

DAVID WEAVER PRESENTS

SECRETS

OF
A

SIDE

Bitch

JESSICA N. WATKINS

Secrets of a Side Bitch

By Jessica N. Watkins

Copyright © 2013, Jessica N. Watkins

Synopsis

He's beautiful with gray eyes, tall, chocolate ... and *he's worth fighting for*.

Meet Omari— a gorgeous, hard working, twenty-eight year old man from the Southside of Chicago. No matter how hard he works at his job at UPS, it is never enough to take care of himself and his long-term girlfriend. After continuous pressure from his older cousin, Ching, Omari finally traded in busting his ass for working under Ching hustling three major blocks on the Westside. All is good as Omari juggles work and the drug game. That is, until Ching involves him in the murder of, who ends up being, the Governor's nephew. As he dodges homicide detectives, Omari is also trying to dodge getting caught between two loves. He's been committed to Aeysha for seven years, but is falling each day for Simone, an older more established woman who is at his every beck and call. After years of playing the side chick, Simone finally finds love that she thinks is all her own. Just as she settles into loving Omari, she finds out about Aeysha and her desperate mind begins to plot on how to finally win her man. Simone's best friend, Tammy, thinks Simone is crazy as she herself is running from an obsessed ex-boyfriend who is persistent in trying to kill her. Tammy lives in hiding for months as she asks herself this burning question; how can a man love a woman with the same hands that he is willing to kill her with?

As the murder investigation leads to arrests, the walls come down on these lovers. Murder, sex, and indictments lead to unforeseen tragedy and unexpected love.

ONE

MONDAY, JUNE 17TH, 2013

Tammy

It was Monday, June 17th. The thought that persistently ran through my mind was how I would never forget this day; *if* I lived to see another one.

“Jimmy, put the gun down.”

I was pleading with him as tears ran marathons down my face. I could feel the Mac Studio Fix as it dripped down my cheeks and onto my neck. My heart was beating so fast with horror that I became short of breath. My head spun in aggressive loops, causing the room to twist and spin like a rollercoaster before my tear soaked eyes.

I wanted to run for my life, but I dared not move. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. I was paralyzed as I stared down the barrel of Jimmy's nine millimeter.

I stared at him in the same way that I would have stared with fright at the angel of death himself. Jimmy ignored my fear and continued to bark manically. “Bitch, I'mma put a bullet in yo' head! I told yo' ass don't play wit' me!”

He had. For days, Jimmy told me that if he couldn't have me, no one else could. For days, he called my cell phone hundreds of times a day. My text message inbox was filled with messages of him threatening my life and of him loving me so much that he couldn't live without me.

Through gritted teeth and a clenched jaw, he told me, “All I wanted to do was love you.”

Jimmy's black skin was perspiring so much that it glowed in the darkness of the living room. I was still wrapped in the blanket that I cuddled up with an hour prior as I prepared to watch the newest episode of Love and Hip Hop Atlanta. I was all too prepared to watch the ratchetness and entertaining foolery until I fell asleep. I was exhausted. The

last couple of days spent arguing with Jimmy had completely worn me out.

After five years of Jimmy's possessiveness, I was done. I was twenty-seven with no children. I had a wonderful teaching career. I drove a fairly new Avenger. I didn't have the most expensive labels in my closet, but I dressed decently. I wasn't the prettiest girl in the world, but I was cute, with measurements that any woman would pay money to get injected with. I ensured that I kept a nice shape by hitting the gym at least four days a week. Plus, I was mixed, so my hair was long, full, and rich. I'm not bragging, but these were all reasons why I didn't have to put up with this nigga who was thirty-three with no job and four kids by three different women telling me what to do, where to go, and what time to be back.

I had spent the last five years literally catering to this man out of fear that if I didn't, he would leave me. I spent five years being scared; scared of being alone and scared of his anger that sent him into tantrums that often ended with me having a sore neck, busted lip, or black eye.

Four days ago, I realized that being alone was better than having his sorry ass company making me miserable every fucking day.

Four days ago, I realized that being alone was better than living every day lonely with him.

"I can't believe you left me!"

Amidst the reflections of Stevie J. and Joseline, Jimmy continued to cruelly aim the nine millimeter at my head. He held that gun so tight that I could see veins bursting out of his hand and forearm.

I was use to Jimmy's violence and abuse. Yet, that day, I was more scared than I had ever been. His eyes looked erratic. They bounced around uncontrollably. They looked diluted and possessed.

"I'm sorry," I said through sobs that were out of control and begged for my life. "We can talk about it, I promise. Just *please* put the gun down, Jimmy."

It was like he didn't even hear me. I could see in his eyes that his mind was somewhere else. "I was gone get back right..."

"Jimmy..."

"I was gone find me a job. I was getting myself together."

With every word, he walked closer towards the couch. With every word, his eyes bounced more erratically. With every word, he unsteadily pointed the gun at the birthmark on my forehead shaped like a lopsided heart.

I tried to reason with his deliriousness. "It's not about that..."

Still, he ignored my pleas. "I love you."

"Jimmy..."

"I LOVE YOU!!" Those three words exited his mouth with such force that I jumped in fear. My sudden movements ignited Jimmy's reflections. He came towards me wildly. I finally decided that this was my only chance to get out of there alive. The light in the hallway seemed to glow like a guiding light towards the front door. As he came towards me, I jumped on top of the couch and over the back of it. No sooner than my bare feet hit the carpet, I took off running. I wasn't able to make it two feet before I heard the gun go off.

Pow!

Instantly, I screamed in terror as I hit the floor. Milliseconds later, I felt the pain in the side of my head and warm blood running down my neck.

Omari

“What up, Pretty Boy.”

My eyes rolled into the back of my head as soon as Ching called me that gay shit. I hated when my family called me that. I never disliked my parents for anything until somebody called me “Pretty Boy”. It was their fault I got the name. My mother was the only dark-skinned woman that many people have seen with light eyes. Her eyes are gray. She’s a pretty woman too. Her friends and sisters always told me how beautiful she was back in the day. She use to model back in the 60s when the industry wasn’t hiring too many dark-skinned African-American women to model for anything. She had even been Jet Beauty of the Week three times.

I got a lot of my mother’s features, including the dark skin and gray eyes, mixed with my father’s height, build, and signature slanted eyes. My mama calls them “bedroom eyes”.

When I was a little kid, I tried my best to shake that pretty boy image. I got tatted up from head to toe. I let my hair grow out into long locs that were damn near to my waist by then. I always kept them up in different styles. I hit the gym hard and bulked up. But all that didn’t do anything to keep the nickname from sticking to me when it came to family. Shit, I even tried my hand at hustling to shake the pretty boy image, but that shit didn’t work for me either, which is why I was calling Ching.

“What up, Ching. Man, I need a favor.”

I knew Ching was tired of me calling him for favors, but I didn’t have anybody else to call. He was my older cousin who had three blocks on the Westside sowed up with block boys serving loud, coke and pills for him.

He chuckled a lil’ bit when he said, “How much you need, man?”

Instantly, I was irritated. I pretended to bang my head on the steering wheel of my 2001 Impala. I felt like less of a

man every time I had to ask another man to help me feed mine.

But, being six years older, Ching was like an uncle to me. Since my father wasn't in my life, I clung to my older cousin and looked up to him. He often treated me like his nephew, rather than a cousin. So, it was easier for me to ask him for help and I knew he would always look out for me.

“Just a couple hundred ‘til I get paid Friday.”

“Come holla at me in the morning on your way to the gig.”

“Fa’ sho, bro. Thanks, man.”

“Aye, ain’t you tired of this shit? You workin’ just to pay me back.”

He was right. I couldn't even argue with him. I was tired of working check to Monday; getting paid on Friday and being broke by Monday. This was nowhere near where I planned to be at twenty-eight years old, but you gotta play the hand that you've been dealt. Obviously, poverty was the hand God dealt me. I got a petty gig straight out of college at UPS while continuing to look for a job in the field that my degree was in. The money was cool at first. It was good enough to take care of me and my girl, Aeysha. But once my mother got in a car accident and ended up on disability, she needed my help financially. Then Aeysha lost her job a year ago and it was a wrap with the help she was on the bills.

“I keep telling you I can use your help, man.”

My instant reaction was a laugh. “Man, you already know what happened last time.”

When Ching first got heavy in the game, he put me on the street as one of his young workers. Man, he put me on that block and I flopped! I couldn't sell water to a fish. Standing on a corner all day drove me fucking crazy. Ching took me off the block in less than a month! Hustling just wasn't for me. So, I took my ass to school.

“I wouldn't put you on no block, my nigga. I got use for you in other areas.”

Easy money sounded real good at that moment. Just thinking about waking up at six in the morning to work for eight hours for a check that wouldn't even belong to me once I got it made my stomach hurt with embarrassment.

“Naw, man. I’ll pass.”

But thinking about the possibilities of getting locked up, not being able to fend for my mama and Aeysha in the little ways that I could, made my stomach hurt worse.

Tammy

The feeling of death is so unreal. I was so scared that it felt like the anxiety would give me a heart attack and kill me before the bullet did. But no matter what, I didn't move. I lay still, listening to Jimmy talk to himself.

“Oh my God. What did I do? I'm so sorry, baby. I'm sorry.”

Jimmy was hovering over me as I lay lifelessly on the carpet. I could feel the moisture from my blood as it leaked out of my head and onto the carpet underneath me. Jimmy hovered over me. He apologized over and over again while kissing me. I could feel his wet tears as they leaked from his eyes and onto my face.

Not once did he check to see if I was alive. Not once did he call the police.

As soon as I knew that I had been hit, my instincts kicked in and I played dead. I lay as motionless as possible while fighting the urge to flinch in response of the burning sensation in my head. I don't even know how long I laid there. It felt like hours, but it could have been minutes.

I wondered if he was going to shoot me again, to ensure that I was dead. I wondered would he shoot himself. I wondered all of these things as I lay there asking God to forgive me for my sins and accept me into the pearly gates of heaven.

I was jolted out of my prayers as I felt Jimmy leave me. I could hear his footsteps. He was running around the living room knocking stuff over. He even stepped over me as he went into the kitchen doing the same thing. I could hear pans crashing onto the floor and appliances breaking as they hit the tile. Then I could hear him in my bedroom. I assumed that he was making it look like a robbery, so I continued to lie lifelessly until finally I could hear the front door open and close.

Surprisingly, I could stand, so I ran to the front door and put all of the security locks on. I wondered why I hadn't done that in the first place, allowing Jimmy to get in easily with his key.

Then, I ran into the living room to find my cell phone. I began to become more frantic and was panicking. I couldn't find it and more and more blood was dripping from my head onto my body, clothes, and even on the furniture and floor as I frantically looked for my cell phone.

Soon, I gave up the search and discreetly looked out of the balcony door out into the parking lot. I could see Jimmy driving erratically out of the complex parking lot in high speeds. Knowing that I was now at least safe from Jimmy for a few minutes, I darted out into the hallway and begin screaming.

“Help me!!! HELP!”

It was eleven o'clock at night, so someone should have been awake. I was banging on apartment doors one after the other, not even waiting on anyone to answer before I started on the next.

“HELP!!! Please, somebody help me!!”

I was dying and I knew it. My mind was spinning. My heart was beating at rates that I had never felt before. My head was pounding like a bass drum so much so that I could hear it in my ears. Blood was all over me.

And just as I could hear heavy footsteps running up the stairs, I passed out.

TWO

TUESDAY, JUNE 18TH, 2013

Simone

I couldn't believe Tammy was blowing my phone up like this! She had called me at least four times. Her and Jimmy were probably getting into it, but I was on a mission at the moment. I told myself to call her back later than morning.

When I heard the trunk close, I knew that this was my last opportunity to get Tre back. I quickly glanced at myself in the rearview mirror to make sure that I looked good. Since it was three in the morning, I couldn't see much of anything though.

"You should be all set," Tre said as he spoke to me through the passenger side window.

As the wind blew, the aroma of his favorite fragrance, Acqua Di Gio, came over me and gave me a familiar feeling.

"Can you get in for a minute? I need to talk to you."

His instant reaction was annoyance, but he quickly tried to mask it as he climbed into my Camaro. Since he was 6'3" with a big build, it was a tight fit.

"What's up? Talk."

This is how Tre had been treating me for a month, after he dumped me because our affair had gotten too serious for him. He actually found a conscience and wanted to be faithful to his wife.

"Tre, I miss you."

Immediately, he moaned and groaned like this was the last conversation he wanted to have.

"I can't miss you?" I was fighting back tears already. I had given two years to this man. I loved his dirty drawers and he knew it. "I don't care about your wife. I was willing to share you, and I still am, if that means I can have you in my life."

"Simone, you deserve your own man."

"But I want you, baby," I told him as I lay my hand on his thigh. "Don't you miss me?"

"I gotta do right by my wife. What we had was good, but it was wrong. It was starting to be about more than sex. You have caught feelings. That ain't cool. The only woman that should have feelings for me is my wife. I told you that in the beginning. This was only supposed to be about sex."

“I know...”

“Apparently, you don’t! You’re calling me at all times of night. You’re expecting shit out of me that ain’t my place. Look at where we are. It’s three in the morning and I’m changing your tire. I’m not your boyfriend, Simone.”

No matter what he was saying, he was still there. Though he felt like me and him were only about sex, he came to my aid. When I was slicing my tire, I knew that he would.

I did what I had to do to see him face-to-face. For weeks, he’d been ignoring my calls, even sending me straight to voicemail. Whenever I did get him on the phone, there was no convincing him to come back to me.

So, I did what I had to do. I waited until three in the morning, drove to where I knew was only a few blocks away from his house, and sliced my tire so that it would go flat. Knowing that I could change a tire on my own, I figured if my distress call didn’t get Tre’s attention, I would just throw the spare on myself and think of something else. Tre never let me know where he lived, but I had followed him home a few times. I figured being close to him would better my chances on him coming to help me.

After text messaging him and asking that he please come change my tire, he replied that he was on his way. That right there let me know that something in him still cared, and I was determined to bring it out of him that night.

Just thinking about the way Tre had been treating me for the past month brought tears to my eyes. In my heart, I knew that this couldn’t go on forever. When I met Tre at a club named Swag two years ago, he told me that he was married, but I wanted him anyway. I was use to being the side bitch. I didn’t care that he was married. I pursed him anyway. His extreme height, wide build, chocolate skin, and crazy swagger made him irresistible. I bought him drink after drink as we conversed about any and everything; sports, politics, music. We stepped, danced, and had a ball. I knew that night that he wanted me. A few hours after the club closed, that was

confirmed as we fucked until the sun came up in his Lexus truck.

From that night on, we were inseparable. Whether we were in a committed relationship or not, he was *my* man. Because he fulfilled my needs, I didn't care about his wife. No, he wasn't around for the holidays. No, he didn't take me on dates. No, he didn't financially take care of me. But physically and emotionally I was being fed, and I missed that.

When Tre saw my tears, he immediately got agitated. "Simone, come on now. You gotta stop this shit. I *cannot* fuck with you no more. Do you understand?"

I didn't answer because I didn't want to understand. I wanted him. *Bad.*

When he reached for the door, I immediately grabbed his arm to make him stay. "No, wait."

"Simone, I gotta go."

Despite the fact that I was pulling on his arm, he opened the door and snatched away from me as he got out.

"No, Tre! Wait!" I was hysterical as I jumped out of the car and met him at the curb. As soon as he was in arm's reach, I wrapped my arms around him tightly. He was trying to get me off of him with all of his might. I was holding on to him with all of mine.

It was like we were playing tug of war. He was trying to leave, and I was pulling on him to make him stay. He looked down on me like I was crazy and pathetic.

I was desperate to convince him to stay. I could only think about him leaving and me never seeing him again. I let go of his arm and reached for his dick. I caressed it through the basketball shorts that he was wearing. Though he still tried to push me away while continuing to say that he had to leave, I reached into his pants.

Then I squatted down in front of him.

We were on a random residential block, but I didn't care. I wanted him to stay and I didn't know what else to do to

show him that I was down for whatever.

He actually laughed. “What the fuck is wrong with, man? Stop!”

Tre tried walking away but I held on to his shorts so tight that he literally had to snatch away, making me fall a little bit.

Again, he laughed at me like I was weak and ridiculous. “You are crazy as hell. I’m out.”

He literally did a light jog to his truck as I stood up and followed him. He closed the driver’s side door as I approached it.

Through the window, he told me, “You need some help.”

But I ignored him. I slapped my hands against the window and asked him to stay as he started to the truck. He damn near hit me as he sped off.

Aeysha

“Girl, when he get home, I’m kickin’ his ass!”

Eboni laughed as we stood in the backyard of the building that we stayed in. She was my neighbor. We lived in a two flat, so had become friends during the two years that Omari and I lived there. Eboni had three kids and lived alone, so me and her often sat in patio chairs in the backyard and gossiped while her kids played.

“No, you’re not,” Eboni said with a giggle. “You gone argue with him. He gone deny it. And you still gone be right upstairs in the bed with him in the morning like always.”

I playfully rolled my eyes at her with my arms folded and a serious attitude. It was hot as hell. Damn near ninety-five degrees. We had a bullshit air conditioner in the living room of our two bedroom apartment, so being outside in the shade felt better than that oven of an apartment. On top of that irritation, Omari left his Facebook page open on the computer like a dumbass. So while I’m on the computer this morning looking for jobs, its continuous instant messages from bitch after bitch popping up. So, naturally, I go through his inbox and see all kinds of message threads between him and other women. Some were innocent. Some were flirtatious. Some were downright initiating sex. And others flat out told that they had had sex.

I was pissed!

Omari had a lot of fucking nerve! His broke ass couldn’t afford to be cheating with no gawd damn body. And I wished those bitches knew that! Women thought Omari was so sexy, but I was the one that knew that he was *soooo* broke! These side chicks got to get the Omari that took them out and fucked them, but I was dealing with the nigga who couldn’t pay the rent!

I couldn’t even get mad though. I didn’t have my shit together, so I couldn’t talk. Omari didn’t start stepping out on me until I started stepping out on myself. It all went downhill a

year ago. First, after going in for a checkup, the doctors told me that I had fertility issues. Since I was a kid, my periods came and went whenever the hell they wanted to. After being with Omari for seven years and never getting pregnant, I figured there was a problem. But for the doctors to actually tell me that I couldn't get pregnant, I felt useless. I felt like less of a woman because, since he doesn't have any, Omari wants children so bad. Then I was fired from my coordinator job at the hospital. They were changing all of the positions to union positions. The new position required at least a Bachelor's, and I had never been to college.

I was twenty-five with no education, broke, and couldn't have kids. I felt useless, especially when it came to my relationship. I felt like the only reason Omari was still with me was because of our history. It felt like I was a burden to him, if anything. Therefore, I started eating my emotions and gained a good twenty pounds.

I couldn't even blame Omari for cheating on me.

Tammy

I was looking at Donte like he had lost his mind. He was my best friend, but he couldn't be serious. Even Simone, a friend of mine, was looking at him like he was crazy.

"I'm serious. Just stay here," he said like it was the perfect solution.

Simone, Donte, and I were in the guest bedroom of Donte's condo up North on Montrose. I figured this was the perfect place to hide while the police still looked for Jimmy.

Luckily, I had only suffered a graze wound to the head. You couldn't have told me that! I thought I was about to die! After fainting, I came to with neighbors huddled around me. I thought I was in a dream. Soon the paramedics came and transported me into the ambulance. That's when they examined me and told me that it looked like a flesh wound and that the whole ordeal had sent my blood pressure up so high that I fainted.

The police were at the hospital when I got there. They put out a search warrant for Jimmy. I had them call Donte. It seemed like he got there within minutes.

"Well, Tammy, you do need a place to stay," Simone said. "You can't stay with me or your mom because Jimmy knows where we live."

She was right, but still I was hesitant. Donte noticed my uncertainty. He knew damn well why I was hesitant and so did Simone.

"Look, just think about it. I gotta go to work. Stay here until I get back. Don't get yourself shot while I'm gone."

Simone giggled so uncontrollably. The way she was laughing, you would have thought that this nigga was Katt Williams. It wasn't that funny. Even Donte looked at her like she was crazy as he walked out of the room. That was Simone though, always so damn extra when she was around a man. She always went over and beyond to get a man's attention. She

was thirsty for it. Though she was thirty years old, she acted like a teenager when it came to men.

“Girl, you know I can’t stay here with him!” I was sure to be quiet since I had yet to hear Donte leave the house.

“Why? Because you still have feelings for him?”

I wanted to smack that silly grin off of her face. But hell, she was right. Donte and I had been friends for ten years. I knew all of his secrets and he knew all of mine. It was the coolest thing having a male best friend. Then, about six years ago, we had sex. It was the oddest thing at first. It was four in the morning after hitting the club on a Friday night like we always did. We were slapped! But not too slapped to begin to feel on each other as we slept in my bed. One thing led to another and he was giving me the business until six in the morning.

We casually had sex for awhile. We both could see that we were feeling each other as more than friends. Then, I met Jimmy, who at the time was the older more established man that swept me off of my feet with every date we went on. I told Donte that I was in love with Jimmy and didn’t want to fuck up our friendship with sex and emotions. He agreed, but I could tell that Donte was hurt. Eventually, he and I got back to the best friends we always were. However, as Jimmy changed, I realized that I could have possibly made the wrong decision. Donte, being the friend that he was, was there for me every step of the way while Jimmy put me through hell. But because he was there, my feelings for Donte resurfaced. I use to try to tell Donte that, but he always cut off the conversation, telling me that he would never want to mess up our friendship with sex and emotions. He was using my words against me and I couldn’t blame him.

I respected my friendship with Donte. But deep down inside those feelings surfaced whenever he was around. Therefore, living with him was bound to be trouble!

THREE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19TH, 2013

Omari

“Oh my God,” Aeysha moaned into my ear. “Yes, baby. *Yes.*”

I loved the way she encouraged me.

“Your dick feels so good inside of me, baby.”

I was on top of Aeysha trying to sign my name in that pussy. I was trying to fuck her soul. I knew that I was completing my mission because I could feel her nails digging into my back. I heard her hissing because, even if the length of my dick applied too much pressure, it felt damn good to her.

I whispered into her ear. “I love you.”

I knew that shit was going to drive her crazy.

In response, her breath got even shorter. “I love you too, babe,” she told me with tears in her eyes. “I love you *so much.*”

I tongue kissed her so romantically that I felt her body leaking all over my dick. It felt so warm. I loved the way my baby’s pussy felt.

The problem was that I loved the way other women’s pussies felt too. When I got home from work yesterday, Aeysha was pissed! My stupid ass left my Facebook page open. I managed to talk my way out of it, like always. I swore up and down that she was reading into innocent flirtation. But I knew that Aeysha knew deep down in her heart that I was fucking other women. No matter what she knew though, Aeysha was never going to leave me. Besides our history, Aeysha had hella insecurities. She felt bad that she wasn’t working and couldn’t find a job because she didn’t have a lot of education. She felt like she wasn’t good enough for me because I had so much more than she did. On top of that, not being able to have my baby fucked with Aeysha. I knew that

her biggest problem with other women was that they could have my baby and she couldn't. She had even gone as far as going to a fertility doctor, but those appointments had to stop once she got laid off.

I stepped out on Aeysha every now and then. I even had a few steady dips here and there, one being KiKi; one of the chicks I was chatting with on Facebook that Aeysha saw. But I loved my woman. She stuck by me through thick and thin. There I was; could hardly pay the rent and she never left me. Even though it was niggas out there trying to get at her that had way more than me, she stayed with me when no other woman would. Nobody could replace her. Every time I got in trouble, I told her that, and then I tried to show her with this dick.

I could feel her walls clenching around me, so I knew that she was cumming. I pulled my dick out, threw her legs in the air, and started to kiss her beautiful clit. It was throbbing inside of my mouth while I sucked it and flicked it fast with my tongue at the same time. I was on a mission. My mouth went on a search inside of her pussy to find the doubt she had in me. I went searching for the anger that she was feeling. I found the insecurity that cheating on her made her feel. Then I sucked, kissed and licked every doubt, all the anger, and every insecurity away until it all came out of her in milky satisfaction.

Aeysha was literally squealing at a high pitch. I chuckled with a mouth full of pussy as I figured that Eboni and her kids could probably hear Aeysha.

“Oh *shiiiiiiit!*”

Aeysha was fighting with me, trying to push my head away from my meal, but I wouldn't let her. I slid two fingers inside of her, found her G-Spot, and attacked it until my baby was cumming everywhere.

I kissed her real quick before leaving her out of breath in the bed while I hopped in the shower and got ready for work. Ching finally hit me up and told me that I could meet

him to pick up the dough he was supposed to lend me days ago. It was always hard to catch up with Ching.

Within thirty minutes, I was out the door and on my way to Ching's. He was right down the street on 71st and Aberdeen, so it only took a few turns to get to his crib.

He was wide awake and smoking a blunt when he opened the door. He was fully dressed in jean shorts, white tee, and some hot ass Timbs. Ching was a big dude. He was dark skinned, black as hell, with dreads a lot shorter than mine. He was about three inches shorter than me and chubby as hell. He wasn't fat, but he didn't have one muscle, I swear to God. He always told me that he'd rather be in the streets than in a gym. I guess that's why he always had money and I always had muscle.

"Here you go, Pretty Boy." Before I could sit down, he was handing me a wad of cash— much more than I asked him for.

"What's all this? I only needed a couple hundred."

"You gone work off what you borrowing and earn the rest. I got a job for you..."

I cut him off quick. "Naw, naw, Ching! I already told you..."

"Man, look! You wanna keep bein' this fuckin' pathetic?!"

Me and Ching stood eye to eye in the middle of his living room. His words had cut but I couldn't act like it. "Call it what you want, nigga, but I ain't down for this shit. I told you, man. I..."

Before I could say anything else, he was snatching the money from me. "Fuck it then, man! Damn!" While he fussed with the blunt hanging from the tips of his lips, he counted out what I actually asked him for and forced it into my hand.

If he wasn't family, I wouldn't have taken shit from him. But I knew he meant well, and I knew he knew the same of me.

Simone

“Urgh!”

I was so angry that I damn near threw my cell phone across the office. I was pissed! I just tried to call Tre and his fucking number was disconnected. Tre was a CPD detective. He made over eighty thousand dollars a year. His damn phone wasn't off. He changed his number!

There was a knock on my office door, so I quickly put on a fake professional happy face, since I could tell by the beat of the knock that it was one of the kids.

“Come in.”

I worked at Lexington House, a home for wards of the state. I was an administrator in the business office, but I still had a relationship with a few of the kids. When I got my Master's Degree, I had dreams of continuing my education and becoming a licensed psychologist. Then, my mother passed away two years ago. I lost all interest in furthering my education after that.

My mother was my best friend. We were thick as thieves and closer than close since I was an only child. She spoiled me rotten as a kid and even in my adulthood. I missed her dearly and had yet to deal with her death. I even moved into her home once she passed. It was a beautiful four-bedroom 3,549 square foot home in Hyde Park. I cherished that house because there were so many memories of my childhood and my mother. It was worth nine hundred thousand. When my mother passed, I had multiple offers, which sounded good to me since the hefty mortgage payments were kicking my ass.

But I couldn't bear to get rid of it. It would be like getting rid of my mother.

As I thought of my mother, my mind was taken away from my visitor briefly. When Chance opened the office door

it brought me out of my trance.

“What’s up, Miss Simone?”

“Hey, Chance. What are you doing in here?”

Chance was one of the older kids that had the misfortune of growing up in Lexington House. His mother was a drug addict and he was born with crack in his system. None of his family was prepared to raise him, so he became a ward of the state from birth. He bounced around from one foster family to another, but was never legally adopted.

“Just got off work. I was just coming in to say what’s up.”

Chance had grown quite close to me within the last three years I worked at Lexington House. Most of these kids were bad as hell, but there were some with goals and ambitions that reached outside of Lexington. From first sight I could see that Chance was one of them. Beyond his tatted pale skin, medium length dreads, and baggy clothes, I saw a boy that really wanted to be different than his surroundings. He just didn’t know or see how.

“You ready for the big day?!”

In a few months, Chance would be eighteen and officially emancipated. Lexington House set up transitional housing for wards that turned eighteen. In transitional housing they were allowed to work, go to school, and save money until they turned twenty-one.

Lexington House was not hell, but it wasn’t heaven for these kids either. I could imagine that it was hard to live with hundreds of kids. It probably felt like living in high school.

When I thought that any child would be ready to get the hell out of Lexington House, Chance looked burdened by the idea. “I don’t know, Miss Simone.”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know if I’m ready. It’s hard out there.”

Lexington House was on the Westside of Chicago, so when these kids went to school and work they saw the worst

of what this city had to offer. There was poverty and ghettos everywhere. Luckily, Chance wasn't a thug. He was a good kid who looked forward to having something for himself.

“It is, but you'll be okay.”

“How? I don't have any family. Nobody to help me.”

“We'll help you. I'll help you.”

Chance smiled bashfully. I knew that would make him feel better. Honestly, I knew that Chance was drawn to me because he had a little crush on me.

It was time for me to go to lunch, so Chance followed me out of my office and towards the exit. As we walked, I tried to assure him that becoming an adult was okay and nothing to be scared of. As we said goodbye, I knew that I was feeding him a bunch of lies. I was thirty years old and still didn't have a handle on being an adult. Hell, I couldn't even keep a man.

Speaking of men, the man of all men was in my peripheral as I walked to my car. His name was Omari, but I would have liked to call him Daddy. This man was so gawd damn fine; pretty was more like it. But his tattoos and locs gave him more of a rugged look. I didn't know him personally. He was a driver at UPS, across the street from Lexington House. I learned that much about him last year after a brief encounter in the parking lot, which Lexington shared with UPS. He tried to get my number but I was so wrapped up in Tre's ass that I turned him down. Ever since, when I did see Omari randomly, it was a hi and bye situation. It's like he never even tried to talk to me. I assumed he was offended that I had the nerve to turn down someone as fine as he was.

Aeysha

“I heard you up there calling on God this morning. You were trying to get in touch with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, wasn’t you?”

I covered my face in shame as Eboni cracked up laughing. I didn’t find anything funny though.

As usual for a sunny afternoon, we were in the backyard with her kids. That day we brought the kiddie pool out and let them play in the water. Her kids were only five, three, and two, so they were having a ball. I had spent most of the morning pissed off at Omari and online submitting job applications, so when Eboni asked me to join her outside, I was happy to.

“I told you that you were going to be right in that bed with Omari, didn’t I? You are so weak!”

“Whatever!” I was fighting back a smile. “I am not weak. He thought the dick was going to convince me that he isn’t cheating, but as soon as he was done, I was and am still convinced that he is cheating on me!”

My face was scrunched as my toes played in the grass. Not only was I pissed off, but it felt like the sun was beaming straight into my eyes. I looked at my toes as they wrapped around blades of grass and got even more irritated.

I couldn’t even afford a pedicure. Even worse, my piece of a man couldn’t afford to get me one!

“Things are so fucked up,” I mumbled.

“Have you been looking for a job?”

“Every day and twice on Sunday.”

Eboni’s kids began to throw water on each other and laugh. I got even more irritated. Life would be so much easier if I could have popped out three kids by three different niggas and got on Section 8, like Eboni.

But hell, I couldn't even get pregnant if I wanted to. Couldn't do that right either!

Noticing my solemn mood, Eboni put her arm around me and handed me some of her drink; Coconut Ciroc and lemonade.

“Girl, you are going to be okay,” she told me as I took a sip. “We are going to pray and ask God to change things for you. You have so much ambition and drive. It's only right that good things start to come your way. This is only a storm, and it will go away. You just have to have faith.”

Eboni went to church a lot. She wasn't holy whatsoever, but she knew how to pray. According to her, God paid the bills, put food on her table, and was responsible for everything else in her life.

“Real talk, I can't even blame Omari for talking to other women. Look at me.” As I spoke, I was literally holding back tears. “I can't do anything for myself. I can't find a job. I don't have any education. I can't afford to go to school because I can't afford to pay tuition. I can't get much financial aid since I don't have any kids. But hell, I can't even get pregnant!”

I had to stop myself before I started crying in front of the kids. One or two tears forced themselves down my cheek. I quickly wiped them away and took another sip of Eboni's drink.

“Girl, you finish that. You need it, shit! There is more in the house.”

We started to giggle. I appreciated Eboni so much. I don't know what I would have done in that house all day without her.

Tammy

“Bitch, I’m not through with you! Just wait til’ I find yo’ ass!”

Just hearing Jimmy’s voice on the voicemail made my skin crawl and my insides turn until I felt myself nearly regurgitating onto the polyester bedspread that I was lying under.

I’d been lying in bed for days, attempting to figure out my life. I wondered if my life with Jimmy had been a front. I felt stupid for wasting the last five years with such a lunatic. I constantly imagined not being alive had the bullet been two centimeters to the left.

“Urrgh!” In anger, I threw my iPhone unto the bed.

I knew, since many of his family and friends were calling my mother to check on me, that Jimmy would eventually find out that I was alive. I thought that he would be happy that he didn’t actually kill me. Yet, from the sound of his voice on the message he just left, hearing that I was alive had only fueled Jimmy’s anger.

I remembered literally tasting the saltiness of his tears as he lay his face next to mine when he thought that I was dead. That was not the same man that shot me. Nor was it the same man that I was just listening to threaten my life all over again.

He was like a possessed Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

“I just wanted to be happy.” I was weeping as I talked to myself and looked at my bandaged head in the mirror in Donte’s guest bedroom.

I had left Jimmy to be happy. I left him to get rid of the unnecessary stresses in my life. But it seemed like leaving him had only made my life worse. It had turned my little problems into mountains of stress and fear.

“You okay?”

Donte startled me. I didn't know how long he had been in the doorway. When our eyes met, I let out all of the other tears that had been threatening to come down my face. Immediately, he entered the room, came towards me, and put his arms around me. I lay in his loving arms wondering why the man that I loved for five years couldn't love me enough that he protected me rather than hurt me.

"I'm okay." As I told Donte that, I was also attempting to convince myself of it.

"You sure?"

"Really. I'm okay."

Though protected, I felt so stupid being there with Donte. I felt like every time I cried or needed him, it was further validation that I had made the worst mistake of my life by choosing Jimmy over him.

In order to keep my thoughts from consuming me, I left Donte's arms and focused on something else. "I need to clean this wound."

Walking back towards the mirror, I began to remove the bandages, but quickly Donte was behind me with his hand on top of mine.

"I'll do it for you."

Guiding me by the hand, he took me over to a chair where he sat. I sat on the floor in front of him between his legs. Tears silently fell from my tired eyes as this man began to clean my wound. I fought with my heart, telling it not to go out to Donte. I told my emotions to check themselves because surely I had bigger and more important things to worry about than falling for another man.

FOUR

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013

Omari

“Fuck!”

I couldn't believe this shit. It was Friday. I finally got paid. I was ready to go, but I had a fucking flat. The slash in the tire was so big that taking it to the gas station to put air in it wasn't an option. Of course, I thought one of my dips was behind all this, but it was no telling. I had been laying pretty low – staying at home and spending time with my girl – ever since Aeysha got into my Facebook page.

What was worse was that I had a spare, but no jack.

I got out of the car. I wasn't about to run out my gas by running the AC, because I didn't know how long AAA would take. So I took my UPS shirt off and sat on the trunk of my car in my wife beater.

Before calling AAA, I called Ching. It had been about a week and a half since he loaned me that bread. I was supposed to be on my way to his crib to give it back.

“What up, Pretty Boy?”

“Ching, I'm gone be a little late. 'Bout an hour.”

“Meet me on the block then.”

“Cool.”

As I hung up and dialed AAA, I heard a familiar voice come out of nowhere. “You need some help?”

I looked to my right and saw Simone coming my way. Looking at her made me damn near not as frustrated anymore. She was a cute girl and dressed up nice. She was always wearing a fitted skirt suit and stilettos – sexy ass business attire type shit. She didn't have much ass, but it was enough back there. She was fit too; with a flat stomach and

nice sized titties. She always kept her hair done. It was a long weave colored in this reddish color that looked good against her brown skin.

What made my dick hard by just looking at her was the readiness in her face. No matter the time or day— rain, sleet, or snow— Simone always looked *ready*. She looked eager when it came to a man. The way she talked told me that if I played my cards right, I could get that pussy. If she wasn't still with her boyfriend, that is.

“Yea, I do. You wouldn't happen to have a jack, would you?”

“Sure do,” she told me with a flirtatious smile. “I'll go get my car for you, sweetie. Be right back.”

I swear she was switching hard just because I was watching. I had half a mind to try to holla at her again, but my state of mine and the state of my pockets were too fucked up to even date a chick like her.

As she pulled up next to me in a 2013 Camaro, that was confirmed. She was riding around in a forty-five thousand dollar car, probably made about seventy thousand dollars a year, and I drove a UPS truck during the day and an Impala at night that wasn't worth two g's.

Honestly, I tried to step to her a while back, but, as I peeped her style, I knew that I couldn't pull a chick like her. She was way out of my league.

It was hot as all hell outside. Too damn hot to be on some steaming ass cement changing a tire, so I hurried up and got the jack out of Simone's trunk.

With a cute giggle, Simone told me, “I would ask how you're doing, but I can see that much.”

“Right,” I replied with a minor grunt while I worked to get the tire off. “It's just one of them days.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that Simone had sat in her driver's seat with her legs out of the car and facing me. Her legs were so far open that I damn near saw her

cookie. But it was too damn hot to even figure out whether that was on purpose or not.

Then my phone rung and the conversation that followed irritated me more than the damn tire and this heat.

“Hey, Pretty Boy.” It was my mother.

“Hey, Ma. I’m a little busy. Can I call you back?”

“Make sure you call me right back. I need some help with the rent and the landlord is down my throat.”

Fuck, I thought to myself.

“Okay, Mama. I’ll call you right back.”

I tried to hide my frustration because I felt Simone looking at me. I hadn’t changed a tire so fast in my life. I was feeling like less of a man already, and to have Simone’s cute established ass sitting there watching me change a tire was putting me under more pressure.

“You and your mom pretty close?”

“Too close, if you ask me,” I answered as I screwed on the lug nuts.

“Don’t talk like that.” Suddenly, she sounded so sad. So, I looked up at her. When we locked eyes, I felt so much chemistry. “My mother died a few years back, so don’t take your time with your mom for granted.”

I quickly changed the subject. I wasn’t in the mood to be brought down anymore than I already was. While I lowered the car to the ground and removed the jack, I asked questions that our normal hi and bye situations hadn’t allowed me to. I found out that she was a little older than me, thirty years old, which let me know why she always had such an eager look. Older women knew what they wanted and didn’t play no games with it. When she told me that she didn’t have any kids, I was sold.

I was tired of fucking with women with baggage. They usually were looking for a man to play daddy, and I wasn’t down for that, unless it was with my own seed.

“So, since you helped me out today, you gotta let me take you to dinner as a thank you. That is, unless your boyfriend is going to get mad.”

As I spoke to her, I made sure to walk real close up on her car, so close that I forced her legs to open wider because I was standing between them. When she didn't shy away, I knew she was already goin'.

“There is no boyfriend to worry about anymore.” She had so much confidence that it made my dick hard. The way she licked her lips made me imagine what she could do with them lips while licking something else.

Simone gave me her number. While I was storing it in, Aeysha called me. I promised Simone that she would hear from me over the weekend, hopped in my car, and headed towards Ching's block on Laramie and Jackson while answering Aeysha's call.

“What's up, bae?”

“Omari, a disconnect bill came in the mail earlier this week. You didn't see it?”

Instantly, I got a fucking headache. The women I loved the most in my life, my mother and Aeysha, only called me about shit like this. It was really starting to irritate the fuck outta me.

“*You* didn't see it, Aeysha? I ain't the one home all day. I don't check the mail, so how would I see it?”

“Don't get mad at me because...”

Right away, I cut off whatever nagging shit she was about to say. “What's the disconnect date, Aeysha?”

But she still had a fucking attitude. “Tuesday!”

“How much?”

“Four hundred.”

Fuck!

“Ah ight. Let me call you back.”

She hung up without even saying goodbye. Sometimes I wondered if Aeysha really had the nerve to be mad at me because of the state we were in, or if she was more so mad at herself for not being able to help out.

It only took a few minutes for me to get to Ching's block on Laramie and Jackson. Since it was Friday, the block was crackin'! Ching sold mostly coke, crack, ex pills, and mollies. So the block was always an assembly line of all kinds of people; rich, poor, dope fiends, and college students.

The usual block boys were posted in front of Ching's trap house. As soon as they saw me, they ran up to my ride.

“Yooooo’! What up, Pretty Boy?!”

They young asses thought that shit was funny. Because of Ching, they called me the same thing, so I didn't smack the shit out of Capone for doing it.

“What I tell you ‘bout that, man?” He just laughed me off, so I told him, “Tell Ching I'm out here.”

Ching sent me a text message on my way over there saying that he needed me to run him somewhere real quick. It was cool with me because after Aeysha pissed me off that quick, I wasn't trying to go to the crib no way.

She was still trying to piss me off. She was text messaging me all kinds of bullshit about how I shouldn't cop an attitude with her because I couldn't afford to pay the bills. I was so pissed that, if I knew I could have gotten another one, I would have thrown my fucking phone out the window.

“Fuck wrong with you, man?”

Ching had scared the shit out of me. I didn't even notice him getting in the car.

I quickly told him nothing, asked him where we was headed and pulled off. All I could think about was how I was about to give this man money that I probably was gone have to ask to borrow again. My mama needed help and I needed electricity.

This shit was so fucked, and I couldn't believe that I was in this type of situation at my age.

“Man, so what kinda job you got lined up for me?”

Ching looked surprised to hear me ask that, but he was definitely pleasantly surprised.

“Something that’s gone make you real comfortable, my dude. You down?”

My heart was heavy. This drug life wasn’t for me. I played with pussy, not drugs. But I had to do what I had to do. “Yea, man. I’m down. Let’s do this.”

Tammy

“Well, that’s done.”

I sighed heavily as I ended the call with Sprint and rested my head back on the couch. Simone sat beside me as she handed me one of her special drinks, Panty Droppa. She had whipped up a batch of the rum concoction and come over to Donte’s to keep me company. But since she drank most of it, I was really ready for her to go home. I needed someone to talk to, not a drunk chick.

I had been cooped up in Donte’s house for a week and a half. Though there was no way that Jimmy could have known that I was there, I was too scared to risk going outside.

Jimmy didn’t know where I was, and, unfortunately, the police didn’t know where he was either. That was horrifying me. If the police couldn’t find him, I damn sure wouldn’t be able to see him coming if he ever found me.

And I knew he wanted to find me since he constantly called my phone from anonymous numbers leaving me threatening voicemails. The police said that they were tracing the calls, but that would take weeks. So, I just changed my number.

“I cannot believe this shit is happening to me.”

Simone looked at me with sympathy as she held my hand dramatically. “You are going to be all right, girl. They are going to catch him.”

“Hopefully it’s before he catches me! He wants to kill me, girl! They are trying to charge him with attempted murder and I am the only witness.”

Tears started to come to my eyes, so I quickly changed the subject. I was tired of crying. I had been crying so much that my fucking eyes were hurting. “Let’s talk about something else. What’s up with you? How is Tre?”

Simone immediately frowned and folded her arms. I knew that there was drama.

No matter how financially stable Simone was— no matter her education, big house, and nice car— she didn't know what the fuck she was doing when it came to men. She lost at that game every time.

Maybe because she was fucking with a married man. I don't know why she even allowed herself to fall for Tre.

“We broke up.”

“Broke up? Were you ever actually in a relationship?”

I never once hid my distaste for her and Tre's relationship. I'd be damned if a bitch like Simone was up under my man prowling for his attention. I didn't like that she was that type of woman, which is why I kept my distance. She considered us friends, but I considered us barely friends. She had some caring qualities about her, but some of the choices she made with men made me question her morals as a whole.

What you'll do to the next bitch, you will definitely do to me under the right circumstances.

“Tre was my man just as much as anybody else's.”

When she spoke like that, it made my skin crawl. It sounded desperate and stupid. “How is that, Simone?”

“We were always together.”

“Yea, *fucking*.”

Instantly, I wanted to take that back because I saw tears in her eyes as she spat, “You don't know how it is, Tammy!”

“How what is?”

Simone covered her face with her hands, but I could hear her sobs.

This drunk bitch, I thought.

I was the one that almost got shot in the head by my boyfriend. What the hell was she crying about?

It was the liquor and I knew it. I didn't feel like sitting here listening to one of her drunken rants about being broken

hearted over this married man.

“You don’t know how it is to never have a man want you– to have a man always choose another bitch over you! Look at me! I am thirty years old! I am comfortable! I have a beautiful home! I’m not ugly! Yet, every man, *every man*, that I have been with has always been somebody else’s man. Do you know how it feels to only be good enough to be the side bitch?!”

As soon as Simone realized what her drunk ass was saying, she looked embarrassed. Her face revealed the fact that she had accidentally told her dirty little secret. I was floored. I knew that Tre was married, but I assumed that that was a special case for Simone. I would have never thought that she always fucked with another woman’s man.

“Don’t be so hard on yourself, girl. What about Dave and Steve?” I thought bringing them up wouldn’t make her feel so bad. They were the loves of her life in college.

“Dave was in a relationship with a bitch at Mississippi State! Steve had a woman on campus. The bitch was a cheerleader.” As Simone spoke, she looked so disgusted. It was clear that her disgust wasn’t aimed at herself. Her repulsion and hatred was with the *real* girlfriends of these men.

Again, I was floored. These were men that she had mentioned before as we became closer and closer. Never once did she mention that she was the side bitch.

I watched her tears in repulsion and wasn’t trying to hide it. I knew that Simone was willing to do anything for a piece of dick, but she just confirmed just how far she would go.

I had never seen a woman so obsessed with having a man, especially with having one that didn’t belong to her.

Luckily, Simone soon took her drunk ass home. I think what she said had settled in and embarrassment sent her home.

So, I was left to wallow in self pity. I lay across the bed in Donte's guest bedroom holding a pillow tight while a rerun of R&B Divas played. I looked at Syleena Johnson and Nicci Gilbert have it out while the TV was on mute.

I wished for problems as simple as theirs. I had gone from minute issues to my boyfriend trying to kill me. Just a few weeks ago, I thought my life was over because I couldn't get rid of a nigga who was bringing me down. Now, I wished that I had never left him, because my life was much worse now than it was with him.

Then, just as the reluctance of my choices came into my mind, Donte appeared in the doorway wearing basketball shorts and a bare chest. Soon my reluctance turned into assurance.

Leaving Jimmy was definitely the right thing. However, whether living here while hiding from him was a good idea had yet to be determined.

“Simone finally took her drunk ass out of here?”

I giggled slightly. “Yes. *Finally.*”

“You okay?”

I didn't even bother masking my pain. I felt captive – hiding from a man that I once would have never walked away from. Seeing my sadness, Donte climbed into bed with me. Effortlessly, he spooned his body with mine and wrapped his arms around me. We had been sleeping like that for the last week and a half. It was his way of protecting me. Only he didn't know that he was making living there even worse for me.

FIVE

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH, 2013

Omari

What Ching wanted me to do was fairly simple. Instead of running the risk of getting caught in the streets or in the air with weight, he and his connect wanted to arrange for the weight to come through UPS shipments.

The connect in Texas would ship weight stuffed into compartments of appliances through UPS. Then he had the appliances shipped to an address that was on my route. I was sure to get the package and deliver it. Ching even shipped weight to a few niggas he supplied to across the city.

Like I said, fairly simple. It was keeping Ching and any of his runners off the streets and his work under the radar. No one would suspect a UPS truck. It was a hell of a risk for me. If ever caught, I would lose my job and more. But I was making five hundred per kilo that I delivered, so it was way too profitable to turn away from.

The summer was always poppin'. More drugs exchanged hands during "Summertime Chi" than any time of the year. Ching's business was booming. He had three trap houses on three different blocks on the Westside, Laramie/Jackson, Racine/Halsted, and Damen/Halsted. So on average, I made about two to five grand a week.

I wasn't balling but I was able to dig myself out of the financial hole that I was in. I didn't splurge because I was saving enough bread to buy a crib and pay off my mom's crib.

I finally felt like things were coming together for me. I had even put more focus on Aeysha and less on my dips. All except one— Simone. The chick had my head, for real. She was different than any of my other dips. She was older, so more mature, established, and secure. She knew what she wanted and she didn't play games trying to give it to me. I had been able to take her out a few times, to nice places that I could

have never afforded to before. I wasn't balling on Ruth's Chris, but she was pretty impressed with J Alexanders.

I hadn't gotten the panties yet, but that was all coming in due time. Her eyes told me that she wanted me. She was being a lady, but I knew that all it took was for me to act like I wanted it for her to open them legs for me.

As I rode my truck down Damen listening to the *Yeezus* album, I planned on that night being the night. I was making a drop for Ching to the trap on Damen. Then I was heading back to the factory to change, shower, and pick up Simone for dinner and drinks.

I had been doing this shit for three weeks, so the routine was fairly simple for me and the block boys. I approached the apartment building where the trap house was carrying a washer machine on a dolly. I was delivering about five kilos of coke and ecstasy powder that the block boys would make into pills. Since I was UPS, I had a key to get into the security gates. I entered the building like normal. Only this time, when I entered the hallway, I was ambushed.

Before I knew it, there were two guns to my head and a young nigga in front of me pointing a nine millimeter right between my eyes.

“Don't move, nigga.”

My natural reaction was to get a good look at these motherfuckas to make sure that they weren't Ching's block boys. I knew I had never seen the one in front of me before, but as soon as I acted like I was about to turn my head, I felt the gun whip across my face.

I was bigger than these lil' niggas, so he couldn't pistol whip me to the point that I fell. But, since they were little niggas, lil niggas with no souls and no appreciation for a life, I stood still and listened to 'em.

“Now this what we gone do,” the one in front of me ordered. “Me and my man gone take this work from you. Then my other man gone escort you back outside to your truck. Just leave with no problem and I won't pop yo' ass. Understood?”

I slowly nodded my head as I took surveillance of this young motherfucka. Besides a black hoodie and bandana covering his face and head, and despite me spotting dreads peeking out of the hoodie, he wore black jogging pants and LeBron XPS joints. These gym shoes were loud colors of green and damn near three hundred dollars. Not too many young niggas could afford them shoes. As he and one of his dudes carried the washer out of the back door of the apartment building, I knew that it wouldn't be hard for Ching to find out who these little niggas was by them shoes alone.

Luckily, they kept their word and didn't pop me. As the last dude walked me out of the building with a gun in my back in broad daylight, I was pretty relieved that he just let me walk to my truck once we got to the security gate.

"Guilt Trip" was pumping through the speakers as I hopped into the truck. I could see the back of dude's Abercrombie hoodie as he ran back into the building. Admittedly, I breathed a sigh of relief, but I wasn't trippin' about the work that I'd lost.

I was only the middle man. This was Ching's work. And it was apparent that somebody in his camp was leaking information on the deliveries. So, I knew he'd take care of it.

Aeysha

Eboni invited me to a Thursday night prayer service at her church, Whole Truth Church of God in Christ.

Things were at there worst for me. After weeks of job searching, I hadn't gotten one call back. Not one. That was heartbreaking because I was putting everything into finding a job. I felt so lost and scared that this was going to be my situation for the rest of my life.

Things seemed to be getting worse for me as they were only getting better for Omari. He had been so happy for the past few weeks and things were looking good for him financially. He was working lots of overtime and paying off bills that were in the red. I was happy for him, but I was becoming even more scared for myself. There was more and more distance in our relationship. He was gone all of the time and I knew that he was hiding things from me.

So, I prayed. I was on my knees in a pew next to Eboni. I could hear her praying and crying, asking God for several things for herself and her children. As she continued to pray, her cries became more intense, so I held her hand tight as I prayed for things of my own.

They say that storms of life don't have to destroy you, but my storms were wiping me out. I wasn't the secure woman that I use to be. I was run down. I felt useless. I felt ugly. I felt insecure. I asked God to turn all of that around and give me back what my tribulations had taken from me. I asked him to give me back my relationship. I asked for my happiness back. I asked for job security and a means to educate myself.

These were little things to pray for. I could hear the preacher at the pulpit demanding the healing of disease for the sick and shut in and to take away the pain of those dealing with bereavement. I felt insensitive for begging God to give me what seemed insignificant compared to Eboni kneeling next to me begging God to allow her to take care of her three children in better ways. I felt even more useless because I was

asking God for things that I should have easily been able to give myself.

As I spoke to God, I could feel my cell phone vibrating as it lay on the pew in front of me. I had to check it because I was waiting to hear back from Omari about meeting up for dinner in the next hour. I quickly checked it and it was a text message: Doin' some overtime. Sorry, gotta cancel. See you at home later .

The pit of my stomach began to turn. My women's intuition was on fifty. But instead of getting angry, I continued to pray; hoping that God would show me a sign of where to go and what to do.

Simone

“Well, if you pregnant, it ain’t mine! So why the fuck you tellin’ me?!”

The way Tre talked to me made me feel like shit. I couldn’t believe that this was the man that I had loved for the last two years. It had been a month since he broke up with me. It had been a month of him ignoring my calls and not answering any of my emails, since I had to resort to that after he changed his number. No matter how much time it had been, I missed him like crazy- so crazy that I emailed him telling him that I was pregnant.

I wasn’t pregnant, but if that got his attention good enough for him to call me, then so be it. If it got him to actually meet up with me, I would figure out the rest later.

“Tre, I swear! I’m two months, baby. I went to the doctor yesterday.”

“Bitch, you crazy as hell!”

I filled the phone with tears. The pregnancy was phony but the tears were real. I had given this man two years. I had given him my everything and loved him better than his wife ever could. No matter how much he felt about his wife, I couldn’t believe that he didn’t love or even care about me enough to even believe me.

“You think I’m crazy all you want to, but what the fuck yo’ wife gone say when she find out?!”

I think I was crying so hard because I wanted him to believe me that bad. All I needed was some physical time with him so that he could remember how good we were together.

When he got silent, I knew that I had at least scared him enough that he was willing to hear me out.

“Stop treating me like this, Tre. I love you, baby. You know that I would do anything for you.”

“Simone, it’s over.” This time, he wasn’t yelling. It was as if he was begging me to get it through my head.

“It being over ain’t got shit to do with this baby! And if you don’t stop treating me like this, I am telling your wife!”

“Bye, bitch!”

When the call ended, I couldn’t believe it. Tre had called me from an anonymous number, so I couldn’t call him back.

I couldn’t believe that I had gotten so desperate, but I was willing to do whatever I had to do to get what I wanted. I had always been like that.

As I held my phone in my hand, it began to ring. It was Omari, so I quickly stopped my tears so that I could answer his call.

“Hello?”

“Hey, baby. Be there in ten minutes.”

“Okay.”

I was set to go out on a date with Omari. We had been seeing each other for a few weeks, but it didn’t get my mind off of Tre. I loved Tre when Omari barely seemed interested in me. Yes, he took me to nice places and called me often, but he ignored all of my advances. I needed a man, someone to rock me to sleep and make me forget about being lonely.

Omari, for whatever reason, was too timid to do that. When we first hung out, I could tell that he was intimidated by my nice job, nice car, and big home. But as the weeks went by, I noticed that he was dabbling into some extracurricular activities that was putting some coins in his pockets. Therefore, he was able to treat me on the level that I was accustomed to. I knew exactly what he was dabbling in because he talked freely around me. It turned me on to be with a nigga in the dope game. That was a first for me.

But like I said, he had yet to fuck with me like I wanted him to, so as we said goodbye I finished getting ready with little urgency. Prior to Tre’s phone call, I had showered

and changed into a mint green mermaid maxi dress. Paired with some stiletto sandals, it was casual yet classy enough for wherever he had in mind to take me that night.

Just as Omari rang the bell, I was finishing up the retouch of my makeup and getting rid of the smudges that the tears left. My mind was still on Tre and it was driving me crazy. I checked my cell for a missed call or email one more time as I walked towards the front door. Luckily, I had an email, so I stopped dead in my tracks in the hallway. Quickly, I opened the Google Mail app. It was indeed Tre, but once I saw that he started the email with “Hoe”, I closed the email and decided to read it later.

When I opened the door for Omari, he looked like he was having just as much of a fucked up night as I was.

“Hey you.” No matter how tired he looked, he greeted me with a smile. It actually looked like laying eyes on me had brightened his day. He looked over the curves that my maxi dress enhanced and licked his lips. “You look great.”

“Thank you. You look great, but tired. Long day?”

Omari stepped into the foyer as I went to grab my purse.

“Yea, something like that. I had a crazy day.”

“Well, we don’t have to go anywhere if you’re too tired.”

Purse in hand, I walked towards him. As soon as he could reach them, he grabbed my hands and pulled me towards him. My pussy leaked as my body came in contact with his. This man had undeniable presence. His smell alone wrapped around me and suffocated me.

“I want to feed you,” he told me as he kissed my forehead.

“You can feed me in other ways.” I was literally purring into his ear. I was being forward, but I didn’t care. Tre had left me feeling like less of a woman. I needed to be convinced otherwise. Omari was the perfect man for the job.

Suddenly, I could feel the familiar heat that was always between Omari and I when we were together. There was sexual chemistry between us that was so magnetic that it felt like my body was being drawn to him. Yet, he ignored that chemistry so effortlessly that it made me question my femininity. He would only kiss me, as he did at that moment. Only tonight he was aggressive with his touch; grabbing me by the back of my head, sucking each of my lips, and biting them gently.

“Let’s stay in.” I was practically begging. I was so ready to give this man all of me. I wanted him to take me so badly.

He continued grabbing my hair with his huge hands as he spoke to me. “You sure?”

We were breathing hard and staring into each other’s eyes. He knew that I wanted to give him this pussy. The way he procrastinated taking it made me want to give it to him even more.

My answer was taking off his shirt. The sight of his bare upper body made me thank God silently. This man was built like a Greek God. Flattening his tire that day was well worth it. It was the only way that I could get him to stand still long enough to hold a conversation with me. On lunch, I flattened his tire with a letter opener from my office. Then, as the day ended, I stood in the window waiting for him to come to his car. When he did, I hurried down the stairs to offer my help.

Yet, as we kissed, touched, and groped one another as we walked to my couch, I knew it was worth pulling that crazy ass move and mentally gave myself a pat on the back for pulling this sexy motherfucker. I was always the type of woman to do what I had to do to get my way, and tonight was no exception. I was tired of Omari’s sexy ass denying my femininity. I knew he wanted this pussy, and he was playing around with taking it.

I pushed him down on the couch. Then I immediately dropped to my knees in front of him. I tore at his jeans, damn

near ripping them as I excitedly unbuckled his belt and unzipped his pants. Omari looked at me pleasingly. He was happy that I was eager to please him.

When his thick long inches of dark skinned goodness charged out of his pants in a full erection, I had to thank God again.

My mouth gravitated to his dick. Finally, I was able to wrap my lips around the warmth of his chocolate love. As soon as it was in my mouth, my mouth began to water with excitement. I took Omari's hand and put on my head, allowing him to treat me like a slut and fuck my face.

"Oh shit," slid out of his mouth in reaction to the oral love that I was making to his dick. I let the saliva run from my mouth and slide over him, making the oral love wet and tight. I made sure that my mouth felt like the tight warm hole of a wet pussy.

Jagging his dick with both hands, I forced his legs open with my shoulders and began to lick and suck his balls. I looked at him. His expression confirmed that he was falling into lust as I watched his eyes roll into the back of his head while it fell back onto the couch.

I couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to feel this man's dick inside of me so bad. Moreover, I wanted him to feel me.

Quickly, I lifted my dress and straddled him. His dick felt so warm against my wet pussy.

"Wait," Omari told me as I tried to kiss him. "Let me get a condom."

"You don't need that, baby."

He looked shocked and confused. To convince him to let me feel him, I slid on top of his dick. I wrapped his arms around my waist and put his hands on my bare ass. He wanted to argue with me. He fought the feeling of my raw love, but I stood on my tip toes and rode him aggressively.

"Aw shit."

I'd won. I reached behind me and played with his ball, still wet from my saliva, and again, Omari's eyes were rolling in the back of his head as I rode his dick.

"This dick is so good," I told him in sexual moans as I felt my orgasm cumming. "You like this pussy, Daddy?"

Quickly, he spat, "Hell yea. Cum on this dick." Then he smacked me on my ass.

I loved the way he fucked me back. I loved the way his raw dick felt inside of my wet box. It was such a tight fit that my insides literally cuffed themselves around every inch of him.

"I'm cumming, baby." I was damn near in tears. Finally, I had this man and it was so well worth the wait.

"I'm cumming wit' you."

Omari grabbed me around my waist. As I bounced on his dick and allowed my orgasm to come down, he fucked me and allowed his to do the same. The friction of his dick felt so good that I trembled. Yet, when I knew that he was now cumming, I hopped up, dropped to my knees, put his dick in my mouth, and sucked the cum out of him.

"Arrrrrgh!" Omari fought the sensation as he came down my throat. "Shit! Gawd damn!"

I giggled, listening to him curse in delight and watching his toes throw up gang signs through his socks. I sucked out every last drop. I even licked my lips until it was all gone.

Omari looked at me like I was crazy as I got up from my knees and sat beside him. He was paralyzed from the orgasm and couldn't move.

"Damn, girl," was all he could say through short breaths.

While rubbing his head, I asked, "Was it good to you, baby?"

"Hell yea."

I sat closely by him, now rubbing his dick, hoping that it would get hard again but just willing to massage it, making sure that Omari felt good. Again, his head went back and he fell into the massage. He seemed to take advantage of how I catered to his dick.

“You ready for round two?”

I was on my knees before Omari could answer. His dick was in my mouth again before he could tell me yes or no.

SIX

FRIDAY, JULY 19TH, 2013

Aeysha

“Where you been all night, Omari?!”

I couldn't believe this smug son of a bitch had the nerve to walk his ass in the house at four o'clock in the morning!

“I am *so* sick of this shit!”

I was standing right at the door yelling at the top of my lungs. I'd met him there because I was wide awake when I heard his keys in the door. I had been lying awake all night tossing, turning, and wondering whose pussy he was up in.

Bet it was some ratchet bitch.

Like a typical nigga, Omari ignored me. He actually walked around me as I stood in the middle of the floor wearing my bra, panties, and a head scarf. I remembered a time that he couldn't ignore me when I had clothes on, much less with my clothes off, so that pissed me off even more and made me sick to my stomach.

“Why don't we just break up?”

Now *that* got his attention.

Stopping in his tracks and turning to face me, he said, “Stop overreacting.”

“This is not over reaction, Omari! You been in and out this motherfucka all day and at all times of night. I'm already up to here with the bitches! Now here you go again!”

Tears were falling by now. They weren't for him. I was disappointed because after all the praying I had done the night before, asking God for a sign, I was terribly disappointed that this was my sign.

“This ain't got nothing to do with bitches!”

“How come it don’t?!”

Frustrated, Omari made an about-face and continued walking towards the bedroom.

I was on his heels, allowing my frustrations to come out in tears that were begging for my man to love me like he use to again, and for me to finally become somebody worth loving.

“I know you’re fucking somebody, Omari. You’re doing the same things you use to do; coming in late, not paying me any attention, canceling plans. She must be a bad bitch too ‘cause, unlike the other times, you ain’t even fucking me.”

He smacked his lips as he took off his shirt. “Man, what the fuck are you talking about?”

There we were; two young people, naked and supposedly in love. But instead of making passionate love, we were fighting like cats and dogs.

With a cynical giggle and shake of my head, I spat, “See? You so far up in this bitch that you don’t even realize that you haven’t fucked your woman in a month.”

He wanted to argue with me, but he couldn’t. He thought about what I said and realized that I was right.

Now that I had his attention, he needed to know that I was at my wits end. “Omari, I can’t do this no more. I love you to death. I have been with you for all of my life, seems like. But I am already in a bad state of mind. I don’t have a job. I can’t get into school.” Even though I had gone through this time and time again, just mentioning the pathetic state of my being made me cry even harder. “I can’t take you treating me like this on top of all of that!”

I was crying hysterically at this point. I couldn’t understand why life was this way; why I couldn’t get ahead and why I couldn’t be happy. I felt like, as he was obviously making moves to improve, I was bringing Omari down.

As I sat on the bed crying into the palm of my hands, I felt him sit beside me and put his arm around me.

“I’ve been working for Ching.”

Instantly, my crying ceased.

“I didn’t want to tell you because I didn’t want to piss you off. But for the past month or so, I been making runs for Ching. I was tired of hurtin’. I was tired of not being able to take care of you like you deserve to be. So, I took him up on his offer.”

I didn’t know what to say. Omari was never a street nigga. The fact that he had gone to such lengths to take care of home made me feel stupid as hell for jumping down his throat. The fact that he had to go to such lengths partly because I couldn’t help take care of home made me feel even more worthless. But the fact that he was willing to take these risks for us made me love him that much more.

Tammy

“What do you mean there is nothing else you can do?!”

Donte slightly grabbed my arm as I was seemingly about to jump over the officer’s desk.

“Ma’am, there is nothing else that we can do. You have a restraining order in effect...”

“A restraining order is a piece of paper! A piece of paper isn’t going to help me when he is trying to kill me!”

I had attempted to go back to work that day. I spent all day in my classroom nervous as hell. As I taught Chemistry to the sophomores and juniors, visions of Jimmy finding me there kept dancing in my head. I could imagine him even causing yet another school shooting with his crazy ass. Somehow, some way, he had gotten my cell phone number *again*. He was constantly calling me, constantly leaving messages on my phone saying how he was going to kill me when he found me.

Then, just when I felt as if I had successfully completed my first day back at work, I found a threatening note on my car from him; telling me how good I looked in the suit that I wore to work. It also said that he would have loved to rip the pencil skirt off of my hips and rape me violently.

“He is crazy!” I was practically pleading with the officer. “So, what am I suppose to do? Call the police when he is a hundred feet away from me?! By the time you all get there, I WILL ALREADY BE DEAD!”

By now, I was yelling in desperation and had gotten the attention of everyone in the precinct.

“Ma’am, you need to calm down,” Officer Brown enforced. He even stood to make himself clearer.

“Tammy, let’s go,” Donte insisted as he stood.

I was so frustrated that I didn’t even force the issue. It was obvious that the police could do nothing for me until,

God forbid, Jimmy had already successfully done something to me.

I walked out without saying another word. My tears were speaking for me. I could feel Donte right behind me, as he had always been during the last month of this tragic ordeal, guiding me out the precinct with his hand on my lower back and speaking positive and comforting words to me.

“It’s going to be okay. He hasn’t been able to find you at my house. You just can’t go back to work.”

As we stepped outside of the precinct, the blazing sun shot down on us. It was ninety-one degrees on a Friday evening. I should have been heading to the beach in a two piece instead of standing outside of a police precinct in a black suit.

I was so frustrated as I took off my suit jacket; revealing the cami that I wore underneath.

“You gotta calm down, Tammy. Don’t let this nigga make you sick. Stress will kill you.”

I tsiked. “Hell, if Jimmy doesn’t kill me first!”

Donte didn’t find that funny. Good thing because I was dead serious. The world was on my shoulders as Donte led the way to his Range Rover. The mill in Gary was paying him well, so he upgraded last week from the 300 to a 2013 Range Rover. Watching him walk towards that Range Rover looking as good as he wanted to look in a wife beater and slightly sagging True Religions with Christian Louboutin sneakers made me want to smack the shit out of myself for ever leaving him.

Just watching the sweat drip from his bald head as he started the truck made me damn near forget my sorrows. It had been so hard being so close to Donte. I was still fighting the feelings that I had for him. I was still wondering if those feelings were genuine or if they were just in rebound of the bullshit I have been going through with Jimmy.

Donte snuck a peek at me as he approached a stop sign. Noticing my stern look, he laid a hand on my thigh and

said, “Let’s go get a drink. You need one.”

I didn’t argue with him and as he continued to drive, his hand never left my exposed thigh, making my confusion grow from a small hill to Mount Everest. Donte and I had gotten even closer since I moved in with him. We spent so much time together. However, I was terribly confused about whether he was there out of interest or protection. I didn’t know whether he watched movies with me or took me to dinners as a friend or to spark what had once been.

My mountain of confusion grew even bigger a few hours later. After countless shots of Jack Daniels, he and I were dancing to “Tonight” by John Legend in a hole in the wall on the Southside of Chicago. We were both so sloppy drunk that we giggled uncontrollably and touched intimately. Though the pace of the song was a quick smooth tempo, we were close and moved slow in one another’s arms. The air conditioner in the lounge barely blew a cool breeze, so we exchanged sweat as our arms intertwined with one another’s.

With his head lightly pressed against my forehead, Donte began to speak to me. No matter how drunk and platonic his words were, they went straight to my heart. “I’m not gone let him hurt you.”

They were simple intoxicated words that spoke a sober truth. I knew that Donte wouldn’t let me hurt, that’s why I felt so sorry for myself that I let him get away.

In response, I leaned over an inch to allow our lips to touch. For milliseconds, I wondered if he would push me away. But immediately, after the wonder came, his tongue pushed it away– spreading my lips apart and inviting my tongue to dance.

Simone

“What’s up, Miss Simone? Need some help with that?”

I was so happy to see Chance. I was rushing out of the office, while carrying mounds of paperwork that I planned to complete over the weekend. It was past six o’clock. I really needed to get home quick so that I could get ready. I had a date with Omari. I couldn’t wait to see him.

“Sure, Chance. Thank you,” I told him as I handed him the stacks of papers in accordion files. “How have you been doing? You haven’t stopped by to see me in a few days.”

With a sigh, Chance replied, “Been busy getting ready to leave this joint. They been sending me on interviews and what not.”

“What kind of interviews?”

As Chance managed to hold onto the files and hold the door open for me, he sighed in frustration. “Jobs that ain’t gone pay me much.”

“Well, are they helping you get into school? You should be able to get a lot of help through the government. We have a lot of programs to help you out with that.”

I caught Chance slightly rolling his eyes as we approached my car. I wasn’t surprised. Rarely do eighteen year old Black boys growing up in the hood want to hear about college and what not. They want money, and they want it fast.

“It’s going to be okay,” I promised Chance as we loaded the files in the back seat of my car. “Don’t get so anxious about leaving here. You don’t have to make a decision regarding taking care of yourself so quickly. You have until you’re twenty-one to be in transitional housing...”

“And then what?”

Chance honestly looked like he wanted me to answer that. He looked like he wanted *me* to fix it. But the only thing I could do was reach out and wrap my arms around him. When he hugged me back, he held on to me so tight that it scared me.

He held me like he needed the love and support in that hug more than he needed air to breathe.

Though it was late, I didn't know if any other personnel were around, so I let Chance go. He reluctantly did the same. As his arms left my body, his hands grazed my waistline and hips.

I wondered was it an accident. I even waited for him to apologize but he simply gave me an obvious stare that gave me uncomfortable chills.

“All right, Chance. I will see you later.”

I knew that he had a crush on me. I guess since he was approaching his release from Lexington, he was feeling froggish. Chance said his goodbyes as I quickly hopped in the driver's seat, started the car, and rolled down the window.

As I watched Chance walk away, I was in a daze. I wondered did he really just feel me up or was it just in my mind. I was so consumed in shock that I didn't hear footsteps quickly approaching my car from the driver's side until it was too late and hands were inside of the window tightly wrapped around my neck.

The grip around my neck was so tight that I couldn't even scream out for help. I pulled at the hands and struggled to get free.

Then, whoever it was brought his face into the window. We were eye to eye. That's when I recognized Tre.

“Bitch, it's this easy to fuck you up,” he threatened, continuing to shake my head by the neck like a rag doll. “Don't you ever threaten to tell my wife shit! Let me find out your ratchet ass done said a fucking word to my wife and I will fucking kill you. Do not call me anymore. Do you fucking understand?!”

Tears were coming to my eyes as Tre finally released me with such a force that my head snapped to the side. I gasped for air as I began to cry while I watched him walk away coolly, like what he'd just done didn't faze him one bit.

I couldn't believe that a man that I had spent so much time with could treat me so dismissively. It was like I was a fucking joke to him. After two years, I was nothing compared to a bitch that couldn't even keep him happy enough to keep him from having whole relationships with other women.

Tre didn't have shit to worry about though. I was on to the next anyway.

SEVEN

W E D N E S D A Y , J U L Y 3 1 , 2 0 1 3

Omari

It felt so good pulling up in front of the crib in a new car. I had just left the Dodge dealership in a brand new red Dodge Challenger. I had never been able to finance a car, but after months of working beside Ching, I was in a new whip. I would have loved some slick shit like a Benz or something, but I would never be on that level in the drug game. I was good with just being able to finance something new and being able to afford the payment.

That shit felt good.

I hadn't even told Aeysha that I was going to get the ride. I had one of the block boys take me up to the dealership because I wanted to surprise her. Since I was getting a new car, she was finally able to have a car, since I was giving her my Impala. It was an older car with some minor issues, but it was clean, running, and better than the bus.

I had plans on getting her a new car next while still saving for us a house.

Like I said, Ayesha didn't even know that I was buying something new, so as I sat in front of the house, she and Eboni stared at the car curiously, since they couldn't see through the tent.

When I hopped out, they both damn near shitted bricks.

I was beaming from ear to ear as they met at the curb. Finally, I was feeling like the man of my household, like I was holding shit down and was somebody for the woman in my life to be proud of.

Things were still a little on edge in the crib. No matter how much I was making things better for us as a couple, Aeysha was still feeling like shit as a person. Me

lacking in the commitment department definitely wasn't making it no better. She didn't have proof about me and Simone, but her woman's intuition was on high alert.

Hopefully, this would make her feel better, though.

“Wow, babe! This shit is hot!”

Though Aeysha was saying words that were giving me props, she still looked uneasy and not too happy for me. I knew that she didn't like me working for Ching. She didn't want me ending up locked up. And I know that, as a woman, she knew that mo' money brought in mo' bitches.

“You can have the Impala,” I told her handing her the keys. “I'll get you a new whip as soon as I can.”

On that note, Eboni excused herself and went into the house. When I thought Aeysha would be ecstatic, she was barely grateful.

“Thank you,” she hardly said.

“What's wrong?”

She sighed and answered, “Nothing.”

I didn't know what the fuck else to do. Here I was giving her a car, when she hadn't had one in years, and she was still moping.

“Here. I can't get you a whip right now, but you can at least go shopping.” I stuck my hand in my pocket and handed her a couple hundred bucks. Still, there wasn't a smile on her face! I knew that her issue wasn't totally with me. If she had something going on for herself I knew she would feel better, but that was out of my control.

But at least I was doing what was in my control. Being able to pay my own bills and kick my girl down put me on ten. Yet, here she was with a car and shopping money with her lip poked out. She was blowing me. Luckily, Ching pulled up right behind me as expected. He hollered at me about an hour before telling me that he was meeting me at my crib so that I could take a ride with him to take care of some business.

When Aeysha peeped Ching pulling up, she got even more frustrated. “So you’re about to bounce?”

“I’ll be right back.”

“You’ll always be right back, Omari!”

Then she had the nerve to throw the bills that I gave her in my face and stomp off towards the house. I didn’t even argue with her. I picked up the money, noticing that she damn sure didn’t throw them car keys. She slammed the front door hard as hell. I didn’t even take it personally. I knew she was going through some internal shit. I wasn’t about to stop making shit better for myself and her because it was making her feel insecure.

“Trouble in paradise, Pretty Boy?”

I snickered as I climbed into Ching’s box chevy. “Something like that. Where we on our way to?”

“Gotta make a quick move,” was all he said. Then he pulled off, bumping Jay Z’s *Holy Grail* album.

Though I got robbed two weeks ago, Ching was pulling me further into his camp. Shit, I thought he was going to stop fucking with me on the hustle side after that robbery. I had already fucked up when he tried to put me on the block years ago, so I thought the robbery was the icing on the cake. But he took it in stride. He told me that he would handle it and kept giving me more work. Not only that, he was also pushing me more into the front lines of his business. I was more present on the block; picking up money and checking on the block boys. I was even talking directly to the connect when it came to making shipments. It was making it easier for Ching to lay in the cut and was putting more money in my pocket.

Ching was pretty quiet as we rode. I knew he was high as hell ‘cuz his eyes were damn near low to the ground and bloodshot red. The music was so loud that I couldn’t say shit anyway. I was really too busy thinking about Aeysha’s ungrateful ass to say more than two words anyway. Eventually, I dozed off. Next thing I knew, Ching was waking me up with a hard nudge on the shoulder.

“Wake up, nigga.”

When I sat up, I realized that we were at a lake, hidden amongst brush and trees. What area of the city we were in, I didn't know. We'd driven pretty far though because, after looking at the clock, I realized that I had been sleep for about forty-five minutes.

Ching hopped out the car without a word. When he went to the trunk, I figured he was meeting somebody here to make a drop. So, I met him at the trunk thinking nothing of it. But when he popped it open, my heart dropped to my stomach.

“Yo, man! What the fuck?!”

I couldn't believe my eyes. It was some nigga, bound by his wrist and ankles, with duct tape over his mouth inside the fucking trunk! He was crying and everything.

“Is that the nigga?”

It freaked me out how calm Ching was. I probably looked like a bitch to him because I was just as freaked out as the nigga in the trunk!

“Is that the nigga or what, man?! Is that the nigga that stole my shit?!”

I couldn't answer Ching because I was stuck. Me and the nigga in the trunk just stared at each other. It freaked me out how, even though his mouth was taped shut, I could tell that his eyes were telling me to lie and save his life.

Real talk, I honestly couldn't tell if this was the same dude that robbed. “Ching, man, I told you they had on hoodies and bandanas.”

“But he had dreads, right?!”

“Yea.”

Walking towards the trunk, he barked while pointing at the nigga's feet. “Exactly! And them LeBron's, ain't they?!”

I looked at the nigga's feet and sho' nuff his stupid ass was wearing them LeBron's. I couldn't even say shit. I just shook my head in disbelief.

Before I knew it, Ching had grabbed this little nigga, picked him up like it wasn't shit, and threw him on the ground a couple of feet away from the car. His head hit the concrete so hard that I even cringed as I could have sworn I heard his fucking skull crack. He flinched and rolled around in pain. By the look in his eyes, I could see that he was dazed from the blow.

My instincts led me to look to see if anybody was around, but they weren't. It was a pretty secluded area that was well hidden by trees. But just like Ching knew about this spot, somebody else probably did too.

Before I could search the perimeter completely, two shots brought my attention back to Ching.

Pow! Pow!

Shocked as shit, I spun around to see Ching putting his glock back in his waist. Now, the lil' dude was laying on the ground lifeless as blood and brain matter poured from two holes in his head.

“Help me carry this nigga to the lake, man.”

I was glad that Ching had his back to me, that way he couldn't see me cringing and looking at him like he was crazy as fuck. I assumed shit like this had to go down every now and then in the drug game, but gawd damn not like this! I figured Ching had little nigga's to do shit like this for him. But I guess he had taken it pretty personal that these young niggas had the audacity to steal from him.

“C'mon, nigga!” Ching was barking as he struggled to pick up the body on his own. “Hurry the fuck up before somebody come.”

I didn't want to touch that fucking body. I didn't want no parts of the shit. But shit, I was there, so I was already an accessory at that point. Plus, Ching had a look in his eyes that I had never seen before, so I just did what the fuck he told me to do.

As we carried the body a few feet to a shallow part of the lake, I had to force myself not to throw up. I had never

seen a dead body or gunshot wound close up. The holes in this nigga's head was leaking all kinds of shit.

We put the body in the water and watched it as it floated out. I couldn't believe my eyes as he went head first into the lake, with his eyes still open. Once he began to sink, Ching was good and decided it was time to jet out. We both rode in silence. Wasn't shit to be heard but Jay Z talking about being caught up in lights and cameras. As we approached the ramp for the highway, I realized that we were right off of Cline Avenue in Hammond, Indiana.

Simone

I hadn't seen much of Tammy since my drunken rant a few weeks ago. Yes, I was a little embarrassed that I let my secrets out like that. I guess a drunk mind really does speak a sober truth. I wasn't ashamed of the men that I had chosen to date. I just knew that most women thought less of a woman that chose to be the side bitch.

Tammy didn't know how hard it was out here. She had so many advantages. She was biracial, black and Puerto Rican, which gave her an exotic look that men in 2013 were going for. She claimed being Black because she thought the shit was cool, but her daddy was a full blooded Puerto Rican. Not only that, she was built like a brick house. She had advantages when it came to men that I didn't, so of course she would give me that shameful ass look when she heard of my indiscretions. She didn't know how it was to pull tricks and play games to get a man's attention because she always had their attention. She didn't know how it was to be cool with being the bitch on the side because she was always the main bitch.

But I hooked up with her on a Wednesday evening to specifically let her know that I had a man that was all my own now. No, Omari and I hadn't made our relationship official yet. But he was mine. I knew the day that we became official was coming soon.

“What's up, Simone? Took you long enough.”

I met Tammy at a bar downtown on Lake Street. She refused to go anywhere in the city because she was still hiding from Jimmy, who had still yet to be caught by the police.

“I'm sorry, girl,” I told her as I sat at the bar next to her. “Traffic was horrible. How you feelin'?”

Tammy rolled her eyes and had the same solemn look on her face that she had the last time I saw her. Despite being sad, she looked pretty, *as always*. She had on distress

straight legged high-waist light blue jeans with a white cami and white peep toe five inch pumps. The whole outfit magnified her DD breasts, thirty inch waist, and forty-four inch hips. Her hair was up in a messy bun. She had on little make-up, but her skin was so pretty that she didn't need much.

I envied her. I felt like if I looked like her, getting a man to love me enough to commit to me, and only me, wouldn't have been so damn hard. Hell, Jimmy wanted to kill her just because he didn't want her to be with anyone else. Yet, Tre was willing to damn near kill me to keep me away from him!

"I been okay, I guess. Been cooped up in that house. I wish they would find Jimmy's crazy ass so that my life can get back to normal."

"Do they have any leads?"

With a hard roll of the eye, Tammy answered, "No. However, I can say that they are diligently looking for him. I don't need them looking for him, though. I need them to *find him*. I can't keep living my life looking over my shoulder. This whack ass restraining order doesn't mean a gawd damn thing. It's like playing rock, paper, scissors; but except scissors, the motherfucka has a gun!"

"Has his family heard from him?"

"No, and they are thankfully very cooperative with the police. They can't believe he tried to kill me either. His mother is so ashamed." Ordering a double shot of Ciroc from the bartender, Tammy continued to vent. "I'm just so sick of living my life on the edge. I had to watch my back just to come here! I have a fucking panic attack every time the littlest things startle me."

As I ordered Sangria from the bartender, Tammy sighed heavily. "But anyway. What's been up with you? Haven't heard from you much."

"Well," I said with a smile. "I been kinda beau'd up."

With a nasty expression, she replied, "With Tre?!"

"No! Omari," I was happy to tell her.

“The sexy UPS driver that you had a crush on?!”

I giggled like a school girl. “Yes.”

And with a judgmental tone and scrutinizing glance, she asked me, “Is he single?”

“Yes, he’s single!”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes! Gawd damn! What is that suppose to mean?” I was irritated like hell as I paid the bartender. Who the fuck was Tammy to judge me?

“Hey, you the one said you have never had a man that was your own,” she replied with a giggle.

“It’s better than having a man hitting me over the head,” I shot back, referring to Jimmy.

“He was *my man*, though.”

Tammy

Admittedly, I was little tipsy when I walked into the house at about one in the morning. Simone copped an attitude and left me at the bar. She didn't like the way I responded to the magical relationship that she was suddenly in.

If she wasn't batshit crazy when it came to men, I would have probably had a different reaction when she came in boasting about having this new beau. But, on top of admitting to me that she never had her own man, and despite her falling in love and stalking many of them to my knowledge, I didn't believe shit she said.

I needed to hear it from Omari's mouth that they were together and as happy as she claimed. Anyway, after she threw Jimmy's abuse in my face, I let her ass have it. I told her ass that me being abused by my man can never compare to her being ran over and treated by men who didn't think enough of her to claim her ass. I would rather have a man chase me because he doesn't want anyone else to have me than me chasing his ass because he up under another bitch.

She left after that, so I drank alone and listened to the live reggae band until it was almost to the point that I might be too tipsy to drive home. Then I realized that my drunk ass was way too vulnerable for Jimmy to still be out on the loose.

Anyway, I showered quickly so that I could get in the bed. Life was weighing down on me. Despite Jimmy's obsessed ass still stalking me every chance he got, I had the nerve to constantly have Donte and that kiss on the brain. I felt so stupid. I had more serious things to think about than Donte—like my life! I should have been worried about how I was going to get on with my life with Jimmy free, not obsessing over if Donte would ever have the same feelings for me.

After we kissed, he laughed and blamed it on me being drunk. I had no choice but to agree because I didn't want to be embarrassed. I truly believed that after I played Donte by

leaving him for Jimmy, he refused to let me back into that space, while still being the friend to me that he has always been. For instance, as I slipped on my Victoria's Secret sleep shirt and climbed into bed, I could hear Donte coming into the condo. I could hear him in his room fumbling around and then in the bathroom as he showered. I just lay there listening to the water, unable to sleep because the fluctuation and instability of my life was giving me insomnia, no matter how much liquor I had in me.

And as always, Donte came into my room. Assuming that I was asleep, he tiptoed through the darkness and carefully climbed into bed behind me. His body spooned with mine and it took everything for me to keep my heart from going out to him. I told my heart to realize that this man was there for my protection and friendship – nothing more nothing less.

But my pussy– that bitch wasn't hearing that.

Though he showered, I could smell the Patron coming from his pores. I hoped that the liquor had him delusional just enough that he would take advantage of me. To encourage him, I moved slowly so that my ass would rub against his dick as it lie closely behind me. I could feel it hardening against my backside. I was happy to know that if Donte was able to ignore the lustful past we shared, his dick wasn't. Just to feel his erection excited me. A good fuck was just what I needed to make me feel better, even if temporarily. I reached behind me and held his dick in my hands. I was shocked when he didn't stop me. I was enticed when I could hear low moans in his throat.

I figured this was my chance if ever I would have one, so I quickly turned over, disappeared under the sheets, and put his chocolate stiff pulsating manhood in my mouth. I was scared that he would stop me, scared that his senses would turn common. Yet, when I could feel his hand on my bun, guiding my wet mouth up and down his blessed, elongated, and broad dick, I knew that he had surrendered to this head. His dick traveled down my throat, reaching spots that hadn't been touched since the last time I sucked his dick, and I

gagged. The gagging turned him on, allowing his moans to become even louder and more inviting.

He began to pulsate inside of my mouth so intensively that I feared he was going to cum. I aborted that mission and quickly hopped on top of him and slid down his dick like a pole. We both burst out whimpers of pleasure as we ravished one another.

We kissed like animals while I rode him like a beast.

EIGHT

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2013

Aeysha

By mid August, much hadn't changed for me. I was still unemployed, but I pretty much rode the tread off of the tires of the Impala going to interview after interview. I was on my way to one at a Pyson, a vacuum company whose headquarters was downtown, for a customer service representative position. It didn't pay a whole lot, but the hours were flexible so that when I was able to get in school, I could do both.

Physically a lot hadn't changed, but emotionally, I was getting better. Rather than letting the usual insecurities and stresses get to me, I had been staying prayed up. I gave all of my problems to God and asked him to answer them for me. I knew that he would answer my prayers and show me signs of what to do and when.

I was confused about whether He was showing me signs to leave Omari alone. Though Omari was taking care of the bills, keeping cash in my pocket, and even having sex with me again, the deeper he got into the drug game with Ching, the less available he was to me. Not to mention, he was often out until three in the morning. I knew that the drug game was a twenty-four hour business, but I still had that gut feeling that Omari was fucking with somebody. Me and that man had been together through thick and thin, through good and bad. The universe was granting his wishes and giving him the better life that he wanted. I honestly refused to leave him over a gut feeling to give another woman the opportunity to enjoy that fortune, especially when I was the one that had gone through the trenches with him.

I also wanted the chance to show him that I too could do better. I felt like such a burden to Omari. Besides his mother, he had to take care of me too. I wanted to show him that I could get on my feet, get a job, and, hell, even lose some

of this damn weight. I wanted the chance to show him the woman that I use to be, even if it was right before leaving his cheating behind. At the time, it wasn't much I could say about his late nights and constant absence because he was taking care of everything. But as soon as I had some ground to stand on I was ready to make him change or I was stepping.

As I parked in the lot of Pyson listening to "Without Me" by Fantasia, I prayed for God to give me this job if it was mine.

I walked into the office building in a black pencil skirt, paisley print button-front shirt, and three inch black chunky heels. Thanks to Omari, I was able to get my hair professionally done. So with the new hair and outfit, I felt ready for this interview.

But, once inside the hiring manager's office, she started with the normal questions that I didn't have the right answers to. No matter how ready I was on the outside, I knew that I wasn't ready on paper.

"I see on your resume that you don't have that much experience." In a scrutinizing way, the hiring manager, Ms. Cason, looked over my resume like it was beneath even a customer service representative position.

"Though I have only worked as a CNA, I believe that job instilled the qualities needed to be a customer service representative. Patients are customers too."

She wasn't moved. "And you've never been to college?"

"Besides a high school diploma, I have a CNA license."

I didn't understand why she was asking me these questions. It was starting to piss me off and make me uncomfortable. She saw right on the resume how much experience and education I had, so what was the point in making me repeat it.

The rest of the interview went quick, unfortunately. She got me out of there so fast that I figured I didn't get the

job. I refused to be depressed though. I was tired of recognizing my misfortune instead of counting my blessings. Despite having no job, I had a car and new clothes— things that I hadn't had in years. I was starting to realize that I needed to be a lot more thankful towards Omari than I had been, especially since it looked like I would be depending on him a little bit longer.

Therefore, when I got home, I told myself to put on a happy face and attempt to show Omari a better side of me.

“How was your interview, babe?”

Surprisingly, he was at home. He was in the living room kicking back on the new sofa that he purchased last week; a part of a sick leather living room set that had to cost some serious coins.

“It went good,” I answered, lying with a fake smile that he bought. “Are you hungry, baby?”

Omari looked at me like I was crazy. Those gray eyes danced around in so much shock and confusion that it made me giggle as I took off my shoes and sat beside him.

“You gone cook?”

“Yes, Silly.”

Then he asked jokingly, “Are you trying to kill me?!”

“Whatever, Omari!”

In response, he put his hand on my forehead like he was trying to check my temperature.

Swatting his hand away, I squealed. “Stop it, boy!”

I guess we were both trying to show each other how much we cared that day, because as we sat beside each other, he reached down, grabbed my feet, and brought them to his lap. When he began to massage my foot, I lay back on the couch to enjoy the treatment.

“Thank you, baby.”

Curiously, he asked, “For what?”

“For everything. You’ve really been holding me down. I appreciate it.”

“You don’t have to thank me. That’s what I’m supposed to do. It’s all I’ve ever wanted to be able to do.”

Omari

“Yea, that’s right. Good girl. Cum on this dick.”

I had Aeysha bent over the kitchen table hitting her from the back with one of her legs hoisted up on a chair.

As soon as I got out of the shower and got dressed, she peeped that I was on my way out and decided to throw me some pussy instead of cursing me out like usual. She was really making an effort at changing. I appreciated that.

“Damn, I love this pussy, girl.” I was talking good shit to her. Making sure that she came real good so that her mind would ease and she wouldn’t be so worried about what I was doing in the streets with somebody else.

“Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my *Gooooo*.” Aeysha was cumming all over my dick. I could hear the tears in her eyes and the love in her heart for me.

I loved her too.

“Wait,” she told me while panting for air. “What are you doing? You didn’t cum yet.”

Since she came, I was pulling out of Aeysha. I had a long night ahead of me. I was on my way to pick up some bread for Ching off of one of the blocks. Then I had a date with Simone. I couldn’t let myself get drained.

I quickly lied to her. “I’m good, baby. I came a long time ago.” Then I kissed her cheek and smacked her ass.

I hurried into the bathroom, pulled my shirt back over my head and washed up real quick.

When I got back into the kitchen to grab my keys, Aeysha was leaning against the counter still naked. She and Simone were so different. I loved my girl to death, but she was

letting life keep her so down that she had let herself go. She had gained some weight. Her stomach wasn't flat anymore. Even her arms were getting big. Aeysha's body use to be so tight. She was naturally curvaceous with beautiful breasts, phat ass, and tight waist. Her legs were long and the best feature on her body. Now those thighs were getting big and rubbing together. I still loved her, so she still turned me on. But having a woman like Simone who was still ripe, tight, and tender only brought Aeysha's negatives to the surface.

“What you doin' tonight?”

“Lookin' for some more jobs. Probably go downstairs and see what's up with Eboni. That's about it.”

I slid my arms around her and tongue kissed her goodbye. “I'll be back. Love you, baby.”

“I love you too, Omari.”

We kissed again before I walked out of the door.

The night air felt good. It had cooled down to about seventy degrees. I felt good. I had gotten my locs styled earlier that day. I had on a new pair of True Religion jeans, matching t-shirt, and fresh jays. I was saving up most of my money, but me and Aeysha was definitely burning up the malls getting shit that we hadn't been able to in years.

The block on Racine and Halsted was jumping when I bent down on it. These lil' niggas was in front of the trap twenty deep. Lil' Durk was blasting from a mustang parked in the front. Niggas was bopping all over the place.

It looked like a party.

“What up, *Pretty Boy!*”

“Capone, don't make me smack the shit outta you, man.”

He laughed as we met at the curb and shook up. His eyes were diluted like a motherfucker and he was jumpy. He was most likely off a molly.

Without me even asking, he reached in his pocket and handed me a wad of cash.

“Do I need to count this shit, man?”

“Man, naw. Don’t do me. It’s ten g’s, my nigga. I swear.”

I believed him. Though only seventeen, Capone was loyal as hell to Ching and pretty scared of him. Besides fucking with me over my nickname, he had been pretty loyal and respectful to me too.

“Any noise about Ron?”

“Hell naw, man. I told you those were some no name little niggas with a bright idea. Them other two niggas long gone with the work, somewhere in another state probably flipping it. Ron was on his way too, but that’s when Ching caught him slippin’.”

Word had hit the street about the nigga who robbed me gone missing. Come to find out, his name was Ron. Chicago was smaller than you would think and the Westside was even smaller. Most of the block boys knew about the robbery because Ching put the word out on the streets to look for the guys who did it. They were also reporting to Ching if there was any word of retaliation once people figured out that he was dead. Ching told me that he caught dude slipping, coming out of his building alone, and scooped him up real quick at gun point before taking him to a trap house beating his ass and tying him up. He claim nobody saw him scoop him, but motherfuckas ain’t crazy. However, motherfuckas knew betta than to snitch too.

I still didn’t feel right being a part of this shit. Ching was bogus as hell for even involving me with that murk. I understood his position. A man in his position couldn’t let clowns get away with taking one hundred thousand dollars worth of work from him; especially some little niggas. But me being new to this game, I wasn’t down with having no parts of killing nobody.

But it came with the territory, I guess. I had to eat. I couldn’t let no babies think it was okay to take from my table.

Simone

Currently, Omari and I were in my bed. Jodeci was playing in my dimly lit bedroom. Only two candles lit the room. KC was crooning about his heart belonging to me and I believed it. Dalvin was accompanying KC with his beautiful melodic adlibs. Omari's moans could have matched theirs had his sexual songs not been smothered by my ass sitting on his face.

Gawd damn, this man knew how to fuck me; knew damn well how to fuck and suck me. I desperately fought the urge to cum in his mouth as I rode his face. Simultaneously, I tried to suck his erection. It was hard as a rock and looked so beautiful as it stared back at me. I couldn't manage to complete the sixty-nine though. He was eating my pussy so good that I couldn't think past my own pleasure. It felt like this man was licking the bitch I was in a previous life. I just wanted to crawl into a ball of passion and die a happy woman.

His taste buds tickled my insides as his tongue penetrated my pussy. I leaked heaps of my juices all over his chin as it played as a stimulating mechanism against my clitoris. Even the tip of his nose grazing and teasing the entrance of my ass made me quiver with delusional euphoria. He ate my pussy like he was craving to taste the insides of my body; as if it was posh and the most exquisite piece of pussy that he had ever had the pleasure of savoring.

He spread my cheeks apart with his big, strong hands until I could literally feel the cool breeze from the air conditioning enter my body.

I think I came five times; came so much that I was embarrassed that I rode his face like it was his dick. But he wasn't shame. He invited the ride.

I was struggling to catch my breath as the next orgasm came and went.

"Okay, baby. Okay..." His arms were wrapped around my waist. I was locked into place on his face, but I wanted free. I couldn't take anymore!

His devilish giggles were muffled as I continued to wrestle free. Still licking and sucking, he finally let me go. I was so exhausted that I could only lay paralyzed from the waist down. My body still convulsed randomly.

Still giggling devilishly, Omari lay next to me and rolled me over so that my back was facing him. He spooned with me. When he kissed my cheek, I could smell the aroma of my nectar all over his face.

“I love you.” I don’t know whether it was the passion, the Jodeci, the candles, or all of the above, but I let those three words slip.

When they came out, I was embarrassed for only two seconds before I realized that I meant it. Finally, I was with a man that wanted to be with me and *only me*. Finally, I was able to spoon with a man all night because he didn’t have a woman to run home to. I was so excited and wrapped up that my emotions were overflowing.

I was more than okay with that.

But when Omari told me, “I love you too, baby,” so effortlessly and naturally, I literally had to keep tears from falling. Such a pleasant and constant smile was on my face that no man had ever been willing to put there. Omari thought me valuable enough to give me that, and, yes, I did love him for that. I loved him so much that I was willing and ready to do anything to ensure that I never lost him.

Tammy

After two weeks of sleeping with Donte, my feelings had only grown, while his seemed to stay paralyzed in the friend zone.

He slept with me randomly; on drunk nights and as he held me protectively through the night. There had even been a few shower sessions. Never once did he mention taking things any further. I really couldn't blame him. After what I did to him, I knew that me and feelings were a surface of very thin ice that he didn't trust crossing again.

I never once mentioned my feelings for him either. Too scared of being rejected, I simply continued being best friends with the man that I adored with all of my heart while fucking his brains out occasionally.

That night would have definitely been one of those occasions. Donte convinced me to come out with him and a few of his work buddies. We were at a neighborhood sports bar and about six rounds of shots in.

For once in the last few weeks, I was feeling good. Sure enough, it probably was the shots of tequila, but I was letting my hair down when I hadn't been able to do that in a long time.

In a pair of blue jean shorts that stopped right below my butt cheeks and a cropped top that showed a bit of midriff, I stood next to Donte doing a bad job of attempting to twerk in five inch heels to "Dance Like a Strippa".

With red eyes that were fueled with just as much alcohol as mine, Donte smiled seductively at me. To have him smile at me like that again made my heart flutter and my insides tingle.

"What you lookin' at?" I teased him as I continued to dance. I thought I was dancing seductively, but I am sure that anyone sober around me thought I was dancing like a drunk white girl.

“You and that ass,” Donte replied flirtatiously while lightly smacking my ass.

I giggled like a school girl. “Boy, stop. I’ll be back. I have to pee.”

“Want me to go with you?”

“No,” I insisted. “I’m cool.”

I bopped away from the bar to the beat of the ratchet anthem playing over the speakers. In these heels, I was more so gliding and trying to keep my ass from falling out of the bottom of my shorts.

Inside the restroom, I fixed my make up and hair, all with visions of sex with Donte later dancing in my head. The lustful thoughts were so consuming that I barely paid attention as someone entered the bathroom with me until the person was directly behind me. Before I knew it, me and Jimmy were eye to eye. He was standing behind me and staring back into my eyes like the villain of a horror movie.

Fear surrounded me like a coffin. Anxiety took over my bodily functions. I began to shiver in terror. Urine streamed down my leg.

Jimmy didn’t make a sound though. He simply stood behind me so closely that I could feel his hot breath against the nape of my neck. He stood over me, casting a shadow like the spirit of death glaring into my eyes.

It was hard to read his eyes. I saw anger. I saw distress.

I even saw love.

I didn’t know what to do. Fear paralyzed me. Only my thoughts moved rapidly in my mind. If I had screamed, no one would have heard me over T.I.’s voice that drowned out every other noise in the bar.

“Oh! Excuse me!”

Even when another female entered the bathroom, Jimmy’s eyes stayed focused on mine.

“Am I in the right restroom?!”

This poor girl was so tipsy that she didn't even see how scared to death I was.

Oddly, Jimmy simply turned around and walked out. I realized that he was taunting me. He was showing me that he could get as close to me as he wanted and there was nothing I could do about it.

Finally, my bodily functions returned. I broke down in tears and hit the floor. Finally able to breathe, I began gasping for air.

“Oh my God! Are you okay?”

The girl that entered the bathroom was hovering over me with her hand on my back. I could smell the liquor on her breath. She was so tipsy that her body weight on my back was heavy.

“Is there somebody that I can get for you? Weren't you with that guy in the striped Polo?”

I could only nod as I continued to gasp and cry.

I was convinced that I was having a panic attack.

“Okay. I'll go get him for you.”

I was in a state of shock. I sat in my own urine realizing that Jimmy wasn't going to stop until he killed me. There was nothing an order of protection could do about it either. Somehow, somehow he was able to figure out my every move.

I was trapped until the police were able to outsmart him, *if* they ever were.

“Oh my God. What happened?!” When Donte barged into the bathroom, he saw me on the floor and immediately lifted me from the ground. He could feel that I was still shaking. He saw the urine and sympathy poured over his face. “What happened, baby?”

“Jimmy,” was the only thing that I could say through my cries.

“He was here?!”

I nodded through continuous weeping.

Donte lifted his shirt over his head. Though he was now shirtless, he put his shirt over my head to cover up the moisture all over my shorts.

“C’mon, baby. Let’s go. I’m taking you home.”

NINE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

Omari

Though I had slipped and told Simone that I loved her, after three months of fucking with her, I ended up having a lot of love for her. She still had no clue that I had a woman. A part of me wanted to just be honest, but it was too easy to have them both since Simone required nothing of me. She never asked for a commitment. She went with the flow. She was so eager and willing to just make me happy. That's why I fucked with her so heavy despite the history that I had with the woman I loved at the crib.

Simone just did it for me. I never had to ask. If I looked like I was hungry, she cooked. If I looked like I wanted my dick sucked, she was on her knees without me having to ask. If I glanced at a glass, she was up getting me a shot of Patron that she kept stocked at her crib because she knew that was my favorite drink.

“All right, baby. I'm gone.”

Aeysha barely made eye contact when she replied, “Okay, baby. See you later.” She was too busy in front of the mirror in the bathroom getting ready for work. She was so excited about the new gig at Pyson that she started two weeks ago. You couldn't tell her shit. It was like that was all she needed to start back feeling like her old self again.

“What time you get off?”

I was leaning in the doorway with my UPS gear on. At that point, I was only still working there as a means to have secured drops for Ching. I had been stacking so much paper. Soon, I was going to be able to pay off mom's crib and even have a down payment for my own.

I told Aeysha that I got off at ten, and after hooking up with Ching, I would be home. Really, I had to hook up with Simone. I couldn't believe that I was actually juggling these

two women, but I just couldn't help myself. I loved and respected Aeysha for the old, but I was loving Simone for the new shit she was dropping on me so heavy. I hadn't even been fucking with any of my other hoes.

Speaking of other hoes, Eboni was in the hallway leaving out at the same time I was. As a matter of fact, she purposely slowed down when she saw me coming down the stairs behind her.

“Hey you.” She tried to be all sexy and flirtatious when we both reached the security door. I reached around her to open the door for her. She instantly put that phat ass on me.

Even she had been texting me, along with my other hoes, wondering where I been and why I hadn't fucked with her. Me and Eboni had been fucking off and on since I moved in. I only fucked her every now and then— maybe every two months on a drunk night coming into the house when she caught me slippin'.

But right after meeting Simone, she was put on the back burner along with the rest of 'em.

I asked her nonchalantly, “What's going on?”

“You. You can't call nobody?”

I had to admit that when she licked her lips, it took me back to the last time I smashed. If I wasn't really interested in that pussy, my dick damn sure was. I couldn't help it though. Though she wasn't the prettiest chick, Eboni was thick as fuck. That day she was wearing some dukes that made her ass cheeks play peek-a-boo and a flimsy tee that showed off her nipples when the wind blew. Her ass and hips were so fat that it made her lil' pudgy stomach look small. Underneath a fly kango was her usual long, straight weave. Her lip gloss was shining. Even her toes looked nice in her sandals that showed off a fresh French tip pedicure.

“My bad. I been busy.”

“Yea, I heard.”

Despite the fact that I knew Aeysha would be coming out the house soon, I didn't mind Eboni following me to my

car. She was a good hoe. She never snitched, and she never gave no signs that anything was going on when Aeysha was around.

“Aeysha told me that you been in them streets fucking with Ching. I see you.” Then she gestured toward my car and looked over me, noticing my ice.

“I been doin’ a little something.”

“That’s what’s up.” On cue, when she heard the front door opening, she got into character after quietly telling me, “Well, stop being such a stranger. *She* misses you.”

I couldn’t even respond because Aeysha was coming out of the house just as I walked towards my car.

“Hey, Aeysha, beau! You on your way to *work*?!”

I could hear Aeysha giggling in response to Eboni as I got in the car. They met at the sidewalk and were so busy talking that they didn’t even notice me as I drove off.

“We have the uncle of Ron Johnson on the line, Governor Derrick Johnson. If you all haven’t heard by now, news broke this morning of the disappearance of Ron Johnson, who has been missing for a few weeks. Governor Johnson, are you there?”

When I heard radio personality, Asha Devine, mention the name Ron Johnson, I turned the radio up and froze.

“Yes, I’m here, Asha.”

“Now, you wanted to call in to tell Chicago about your nephew, Ron. Go ahead and tell Chicago how they can help.”

“My nephew Ron has been missing since July 31st. I just wanted to take this time to ask your listeners to please contact the police if they know anything about my nephew’s disappearance. After some police investigation over the last week, we believe that my nephew’s disappearance is the result of foul play. If anybody knows anything, please contact the authorities. Again, my nephew’s name is Ron Johnson. He is 6’”, slim, dark skinned, with dread locs. He was last seen in

Humboldt Park on July 31st. Again, if anybody knows anything regarding this disappearance, please contact the authorities.”

“Okay, Governor. It’s unfortunate to have you on the show like this...”

The rest of the interview went blank. Immediately, I was on the throw away calling Ching.

“What up, Pretty Boy?”

“Please tell me Ron last name isn’t Johnson.”

“What the fuck is you talking about?”

“Indiana.” That’s all I needed to say for Ching to know what and who I was referring to.

“I don’t know. Why?”

“Governor on the radio looking for his nephew that went missing July 31st. His nephew’s name is Ron Johnson.”

“Let me call you back.”

Simone

♪ *Happy birthday to you!*
Happy birthday to you!
Happy birthday!
Happy birthday to you!
Happy birthday to you!
Happy birthday! ♪

Many of Chance's friends and some of the faculty that had grown close to him were in the cafeteria of Lexington House singing Stevie Wonder's "Happy Birthday" in front of a German chocolate cake lit with eighteen candles.

Though we were singing with smiling faces, Chance looked unhappy to be there. He stood next to me with his arm around my waist and head on my shoulders. For the past few weeks, he had become more and more comfortable being affectionate with me. I wondered was it lust or just coincidental because he was emotional about leaving a place and people that had raised him.

As we clapped and cheered for his eighteenth birthday and independence, it looked like Chance was fighting tears.

He barely let out, "Thanks, y'all," with his head held low.

"This nigga trippin'! I would be happy to get out this..."

Quickly, I cut off Germaine, one of the other teens that was almost eighteen and on his way out of here. "Aye, watch your mouth!"

"I'm just sayin'!"

I could only laugh at Germaine because he felt how I thought Chance should feel.

"You all packed up?"

Chance was leaving Lexington in a few days. He looked at me reluctantly as he sat at the cafeteria table. He took a plastic fork and began to jab at a piece of cake that someone put in front of him.

“I guess so,” he finally answered me.

Sitting beside him with my own cake, I asked him, “Why are you so scared of leaving?”

“I already told you. It’s crazy out there. Even crazier for a nigga with no money.”

“Chance, you’ve been out there. You live here, but you went to school out there. You hung out out there.”

“But I always had a place to come home to.”

“We aren’t just throwing you out there. We’re giving you somewhere to live.”

“For three more years, and then what? Then what am I going to do?”

“Chance, by then, you will be in school and working. You will have life figured out. You’re over reacting.”

“How do you know? What if I don’t? I barely graduated. What college gone let me in? I’m gone end up like these other niggas– on the corner trying to sell whateva I can to get by. I spent my entire life in here, having nothing and wondering where I belong, just to end up *still* tryin’ to figure out where I belong.”

I honestly felt sorry for him. I didn’t have an answer. The eerie part was that he looked at me so longingly and impatiently, actually waiting for me to give him one.

But all that I could assure him was that we would help him, that Lexington would always be there for him– especially me.

Tammy

Sleeping with Donte wasn't right. There were other things that I needed to be focused on; like Jimmy. But there was little that I could do until he was caught. After that scare at the sports bar, I decided it would be best to stay in the house until the police arrested him.

Being caught between an ex-boyfriend trying to kill me and a best friend that didn't know that I loved him was only putting me in more of a shithole. I knew in my heart that this wasn't an ideal situation, but, as me and Donte lay in my bed, once again riding one another until sweat dripped from our brows and I could feel the creamy reactions of our love running down my leg, it felt so right to me. I was remembering the man that I had begun to fall for before I idiotically allowed Jimmy to sweep me away.

I cursed loving inspirations into his ear between short, heavy breaths. I praised how good he fucked me. I adored how his length reached my stomach and how his width was such a tight fit inside of my walls. I sucked his earlobe as he lay on top of me, consistently probing my pussy with long, deep strokes that made me delusional.

“Urrrrgh. Shit!”

He was cumming, and I was sad. I didn't want it to end. His body weight on top of mine felt right. Being in his home felt right. Us being together just felt right.

However, after sitting on the side of the bed and taking off the condom, he told me, “Good night”, and actually stood to leave.

“You're not sleeping with me tonight?”

Donte had slept with me every night since I got there. He hadn't missed one night.

“Naw, not tonight,” he said so nonchalantly that it hurt.

In offense, I sat up, holding the blanket to my chest to shield my breasts from the cold air. “Why not?”

“We can’t be fucking like this and laying up. Sex plus time equals feelings.”

“So you’re scared of catching feelings?”

“Hell naw,” he said so fast that it cut like a knife.

“So the issue is *me* catching feelings?”

Just like men do, he just stood there looking stupid. Our sex had turned into a serious conversation that he wasn’t prepared for. His dick was still hard as he stood in the middle of the floor in the guest bedroom in boxers. Even in my anger, it was hard for me not to admire his body.

When he avoided the question with silence, he’d given me my answer. Though he had definitely been keeping me in the friend zone, I thought it was because he was scared of his own feelings, since I had toyed with them previously.

But I had spent the last few weeks convincingly fucking and sucking that scariness away, so I thought.

“What if I already have feelings?”

I decided to just put it out there. Fuck it. I was ready to put it all out there.

But, unfortunately, Donte wasn’t ready to accept it. “Tammy, you got a lot going on.”

“Don’t give me excuses, Donte.”

“We’ve been down this road before.”

“And you’re not willing to go down that road again?”

The way he condescendingly looked at me made me feel like shit. I was a grown ass woman, so I knew better than to childishly think that just because I was fucking this man it meant that we were on the road to a relationship. However, the fact that he wouldn’t even consider being with his best friend, a woman that he loved enough to hold every night for weeks, to protect every night for weeks, and tell his every secret for years, offended the fuck out of me.

Again, he'd used silence to give me an answer. The fact that he couldn't even open his fucking mouth and talk to me hurt even more.

In response to the anguish in my eyes, he simply asked, "Do you want me to leave?"

"Hell, you were leaving anyway, Donte."

Many pieces of my newly broken heart wanted to ask him to stay, to beg him not to walk out, as I watched him leave the room.

But he was closing the door behind himself before I could muster up the courage to do so.

Simone

Something was wrong with Omari that night. He'd come into my house silent and agitated. It was obvious that a lot was on his mind.

For hours we sat damn near in silence watching a movie. Though he still held me as we sat closely on the couch, it was obviously something wrong with him.

There was damn sure something wrong with me.

At this point, Omari and I had been together for almost four months. I had never been invited to his home. Though he stayed with me until very early hours of the morning, he never stayed overnight or for days. I fucked with enough married men to know that those were moves of a man that had a woman at home.

The more I realized it, the more it broke my heart. It put me back into a place that I thought I had successfully escaped from. I thought that I had finally won. I thought that I finally had a good man that was mine and that I didn't have to share. But, as he continuously excused himself to talk on the phone, an eerie and familiar feeling of heartbreak came over me.

"I gotta go," he said as he came back into the living room.

"Why? What's wrong?"

"It's late. I have to go to work in the morning."

"You know you can stay here."

With a fake smile that was suppose to convince me, he said, "I'll never get any sleep if I stay, and I'm tired tonight."

I saw right through that though, so I tried a different approach. "Well, I wanted to spend some time with you

tonight. I miss you. Let me go home with you then. I promise not to bother you.”

“My house isn’t clean.”

I was devastated. As he slipped on his shoes, I realized that I was right back in the same shit. I was so sick of sharing a man. I was so sick of a man thinking me good enough to fuck, but not good enough to come home too.

I was so fucking tired of losing. I was so wrapped up in the feeling of finally having a regular relationship with Omari that I wasn’t willing to let that feeling go.

But I did let him go. I lovingly kissed him goodbye and looked into those beautiful gray eyes praying that my women’s intuition was just being a dramatic lying bitch.

“Oh, here you go,” Omari said reaching into the pocket of his shorts. “I told you that I was going to get you those shoes and handbag you wanted from Neiman Marcus.” As Omari spoke, he reached into his pockets, counted out what looked to be over fifteen hundred dollars and slipped it into my hand, kissing me on the forehead as he did.

I was short of breath as I told him, “Thank you.” I was fighting back tears as I let him out of the house. Regardless of my heart wanting to ignore the signs, my gut was kicking my ass.

So, as soon as I locked the door, I ran to my bedroom, slipped on a pair of flip flops and grabbed my car keys. Once I could hear Omari driving out of the driveway, I ran outside, hopped in my car, and followed him.

TEN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2013

Omari

Ching never called me back Thursday. I didn't like that. He had involved me with that murk without me even knowing and now he was being all nonchalant about killing the Governor's nephew!

I was on my way to his crib when Capone called the throw away.

"What up?"

"Man, a lot."

My heart started beating so fast and hard that I had to slow down as I rode down Seventy-First Street.

"Them boys just left the block."

"Dics?"

"Yep. Homicide."

"What they talkin' 'bout?"

"Asking about Ching. Asking about a robbery."

I tightly gripped the steering wheel and gritted my teeth.

"They didn't get shit out of me, of course. But they around here sniffin', dawg."

"Ah ight. I'm on my way to Ching crib. I'll holla at him."

"Peace."

I couldn't believe this shit. I was in the middle of a real life murder investigation. I went from being broke to damn near on my way to prison for murder.

I pulled up in front of Ching's crib and hopped out so fast that I almost left my ride running.

The door was open since Ching was expecting me. On top of the fact that I needed to holla at him, he needed to holla at me about something.

Ching was in the living room on the floor sitting between the legs of Nina, one of his dips, as she twisted his roots while he smoked a blunt.

“What up, Pretty Boy?”

“Man, I gotta holla at you,” I told him as I sat on the couch across from him.

He saw the look on my face and told Nina to give us some privacy. Once she bounced and I heard the bedroom door close, Ching let me know that he was already up on game.

“I already know, dawg. Black called and told me that them boys was on the block.”

“What the fuck we gone do?”

“Nothing. Not a gawd damn thing! Why we would we?”

“They know about the robbery.”

“And?!”

“We was in your ride, man!”

“I got rid of that motherfucka! C'mon, man. I ain't new to this!”

“I am though, dawg! *I am!*”

I didn't mind letting my guard down in front of Ching. He was family.

Ching sat upright on the floor. We were eye to eye as he blew loud from his nose.

“Don't tell me you scared, man.”

“Look, Ching. I don't know if you forgot, but this shit ain't my life. I ain't no pussy ass nigga, but

do I want to do a bid for killing somebody? Hell naw! And who would?!”

“You didn’t kill nobody.”

“But you put me in the middle of the shit!”

“Them lil’ niggas took over a hundred thousand dollars worth of work from you! You didn’t want to show them niggas what was up?! Or you wanted to put in them niggas heads that they can just take from you anytime they feel like it?! Next time it woulda been you in that lake fuckin’ with them trigga happy ass niggas!”

Aggressively, he dumped ashes on the floor.

I didn’t know what to say because he was right. They hadn’t killed me by the grace of God and only that. They killed niggas everyday for much less than a couple kilos.

“Nephew, man, listen...” I knew that Ching was being sincere when he called me “nephew”, something he hadn’t called me since we were teenagers. “...You my family, dawg. I would never do anything to put you in harm’s way. I would never do shit to take you away from your moms and your girl,” Ching promised me. “But I need to know that you gone be cool, man. If them boys show up, you gots to be cool. All that scared shit ain’t gone do shit but get us caught up. You hear me?”

As he waited for an answer he reached out his hand to shake up with me.

“You cool?”

On the inside, I wasn’t cool. This shit felt like trouble, trouble that I wanted no parts of.

“*Are you cool, man?*” This time, Ching was a lot less sentimental. I saw more of a threat in his eyes as he glared at me waiting for an answer with his hand still waiting on mine to meet his.

I went ahead and shook up with him as I answered, “Yea, man. I’m cool.”

“Good. Now I got some niggas in Cleveland that want some work ASAP. They ain’t willing to wait days for a shipment. I need you to take a little road trip.”

Aeysha

“I need you to make a run with me.”

I rolled my eyes in the back of my head as I parked the car. “Make a run where, Omari?”

“I need to ride to Cleveland for Ching.”

Oh hell no. “Omari, I do not want to be involved...”

He cut me off quick, probably because he didn’t want me saying the wrong thing over the phone. “C’mon, baby. I want you to ride with me.”

“Omari, I just started working. I can’t call off already.”

True in all, I did have to go to work. But first and foremost, I had to go to the clinic.

As Omari told me that he would be back sometime tomorrow afternoon, I cursed his fucking existence. I light weight hoped he got stopped by the police and got caught with whatever the fuck he was taking to Cleveland for Ching.

I woke up that morning with a painful vagina. I was swollen and extremely dry, and it hurt to pee. Even when Omari tried to get some morning sex, it was so dry and painful that I had to make him stop.

As I left my car and walked into the clinic, I kicked my own ass for being so stupid that I stayed with Omari

through all the lies.

I asked God to show me a sign. I asked Him to show me if I should be with Omari or not. I asked him to show me if I should leave or stay. He showed me with little signs, but I wouldn't pay attention to those signs. Now, God was showing me with a sign that I just couldn't ignore.

Luckily, I didn't have to wait long in the waiting area. My name was called quickly. After taking my weight and blood pressure, I was left waiting in the examination room with an itchy pussy.

As I lay on the examination table, biting my fingernails nervously, I was praying that I didn't stay with Omari's cheating ass long enough for him to give me a STD that wasn't curable.

“Knock, knock. Are you dressed, Miss Walker?”

“Yes, I'm dressed.”

I was still stupidly in love with Omari, because even as I sat there knowing that he had done the unthinkable, I wished that I could go back into time; go back to yesterday and erase this entire day so that I wouldn't have to face this. No matter how much he had cheated and lied to me, Omari was all that I knew. He was the first and only man that I ever loved. Truth be told, I didn't want to love anyone else.

“Well, Miss Walker, what brings you in?”

Dr. Kumar had been my gynecologist for years. She was the same gynecologist that was once helping me get pregnant. She couldn't understand why in my early twenties I was trying to get pregnant by a man that I wasn't even married to. But I convinced her that because of how much I loved Omari, I wanted to have his baby.

She knew my history, and she knew Omari, so I was comfortable keeping it real with her.

“I think I have a STD.”

With a raised eyebrow, she asked in her Indian accent, “What kind of symptoms are you having?”

“My vagina is itchy and irritated. It’s even a little swollen. When Omari tried to have sex with me this morning, it hurt. I had some discharge too.”

Surprisingly, Dr. Kumar was very calm when she replied, “Sounds like a yeast infection.”

She even had a slight smile on her face that threw me off.

“A yeast infection? Why would I have one of those? I have never had one before.”

“Well, many women get them when they’re pregnant.”

Obviously, my heart was able to grasp what she just said before my mind did, because my eyes were leaking tears before I could wrap my head around what she just said.

“You’re pregnant!” Dr. Kumar was so happy. She even jumped out of her seat and hugged me.

I was so shocked that I couldn’t even hug her back. I just sat in her arms with my hand over my mouth and tears streaming down my face.

“Are you sure?”

“When the nurse told me that the urine test came back positive, I had her do it again. You are definitely pregnant. Isn’t this great?!”

Finally, my mind was in sync with my heart. I realized that I was really pregnant and so much joy came over me. God was really answering my prayers. First, the job that I didn’t even qualify for and now this.

As Dr. Kumar scheduled me for blood tests and appointments, I thanked God over and over again for this miracle.

Maybe *this* was my sign. This was my sign that I was where I belonged and that everything would be okay.

Tammy

As I lay in bed in the darkness of the guest bedroom, I could hear commotion outside of my bedroom door.

It was a little after midnight. Donte had gone out to have drinks with some of his friends, so I assumed that he had come back drunk and was stumbling through the hallways, knocking over shit.

At first, I was just going to lie there. I was still pretty offended at the way Donte treated me after the last time we had sex. Ever since that night, I did my best to avoid him, and had even begun making other living arrangements.

But Donte was making so much noise out there that I figured he must need some help. Climbing out of bed, I slipped on a pair of shorts and tiptoed through the darkness of the bedroom towards the closed door.

Upon opening the door, I was met with a dark shadowy figure that I first assumed was Donte. Instantly, I thought the nerve of him to be trying to come into my bedroom drunk trying to fuck.

However, as soon as our eyes met in the darkness, I knew it was him. I could even recognize the smell of his skin.

“Jimmy, no!!”

Immediately, I tried to hurry back into the room and close the door, but he bombarded his way past the wooden door. I fell from his attack.

I was kicking fearfully and curdling screams dashed from my throat. “HELP! SOMEBODY HELP ME, PLEASE?!”

Jimmy was able to easily grab both of my feet. He began to drag me out of the room as he spat, “Bitch, I told you I would find you! And you livin’ with a nigga?! I’mma kill yo’ ass!”

He quickly charged through the condo, dragging my body along with him. The carpet burnt my face as he drug me down the hall. He so violently flung my body that my face and body banged into tables, chairs, and doorways.

“Heeeeeeeelp!”

As soon as I yelled as we passed an open window, Jimmy kicked me in the stomach. “Shut the fuck up, bitch!”

Nausea swam inside of me as ghastly pain engulfed the insides of my abdomen and went straight to my ribs.

I didn’t understand. As Jimmy and I wrestled inside of the living room, I didn’t understand how a man could love a woman with the same hands that he was willing to kill her with.

“You comin’ with me!” Jimmy was trying his best to get me towards the front door. No matter how much he kicked and punched me, I fought back. I couldn’t leave out of that condo with him. I knew that if I did, I was going to die.

Suddenly, light shone into the living room. It looked like the same light that I saw when I thought Jimmy shot me. It looked like the light that people say you see when you are about to die. Except God wasn’t at the end of the light. Donte was. Now that light was inside of the condo, Jimmy and I were able to see each other for the first time. He looked possessed. I wondered if he was on drugs as he stood over me, still holding one of my feet, as he perspired heavily.

He looked crazy as hell.

Seeing Donte only infuriated Jimmy even more. When Donte went to attack, Jimmy simply reached into his waistband. The time it took him to aim and shoot was milliseconds. Immediately Donte fell face first onto the carpet. My screams shot through the condo like the piercing sound of nails on a chalk board. Without even wondering if Jimmy would shoot me next, I took the opportunity and ran into my bedroom. I closed and locked the door behind me.

I was crying hysterically and saying, “Oh my God,” over and over again as I grabbed my cell phone off of the bed.

As I dialed 911, I could hear the front door slamming.

Assuming that Jimmy left, I ran back into the living room. Luckily, Jimmy was really gone. I thanked God and quickly maneuvered around Donte's unconscious body, pushing the couch in front of the door in case Jimmy came back.

"911. What is your emergency?"

"Somebody has been shot. I need help." Fear had gone out of the window. I was no longer crying. I was in survival mode— for me and for Donte. I hovered over him, not wanting to move him just in case I would cause more damage. Blood flowed onto the cream carpet around him. As the 911 operator got the address from me, I felt for a pulse. Thankfully, there was one, but it was faint.

I could only pray and ask God to spare Donte's life... and mine too.

Simone

“Hello?”

I was laying up under my man in a hotel room in downtown Cleveland. We had just finished having, what felt like, the best sex we’d ever had.

Clearly, I didn’t feel like talking to Tammy. But she’d called at least three times while me and Omari were having sex, so I figured it was important. Or it better had been.

I knew that it was when I heard tears.

“Simone, he shot him.”

I sat up instantly. Omari was sound asleep next to me. He was even slightly snoring. But I was so wrapped up into him that even his snores were just as beautiful as he was.

“Who shot who?!”

“Jimmy! He shot Donte. Can you come up to hospital?”

Sighing heavily, I put my head in my hands. “Oh my God. Are you serious?! I’m in Cleveland with Omari. We’re coming back first thing in the morning. Is Donte okay?”

“I don’t know yet,” Tammy answered barely. She could hardly speak through her heavy cries.

Then, Tammy began to fuss. “I don’t need anything. I’m fine! I want to see Donte!”

I could tell that she was arguing with someone that was obviously trying to give her medical treatment.

“Tammy, did he hurt you?”

With a smack of the lips, she answered, “Yea, he banged me up pretty bad, but I’m okay. I just want to see Donte.” Again, she was crying and weeping uncontrollably. “He’s in surgery. He got shot in the chest. They haven’t told me anything.”

“What happened?”

“Jimmy got into the condo...I have to go, Simone. The detectives need a statement from me.”

“Is someone there with you?”

“I’m going to call my mom.”

“Call me back if you need me.”

I hung up not believing the lengths that Jimmy was willing to go all because Tammy didn’t want to be with him. I looked at Omari wondering would he ever be that obsessed about me. I reached over and touched his face softly, admiring every feature of his gorgeous skin. I traced his lips, admiring the masculinity and fullness of them, and wondered if when those lips said I love you, if he meant it.

I still had suspicions that he was involved with someone else. Even though I followed him home that night, I was only able to see where he lived, not if anyone was inside of the house with him. Despite my women’s intuition, I didn’t care. I wanted him, other woman or not.

I longed for the day that a man was as passionate about me as Jimmy was about Tammy. I looked at Omari, sleeping beautifully with his arm still wrapped around my waist. At that moment, I vowed to myself that that man would be him.

ELEVEN

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2013

Omari

I was nervous as hell. Even though Ching had attempted to calm my nerves about the Ron’s murder, I still couldn’t sit tight. So as Simone and I rode down I-65, I watched the side mirrors like a hawk. I felt like the law was coming. I just didn’t know when. I felt like a sitting duck and that was driving me crazy.

I was on edge.

So on edge that when the throw away rang, I damn near jumped out of my skin.

“What up, Ching?”

“Everything all good?”

“Yea, we’re good.”

“Everything went smooth?”

Things went smooth as hell. It was the easiest couple grand that I ever made. That morning, a couple Mexican guys met me at the hotel and dropped a hundred thousand for kilos I’d driven to Cleveland. They were super young and wasn’t a threat. They were most likely picking up the weight for an older kat. They were in and out in minutes.

“No worries. On the way back.”

“Good shit. Look, gotta holla at you about something.”

Mentally, I cursed. Like I said, I was on edge and expecting the worse when it came to Ching and this fucking murder hanging over our head.

“You been putting money up or you been splurging?”

“Little of both,” I answered honestly with a slight laugh. “Told you I need to pay off mom’s crib.”

“Well, why don’t you put some bread together so you can start making some real change, nephew. You my blood. I fucks with you. You been putting in a lot of work for me. I don’t mind sharing the wealth.”

I really didn’t know what to say to that. I mean, it sounded good. But after that stunt Ching pulled I was real iffy on how I involved myself in his business. And I was really iffy on his motive to get me so deeply involved. I wondered if he was being genuine, or if he wanted me in so deep that I would keep my mouth closed because he was scared that I wouldn’t.

“I’ll think about it, man. I don’t have that much bread saved up.”

“Well, think about it and let me know.”

“Ah ight. I’ll be by to see you with this bread in a minute. We’re about two hours away.”

“Bet.”

After hanging up, I couldn’t help but marinate on what Ching just told me. Investing in his business would have put me in the position to make a lot more bread a lot faster. But at what cost? The little bread that I had accumulated had a murder rap hanging above it. I wasn’t down for anything else.

“I’ll help you, baby.”

I was so deep in thought that I damn near forgot that Simone was sitting over there.

“Help me with what?”

“Whatever money you need. I’ll help you.”

I smiled at her eagerness. That’s why I fucked with her. She was so thoughtful. She was willing to stick her neck out there for a nigga with no nagging and no fussing. When I asked Aeysha to take this ride with me, she gave me every excuse in the book. Simone’s bags were packed before I could even get the question out good.

I chuckled at her though. It was sweet that she was willing to help, but I no longer wanted to be in the position that I needed help, especially from a woman. “That’s sweet, but I’m good.”

“C’mon,” she said, trying to convince me. “I have it. And I don’t mind. I’ll consider it an investment into us.”

She smiled so genuinely, like she really meant that. As she looked over at me smiling seductively I couldn’t help but think how cute she was. As the sun shone off of her lip gloss, I couldn’t help but want her lips around my dick.

But the word “us” fucked me up. She used that word too much for my liking. I never told her that we were officially in a relationship, nor had we ever even discussed it. But I knew women well enough to know that fucking them raw and telling them that you love ‘em makes you her boyfriend, whether you agree with it or not.

Honestly, being her man wasn't a bad idea if it wasn't for Aeysha. Like I said, Simone was down for a nigga like no other woman that I ever met. She knew what she wanted and didn't mind going for it. I could see myself with a chick like her.

A small part of my heart was rocking with Simone, but the biggest and most important part would always be rocking with Aeysha.

Tammy

By the grace of God, Donte was alive. The bullet missed his heart by inches and hadn't hit any major arteries. The bullet was removed during surgery. Though in critical condition last night, he had been upgraded to fair condition this morning and transferred out of ICU.

He was even awake and asking for food, so I was in the cafeteria at Rush Medical Center getting him something to eat. I hadn't left his side all night. Even as his parents and sisters came, I stayed right next to that bed, holding his hand and praying. I felt so guilty for putting him in this position. He was being a friend when he offered to let me stay in his home. As a result, all of my drama had caused so many problems. Not only was there now a strain in our friendship because I couldn't keep my legs closed, but now he had gotten shot trying to protect me.

I felt like such a burden in his life.

My plan was to move out while he was in the hospital. The doctor said that he would be there for at least a week. I figured it would be less of an emotional rollercoaster for me if I left sometime that week.

I had feelings for Donte. I couldn't deny that. And I couldn't deny that they had gotten trampled all over when he so easily dismissed my attempts to reconcile the relationship we were building six years ago. On top of the stresses of Jimmy being on the loose, it was best that I leave. Even though moving in with my mother was like surrendering to Jimmy, it was my only option at this point.

It being my only option was validated when I walked into Donte's hospital room carrying yogurt, granola, fresh fruit, and orange juice. As I sat the food tray down on the bed table, I looked closely and curiously at the woman standing beside his bed, holding his hand, and kissing his cheek.

Although she automatically acted as if she knew who I was, I surely didn't recognize her as being any of his siblings or cousins. She was way too old to be a niece.

“Oh, hi! I'm Kennedy, Donte's girlfriend! You must be Tammy!”

Like me, she was mixed. I could tell that it had to be with African-American and Dominican. She was tall, slim, and fit. Underneath her maxi dress that swept the floor, I saw the outline of perky breasts and curvaceous hips. Her long hair fell in natural kinky curls that framed her tan face.

Curiously, I looked at Donte who was definitely avoiding my eyes. Then, I noticed suitcases in the corner of the room that weren't there before.

“I just flew in, girl. I couldn't catch a plane quick enough when Donte's mom called and told me what happened! I can't believe that crazy motherfucka is actually after you like this. But I know you're glad that your cousin has been there for you. When Donte told me that his little cousin was moving in with him because her ex was trying to kill her, my heart really went out to you.”

I couldn't say shit. Literally, I was speechless as this airhead bitch went on and on, not even noticing my discomfort or the blatant awkwardness spread all over Donte's face.

I literally could not rationalize what the fuck was going on. Her words sounded muffled as she spoke to me like she knew everything about me. I could only reach for my purse and literally walk out of that room as she continued to speak so freely about her *boyfriend*. I could hear Donte attempting to smooth over my exit as I walked out of the room, but even his voice was muffled by the sounds of the contents of my stomach coming out of my body through my throat.

Aeysha

“Hey, baby.”

Omari looked a little tired as he came into the bedroom. He had just walked into the house. I was lying across the bed watching TV.

I was so excited to tell Omari about the baby. But I wanted to tell him face to face. So I had been sitting on pins and needles until he got back from Cleveland.

I couldn't believe that I was pregnant. I had an irregular cycle, which was part of the reason why it was hard for me to get pregnant in the first place. But because of it, I never thought anything of it when I missed my period for one or two months, or when I would spot here and there. I had an ultrasound yesterday, which said that I was about seventeen weeks. Even though there was really nothing to see on the ultrasound, I wanted to show Omari anyway so that he could physically see our baby. Since I couldn't believe it, I knew that he wouldn't believe it either.

After kicking off his shoes, he immediately climbed into bed and lay next to me.

“Tired?”

“Yea. It was a long ass drive. You didn't have to work today?”

“Nope. I was off.”

“What's wrong with you?”

I was happy on the inside, but I was nervous as hell on the outside, and it showed. So many things would change once Omari and I had a baby. We had been together for seven years, but it seemed like now we were official. This baby was making us a real family.

“I went to the doctor yesterday.”

I had his attention already, but those words got his direct attention. He sat up on his elbows and looked at me curiously.

“For what? What’s wrong?”

I chuckled to myself. Just like a nigga to think something was wrong when a chick has to go to the doctor, especially a nigga who cheats.

“Nothing major. Just a little yeast infection.”

“Yeast infection? You don’t get those.”

“I know.” Then I sighed heavily. “But the doctor says that it’s pretty normal for women to have them when they’re pregnant.”

It took him a few seconds to register those words. But as I finally released my excited smile, his eyes lightened and grew so big that those gray eyes looked like moons.

Excitedly, I sat up and began to bounce on the bed repeatedly. “I’m pregnant!”

At first, the only emotion I felt was happiness and excitement. But as Omari lay there staring up at me, speechless and motionless, with tears coming to his eyes, I began to feel so touched that I too began to cry.

“You’re what?”

“*Pregnant*,” I answered with a giggle through my tears.

Finally, Omari sat up as well. He shamelessly let his tears fall as he reached out and touched my belly.

“Yo, oh my God. I am so happy for you. I mean, I’m happy for us, but you’ve wanted this so bad, baby. How far along are you?”

“Four months.”

When he lay his head on my stomach and wrapped his arms tightly around me, I was moved beyond tears.

This was all that I ever wanted. For years, me and Omari had fought to stay together through the bad and the

bullshit. I truly felt like all of that fight was for this moment and this family.

Simone

After making that trip with Omari, I was totally convinced that he had a woman. The way he kept his telephone screen hidden as he text messaged. The way he snuck phone calls in when I would leave the car or the room. Those were all signs of a nigga with a woman.

Desperate times had called for desperate measures in the past, so I knew exactly how to find out if he had one. I sat at my computer at home and logged into a background check website. Once I purchased and downloaded a background check on Omari, if there was a woman living with him, I would know. She would be connected to him in some type of way that would show up on the background check, whether by address, marriage, or associates.

And sure enough, as I scanned the forms that told me detailed information on Omari's address history and other personal information, the name Aeysha Walker was displayed under the relatives and associates section.

I had a fake Facebook page that I used when watching the men that I fucked with and their women. Some may call it stalking, but I just called it keeping an eye on them. The name that I used for the page was that of a popular DJ here in Chicago. Therefore, when adding them to my page they would accept my friend request without thinking about it. Now that I had Aeysha's name, I went to Facebook's search engine to search for her. I was trying to find her Facebook page to look for any proof of a relationship with Omari. I hoped that her page wasn't private so that I wouldn't have to request her friendship and do too much digging.

I didn't need any of that though. There was one Aeysha Walker on Facebook. The profile picture was of her and Omari. I was devastated. I banged my hand against my computer desk so hard that pens and papers flew to the floor.

“Urgh!!”

In devastation, I sent her a friend request. Then I looked over the About section of her profile. I was disgusted as I read that all of her work and education was in the hood. Even her quotes, favorite movies, and music were ratchet as hell. I clicked on her photos. Only a few were public. They showed how fat and out of shape she was. I literally became sick with envy as I looked at various profile pictures of her and Omari— some with them hugging, some with them kissing.

It was happening to me again. Yet again, I was the bitch on the side. Though a pretty girl, it was obvious that compared to me she was a ghetto nothing ass bitch. I couldn't believe that *this* was the bitch I was playing second fiddle to!

Omari

I was so fucking happy that I was literally dancing towards the bar to my own beat.

I was happy for us, but I was really happy for Aeysha. To see her life come together over these last few weeks was amazing to me. As someone that had been in her life for years, watching her ups and downs and struggles with getting pregnant, I was just so motherfuckin' happy for my baby.

I was having a kid! I was happy as hell to be able to say that, especially since now I was in the financial position to take care of that kid like I wanted to.

“What up, Pretty Boy?”

I was meeting Capone at a lil' hole in the wall by my crib. He was in the streets when I told him about the baby, so he wanted to have a drink with me to celebrate.

Beats the fuck outta me how his young ass steady got in clubs. He most likely paid off security and only went to clubs where bouncers knew him.

“Man, dawg, you gone have to come up with something else to call me.”

“I'll call you Pops then, my nigga!”

Damn, a real life genuine happiness came over me just to hear somebody call me that shit. “Yea, *Pops*. That'll do.”

Me and Capone started heavy with the shots of Remy. Remy was a pretty hard choice for me, but that was a night to go hard if any!

“Man, dawg, did Ching tell you about them boys hollering at him?”

Instantly, my happiness went out the window. “When was this?”

“This morning. Early as fuck this morning they hit the block on Racine.”

I couldn’t believe Ching didn’t tell me. Now I was even more suspicious about that pep talk he gave me that afternoon. I had been to his crib that morning, dropping off the money from the drop in Cleveland, so he had ample opportunity to tell me.

“What they holla at him about?”

“One of them niggas in the robbery told the dics about it and was like that probably had something to do with Ron’s disappearance. Told them that they robbed Ching.”

“*Fuck*. All they did was question him?”

“Yep. Hollered at him for a minute and bounced when he wouldn’t give them no info. But you know they comin’ back.”

Soon as fear and anxiety took over me, Capone tried giving me some reassurance. “Man, you good.”

“How?”

“You ain’t pop nobody.”

“I was there.”

“And that, my nigga, is some shit you should never say again. To nobody. Not me, not Ching, ’*especially* not them boys. *Nobody*.”

Though much younger than me physically, Capone was a hell of a lot older than me when it came to this game. I was just a nigga making drops for extra bread, but he had been living this shit since he was thirteen. I took what he said and rolled with it, keeping it in the back of my head to watch what I said and to keep an eye on Ching. I didn’t like that he hadn’t told me that detectives had questioned him, but I hoped that he had kept it from me as a way of looking out for me.

Capone and I continued to throw back shot after shot after shot. The best Dj's were in hole in the walls. Future, Lil' Wayne, 2 Chainz, and Jay Z was banging from the speakers so loud that I could barely hear this beautiful exotic woman that approached me with a smile. She looked a little familiar, but I was tipsy by then and could barely put two and two together.

"It's me, Tammy. Simone's friend."

"Oh, what's up, girl!" I met Tammy that morning. Me and Simone picked her up from Rush Medical Center because she needed a ride to her mom's crib. "Damn, you dress up nicely."

She looked a mess earlier that morning. Simone told me that that crazy nigga had got in Donte's crib, fucked her up pretty bad, and shot Donte. Now, her hair was combed. In jeggings and a tie-up top, I could see every one of her many curves. While Simone was a cute girl, her friend Tammy was *gorgeous*. She looked straight out of the pages of King magazine. Even Capone stared at her like a dog in heat. He was looking so hard that I was scared he was going to literally reach out and grab her ass.

"Wow! Well, damn. Thanks!"

"No offense. I'm sorry," I said with a laugh. "What are you doing out here? Shouldn't you be somewhere resting...*or hiding?!*"

With a faint chuckle, she replied, "I needed a drink. This place is right down the street from my mother's house. I have had a long, emotional two days. Fuck Jimmy. I'm tired of hiding from him."

She did look like she was in a fucked up mood. Even though it was a party going on around her full of drunk happy motherfuckas, she looked sad. So I invited her to join me and Capone, who had no problem ordering her continuous shots.

By two in the morning, me and Tammy were in the back of my Challenger fucking the shit out of each other. Even as she rode me, I wondered how the fuck we'd gone from me walking her to her car to ending up in the back seat of mine. The car was literally spinning as she bounced up and down on

my dick. She was so fucked up that she'd gotten completely naked like we were at the crib or some shit. Her titties bounced in my face as she held onto the back seat, balanced on her tiptoes, and slid up and down my dick.

I really didn't even want to be doing it. But I couldn't deny how pretty she was, how bad her body was, and even how good she smelled as her skin brushed against my nose every time she hopped up and down on my dick. Her pussy was wet as fuck. I could feel her insides sliding down the rubber and on my balls. I couldn't believe how tight that pussy was. I tried not to enjoy it, but as I felt myself cumming, I figured it was too late to stop it. I grabbed her around her waist, held on tight, rested my head back against the seat, and got comfortable in that pussy.

TWELVE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2013

Omari

A week later, I felt like shit. I was doin' way too much for my own good. Simone, Tammy, and this murder was becoming overbearing. Like most niggas do when shit hit the fan, I wanted to just fall back from everything, focus on my family, and just chill.

That included leaving Simone alone. For the past week I had been kinda distant with her because I was trying to figure out how and when to stop fucking with her. She was a good girl and I felt bad for stringing her along. True in all, I had mad feelings for her, but those feelings weren't strong enough for me to ever leave my girl. Simone deserved a nigga that could give her what I was only willing to give to Aeysa. Besides, after fucking her friend, I figured it was time to get out of that situation. I was a dog ass nigga, but never had I fucked a chick's friend. That was just wrong and I felt bad. Even after fucking her, me and Tammy looked at each other like we had just cheated on our ACTs or some shit. It felt good as fuck, but once it was done, it felt dirty as hell.

We both swore to keep it to ourselves. We didn't even switch numbers. I made sure she got in her car safely and that was that.

“Hey, baby.”

Still in all, I had to leave Simone alone. It was the right thing to do. We were in the parking lot. We usually pulled in around the same time to see each other before going in the gig.

“Hey.” I could barely speak to her. When I didn't return her smile, she knew something was wrong.

I took her by the hand and walked back towards my ride where we both rested on the hood. It was a little cool out. By now, it was October, so the weather was dropping and it was time to throw on jackets, even though nobody was ready to let go of the summertime.

“I gotta talk to you.”

“About what?”

I could see her heart beating out of her chest. She saw the look in my face, so she knew it wasn't good. I looked at her legs peaking out of her skirt. I even admired the little bit of cleavage that was peeking out of her button up shirt.

I shol' hated to let her go. But I had to.

“We need to chill for a minute.”

“Chill? What does that mean?”

“C'mon, Simone. Don't make me say it.”

“Make you say what?” She was getting defensive. She stood from the hood of the car, folded her arms across her chest, stood directly in front of me and looked into my eyes.

“I can't mess with you anymore. I got a lot going on that I need to focus on. I'm about to get in a little deeper with Ching,” I lied. “I really won't have time to give you what you deserve.”

“How do you know that until you try, Omari?”

“I just know it. Plus, we been getting so serious, and I'm not ready for a relationship. That's not what I'm looking for.”

Simone

When I found out about Aeysha, I decided to take a different approach. All of the other things that I'd done to win men over had failed, so I opted with keeping my mouth closed. There was obviously a lot about me that Omari liked and a lot of things about Aeysha that he didn't, otherwise he wouldn't have been fucking with me. I figured that as long as I kept doing those things right, he would eventually be mine.

As I stood in that parking lot listening to him give me bullshit excuses as to why he suddenly had to stop fucking with me, I didn't feel like I was losing him. I could see it in his face that he was doing something that he really didn't want to do.

So, I took it like a big girl. "Okay. If that's what you want. You know I'm always here for you."

Omari looked at me with surprise that I didn't argue with him further. Then he sighed heavily and walked towards me. When he wrapped his arms around me and hugged me, I knew that that wouldn't be last time that I was in his arms.

I refused to let it be.

I was playing the mature role, trying to act like I was a big girl that didn't need to beg for his presence in my life. Despite the fact that it looked like he wanted to say more, I kissed him on the cheek, said goodbye and walked away. Yet, I fought back tears as I walked to my office. I knew that, though he obviously wanted to fuck with me, that bitch Aeysha had obviously gotten in his head some sort of way.

As soon as I got into my office, I turned on my computer and immediately logged into Facebook. Aeysha had accepted my friend request a few days ago, but she had only been posting about random immature bullshit. But I figured that if something had happened that made him choose to suddenly be faithful, her young ass would surely reference it

on her Facebook page. When I clicked on her page, I saw that she definitely had.

Her status message from last night read like death to my soul. “I guess I can finally tell my Facebook family that me and Omari are having a baby!! I’m four months. I feel so blessed! Me and Omari have been trying for years and finally God answered my prayers.”

I was so heartbroken. Literally, I could feel a pain in my heart that was excruciating. I stared at that status message, watching the numerous amounts of likes and replies of well wishes, and felt every artery in my heart straining with throbbing pain, envy, and anger.

I could compete with a broke, fat bitch, but I couldn’t compete with blessings, babies, and God.

Omari

I knew that I had done the right thing by cutting things off with Simone, but while at work and even during the ride home, I felt the difference in my day without her being in it. No text messages during the day. No freaky pictures from her that she took in her office. No meeting her for lunch for some head in the car.

I just kept thinking of Aeysha and the baby. Every time I pictured Aeysha's happiness when she told me that she was pregnant, I knew that no side pussy was worth taking that happiness from her.

For the last few months, I had been able to be there for her financially like I always wanted to be. Now, it was time for me to be there emotionally with my commitment like she always wanted me to be.

I was more than cool with that. As I hopped out of my ride in front of the crib, I felt like me and Aeysha was finally about to have the family that we both always wanted.

“Hey, Omari.”

I cursed under my breath as I ran into Eboni in the hallway. I did not feel like dealing with her shit. She had become a little stalkerish; calling and text messaging me at all times of night. She claimed she missed the dick, but it was funny how she didn't miss the dick that much until it started making some paper.

“What's up, Eboni?”

The further I walked towards the stairs, the closer she walked towards me until she had me cornered on the stairwell with her hands on my crotch.

Just when I was ready to leave these side bitches alone, here came this bitch. I never wanted to not fuck another woman so bad in my life.

“Man, what is you doin’?” I smiled to throw her off while I softly pushed her hand away.

“C’mon, baby. Aeysha isn’t here. She’s at work.” She was damn near purring while walking so close up on me that her breasts were hugging my chests.

“Okay, and?”

Right away, she got an attitude. With her arms folded across her chest, she snapped. “So now you all of a sudden faithful?”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“Its bullshit and you know it.”

She took my hands and placed them on her ass. My hands cupped her cheeks since they were barely covered by blue jean shorts. “Look, Omari. Do you know how hard it is for me to live up under you, listening to you fuck your girl every other night, while I’m down here struggling with these kids with no man? I been a good girl for you. But I get nothing in return for it.” Then she sighed dramatically. “And with me and Aeysha being so cool, I just don’t think I can take keeping this secret from her anymore. I feel so bad.”

She was using lightweight words to threaten me. I heard them loud and clear though. If I left a chick alone that I was actually feeling to spare my relationship, I definitely wasn’t gone let this broad fuck up my relationship.

I took heed to her warning. To make her happy and to shut her up, I led her into her apartment, stepped over hella toys and even walked pass two of her kids watching TV, and took her into her bedroom and gave her the dick. I bent her over and signed my name in that motherfucka, just to keep her quiet. When I was done, I even gave her a couple hundred dollars.

I knew that she would be back again. Now she felt like she had me in a bind. But I just figured, enough trying to save up some bread to buy some big ass house. First the dics was coming around and now Eboni wanted to threaten to snitch.

It was time to move.

Simone

There was a round of knocks on my office door that took me by surprise.

It was nearly seven o'clock. I was still at work, handling a couple of HR issues. I really wasn't motivated to go home. I was still a mess over Omari. I played hard all day. I did the opposite of what I usually do when niggas left me. I didn't call him or text message him. I played it cool to him, but I was in my office bawling like a baby and trying to do work without thinking about Omari, Aeysha, and this damn baby.

"Hey, Miss Simone."

I was startled that it was Chance that came through the door.

"Chance, what are you doing here?"

"Security let me in. I wanted to come see you."

Chance looked weird. His expression was full of anxiety. He stood in the middle of my office floor with his hands in his pockets, avoiding my eyes.

"Don't you have curfew?"

"Yea. Nine o'clock. But fuck that place, man."

"What's wrong, Chance?"

And like always, he complained about the same things. He had yet to find a better job since leaving Lexington weeks ago. He had yet to get an acceptance letter from any colleges, which he expected because of his grades.

When I saw him get teary eyed, I stood up from my desk, walked towards him and put my arms around him. "Its going to be okay, Chance. I told you that I would help you as much as I can."

Chance didn't respond, stayed quiet, and held me as I held him. However, when the hug began to linger for too long, I felt uncomfortable and let go of him.

"Chance." I called his name to get his attention. He had continued to hold me around my waist well after I released my embrace.

Finally, he lifted his head from my shoulder. But as the surface of his cheek brushed against mine, I felt his lips touch mine. I immediately jumped back.

"Chance, you can't do that."

"C'mon, Miss Simone. I'm eighteen now. You know I'm feeling you."

"Chance, this is very inappropriate. I have to ask you to leave. *Now.*"

He looked as heartbroken as I had been feeling all evening. And even as he said goodbye, my heart still went out to him. I still wanted to be the friend that promised to help him.

Tammy

I felt so bad for fucking Omari.

I was drunk and in my feelings because I was hurt like a motherfucker that Donte had played me the way that he did.

I hadn't seen Donte since I walked out of the hospital room a week ago. However, he had sent me lots of text messages trying to make it right that he'd hidden this long distance girlfriend from me.

I was sick, literally. For a week, I cried in my old bedroom at my mom's house and wondered how in the hell my life ended up this way. I was so scared for my life. I felt like a sitting duck, waiting on Jimmy to figure out that I was right up under his nose.

"Aaaaw! Hey, friend." Simone was very comforting as she walked into my bedroom and hugged me tightly as I sat on the bed.

"I brought you something!" Then she waved a gallon in the air that had a familiar color to it. "Brought you a big ass gallon of Panty Droppa. You need it girl!"

Guilt started to eat me up as Simone went into the kitchen to get us some cups and ice. Yet, I didn't feel that guilty. Yes, I was wrong as hell for fucking Omari. He wasn't her man, though. I was pretty lit that night, but before I got lit I remembered him telling me that he and Simone weren't officially in a committed relationship.

"So, have you talked to Donte?"

As soon as Simone mentioned his name after she came back into the room, I rolled my eyes hard. "Fuck, Donte."

Simone actually had a smile on her face when she asked, "Why?"

I don't know whether she was being funny or cynical. She knew exactly why I felt that way.

Wearing a questioning stare, I asked her, “What are you smiling at?”

“I’m just in a good mood, girl.”

Even as she made my drink, she had the most humorous yet pleased smirk on her face.

“And why is that?”

“I’m just happy. Life is good. Work is good. *My man is good.*”

I attempted to hold back a cynical smirk my damn self as I replied, “Oh, really? And how are you and Omari doing?”

“Great. We love each other so much. He even wants me to have his baby.”

I damn near choked on my liquor. “He what?”

With the biggest grin, she replied, “Yes, girl.”

“After a few months, huh?”

“Yes. Sometimes you have to just go with the flow.”

As she sat on the bed across from me Indian style, I tried hard not to look at her like she was crazy as hell. “Go with the flow meaning?”

“I mean, if he wants me to have his baby, why not? I’m even thinking of selling the house so that we can move closer to our jobs on the Westside.”

I definitely choked on my liquor then. A little ran down the side of my lip even. As I wiped my mouth, I lost it.

“You’re what?!”

With that same weird smile, Simone replied, “Yea. I talked to a realtor today.”

“But you love that house. You’re going to sell your mom’s house?!”

“With the money I will get from it me and Omari can start all over again. Plus, I need a little money to help out a friend.”

I held back a judgmental smirk. Sure, she wanted to help out a friend. She was probably giving some ends to Omari to help him with some fucking drugs.

This damn girl was pathetic.

Omari's voice ran through my mind over and over again. I can hear him saying to me that he and Simone weren't even in a committed relationship. Maybe he was just saying some shit in order to get some ass. Maybe Simone was just being her crazy possessive self.

Either way. I had my own bullshit to deal with, so I really couldn't care about Simone's crazy ass.

THIRTEEN

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2013

Aeysha

This baby seemed to be changing my man for the better.

I knew better than to think that a baby would fix or keep a man. But ever since Omari found out that I was pregnant, he was becoming more and more the man of my dreams. He was attentive and affectionate. He seemed way more focused on this relationship than ever before.

I still prayed, asking God to make this a permanent change in Omari.

“You like it, baby?” Omari looked at me anxiously, waiting for an answer. His hands were in the pockets of his Pele as he hid behind its collar, attempting to keep warm. I was doing the same in the matching women’s Pele that he bought a few days ago when the temperature plumaged to the low fifties.

“Yes. There isn’t anything not to like,” I said as I smiled at Gina, one of Omari’s mom’s friends and a realtor.

I looked around the living room of the vacant two story brick home in Riverdale. There was nothing overly spectacular about it, but it was nice. What was spectacular, however, was that Omari was very eagerly prepared to buy it for *us*. I had to force the tears back that were trying desperately to appear and fall. Beyond being overly emotional because I was five months pregnant, seeing the motivation in Omari to make me and this baby comfortable and happy was making me feel some kinda way.

I was definitely in my feelings as he took me by the hand and followed the realtor around the home from bedroom to bedroom, kitchen to bathroom, and from the living room to the dining room, and then the basement.

I loved the hardwood floors throughout the house. I adored the second bedroom that would be the baby's room. I appreciated the third bedroom that Omari said my mother would use while staying there to help out with the baby once it was born. I liked the backyard. I imagined Eboni visiting with her kids and our kids playing back there in the summer.

But what I loved about the house was that it would be *our* house.

“We can put a playground in the yard. It's even big enough for me to put a pool back here. Once the baby is big enough, it would love swimming in the summer. We'd all love it.”

That was it! As Omari spoke, holding my hand and staring into the yard, I completely broke down.

As I cried into my free hand, Gina got concerned. “What's wrong, Aeysha?! Are you okay?”

“Baby, what's wrong?!”

Embarrassed, I wiped my tears and tried to get it together. But I couldn't. My tears flowed so profusely from my eyes. I even began to sob in happiness and joy. I couldn't believe that my life had gotten to that point. At that very moment I felt like I had been praying and asking God for a miracle, and finally, *finally*, He granted my wish.

I was so appreciative.

“Baby, what's wrong?” Omari hugged me as he tried to console me.

“I'm just happy, bae.”

Hearing that everything was okay, Gina giggled and said, “I will go into the house and give you all some privacy.”

Gina went back into the house as me and Omari stayed on the back deck, holding one another as I cried tears of joy into his chest.

“All I've ever wanted is to make you this happy.” Omari's words only made me cry even harder. “I just want to show you how much you mean to me and how much I love

you and my baby. You stuck with me through everything, and now everything is going to be okay. I want to make it okay for my family.”

Simone

“Hello?”

“Hey, Simone. This is Michelle, Tammy’s mother.”

When I heard the name, I stopped logging into Facebook and gave her my full attention.

“Hi, Michelle.”

“Um, I have a question. Have you seen or talked to Tammy?”

“No, ma’am. Not since I was at your place about two weeks ago.”

“Is it normal for you not to talk to her?”

“We have our moments. A week there. A month here. Is everything okay?”

Sadly, Michelle answered, “I don’t think so.” Then she let out a heavy sigh as she replied, “She never came back from the store last night.”

“She’s not answering her phone?”

“It’s going straight to voicemail.”

“Do you think...”

Michelle cut off me off. I don’t think she wanted to consider the obvious. “Can you call some of your mutual friends and see if they’ve talked to her?”

“Sure. I’ll do that and give you a call back if I hear anything.”

“Thank you, Simone.”

As I hung the phone up, I put my focus back on Facebook. Fuck, Tammy. She was a bitch. Her facial expression a few weeks ago as I told her about Omari was embedded into my brain. Every time I thought about that cynical smirk that overly confident bitch was giving me, it

made me hate her smug ass even more. Yes, I was lying about me and Omari's relationship, but who the fuck was she to think otherwise?

Bitch.

I focused back on Facebook as I cursed Tammy's existence. Of course I was logging into my fake page so that I could look on Aeysha's page to see what was going on.

Though I thought that me and Omari wouldn't be over, it seemed like it really was. As days and weeks went by, I continued to try to play it cool while calling and text messaging him randomly as if I was just saying hello and seeing how he was doing. My calls were never returned and he returned *some* of my messages with very vague responses.

The heartbreak of losing him was especially worse that day. The upcoming Saturday was Sweetest Day. I was going to spend yet another holiday alone. I was use to it. Being the side bitch so many times got me use to spending Thanksgiving and Christmas alone. I could completely count out the romantic holidays. Being with Omari, I was finally looking forward to spending a loving holiday with my man. But, yet again, I was left alone, because he had to be with his real woman; the one who deserved the holidays, and more.

I wanted to be the one that deserved the holidays.

I couldn't believe that, after all the time we spent together, Omari was able to throw me away so easily. It put a demeaning feeling in my spirit that hurt like a bitch and was way too familiar.

That feeling got worse as I read status messages from that day on Aeysha's page. That worthless feeling lay over me like a blanket as I read about her and Omari looking for houses and how good her man was to her.

I stared at her profile picture and reread her statuses about Omari over and over again. I wondered why there wasn't one thing about me that would make him chose me over this fat, uneducated, ghetto bitch.

When Tre stopped fucking with me, I said that that was the last time that a nigga chose another bitch over me, and I was not playing.

Omari

“I called everybody here tonight because I got picked up by them boys today.”

My heart started to race while I sat at the table next to Capone in Ching’s kitchen. It was three other niggas at the table with us – Black, Smoke, and Bert. They all played intricate parts in Ching’s camp. Smoke, like Capone, ran Ching’s other block out west. After Ching shut down the block I got robbed on, Black had been upgraded to work alongside Bert supplying other camps all over the city.

Bert was obviously shook, like the rest of us. “When was this?!”

Like Bert, I couldn’t believe that the cops had actually been anywhere near Ching without us knowing.

“Them motherfuckas been questioning me for eight hours. Got me comin’ out the crib this morning.”

Smoke asked, “This crib? How the fuck they know where you live?”

What’s fucked up is, when Ching answered, “Beats the fuck outta me,” he looked dead at me.

It hadn’t been any noise about the murder lately, but I knew that the cops wasn’t just gone let that shit go. The governor was on the news every other day asking people to come forward. Even Ron’s parents spoke at a news conference and offered a ten thousand dollar reward for whoever came forward with information.

Ten thousand dollars wasn’t worth a life though, so nobody was worried about a snitch.

“Look,” Ching said leaning forward. “Nobody but the niggas at this table know what happened. The streets may know about that robbery but as long as everybody at this table shut the fuck up, I’ll stay out jail.”

I didn't like that this motherfucka kept looking at me. I definitely didn't like the fact that this nigga said *he* would stay out of jail.

What the fuck about me?

After going over some more business, Ching dismissed everybody. Since they all lived on the Westside, Capone, Smoke, Black, and Bert got the fuck up out of there. Westside niggas didn't fuck with the Southside too tough. Capone was the only one that did since he was raised on the Southside.

I lingered around until everybody was gone so that I could finally holla at Ching.

This nigga was supposed to be my family. I knew that I was a man, so couldn't nobody make me do shit. But he had definitely strong armed me into this lifestyle and that fucking murder. I didn't like how he was acting like I was the one with the problem. He was the one that put me in the shit in the first place.

“Aye, Ching. I need to rap wit’ you, man.”

I was standing at the table. Ching was still sitting there, now rolling a few blunts. When I'd approached him like a man, he approached me like I was a peon.

He didn't even look me in my eyes when he said, “What up?”

“Why I feel like you think I'm a soft ass nigga or something? You think I snitched on where you live?”

“I hope not.”

“You *hope*?” Truth be told, that fucked with me. History had shown Ching that I was less of a man. I couldn't take care of my family if it hadn't been for him. But for him to actually look at me like I wasn't shit was a smack in the face. I figured after putting myself on the line countless times for this nigga that I had proven that I could hold my own.

“Yea, I *hope*. And sit down. I don't like lookin' up to no nigga when I'm talkin' to him!”

I damn near laughed out loud. “Is you serious?!”

As fast as lightning, Ching stood up, whipped his gun from his pants and was pointing it at me. “Dead motherfuckin’ serious!”

I didn’t even flinch. I saw a lot of fear in Ching’s eyes. He wasn’t mad at me, and he really wasn’t going to shoot me. He just knew that he’d fucked up with that murder and he was scared.

“I knew you was a soft nigga! I don’t even know why I fucked wit’ you!”

When you should never turn your back on a man with a gun, I did. Out of my peripheral, I saw him putting his gun back as he sat back down at the table. I could hear Ching calling me all kinds of soft pretty boys as I walked out. I figured that was my last time fucking with Ching. And that was cool with me. I had enough money to put a nice down payment on the house and keep me, Aeysha, mom and the baby straight until I found a better way. I wasn’t going to be able to pay off mom’s crib as planned, but, fuck it.

It was time to wash my hands of Ching.

Simone

Even after work, my mind was still swarming with thoughts of Omari and Aeysha. As I drove home, I pictured them making love and got sick to my stomach. As I walked into my house, I pictured them walking into their new house and started to cry.

“Hello?”

I really didn't feel like talking. But when I saw that it was my girl Sara, I answered. Sara was helping me sell my house. She worked at Lexington but was a realtor in her spare time.

“Hey, Simone. Are you okay?”

“Not really. Just having a bad day,” I answered with a heavy sigh as I sat on the couch and took off my heels.

“Well, I won't keep you long. Just wanted to let you know that I was showing the house on Saturday.”

“Okay, girl. Thanks again for all your help.”

“No problem. Talk to you later.”

I hung up and threw my phone across the room. I was so irritated! Luckily, I had carpet, so the phone didn't shatter into pieces.

I had to do something to get Omari's attention. I figured that I had to pull some kind of stunt in order to see him. I figured that once face to face he wouldn't be able to deny our chemistry. Then I would at least have his attention again so that I could then work on getting him back.

Since playing hard to get wasn't working, I had to go another route. I went into the kitchen plotting, but as I stood in the middle of the floor nothing came to mind. Then I saw the knife set on the counter and grabbed the sharpest one. I ran over the blade with my fingertips as I walked back into the living room. I remember thinking to myself that I must be

insane, but thoughts of Omari were louder than any other common sense.

Lamps crashed as I kicked over the two end tables. The 60” inch flat screen sounded like cracks of lightning as I knocked it onto the floor.

I took the knife and made tears in my blouse. As the knife sliced through the material, it made small scratches on my chest.

I screeched as I sliced my legs. I made sure that there were two visible gashes, but nothing deep enough that would need stitches.

When I called Omari and didn't get an answer, I took pictures of the destroyed living room and my legs. I sent them to Omari with messages to please call because I needed help.

I sat on the couch ripping my blouse more while hoping that he would call. I feared my mental stability if even this didn't make him reach out to me.

Ten minutes later, my cell phone rang and his name appeared on the screen. It's crazy how I smiled just seeing his name appear on that screen again.

I answered the phone with fake terror and tears.
“Hello?”

“What's happened?!”

“Oh my God, Omari! I walked into the house and Jimmy was here! He kept asking me where Tammy was. When I didn't respond, he attacked me!”

“What?! Did you call the police?!”

“Yea, they just left. But I'm so scared. Can you come by, please?”

When initially my tears were phony, real tears began to flow as I anticipated his response.

I wanted this man so desperately that I held my breath until he finally answered, “I'm down the street. Be there in a second.”

Omari

“Ow, Omari! That burns!”

“Its alcohol. It’s supposed to burn,” I told Simone as I softly pinched her exposed stomach. “Stop acting like a baby. Why didn’t you go to the hospital anyway?”

“Its just two gashes. No use in racking up hospital bills over it.”

Simone and I were in her bathroom. She had finally showered and changed. It took me about two hours to calm her down, clean up the living room, and get all of the glass out of the carpet.

I couldn’t believe that Jimmy got into her house. That nigga was crazy. Simone said she was going to be sure to get an ADT system the next day.

While I was on my knees in front of Simone in the bathroom cleaning her wounds and bandaging them, I felt like shit. I didn’t want to be there. I had to come check on her though. I would have been an asshole if I didn’t. But as she sat on the toilet in her bra and panties, I couldn’t help but feel something for her that I didn’t want to. I liked Simone, but I didn’t want to anymore. I liked her, but I loved my girl, which was why I was sure to keep my distance.

“All right. I’m done.”

As I stood up, Simone looked up at me with the sexiest smile on her face. Even after crying her eyes out for two hours, she still had that passive appeal in her smile that drove me crazy.

“I’m tired,” she said as I looked into her eyes, fighting my hard dick. “I need to go to bed.”

“C’mon. I’ll tuck you in before I leave,” I said with a laugh.

“Thank you so much for coming to help me,” she told me as we walked out of the bathroom. As I followed her down the hall, I fought not to watch her ass as she switched in front of me in bikini panties. “I didn’t know what to do. I was so scared.”

Her room was dark as we walked inside. Being a man of my word, I tucked her in. I made sure that she was comfortable, putting the blankets over her. Though the room was dark, I could see her face from the light in the hallway. She was staring me in my eyes with the weirdest look on her face.

“Why didn’t you tell me that you had a girlfriend?”

That threw me for a loop. I didn’t know what the fuck to say. I just stood there with this dumbass look on my face.

But shorty deserved the truth. She was a good girl, and I was tired of being a ain’t shit nigga. “How do you know about Aeysha?”

“Me and Aeysha know the same people.”

That scared me. I know the concerned showed all over my face because Simone then said, “Don’t worry. I didn’t say anything about us fucking around.”

She left it at that and so did I.

I sat on her bed to be close to her. I wanted Simone to know that I genuinely liked her. I was tired of hurting people and just wanted everyone in my life to be all right.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know when to tell you about Aeysha. I honestly liked you and wanted the opportunity to get to know you. I never expected to get feelings for you. When I did, I decided not to be selfish anymore and let you go so that you could have the kinda man you deserve.”

Simone sat up and put her hand in mine. “But you’re who I deserve, Omari. I want you. I need you.”

I sighed heavily because I felt so stuck. Yea, I was feeling Simone before, but I loved my bitch to death. Naw, I

didn't want to be selfish and have Simone on the side. But most importantly, I didn't want Aeysha finding out about Simone.

I could not give this chick what her eyes were telling me she wanted so bad.

"I know how to play my role." Simone convinced my confusion in the sweetest voice as she came towards me. "I don't care about Aeysha. I just want to be with you."

I was speechless because her hand was on my dick, rubbing it through my basketball shorts with every word she said. When I tried to speak, she kissed me and used her body to lay mine down on the bed.

I swear to God my heart was with Aeysha. I didn't want to be with nobody else but that girl. However, it was so fucking hard for me to tell Simone no with her soft hands pulling my dick out of my shorts. I damn near came in her mouth as soon her lips were wrapped around it. That girl sucked dick with greed. She had an appetite for dick that was gluttonous and insatiable. It's like she ravished the dick. She sucked my dick so good while stroking it with both hands that I felt violated. I wanted to tell her to stop, but when she drenched my dick with her mouth's juices, I couldn't fight the urge to fuck that pussy.

FOURTEEN

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2013

Omari

“Omari, where the fuck are you?! I have been calling you all night! Its six o’clock in the morning!”

I cringed as Aeysha screeched into the phone. I was pulling off from in front of Simone’s crib while wiping crud from my eyes.

“Baby, I am so sorry. I got drunk and passed out at Ching’s crib. I’m on my way.”

She said, “Okay, Omari,” but it was with a whole lot of attitude.

I knew she was pissed.

“I’ll be home in a few minutes.

She hung up without saying another word.

I knew that she had been up all night because she was calling me all damn night. After fucking Simone, I dozed off. Admittedly, that pussy had worn me out. I had missed it way more than her. I showed her how much I missed it too- all night. I couldn’t blame it on liquor, because I hadn’t had one drop to drink. I honestly loved fucking that girl, and she knew that. If she was willing to fuck me knowing about Aeysha, that was on her.

The other bitch willing to fuck me knowing about Aeysha, Eboni, was calling me nonstop all night as well. She probably saw that my car wasn’t outside all night and decided to see what I was on. That bitch was really getting on my nerves. Every few days she was at me for a few dollars and some dick. It only took her one time to insinuate that she would tell my girl for me to know that she was capable of doing so. But once me and Aeysha closed on the house in

Riverdale next week, we would be outta there soon and I wouldn't have to fuck with that trifling bitch Eboni no more.

“Hands on the car!”

I had gotten out of my car and made it to the curb when two detectives came out of nowhere with guns drawn! I put my hands up right away. When I turned around to put my hands on the hood of my whip, one of them started searching me.

“Are you Omari Sutton?”

“Yea, man.”

“I need you to come down to the station with us for questioning.”

Out of the corner of my eyes, I saw Eboni in her living room window looking outside. I made an obvious gesture towards the top floor, hoping that she had sense enough to know that that meant to tell Aeysha what she saw.

After frisking me, they let me stand up on my own and were a lot less aggressive.

“Questioning for what?”

The taller one answered, “Ron Johnson.”

I made a face like I didn't even know who Ron was, but they weren't buying it and escorted me toward the Crown Vic.

Aeysha

I couldn't understand why Eboni was banging on my door at damn near seven in the morning and yelling my name. Good thing I was up anyway waiting on Omari to come home.

When I opened the door, Eboni barged in frantically.

“Girl, the police just took Omari!”

“WHAT?!”

“Go look out the window!”

I rushed to the living room window with Eboni close behind me. I could see a navy blue Crown Vic pulling off. I recognized Omari in the backseat.

“Oh my God!” I slumped down onto the couch with my hands covering my face. I was horrified. I could imagine why he was arrested. Thinking of the possibilities scared the shit out of me. I started to freak out, thinking that my happily ever after was quickly turning into a nightmare.

First, Omari was suddenly back to his old bullshit-staying out all night- and now this!

“You think he got arrested?!”

Eboni's suggestion put panic in my heart. Like I said, I could imagine why he was arrested. I knew he was working for Ching. How deep or how much, I was unsure though.

“Look, Aeysha.” Eboni sat beside me and touched my arm to get my attention.

I looked at her with tears in my eyes.

“You have to get yourself together. He might just be getting questioned for something, you never know.”

“Questioned for what though?!”

“Aeysha, calm down. Go get your phone to see if he has tried to call or text you.”

Taking deep breaths, I got up from the couch and went inside of the bedroom to get my cell phone off of the charger. Eboni was right. I had to calm down. Test results from my appointment a few weeks ago showed signs of preeclampsia, so I really needed to keep my blood pressure down. I rubbed my stomach to soothe it and me. I finally had a baby bump as big as a basketball.

Walking back into the living room and checking my phone, I was excited to see that Omari had text messaged me. If he had his phone and was using it, that meant at some point he wasn't under arrest.

“He sent me a text saying not to worry, that he is just being questioned for some bullshit with Ching, and that he will be home in a little while.”

Eboni put her arm around me as I sat on the couch. “See? I told you there was nothing to worry about. We’ll just sit here and wait.”

“I can’t just sit here. I’ll go crazy! Let’s go up there.”

“To the police station?”

“Yes.”

“Hell naw! Don’t involve yourself and don’t give them any reason to. We just have to wait, girl.”

“Well, let’s go get something to eat or something. I can’t just sit here.”

Eboni looked me up and down with a playful frown. I looked a hot mess. My hair was all over my head. I had on one of Omari’s t-shirts and mix match socks.

“Um, you ain’t goin’ nowhere with me lookin’ like that. Gone head and get your life. I’ll meet you downstairs in an hour.”

I was so worried about Omari, but my baby was hungry as hell. I figured it would be good to worry about Omari while I fed my face. But I prayed that after an hour, I would have heard from Omari.

Omari

Through surveillance, homicide detectives tied to me to Ching. After running my plates and then my name, they were able to tie my employment at UPS to the robbery that they were told about.

But I denied everything. I had logged the package in that day as delivered. There was no real customer that they were able to contact that would dispute that. With no physical evidence tying me to the robbery or murder, they had to let me go.

I knew that wasn't the end of it though. Them motherfuckas wasn't just gone leave it at that. Their investigation had only begun, and, soon enough, they were going to find where this trail was leading.

All of that was wracking my brain as I rode in the back of the Crown Vic back to the crib. These dics were being super nice to me, acting like they was cool with me, but I knew it was all just a ploy to get me to feel comfortable enough with them to start talking.

“Okay, Omari. If you have anything you want to tell us, holla at us.”

I didn't even respond to Detective Howard as I got out of the car. I didn't give a fuck about telling them shit. I only gave a fuck about figuring out what I was going to do. I didn't know whether I should run, ride this shit out, or just take this charge that I felt like was coming any day.

I stood watching the Crown Vic pull off, wondering when they were coming back to get my ass for good. I was in a bad state of mind as I waited for cars to stop coming so that I could cross the street, head into the crib, and just hide in Aeysha's arms for a lil' while.

As I stared into space, I noticed somebody eyeballing me as it trailed the Crown Vic. It was noon by now, so I could make out Ching's face plain as day. The way he was staring at

me shook the shit outta me. It was eerie and scary as fuck. What was weirder was that this nigga didn't say shit or stop his car. He just kept trailing the Crown Vic a few yards back in this beater I'd never even seen him riding in.

I shook the feeling and headed into the crib while checking my phone because I could feel it vibrating in my pocket. The text message on the screen made me stop in my tracks. It was from a number that wasn't stored in my phone. Whoever it was called me a sucka ass nigga. Whoever it was said that they knew they couldn't trust me and that they should have never started fucking with me. They said that I was a snitch and that they were going to shut me up.

I knew it was Ching. I couldn't believe that this nigga would ever believe that I was a snitch. He was spazzing the fuck out. I simply texted him back that I hadn't said shit and left it at that. I thought he responded, but it was a message from Aeysha instead saying that she was happy that I was home, was out with Eboni getting something to eat, and would be home ASAP.

Since Aeysha wasn't in the crib, I turned right back around and headed towards my car while texting Capone to see if he was free to meet for a drink.

Simone

Once again I was stalking Aeysha's Facebook page. It had become a daily routine for me. I caught myself on her page sometimes twice a day.

Everyday I saw something that sent me into heartbreak, but today I was all too pleased. She had tagged herself at Leona's in Hyde Park, merely two blocks away from my house. I wasn't even thinking as I jumped up and started throwing on clothes. It was like I was having an out of body experience. Maybe it was curiosity in seeing in the flesh the bitch who stole my man. Maybe it was the insanity in actually wanting to say something to this bitch.

I don't know! Most importantly, I didn't care. I couldn't let this bitch be up under my man and in my fucking neighborhood! She couldn't have everything!

I raced out of the house in jeans, boots, and leather blazer. Just in case, I threw on a pair of shades. My hair was up in a high ponytail. I glossed my lips as I sped down the three blocks towards the restaurant. I hopped out the car so fast that I damn near forgot to put it in park.

Once inside the restaurant, I immediately spotted that sloppy bitch sitting at the bar next to another chick.

"Ma'am, are you waiting to be seated?"

Quickly, I told the waitress, "No, I'll sit at the bar. Thanks."

Aeysha didn't even see me coming as I approached the bar and sat beside her.

"Hi, Pretty Lady. What are you having?"

I told the bartender to give me a shot of Patron.

"Damn! She drinkin' strong *early!*"

I giggled in response to Aeysha's friend, all while sizing them up. These bitches were hood boogers with beauty

supply hair and fake jewelry. Clearly Aeysha's girl was wearing beauty supply store ballerina flats. Aeysha looked a little more expensive. She at least wore remy hair and Coogi. It was obvious that Omari's money was benefitting her. But was this nigga really denying me for a bitch that wore Coogi and Reeboks?!

I couldn't believe I was sharing my man with a bitch like Aeysha. I just looked her up and down with a fake smile wondering why the fuck Omari felt so stuck with her.

Then I noticed her belly falling out of the bottom of her sweater, and I knew why.

"Girl, it's been one of those days," I told her friend with a laugh.

"Girl, I feel you. It's been one for us too. That's why I'm right with you!" Then she waved her drink in the air.

"What are you ladies drinking?"

"Well, *I'm* drinking Jack Honey," she answered me. "*She* isn't drinking anything because she's preggers."

Aeysha smiled bashfully as she rubbed her stomach.

I told the bartender to get the girl another drink. Her loud ass was too excited. "Ooo, thank you, girl! Turn up!"

My skin crawled while I fought the urge not to roll my eyes.

"So how many months are you?"

"Almost six," Aeysha answered.

I was so envious of her smile. She looked happy and content. I wanted to smack that fucking contentment off of her funny looking ass face! I was so offended that she had the nerve to be so happy with what was *mine*.

It burned my throat to say, "Well, congratulations."

"Thanks. It's such a blessing."

I continued to make small talk with these bugaboos, in particularly Aeysha. I asked them where they were from and where they worked. Since I knew from her status messages on

Facebook that Aeysha wanted more for herself than her job at Pyson, I lied and said that I was a hiring manager named Tiana Bradley. When I told her to give me her phone number so that I could call her with some job leads, she fell right for it.

Having her number was enough for me at the moment. I didn't want to do anything that jeopardized my future with Omari. Since we had sex the night before, I knew that he was still interested in me- in this pussy at least. But he wasn't where I needed him to be just yet, so I didn't want to turn him away by saying anything to Aeysha. So I excused myself, kept her number, and figured that since Omari was away from Aeysha, I would call him and try to hook up with him.

I was literally skipping out of Leona's. Now that I had the opportunity to see this bitch in the flesh and had a conversation with her, I knew what Omari saw in me that drew him to me in the first place, despite having a girl. I was obviously more his speed and level. It was obvious that the only thing keeping him with this bitch was history and that baby.

Those were two things that I could change and acquire quite easily.

Just as I settled in the driver's seat to call Omari, my cell rang. I anticipated it being Omari, but when I saw that it was Tammy's mother, I cringed in irritation.

“Hi, Miss Douglas. Have you heard from Tammy?”

Omari

“I don’t know what the fuck to do, dawg.”

Me and Capone were at our usual hood hang out out South. I was cuddled up with a double shot of Patron that I had coming on repeat.

I was fucked up about being picked up by homicide. I was even more fucked up by how Ching was acting. I knew I wasn’t the typical street nigga. I knew that a motherfucka wouldn’t look at me and see a hard ass nigga. But Ching was suppose to be my family. He had my back since I was five years old.

With a heavy sigh and smack of his lips, Capone shook his head in disbelief. “I don’t know what’s gotten into this nigga. Maybe he just scared.”

“So then *he’s* the sucka! Not me.”

“I know, man. I know. Fuck Ching for right now though. You gotta figure out what you gone do about this murder, man. You just gone sit at the crib and wait for them to come get you?”

Sarcastically, I asked, “I’m suppose to run?”

And Capone laughed like I shoulda known better. “Hell in the fuck yea.”

I shook my head slowly. It was so heavy with stress and anxiety. I didn’t know what to do or where to go. I couldn’t take Aeysha and just leave. She was going to fight me tooth and nail. But I couldn’t leave her there pregnant and stuck with bills and a new baby either.

“Urggh! What the fuck, man?!”

Capone looked at me like I was crazy as I slapped my phone down on the bar.

He asked, “Was it Ching again?”

“Hell naw. Eboni’s crazy ass keep texting me.”

Capone cracked up laughing. “She wants her money, trick.”

“Yea, that bitch is definitely pimpin’ me.”

When my phone started to ring, we both started laughing. But it wasn’t Eboni as I expected. It was Simone.

“What’s up?”

I was expecting her call. She had been texting me since I left her crib. Funny thing is, she was texting me like me sticking my dick in her had changed everything and we were right back fucking around with each other. But if she was cool with that knowing I had a girl, I wasn’t about to argue with her. I had enough shit to deal with.

“Hello? Simone? I can’t hear you.”

I stuck my finger in my ear so that I could hear her more clearly. Then I got up from the bar to step out the exit. The further away I got from the noise of the bar, the more I could make out her tears. Instantly, my eyes rolled into the back of my head and I regretted answering the phone.

I didn’t have time for another night with Simone and her crying.

“Hello? Simone, what’s wrong?”

As I stepped outside, I could make out everything she said. “Omari, she’s dead.”

“Who’s dead?!”

“Tammy! She’s dead.”

“How? When? What happened to her?” I was rambling and stuttering over my words. I couldn’t believe this shit. Instantly, my heart went out to Tammy, knowing that Jimmy had finally gotten to her.

“They found her body burned up in the Dan Ryan Woods.”

Damn. This shit was heavy. I didn’t know what to say.

“I can’t believe that nigga really killed her. Oh my God, baby, it hurts so bad. I need you so bad.”

Over Simone’s tears, I could only think of the fact that Aeysa was sitting at home waiting on me and worried because she still hadn’t seen me all day. But I had never heard anybody cry because they experienced a loss like this. Unlike last night when Simone was just shaken up, tonight she was wailing in such pain that it made me hurt.

My heart went out to Tammy and it definitely went out to Simone.

“I’m on my way.”

FIFTEEN

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2013

Simone

“Tammy Douglas was born March 26, 1986 in Chicago, Illinois. Tammy was a beautiful, intelligent, young woman who loved science. She graduated from South Shore High School. After high school, she received formal education at Chicago State University. After receiving her Master’s as a double major in Education and Science, she taught Chemistry at Kenwood Academy High School...”

Sobs and sniffles seemingly played as a soundtrack to the reading of Tammy’s obituary. I stood at the podium, dressed in black and wearing shades, as I read the obituary, per Mrs. Douglas’ request. Mrs. Douglas’ cries were the worst I had ever heard in my life. They ripped through the church like a painful symphony. Her wails were wracked with so much agony and suffering. The sound of a mother’s cries that had lost her child was like nothing I ever heard before.

“...Tammy’s energy was just as magnetic as her beauty. She touched the lives of many with her smile and generosity. She touched the lives of countless students that she taught for the last three years, as well as children that she tutored in Science citywide...”

Some of those students were in attendance. They sat in the back of the large church taking up several pews. They wore their school t-shirts in tribute, even some with Tammy’s name or picture spray painted on the back.

Donte sat in the front row. When Mr. Douglas should have been the one getting consoled, he was next to Donte literally keeping Donte from totally falling apart. Donte seemed to be shivering with sadness and was overwhelmed with heartbreak.

Even in death, I envied Tammy. I read her obituary and envied how wonderfully she was being perceived. I saw the abundance of love there for her that day and envied how she was undeniably loved.

But as I read and laid eyes on Omari, I felt comfort in knowing that if no one in the world loved me, he was going to.

“... Tammy was granted her angel wings on Wednesday, October 9, 2013. She is survived by her parents, Ernestine and Brian Douglas, her sisters, Tameryn and Talisia, and her best friend, Donte Booker, as well as numerous amounts of relatives, friends, coworkers, and students.”

Omari

“You okay?”

Simone and I were standing a few feet away from Tammy’s gravesite. I was holding her around her waist as she stood, along with a few of Tammy’s family members and close friends, as we watched grave workers lower her casket into the ground.

“Of course not.”

Simone’s voice was at a trembling whisper, so I kissed her cheek. She sighed heavily as she rested her head back on my chest. I honestly wanted to hold her until she wasn’t hurt anymore. If I could have kissed her pain away, I would have.

Ever since Tammy got killed, I had been with Simone as much as I could. I felt like a jerk when she told me that she knew about Aeysha. Being with her for the past week was my way of making up for lying to her. Since I was no longer working for Ching, it was easy for me to juggle my free time outside of work between her and Aeysha. Aeysha thought that I was still on the streets with Ching. I let her think that so that I could manage to be there for Simone through such a fucked up time as this.

Though I was spending a nice amount of time with Simone, I hadn’t fucked her. Believe me, I wanted to. Since Aeysha’s pregnancy was so high risk, she didn’t want to have sex. But with the range of emotions that Simone was going through, I didn’t want to toy with them at that time. I could see that she was feeling me and willing to fuck with me despite Aeysha. Though I could honestly say that I was feeling her, she needed to know that I loved my girl, we had a baby on the way, and that I was not about to leave her.

It wasn’t the right time to lay something that thick on her.

I wanted to be at home with my girl. With Ron's murder still being intensively investigated though, I felt way better being at Simone's crib instead of mine. There hadn't been much word from the dics or Ching, but until I heard official notice that the investigation was closed, that murder would forever be over my head.

Simone and I were back in my Challenger and in the procession line traffic leaving the burial site when my cell phone rang. It was Aeysha. Since Simone knew about Aeysha, I hadn't had any issues talking to her in front of Simone these last few days.

"Hey, baby. What's up?"

When I answered the phone, Simone slid her hand around my free hand, held it, and laid her head on my shoulder. This chick was so fucking down that it made my dick stand straight up. She wasn't shit for being so willing despite my girl, but I couldn't deny how her loyalty and submissiveness was refreshing as fuck. It had been a minute since I could tell a bitch to jump and she asked how high instead of telling me to jump my gawd damn self.

"I need to go to the hospital, Omari."

There was so much fear in Aeysha's voice that I immediately got scared.

Her voice was full of tears as she asked, "Are you far away?"

"I'm in the south suburbs. I can be there in like thirty minutes. What's wrong?"

"I'm cramping really bad. It feels like contractions. Then I spotted a few minutes ago. I'm scared I'm having a miscarriage." At the word miscarriage, she broke down into tears and my heart broke.

I felt like shit being where I was at that moment.

"What hospital are you going to? I'll meet you there. It will be quicker."

"The University of Chicago. Hurry up, babe."

Aeysha

“Baby, it’s going to be okay. Try to calm down.”

I closed my eyes and tried not to think the worse. I focused on Omari’s hand on my stomach, rubbing it soothing and lovingly.

No matter how much I tried not to be, I was so scared of losing my baby. I lay on the table in the examination room waiting for the doctor to come in to do the ultrasound. They had already started test and drawn blood.

“I don’t want to lose my baby.” My voice was at a frightened whisper. Tears rolled silently down my face as I lay looking towards the ceiling.

“Try thinking about something else, babe.”

I couldn’t even look at Omari. If I lost this baby, I felt like I would lose him. I wasn’t having this baby to keep him. But if I lost this baby, I was losing what had been an important part of changing this relationship from boyfriend/girlfriend to family.

“I’m so happy,” I said through tears. “For once, I’m genuinely happy. I just want it to stay that way.”

Omari’s hand left my stomach and held my hand tightly. He wiped my tears with the palm of his other hand and kissed my cheek slow and soothingly.

“In a million years, I never thought I would be here; in this moment, with you, carrying our baby. I’m so happy in this moment. For so long, I have wanted to be a better me. Even though I got a job, I am officially a better me now, because I am finally a mother and *your* baby’s mother. This baby changed me for the better. If it dies, I feel like I’ll die with it.”

Finally, I looked at him. My heart broke into pieces to see a lonely tear sliding slowly down his cheek.

Omari promised me, “Everything is going to be okay,” as if he would make it okay no matter what. “What are we going to name the baby?”

He was changing the subject. By the looks of the tears that began to flow, it was for his sake, not mine.

“If it’s a girl, let’s name her Dahlia Rose, after your mother.”

While wiping his face free of his tears, Omari smiled happily. “I like that, babe. And if it’s a boy?”

“I’ll let you name him if it’s a boy.”

“He’ll be a Junior then, of course!”

We both giggled as someone knocked on the door.

“I’m dressed,” I announced.

Just as quick as the conversation took my sadness away, it came back as Dr. Kumar came in. She cut off the lights and began to cover my stomach with ultrasound gel.

She noticed the fear in my eyes. With a comforting smile, she told me, “Relax. Let’s take a look at your baby.”

Me and Omari’s eyes widened as our little one appeared on the monitor in 3D. First, I could only see its arms and fingers. As Dr. Kumar moved the transducer probe, I could see that the baby was holding its little foot. Me and Omari broke out in uncontrollable giggles.

We stared at our baby in amazement; the image being so lifelike that it seemed as if we could reach out and touch our baby. We could see the structure of its nose, the chunkiness of its cheeks, and even that it had Omari’s slanted eyes.

“Do you want to know the gender?”

Before I could even answer, Omari answered, “Yea!”

Dr. Kumar and I laughed at his eagerness as she moved the probe to find the genitals. Omari and I stared at the monitor, holding our breath in anticipation. Honestly, I didn’t care what we had. I would be happy either way.

“It’s a girl.”

Though I didn’t care either way, I burst out in tears knowing that it was a girl.

Omari held my hand tightly with one hand while wrapping his other around my head and kissing my cheek over and over again.

“Dahlia Rose,” I uttered in amazement.

“Oh my God,” slipped from Omari’s lips in a whisper as he stared at his daughter. I was in pleasant shock, gazing at the monitor with a mixture of fear and joy. It was the most amazing feeling to lay eyes on something that I thought I would never have in my life. But as I lay there continuing to feel undeniable pain in my cervix, I was horrified by a premonition that this would be the closest I would come to seeing our baby.

Omari

Aeysha had preeclampsia and an incompetent cervix. The doctor put her on strict bed rest until she went into labor. Except for going to the bathroom or a quick shower, she had to lie down.

That meant that outside of work, I had to be her little errand boy, which she was super cool with. I was cool with it too, especially after seeing my little girl on that monitor.

“What up, Capone? My bad. I been meaning to call you back all day. I had a pretty hectic one.”

Capone answered, “You ain’t the only one.”

As I drove towards Chinese Kitchen to get Aeysha something to eat, I braced myself for the bullshit.

“Ching got arrested today. The lil’ dip sleeping over at his crib called Black’s phone at like nine o’clock this morning. They snatched him up at the crib this morning.”

My head started to spin so fast that I got dizzy. I felt faint as I pulled into the parking lot of the strip mall.

“Has he been able to make a phone call?”

“Yea, he called Black about an hour ago.”

“They charge him yet?”

“Yea. First-degree murder.”

“Damn. They had evidence?!”

“Apparently, they found the whip he was riding in. He tried to get somebody to burn it up and leave it in Michigan somewhere. There was DNA in the trunk.”

Fuck.

“What did he say when he talked to Black?”

“Shit, a lot. He pissed off. Thinking niggas snitchin’. He didn’t say who...”

“But me and you both know who he think snitched.”

As I hung up with Capone, I forced myself to shake the uneasy feeling that was making my head spin. I had to get it together. There wasn't shit I could do but wait, like a sitting duck, to see if I was ever tied to that murder or if Ching was going to retaliate against me for “snitching”.

Luckily, Aeysha's order was ready, so I was in and out and back in front of the crib within ten minutes. I just wanted to be in the crib up under both of my babies. That day had been full of a lot of unusual emotions.

I was worn the fuck out and just wanted to sleep.

“So you can't answer my calls?”

Eboni's voice was like nails on a gawd damn chalkboard. Reluctantly, I turned around to see her sitting on her couch in her bra panties through her cracked front door.

I tried to joke and play it off. “Man, why is you sitting there with the door open like that?”

She stood up from the couch and walked towards the front door seductively. “Waiting on you to come back with Aeysha's food.”

Daringly she entered the small hallway in her underwear. Luckily, the security door was solid, so nobody could see through it.

“Man, what the fuck is you doin'?” I was whispering but my words came out harshly as Eboni walked towards me. Once again, she had me cornered on the stairs.

“C'mon, baby. Give me that dick,” she begged as she reached into my pants. It was hard for me to fight her with a liter of pop in one hand and Aeysha's dinner in the other.

I sat the food down and grabbed her shoulders while continuing to whisper. “Eboni, you trippin'!”

But she kept reaching into my pants with a smile on her face. “She can't even get out of the bed, Omari. You're straight.”

“So!”

Then she actually yelled. “WHY NOT?!”

I damn near shitted bricks when Eboni got loud. I looked at her questioningly, like I couldn't believe she would really do this as she looked at me with a smile on her face.

In response, she folded her arms and looked at me with an expression on her face that dared me to try her.

I left the food on the stairs and followed Eboni into the house. I was so sick of being treated like a punk bitch. Between her and Ching, I felt like it was time I showed a motherfucka what it was. Ching was locked up, so I couldn't prove shit to that nigga. But Eboni was about to feel the wrath for both of them.

I threw her on the couch on her back, pulled my dick out of my pants and got on top of her, anchoring myself with one leg placed firmly on the floor. I put my hands over her mouth and I slid my dick into her already wet pussy. I couldn't believe she was already wet, like it turned her on to do this shit.

With both of my hands over her mouth, I fucked the living dawg shit out that girl. If dick was what she wanted, dick was what she got.

Her moans and screams were muffled into my hand as she clawed at my back. I saw tears in her eyes, but I knew that it was because it was hurting so good. As I made deep penetrating circular motions, I could make out that she was saying, “Oh my God,” over and over again.

“Oh your God what?” I was talking shit threateningly while now stroking her deep, long, and fast. “You wanted this dick, right?”

She nodded her head eagerly, like a puppy.

Every now and then, I would look back at the door to make sure that nobody was coming. But I was about to cum. No matter how much this bitch got on my nerves, the feeling of wet pussy on my dick was amazing.

SIXTEEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2013

Aeysha

Eboni was out of breath as she entered my bedroom.

“Whoo! Coming up and down them stairs hurt like a motherfucka!”

She had a plate of food in her hand that I eagerly took from her. Eboni had been such a big help since I got put on bed rest. Since I couldn't work, Omari was taking all of the overtime he could get at UPS, so Aeysha was the only person close by that could help me when needed.

“I'm sorry, girl,” I told her as I started digging into the omelet she made me. “I won't bother you anymore. Omari is only working a little over time this morning, so he should be home soon.”

“Umph,” she replied with a smirk as she sat at the foot of the bed.

“What's that face for?”

“How you know he doin' overtime?”

“Because he said he was,” I replied obviously. “Why would he lie?”

Eboni laughed. “Why wouldn't he? Girl, he lie all the time. Don't let that baby make you forget.”

I rolled my eyes behind her back. This was typical shit bitches did when a woman was trying to enjoy her happiness. I was sure that Eboni was just trying to be a friend, helping me maintain my composure and not get lost in the clouds. I knew Omari wasn't perfect though. Trying to enjoy my happiness didn't have anything to do with me suddenly forgetting all the bullshit he use to be on.

“I haven’t forgotten a damn thing. I know good and gawd damn well what my man is capable of.”

“Well, long as you know,” she replied, casually flipping through a Victoria’s Secret magazine.

“But as long as he keep doing what he been doin’, which is holding down this family and keeping his bullshit to a minimum, I’m good. I haven’t had any issues out of Omari in a minute, so I’m not about to sit here and dwell on it. I just want to enjoy my pregnancy as much as I can.”

Eboni sighed heavily. “You’re right,” she replied turning towards me. “You should definitely enjoy your pregnancy.” Then she softly rubbed my belly with a smile. “So, how does it feel being preggers finally?”

The biggest smile spread across my face.

Eboni rolled her eyes playfully. “You’re such a lame.”

“Of course you would think I’m a lame. Getting pregnant isn’t hard for you, so it’s no big deal. You get pregnant if a nigga sneeze on you.”

Laughing, Eboni nodded. “This is true. Very true.”

“Girl, I never thought I could have a baby. You know how it feels to love a man with all of your heart, but you can’t give him what every other bitch in the world can? I felt like less of a woman.” I stopped myself to keep from crying. Just talking about it still hurt.

“Well, you don’t have to worry about that anymore!” Eboni was trying to lighten the mood, and I appreciated it. By the grace of God I didn’t have to relive those ill feelings anymore.

Omari

A week after Ching was arrested, he had a bail hearing. I didn't go of course. Since Ching was on that bullshit, I really didn't give a fuck about being there. The only thing I cared about was whether this nigga really thought I was a trick.

Since even Black and Bert had begun to distance themselves from me, I figured he did.

Capone went though. Afterwards, we met up for a bite to eat out west at Macarthur's.

“They didn't even give that nigga bail.”

When Capone told me that, I wasn't surprised. Regardless of the governor being on top of the whole case, very few people got bail when being charged with first-degree murder.

“Them dics been fucking with you, man?”

I shook my head while smashing some dressing and gravy. Macarthur's was the most popular soul food restaurant in the Chi. My plate was full of fried chicken, catfish steaks, macaroni and cheese, greens, yams, and cornbread.

Looking at me curiously as I smashed, Capone asked, “Man, you high or something?”

“Naw, nigga. I'm hungry.”

“Aw, man. You got the pregnancy symptoms. That's cute.”

Capone was high as hell his damn self. That's why he felt like he was a fucking comedian all of a sudden.

“Fuck you, dawg. Don't ever say shit is cute about me. That's gay.”

“Your eyes gray tho, fam.”

“Anyway, nigga! Naw the dics ain't on me, man.”

Finally, Capone got serious. “I can’t see Ching snitchin’.”

“With the way that nigga been actin’, there’s no tellin’.”

I could hear my text message sound notification going off in my pocket. I knew it was Simone saying some ol’ nasty shit to me. I hadn’t seen her since Tammy’s funeral. If I wasn’t at work, I was at the crib with Aeysha with not even a chance to pick up the phone to see how she was doing. That day, I knew exactly how she was doing though. She was horny as fuck. Every text message she sent was telling me what she wanted to do to me, or what she wanted me to do to her, and she was even sending pictures of herself naked in all these raunchy ass poses and positions.

I didn’t mind putting her in a few positions my damn self. Now that Aeysha was on bed rest, that pussy was off limits completely. Besides being forced to fuck Eboni’s nasty ass every now and then, I was stuck beating off in the bathroom.

I would have given anything to fuck something that I wanted to that was pretty, tight, and willing.

“Let me ask you something,” I told Capone as I sat my fork down. “You think I snitched?”

I needed to know. Bert and Black were flunkies. They did whatever the fuck Ching said do. I didn’t even really know them niggas. But I fucked with Capone, so I wanted to know.

“Naw, dawg,” he answered.

“Seriously.”

“I wouldn’t even be here with you if I did. Ching trippin’. He spazzin’, man. When it’s all said and done, he’ll realize that you didn’t snitch.”

I just sat there quietly. In my heart, I honestly didn’t believe that shit. Niggas didn’t like snitches. If Ching was going to trial, I knew he felt like I could possibly testify

against him to keep myself out of jail, if it ever came to that, especially since he already thought I was singing.

“So what we gone do, dawg?”

I was lost. I looked at Capone curiously. “Do about what?”

“Work. Bread. The block.”

“Man, I told you, I ain’t fuckin’ with Ching no more.”

“Who said anything about Ching? That nigga gone be gone for a real long time. Eventually the lil’ work on the block gone run out and then what?”

“What Black and Bert talkin’ about?”

“Ching probably gone try to run shit from the county for a minute. So you know Black and Bert waitin’ on word from Ching.”

“You not?”

Capone sat back while pushing his plate away. “Naw. I’m not. I’m tired of being on the block. I want to run my own shit.”

I just sat there looking at him, waiting to see what the fuck I had to do with any of it.

Then he told me, “You’re my only line to the connect. You got a good rep with him. You been working on them drops and shipments. He fucks with you. So let’s do this.”

“*Lets?*”

“Yea, nigga, *let’s*. Me and you. I got niggas out south waiting on work right now.”

“So you don’t need me then.”

“I need your money.”

I was crackin’ up laughing. “Oh *that’s* what I got to do with it.”

“I got my own bread, but I need more to cop the amount of weight that I have to in order to fuck with Ching’s connect.” When I sat there needing more convincing, Capone gave me some. “You said you was through with Ching. But are you through gettin’ money?”

Money was definitely running low. After putting the down payment on the house in Riverdale, furnishing it, and preparing to move, my stash was dwindling. I realized that once we moved and the baby came, I was going to be right back in the position I was in a few months ago; broke, but now without a nigga like Ching to borrow from.

“Man, I ain’t no street, nigga.” It was real easy for Capone to put this all together in his head because he knew that life inside and out. I had been forced into the shit. I was a nigga that made drops, but he was trying to put me on a whole nother level that I knew nothing about.

Capone laughed in my face, came close and spoke in a much lower tone. “Nigga, you droppin’ bodies in lakes and pushin’ bricks. You ‘bout this life and you don’t even know it.”

Simone

As I frantically raced towards the door, I patted my hair to ensure that it was in place and rubbed my lips together to smooth out my lip gloss.

Finally, after nearly two weeks, I’d broken Omari down and convinced him to come over.

I opened the door and stood there damn near posing in a bright red thong and matching lace bra.

I smiled seductively as I greeted him. “Hey you.”

He looked me up and down slowly and admired my body. But he didn’t return my lust as he came in. “We need to talk.”

Omari was walking quickly, as if he didn’t have much time.

That annoyed me.

I didn't sit beside him on the couch. I sat on his lap instead, putting my soft perky titties right in front of him like lunch.

He wasn't paying them any attention though. But when he wrapped his arms around my waist, I knew that, no matter how bad he tried to resist, he wanted me.

"Listen, Simone. You know that I have a girl, but we never talked about her."

Instantly, I rolled my eyes into the back of my head. I tried to leave his lap, but using his strength, he wouldn't let me.

"Why would I want to talk about her?"

"You need to know. I wanna keep it real with you."

I didn't need to know shit about that bitch. All I needed to know was that he was still willing to fuck with me. He had been trying to distance himself. I could tell that he was focusing on that *little family*. I was slowly reeling his ass in though, little by little. Despite his love for Aeysha, I could see in his eyes that he still wanted me.

That's all I needed to know.

But I shut up and let him talk.

"She's six months pregnant. I been with her for seven years. I love her..."

I interrupted him by touching his locs. No matter what this man was saying to me, I was so totally fascinated by him that I didn't care what was coming out of his mouth unless it had something to do with me. "But you like me, right?"

"I do. I'm not even gone front."

"Then what's the problem?"

Looking dead into my eyes, he told me, "I'll never leave her."

I gave him the same seriousness when I replied, “I didn’t ask you to.”

As he sat stuck and confused, I took the opportunity to take his mind off of that bitch Aeysha and that runt. I slid down onto my knees and began to softly nibble at his dick through his cargo pants. When he let out a soft moan, I knew that the dick was mine.

He helped me unzip his pants.

I moaned seductively just seeing that beautiful erect piece of art staring back at me. “Ooo, I want that dick.”

With every word I said, I could see his dick pulsating with excitement. He looked at me in awe of my eagerness to give myself to him.

Omari reached down. When he softly wrapped his hand around my neck, I felt my pussy began to drip. It ran like an ocean as he guided me by the neck towards him.

Once I was straddling him, he kissed me so aggressively that I thought he was mad at me. He squeezed my ass tightly and smacked it roughly.

“Shit,” I moaned.

Our faces were close. Our breath was intertwined. Our words merged together.

“You want this dick, right?”

“Yes, baby.” The lust was so thick that it was suffocating me. “I want it *so bad*.”

“Show me.”

His aggression was so fucking overpowering and irresistible. He already had my mind gone. But when he did shit like this, it made me obsessed.

I hovered above him on my tiptoes.

As I slid down his dick, he continued to threaten me erotically. “You betta give me all that pussy too.”

We began to fuck fight; me fucking him with all of my might and him fucking me back with all of his. He wrapped my hair around his fingers and pulled tight until my neck was vulnerably exposed to his oral battering. He licked and sucked the most sensitive areas of my neck while I rode him ruthlessly; the combination of the two sensations making me cream all over his dick.

Suddenly, he was lying me down on the couch. The smell of Ralph Lauren that he was wearing captivated me. This man had me in such a spell.

He knew that. Omari knew that I was like putty in his hands. He got a kick out of watching me moan in ecstasy while he rubbed his dick against my clit and teasingly penetrated me.

“Put it in me, baby. Give it to me.”

With a teasing laugh, he told me, “Nope.”

Panting, I asked, “Please?”

I loved playing this game with him.

“You want it that bad?”

I was nearly in tears as I answered, “Yes.”

“What will you do for it?”

“Anything, baby.”

I guess that was the right answer, because he then gave me the best dick of my life. As I lay there cumming over and over, I knew that, though Aeysha had his heart, I had the rest of him.

It would only be a matter of time before his heart was mine too.

SEVENTEEN

MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2013

Omari

Aeysha looked at me like I was crazy when she woke up and I was staring at her.

“What are you looking at?”

“You’re beautiful.”

She was. No matter the weight she gained, no matter the women I slept with, I loved this woman to death. Nobody or no new pussy could ever change that.

And what made her the most beautiful woman in the world was that fat round belly that lay between us.

“You think so, Omari?”

“Hell yea. Even with stank ass breath and crud in your eye.”

“Whatever, nigga.”

Then, like two teenagers, we lay there staring at each other with goofy grins on our faces that told on how much we loved each other.

I might be a hypocrite. I know I was in some other pussy just the night before. But there was a big difference in liking or having love for somebody and being in love. I was in love with this girl that was lying next to me. That was why no matter how much love I had for Simone, I would never ever leave this woman. I would always tough it out. I would always take her shit talking. I would always be there.

“I prayed for this.”

“What do you mean?”

“I prayed for this right here,” Aeysha explained with a soft smile. “The three of us being together. I prayed over and over again and asked God to show me a sign that this was meant to be. When He gave me this baby, I knew it was His sign that we would be okay. God answered my prayers.”

That right there; *that* was why I loved her so much.

Aeysha

“Hey, Mama Sutton.”

“Hey, Aeysha. How are you feeling, sweetie?”

At the moment, I was miserable.

“Tired of being in this bed. Can’t do anything but watch TV,” I explained before letting out a frustrated moan.

“Well, you gotta do what you gotta do. We don’t want anything to happen to that beautiful baby. Where is Omari? He isn’t answering his cell phone.”

“He went to buy some boxes from Home Depot so that he can finish packing the apartment. Then he is picking us up some lunch.”

“When are you all moving?”

“In two weeks.”

“Oh okay. Well, I was calling you all because the banquet hall needs a credit card number in order to reserve the room. It’s the only room left, and a wedding party is trying to get it. I know you really wanted to have your baby shower there, so we need to give them a credit card like ASAP.”

“Okay, Mama. Let me try to get a hold of Omari. You know he doesn’t have any plastic, but mine is in the car. I’ll call you right back.”

When Omari didn’t answer, I figured that he had his hands full with boxes at Home Depot. I cursed him because I told him to get my wallet out of the car before he left. He left it in there after getting us dinner last night with my card and using my car.

I tried Eboni’s cell. She didn’t answer either. I peeked outside of the blinds and didn’t see her car.

Nervous that that beautiful room that I wanted my baby shower to be in would be booked by that wedding before

Omari got back, I slid out of the bed. I knew that I shouldn't have been on my feet or climbing the stairs. But the doctor assured me that minor walking was okay. That was my first, and I planned for it to be my only, time on my feet that day, so I figured it would be okay.

Omari

It took forever for them to get the boxes from the back that I ordered at Home Depot. By the time I was able to buy them and pack them into the back of my car, it had been a good forty–five minutes.

I'd left my phone in the car, so as I climbed into the passenger seat, I started my car and checked my phone for any missed calls or text messages.

My mama had blown me up a few times, but I knew she probably only wanted to talk about the baby shower. Aeysha had only rung me once and then sent a text saying that she needed her wallet out of the car when I got back home.

What blew me was that Eboni had blown my phone the fuck up within the last ten or fifteen minutes. That bitch was losing it. She was becoming more and more controlling and spastic.

I couldn't wait to move.

I took the few minutes alone in my car to think for a minute. Everything was happening so fast; moving, the baby, and Ching's trial. I was still waiting to see if I would ever be picked up again by the dics, but the closer I got to moving across town, the more relieved I felt. True in all, the dics could get me from anywhere, but I just felt less like of a target in another location.

As I pulled up on the corner of my block, I was ambushed by mass chaos. Police officers were everywhere. The block was taped off by yellow crime scene tape and a squad car was blocking the intersection. It had to be about twenty people surrounding the barricade; trying their damnest to see what was going on. I parked my whip, left the boxes in the car, grabbed Aeysha's food, and went to see what was going on.

Some people had the weirdest looks on their faces as they watched me walk up. I knew everybody, since I lived on the block for some time.

“Omari!” Someone shouted my name. The sound of her voice was curdling with tears and sadness.

It was Eboni.

Before I could spot her, she was behind me, pulling me by the arm towards an officer. “I’ve been calling you! Oh my God!”

“What’s wrong?”

She only continued to cry hysterically. That brought me to a panic. As I followed Eboni unconscious of where she was taking me, I tried to look down the block, trying to see what was going on, but I couldn’t. I could only make out a group of officers and detectives, standing in the middle of the street.

As we walked up on an officer, Eboni told the officer, “This is her boyfriend.” Then her cries got worse as she cover her face with her hands. She was even shaking.

“What’s your name, son?” This officer was being so nice and careful with me that the shit was scary.

“Omari,” I told her. “What’s going on?”

“You need to come with me to the hospital. Get in the car, son.”

“Why?! What the fuck is going on?!”

I looked at Eboni for a sign, but only got more tears as she shook her head in disbelief.

“Yo’! What the fuck happened, Eboni?!”

I was getting scared and frustrated at the same time. My head was starting to spin. I noticed my neighbors; some who lived on either side of me or across the street. Their composure was lost as tears streamed down their faces. I tried looking down the block again. When I couldn’t see my house, my instincts moved my feet.

“No, son! You can’t go in there!”

The officer tried to hold me back, but I pushed her arms. Still crying hysterically, Ebony assisted her in keeping me away from the crime scene tape.

“Omari, its Aeysha!” When I heard her name, I stopped dead in my tracks. I stared into Ebony’s eyes hoping that I saw a lie. “She got shot.”

“WHAT?!”

I didn’t even wait for an answer. I charged towards the barricade, ready to force my way past everybody and every cop.

Noticing the disturbance, three more officers came, but I didn’t give a fuck. I fought them too as they tried to contain me. My head was spinning and my heart was hurting. I was having an outer body experience as I tried to wrap my head around what the fuck was going on.

“Son, you gone have to calm down before we have to restrain you. Don’t make us restrain you. *Please.*”

The sympathy of these officers is what really scared me.

It could only mean one thing.

I finally stopped fighting and just stood trying with all my heart to see a glimpse of my girl on that block somewhere. I didn’t even look at any of their faces as I asked, “Is she okay?”

And all they could tell me was, “Get in the car, son. Let us take you to the hospital.”

EIGHTEEN

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2013

Omari

Aeysha died the next morning from a gunshot wounds to the head and chest. After surgery, she fought all night to stay alive. I held her hand and talked to her, hoping that she could hear me.

At two o'clock n the morning, she was gone.

“Son, do you have any idea who would do something like this?”

I was still at the hospital. I couldn't even bring myself to leave. I felt like if I left that hospital, it would make it so real that my baby was gone. It felt like I was in a real fucked up dream and at any moment I would wake up staring at my baby's sleeping face again.

I wanted to hold onto that hope as much as I could.

But as I looked at the sorrow and tears in my mother's eyes as she sat beside me in the family room of the critical care unit, holding my hand and rubbing my back, I knew this shit was real.

“If you know anything, I need you to tell me, son.”

I couldn't tell this cop that Ching had done this. I couldn't tell him because, though I knew it, I couldn't wrap my head around this nigga taking it so far that he would kill Aeysha in cold blood. He'd had somebody execute my baby all because he was spooked that I would trick and fuck up his case.

My mind was spinning. The room was spinning. Voices sounded like scrambled words in the distance. I just leaned over into my mother's lap. I cried, screamed, and asked God why. I had never heard myself make such grueling noises

in my life. This pain was so bad that I thought if I screamed loud enough, it would go away.

But it didn't.

I thought if I asked God enough times, Aeysha would wake up.

But she didn't.

I heard my mother telling the officer to give me some time. But no time would be long enough to heal from this.

Simone

“Simone, I can not believe you sold this beautiful house.”

Looking around the living room, I couldn't believe it. African-American art that my mother purchased years and years ago still hung on the wall. I even kept her favorite umbrella in the corner, where she left it. There was a time that I thought that I would never part with this house.

But as I signed the contract and handed it back to Sara, it was official. My mother's house was no longer mine. It now belonged to a married couple with a set of twin girls.

“I can't believe it either. But I didn't need all of this space. Plus, this house reminds me of my mother. It's too painful. And the mortgage was kicking my ass.”

“Well, at the price you got for the house, you have a pretty nice cushion to rest on.”

That indeed. I sold the house at twenty thousand dollars more than it was appraised for. After paying off the mortgage, I was walking away with seventy-five thousand dollars.

“Where are you going to live now?”

“I'll be closing on a condo downtown in a few days.”

Sara smiled and nodded in approval. Most white folks approved of living as far north in the city as possible.

A few minutes later, Sara and I said goodbye. After letting her out, I walked through the door touching everything that I could get my hands on. I immersed myself in the feel of everything so that I would never forget the comfort and joy that this house had given me.

NINETEEN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2013

Omari

I laughed at the way Capone smiled at me when I walked into the bar.

“Get that goofy ass grin off your face, nigga. You done got soft in two months?”

We shook up, but considering what I had been through, Capone gave me a bro hug.

“Man, I can’t front. It’s good to see you out and about.”

It felt good being out and about. The last two months after Aeysha’s murder had been rough, to say the least. For weeks after the funeral, I stayed in the house, trying hard to stay sane. I didn’t eat much. I could never sleep. I even got fired from UPS because I was taking too much time off.

Capone ordered me a shot of Patron. At first, I was scared to even drink that shit, thinking that my drunk mind would bring my grieving truth to the surface. Yea, I was outside, but it was all a front. I was pretending to have it all together for the sake of trying to press on.

Life was forcing me to keep living.

“I was surprised you called me, man.”

I knew Capone would be surprised. But like I said, life was forcing me to keep living. “I know.”

“What’s up?”

“That offer still on the table to take over them blocks?”

Capone’s eyes brightened with happiness. “You ready to work?”

I was more than ready. I couldn't stomach living in that apartment after Aeysha was killed. Because she was just as excited about the house in Riverdale as I was, I went ahead and moved in it, even though I was laid off. My stash had dwindled down to barely anything. I was still fucked up in the head about Aeysha, and I even still had a bad taste in my mouth about being in the game, since it's what led to her getting killed. But I was back at square one. I was back struggling to pay bills. And even though I didn't have Aeysha to take care of anymore, in addition to my mother, I still had a little Aeysha to take care of.

Dahlia Rose had survived the shooting. Though born at fourteen ounces and only ten inches long, after two months of being in the Neonatal Unit at Wyler's Children's Hospital, my little princess was being released from the hospital the next day.

"I'm more than ready," I told Capone.

"You got the bread?"

I didn't, but I knew who did.

Just as I nodded my head, Simone came into the bar. She looked good in a fitted leather blazer, knee length leather boots and straight leg jeans. Her hair bounced like she had just gotten it done. It was much longer and looked like that good virgin shit that women spend hundreds on. Even her body looked different. She was a lot more toned, and she had a lot more hips and ass than I remembered. I knew she'd gotten some money from selling her crib. I figured some of it had been injected in her ass.

Just like Capone, I had to laugh at the way she smiled at me.

"Heeeey," she sung to me as she hugged me. "It's good to see you."

I hadn't seen her since Aeysha was killed. We'd stayed in contact because she refused to let me slip past the point of no return. Day in and day out, Simone was talking to me, consoling me and helping me cope with the pain. Even though

I was grieving, I couldn't deny how she had put her feelings aside just to be there for me while I grieved for my woman.

Because of that, my love for her had grown even more.

Even while I was trying to figure out how to get back on my feet, she offered to loan me the money that I needed to cop some weight from the connect.

She was willing to loan me twenty thousand dollars. She was loyal as fuck, and I appreciated it like a motherfucka.

“Look at you. You've lost so much weight.”

Timidly, I smiled. When usually that was a good thing, for me, it was bad. I wasn't the biggest nigga before. After weeks of barely having an appetite, I'd lost muscle mass along with about twenty pounds.

“I know. I'm getting it back right, though. One day at a time.”

“That's the only way to do it.”

After ordering a drink, Simone got to the point. “So what's up? Why did you ask me to come here?”

Along with having Capone meet me so that I could get my shit rolling into the direction of getting my life back on track, I asked Simone to come for the same reasons.

“I needed to talk to you.”

“About?”

“Well, besides my mother, you've been there for me through what is probably the worst thing I will ever go through in my life.” Just thinking about it brought tears to my eyes. But I shook that feeling. Even if it was just a front, I had to move on. “I can't image how it must feel having feelings for somebody who loves somebody else. The fact that you put your feelings to the side just to be there for me is something that I will never forget. I've always liked you. And in a fucked up way, now I can be there for you like you have been there for me. I got this little girl coming home with me tomorrow. I don't know the first thing about raising a girl. It's so many

things changing in my life, but I know for a fact that I want you in it helping me through the change.”

Simone

As he said those words, my body literally exhaled.

“Of course, I’ll be there for you.”

Then, Omari reached out and hugged me. To be in his arms again was like taking a breath that I had been waiting to take for two months. I exhaled and engrossed myself in his arms.

As we let go, he gave me the most sensual kiss on the lips.

My arms were around his neck as I smiled flirtatious and said, “I missed you.”

“I missed you too.” When he spoke, those beautiful gray eyes were damn near sparkling.

Then, regret filled my heart as I felt my phone vibrating in my pocket. I knew it was Chance, so I had to go.

“Listen. I have to make a run. How long will you be here?”

“For awhile. Come back.”

I promised Omari that I would as I finished off my drink. Then I hurried towards the door. Once outside, I literally ran to my car and away from the biting air. It was a cold December day- only thirty degrees.

No matter how cold it was outside, I was hot as hell on the inside with thoughts of Omari running through my mind as I turned on the radio.

“Yet another pregnant woman was gunned down on the Southside last night. Tina Presley, twenty-seven and four months pregnant was gunned down during a drive by on Seventy-Ninth and Racine. This is the second time this year a pregnant woman has been murdered by gun violence. Aeysa

Richardson was gunned down just two months ago outside of her home. This violence has to...”

I shut the DJ up by turning off the radio.

Fuck that bitch! I was tired of hearing about Aeysha! She was dead, but I was hearing her fucking name more than I did when she was alive.

Urgh!

But all is well that ends *perfectly*. Finally, I had my man. No longer was I the bitch that lost to some other trick. Finally, after all of the planning, plotting, and scheming, I was number one and it felt so fucking good.

As I pulled into the gas station on Eighty-Seventh and State with the biggest smile on my face thinking of Omari, I spotted Chance standing in a black North Face bubble coat. I blew the horn. He spotted me and quickly came over to the car.

I popped the lock and reached for my purse. By the time he climbed in and shut the door, I handed him the blank envelope full of cash.

All he could say was, “Bet.”

During this entire time, Chance had been very nonchalant about this whole thing. But he needed the money more than life itself, so I knew, no matter his attitude, he would follow through with the plan.

“You’re leaving town, right?”

He didn’t have a choice really. Staying in Chicago was too risky. Even though Omari said that Aeysha’s murder case had grown cold, I did not want to risk Chance lingering around Chicago.

As he opened the envelope and thumbed through the cash, he nodded slowly.

“It’s all there,” I assured him. “Twenty-five thousand dollars.”

Twenty-five thousand dollars to kill that bitch Aeysha. I could not believe it. But, I can't even deny that when Omari wrapped his arms around me and kissed me, I felt like it was worth every penny. Besides, after killing Tammy, I was even more willing to pay someone to get rid of Aeysha for me.

Tammy had it coming though! I saw that bitch fucking Omari. The day I found out about Aeysha, I went to his house. I wasn't expecting to see anything. I just sat out there staring, wishing that I was the one living in there with him. When I saw him leave the house, I trailed him to that club. Then I just sat out there all night, wondering if I should go in. So I was parked a few cars down when him and Tammy got into the backseat of his car. A few days after that bitch had the nerve to look like she questioned if Omari was really my man, I went back over her mother's house to confront her "perfect" ass about fucking Omari.

You know what that bitch had the nerve to tell me? She had the audacity to call me crazy for following him. She called me a psycho stalker. Then she had the nerve to tell me that Omari wasn't my man and would never want me. She said that I would never be anything in my life but a side bitch.

I showed that bitch how he would never want her slut ass again when I choked her motherfuckin' ass to death.

I was just so mad that she was talking to me like that! She was right. After falling for another man, I was still playing second string to some bitch. I felt so stupid and so angry. And when Tammy sat there looking at me like I was worthless, I felt like Tammy had transformed into the main bitch to all them niggas that didn't choose me. So I leaped over and just started choking the bitch! I was choking her so hard that I could feel the ridges of her esophagus against my fingertips.

I was in a trance of rage. I honestly didn't realize what I was doing until she was taking her last breath. For thirty minutes, I sat there in shock wondering what the fuck to do with her body before her mother came home. Then I drug her body out to the garage and into my car, drove it to the forest

preserve, and set her on fire to burn any evidence. I knew everybody would think it was Jimmy.

I felt bad, but I had always envied Tammy so much that I wished she would go away. Even when Jimmy would call me trying to find her, I would give him her new number and even told him where she was.

After getting away with killing Tammy, I was even more convinced to kill Aeysha, especially if I didn't do it myself. I had always planned to pay Chance to do the dirty work. At first, I put my mother's house up for sale to get the money to loan to Omari so that he could buy into Ching's camp. I figured that would be a way to get his attention again. But, as he distanced himself more and more, I figured I could use the money to pay Chance to get rid of Aeysha all together. Chance needed the money, was a naive kid down on his luck that had a crush on me, and I needed him.

Since Aeysha was on bed rest, my plan that day was for Chance to break into the apartment and kill Aeysha. As Chance and I sat in my car at the end of the block, waiting on Omari to leave, never once did I think to stop, and neither did he. We both needed it for very different desperate reasons.

When we spotted her walking down the front steps, it was perfect timing.

I always had a gut feeling that once Aeysha was out of the picture, Omari would be all mine. Now, she had been completely erased out of the gawd damn picture and finally, *finally*, I was number one.

Finally, I won.

To be continued.....

Follow Jessica online:

Twitter: @luv_sex_lies

Instagram: @authorjwatkins

Facebook: www.facebook.com/authorjwatkins