I will check in with you after that. Have a good night.”

“Damn, we gotta get rid of this feisty Taissa.” He crossed the threshold, wearing a smirk.

“You wish.” I slammed the door in his face.

I was excited to see where Jory and I would go, even though I knew there would be some obstacles due to how we came together. I didn’t want to get too joyous though, because he could easily never tell her a word and continue his life with her. If he did, I think this time I’d be okay versus the train wreck that I was last time.

KRUCIAL THA GREAT

I told her, “Babe, show me you love me”... “Let ‘em know out in public”... “Uh-huh, let ‘em know why we fuckin’...”

This afternoon was the long-awaited big ass cookout the Lunatics had been yearning for. It cost a little bit of money to get food and shit out here, but it was nothing for a nigga. As crazy as I was and as quick as I was to put a muthafucka down for not doing right by the hood, I was the same nigga who would go all out for my niggas that repped this shit same way I did.

Not everybody in the fucking Lunatics was balling or living in luxury spots while driving the whip to match. A lot of these niggas were struggling due to being so low on the totem pole, so I made sure to help a few of them out depending on the type of nigga they were. It was nothing for me to put food in them niggas’ apartments, front some rent, or make sure they had some shit to drive, long as they made sure to break me off if a payment arrangement was put in place. So see, a nigga wasn’t all bad. I had a bit of a nice streak too. Just don’t fuck with my girl, my money, or the gang, and you’d be straight.

Walking hand in hand with Andreka through the park, I slapped hands with a few niggas as I eyed the spot. The park was humungous, and we’d filled that shit up.

Currently “Red Light Green Light” by Da Baby was blasting from the speakers as niggas dressed in their best and females dressed in their sluttiest attires moved about smoking, drinking, eating that good ass barbecue, and just chilling.

“Wow, baby, this is legit. You have this every year?” Andreka quizzed, taking it all in.

I scanned her in the outfit she had on, looking good enough to sop up with a biscuit. Her yellow shorts were little as fuck, but appropriate, showing off her thick ass sweet brown thighs. The white top she had on that exposed the upper area of her stomach gave just enough to tease a nigga. Like always her pretty toes were showing out in the gold colored sandals she had on, with some tiny ass pointless ass purse to match that ran me a little over a rack.

As we walked, the slight wind blew through her wavy hair that hung down her back, stopping right above her nice, round, plump ass. The sight made me lick my lips as I inhaled the sweet ass scent of her perfume. I was turned the fuck on, and we hadn't been here twenty minutes.

“Yeah, something like that; sometimes twice a year,” I finally replied. “You know I ain't gon' be able to wait to get home to get up in that, right?” I gave her ass a smack then a rough grab while nibbling on my bottom lip at the freaky ass thoughts crossing my mind.

“Kapri, we literally just walked in here. I'm not messing up my makeup before people see me and I get pictures.” She popped her gum as she dug through her purse with her ghetto ass.

“I don't know what the fuck you looking for in that bullshit ass purse. Ain't shit in there.”

Laughing, she rolled her eyes while reapplying some of that shiny ass gloss. “Do not hate. It has my essentials.”

“And who the fuck need to see you?” I scanned the party before looking down into her face.

“My friends, mainly Iyanna. I want her to take some photos of me.” She made a face of disgust after speaking, and I noticed a nigga walking by looking like he was two seconds from drooling.

“Arggh!” He hollered out in pain, dropping his plate that was piled up with food when I snatched his ass backward by

his short, brittle ass ponytail he had at the back of his head so he couldn't walk any further.

“Aye, nigga, what's yo' issue?” I hissed. “She look available to yo' ass, muthafucka?” I spoke through clenched teeth as he winced in pain.

“He grabbed that nigga like he a bitch!” somebody hollered out as niggas laughed. A sort of crowd had formed, but I was used to shit like that, especially at large gang festivities.

“Nah, nah. My bad, Krucial. Fuck,” he whimpered in pain. I knew the shit hurt because my hand was cramping from holding his hair so fucking tightly.

“Now if I ever catch yo' roody-poo ass eyeing my girl like that again, I'm gon' put some muthafuckin heat in ya chest. All this shit I don' put out for you niggas, and you got the nerve to disrespect me? I should smoke yo' ass right here.”

“No, man, I swear to God I ain't mean it.” He sniveled, causing his lip to tremble. Upon seeing that shit, I started laughing, and others joined me, not even knowing what I was laughing at, just being some hoe ass followers.

“Aye, man.” I chuckled, letting him go. “Take yo' ass on. Nah, matter fact, run yo' ass home and wash ya neck.”

“Huh?” He massaged his head while looking up at me, puzzled.

“Wash his neck for what?” Andreka inquired.

“Either it's ya breath smelling like badussy, or it's ya neck, and judging by the ring around that t-shirt, it's the fucking latter. You can't be a light-skinned nigga with a black ass neck. Now get up out of here like I said 'fore I knock you the fuck out for looking at my woman and being a stank ass nigga.”

Old boy gave me a quick nod and jetted off.

“You are so mean!” Andreka stomped her small foot, trying not to chuckle.

“I'm mean? Nah, every muthafucka who don' smelled and seen the dirt on that nigga's neck is mean. Shit, at least I spoke

up, got him some help.” I frowned, low-key offended.

“You’re right, baby, my bad.” She reached up to rub my shoulder.

“Nah, come here.” I hugged her body tightly, and when I squeezed her ass, she giggled and squirmed. “You ain’t never sat on my face backwards, huh?” I whispered before kissing her neck softly.

“Not yet,” she replied, tone full of lust.

“That’s what I want.” I caressed her booty. “I wanna beat it up, make you cum hard, then just put that shit on my face so I can taste you.”

“You are disgusting,” she damn near moaned.

“Sound like you like that shit.” I let her go, wearing a smirk. “You wet, huh?” I asked when she fixed her shorts.

“No!” She started hitting my arm when I began laughing at her lying ass, as her phone rang. “That’s probably Iyanna calling, so I’m gonna find her.” She tried to walk off, but I followed.

She found her homegirl, who shocked the shit out of me when she climbed out the car with a belly. Then I remembered that whole stupid ass transexual conversation with the homies, and realized my ass was right about her.

When Iyanna saw me, she offered up an uncomfortable smile, like she knew that I knew her ass had played my boy. I didn’t give a fuck though. That was some bitch shit to be all in another nigga’s relationships. Long as she hadn’t set the homie up or done no foul shit that threatened his life or our set, she was cool with me.

After I made sure Andreka and her homegirl were safely in the park and where I could see them, I went to kick it with the homies so I could eat until Andreka was done with her hood photoshoot.

“Why the fuck you let Andreka invite her?” Lolly fussed as soon as I sat at the bench with my food.

“Don’t be mad at that girl ’cause she saw you was a dumb ass and took advantage,” Jory replied, then slapped hands with me as we chuckled.

“Nah, I wasn’t no dumb ass. I was trying to be patient, show her ass I wasn’t only interested in fucking, but the shit backfired,” Lolly spat.

“Nah, you was dumb as fuck. It’s one thing for a female to not wanna let you fuck too soon, but I can’t even feel you up? I can’t grab on yo’ ass? Hell nah.” I shook my head, tearing the food up.

“I mean, she was giving me head here and there, so I was cool; I was getting my nut.” Lolly shrugged, drinking from his red cup.

“Sound like a high school ass nigga. That shit ain’t good enough for me. I wanna eat some pussy, pound some pussy, shit, ain’t nothing better than seeing ya bitch cum and making her body weak as fuck. I come last,” I replied.

“Real shit.” Jory nodded, tearing the meat off a rib.

“At least you know her ass ain’t no man, ’cause she pregnant,” Quay finally spoke.

“Man, shut the fuck up. You ain’t never got nothing of fucking substance to say.” Lolly turned his lip up.

“I got more shit going on up in here than yo’ ass.” Quay pointed to his head. “Ain’t none of my bitches ever popped up pregnant by another nigga.”

No sooner had Quay finished his sentence than Lolly shot up from his seat, ready to fight.

“Say that shit to my face, nigga.” Lolly sneered.

“And then what, muthafucka?” Quay got up as well, making the hundreds of people at the cookout look over.

“Then this, bitch.” Lolly pulled his gun out, aiming it right at Quay who didn’t budge.

Standing, Jory said, “Chill out, aight? Y’all getting ready to kill each other over some jokes and shit.” Lolly nor Quay

budged, keeping their eyes on each other. “Krucial.” Jory looked to me for backup.

“If this nigga wanna kill in front of all these witnesses, and if this nigga wanna get killed over a bitch that neither one of you is fucking, be my guest on that dumb shit.” I shrugged. Thankfully, them niggas calmed down and returned to their seats. “Y’all two bitches fight like y’all used to fuck in another life. Relax. Y’all ain’t make it this far to kill or die over some shit like this.

“If you gon’ go out, go out for yo’ hood, die for ya bitch that’s solid, and kill for the same fucking reasons. I shouldn’t have to tell you big grown ass niggas this, and don’t make me repeat the shit,” I ranted, irritated as fuck that seasoned ass niggas were acting reckless and in front of the niggas under us.

Yeah, I could be that way too, but never would I pull a gun out on the homie or, shit, any of the Lunatics over some emotional shit; that was for pussy ass niggas. Them were the same muthafuckas dying or getting phone number years in prison over pussy that was barely theirs.

Now you disrespect my bitch, one that’s really riding for me and one when you see her you know that’s me, like Andreka, then that’s another thing, because you disrespecting me as well. But Lolly was clearly done with Iyanna’s ass, so what was the point? And he knew Quay and how he got down. The nigga fucked with everybody.

It got quiet at our table, even though music was still blasting and plenty of conversation had resumed now that Lolly had put his gun away.

“Aye, Andreka’s cousin coming?” Quay inquired.

“I knew you had fucked that bitch before.” I squinted.

“I ain’t really peep her face, but I believe you if you say that’s her. What was her name, nigga? You never told me.”

“Chante or Chanel, I don’t really fucking remember.” I dropped the rib that was now just a bone, and when I looked up at Quay, his demeanor had changed.

“Must’ve been the *hoe* that got away,” Lolly said intentionally, prompting Quay to shoot daggers at his ass.

“Don’t y’all start, please,” Jory pleaded.

As Lolly and Quay went back and forth just a little bit, I noticed somebody walking up that was the last muthafucka I wanted to see.

As she pranced through, wearing a dress so tight a nigga could see everything, muthafuckas stared, and rightfully fucking so. Nah, it wasn’t ’cause she was looking good. I’d never think that shit about her broad jaw ass, but she wasn’t welcome ’round these parts.

“Is that the bitch Moe was married to?” Quay inquired, Sisi finally catching everybody at this table’s attention.

Approaching with a smile and switching way too fucking hard, she stopped near me.

“Good afternoon, Krucial. I heard about the party and came through because I have an urgent matter to discuss with you.” She put her hair behind her ears. Shit couldn’t have been real because her hair was much shorter last time I’d seen her ass. She honestly looked way better with the short afro than this horse tail she had sitting on her head at the moment.

Standing, I felt the smirk that appeared on my face as I gestured for Sisi to follow me a few feet away.

Keeping the smile on my face as not to alarm the people paying attention, I said, “You think you funny? You think I won’t lay yo’ ass out right now for testing my gangsta?”

“No, of course not. I really have some information. And since I don’t have your phone number, this was the only way for me to tell you.”

I just looked down at the bitch, peeping game.

“You know if I shot you right now, nobody at this muthafuckin park would say a mumbling word?” I watched her choke on her words a bit. “So check this out, the deal we had, the shit is off. Murking bitches ain’t my thing, and you about a millisecond away from having a bullet in between ya

eyes. I'm actually hot as fish grease right now that I can't lay you out. You gon' fuck around and roll up on a nigga at a good time, yapping this same bullshit, and I'm gon' end up sending you to ya maker."

"No, it's not even—"

WHAM!

Before Sisi could finish her sentence, she was flying into the damn dirt with a punch to her temple. When I saw Andreka proceed to punch her ass again, Iyanna holding her purse, I snatched her little ass up.

"Let me go, Kapri!" she growled as Sisi scrambled to her feet.

"You stupid bitch!" Sisi charged toward Andreka as I was holding her.

"If you don't back yo' stupid ass up." I mushed her, causing her to fall back in the dirt but more of the muddy side this time. "Fuck wrong with you." Sisi hopped up and tried again, so I put Andreka down with the quickness and got in her space. "Aye, that's me. You touch her, and I'll knock the shit out like you a grown ass man," I stated seriously.

Sisi heeded to my warnings eventually and turned around to stomp off, mud all over her bright colored dress and that now busted ass hair.

"I'm done with you!" Andreka snapped and tried to switch off after grabbing her small ass bag from Iyanna.

"You ain't done with shit." I grabbed her up and tossed her over my shoulder. "Y'all muthafuckas, get back to the festivities 'fore I get to shooting 'round this bitch!" I snarled, making everybody mind their damn business again. I walked off with Andreka fighting wildly over my shoulder, punching my back as if that shit was doing something. "You better chill out. You gon' break ya hands."

Finally, when we had enough distance between the party and us, I set her to her feet, and she stumbled a bit into the large tree we were by.

“You think I’m playing, well I’m not! And I’m not scared of you like Sisi is. I will fuck you up!” she yelled up into my face, scowling all hard.

“Why you mad?” I asked calmly, taking one of her hands to kiss the palm of it. She let me, but then snatched back when she realized it.

“You invited her here! That is embarrassing to me!”

Little people were always so angry. I snickered at my thoughts, making Andreka cut her eyes at me.

“I didn’t invite that chin-tastic ass bitch. She popped up here. It ain’t like this party is a secret. Look at all these niggas here.” I gestured toward where everyone was.

“Still, I don’t like that she knows you, that she talks to you —”

“She don’t fucking know me, first off. She don’t talk to me unless it’s about the shit I’m doing to help you, and you agreed to the shit.”

“I don’t want her around you! I don’t care if she’s a doctor performing a major surgery you need, I don’t like it!”

“Calm down, baby.” I picked Andreka up, wrapping her legs around me as she fought me a little bit. “That’s why I told her ass the deal was off; I wasn’t fucking with her no more.” I kissed on her neck, feeling her loosen up some as I pinned her body to the tree.

“No, Kapri, people can see.” She tried to stop me from using my free hand to pull on her shorts that by the grace of God had no button or zipper. “I’m not in... the mood... either,” she spoke in between kisses.

Once I had her shorts off, I pulled her thin ass panties to the side, feeling how soaked them muthafuckas were as I did the shit. Releasing myself from my Amiri track pants, I barged my way inside, forcing a moan from both of our mouths. Andreka was still trying to play hard to get, even though I was inside that tight wet shit already, but eventually, she locked her ankles around me, giving me an all-access pass to the pussy.

“Fuck,” I grumbled, slow stroking her, making sure she hit the tip. I stared her ass in the eyes as I dug her out, feeling her tighten her walls every time it got to the head. “Shit.” I felt it again, grasping her ass cheeks tightly.

“Mmm,” she cooed, voice trembling a little bit as she exploded down my shaft, wetting my pants a little bit, but a nigga couldn’t care less.

“You ain’t ever done with me, you hear me?” I talked my shit, speeding up a little and making the sound of her gushy center compete with the music blasting over the park. “I asked you a fucking question.” I pounded her.

“Ye-yes,” she cried out, body gyrating gently as she released again, nails digging into my back.

I shut my eyes for a second, basking in how soaking wet she was. And her purposely tightening her pussy on me in certain areas was driving me insane. Every time she busted, it gripped the fuck out of my dick, making me wanna wild out and bite the muthafuckin tree we were fucking up against.

It was broad daylight out this bitch too, and we were right there in the middle of the park, getting it in. I bit her lip before hungrily kissing her as I listened to the sound of her pussy, reminiscent of a nigga stirring a big ass post of macaroni or potato salad.

“Fuck, baby.” I groaned into her ear before sucking it and going hard in the paint.

I felt her leaking as she creamed back-to-back, but I didn’t let up on the speed or how deep I was hitting that shit. She tapped me to let her down, and reluctantly, I did. Dropping into a squat, she immediately began sloppily sucking me off, causing me to moan out loud which I had no plans on doing. Moments later, she was swallowing about a boatload of nut.

“What?” She giggled, looking up at me.

“Get yo’ nasty ass up off the ground and put these shorts back on.” I helped her up. “Freaky ass,” I said just before tonguing her down while gripping the front of her neck. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

We kissed for a little bit, then I put my dick away while she pulled on her shorts, before we walked to the bathroom.

“Kapri, the door said *Women*.” Andreka chuckled as we entered.

“So, ain’t nobody in this muthafucka.” I took the wipe she’d handed me from her purse.

Just then, some rotund ass white bitch walked in, looking startled upon seeing me.

“The door said this is the women’s bathroom,” she said, sounding like Andreka’s echo.

“I know, bitch. How the fuck you gon’ tell me what I am?” I snapped. “I’m a whole ass female. Everybody ain’t built like yo’ big puffy ass, but I def got a pussy. Some good shit too.”

Without a word, that white hoe looked me over for a few seconds longer before apologizing and bouncing. As soon as she did, Andreka burst into laughter, making me do the same as I started to clean my dick with the wipe.

“She was really trying to look at you for any femininity. I know she didn’t see any at all.” Andreka entered a stall.

“Damn right she ain’t see shit. But with the way the world is today, you can’t be walking up on niggas assuming their gender.” I smirked.

“I know, but you’re still crazy.”

I washed my hands while Andreka peed and cleaned up. Then once she was done washing hers, we left out, heading back toward the party.

“You took yo’ panties off?” I asked, seeing them in her purse when she went in for some hand lotion.

“Yes. They’re delicate, so they got too soaked. It’s too uncomfortable to put back on. I should put them in your mouth since this is your fault.”

“I don’t give a fuck. I love Yami sauce. Why you think I be eating that pussy whenever I can?”

Rolling her eyes, she replied, “Okay,” then took them from her bag. She was shocked as I paused to open up, and she shoved them in. “Now go up to the table with your friends like that.”

I didn’t respond; I just kept walking, and when the homies saw me, they frowned while Andreka laughed with her jaw on the floor. Finally, she reached up to snatch them out, embarrassed even though it was her fucking idea.

“Fuck y’all niggas looking at? Y’all ain’t never had no panties in ya mouth?” I inquired as I took a seat, Andreka sliding into my lap while searching the park with her eyes, probably for Iyanna.

“Hell nah, nigga. What the fuck!” Quay replied, as he and everyone else in earshot guffawed.

“When the pussy good, you put everything in ya mouth, right?” I pressed my lips to Andreka’s neck as I held her in my lap, causing her to beam.

“Yep, everything.”

“I’m about to go over there. Y’all about to make me throw up my damn food.” Quay got up.

The rest of the day went good. Shit was fun once everybody had loosened the fuck up. Some shit was still on my mind though and fucking with me... like what Sisi possibly had to tell me. I didn’t know if she was bullshitting or for real, but something told me she wasn’t bold enough to roll up on me without no real information. Yeah, the hoe had an ulterior motive, she was trying to get fucked, no doubt about it, but she had some key shit. It was too much of a risk to my relationship, but damn was I curious as to what the fuck she had on her, especially because shit was feeling weird and eerie.

IYANNA

I thought I would be okay when Lolly broke up with me, but I wasn't. I felt incomplete and could barely get myself to smile anymore. But that was my fault. I had no business jumping into a new relationship so soon, especially while I was pregnant by another.

I knew people rolled their eyes when they heard the excuse 'that it just happened', but it was true. One minute Lolly was some annoying ass gnat that I couldn't get away from and never saw myself with, and the next minute, he was the only person I wanted to see no matter how shitty I was feeling. I couldn't even explain to myself how he changed roles in my life, but he did.

*W*hen he left my apartment that day, I was hurt but figured if I could get over a man I'd been with ten times longer who left me high and dry while carrying his child, surely getting over Lolly would be a cinch. I was very wrong though, because this shit lasted ten times less but hurt ten times more.

I'd gone mad it seemed, which was why, currently, I was pulling up into his driveway at 9:30 a.m. What else was I supposed to do? He wouldn't answer my texts, calls, or social media direct messages, so this

was my last resort. I could've tried talking at the Lunatic cookout, but it was way too many people there, and if he'd reacted in a way that would have shamed me, I would have had to defend myself. I wanted to be vulnerable when we talked, not on the defense or worried about what other people watching thought.

*A*s I walked up to Lolly's front door, I saw I had a text from Jalen.

*J*alen: *I miss you.*
Jalen: I still love you.

*H*e always sent shit like this and about how he wanted to be a family with the baby and me, so it was nothing new.

*I*gnoring it and locking my phone, I rang Lolly's doorbell. It took a few minutes, and when I spotted him looking out of the small window next to his enormous double doors, my heart fluttered a little bit.

*T*he door flew open, and there he was wearing a sexy mean mug that seemed to look so good with his shiny bald head, beaming caramel skin, and thick luscious beard. He wasn't wearing a shirt, only basketball shorts and socks, and his cologne smelled heavenly. I could tell he'd been eating because he was holding a spoon. Wow, Iyanna was lusting and in love with Lance Adams, a nigga I couldn't stand less than a year ago.

hat?" He shrugged.

“W

“I wanted to know if we could talk.”

“We said enough shit last time I seen you.”

“No we did not. Also, you were extremely angry, and I was in shock, which didn’t make for a good conversation.”

“I’m still extremely angry, so maybe right now wouldn’t be a good time for that conversation either.” He tried to close the door, but I put my hand on it. “Iyanna, why the fuck you at my house early in the morning?”

“It’s the only time I knew you would be home. Sometimes you work from the evening all the way until the wee hours, but usually from nine a.m. until about noon, you’re home or free.”

“First my set’s cookout and now this shit? Nah, you tripping, and it’s ugly as fuck right now. I’m not into the thirsty shit.”

See, now if he had have said this shit at that damn park where all them people were, I would’ve had to curse his ass out and throw a few insults of my own. This was exactly I why let his ass be when there. But here, we

were alone, and I was okay with his mean words because I knew he was hurt.

“*I*’m not being thirsty, Lance. I’m trying to have a for real conversation with you. I don’t want you thinking that I used you or that this was a game for me, but I can understand that that’s what it looks like.”

“*A*in’t no looks like, that’s what it was. The whole time you acted like you couldn’t fuck with me because of me, when really it was another nigga’s baby growing in ya stomach!”

“*T*hat is not fully true! Yes, part of the reason I wasn’t interested in you, or anybody else for that matter, was because I was pregnant, but you, specifically, I wanted nothing to do with because you were no different than Jalen in my eyes. Hell, you may have been worse because you did the shit constantly, daily, and out in the open. At least Jalen had enough sense to hide it from me for a period of time!”

“*T*hen you...” He looked off, shaking his head with his tongue in his cheek like he was pissed off and in disbelief at his thoughts. “Then you played games with me. Not letting me touch you, no sex, blowing up on me when I was trying to be thoughtful and get you a bathing suit since I knew you loved swimming and hitting the beach. And I was patient with yo’ ass, wanting to prove to you that I cared about more than fucking you, and you took advantage of the shit.”

felt horrible hearing him say those things out loud, so horrible that tears began to form in my eyes.

I

“I did.” I nodded, wiping my eyes. “But only because I was afraid. And I did things I didn’t even feel comfortable doing, just to keep you happy. You think I wanted to be pregnant and on my knees sucking off a whole new man? No, but I had deep feelings for you and didn’t want you thinking I didn’t. Doesn’t that get some type of credit?”

“N

ah.” He shook his head. “It don’t, because all you had to do was say you was pregnant and you wouldn’t have had to do none of that shit.”

“Y

ou wouldn’t have stayed!” I sobbed.

“Y

ou don’t know what the fuck I would’ve done, because you don’t know shit about me!” He came from behind the door all the way and onto the porch a little bit. “From day one it’s been assumptions, and I thought after we got close, you’d see what a nigga was really about and throw all that shit out the window! And yeah, I ain’t gon’ hold you. I was on some fuck shit at the very beginning when you and Jalen were still together, but as we started to kick it, I was for real, and you knew it. You not even that type of female, Iyanna. You would’ve never even given me so much as a hand job if you thought I was bullshitting you! But that same nigga you was willing to suck off while pregnant, you ain’t think enough of to be honest!”

t's not like that!"

"It is! None of the work I put in to be with yo' ass meant anything when it came down to being real with me. When I said I loved you, I meant the shit. Yeah, I would've been thrown the fuck off about you being pregnant, but I really fucked with you, girl." He looked me deeply in the eyes. "I may have money, status, and a bunch of other shit, but females of a certain caliber don't come around often. I wouldn't have let a baby stop me from pursuing a woman that I thought was bona-fide and could make me a better man."

"Lance, please, I am sorry," I cried.

"The worst part of all this shit, Iyanna, is after everything I've done, you still looked at me like some fuckboy. Looked at me like some little ass boy who couldn't handle some shit like you being pregnant by a nigga who didn't even deserve you in the first place." He stared at me, but I couldn't reply because I was too broken up. "Aye, come here." He pulled me closer for a hug. "I need you to calm down. At the end of the day, this ain't worth nothing happening to ya baby, aight?"

"Yes," I whimpered, basking in his arms holding me tightly.

olly, who is this?" Some girl walked out of the house frowning.

“L

“Oh,” he let me go, “don’t worry about it. Go back inside.”

I nstead, the girl stood there, staring at me.

“Ah!” She screamed when I picked up one of his small potted plants and threw it all over her ass, before tossing the small pot into her face.

“J yanna!” Lolly exclaimed.

“I wanted to give the bitch a show since she kept staring!” I turned to leave abruptly, feeling sick to my stomach that he’d already reverted back to his old ways.

“Oh my gosh!” The girl continued to complain as Lolly consoled her, taking her back inside, judging by the sound of the door closing and her whiny voice no longer assaulting the outside.

W hen I got in the car, my phone buzzed, and I saw it was Jalen again.

Jalen: I know I fucked up but I can't stop thinking about you.

*Jalen: Remember what I said... just say the word and it's
me and you.*

I hit his name at the top then tapped the phone icon. I started up my car and put my iPhone in the cupholder as it rang so I could drive off.

“Hey, baby,” Jalen spoke smoothly into the phone.

“Do not fucking text me anymore! If it's not about the baby, we have nothing to fucking talk about! And tell your hoe of a wife if she pops up on me again, I will beat the brakes off her big ass! Talking about she's nine months... She looks thirteen! I guess BBLs and baby weight don't mix! Stupid fat bitch!” I shouted and hung up before he could say a word.

I got home about thirty minutes later and ran myself a much-needed bath. As I was about to get in, I heard my phone ringing and saw it was Jalen. Oh, this nigga wanted some more? Well, I was gonna give it. It felt good getting all my frustrations out on him.

“You thought I was playing?” I snapped into the phone.

“Bitch, didn't I tell you to leave my man alone? I looked in his phone and saw you called him! He does not want you! So take your bastard baby and find it a new father, because Jalen does not give a fuck

about you nor that baby! Quit chasing him; it's not cute!" Tisha called herself telling me off.

“*Y*ou're right, good day.” I hung up.

*T*urning off my steaming bath water, I went to my bedroom and fetched a bathing suit to put on. I found this cute two-piece and slipped it on. Looking in the mirror, I smiled. It was the first time I really gave my body and belly a look without feeling some type of way. I looked good pregnant, and would look even better when I snapped back.

*L*etting my hair down, I tousled it, giving it that Victoria's Secret angel look, then snapped a few photos. After choosing two that I liked, I went to my social media account. There, I posted my bikini shots, but when you swiped, you also saw the plethora of text messages from Jalen, with the dates showing, telling me how much he loved me, wanted me, would leave Tisha if I asked, and much, much more.

I then wrote a lengthy caption describing how he'd done me dirty, how badly he'd treated me, how he now wanted me back, how much he didn't want his new bride, and how his now wife was harassing me over what she thought was a diamond but was really shit covered in glitter.

*A*fter posting it, I set my phone on my little bath tray, along with a book, put my hair up, and then removed the bikini before sinking into the warm bath. My phone began blowing up with social media notifications, and

at first, I didn't want to look, already knowing the backlash and negativity I would receive. However, to my surprise, all my comments were in support of me, saying how trash Jalen was, that I looked beautiful, and that Tisha was stupid among other ungodly words. And when it got posted on one of those social media gossip blogs, the comments matched that same tune, bringing a smile to my face.

There were a few people who tried dragging me in support of Jalen and Tisha, but majority was in my favor. My post had gone viral in minutes it seemed, which I knew would happen, but I cared no more.

Bestfriend: You are the GOAT!

I saw Andreka had texted me, along with an angry Jalen, but instead of replying right away, I simply relaxed in my bubble bath. It was time I started living my truth, despite what people would think, and stopped protecting people who cared nothing about me.

JORY

I t'd been about a week since I told Taissa how I felt, and I still hadn't let Maissa know what the fuck was up. Shit sounded easier than it actually was, and I didn't understand it. It wasn't like I was afraid of her little ass, so I didn't get why it was so fucking hard for me to just tell her shit was over.

I kept up with Taissa, making sure to let her know I was keeping my word, just having a hard ass time. To my fucking surprise, she was understanding, and I didn't know how to feel about that shit. On one hand, I wanted her to be upset, showing me that she wanted a nigga that badly, but then again, it took some of the pressure off knowing she didn't have me on some type of time limit.

Coming out of the bedroom after having a fresh shower since I'd been in the streets until 8 a.m., I overheard the TV downstairs in the home gym. All I heard were a bunch of bitches hollering at each other, so I knew Maissa was watching one of them muthafuckin reality shows.

Taking a deep breath, I figured now was a good time, but I was gone pull her ass out of that gym room so she wouldn't have any weapons nearby to hit a nigga with. I was a tough muthafucka, but I wasn't sure if I could survive a big ass dumbbell to the head.

Peeking into the big, cool aired gym, I saw Maissa doing some squats on the Smith machine. The weights were little as fuck, but I had to commend her for actually doing the shit and not just pretending to like a lot of females on social media.

Walking up behind her, I smirked at her through the mirror, folding my arms as I watched her work. She was beautiful as fuck, even while sweating and her hair being somewhat frayed.

“What?” She locked the bar in its place and turned to face me, panting a little bit.

“I thought you got ya body done so you wouldn’t have to work out?” I questioned.

“Me too, but my doctor said if I don’t work out, it’ll start to look sloppy and uneven. He said it only looks this good when it’s new or if you get in the gym.” She rolled her eyes.

“So what’s the fucking point?” I frowned.

“Same thing I said, but it’s too late now.” She dabbed her face with the white towel. “What’s up, babe? You know I don’t like looking a mess in front of you.”

Chuckling, I replied, “You look fine like I always say. Come out so I can holla at you.” I moved back some so she could come completely out of the machine.

“Okay.” She stared at me in a strange way for a little bit.

Fuck. Here I was choking on my fucking words again. But I had to do this shit, or I was never gon’ do it. I was gon’ end up married with five kids by Maissa’s ass if I didn’t speak up now.

“Come out the gym.”

“Jory, no. What the hell do you have to say? I’m in the middle of a session, so if it’s not important, can it at least wait until I’m done and showered? If it is important, say it right now.”

If I moved quickly enough, I could possibly fight her off or wiggle the weight from her grip if it went that far.

“You know how I feel about you and how much I love you, but shit ain’t been going the way I thought it would, you know?”

“No, I don’t know. Enlighten me.”

“Chill, Mai.”

“I am chill! But I wanna know how the fucking relationship is all of a sudden not going how you thought! Shit, it’s not going how I thought, negro! I didn’t think you’d be cheating on me and with my busted ass, pathetic sister! So please, tell me what you mean!”

Running my hand down my face, I sighed. Shit was already going left a few sentences in, and I hadn’t even gotten to the big shit.

“When we got together, you never really had any ambition, and it was cool. Even the past few years it was cool, because I thought I could handle it. But being around females that have the same hustler mentality as me, is what I find attractive at this age, and that ain’t you. You go to school, cool, but nothing ever comes of it. You opened that business or was working on the shit, and I haven’t heard about it since the damn party. Even if you wanted to just be in the house, cooking, cleaning, holding the house down, and maybe being a mother, I’d fuck with that, but you ain’t even with that shit. You just wanna sit up, watch TV, and shop online all fucking day.

“We not vibing like we used to, baby. And I don’t know if it’s because a nigga has grown up, or if it’s because...”

“Because what?”

Exhaling heavily, I said, “Because I got to know yo’ sister, and she’s nothing like you. She got dreams, ambitions; she wants to build shit. I don’t feel like I’m going hard alone like I do with you. Shit, what if some shit happens to me, who gon’ pay for this house note? Who gon’ pay on the fucking cars? Hell, could you even get us an apartment to live in for the time being? You ain’t even got credit.”

Maissa began laughing maniacally.

“So basically, you want a girlfriend similar to your little homeboys. Sorry, that’s not me. I like to spend my nigga’s money and pay him back with some good pussy, loyalty, and encouraging words.”

“And for some niggas, that’s all they need, and ain’t shit wrong with it. I ain’t bashing you for how the fuck you wanna live. I’m telling you that shit don’t work with how I wanna live. Yeah, I want my girl to relax and enjoy my bread, but I want her to have her own shit. I’m the man, but damn, I may need a safety net too. I pray every night that I don’t, but shit happens. And if a nigga ends up dead or in jail, how you gon’ survive?”

“You know what—”

The sound of the doorbell being fucking abused cut her off, and whomever it was needed to chill the fuck out before they broke the shit.

“Hold on,” I told Maissa and left the gym to go see who it was. I could hear her following right behind me. When I looked at the camera monitor by the door, I saw it was Maissa’s homegirl Sabrina.

“Who is it?” Maissa quizzed.

“Aye, why the fuck you assaulting my doorbell and—” I opened the door to scold Sabrina’s ass, but she barged in going off, cutting my sentence short.

“You been fucking Austin, bitch!” Sabrina growled, looking like a damn bull seeing red as she focused on a speechless Maissa.

“The fuck?” I let slip out, but the shit was barely audible, especially compared to Sabrina’s hollering.

“Ah!” Maissa screamed when Sabrina slapped the dog shit out of her.

“Aye nah! You gotta get the fuck up out my house with this bullshit!” I roared, standing between them.

“Keep protecting that whore! She’s been fucking my man almost our entire fucking friendship!” Sabrina accused.

“No I have not! Who even told you that lie!” Maissa shouted, nursing her face. I knew that shit had to be on fire because I even felt that damn slap.

“Really, hoe? Because I was able to get in his phone once I showed the phone company his death certificate, and you’re all up in his fucking text messages!” Turning to me, Sabrina added, “She was in love with that nigga, and apparently, he was in love with her ass!”

I tried to think of something to say, but I was dumbfounded, bewildered, and fucking mystified. No way this shit was true. No way the woman I’d been parading around as my girl had been fucking a Yob the entire time. Nah. That would be a death sentence for her, and Maissa wasn’t that fucking crazy.

“Mai, what the fuck she talking about?” I asked calmly.

“Why do you care? You’ve been fucking my sister! And the only reason you wanna fucking leave me now is not because of my ambition but because you wanna be with her dusty ass! I’m not fucking stupid!” Maissa screeched her damn head off, making my ears ring. “I don’t have to have a degree to know a dog ass nigga when I see one!”

“Well then you two muthafuckas belong together! I brought this for you in case you didn’t believe the shit!” Sabrina threw a stack of papers at me, and the ones I was able to catch showed text messages between who I assume was supposed to be Shoki and Maissa. “Bitch, you are gonna get what’s coming to you.” Sabrina had tears streaming her cheeks, providing me with the sinking feeling that her ass was telling the truth. “Unlike you, I loved my nigga and I loved you, thinking you were my fucking friend. But you’re a fucking rat, and you always will be.”

Maissa said nothing as Sabrina glared at her for a little bit then left the house.

“Let me see yo’ phone,” I said as soon as the door closed. Yeah, them papers said Maissa on it, but I wanted my own solid proof.

“No. Fuck you. Worry about Taissa’s phone.” She started up the stairs, but I was right on her ass.

“Where yo’ muthafuckin phone, Maissa? I’m not playing around!” I slammed the bedroom door, searching the room as she grabbed some shit from her closet.

We seemingly spotted her shit at the same time and darted for it, but she beat me to it. For the next minute or so, we were wrestling on the fucking bed, her scratching, biting, and clawing me the fuck up so I wouldn’t get it. After a moment of doing some heavy ass scuffling with her just to get her phone, I snapped out of it. What the fuck was I doing? The way she was fighting me off like a wild banshee told me enough.

“Don’t touch my shit!” she yelled when I got off of her. “I am not yours to worry about, you sorry piece of shit!”

“I’m sorry, but you been fucking the opp!” I hollered so loudly I felt a rumble in my chest. “I swear to God I wanna put a bullet in yo’ fucking head right now! You stupid ass bitch!” I’d never in life talked to a woman in this way, but she deserved the shit. “All I did for yo’ shallow, mundane, ignorant ass, and that’s how you repay me! That’s why that nigga dead, you dumb ass bitch! You ain’t got a nigga, a side nigga, nor any friends! Where the fuck yo’ broke bum ass gon’ go now, huh?”

“I hate you! And I’d rather have him dead than you well and alive! I haven’t loved you for probably two years by now! All you fucking do is whine and cry about me making my own money instead of growing a pair of balls and holding it down! At least my man died like a G. You ain’t even been shot yet because you a bitch!”

WHAP!

I couldn’t help it. It was like my hand had a mind of its own.

“Nigga ain’t no muthafuckin G! He a dumb ass! What type of gang banger rolls up on a psycho muthafucka with no heat? That’s why his ass got smoked, and we had a nice little dinner on his behalf, thanks to that jewelry the homie snatched off his hoe ass.” I smiled and laughed. “Only thing missing was his ashes to sprinkle in a blunt after we ate,” I said, sounding like Krucial’s heartless ass when it came to them Yobs.

“I hate you!” she hollered again.

“Good, bitch. I hate yo’ stanking ass too! Hurry up and get the fuck up out of my house ’fore I call the police on yo’ funny built ass!” I pulled the bedroom door open to leave. I had to go, because if I stayed here any longer being as mad as I was, I was gon’ kill her ass.

Shoki? For years? I couldn’t wrap my mind around it, and I knew the whole Lunatic gang would be looking at me funny if Maissa continued being able to live. She’d violated in the worst way. She could’ve fucked any other nigga, but she chose a Yob, and one of the worst ones at that.

“Yeah, go! Go run to Taissa and get played again with your bitch ass! You’re always gonna get the short end of the stick because you’re an easy ass lick!” Maissa came running out of the room, shouting at me as I descended the stairs.

“Nah, she nothing like you. That’s why I want her.” I smirked through the anger.

“Oh, is that what you think? Is that why she lied for me about the pasta? Yeah, she knew I was inside of that hotel getting fucked good by Shoki’s big dick ass! In fact, she drove me every time I went to see him at the SLS Hotel! Then when you *finally* smartened up on the pasta, she lied again for me about some fake ass business so you wouldn’t know I was *again*, getting fucked by Shoki! Apples don’t fall far from the tree, and they also don’t fall far from each other! Tell my big sis I said thank you when you see her!” She went back into the bedroom, leaving me bewildered as fuck.

It must’ve been a full fucking moon coming because today was some shit. Here I was thinking the most that would happen would be Maissa taking off on me, but nah. I find out my girl been fucking my enemy, my new potential girl been playing me just as hard, and that I’d been walking around looking like a fucking idiot and didn’t even know the shit. If I could dig Shoki’s ass up and kill his ass again, I would.

Thinking, I took my phone out and sent Krucial a ‘thank you’ text. I didn’t even say why; I just wanted his ass to know. He said Maissa’s ass was fucking Shoki, and he also took that

nigga out for me. Shit was crazy because, initially, I was hot with him, thinking he was being his usual self, taking shit too muthafuckin far, but he wasn't. He was such a fucking hothead that I sometimes forgot how smart, observant, and intuitive the muthafucka was. Never again would I doubt the homie. I didn't care how crazy or unlikely the shit sounded.

Next, I dialed up Taissa, trying to conceal how pissed I was when I did.

"Hey," she answered coyly.

"Sup, you busy, baby? I told her." I bore an angry mug, I felt it, but my voice was on some sweet-talking shit.

"Oh my gosh, are you serious? You know I will find out if you're lying, Jory."

"Nah, I'm not lying." Just as I said that, I heard a loud ass crash in the bedroom, knowing it was Maissa breaking some shit. "See."

"Wow, you better get out of there for a little bit."

"I am. That's why I'm calling you. You at home?"

"Yeah, I am. I just cooked too, so you called at the perfect time."

I smirked and then said my goodbyes before hanging up. I wasted no time hopping in my Trackhawk since it was already parked outside. Almost as if God wanted me to get to Taissa's ass, there was no traffic in sight this Sunday evening, so I got to her place downtown in virtually no time. By now, the front desk people knew me, so they called Taissa just to alert, then escorted me up. Before I even got to her door, Taissa had come out with a big ass grin on her face.

"Now we can celebrate!" she squealed, jumping on me, and I held onto her as I carried her inside.

"Yeah, we can." I let her kiss on my neck, body still wrapped around me. "What business did Maissa have?"

My question stopped all her kissing and touching as she pulled back with a puzzled look.

“Business? I don’t know.”

“She never told you?”

“Nope, she didn’t. But who cares?” She tried to resume kissing my neck, but I put her ass down, confusing her some more.

“I just wanna make sure I understand. You lied about y’all having pasta at the SLS because she was having a meeting with someone regarding a business opportunity you knew nothing about?”

This shit sounded stupid as shit as I repeated it, and I felt like an even bigger dope for falling for it.

“Jory, why are you bringing this up again? That shit is the past. We’re supposed to be moving forward to a new—”

“Because you a fucking liar, that’s why. I knew when I saw the way you smoothly told that bullshit ass fib to Erica when she caught us out that yo’ ass was a professional at this lying shit!”

“I did that to help you! Had I not said anything, it would’ve blown up your spot!”

“Was you helping me by lying about the pasta?”

“I cannot believe me lying about some damn food has gone this far!”

“It ain’t about the muthafuckin food! It’s about you playing me just like yo’ fucking sister was, but trying to pretend like you had my best interest at heart!”

“She is my sister! During that time, I had more loyalty towards her!”

“Oh, so you was lying to me out of loyalty to her, but fucking her nigga at the same time?”

“That’s not fair.”

“Why it’s not? You a snake just like Maissa, but you know what? Yo’ ass is worse because you play the innocent role. At least Maissa is herself through and through, so you expect her to do underhanded shit, but you? You act like you on some do-

gooder type vibe, but you not. Muthafuckas like you are dangerous 'cause you get people to let their damn guard down, thinking they're safe when really they're not. You even got Andreka in the shit, lying on her fucking name to the point where Maissa ended up getting her ass beat.

“My first mind was to stick with Maissa and leave yo' ass alone, and I should've stuck with that.”

“Stuck with a woman who is cheating on you and has been for the past few years?” She thought she was dropping a bomb on me.

Laughing, I replied, “Yeah, you been knew that, huh? You knew she was fucking around on me. I understood not saying shit when you and I were just cordial, but when we got close enough to fuck on the regular, your loyalty to her that was keeping you from being honest with me should've been thrown out the window with the same loyalty that would've kept you from fucking me. 'Cause how you dirty enough to fuck her man but not dirty enough to tell that same man what she up to?”

“I know, Jory, I know, and I'm sorry. I was conflicted. I liked you a lot, but I loved my sister; it was hard for me. Can't you understand that?”

“I can, but at some point, you gotta stop straddling the fence.”

“I agree. I'm sorry, and I won't ever lie like that in the future.”

“Nah, you won't, 'cause I'm done with you and yo' whole fucking family. You and yo' sister are the same person just different types, and I want no parts of the shit.”

I felt like a clown, no lie. Them two hoes had played me like the ball in a ping pong game, and the shit didn't feel good at all. I think I was angrier with Taissa than Maissa because I trusted the former. I never expected Maissa to have my back like that. I knew what type of woman I had—one that loved the almighty dollar and attention. Her cheating was shocking, but not to the point where I was in complete disbelief.

The only thing that really caught me off guard with Maissa was who she chose to fuck on. Not only because he was my fucking enemy, but she knew full well something like that could get her killed and not just by me. Had a Lunatic seen her out with Shoki, they would've had every right to light both their asses up, and I wouldn't have been able to say much about the shit. The bitch was bold, which told me she, unfortunately, really loved that bitch ass nigga.

Taissa making shit up to throw me off on multiple occasions was a blow to me. I saw her as this angelic spirit, yet she was everything but. If niggas questioned whether the two of them were related, I could sadly confirm they had the same damn blood running through their snake ass veins.

“Seriously, Jory? You're gonna punish me for being conflicted over who to be loyal to between, family and you?”

“Nah, I'm not punishing you. I'm just not fucking with you.” I shrugged.

“Jory.”

“I'll holla at you.” I pulled the door open to leave.

I was done with both of them hoes. Taissa was easy; all I needed to do was get Maissa out of my fucking house, and then I could move on. Shit sounded good to me. Only thing I was worried about was how the gang would react to her having messed with Shoki.

That shit was no joke. I wasn't worried about what would happen to Maissa, but more so of what them niggas would expect from me and how much respect I would lose. Last nigga this shit happened to was Moe, but lucky for that nigga, he was 'dead' when it happened.

If it were up to me, I wouldn't even expose the shit, but I knew Sabrina wouldn't let that happen, and the Yobs were about to have a field day with this shit.

I doubt they already knew because I was sure they would've been said something about it. They'd been waiting for a reason to clown us, and this was perfect. Krucial had been dogging them niggas all year, killing them, stealing their

bitches, the list goes on, so they'd have no mercy with this.
Shit was about to get realer than real.

KRUCIAL THA GREAT

The very next day...

“Aye, little nigga, what you doing out here in the street by yaself?” I asked the little boy. It was 8 p.m., and his young ass should’ve been in the house.

“I don’t know.” He shrugged, bouncing the basketball up and down.

“Come on.” I gripped his shoulder and walked him up toward his front door.

Opening the shit, I walked right in, taking in my surroundings and how shit looked. I could hear his siblings being loud as hell toward the back, so I followed it and found the whole family in the den area, chilling.

“Oh my gosh!” Sisi hopped up, eyes about to pop of out of her head.

“Found ya fucking son in the street playing. Ain’t he a little young to be out there by himself?” I nudged him in her direction.

“What are you doing in my house?”

“We can go over them details later. Let me talk to you.” I walked out of the den, leaving her kids to play.

It took a minute, but she soon joined me in the living room.

“I don’t have a bra on or anything and you’re just in my house,” she mentioned purposely, gripping her breasts in a

certain way.

“No need to say the shit. I already saw ya nipples fighting to dig in ya belly button, so it’s obvious you ain’t got a muthafuckin bra on,” I replied. Not giving her ass time to respond, I continued. “What the fuck did you have to tell me?”

“I’m not telling you anything after the way Andreka punched my head and you took up for her, shit!”

“So I’m gon’ let you know now not to raise ya voice at me, aight?” I stated evenly. “And you gon’ give me the information I asked for, or ya kids gon’ find you in here with a puddle of blood next to ya head. I would hate for it to go that far, especially when you could’ve told me what the fuck I wanted to know and stayed alive.”

“I don’t know how Moriah survived in that world.” She shook her head.

“He didn’t. Now spill the shit.”

Glancing off while blowing out hot air, she responded, “I was trying to tell you that Mrs. McCullough has caught on to her husband trying to frame her.”

“So.”

“So, that’s not a good thing. Barry may be the man of the house, but Emily runs everything, and I do mean everything. All that they do, she’s the mastermind, so if she has found out that Barry was trying to betray her, that’s gonna be all bad.”

“All bad for who?” I chuckled lightly.

“All bad for Barry and whomever he was trying to help.”

“Fuck,” I mumbled.

I needed his ass to testify and with evidence to support the shit. He got the shit, but it’d taken a while, and now I knew why. The muthafucka wasn’t running shit but was too pussy to even say it. Now he had possibly fucked up my whole plan and what I had been working on to help my girl.

“You know I forgive you and can still lend a hand if—”

“Nah, I don’t need yo’ fucking forgiveness or ya help. And next time, wear a bra or tuck them sagging muthafuckas in ya pants whether you home alone or not. Them damn kids don’t need to see that shit.” I left out her crib.

Using my burner, I contacted Barry’s ass but got no answer. If he was trying to hide out, he was a funny ass nigga ’cause I’d find him. I ran this whole fucking city, even the suburbs where his hoe ass resided. I tried him once more but got nothing, so I shut my shit off. I’d get at his ass tomorrow; I knew where the fuck he worked.

Pulling up to my crib, I shut the engine off then hurried inside for a hot shower. Andreka’s ass was already asleep, so getting some pussy was off the schedule for the night. But best believe bright and early in the a.m., she’d have her fucking face in the pillow.

Climbing into the bed, I hugged her soft ass body from behind and planted a kiss on her shoulder. The scent of her body helped a nigga fall asleep faster than intended.

3 a.m....

“What?” I mumbled, feeling someone shake me.

“Get up, Kapri,” Andreka demanded sternly.

When I opened my eyes, I saw she was straddling me with a deep ass glare on her face. Wasn’t no telling what the fuck a nigga had done, and Andreka’s ass was crazy.

“What time is it?” I rubbed up her thick thighs, dick hardening from her sitting on me.

“Why were you walking with Donnica?”

Here we go.

“Baby, when was I walking with her?” I shut my tired eyes, realizing pussy wasn’t happening. “Ah, fuck!” I damn near jumped out of my skin feeling a hot ass substance burn the fuck out of my chest. Pinning my chin down so I could see better, I spotted some steaming ass oatmeal. Only then I noticed a hot ass pot of it on the nightstand near us.

“Why were you walking with that bitch!”

Looking up at Andreka like her ass was insane, I couldn't answer right away, but when she picked up another spoonful, smoke coming from that shit like it was hitting the blunt, I woke the fuck up completely.

“Who the fuck you yelling at! And burn me with that shit again and I swear 'fo God, Andreka, I will put hands on you,” I warned her ass. That shit was hot! “Ahh, fuck!” I groaned when she dropped another scoop on my chest.

“I got a picture! You were walking with her and probably took the bitch out to eat too!” she hollered as I tried to gain some composure from being burnt.

Flipping her ass onto her back and making her squeal, I said, “I been showing yo' monkey ass too much love, and you don' forgot what type of nigga you with. You making it real easy for me to bust you in yo' shit like I don't love yo' ass. I'm really not sane, and I really will hurt the fuck out of you. The next muthafuckin time you wake me up at the crack of fucking dawn, you better be riding this dick, or sucking on that shit.

“Now this the last time I'm gon' speak on this shit. You the only bitch I fuck with. Not Donnica, not Sisi, and not whomever fucking else you may possibly think I'm sticking my dick in, aight? When I wanna fuck with another bitch, I'll let you know, trust me. I ain't the type of nigga to lie, 'cause I ain't scared of a got damn thing, and you got to be scared to lie about some shit.

“I love yo' ass, but that don't mean I won't snatch you the fuck up and show you who the fuck running shit 'round this bitch. Now since you in a cooking mood with yo' off-kilter ass, go in that muthafuckin kitchen, warm up my strawberry Eggo waffles, and put the shit with some eggs, bacon, and orange juice. Hurry up.” I got off of her, throwing my legs off the side of the bed.

I was still perplexed that she'd woken her psycho ass up to make some oatmeal, just to pull this serial killer torture shit.

I watched as Andreka sadly climbed from the bed and wanted to slap myself for feeling any type of way about the

shit. As she started past me, I grabbed her small hand, tugging her back to me so that she'd fall into my lap.

"I'm sorry," she said somberly. "I didn't mean to burn you."

"Nah, you did, but I knew yo' ass wasn't all there when I got with you." I kissed the corner of her mouth. "I love you, and that's some real shit. You with a nigga bitches can't even get a whiff of, and my girl is a female niggas wish would look their way, and that ain't on no cocky shit. People gon' hate, but you can't let that shit come between us. I don't give a fuck what a nigga say about you; I'm gon' always believe you first. I'm gon' kill his ass for speaking yo' name, but I'm not gon' be stunting the shit. I need yo' ass to be the same way. We gotta be solid out here."

"We are solid, I'm just jealous." She smirked. "But I will try to take a minute and do a couple deep breathing exercises so I can get back in my right mind."

"I'm jealous as fuck too, you know that. But I keep that type of energy for them niggas I see trying to sweat you, not for you. I know you mine. It's not one nigga on this earth that could take you from me; I'd put money on the shit."

"Them dusty hoes couldn't take you from me either." She sucked her teeth.

"That's what the fuck I like to hear, and that shit is true."

Blushing, she kissed me deeply and then got up.

"Okay. I'm gonna make your food, but the waffles will be from scratch." She winked.

"Aww shit, that mean both ends gon' be sloppy tonight." My dick perked up at the sound of my own words.

"Yep." She giggled, prancing out with her beautiful ass.

"Aye, who sent you a photo of Donnica and me?"

"I don't know. It was from a number I don't have in my phone." She shrugged then continued out.

That was the second fucking time Andreka had been sent some shit, and they always caught me outside of Depp's. Somebody was over there working fucking overtime, clearly wanting me to kill their stupid asses.



Two days later...

“Good morning, boss.” Percy walked into the big warehouse room smiling like the yee ass nigga that he was.

Jory and I chuckled lowly, I guess thinking the same thing. Percy was my nigga though.

“Sup. You know I got a job for you.” I gestured for him to sit down.

“Of course.” He took the seat.

Sitting down on the edge of the table myself, I said, “Somebody been sending shit to my girl but from a number she ain't got saved in her phone. I need to know who the fuck it is 'cause it's always photos of me, making it look like I'm doing some shit I'm not.”

“Hmm, okay. They're probably using a burner number of some sort. Is there anyway you can get your girlfriend's phone?”

“Shit, that shouldn't be no problem. I'm sure she wanna know who the fuck is texting her too.” I nodded. “How long after you get the phone, because I'm trying to dead that ASAP. I got other shit I need to tend to, not this petty bullshit.”

“Not long at all. I'm sure whomever is sending the messages used their actual phone number to create the burner number. I have a software that can pull up the creator's original number and their information.”

“See, that's why I fuck with you.” I smirked, standing up. “The quicker you do this shit, the fatter that knot will be for you.”

“No worries, boss. Just let me know when you have the phone.” Percy grinned excitedly, standing up.

“Come on.” Jory waved him so he could walk him out, while I texted Andreka to let her know I was on the way to her crib.

Leaving the warehouse, I drove straight to Andreka’s to pick up her and my little nigga Coop.

“What’s popping, Coop?” I squatted down to dap him up.

“What’s popping?” he replied, causing me to laugh.

“You ready to come kick it? Play some ball?”

“Yes! I love ball!” his little ass lied. Nigga had never played before, but I wasn’t gon’ put the homie on blast.

“I know. I got the court set up and everything for you, playa.” I picked him up.

“Kapri, he doesn’t need all of that.” Andreka walked up with his overnight bag.

“You see ya mama be hating, trying to keep us apart,” I pretend whispered to Coop.

“No, Mommy, I love Copy!” he shouted, and neither me nor Andreka knew what the fuck to say at first.

I was a hood ass, gangsta ass, 90 percent of the time cold ass nigga, but this little muthafucka had warmed my heart up.

“I love you too, Coop.” I pecked his cheek.

“What about me?” Andreka whined playfully.

“You aight. Now bring yo’ ass on. Coop and I got shit to do. We gotta play ball then train some dogs.” I left out carrying little man with Andreka behind me.

“Yay, dogs!” Cooper shouted.

“Kapri, he is not gonna train those damn pitbulls,” she fussed, locking up.

“Yeah, aight.”

Once everybody was in the whip and buckled up, we dipped. However, I did need to make a stop by my Rumwood apartment, and since it was daytime, I figured this was better than later. I didn't care when I was alone, but I didn't like having Andreka and Cooper in this environment, especially not lately with all this weird ass shit going on.

"I need yo' phone for something," I let Andreka know as I drove.

"For?"

"Find out who been sending you pictures of me. I don't like that messy shit."

"Oh. Who are you giving my phone to?"

"Andreka? For real?" I looked away from the road briefly. "I got a nigga who gon' trace the damn number."

"Well I need to come too. I'm not gonna just send my phone off and wait for it to come back."

"Wow. Aight." I nodded. "You can bring yo' ass if you want. I really don't give a fuck."

"I really don't give a fuck either," Coop chimed in.

"Cooper McCullough!" Andreka snapped as I focused on the street straight ahead, trying not to laugh.

"I'm sorry, Mommy," he responded sadly. And like always, because my nigga Coop had the juice, Andreka's ass softened the fuck up that quickly.

"It's okay, baby, but no curse words. That's for grown ups." She then turned in her seat, and I felt the heat from her stare, causing me to smirk. "Keep playing with me, Kapri."

Parking right outside of my simple two-story building, I hopped out and ran up the stairs really quickly. I wasn't worried about my precious cargo sitting in the Lambo truck, because this area was small, and I had a good view from where I was. Plus, if I saw a suspicious muthafucka, it was easy as fuck to pop his ass from right where I stood.

Looking in my mailbox, I saw a few letters and then a medium sized manila folder. Picking it up, I felt something thick inside, so I put the mail pieces under my arm to open the shit.

“Ugh, fuck,” I almost threw up seeing a hand in it. Looking closely, I recognized the thick ass wedding band. This shit was Barry McCullough’s.

For a minute, I was stuck. Not only had Andreka lost a main witness in her case that would’ve made it open and shut, but Mrs. McCullough was out here in ways I never thought her old raisin in the sun ass could be.

It was obvious to me at this moment that I’d surely have to kill that bitch. I just didn’t know how to go about it due to my connection to Andreka. The last thing I wanted was Mrs. McCullough’s murder coming back on her, but that bitch had to go.

Snapping back to reality, I closed up the envelope to stop that rancid ass smell from permeating, and headed back down to the car. As I put it in the trunk, planning to dispose of the shit later, I heard someone walking up.

“Excuse me, I was looking to rent an apartment over here, and I was told you own the complexes,” Mariana cooed in the same way she did when her hoe ass brother introduced us. I should’ve known Cesar wasn’t gon’ give up that easily.

“Nah, ain’t no vacancies. You gotta get the fuck up out of here.” I took my heat off my hip in case she ain’t catch on.

Had Andreka not been in the car, I would’ve choked this bitch out by now.

“Oh crap. Well do you have buildings anywhere else that I can live in? Where does the girl in the car live? Is she looking for a roommate?”

Getting close to Mariana after checking my surroundings, I growled, “You pulled up on me at a good ass time. I commend you for that shit.” I grinned. “The last thing I wanna do is kill a muthafucka in front of my woman and baby. But let me remind you of something... I can always pull up on yo’ ass,

and if I have to, I'm coming for one thing: yo' muthafuckin life.

"Ya brother don't scare me like he may scare some of these other niggas, so take this opportunity and run yo' ass back to ya hometown 'fore ya brother's antics get you slumped in the street. 'Cause on my mama, if my girl even gets a glimpse of what you look like, I'm splitting a major artery. You know what the fuck that is?"

"N-no," she stuttered.

"Means yo' ass'll be dead as fuck. Focus less on selling pussy for yo' brother and more on expanding yo' knowledge. Scram," I directed her with my gun, and she almost fell trying to move in a hurry with them heels.

If it wasn't one thing it was a-muthafuckin-nother.

OD

It was time to turn the fuck up. I was tired of being the muthafuckin underdogs or being seen as less than, when the Yobs were supposed to be equals to the Lunatics. The shit was embarrassing, but losing one of my main niggas made it hurtful as fuck as well. At this point, it wasn't even the Lunatics I was tired of; it was Krucial.

Everybody knew the gangs operated based on how their leader operated. Before Krucial, we never had this many deaths or problems. We were always able to do our shit, and the Lunatics were able to do their shit. Naturally here and there, shit popped off, and one or the other ended up dead. That was how gang shit went, just a never-ending tale of retribution. But Krucial taking over the Lunatics had made shit ridiculously dangerous.

Niggas were scared to do simple shit like take their family out to dinner, fearing Krucial would see their asses and start some shit. It was nothing for his sick in the head ass to shoot up an establishment he knew we were in. I didn't know what the nigga's problem was, but deep down, I felt he was jealous as fuck of me.

He was the son of a side bitch, while I was the son of the wife. His mama, Catrina, was known as a hood hoe back in the day, because of how she broke up my parents' marriage, and therefore, people didn't look at Krucial as my father's true son; that shit was always me.

The only muthafucka that should've been king out here was OD, not Krucial's bitch ass. Nigga even had a hoe ass

name. What hood nigga was named Kapri? I laughed out loud at my thoughts.

Unfortunately, my pops didn't see it that way, and even in his grave, I would never forgive his ass for leaving us. I even changed my damn last name to my mother's maiden because I wanted no connection with his whack ass. If he felt like with Krucial and his bop ass mama was where he should've been, then I'd be damned if I continued on his legacy, passing that weak ass last name to my fucking kids.

"Food smells goooood." Curly's plump ass ran his tongue across his teeth.

Since the Lunatics had a cookout every year, we usually did too, but we'd initially decided not to due to all the violent acts Krucial's ass had been pulling. But I said fuck that. If we kept letting that nigga get away with shit, the Yobs would eventually be extinct, and that shit wasn't happening under me. So hell yeah, today during this lovely ass Saturday in LA, with perfect ass weather, I had the whole gang and plenty of bad bitches out here celebrating Yob style. I was done playing it cool.

At the moment, the smell of the barbecue and all the other food had taken over the park, right along with the music, drinks, and abundance of weed.

"You look good." I complimented Essence as she walked by me with her plate. She had on some colorful ass one-piece that had her back out as well as the side of her titties. It stopped right past her knees, showing her pretty ass caramel complexion and perfect toes. "Aye, you heard what the fuck I said?" I gripped her as she was about to sit down on the bench that I was on top of.

"Yes, Odie, damn. Thank you." She snatched her arm from me, making me stand up.

Leaning over her, I gripped a handful of her hair tightly and spoke through clenched teeth. "Watch that fucking attitude, aight? This ain't the place to try to be bold because I would hate to fuck you up in front of everybody and make an example out yo' ass for disrespecting me. Cool?"

She nodded slowly and stared off for a second before starting to eat her food. I didn't know what the fuck was wrong with her ass, but she needed to shape the fuck up. Luckily, when I looked over, I spotted Donnica walking up in a tiny ass jean skirt and a top that tied around her neck. Like Essence, everything on her light-skinned ass looked perfect.

Purposely trying to irritate Essence, I welcome Donnica into my arms, squeezing on her ass.

"Hey, daddy," Donnica cooed.

"See, that's how you greet yo' man," I threw over my shoulder at Essence's ass, but she kept on eating.

I took it a step further, tonguing Donnica down since I knew people were watching, and sure enough, Essence hopped her bratty ass up in attempt to walk off.

"Let me go!" she snapped when I grabbed her.

"Sit yo' ass down and quit trying to act tough then! When I give you attention, act like you appreciate the shit, or it's going elsewhere!" I ranted back, making her sit back down. "Aye, go make me a plate." I slapped Donnica on the ass, and she happily obliged.

I sat next to Essence, smiling a little bit at how smooth the party was going. At the moment, everybody was wilding out to "Shake" by Lil Ronny Motha F, and just having a good ass time. It was nice seeing my niggas carefree, and females feeling safe in our fucking presence.

"What's good?" I heard a voice and looked to my left to see Alton, Donnica's baby daddy.

"Sup, my nigga. You know all ain't forgiven until you handle what the fuck I asked you to." I got right to the point.

Alton's ass had played Harm out of some fucking money, and not only was that some bitch shit, but Harm was the most beloved leader of the Yobs. Niggas constantly complained that he was the last real nigga, and had he still been deep in this shit, Krucial would've been dead somewhere. It was my goal at this point to be regarded in the same way as Harm's ass, because after Moe went out like the hoe that he was, getting

raided then killed by the same nigga who took his bitch, I couldn't fuck up. I knew if I was behind Krucial being murdered, I would go down in metafiction history.

"I know, and trust me, I got you. It's not like you hired me to get at some easy nigga."

"I know that. That's the only reason you got time. Had it been anybody else I was asking you to kill, that clock would've ran out."

"Oh, hey." Donnica returned with my plate and sat next to me. Her greeting to Alton was drier than dry.

I said grace and started tearing that shit up.

"Well like I said, boss, you ain't got shit to worry about. I'm gon' handle it and in a way that's gon' have that nigga looking like a joke." Alton smirked.

I just shook my head as I devoured this plate. I wasn't falling for shit until I saw some results.

"I'm about to go get a drink." Donnica stood up out of nowhere.

"Before you go, come holla at me in the car." Alton got up as well.

Darting her eyes to me than back to Alton, she frowned. "No, what the fuck? We have nothing to talk about unless you're gonna pay some back child support!"

"Good thing I ain't trying to talk." He licked his lips.

"Odie!" Donnica eyed me, begging for help.

"Go see what he want." I nodded my head in his direction. I felt Donnica staring at me, but I focused on my plate.

"Wow," she mumbled and stormed off toward Alton's car in which he followed.

"She's so stupid. When will she realize you're using her ass?" Essence finally spoke up, chewing on some ice while chuckling.

“In a minute, I may not be just using her ass. You been slacking on yo’ fucking job. Don’t let her take yo’ spot,” I said, shutting her ass up. “Go get me some dessert.”

Essence hesitated like she wanted to speak but then got up to do as I’d asked.

I finished my plate just in time since Essence had returned with my cake right when I put the last forkful into my mouth. After I ate that dessert, I was in the mood, so I instructed her to follow me to an area behind the bathroom where she could suck me off right quick.

“Ah!” Essence screeched when Krucial grabbed me up, putting me in a crucial ass headlock from behind. I couldn’t speak or barely breath, as I wiggled wildly to break free.

“Take yo’ ass back to the party,” he instructed her using his gun. “Do anything stupid and I’ll kill his ass, I swear to God.”

Nodding, Essence backed away and then ran off like the punk ass that she was.

“Le-t me—” I couldn’t even get the rest out because it was too fucking hard.

“Who jumped my girl?” he asked calmly.

“I don’t... know!” I struggled to speak. I was hot as fish grease that he had me in this position, but thankfully, nobody could see.

“You think I won’t kill yo’ ass? Only reason I haven’t was out of respect for my muthafuckin mama, but fucking with my bitch gets that shit thrown out the window.”

I couldn’t say anything because this fucking chokehold was something serious, so Krucial threw me to the ground roughly, slapping the shit out of me with his gun.

“I ain’t have nothing to do with getting that bitch—Argggh!” I damn near cried when he kicked me dead in the mouth. One of my teeth had slipped down my throat as I coughed up blood.

“Watch yo’ mouth, nigga. You talking about royalty. Show some muthafuckin respect.”

Coughing a little bit and still shocked as fuck that I'd lost my tooth, I spoke lowly. "I ain't have nobody jump Andreka. You maybe need to take a closer look at yo' circle."

Krucial peered down at me angrily, and then without a word proceeded to whoop my ass. I tried to fight back, but he'd already hindered the fuck out of my fighting abilities when he kicked me in the face. After a while, my body gave out, and I was dipping in and out of consciousness. I felt my body lift up and realized I was being dragged by this nigga through the dirt and toward the party.

Panicking, I attempted to help myself come to, but the shit was too hard. I didn't want my gang seeing me incapacitated like this, but I couldn't help the shit.

"This how the boss roll?" Krucial laughed, dropping me in the middle of the damn cookout, causing me to groan when my face hit the dirt. Placing his foot on my back, he announced, "I'm gon' exterminate all you bitches until I find out who the fuck touched my woman. Y'all better decide; either give up the muthafucka who did it, or y'all all going down for the shit."

"Fuck," somebody mumbled. Lord I wanted to get up, but this nigga's big ass foot on my back, and my inability to stay completely awake was making the shit difficult.

The last thing I remembered before I completely passed out was seeing Krucial making himself a plate of the food I footed the bill for and then yell after he bit a rib, "Oh, RIH to that nigga Shoki. May his bitch ass rest in hell."

Yet again, Krucial had done the most and ruined some shit with his obsessed ass. If Alton didn't kill him within the next few days, I was doing it. I was over that muthafucka walking around my city, pounding on his chest like he was king! It was time for his ass to go!



ust two days later...

“Right this way.” The prison guard led me to the table my mama was seated at.

“Thanks.” I gave him a nod as I approached, prompting her to smile widely.

The guard stuck around as we hugged and pecked each other’s cheeks briefly, then he made us sit down.

“Baby, what happened to your jaw? And your tooth? Oh my goodness!” she asked, reaching to touch my face, but the guard yelled for her not to.

“Nothing major.” I shrugged. “Don’t worry about me out there in the free world.” I tried to chuckle it off.

“I thought you were somebody big and tough out there. Why do you look like you got your ass whooped?”

“Mama, can we just—”

“Answer me, boy.”

I looked off then regained eye contact with her.

“I got in a fight with that nigga Kapri.”

“I thought I told you to stay away from him, Odie.”

“And I try, but the nigga is obsessed with my ass. I can’t do shit, and neither can my peoples without him showing up or wreaking havoc.”

“I told you to kill that boy long ago,” she whispered. “Hell, his mama should’ve killed him in the womb.” She looked off for a second, mouth twisted in anger. Damn, she was still messed up over what Catrina caused in our family, and that was exactly why I would never forgive that hoe or her son.

“It ain’t that easy, Ma. He ain’t a little ass baby like he was when you left. He insane, and as much as I hate to say, calculated and smart as fuck. Don’t you think he would’ve been gone by now?” I spoke lowly. “You shouldn’t be saying shit like that anyway, ’cause look where that mentality got you.”

My mama was the reason why, despite being deep off in this gang shit, my record was spotless. I didn’t even have a

parking citation on my shit. A clean ass record was like having good credit; it got you a lot of shit you otherwise couldn't afford or wouldn't be able to get out of.

“Like I told you then, I didn't kill anybody. Yes, I hated Kilian deep within my soul, but I would never have the heart to kill a man I spent that much of my life with. Remember, he fell out of love with me; I didn't fall out of love with him.”

I could see the sincerity in her eyes, but that shit didn't make sense.

“Who did the shit then? Catrina?”

“Please.” My mama rolled her eyes. “That whore was only good at one thing, opening her legs to married men. Committing murder and being able to get away with it seems to be a bit outside of a whore's purview.”

“So you telling me you been locked up all this damn time over some possible street murder?” I frowned. “Some random thug did this shit, and you paying for it?” I felt myself getting heated.

I hated to say the shit, but I never believed my mama all the times she claimed to be innocent. Shit, I grew up around killers, and that was the first thing they said once caught. Niggas only bragged about killing and shit while free, but once behind them steel bars, they always cried innocent.

In my eyes, my mama was no different. Shit, who else would've murdered my pops? He was well liked but at the same time not a big enough deal to be the target of a jealous muthafucka. Sure, give it a couple years, and he would've been running the streets, but he never got that far, so I didn't understand.

Now that my moms had broken it down for me, I remembered how much she loved my dad and would've never done no shit like this. Not to mention, she was tiny, skinny, and an all-around gentle woman; she was my mama. Before his murder, she'd never had one venomous bone or trait in her body. But if it wasn't her ass nor was it Catrina, then who?

“Yes, that’s what I’ve been saying.” Leaning into me, she said, “I’m pretty sure it was that bitch’s brother that set me up.”

“What bitch? Catrina’s brother?” I asked, and she nodded. “Depp?”

“Time’s up, Kipling!” the guard yelled, getting over here quickly to pick my mama up from her seat.

“Relax, nigga, she’s older,” I let him know.

He groaned but kept it pushing, manhandling my mama in a way that I didn’t approve of.

If what she’d just dropped on me was true, no way was I about to let my moms rot over some shit my pops’s *other* family did. Nah, this shit was wrong, and I was about to make it right in more ways than one.

ANDREKA

Mr. McCullough was dead...

I didn't know what to think as I sat in my lawyer's office, him rambling about what our next steps needed to be. I'd gotten so comfortable thinking once Mr. McCullough testified against his wife, Cooper would be mine for good and all of this would be over. However, Mrs. McCullough had gotten over on me once again.

What amazed me was how she did it or who she got to do it that was ruthless enough to drop his hand off in a package. For now, people like my lawyer believed Mr. McCullough had gotten into some shit with the wrong people, since his insurance fraud had now been exposed, courtesy of his wife, I'm sure, but Krucial and I knew better.

It was no coincidence that as soon as he was about to get on the stand and tell everything he knew about helping Moe escape and pinning his murder on Mrs. McCullough, that he ended up dead. I think Mr. McCullough was probably happy to be dead though, because he was in a hard place being forced to squeal on his wife in order to save his life and/or his business.

"So sound good, Miss Nicholas?" My lawyer Edwin yanked me back to reality.

"Uh, umm, I'm sorry. I didn't really hear anything you said," I admitted.

Sighing out of irritation, which I understood, he reiterated, "I basically said to stay out of trouble, and maybe take some time to focus on finding a job. Right now, on record, you are

jobless. You're in school, so that's good, but the courts want to see an income that can support you *and* Cooper.

“Also, you have a few pending assault charges that I want to try to resolve before the rescheduled court date, because right now, your profile without that testimony from Dr. McCullough looks bad. You are worse off than before because you have no revolving income, and now assault cases filed by two different parties.”

“Assault cases?” I furrowed my brows. “Who the hell filed that against me?”

“Looks like your old boss, Essence Tipton, and then Cooper's stepmother, Sisi McCullough.” He read a sheet of paper.

“She is not his fucking stepmother.”

“Fine, Moriah McCullough's widow.” Placing his pen down and closing his notepad, Edwin stared into my eyes. He was a nice-looking Hispanic man in probably his mid-forties. I could tell by his attire, jewelry, Maybach, and high-rise office that he made a lot of money, and Krucial was most likely paying him handsomely. “Miss Nicholas, I've been an attorney for a long while, meaning I can see right through people. I know when I have a criminal playing innocent and vice versa. You are a good mother, and you are a good woman who got caught up in the acts of your significant other; I can see it.

“I want to help you, but you have to assist me in doing so. No judge wants to keep a child from their mother if they don't have to. So relax and understand that, just like me, Judge Bowman wants more than anything to send you home with Cooper. If you just calm down, think positively, get a new job, and let me get rid of these assault charges for you, you will have your son. You don't need to do anything else, including going to battle with Mrs. McCullough. Are we in agreement?”

“Yeah, I think that would be good for my stress levels.”

“Me too. That's what Mr. Hendricks is paying me for, to make things happen while you kick back. And we both know that I don't want to disappoint the man.”

Giggling, I shook my head. “No, you don’t.”

I finished up my meeting with my lawyer and felt pretty okay afterwards. Getting into my car, I heard my phone going off, but when I took it from my purse, I didn’t recognize the number.

“Andreka.” Mrs. McCullough’s voice came through my car speakers since I’d started my car.

“I’m hanging up.”

“Go right ahead, but I just want you to know you will never have Cooper legally. Your little boyfriend can only keep up the threats for so long, but at the end of the day, the courts will always choose me. I am richer, more prominent, and have connections a little hood booger like you couldn’t even fathom.

“Initially, I went easy on you, but you and that gang banger have fucked with the wrong one, I’m gonna tell you. No matter what I do, who do you think the law is going to side with? A well-known, prestigious doctor who has been practicing medicine for twenty-six years and counting? Or a gang banger with a record one hundred miles long, and his little girlfriend who is soon building a record of her own?”

“I love that you underestimate me, Emily, I really do.” I chuckled. She was silent, so I knew my calmness had caught her off guard. “You’ve been practicing medicine for a while, but maybe you should brush up on the law. The courts want Cooper with me. Why do you think the judge hasn’t just made his decision permanent yet?”

“And if Kapri was nothing more than a simple-minded gang banger with no connections, he’d probably be right where your son is, but he’s not. He owns a business, makes great money, and most importantly is not behind bars or dead. As for me, it’ll take more than an assault case for me to lose Cooper for good. You just better hope that no one finds out what you did to your husband, because I’m sure your medical degree didn’t teach you how to get away with murder.”

“Listen—”

I ended the call, having nothing else to say and no longer about to waste my damn time listening to her stupid ass threats. I was going to take Edwin's advice and focus on improving my life, not battling it out with Emily McCullough. Plus, I had a feeling Krucial was going to expose the bitch, and I couldn't wait.



Krucial had been bugging me about giving him my phone so he could pass it off to his tech guy, but I was hesitant. Like I said before, I didn't want him to handle this and I never knew who it was, and there also may be some things I wanted to say to the asshole too. So, before I handed it off, I was going to do some investigating of my own... but in Skyler's car.

Before I did that though, I wanted to fill up her low ass tank because I knew from the past that when you went snooping, the last thing you wanted to do was stop midway and have to get gas.

Pulling into the gas station near my home, I parked in front of one of the tanks and then climbed out with my phone since it took Apple Pay. After paying, I slipped the pump inside of my car, letting it fill up to its heart's desire.

"Excuse me," a woman got my attention. "I am new in town, and I was wondering if there was a Target nearby?" she quizzed. I noticed she had a Spanish accent.

"Oh yeah I mean, it's about fifteen minutes away, but it's not too bad for LA. You get used to it. Do you have a phone? I can show you how to pull it up."

"Oh yes, would you? I am not well with these gadgets." She handed me her phone after unlocking it.

"See. Just click this map application and type the name of what you're looking for. This is the closest." I tapped it.

"Oh my gosh, I feel so stupid." She palmed her face then took her phone. "Thank you so much..."

“Andreka.”

“Thank you, Andreka. This is a large city, but if I do ever see you again, my name is Mariana.” She smiled.

“Nice to meet you, Mariana.” I gave her a nod just before she walked off, jogging slightly to her car.

When my tank was full, I hooked the pump back up and then used some of the hand sanitizer they had out here before leaving.

I knew Krucial visited Supreme Fish around this time, so I drove straight over there. I came down from the opposite end I was usually on and began to creep down the street. Per usual, the speed demons honked, yelled, and dipped around me, but I didn't care.

At last, I saw my man with his fine chocolate ass, conversing with Quay. I came to stop right where I was so that I could scope the scene, pay attention to figure out if anyone was focusing intently on him, but I found no one.

Just as I was about to drive off, a black car with deep tint sped around me, prompting me to roll my eyes. Pulling off slowly, I noticed the black car start to creep like I'd been doing minutes ago as it approached Supreme Fish where my baby was, right there outside. Something deep down in my gut told me this wasn't good.

“Kapri!” I yelled, honking, but it was so loud out here due to the busyness of the street. It was literally lined with about twenty popular stores, food places, and salons. I rolled the window down to yell again. “Kapri! Oh my gosh!” I screamed seeing a gun point out of the back seat window, dead at him. I was panicking trying to get out the car in time. “Kapri! Baby ___”

POP! POP! POP! POP!

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