

A KeyWalt Crossover
with
This Love Not Different

Something
NEW

T. Key & Monica Walters

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DISCLAIMER: This book has strong and explicit language as well as graphic scenes. Read at your own discretion.

Please make sure you check out the Something New playlist on Spotify!
Here are some of the tracks from the playlist:

Kash Doll, Trey Songz- On Sight

Arin Ray- A Seat

Kehlani, Dom Kennedy- Nunya

John Legend, Jhené Aiko- U Move, I Move

Justine Skye- Million Days

Teyana Taylor, Quavo- Let's Build

Summer Walker, London On Da Track- Something Real

Daley, Marsha Ambrosius- Alone Together

Prologue

I had never laid eyes on someone so fine. I'm talking from head to toe. When my cousin Divine and her new fiancé Solomon walked through the front door of my Uncle Des and Aunt Juliana's house for their engagement party with his friends, my eyes immediately found his. On his face was this sexy ass smirk as we stared at each other for a minute.

As we all filed out to the backyard, me and my other cousin Gia walked behind Divine and Solomon and his friends behind us. My body was starting to warm over and I needed a drink. So, as soon as we got outside, I headed over to the bar where the bartender for the night was busy pouring champagne. "Damn Sheena," Gia whispered in my ear. "If you stare at him any harder, his clothes gone just fall off." We both laughed as we leaned against the bar and watched Divine and Solomon be congratulated by members of our family.

"Well, I would hope not. I wouldn't want nobody getting a glimpse of what I hope is underneath those clothes except me."

"You are so fast," she giggled as I caught his eye again. He was now across the way with Solomon, his other friend and me and Gia's dads. I grabbed my champagne and so did Gia then headed over to Divine, who was now talking to Aunt Juliana.

"Can we get in on the love," Gia asked as she stretched her arms out to hug Di Di. "We're so happy for you."

"Thanks y'all," Di Di replied. My cousin was already beautiful but being engaged...and pregnant...she had a glow about her.

"Well, I'll let you girls hang out," Aunt Juliana said as she gave Divine's shoulder a squeeze then walked away.

As soon as she was out of earshot, I turned to Divine and asked, "Who is the brother that keeps looking at me?" When she turned in their direction,

Solomon consumed her attention and my question was completely forgotten. I couldn't be mad though. I wanted someone to look at me the way he looked at her. Wanted somebody to love me the way he loved her. When she blushed under his stare, I glanced over at Gia, who, although she hadn't said anything, was curious about his other friend.

"Hello? Earth to Di Di," I said then shook my head. "You and Solomon are so cute it's sickening."

"They really are," Gia cosigned. As my eyes moved across the yard again, I found Mr. Sexy's on me once again. He licked his lips and I smiled then tossed my hair over my shoulder.

"But back to what I was saying. Who is he?"

"His name is Bryce. You know, you could've went and asked him yourself."

"I wanna make him watch me a little longer. I like it," I replied and her and Gia laughed their asses off.

"Gia, I don't know why you're laughing. Your eyes have been glued to the other one since they walked in." When we turned to look at Gia, her face was red as hell. "Uh huh."

"I think he's cute, but he looks like he is guarded as shit. I'm kinda scared of that." When our attention went back to them, again, Bryce's eyes were on me. He had my body feeling and doing shit it had NEVER done. Like a siren to a sailor, I felt like he was pulling me in. Hopefully, he didn't have shit with him like the last fool I gave my time to.

"Well, I'm gonna leave y'all to eye-fuck those men and go and speak to everybody else." And that's exactly what I did. Even when I was in conversation with my father, mother then some of my other cousins, our eyes always found their way back to each other.

As I stood at the bar, waiting for my shot and another glass of champagne, his presence caused my heart to race. He smelled so good and just the sight of

his muscles straining against his shirt...I could've melted right there. But, I played it cool and only turned to give him my attention when he leaned against the bar next to me. "I was wondering how long it would take for you to come talk to me," I said, taking a sip from my glass to keep from grinning like crazy.

"I needed to get all the slick and vulgar thoughts out of my head first. I needed to come correct. You feel me?" He licked his lips and mine parted. My kitty was ready to pipe up in this conversation. *Relax Sheena*. I regained my composure and stuck my hand out.

"Now, I'm intrigued. I'm Sheena by the way," I replied.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Bryce." He took my hand and brought it to his lips. They were soft against the back my hand and it gave me goosebumps.

"Believe me, the pleasure is all mine Bryce." My eyes swept over him again. "Now, I'd love to know about these thoughts in your head."

"Had I known you wanted to know, I wouldn't have wasted all that time suppressing that shit," he said, stepping closer to me, changing the pattern of my breathing. As I stared up at him, I was breathless as shit.

"Well, you know now. And I don't think it was time wasted at all. It gave me time to appreciate the physical...before I get to know what's underneath all this muscle and sexiness." He grabbed my hand and I had to take another drink of my champagne to cool off a bit. After all, my parents were here. But this man, he had all my attention and I had his.

"Is that right? Well, yo' pretty ass is definitely my speed. I could tell by the way those eyes took me in." I pulled my bottom lip between my teeth as I gathered my thoughts.

"There's so much I could say. I'd rather save that for private conversation...Mr. Bryce."

"Hell yeah. Hopefully, we can have that private conversation sooner than later," he replied.

“I agree handsome.”

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As I secured the closure for Jessie Woo’s hair, a singer and reality TV personality, my mind was somewhere else. My cousin’s engagement party was a couple of days ago and Bryce plagued my thoughts. After flirting pretty much the entire night, we exchanged numbers and I was dying for him to call or text me. I knew he had to be Solomon’s age and I was sure he was aware that I was younger than him. But none of that, hindered our connection. I felt him and I could tell by the way he kept looking at me, licking his lips or just touching my hand that he felt it too. Now, we just needed to allow said connection to blossom and grow. I was damn sure ready for the journey.

My entire adult life, I had fucked with nothing but cheaters, liars and ain’t shit niggas. I was ready for something real. Something new. Shit, my parents were even wondering when I’d get settled down. They were anxious for grandkids from me. I had an older brother who had already had kids, but of course...it was the baby girl’s turn to settle down and be happy. *I was trying.*

When I was done with my client, she thanked and paid me then I gathered my things to head home. I hated going home alone. Sometimes I would sleep over at my parents’ house. They had the space.

Although I dreaded going home alone, I decided it was best. I had a couple of clients the next morning and could use some wind-down time to prepare for my workday the following day. I was a cosmetologist. I had male and female clients in the industry. A lot of my clients came from my parents. I had even worked on the set of a couple of my uncle’s movies. Although I wasn’t in high demand like a lot of the celebrity hairstylists, people knew my name when they wanted their wig laid, hair pressed or a fresh line up. I wasn’t afraid to say ya’ girl had skills.

When I made it to my house, I dropped my bag and purse on the couch then went a grabbed me a glass of wine so I could roll me a joint and unwind

at the same time. I missed the days where me, Divine and Gia would get lifted and just chill. But now, Di Di was getting married and expecting her first baby. And Gia was struggling with being in a career she hated while trying to avoid a relationship that one would think was arranged. Just that thought made me pick up my phone and text her.

What you doing boo?

Gia: Bout to get high as a kite after coming from my mom and dad's.

Me: Wanna come join me? I could use the company.

Gia: Pour me a glass of wine. I'm on my way.

Me: Gotchu boo.

After I rolled the joint I was working on, I rolled three more. By the time I was done, Gia was ringing my doorbell. I hadn't even showered or changed I needed this chill so bad. When I opened the door, she was sliding her hand through her hair, looking stressed the hell out. "Damn, how was YOUR day," I asked her, letting her inside.

"I don't even wanna talk about it. I'm about ready to put in my two-week notice. Then, Mom and Daddy were trying to get me to come to dinner with them and Antonio and his parents." I rolled my eyes. Hell, even I was tired of their shenanigans when it came to trying to hook her up with their friends' son.

"Well, your glass of wine is on the coffee table along with four joints."

"Yees. Please let's get into that. What's got you so wound up." As we both sat on the floor in front of the coffee table and sparked up, I exhaled hard.

"Thinking about Bryce." She grinned, exhaling smoke then sipped from her glass.

"Have you talked to him," she asked. I shook my head. "You know...he

DID give you his number too. You could text or call him.” I could, but I was nervous. Bryce had a couple of baby mothers and I wasn’t too sure of how the dynamics between them worked so I was hesitant to reach out. I had just shut shit down with the last fuckboy I was messing with because he ended up being married with a newborn and I had no idea. I guess that situation scared me when it came to Bryce. He seemed so perfect for me, that I was terrified to find out he wasn’t. So, for two days, I had been waiting for him to hit me up.

“I just kinda wanna follow his lead.”

“Is it because of the whole baby mama thing,” she asked then took a drag of her joint.

“It is. I’m scared Gia. He seems too much like he was made for me judging by the one meeting alone.”

She peered over at me before picking up my phone and waking my screen. “What are you doing?”

“Texting Bryce for you,” she replied nonchalantly as she tapped away then laid my phone on the table and slid it to me.

“Gia,” I shrieked. Partially because I couldn’t believe her shy ass had the balls to be bold enough.

“Sheena,” she shrieked back. “Stop being scared. That’s my role not yours.” We both chuckled as I woke up my screen and went to my text messages to see what she said. I smiled a little when I read it because it was definitely something I would say.

I peered over at her and smirked. “Bitch, this shit sound like it came straight from me.”

“Because I know your ass,” she remarked. “Now, we wait for his reply.” I read the message again and couldn’t help but chuckle and shake my head.

Forgot about me already?

“Have you talked to Watt,” I asked and she rolled her eyes then dropped her head.

“Nope.” When she lifted it, her eyes were squeezed shut. “Maybe he’s not feeling me like that.”

“Uh...he is. And anybody could tell.” My phone chimed and Gia reached for it like it was her shit. I snatched it back and she stuck her tongue out. “Thank you.” My heart sped as I unlocked the screen and read the text staring back at me.

Not at all. But I could ask the same question.

“What are you gonna say back,” Gia asked, leaning over my shoulder for her own glimpse.

“I don’t know,” I answered as I puffed on my joint. I took a sip of wine from my glass as I let my thoughts swirl around in my head. A slow grin spread across my face as I picked my phone up and started typing.

I could never...

I inserted the winking emoji then hit send. “You are such a flirt,” Gia giggled.

“I know.” As we continued to smoke and drink, we started to get hungry. So, we went to the kitchen so I could reheat the leftovers my mom dropped off yesterday. She knew how much I loved her fried chicken, potato salad and red beans and rice. As soon as I pulled the dishes from the refrigerator, my phone went off. After loading up the microwave and grabbing us some plates, I opened up my messaging app.

That’s good to know gorgeous. You’ve been on my mind since I left your fine ass. What a young thoroughbred like yourself got planned for tomorrow night?

Me: Have I now? Again...I’m intrigued by the thoughts in your head.

Me: I don't have anything planned. Is that your way of saying you would like to see me again?

When the microwave went off, I was so busy waiting for his response and being giddy about all the flirtation, Gia took it upon herself to help me out and get the dish of chicken out and put in the dish with the red beans and rice. "Sorry girl."

"You're good She She, but I'm starving so I can't wait for you to stop cheesing in your phone. Stocuginando di fame."

"I'm starving too bitch." My family was a blend of Black and Italian. So, between school and my family, I was fluent.

"Yeah, starving for some of Bryce."

"That too," I mumbled, not thinking she heard me.

"You are so nasty," she giggled and pulled the other dish from the microwave as I checked out his response to my last text.

Naw. I would LOVE to see you again. Can I take you to dinner?

Me: Oh you would love to hunh? Well, I can't say no to that handsome. I would LOVE to go to dinner with you.

Bryce: I'll make sure you never regret that decision. Is 6 okay for you?

Me: 6 is good with me. I look forward to it.

After inserting the winking emoji blowing a kiss and hitting send, I started making my plate alongside of Gia. "So, what did he say?"

I smiled and said, "He wants to take me to dinner tomorrow night." Her eyes widened as she sampled the red beans and rice.

"That's great. See, you over here tripping over nothing."

“I guess you’re right, but after the last asshole I was with, I’m more nervous to date these days.”

“You can’t make Bryce pay for him though.”

“I agree. Which is why this hair will be laid, this body will be dressed in something that takes his breath away and this face will be beat to the heavens.” We both giggled then said grace and dug in where we stood. I couldn’t wait to see him again. He was everything to look at and he flirted boldly like me. On top of that, he gave my body the feels with his eyes alone. I was so excited about it, I started sifting through my closet in my head. As I did, my phone went off again.

Okay. I’ll hit you up later tonight if that’s cool with you sexy

Me: Of course it is boo. I’ve been waiting to hear your voice again. Talk to you later.

Chapter 1

3 Months Later

It was the day of the gender reveal party that Divine wanted me and Gia to plan. She was about six months pregnant now and an even bigger spoiled brat than she already was thanks to pregnancy and Solomon. As we finished setting up all the decorations, she started whining to Aunt Juliana about the two different shades of pink of the balloons. Finally, Solomon came and got her ass so she could go get dressed and out of our hair.

We all were instructed to wear the color of our guess for the gender of the baby. So far, a lot of our family had shown up in pink. Uncle Des and Solomon were in blue. And as I peered up and caught a glimpse of the sexiest man I'd ever laid eyes on, I noticed he was in pink like me. Bryce and I had been talking for a few months now. And although I couldn't say I was in love, I cared about him very much. I wanted to be with him.

By the time Divine was done getting dressed, everybody had arrived. The food was done and from the way Divine kept eying it, she was ready to eat. Me and Gia took it upon ourselves to make her and Solomon's plates. "Plates for the parents," I said with a smile as me and Gia held them out to them. Divine smiled back.

"Thanks boo," she replied. "Although I thought Bryce would have gotten his plate before me." She laughed and so did me, Gia and Solomon.

"Oh, I got him next baby girl." She laughed louder. "Gotta take care of baby mama and daddy first." When Gia and I turn to head back to the trays of food, Bryce and I locked eyes. All I wanted to do was go back to my place and let him remove the pink Chanel dress I was wearing and put his mouth in it's place. Just as my thoughts were taking a nasty turn, up walked my dad.

"Hey Uncle Deon."

"Hey Gia," Daddy replied then turned his attention back to me.

“So, do I get introduced to him properly today?” I sighed. My father had been introduced to Solomon, Bryce and Watt at the engagement party Uncle Des and Aunt Juliana had for them. But then, he wasn’t someone that was pursuing me.

“Daddy, in due time, you will be introduced properly. I promise,” I answered then glanced over at my mom who was ear-hustling while making their plates.

“Ok baby girl. As long as it’s gonna happen, I’ll chill.” I nodded and he kissed my cheek then walked off with my mother. When Bryce approached to make his plate, I slid my hand over his.

“Let me do that for you handsome.” I smiled up at him and he returned one that was so damn beautiful. He bit his bottom lip as his eyes slid over my body, taking me back to my earlier thoughts.

“Shiiid, I ain’t gon’ say no baby girl. I appreciate that.” He kissed my cheek and gave me his plate then walked back to the couch. It had been a couple of days since he last stroked my kitty and I was feeling the withdrawals. But tonight, he would be putting me out of my misery.

I put a little of everything on the plate then took it to him. “I hope it’s not too much. Just thought you might like to get good and full,” I said with a smirk then licked my lips and I knew he knew where I was going with that. I turned to walk away, but he caught me by the hand. Sitting his plate on the table, he spooned some potato salad up and stood. As he fed it to me, he watched my mouth. I could feel myself pooling in my panties. I licked my lips then slid my pinky across them.

“Damn, that’s so good,” I said as he continued staring at my lips.

“Uh huh. Sit down and eat with me.” Before I could respond, he sat and pulled me down next to him. In between his own bites, he fed me. I couldn’t stop my eyes from roaming all over him. I needed him ASAP. Crossing my legs towards him, I slid my finger across the line of his jaw, deciding to let him in on the thoughts in my head.

“It’s been awhile. We miss you.”

“We miss y’all too. Don’t worry, we coming through like an earthquake to shake shit up. Now, quit talking about it before all this nigga stand up and block out all the light in this bitch.” I giggled then kissed his lips.

“Then, I suggest you keep feeding me.” He slowly shook his head as he gave me more potato salad.

“Nasty ass,” he mumbled. “But I like that shit.” I chuckled.

“Uh huh. I know you do baby.”

“I have something I wanna talk to you about when I come through tonight,” he said and I became nervous. Nothing about his tone or body language said it was something bad as far as he and I were concerned, so I told myself to relax.

As he fed me some of the brisket, he stared into my eyes. I was praying I was right because I was falling for him. “Kay. I hope it’s nothing detrimental to you showing me how much you missed us. I’ll be all ears for whatever you gotta say baby.” He kissed my lips.

“Nothing detrimental at all. Don’t worry your fine ass about a thing but hopping on this dick when I get through talking to you. Aight?”

“Aight baby.”

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After the baby shower, I headed home to shower and get ready for Bryce to come over. My body needed this because ever since the first time he touched it, fucked it and tasted it, it craved him. Once I was showered and moisturized, I slid on my black lace robe, nothing underneath and some black stilettos. After telling Alexa to start the music throughout the house, I headed to the kitchen for a glass of wine to drink while I smoked my joint.

I was sitting on the couch vibing to the music when my doorbell finally rang. I had finished my joint and glass of wine and was feeling good. I got to the door and pulled it open and his eyes immediately started to descend, heating my body even more. “Looks like y’all been anticipating our arrival.”

“We have,” I said as I stepped aside and let him in. I closed and locked the door behind him then he grabbed my hand and led me to the couch.

“I wanna get this out now before I get distracted. I don’t see no lines, so I know you ain’t got shit on underneath this.” He sat down and pulled me to his lap, his hand sliding up and down my leg while I waited for him to speak. I brushed my hand across the waves in his hair, anticipating him satisfying my curiosity.

He looked up at me and said, “Sheena, I want you to be mine. You are the only woman that I’ve said that to in damn near twenty years, but you do things to me that I can’t describe. Having you all to myself would be the best thing that’s happened to me since the birth of my daughter. Please tell me you want that too.” I slid my hand from his head and rested it against his cheek.

“I want that too. I’ve never felt the way you make me feel just looking at me. I care about you so much Bryce. I wanna be with you.”

“That makes me happy. I was nervous as shit for some reason. But there’s more I need to talk to you about.” He kissed me then eased me from his lap onto the couch and got on his knees in front of me. “I want you to meet my children. I’m not trying to rush you, but Jasmine will be spending more time with me soon. Her mom has to have a hysterectomy next week. She got diagnosed with ovarian cancer and doesn’t want our eight-year old to know the severity of it just yet since she knows that her grandmother died of cancer. I’m gonna want to see you as much as I’m seeing you now, if not more, so I needed to tell you that. Of course, there’s no sense in introducing you to Jasmine and not introducing you to Hunter too.”

I took his face into my hands. “First, I’m sorry to hear about your daughter’s mom. Secondly, I would love to meet your kids. Hopefully, they like me. And last, my parents have been anxious to meet you. So, I would like you to meet my parents.”

Slowly, he pushed my legs apart then looked up at me. “I’m cool with that.” He pulled my hips forward then gently pushed me back against the cushions of my couch. His tongue was about to do magic for my kitty that was already wet with excitement. As he stared at it, I was damn near panting with desire and anticipation. He slowly licked his lips then peered up at me. I couldn’t even speak. The way his stare pinned mine...I knew I was about get the best form of a tongue lashing known to woman.

As soon as his tongue caressed my sex, my eyes fell closed and I gripped his head. Goosebumps covered my flesh as he licked my wetness like he was trying to produce more and savor the flavor of what he received. The way he devoured me, he enjoyed it just as much as I did. It was like smoking a fat ass blunt. My head was in the clouds as his tongue made its way to my clit and he gripped my thighs.

“Ahhh,” was a breathless whisper as my head fell further back into the cushion behind me. I knew he felt the tremble in my legs when he pushed them up to my head. I reached up and gripped the cushion then placed my other hand on the top of his head as he went back in for the kill. And that’s exactly what he was doing...killing my pussy so softly it was dizzying. Especially when his fingers slid inside me, curling perfectly and hitting the spot that would grant him what he was seeking.

“Tell me all this shit for me Sheena,” he said, his voice deep with lust and desire.

“Look at her baby. She showing you,” I answered. “You know it’s all for you.”

“I needed to hear you say it.” As he continued to stroke me with his fingers slowly, his eyes on my kitty, he started to blow on it and my eyes widened as my body started to quake once again. I had never known such pleasure. When he covered my pussy with his mouth, the way his tongue swirled while he sucked my fruit, I nosedived into an orgasm that damn near lifted me from the couch as I cried out my appreciation. As my body relaxed back into the cushions, I struggled to catch my breath, watching him consume every drop of my nectar.

When he lifted himself up, he pulled his shirt over his head then stood to his feet in front of me. After he pulled condoms from his pocket, he tossed all but one to the coffee table. His shorts and underwear hit the floor and my eyes immediately found my pleasure stick. The sexual energy was intense, especially since I could feel his eyes on me.

When he got strapped up, he sat down next to me and pulled me to him, straddling his lap. As he reached beneath me to position himself at my opening, I untied my robe and let it slide off, completely bare before him. As I slid down on him, he grabbed ahold of his favorite asset, squeezing my ass as I lowered myself all the way down on him, holding his head to my chest. His mouth found my nipple and when his warm mouth covered it, I leaned back, pulling him with me as my torso rolled while I lifted and dropped down on him. “Daaaamn babyyyy,” I moaned, sliding a hand down his back. His chest, arms and back were some of my favorite features. Just the feel of the ripples under my fingertips excited me. He was fine as fuck...and all mine.

He slumped in the couch and started rolling his hips. The ability that he possessed to make my body bow and submit to his was unbelievable. But the fact that he had declared himself my man made my body opened up to him on a different level and his responded perfectly. As he stared at me, he bit his bottom lip. “Look at me baby.” My eyes slowly opened as my body started to unravel and I quickened my pace.

“Shiiit. My body craves you,” I whined as that familiar stirring below my stomach slowly crept up on me. He pulled me to him, wrapping his arms around my waist and filled me deliciously with every inch of him, speeding up the pace.

“Damn girl. Fuck,” he growled as I continued to enjoy the salacious ride. He slowed his strokes but continued to dig deep into me. “Come for me baby. Coat my dick with that platinum.” Gripping the cushions behind him, I lifted and dropped my hips as I continued to grind on him, feeling my orgasm encapsulate me.

“Bryce! Babyyyy shit,” I screamed as my body shatter to pieces.

“Fuck,” he roared as he let his orgasm take him down too. He held me to

him as we both panted, coming down from the amazing high that was our lovemaking. His dick slid out of me and he pulled off the condom. I eased off of his lap and he stood. “Was it me or did it seem like it felt different this time?” I stood to my feet too and wrapped my arms around his waist.

“It definitely felt different. I was making love to my man.”

“Making love hunh,” he replied.

“You have fucked me wonderfully on a number of occasions. But that... that was something completely different.”

“I think the action was the same. Just the feelings behind the action was different. Not different...but expressed. Our reaction to the expression caused more emotion...from both of us. I ain’t had a girlfriend in a long time, so I hope I don’t let you down.” I slid my hand down between us and took his length into my hand.

“As long as this remains only for me...and you don’t play with my heart, I think you’ll be good.” I stared up into his eyes, hoping that he could see my vulnerability. I was opening my heart to him and it was a little scary. But everything in me told it would be worth it.

“I’ve never been one to lead anybody on. I’ve always said what I meant and meant what I said. I’ve never held a heart, but I promise to be careful with yours,” he replied then glanced down at his growing erection in my hand. “He’s all yours baby girl. Now whatchu gon’ do with it?” I smirked then began kissing his chest as I slowly slid my hand up and down his dick. Dropping to the floor, I stared up at him and licked my lips before I devoured every inch of him.

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It was Monday, the day my dad always got his hair cut. It was a beautiful day in L.A. as I rode with the top down on my Audi TT, heading to his office. I had been on a high the last couple of days and I had Bryce to thank for that.

I mean, the man consumed my thoughts. If I wasn't around him, I wanted to be around him. I could now see how Divine felt when she got lost in Solomon. It was so easy to just wanna shut the world out and forget that anything or anybody else mattered.

When I got to my dad's office and walked through the door, he peeked up from some headshots that were spread out across his desk. "Hey baby girl."

"Hi Daddy. How's work going today?"

He huffed and said, "It's going." I started getting out my cape and clippers and other things that I would need. "How's work going on your end sweetheart?"

"It's going good. Got a couple of more clients after you."

"That's good." I draped the cape around him and fastened it at the neck.

"Daddy? I wanna talk to you about something."

"I'm all ears," he replied.

"Bryce and I are together now."

"Oh? Does that mean that me and your mom will be meeting him soon?"

"Yes," I answered as I brushed his hair. "There's something else."

"Ok," he said slowly.

"He has two kids. A son and a daughter." When he didn't say anything, I asked, "Does that bother you?"

"Does it bother you," he inquired back.

"No, it doesn't."

"Then, it doesn't bother me. As long as you are good, I'm good. He seems to be making you happy and that's all I want for you."

“He does make me happy.”

“Well, then that’s great baby girl. I can’t wait to officially meet him as the man in your life.”

“No interrogations either Daddy. Let the conversation flow naturally please.” He chuckled.

“Well, he doesn’t seem like someone I need to interrogate him. The dipshits you brought to us before definitely needed to get them twenty-one questions.” I shook my head and laughed as I started the clippers and got in my zone, my thoughts filled with all things Bryce. *Yeah, he had me...already.*

Chapter 2

“I don’t wanna hear nothing else about me when I go into hiding with my man,” Divine giggled as we looked through racks of a high-end maternity store. Gia giggled too and I tried not to blush. “It’s been days since we seen or heard from you.”

“Whatever. I spend as much time with him as I can get. He’s a dedicated father so he divides his time between me and his kids. More so his daughter now that her mother is sick.” They both eyed me curiously, so I explained the situation.

“Oh, that’s horrible. My prayers are with her and his daughter,” Gia replied sadly.

“Mine too,” Divine added with the same look of sympathy.

“Yeah, it seems scary, but I hope that everything works out for the better. Her daughter needs her.”

“For sure,” Divine commented.

“Speaking of his kids, I’m meeting them this weekend. I’m nervous y’all.”

“Why? Everybody loves you,” Gia replied as we watched Divine hold up the cutest green maternity dress.

“Well, I’m dating their dad. I don’t wanna feel like an intruder on their family.”

“You can’t look at it like that, but I see why you would,” Divine said. “I’m sure he will be giving them a heads up on who you are to him before he puts y’all in the same room.”

“Yeah, I know. It’s just nerves. I want them to like me.” Gia threw her arm

around my shoulders.

“And they will,” she championed.

“I hope so.”

After a couple of hours of shopping with them, I decided to stop by my brother’s to pay him and my sister-in-law a visit. Plus, I wanted to see my niece and nephew. My brother, much like my father, acted like I was still a little girl. He was four years older and spoiled me too. Always took up for me and had even gotten in the face of a couple of the dudes that I dated.

When I first got to their house, Amara opened the door and greeted me with a hug. “Hey Sheena.”

“Hey girl.” Before we could even further our exchange, my brother came around the corner with my one-year old niece Adia, who quickly reached for me.

“I heard you got a man now,” he said, no greeting or nothing as I took my baby from him.

“Hello to you too jerk. And can I get in the house before you start interrogating me?”

“I don’t need to. I already know who he is,” he replied. I should’ve known. My dad and him conspired a lot when it came to me. “I seen y’all all boo’d up at the gender reveal party too. Daddy told me to chill out ‘cause I was ‘bout to come ask if he was your man and shit. You kept him on the low.”

“Daddy knew, but we weren’t serious yet. So, I told him not to say anything to anybody,” I replied, getting comfortable on the sofa as my niece toyed with my earring. Shortly after, I heard the tiny feet scurrying in our direction and was soon greeted by the cute chubby face of my four-year old nephew, Derrick. After cuddling and kissing his little face, he shrugged me off and took off to resume whatever it was he was doing.

“Well, when do we get an official introduction,” Amara asked excitedly.

“I don’t know exactly. Soon though. Maybe at the premiere of Aunt Juliana’s movie.”

“Oh, that’s soon,” Junior commented with a sinister grin as he rubbed his hands together.

“Don’t you embarrass me asshole,” I said with a glare and he laughed.

“Me? Never,” he said, feigning innocent. Amara playfully shoved him.

“Do not baby.”

“I’m not gonna do shit. Damn. How little y’all think of me,” he replied.

“No, we just know your ass. That’s all,” I said as I rolled my eyes.

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I had tried all day to distract myself. I had three clients today and all three reminded me of how distant I was. My mind was in another place. Today, Bryce’s daughter’s mother was having her surgery. I was wondering how he was feeling. How his daughter was doing. As an adult, my parents meant the world to me, so I felt bad for Jasmine, being only eight and worrying about her mother.

As I packed my stuff, I was going back and forth in my mind on whether I should shoot him a text or just wait for him to reach out to me. It was as if God was over my indecisiveness and decided to help me out when my phone rang from a facetime call from Bryce. As it always did when it came to him, my heart sped and a smile spread across my face. “Hey boo,” I answered, missing his presence even more now that I was looking at him. But it was the beauty next to him peeking at the screen that widened my smile. She was beautiful and had so much hair. Not too mention she looked just like him.

“Hey baby. How’s your day going?”

His eyes darted over to his daughter. When the phone tilted in her direction

a little, she waved and said, “Hi!”

“Hi beautiful. I’m Sheena. It’s very nice to meet you. Well...kinda meet you.” I said nervously before my attention shifted back to her father. “My day is going pretty good baby. How’s everything over there?”

“Things are good. They just took Kamryn to the back to get her prepped... her IV and charts and stuff. We’re waiting for them to come get us to go back and see her before they take her into surgery. Somebody had a couple of questions they wanted to ask you.” I looked from him to her and she became bashful. “It’s okay. She ain’t gon’ bite. Ask her what you wanted to know.” He kissed her head and then her eyes were on me.

“It’s okay sweetheart. Feel free to ask me whatever you want,” I further coaxed as I tossed my bag into the passenger seat of my car and climbed in. Instead of cranking up, I sat there in the driveway of my client’s house to finish my call.

“Um...Daddy said I was gonna get to meet you this weekend. Which day are you coming? And...I wanted to know if you would fix my hair in a style,” she said as she nervously twirled her pigtail.

“Well, the first question is up to your daddy. And to answer your second question, I would love to do your hair. However you want.” She warmed my heart when she started beaming.

When Bryce’s eyes were back on me, he said, “Is Saturday evening cool? I don’t know your schedule. We’ll be up here at Cedar Sinai around lunchtime to visit with Kamryn, but we’ll be back home after that. You’ll get to meet Hunter too.”

“Saturday evening is cool with me boo. Can I bring dinner?”

“Word? Yeah, you can bring dinner.”

Before he could say anything else, Jasmine asked, “Can I meet you before Saturday? Hunter can wait,” turning the phone more on her before her daddy could say another word. I laughed as he rolled his eyes.

“If you aren’t busy Sheena, it’s always cool for you to come by before Saturday. Once the surgery is done, we can finalize plans,” he said, glancing at Jasmine, whose eyes were like the pleading eyes of a cute little puppy. I smiled.

“How about I come by tomorrow evening? I can do your hair Ms. Jasmine and we can get to know each other before I meet Hunter. How about that?” She looked up at Bryce.

“What time is Hunter coming Daddy?”

“I pick him up at eight tomorrow night baby.”

“Ok. Ms. Sheena will you be there before that?” Bryce shook his head. I could tell she got her way a lot. Who could say no to that face? She was adorable and looked tiny for her age. Aside from wanting to meet the little lady, glancing over at her dad made me realize how much I missed him.

“What about tonight? If you two are free. I can bring dinner, do your hair and wrap it up and we can hang out.”

“I’ll let you know for sure in a little while baby. We have to go.”

“Ok baby. I’ll talk to you later.” After ending our call, I finally pulled out of the driveway and headed to the set of a photoshoot for my last client of the day. As I drove, a call came in through the Bluetooth of my car. It was Divine.

“Hey Di Di,” I answered.

“Hey She She. I know you’re probably working so I’ll be quick.”

“Actually, I’m in the car on my way to my next client. What’s up?”

“Are you booked up for tomorrow?”

“Um...I think I have an early morning slot open. I’ll have to check my schedule. You need my hair expertise?”

“Yes. Solomon has a dinner party for the cast of the movie this weekend. I need you to straighten my hair for me.”

“Ok. I’ll check the time and then text you and let you know.”

“You are a lifesaver cousin.” I grinned.

“I know.”

“And a cocky one at that,” she chuckled, making me laugh.

“I know that too.”

“Whatever heifer. Call me later.”

“Will do boo.”

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I had gotten to my house when I got Bryce’s text saying that they were on their way home. After closing and locking the door, I responded.

Ok love. Let me shower then grab some dinner and I’ll head your way.

Is there anything in particular you have a taste for?

I hit send and dropped my work bag to the floor then made my way to my bedroom. I started the shower then grabbed my bonnet and covered my hair. I was in the middle of undressing when my phone went off again. I hurried out of my shorts and panties then woke up the screen.

Could you bring fried chicken? We’d greatly appreciate it.

Me: Fried chicken it is. I’ll see you in a few.

Within a few seconds, his response came through.

Thank you baby.

Me: My pleasure.

As I showered, I thought about restaurants that had the best fried chicken. I thought about my mama's for a second and smiled, hoping that maybe one day they'd get to taste hers. That was some fried chicken worth whooping somebody's ass over. That thought triggered my idea to go to Gus's. I finished my shower and buttered up my body. I found some black shorts and my *Boyz In The Hood* tee and decided to wear my red J's. Normally, when I went to see Bryce...I would be serving up all the sexy. But because his baby girl would be present, I figured I'd tone it down.

Once I was dressed, I grabbed my workbag for baby girl's hair, my purse and headed out. I picked up the food and made my way to Bryce's house. After grabbing everything, I went to the front door and rang the bell. My heart was racing even though I had already been introduced to Jasmine. I was a little nervous about her really liking me. The door opened and I smiled as Bryce took the food from me and kissed my cheek.

"Hey baby. Come on in," he said as the pretty little angel next to him stared up at me. When I did, I extended my hand.

"Hi. You must be Jasmine. It's very nice to meet you." She placed her hand in mine and pulled me to the kitchen with Bryce following behind us.

"It's nice to meet you too. You're really pretty," she said.

"Thank you. And you're a doll yourself." After sitting the food on the table, Bryce went to get plates and brought them back to the table. I couldn't help but smile as Jasmine continued to eye me like I was something shiny and new. "Um...I didn't know what to get so I just got an eight piece, some baked beans, slaw, greens, mac & cheese and fries. Hope that's okay. I know you normally like to eat clean but I figured since you're obviously having a cheat day, you should have some good options," I said to Bryce as I started to pull out the containers. When I caught his eye, I smiled and winked.

He walked over to me and grabbed my chin, tilting my head back. When

he kissed my lips, goosebumps covered my skin. “That’s cool baby. Relax. You went all out. Thank you,” he said then got busy making Jasmine a plate.

“You’re welcome baby.” When he sat a plate in front of Jasmine, I was surprised by her restraint as she waited for us to get our plates and say grace before diving in. “So, Miss Jasmine, any ideas on what style you want your hair in?”

“No ma’am,” she said after she swallowed the food in her mouth. I was about to speak when I felt Bryce’s hand on my thigh under the table. My heart started to race as my eyes moved over to him. I covered his hand with mine. The temperature between my thighs started to rise as I eased his hand a little further up. There was never a time when I was in his presence and didn’t want him. I had to remind myself we were in the presence of baby girl. Clearing my throat, I pulled my eyes away from him, giving Jasmine my attention once again.

“Well, I think we could pull the top half into two cute buns and straighten the bottom half. What do you think?” She gave me a big bright smile as she nodded, her excitement obvious.

“I think that sounds great!” I smiled back at her.

“Ok sweetheart.” I knew that we would have to get started right after dinner because now that Bryce had me feeling a way, all I could think about was his body on mine. Feeling him inside me. And judging by the way he kept stealing glances at me, he felt the same way. I needed him as soon as possible. I crossed my legs, squeezing them together and glanced over at him again. His eyes were smoldering. My sex throbbed with excitement because I knew that the first chance he got, he would be blessing me with his rod of plenty orgasms. I was ready to claim as many as I could get too.

Once dinner was over, I grabbed my bag and got busy on Jasmine’s hair. She was so excited, she could barely keep still until I started actually working on her hair. She was full of questions too. Asked about my parents, my job, did I have any kids. All of which I was happy to answer for her. She was a sweetheart and I could tell. Bryce had disappeared after dinner and it was a while before he reemerged heading outside.

“We’re done,” I said to Jasmine, passing her my handheld mirror. When she looked at her reflection in it, her eyes widened. She hopped up and threw her arms around me.

“Thank you Ms. Sheena.” I smiled at her as I ran my hand down the hair that hung straight down her back.

“You are very welcome sweetheart. You wanna go show your dad?” She nodded, grabbed my hand and led the way. When we got to the kitchen, he was drying off his hands. He turned around and his eyebrows lifted as she spun, giving him the full view of her hair.

“Sheena, where’s Jas? I don’t know who this lil’ girl is.” She and I both giggled.

“That means it’s pretty baby girl. Right love?”

“It’s very pretty Jas. You really look like Princess Jasmine now,” he said. She ran into his open arms and he kissed her cheek, picking her up to sit her on the kitchen island. I thought this man had me gone already but watching him with his daughter made him even more of the man to me. “So, how you feel about my lady over there,” he asked her. Jasmine glanced at me then turned back to him.

“She’s nice. Plus, she can do my hair. She’s a keeper.” I laughed and so did Bryce. Jasmine’s personality was everything.

Bryce held out his arm and I made my way over to him. Where I’ve been wanting to be since I got to his house. Holding me close to him, he rested his forehead against mine. “Thank you for taking time with baby girl. I’m glad y’all hit it off.”

“Don’t mention it. I enjoyed her. She’s really a doll.” I kissed his lips then neared his ear and whispered, “But if you really wanna thank me...I can think of a few ways you can show your gratitude.” His stare was intense when I looked up at him. And when he licked his lips, all I saw was his tongue all over me. His hand moved to my ass, giving it a soft squeeze and my body responded as it always did to his touch.

“Daddy, do you love Ms. Sheena?” The question reminded me that we weren’t alone... and made me nervous all at the same time. Bryce looked at Jasmine then his eyes swung my way.

“Ummm...I care about her a lot, but I want to fall in love with her.” Damn was I glad to hear that because I was already falling. I had never had a real man until I met him. Had never experienced the level of chemistry we have with anybody else. I wanted to share my life with him.

“Ms. Sheena, you love Daddy,” she asked me. I wrapped my arms around his waist and looked up at him.

“Your daddy means the world to me Jasmine.” I turned to her and smiled. “He’s making it pretty easy to fall in love with him. I’ll make sure to let you know when I do.” She nodded, seeming satisfied with the answers she had been given. Bryce stepped out of my arms and lifted her from the countertop as she yawned.

“You tired Princess?”

“A little.”

“Okay. Let Ms. Sheena wrap your hair up so it can still be pretty tomorrow,” he told her. “She has a bonnet that she wears at night. Kamryn doesn’t believe in bed head...her words, not mine. I’m going to my room,” he said to me. He bit his bottom lip as he stared at me. If my kitty could talk, she would declare her love for him before I did. He looked back at Jasmine.

“Goodnight baby girl. I love you so much.”

“I love you Daddy,” she said. “Will we go see Mommy tomorrow?”

“Of course baby.” He kissed her cheek and forehead then set her on her feet and left us to it.

Once again, Jasmine took my hand and I followed her to her room. She grabbed her bonnet and handed it to me. I gently covered her hair. “Goodnight Jasmine,” I said softly, cupping her cheek. “It was really nice to

meet you.”

“Goodnight Ms. Sheena. You too.” I left her room and headed to Bryce’s.

Chapter 3

“You better make sure you wrap this hair up tonight Di Di. I’m not gon’ have time to come over here for a touch-up.” Divine turned her head a little and frowned as she rubbed her belly.

“And why not?”

“Because I’m meeting Bryce’s son. I met his daughter yesterday and she is an absolute doll.”

“Awww. How did it go? Does she like you?”

“She does actually,” I said as I sectioned off some of her hair and clipped up the rest. “She let me do her hair and asked me and Bryce if we loved each other.” I peered up into the mirror to see Divine’s wide eyes on me.

“What did y’all say?”

“We basically said the same thing. We really care about each other and would like for things to progress there. But I’m already falling Di Di.”

“Oh wow She She. I believe you already fell. The way your eyes light up when you talk about him is proof to me. I know the look.” I couldn’t lie and say I didn’t feel like she could be right. Whenever I was around him, I felt adored...cherished. When I wasn’t, he consumed much of my thoughts. I had talked to him a few times today and each time I saw his name pop up on my phone, I smiled without thought. *Maybe she was right...* “You fell alright,” she added. “So now, the question is when are you gonna tell him?”

“I don’t know Di Di, Little Miss Pushy,” I replied and we both laughed. “I wanna sit in the feeling for a while...you know? It feels good...and foreign.”

“I get it boo. I told you you’d find somebody to love you like you

deserved.” She smiled and winked.

“Yes, you did. And thanks to your hot ass, you brought him to me.” She laughed out loud.

“Stop Sheena. I don’t wanna pee on myself.”

After I finished Divine’s hair and had gotten in my car to leave, I checked my phone. I had texted Bryce a couple of times and hadn’t gotten a response. I connected my phone to my car and then called him. No answer and that was odd. I knew that he and Jasmine were going to the hospital to see her mother today and that he had to pick up his son, but I was starting to wonder if something had happened to Kamryn.

As I headed home to shower and have a glass of wine, I pondered on what could be the reason for the radio silence. There was never a time where I couldn’t reach him. And if there was, he always got back to me pretty quickly. When I walked into the house, I tossed my purse and bag on the table by the door and headed to the kitchen to pour me some wine. Turning on the sound system through my phone, I pulled up Spotify then headed to my room and started to undress.

After my shower, I dried myself, moisturized and pulled on some black leggings and a distressed cropped shirt. I grabbed my wineglass and phone then headed to the living room. Bryce still hadn’t responded. Something didn’t feel right about this. Now, I was known for being the crazy bitch that would pull up on somebody, but this wasn’t on that type of vibe. I was ready to pull up to make sure everything was okay. I didn’t like not knowing. It drove me crazy. So, I texted him once more and waited. To kill time and to feed my growling stomach, I made me a salad.

I had finished eating and was about to pour myself a second glass of wine when I got it in my head to go to Bryce’s house. He still hadn’t texted me back. I was concerned and could no longer take it. So, I grabbed my sandals, my purse and headed out. When I got there, his car was gone, but I still got out and went to the backdoor. I knocked and no one answered. I was about to call him when I heard voices then looked up and saw Jasmine heading my way.

The look on her face worried me. When she stood next to me, I slid my fingers through the back of her hair. “Hey pretty girl. Something wrong?” She looked behind her, causing me to look that way too. I had never seen Bryce upset before. The deep frown and tightness in his jaw, coupled with the fact that his son didn’t seem to be with him, told me something had happened when he went to get him. Me and Jasmine stepped aside and allowed him to open the door. When we got inside, she kept going to her room as I reached for his hand, gently pulling him to me. “You wanna talk about it baby?”

He took a deep breath. “Let me get a drink and try to calm down first. It’s been a fucked up day.” His voice was so low it was frightening. He sounded like he had had enough of everything and was ready to go off on the first motherfucker deserving.

“Ok love.” My mind wandered as he went to get his drink. *Did he tell his baby mama about me and she wasn’t feeling it? Would this become a pattern?* I didn’t have a good feeling about what was going on. Before I could let my mind go too deep down the rabbit hole, the sound of shattering glass scared me half to death and it was followed by a deep growl.

“Sheena...come here,” he called out. My heart raced faster with every step I took. I didn’t know how I would find him or what to expect. When I got to him, there was shattered glass everywhere...including in his hand. I stepped in front of him and placed my palms to his cheeks, running my thumbs back and forth across the hair of his beard.

“What can I do baby,” I asked softly. He snaked his arm around my waist and stepped closer to me, pressing his body into mine. He took a deep breath as he dropped his forehead to mine.

“I just need to feel your presence baby.” I dropped my arm to his shoulder and slid my hand up the back of his head. All I wanted to do was take away his stress. Be his peace in this moment. I was more than sure that I was falling in love with him and was ready to drown if I had to. He kissed my forehead then eased to the side of me to wash his hands. After he dried them, he grabbed mine and led me to the couch, pulling me down to straddle his lap. When he rested his head against my chest.

“Kamryn slipped into a coma. Baby girl isn’t doing too well with that. Honestly, I’m not either. We’ve always had a good relationship. But the other one...Patrice. She’s trying to keep my son from me because she can’t have her way.” He squeezed me a little tighter as I slid my hand over his head.

“I’m so sorry about Kamryn baby. But she can wake up. She’s got a daughter that she knows needs and loves her. There’s always a reason to be hopeful.” I rested my cheek against his head. “As far as Patrice...what does she want?”

“I called my attorney to file for custody and went to the police station to file a report. She left with my son right as I was arriving. Just because she wanted to meet you before Hunter did. I’m tired of kissing her ass and her using my son to make me do so. I’m not kissing her ass this time Sheena.” His hands slid to my ass as he said, “Thank you for listening. I have to go talk to Jasmine.”

I held his face in my hands as I said, “Baby, I don’t wanna be the reason you can’t see your son. I don’t know about custody and how it works between parents, but it’s not fair to not be able to see your son. And you don’t have to thank me Bryce. I...I care about you more than you know. I’ll be whatever you need from me babe.” I almost slipped. A part of me wanted to say it, but a bigger part of me was afraid. For a moment, he just started into my eyes. It unnerved me. I felt like he was reading my mind and heart or something.

“This isn’t about you. Patrice is a vindictive bitch and I’m tired of dealing with her ass. I’m tired of having to jump through hoops to see my son. It’s not fair to not be able to see my son, but that isn’t on you. It’s on her. She just wants to make things difficult because she can’t have me. It’s about her own selfish agenda. That’s it.” He gently kissed my chest then neck, changing the rhythm of my breathing. “Damn baby. You trippin’ over a nigga that much,” he asked with a bit of a smile. I grabbed his face and our stare united.

“I am,” I answered simply before I dropped my head and kissed his lips. “Now, go talk to your baby girl. I’m gonna pour me a drink because I need it. I was worried about y’all. I’ll pour you one too if you want.” He stood with me in his arms and I wrapped my legs around him.

“Could you please? Crown Black. I’m sorry you were worried baby. I’ll do my best to make it up to you if you stay tonight,” he replied as he continued staring into my eyes. I gave him a small smile.

“How could I say no to that offer?” I slid my hands over the bulges in his arms. “Meet me in your bedroom?”

“Mmm hmm,” he replied, allowing me to slide down from his grasp. He broke our gaze and kissed my neck. “Be open wide, waiting for me when I get in there,” he said into my ear.

“Hell yeah baby,” I breathed because just the anticipation of the expertise of his mouth and the way our bodies mingled excited me. He kissed my head then went to talk to Jasmine. I headed to the kitchen, grabbed two glasses to poured both of us some Crown Black then made my way to his bedroom.

Stripping down to my birthday suit, I sat his glass on the nightstand and climbed onto his bed with mine. As I sipped, my thoughts were going wild. That’s what this man had the power to do to me. I couldn’t stop thinking about the way he kept staring into my eyes. The way I felt in his arms. The way my body temperature started to rise from all the thoughts. I understood now how Divine became completely sprung off Solomon. It was a feeling too great to wanna be away from the source of it.

I sipped my drink, letting my fingers slide up and down the curve of my hip and thigh. When he walked in the door, adrenaline surged through me and I could have salivated at the mouth. Bryce was fine and he knew it. The confidence he walked with said so. He locked the door then walked over to the nightstand, grabbing his drink. He took a healthy gulp as he stared at me. He sat the glass back down and pulled his shirt over his head. My eyes immediately fell on his chest then darted from arm to arm, admiring the graffiti that littered his honey-colored body. He was a scrumptious piece of eye candy.

He continued to undress and I watched with pure admiration waiting for the moment his length sprung free from his underwear. After removing them, he joined me on the bed, kissing my lips with so much tenderness. He took my glass and before he sat it down, he dipped his fingers into what remained,

running them over my nipples as I tried to tell myself to remember to breathe. My body was always under his command. When he put his fingers to my lips, I drew them into my mouth immediately as my eyes fell closed. A moan slid past my lips as my tongue did the same across his fingers. My hand moved from my hip between my legs as I propped my left leg up.

He grabbed my hand and placed it on his erection. “You wanna touch something, touch this. That shit between your legs belongs to me.” He was so right, I could cry. He was so right, it sent a chill down my spine. I wasn’t much for crying, but emotions and his touch were overwhelming me. I whimpered as I slid my hand up and down his dick with a twist of my wrist as he sucked my nipples into submission. They stood at attention because his tongue said so.

He gently moved my hand, which was a clear sign that I had taken ahold of his soul and he wasn’t quite ready to relinquish control to me. He got on his knees and lifted my leg. When he was positioned between both, he kissed my ankle and continued up my calf to my knee. I was covered in goosebumps by the time he laid on his stomach, eye to eye with my sex. When he looked up at me, a lump formed in my throat. I tried desperately to swallow it. When he slid his nose over my clit, my eyes fell closed and I grabbed my bottom lip with my teeth.

“You make me surrender to your excellence every time. Your exquisite design keeps me fawning over you girl. Can I speak in tongues to you baby,” he whispered. My body trembled as I took his face into my hands, my head dipping further back into the pillow as I pulled him into me.

“Ooooh baby. Pleeeeeease,” I moaned. That was all he needed to hear to give me his spine-tingling tongue action. The way it danced over my lower lips and stiffened against my clit as it swirled around it, I was dizzy with desire and felt myself ascending to a place only he could take me. When his fingers slid inside of me, my eyes started to tear up. I was in the midst of pleasure overload and could only go over to that plane quietly due to Jasmine being here.

“This shit so good Sheena. God had to have tailormade it just for me,” he whispered. *He made it just for you baby.*

When he removed his fingers, I felt deprived. His gaze never broke from mine. I was damn near panting with anticipation as I began toying with my own nipples. I needed to release or I'd explode. That's how wound up my love had me. *My love? Bitch what?*

Before I could press my thoughts, he said, "Sheena, I'm gon' allow you to come, but I ain't stopping until I'm satisfied. I don't care if you come eight motherfucking times. I'm sucking on this pussy until I've had my fill and my fucking tongue is paralyzed." I had no verbal response. I simply spread my legs as wide as they would go, licked my fingers and massaged my swollen bud before lifting my hands above my head as I waited for him to send me to ecstasy.

As he sucked, he stroked my kitty until my hips were almost completely off the bed and my legs trembled. "Give me my first round of drinks baby," he said right up against my pussy then went back to sucking my clit. If I had to describe the pleasure, I'd have to say it was maddening. My body was no longer mine to control. All I could do was grab handfuls of my hair as my orgasm blessed me tremendously with its presence.

My leg curled around his head as I softly cried out, "Bryce! Oh my God...I love you!" And just like that...it was out. As I laid there trembling and convulsing, my heart hammered in my chest. I said the words and couldn't take them back. But that was the magic that my baby possessed. Everything I was was his for the taking. Including my love for him.

His head lifted and he stared at me. I felt completely naked at that point. Emotionally naked. I had laid myself on the line. He said nothing as he got up and pushed inside of me, taking my breath away. As his head fell to the pillow next to me, he whispered, "I love you too." There was no way I could stop the flow of tears as I slid my hands down his back to his ass. I gripped it, pulling him deeper into me. His strokes were deep and rough, but slow and full of passion. Toe curling for damn sure. He lifted his head and kissed me, wiping my tears with his thumb as he used his body to communicate the words that flowed from his mouth.

He hooked his arm under my leg, intensifying the drive of his dick. He separated our lips and my head fell further into the bed, just like it seemed

my heart had done into him, as my tongue ran across my lips. And just when I didn't think it could get any better, he slid out of me and down my body until his face met my sex.

"I can't believe I confessed my love for you, but I'm glad I did. It's been a long time since I've been in love baby. But I hope to prove my love with my actions. I'm a lucky muthafucka," he said before he licked me like was a sweet treat.

"Shiiit baby," I moaned as I felt the stirring and trembling as my orgasm was surfacing. I slid into climax fast and hard, teeth clamped into my bottom lip so that my cry wasn't too loud. He had me squirming like a fish out of water as wave after wave of pleasure flowed all over me. He came back up and licked his lips then pushed back inside of me as he lifted my leg to my shoulder, releasing a groan. The more intense his strokes got, the more my core coiled, ready to spring for orgasmic bliss once again.

"Open your eyes baby. Tell me you love me. Look me in my eyes and say it...please." I slid one arm down his back and cupped his cheek in my hand.

"I love you Bryce."

"Fuck! I love you too Sheena. Ahh," he growled as I started to go under so salaciously. Soon after I succumbed to my orgasm, he pulled out and spilled his babies all over my stomach. "Damn Sheena. You know you fucked me up tonight." I licked my lips that felt as dry as the Sahara.

"The feeling is mutual my love."

∞∞∞∞

Bryce: She's awake. Thank God.

That was the text I got as I was setting up to do my mother's hair. It was one of her off days and she needed her hair done for her lawyer friend's party. Me and my mother got along great for the most part, but my relationship with her was nothing like me and my father's. She was more

partial to Junior. Daddy said me and my mother bumped heads so often because we were so much alike.

“So, how’s everything been She She,” she asked as she scanned the magazine in her hand while I responded to Bryce.

That’s great baby. I bet Jasmine is over the moon happy.

“Everything is great,” I said after hitting send on my text.

“I can tell. You walked in here all lit up like a Christmas tree. Must be the man you’re so hesitant to introduce to us as your man.”

“I’m not hesitant Mommy. I just wanted to be sure he was for real.”

“Well, is he,” she inquired, spreading her arms so that I could get the cape on without covering up her magazine.

“He told me he loves me last night. So, I’d say yes we’re serious...and in love.”

“Weeelll...I’m glad to hear it. Now, you can bring him around us more often.”

“I was gonna ask him to come with me to Aunt Juliana’s premiere. Y’all can meet him then. If he comes.”

“Good. I look forward to it,” she said then sat back and allowed me to do my thing. My mother didn’t talk very much. She was what you would call... not for bullshit. My dad was a character, the life of the party like his big brother Uncle Des...but not much of a public speaker. I always wondered how Daddy and my mom got together. They were so different. Maybe that was what attracted them to each other in the first place.

I had just plugged in my straightener and was reaching for my blow dryer when my phone chimed. I woke up the screen and saw Bryce had texted me back.

She hasn’t stopped talking yet. How much she likes you has already

come up.

That made me smile. I liked her too. She was an adorable eight-year old ray of sunshine. Her being little for her age made her cuter. Plus, I loved her personality. I was glad to hear that she expressed that to her mother. I wanted her to be comfortable with her daughter in my presence. It would be great to at least have one of his baby mamas being cooperative. Before I let my mind go back to the revelation of Patrice wanting my man, I replied to his text.

Lol. Oh really? Well the feeling is mutual.

I picked up my blow dryer and got ready to turn it on when my mom said, “I hope he’s the real deal because he seems to have you wide open.” I laughed and she chuckled quietly. “I just...I mean I’m tired of seeing you hurt...is all.”

“Well, you and me both Mommy. But Bryce is definitely the real deal. I even met his daughter and she likes me too,” I replied as I got ready to turn on the blow dryer in my hand, but my phone stopped me.

I know you’re busy but I hope to see you tonight. I love you.

Reading those words widened my smile tremendously. I knew that I would never get enough of hearing or reading those three words from him.

You definitely will baby. I love you too.

After inserting the kissy face emoji, I hit send and got back to work.

Chapter 3

By the time I got to Bryce's house, I was a ball of nerves. I got a great reception from Jasmine, but I didn't know if Hunter would welcome me the same way. I sat in my car for a few minutes to get myself together.

When I got to the front door and rang the doorbell, the door swung open and before I could speak, Bryce kissed me. His heart was racing so something had to have happened. When he pulled away, there was a frown on my face. "Everything okay?" As I entered his home, I waited for his answer.

"Some shit with Patrice, but I'll be okay hopefully. Patrice told Hunter he doesn't have to respect anyone who doesn't have authority over him and that he doesn't have to speak to you. I wanted to break his damn neck."

"Oh," I said, a little disappointed that I was right to worry. "Do you think he'll even wanna meet me?"

"He doesn't have a choice."

"Ok love," I replied. "Where's my girl?" His mood shifted a little when I asked about Jasmine. His frown disappeared.

"She's on the couch playing on her laptop. Hunter should be over there too." When we walked over to the couch, she hopped up.

"Ms. Sheena!" She ran to me and hugged me tightly.

"Hi pretty girl. I see your hair is still looking fly." I glanced over at Hunter who gave me the side-eye. *Bryce wasn't lying...*

"I know! I don't lay on it until it's time for bed. Daddy helps me put on my night cap scarf thingy."

"Hunter, this is my girlfriend Sheena," Bryce said. "Sheena, this is my son

Hunter." He stood up from the couch and I became hopeful. When he walked over to me, Jasmine stepped away. Only he kept walking. I knew Bryce was fuming by the way his face changed. He headed in the direction Hunter had went and I hurried behind him.

"Bryce, baby please. Wait." When he slowed, I rushed to stand in front of him, taking his face into my hands. "Please don't chastise him right now. He's just a kid...who has had things put into his head. Give him some time. For me. For tonight, just let him make it. I don't want him to hate me because I love you and Jasmine is quickly claiming my heart. I know it's important for both your kids to accept me. If you let it rip on him...he may never."

He stared at me for a moment. I could tell he was angry. He pulled my hands from his face. "For you, I will wait until I calm down. He and I had a talk before you got here and he chose to blatantly disrespect you and me anyway. He will never get a pass for being disrespectful. There's no logical excuse for it. And when I see Patrice, it's gon' take everything in me not to put my foot up her ass. Whether he likes what we have or not, he's gonna respect it like he loves it." I slid my hands up his chest as I stared up at him, hoping the power I possessed that calmed him would kick in.

"Ok baby. Just give it a minute. I hate to see you this angry. I understand your point completely though. I just don't want things to get worse."

"I feel you baby. I'm 'bout to have a drink. Although, I know things might get worse in order for them to get better. For years I let Patrice use my son as leverage to get what she wanted. It's not gon' happen this time." He walked off and headed to the kitchen as Jasmine watched him. I hated that baby girl had to see that side of him. I had a feeling that the shit with Patrice was definitely gonna get worse.

I went and sat next to her. "You okay baby girl," I asked her. She shrugged.

"Hunter always makes Daddy mad."

"Well, you tend to make your daddy very happy. I'm sure he appreciates that. I heard your mom is doing good. I know you're pretty excited about

that."

As I spoke I caught sight of Bryce. He was heading outside with his bottle. "Yes! I can't wait until she can come home," she replied excitedly.

As me and Jasmine continued making small talk, he walked back inside, heading to the kitchen before he joined us. When he did, Jasmine got up on her knees in the couch and kissed his cheek as she wrapped her arms around his neck causing him to close his eyes. She was such a solace for him. I adored their relationship. "I love you Daddy."

"I love you too baby girl." His eyes found me. "I love you too Sheena." When Jasmine turned to me, her eyes were wide, like she was waiting for my response.

I slid my hand down the back of his head as I smiled at him then winked at Jasmine.

"I love you too baby." Jasmine's smile got even bigger then she started clapping.

"I knew y'all loved each other!" He grabbed my hand and kissed it before doing the same to Jasmine. "So, when are y'all getting married?"

"Can we bask in the moment for a little bit baby girl? We just confessed our love," he replied as he stared at her and chuckled then his eyes were on me as she giggled.

"What does that mean? If you love each other, shouldn't you get married?"

"There's more to marriage than love baby girl, although love is a big part of it," he began to reply. "You'll understand when you get older. But I promise you, I believe that Sheena is my forever." When those words left his lips, my heart soared.

Bryce was everything I could ever want. He treated me like a queen and was a great father. Not to mention, how fine my baby was. He was the long-awaited answer to my prayers for love. "If I can help it, I plan to keep her in

love with me for as long as she lives." Jasmine's smile was huge as she nodded. Bryce then turned to me. "That cool with you baby?" I know my face had to have reddened due to the warmth in my cheeks. I scooted closer to him, wrapping my arms around his neck, I kissed his lips then smiled.

"That's beyond cool with me love. I don't see a future for me without you in it." I turned to Jasmine and winked at her. "Or you." She beamed and Bryce pulled us both closer to him.

"My favorite women. Y'all complete me. Hunter too. I hope y'all know how much you mean to me." His love was all over me. I couldn't help but be aware of how much I meant to him. I could see us as a family already. I could see myself giving him a baby of our own and it made me smile. *I wouldn't trade this love for the world.*

∞∞∞∞

I've been meaning to ask you if you would be my date to my Aunt Juliana's premiere. Every time I planned to, something came up.

I had been super busy over the last couple of days. And I couldn't complain either. After my meeting with Hunter, I needed to stay distracted. I so wanted to make a good impression on both Bryce's kids. I was disappointed that I didn't even have a chance with Hunter because his mother had already made sure that door was closed. I just hoped it wasn't permanent. I mean, what would that mean for me and Bryce? It made me sick to even think of not having him in my world. Which is why my schedule for the last couple of days was absolutely perfect.

It also distracted me from thinking about his baby mama Patrice. I couldn't blame her for wanting Bryce though. He was perfection...to me anyway. Sure, he had his flaws, like the rest of us. But my man had every quality that made him a hot commodity. "Ooh girl, you laid this wig," my client said, pulling me out of my thoughts.

"Thank you. Make sure you tag me in your posts on social media. Tell ya'

girls...or ya' niggas about me because I'm a monster with some clippers too," I replied as my phone chimed.

Bryce: When is it baby?

Me: It's next weekend. I think it's time I introduce my man to my parents.

Bryce: Which day? That's my weekend to have Hunter.

Shit. I didn't even think...

As I got ready to reply another text came through.

Let me text Patrice and see if I can switch weekends.

Me: If you can't it's no big deal love. We can just get together with my parents another time.

I had just put all my things away and was throwing my bag over my shoulder when my phone went off again. And when I woke up the screen, my heart sank a little.

I'm sorry baby. She won't switch weekends.

Me: It's okay. I understand boo. We'll figure out a night where we can maybe go out to dinner with them.

Bryce: It's not okay. I'll do my best to make it up to you. I'm sorry baby.

I inserted the kiss emoji and said **I love you** then got into my car and cranked up. I was connecting my phone to the car when his response came through.

I love you too

Shortly after that...he was calling. I answered as I pulled out onto the street. "Hey love."

"Hey. I just needed to hear your voice. I'm really sorry. Don't replace me just yet though. I'm trying to think of a way I can still attend." I smiled a little because it meant a lot to me that he was trying so hard not to let me down. And truthfully, he wasn't. I was disappointed, but it wasn't his fault.

"I could never replace you baby. But really, I get it. Had I told you sooner, maybe we could have planned for it."

"Well, save Friday night for me if you can. If Kamryn is feeling okay, Jasmine will be going back home."

"Ok. Friday night is all yours. What are we doing?"

"I don't know for sure yet. I know for sure we'll be having dinner somewhere fancy. I wanna see you in your sexy formal attire. I also know I will be pleasing that body several times. I'm backed up, so I know you are too."

"Well, Friday night sounds like it might be something I can get into. And you are correct...my kitty cat is ready to cry a river."

"Damn. Can't wait for that river to flow. I'm thirsty as hell," he replied, his voice deepening, causing the muscles of my sex to contract.

"Well, maybe later you can drink from these waters love."

"Later...as in tonight?"

"As in not another twenty-four hours will go by without you showing my body how much you missed it."

"Shit. You making me wanna leave work early. I need to suck on that pussy ASAP." As if he spoke those words directly to my yoni, the muscles in my thighs tightened and my nipples peaked. *If I didn't have a client my damm self...*

"I wish I could take the rest of the day just to let you baby. Until your heart was content. But you keep all that energy. I want all the smoke when I get to you."

"I always have that energy concerning you. So, you gon' get more than smoke."

"They say where there's smoke there's fire, you know," I replied, knowing that I should stop because I was already feeling the temperature between my legs change.

"Shit, who you telling? But this shit... it's gon' be a fucking explosion and I can't wait to be on the receiving end of your detonation of all that creamy shit I like." There was a slight pause then he said, "Mmm. You feel me Sheena? Your pussy throbbing baby?" It so was and the fact that he knew that only spoke volumes to how much he knew every inch of me.

"Is water wet," I asked, shifting in my seat. "Now, I'm gonna go into work just that...wet. As hell."

His chuckle was light and then he said, "I'm gon' take care of you...all night. We both gon' be tired as hell tomorrow."

"Mmm...sign me up for that baby," I replied as I pulled up to valet at the hotel my client was staying in. "I just pulled up on my next client. I will definitely be seeing you later handsome." I grabbed my bag, stepped out and gave valet my keys.

"Aight gorgeous. Love you."

"I love you too baby."

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"I thought Di Di was coming with us today?" Gia giggled.

"She was supposed to, but she said her feet hurt and all she wants to do is sleep."

"My poor Di," I replied as I settled onto the massage table.

"I know. Maybe we should go hang out with her on Friday. Oh, did you ask Bryce about being your date to the premiere?" I winced a little louder than I planned and her eyes widened.

"He can't. Hunter's mom won't switch weekends with him."

"Well, that's petty," Gia replied.

"Real fucking petty." When the masseuse gently kneaded my shoulders, I moaned. I was so tense. I did not want to carry this tension with me when I went to Bryce's later. So, our weekly facial and massage appointment was just what I needed.

"Well, you can be my date," Gia said.

"You should've asked Watt." She frowned.

"Hell no," she said then her eyes went wide. "How would I even ask him?"

"Di Di could've got his number. Or I could've." She rolled her eyes.

"No thanks. When he and I talk, I want it to be because HE wants to. I want him to come to me."

"Well, I guess we gon' be each other's date then," I replied.

"Make sure you let me know what color you're wearing."

After our massages and facials, I was way more relaxed than when I went in. We had a late lunch and then went our separate ways. As soon as I made it home, I got in the shower. I was so hot in the pussy to get to Bryce, that's all I could think about.

While I showered, I heard my phone ring twice and then the chime that said I had a text. I washed and got out then wrapped a towel around my body and grabbed my phone. Although I didn't know the number, the way I was greeted in the text let me know exactly who it was.

Hey Doll Baby I'm in town for two weeks and I was hoping we could

catch up.

Me: I don't know where you found the audacity to even text me. Does your wife know?

Mario was the first asshole that broke my heart. I dated him for two years and thought we were on our way to marriage. Little did I know, he was dating his best friend's sister behind my back. When his behavior became more and more suspicious, I went through his phone one night. And there it was. Plans for a future with a woman that wasn't me. They were engaged the night before and he was moving to Vegas for a job I knew nothing about. So, the next day I broke up with him before he could break up with me and spent the next six months picking up the pieces of my heart. I blocked his number and unfollowed him everywhere. *I guess he got a new number.*

Another text came through.

Please. Just lunch. I still follow you on IG. I see you got a man now. I'm happy for you.

Me: Go away Mario

After hitting sending, I headed to my closet. Settling on a clingy black maxi and a cropped denim jacket with the sleeves folded, I got dressed then put on my sandals. Before I added a little makeup to my face, I sent Bryce a text.

I'm heading your way in ten minutes baby.

Deciding to go with just a little makeup and bold red lip, I was done in less than ten minutes. I checked the black waves that hung down my back and was ready to go when my phone went off.

Be careful baby. Can't wait to see you.

Me: I can't wait for you to show me.

After I texted him back, I headed out, listening to Daley and Marsha Ambrosius sing "Alone Together". By the time I made it to his house, I was

in such a chill mood...and ready for my man. I checked my lipstick in the visor mirror then got out and went to the door, ringing the doorbell. He opened it with a smile on his face. Grabbing my hand, he pulled me into him and said, "Hey baby."

"Hi handsome," I replied before kissing his lips.

"I hope you're hungry. I made fajitas and salads," he said then leaned over and kissed my neck. The chills were instant. He pulled away and closed the door. "How was your day beautiful?"

"It was busy but okay. After my massage with Gia, it got a little better. Now, I'm hoping my man gon' make sure that when my night ends, it's amazing."

He bit his bottom lip as he took my hand, leading me to the dining room. He pulled out my chair and said, "Well, I can promise you that it's only gonna get more amazing from here."

"Well, your presence alone has you off to a great start love." I smiled at him as I took my seat. Although I had eaten earlier with Gia, I was a little hungry and couldn't wait to chow down.

He sat down, grabbed my hand and blessed our food then dove into his. I did the same but halted when he said, "I have good news." My eyes widened a little with curiosity as I rested my chin in the palm of my hand.

"You have my attention."

"I'm gonna make the premiere. So, I hope you haven't replaced me yet."

"Bryce, are you for real? How did you make that happen?" He chuckled.

"I'm for real. Solo getting a sitter to come to the premiere. That way, even if I have to bring Jasmine, we'll be covered." I was so excited. I loved Gia and didn't mind being her date if I had to, but would rather be on Bryce's arm instead. And now, I wouldn't have to deal with having to tell my parents he wouldn't be there.

“That’s perfect baby. Gia was gonna be my date, but I’m glad everything worked out so you could be there with me.”

“Well, she may get action too. Watt is coming.” My eyes got even wider.

“Well, God was handing out miracles today hunh,” I giggled. “I’m glad he’s coming. It’s time for him to put my Gia out of her misery.”

“Right. Hopefully, he will at least talk to her. Me and Solo been tryna talk to that nigga, but he gon’ do what he wanna do. So, we’re just hoping that maybe he’ll take some initiative this time. He’s just as interested in her as she is in him, but he said he wasn’t completely over Renee. So, I guess I can only admire him for not wanting to hurt her because of his issues.” I nodded as I finished chewing the food in my mouth.

“I’m really glad you’re gonna be there love. I know I said I understood and I did...I do. But I was low-key disappointed. Only because I’m ready for you to be introduced to my parents as the man that I love and not just Solomon’s friend.” He stood from his seat and walked around the table, pulling me to mine.

He wrapped his arms around me and said, “I know baby and I hate seeing you disappointed. I’m glad everything’s going to work out. I just hope that I measure up to your parents’ expectations.” He kissed my head then slid his hand over my cheek as I stared up at him.

“Just be yourself baby,” I said as I wrapped my arms around his waist. “As long as you do that for me, I don’t care about what they expect. I love you... that’s what matters most to me baby.”

“Damn. How did a nigga like me get so lucky?” I smiled.

“That face and this body for starters,” I answered then went up on my toes to kiss his lips. “I’d like to think I’m pretty lucky too though baby.”

“Mmm, is that right,” he asked up against my lips as his hand moved to my ass. He squeezed and I could’ve melted like butter into him.

“Hell yeah daddy,” I answered. He lifted me and sat me on the table next to my plate, pulling the straps of my dress off of my shoulders one by one.

“Did you have plans on finishing those fajitas? I got something else I wanna eat.” I pulled my dress up passed my thighs and stared up at him, no verbal response given.

He snatched his shirt over his head then pulled the chair up. His hand slid between my thighs, ripping my thong. As his fingers eased past my lower lips, he kissed my neck. He grabbed my hair and pulled my head back more as his tongue moved to my earlobe. My body was one big flame, ready to set fire to his house. “I love you,” he whispered into my ear, giving me chills and goosebumps all at once.

“I love you too baby,” I whispered back, sliding my hand up the back of his head, his hair silky and wavy against my palm. He moved to my breasts, taking a nipple into his mouth, teasing the other with his fingertips. My body shivered as it started to relinquish complete control to him. He sat in the chair and slowly spread my legs. My heart raced with excitement. He glanced up at me. “I like buffets. I’m eating until I get full.” I turned and pushed my plate further away from me then laid back on the table. Planting my feet on the edge, I opened myself up wider for him to let me nourish him.

He scooted his chair up then slid his hands down my inner thighs before he gripped them, pulling me closer to him. His kisses were soft as he pressed his lips to each thigh. Even granted what sat between them the softness of his lips before he went for what he really wanted. What I really wanted to give him. When his lips covered my lower ones and his tongue slowly glided over them and between them before he sucked them, I was transported to another place.

The way his lips and tongue moved was a gift. That wasn’t shit you learned. You just had it. *And damn did he have it.* I started to squirm, ready for him to wrap his lips around my clit, sucking me into ecstasy. “Tell me how you want it baby. What you in the mood for?”

I peered down at him and said, “I want you to make a mess baby. And right now, I’m in the mood to drip honey all over your lips when you suck my clit the way you know I absolutely adore.”

“Mmm,” he moaned as he pulled his beater off and toss it to the floor. “I guess it’s a good thing I’m at the table.” Before I could even part my lips to reply, his tongue was on my trigger as he slid his fingers into me, going straight to the spot that weakened me. He completely and utterly ate me alive. Licking, slurping and sucking like he’d thirsted for my love for days. My moans were soft as I basked in the way he made my body feel.

When he moaned on my clit and let his tongue swirl around it, I reached up and gripped the edge of the table as my orgasm stared me down. My legs began to tremble as I wrapped them around his neck and my soft moans were no longer so soft. He lifted my hips and my pussy didn’t stand a chance. “Ahhh,” I gasped as my orgasm ripped through me so hard my eyes misted. “Shiiiiit,” I moaned as the high clouded my mind. Even then he didn’t stop. He continued to feed his appetite. I grabbed his head, letting my nails graze over his scalp as my screams and cries of pleasure grew louder.

“I love you,” he said before kissing my inner thighs again as my legs loosened around his neck. When he went back to my sex, he tongued it slowly, gently sucking my lips as he coated his fingers with my wetness.

He pushed a finger into my ass, slowly stroking his finger into it. “Bryyyce babyyyy,” I whined as I held his head between my legs and rolled my hips, feeling the presence of orgasm number two just that fucking fast. He could tell I was on the edge and began sucking my clit with so much fervor, my body submitted with no reluctance as I spiraled into bliss once again as he toyed with my nipple and continue stroking my ass. And even with as much as I had given up already, I couldn’t wait to feel him inside of me.

After I rode the wave, he lifted my leg over his shoulder, turning me slightly to my side, continuing to eat me out. I was going insane from the overload of pleasure. He went from my kitty to my ass, devouring every inch of both. He slapped my ass and gripped it as he used his tongue to fuck me. With his finger, he flicked my clit as his mouth continued its magic trick. I could hear the sound of my juices as I started to back away. My body was so sensitive, the pleasure was almost too much. I knew that I would be spent the next day.

My running was futile because he pulled me right back to him, continuing

his oral assault. I was so wound up, I needed him to fill me immediately. “Baby, I need you,” I panted as I fought between wanting to scoot away again and riding his face into the night. He moaned against me.

“I’m here baby. Come on my tongue one more time and I’m gon’ give you everything you need from me,” he said then turned me back to my back, burying his face back into my kitty. I gripped his head and spread my legs wider as he sent me off into another soul-snatching orgasm crying out his name. When the tremors subsided, I laid there panting...unable to lift any of my limbs at the moment.

As I laid there trying to catch my breath, he dropped his pants and his erection sprung free. He lifted my legs and dove into me. “Is this what you needed baby?”

“Ooooh daaaddy yees,” I replied lazily. Bryce had eaten me into complete and utter exhaustion, but the immeasurable amount of pleasure that his joystick brought was undeniable. He lifted me from the table and I looped my arms, that felt like wet noodles at this point, around his neck as he lowered onto his length.

“Sheena fuck!” I dropped my head to his shoulder enjoying the feel of him cocooned within my walls. As he walked us to the bedroom, I lifted my head from his shoulder. He pulled my nipple into his mouth causing it to greet his tongue, swelling from its touch. He laid me on the bed gently and slid on top of me, plunging into me once again. “Fuck,” he growled as I wrapped my legs around him and eased my hands up his chest to his neck, resting them at the back of his head. I pulled him to me and claimed his mouth and tongue for my own, licking and sucking both.

Our mouths slowed as they made love to the same pace as our bodies. The pleasure spread from my body and moved to my emotions. Bryce was making love to every part of me and my legs started to tremble. Orgasm number four was creeping up on me when he said, “I love you Sheena. With my soul baby.”

I took his face into my hands as I stared into his eyes, allowing my body to succumb to the pleasure that was washing over me. “God, I love you too.” As

soon as the words left my lips, he coated my walls with his seed. Seed that might have gotten planted if it weren't for my birth control.

He rested his head against my forehead as he slid out of me and laid next to me. I cuddled up next to him, thankful that he would be by my side at the premiere after all.

Chapter 4

We pulled up to the valet and my nerves were on a thousand. Tonight, Bryce would be presented to my family as the man in my life. And although I knew my parents and jerk of a brother would be accepting, I still could feel the tremble in my own hand when Bryce got out, gave the valet his keys then opened the door for me.

It didn't help that he looked good enough to eat in his fitted white-button down, black pants and shoes. Aunt Juliana's attire requirement for the premiere was black and white. I went with all black, rocking a black bustier that sparkled from the jewels and embellishments that decorated it and a knee-length black pencil skirt with black YSL Cassandra sandals. I decided to rock my natural bob instead of a wig or weave and went smoky on the makeup.

When I stood in front of him, I stared up into his eyes. "I'm sure you can tell I'm kinda nervous love." He took a deep breath.

"I can tell. I'm a forty-one-year-old man and I'm nervous too."

"This is normally when my relationships end. When second thoughts start being had about a serious relationship with me. I'm not nervous for them to meet you as my man because I know they'll love you." I drop my head embarrassed by the fear and anxiety that crept in on me. Yes, I knew Bryce loved me. I felt it so deep within my soul, but it did nothing for my thoughts at the moment. *Call it PTSD.*

He lifted my chin. "So, you're nervous that I won't like them?"

"I'm nervous because in the past after the introduction to my parents, I was told that maybe things are moving too fast or my family and their money is intimidating. Or my favorite, 'I thought I was ready for a serious relationship, but maybe I'm not'. I don't doubt your love for me, but sometimes I'm

haunted by my pain.”

“Listen baby. You have nothing to worry about. I’m a grown-ass man that knows what he wants. I want you. There’s nothing or nobody that can change that. So, I’m gonna have to put those spirits that are haunting you to rest. I promise that I’m gonna prove to you that I’m not easily intimidated, if it at all. Especially by nothing so superficial as money.” He pulled me close, kissed my cheek then held out his arm for me to loop mine around it. When I did, I stared up at him.

“I love you Bryce Hardwick. Kiss me please.”

“You don’t mind me messing up your lipstick? ‘Cause if I lay my lips on yours, it’s gonna be picture worthy,” he replied.

“I don’t care about this lipstick or the cameras love.” He said nothing more, just gave me what I was needing, sliding his tongue into my mouth. All the passion and love he poured into our kiss, my nerves were a thing of the past and all that mattered was the way his lips felt up against mine. That was until someone cleared their throat, getting our attention. Bryce pulled away and wipe his mouth as I did the same and reached into my clutch for my compact as Solomon stood there frowning.

“Sheena, you didn’t tell me there would be haters at every turn,” he said. I chuckled and shook my head as I reapplied my lipstick.

“Whatever. Are y’all coming inside or not? I’ve been watching y’all through the glass for the past ten minutes. I’m sorry I couldn’t get the sitter on site. There was nowhere for her to go with them,” Solomon said.

“It’s cool,” Bryce replied then turned to me. “You ready gorgeous?” I reached up and wiped the remaining lipstick from the corner of his mouth then took his hand.

“I’m ready baby.” As we headed inside, I took a calming breath, keeping a smile on my face because cameras were going off everywhere. I’m sure because of Solomon, who was walking back in with us.

“Must you be late everywhere,” my brother asked rhetorically when we approached the family. I rolled my eyes and stepped into his embrace.

“Junior, don’t start.” I turned to Bryce. “Junior, this is Bryce, my boyfriend.” After air-kissing the cheek of my sister-in-law, I said, “And this is Amara, Junior’s wife.” They smiled politely at each other and shook hands. “Where’s Mommy and Daddy?”

“They were taking pictures with Uncle Des and Aunt Juliana. They want pictures with all of us, so come on.” I took Bryce’s hand again and followed Junior and Amara further into the circle of our family. When my Dad’s eyes met mine, he smiled and made his way to me. He’d been waiting for this day for so long. Why? I’m not sure. He was never that excited about anybody else. Hell, he dreaded the introductions for the most part. Still, I couldn’t help but smile back as he stretched out his arms and embraced me.

“Hi Daddy.”

“Hi baby girl.” I returned to Bryce’s side and grabbed his hand.

“You remember my boyfriend Bryce,” I said and Daddy extended his hand to Bryce.

“I do. Nice to see you again Bryce.”

“Likewise sir.” My mother walked up and kissed my cheek with hers.

“Hi Mommy.”

“Hey.” She looked up at Bryce and smiled before sticking out her hand. “Hello. Bryce, right?”

“Yes ma’am. Hello.”

“I’m glad you could join us tonight.”

“Me too.” She smiled and nodded. “Sheena, we’re getting ready for a few family pictures, okay?”

“Yes ma’am,” I said before her and my dad went to join everyone else. I turned to Bryce and placed my hands on his face. “Try to relax baby. The hard part is over.” He kissed my forehead.

“You’re right baby. Just wanted to give a good first impression as your man.”

“I’m sure you did. At least I was impressed...from the minute I laid eyes on you tonight love.”

“Thanks baby. But you already know me, so you’re biased.” I nodded slowly, a smirk appearing on my lips.

“I am so biased love,” I replied, looping my arm around his.

After a few pictures, it was time to watch the movie. It turned out to be really good. I thought it was beautiful how proud of Aunt Juliana Uncle Desmond was. At the end of the movie when everyone stood and applauded, he couldn’t stop beaming at her. Before we all filed out of the building, Aunt Juliana informed us there would be a celebratory dinner at their home and I was here for that. The food at their parties was always amazing and my Uncle Desmond loved to turn up.

When we were in the lobby, I turned to Bryce and said, “I...I don’t know how you feel about this, but I’d like Jasmine and Hunter to join us at the dinner. There will be other kids there and it’ll be plenty of food and I don’t want them to feel like you left them behind to be with me,” I rattled out. He looked away then back at me and my excitement died down a little.

“I don’t know babe. I mean, we dated for a while before you met them. I kind of wanted you and Hunter to have a connection before bringing them around your family.”

“Yeah...you’re right. Sorry, I didn’t think about it that way,” I replied with a small smile. “So, you won’t be going to the dinner with us, I’m assuming? I can catch a ride with Gia if I need to.” Despite everybody being under the impression that Watt was gonna show up, he didn’t. So, my girl was rolling dolo. We’d be great company for each other at the dinner.

“I’m sorry. I won’t be able to attend baby.” He ran the back of his hand down my cheek. “Maybe you can ride with me to go get the kids, then I can bring you there.” I smiled and nodded.

“Ok love.” His face had reddened.

“You’re disappointed huh,” he asked.

“Baby, I know how important your kids are. Do I want you with me? Yes. But the type of father you are is one of the things I love about you. Your babies are top priority. There’ll be other dinners.” He nodded. I wrapped my arms around his neck and stared up at him.

“I love you. And thank you for being here with me.” I didn’t want him feeling guilty about not being able to come to dinner with me. And judging by his body language and the look on his face, it appeared to me that he was.

“I love you too,” he replied and pecked my lips.

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“I can’t believe Watt didn’t show,” I said to Gia. We were seated next to each other at one of the tables that were scattered throughout the dining room. She somberly shrugged.

“I’m beginning to think maybe I should just consider that a done deal. It was a nice thought, but maybe we’re not on the same page. What about Bryce? Why didn’t he come in and have dinner with us?”

“He wasn’t quite ready to introduce the kids to my family yet. I understand.”

“Yeah, I get it,” she cosigned. “But at least we can get lit together and still have a good time.” She lifted her champagne glass and I tapped it with mine.

“I’m on the way there sister.” My parents had asked when I got here where Bryce was. And so did my brother. And Solomon and Divine. Everybody

seemed to get it when I explained the situation. I know my parents were somewhat disappointed because they wanted a chance to sit and talk with him. But like I told them...another time.

Despite my baby not being at the dinner with me, it was turning out to be a celebration. Uncle Desmond and Aunt Juliana were dancing their little tipsy hearts out. Me and Gia danced alongside of Solomon and Divine for a little while. Until her pregnant ass had had enough. When I myself had had enough, I went back to the table and texted Bryce.

I miss you...*sad face emoji*

“Hey, I’m gonna go soon if you want a ride. We can share my Uber,” Gia said when she came to join me at our table.

“Yeah, please.”

My phone went off in my hand as I went to say goodbye to my mom and dad. “You leaving,” Junior asked as I was passing by him and Amara at their table sipping from their glasses. I nodded and he stood and hugged me. “Alright. See ya’ later little sister.”

“See ya,” I replied then hugged Amara and headed to where my parents were talking to Uncle Des and Aunt Juliana. “Me and Gia are gonna head out. Again Auntie, the movie was great.” She smiled and hugged me and so did Uncle Des.

“I’m glad you enjoyed it Sheena,” Aunt Juliana replied with a smile.

When I kissed my dad’s cheek, he whispered, “I love you baby girl. I’m glad you’re happy.” I pulled back and smiled. He winked.

“I love you too Daddy. Thank you.” He nodded then kissed my forehead.

“See you later baby girl.” I turned to my mother and kissed her cheek.

“Bryce seems like he really loves you from what I can tell,” she said. “Maybe you can invite him over one Sunday for dinner and we can really sit

down and get to know him.”

“Will do. Love you Mommy.”

“Love you.” After saying my goodbyes, I could finally check my phone.

Bryce: I miss you too.

Me: I’m going home now. Catching a ride with Gia. I hope you enjoyed yourself tonight love.

Bryce: Be careful. Call me when you get home.

Me: Ok baby.

“Car’s here,” Gia said. I nodded and we were out.

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The next day, I was glad to be off. Although I wasn’t hungover, I was tired as hell. I didn’t wake up until noon. When I did, I brushed my teeth, showered then smoked a joint as I went through my phone. I had a text from Bryce, some clients wanting to make appointments and some social media notifications. I went to Bryce’s text first.

Hey baby. You wanna come by this evening? Maybe you can try to get to know Hunter again. He seems cool this go ‘round.

Me: Hey love. Of course I wanna come over. Do you think he’ll be receptive this time? Have you talked to him about it?

I did want a second chance with Hunter, but I didn’t want us to force it again and get the same results. I wanted him to be open to it. While I waited for Bryce to respond, I went to IG. When I saw the reason for the notifications, I couldn’t help but groan and roll my eyes. Mario’s ass liked every picture I posted from the premiere and the dinner last night. Including pictures of me and Bryce. I don’t know what he was trying to pull, but I

instantly blocked his ass then went to make me some breakfast. As I was getting out the eggs, bacon and can of biscuits, my phone went off again.

Bryce: I haven't really talked to him but I did ask what he thought about spending time with you today. He said it was cool. I'm gon' rock with that.

Me: Ok boo. Well tell me what time I should be there and I'm with it.

Bryce: We should be there in two hours. We're about to leave Solo, take showers and go get Jasmine.

Me: Ok baby. Well...I haven't been up long. So, I'm gonna eat and run a few errands then I'll head your way.

Bryce: Ok

When I finished my breakfast, I went to my closet to change. I decided to just go with my yellow maxi skirt and a white tank. After sliding into my gold sandals, I went and straightened my hair again and added a little bit of makeup. I got ready to leave my house and started to get nervous. But I told myself not to let the devil get into my head. I was gonna remain positive about this going well.

I went to the nail shop to get my nails and toes done, picked up some clothes from the cleaners and went to meet my hair supplier. By the time I had done that, it was early evening and I was sure Bryce and the kids were home, so I headed that way. As nervous as I was when I left the house, when I got out of the car, I felt surprisingly calm. I knocked on the door and waited. It opened and Bryce said, "Hey baby. Come on in." I stepped inside and he closed the door behind me. After he locked it, I slid my hand up his chest and wrapped my arm around his neck.

"Hi handsome," I replied then kissed his lips as he gripped my hips and pulled me to him, making me crave what I wanted so badly last night. Before either of us could get lost in the passion, he pulled away and grabbed my hand.

“Hunter and I had a talk. Everything should be good baby.”

I smiled and said, “I’m glad to hear it. Lead the way.” We walked into the family room and Jasmine sprung from her seat on the couch and ran to me.

“Hey Ms. Sheena!”

“Hi beautiful,” I replied as I hugged her. She was such a sweet little girl and made me feel like I was everything whenever I was around. I looked up and Hunter had entered the room. He smiled and his cheeks reddened, which caught me off guard. He was a very handsome young man too. His father’s twin.

“Hello Ms. Sheena. I’m Hunter. I’m sorry about making a horrible first impression. That wasn’t me. I mean...that wasn’t a great representation of who I am. Please forgive me.” I couldn’t stop my eyes from widening if I wanted to. I was impressed with the way he articulated his apology.

He stretched his hand out to me and I smiled then shook it. “Well, thank you for your apology and it is very nice to meet you Hunter. I appreciate you giving me a chance.” He nodded and smiled as Bryce patted his shoulder. I could see the pride all over his face.

When Hunter walked away, Bryce grabbed my hand and led me to the kitchen. He leaned against the kitchen island and said, “Now, that makes me extremely happy. You think maybe we can have dinner with your family next weekend?”

Looping my arms around his neck, I stared up at him and replied, “I think that can be arranged. My mother had that same idea anyway. She wanted me to extend an invite to Sunday dinner. I’ll let her know you accept.”

“Absolutely,” he replied then kissed my lips. “So, the kids wanted nachos tonight. I hope that’s cool with you. I have beef, jalapenos, sour cream, all that shit.” He chuckled as his hands slid down to my ass and rested there.

“That’s cool with me. Feed me daddy.” His eyes widened a little.

“Don’t be starting that shit right now. ‘Cause I got plenty I can feed you,” he said as he squeezed my ass. I smirked.

“You sure do love. I’ll let you satisfy my stomach’s appetite first though.”

“Mmmhmm. I got yo’ number witcho horny ass. It’s on later.” He let me go and went to the cabinets to get plates. Jasmine walked into the kitchen with her tablet.

“Ms. Sheena, look at this hairstyle. Do you like it?”

“Oooh baby girl, that is fire. We gon’ have to try that for your next style.”

“Jasmine, go wash your hands. Tell Hunter to do the same,” Bryce said. When she left the kitchen, he pulled me to him. “Don’t let her punk you. You don’t have to do what she insinuates. Plus...make her ask for what she wants.” He smacked me on the ass then grabbed the bag of tortilla chips. I chuckled.

“She’s just so adorable though,” I replied before going to the sink to wash my own hands.

“Well, you better put your foot down now. When you become her stepmother, it’s gonna be too late.” I heard the words...in slow motion it seemed. I stopped breathing as I turned around, my wide eyes on him.

“Wh...you...are you saying...” I squeezed my eyes shut and shook my head, trying to rattle some sense back into my head. “You wanna marry me?” He walked over to me and pressed his body against mine.

“Isn’t that what we’re working toward? What better way to show you how much you mean to me? I’m not asking you at this moment, but I want you to be prepared for when I do. We’ve already been talking and dating a combined five or six months. I’m not trying to drag this out. We have a few other items that we need to talk about, things we need to do before that moment comes, but it will come Sheena. I love you girl.” I didn’t even reply, just threw my arms around his neck and kissed him, pulling his bottom lip between mine.

“I love you too,” I replied softly.

“Aight baby Let me fix y’all food before yo’ stomach get grouchy.” I smiled and let go then watched him make plates, thinking that I could definitely see this being my life.

Chapter 5

“Oooh, I hope their chef is making lunch for us today,” I tell Gia after knocking on the front door of Divine and Solomon’s. “I am starving. Three clients before noon was vicious on ya’ girl.”

“I know what you mean. My eyes stayed on the clock across from my desk all morning.” Today, we were supposed to go out to lunch with Divine, but she decided she wanted us to just come over and each lunch on the patio of her home.

When she opened the door, I couldn’t help but smile. Her belly was huge now. She was mere weeks away from bringing Little Miss Frank into the world. “Hey boo,” I squealed rubbing her belly.

“Hey,” she replied. Gia came in behind me and kissed her cheek.

“You look like you’re ready to go at any moment,” she said.

“You have no idea. This little girl is gonna be a dancer the way she stays tapdancing on my organs.” Me and Gia chuckled. “Well, come on. Let’s go out to the patio.”

As we followed behind her, I asked, “Where’s Solomon this afternoon?”

“Oh, with my dad. Daddy is trying his best to convince him to become a golfer. I think Solomon only appeases him because it’s Daddy.” I laughed. “You know our dads could be out there for hours, happy and content.”

“Very true,” I laughed. Those two brothers loved them some golf.

When we got to the patio, I was delighted to see our food was set up out there. The BLT chopped salad with corn, feta and avocado was calling me. As soon as I sat down, I said my blessing and dove in. Gia too.

“Damn, y’all act like the pregnant ones,” Divine giggled.

“Bitch, all I had for breakfast was a smoothie. I’m starving,” I said after chewing the bite of food in my mouth.

“I have a date,” Gia blurted out. Me and Divine looked at her in astonishment.

“Watt finally came to his senses I see,” I said.

“It’s not Watt,” she replied quietly.

“Whaaat,” Divine whispered in awe.

“I just...I can’t wait for him to want me. Everything in me is saying that there could be something amazing between us, but I can’t keep getting my hopes up to be let down. Besides, if he wants me...he knows how to find me.”

“Ok girl. I hear you,” I remarked before filling my mouth with more salad.

“Well, what’s his name? How’d you meet him?”

“He’s a client of my boss’s. His name is Ellis and we’re going to dinner this weekend.”

“Well, have fun,” Divine said. “I’m happy for you.”

“Me too Gi Gi,” I added and she smiled softly.

“Thanks y’all.”

“So, what about you She She. How are you and Bryce?” She could barely get the words out of her mouth and I was already grinning. “Ooooh, tell us.”

“The other day, he said he wanted to marry me.”

“Shut up,” Divine said.

“For real,” Gia asked and I nodded as my smile grew wider.

“Not right now,” I quickly added. “But just knowing that he wants to...ya’ bitch been on a cloud for days now.”

“I bet,” Gia giggled. “You’ve only been planning your wedding since we were in high school.” We all laughed.

“Hey, it doesn’t hurt to have a blueprint, ya’ know. Plus, I just...I always wanted to be married Gi Gi.”

“I know boo. I’m so glad that it’s gonna happen for you.”

“I’m happy for you too She She,” Divine added, emotion in her voice. “Sorry, I’m not trying to get choked up.” I laughed and reached over and patted her hand.

“It’s okay boo. We understand.”

“So, what about babies?”

“I do want kids with him. We just haven’t really talked about it. I definitely think that’s a conversation we should have though. Soon. I ain’t getting no younger.”

When we finished lunch with Divine, me and Gia left to get back to work. On my way to my client’s, I decided to call Bryce. Honestly, the conversation I had with Divine about kids was still on my mind. I was anxious to talk to him about it and was thinking maybe I could stop by later so we could talk in person.

“Hey baby. How’s your day going?”

“Hi love. My day’s been great. How’s yours?”

“It’s been hella busy, but I’m managing.”

“I was calling because I wanted to come see you tonight. Can I do that boo? I wanna talk about something.”

“Since when you have to ask permission to come see me Sheena? I can’t wait to see you baby.”

“Ooooh...I hope you down to show me baby.”

“I’m always down for that. You know that shit too.”

“Well damn daddy. I guess I will DEFINITELY be seeing you later.”

“Mmmhmm. All of me gon’ see all of you. What do you wanna talk to me about?”

“I rather talk in person baby. There’s nothing to worry about though,” I answered.

“Ok. Don’t have me sitting on pins and needles, waiting. I’m gonna be home at forty-thirty. Be waiting for me.”

“I sure will baby.” He chuckled.

“Aight baby. Let me go so I can get this workday over with. I love you.”

“I love you too. See you later.”

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We had eaten dinner together and made small talk. I was avoiding the conversation I wanted to have until we were comfortable and relaxed. So, as we laid on the couch, me on top of him, supposedly watching something that didn’t hold my attention, I lifted my head from his chest. “I’m ready to talk now baby,” I said as I stared at him, waiting for his gaze to meet mine.

“Okay,” he replied. He sat up, causing me to sit up too. He grabbed my hand and stared at me, waiting for what I had to say.

As I stared back, I asked, “Do you want more babies Bryce?” He slowly exhaled like he had been bracing himself then pulled me astride his lap.

“Had I not been seriously in love, then I wouldn’t.” He gently stroked my cheek then slid his hands to his ass. “But with you, I’ll give you the world. You want babies Sheena?” Resting my arms on his shoulders, I slid my hand up and down the back of his head.

“I want babies with you,” I answered.

“Mmm. How many babies are we talking about,” he asked, pulling me closer to him. I could feel his erection.

I leaned into him and kissed his neck then softly said into his ear, “One or two.” I kissed his ear. “How many do you want love?”

“How ever many you want. So, had you said six, I would’ve given that to you. We’d have to find another house, but I said I would give you the world if I could. So, I guess my question is, when did you want to get started?” His hands eased up to my breasts and gently rubbed them through my shirt. I slowly started to grind on his lap.

“Mmmm. I’m ready now baby.” He chuckled a little then stilled me.

“Let’s give this a little time baby. I’m going to give you what you want, but I want to establish a relationship with your parents first and allow my kids to do the same. There’s my family too. I know I don’t really talk about them or spend time with them, but I don’t want to feel like I’m keeping you hidden from them...no matter how unstable they are. Then...I want to get your dad’s permission to give you my last name. Once all that happens, it’s open season.”

I pouted a little then said, “I get it baby and I want all those things too. But...you DID ask when I wanted to get started. I’m just ready to share every aspect of life and every experience with you. Becoming a mother being one. But we will do this your way because I feel where you’re coming from boo.” He grabbed my chin and pulled me to him, kissing my lips.

“I understand your point too. In no way was I expecting you to say now.” He chuckled. “I was trying to get a timeline in my mind. But now I know that we need to move this along rather quickly. So, once I meet your people this

Sunday, we can have dinner here next weekend, so they can meet Hunter and Jasmine. That way the kids will be comfortable in their own environment. We can visit my people somewhere between all that. I can guarantee it will be a short visit. So, don't worry. I'll make this process as painless as possible."

"Ok baby," I replied with a smile. "Sounds good to me." Slowly, I started to roll my hips again. "I know something else that sounds good too."

"What else sounds good baby? The sloshing noises that pussy make when I'm up in it." I dropped my forehead to his and ran my finger across his lip.

"Mmmhmm. And that the nasty shit that comes out of your mouth when you in it."

"Mmm. And don't forget all the nasty shit that comes out of yours," he replied, pulling my shirt over my head.

"Can't forget about that love," I said before kissing his lips and reaching for his shirt. He sat up and let me pull it over his head. My eyes scanned his chest and arms as my hands ran across the peaks and ridges that made him so fucking sexy to me. I loved everything about this man. Without a shadow of a doubt, I wanted to carry his last name. Mother his babies.

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It was the evening before dinner with my parents. It was my self-care night. I had taken a nice hot bath, slid into my robe and put on my detoxifying facial mask then turned on some slow jams and sparked a J when my phone rang. When I looked at the screen, my mother's face was on the screen. "Hey Ma," I answered.

"Hey sweetheart," she replied. "I was calling because the chef needs a head count. Will Bryce's children be joining us?"

"No ma'am. In fact, we want you guys to have dinner with us at Bryce's next weekend so you can meet the kids. It's best you and Daddy get better

acquainted with Bryce first.”

“I understand. I’ll mention it to your father.” The line went silent for a while. “This is really real hunh,” she asked.

“What makes you ask that?”

“At the premiere, I watched how he made you light up. Saw how you two couldn’t keep your hands off of each other. He stares at you like you are the sun in his sky.”

“This is the first time I’ve been in love and actually felt that same love being reciprocated.”

“I’m so happy for you Sheena. I look forward to dinner tomorrow. Love you baby girl.”

“Thank you Mommy. Love you too.”

When I woke up the next morning, I had to hit the ground running. Although I had the dinner with my parents and Bryce to get ready for, I had two clients scheduled for the morning. Once I finished them up, I went home and laid my own wig then went shopping for something to wear. By the time I got back home it was late in the afternoon. I decided to take a shower then did my makeup.

By the time Bryce arrived at my house to pick me up, I had just slid into my beige off-the-shoulder button-up mini-dress. I grabbed my shoes and clutch and ran to the front door. I pulled it open and there he stood in his long-sleeved button down and gray slacks with a bouquet of white calla lilies. “Hi baby,” I said, placing a kiss on his lips.

“Hey. You look amazing,” he replied.

“Thank you. So do you.” After I stepped into my shoes, I took the flowers he brought. “These are very pretty love. Thank you. Let me put these in water and we can go.”

“Ok baby.” I went to the kitchen, found a vase and put the flowers in

water, sitting them on the kitchen island. When I got back to him, I looped my arm in his and we headed out.

I thought I would be nervous by now. Hell, the whole ride to my parents' house, I was waiting for the nerves to kick in, but they never did. Something told me that tonight would be everything I was hoping for. My parents would get to know my man better and he would get more comfortable with them. *At least that was what I was speaking into the atmosphere.*

We pulled into the driveway and he got out to come around and open my door for me. Before we made our way to the porch, I turned to him and wrapped my arms around his waist. He was a bit nervous, I could tell. Smiling at him, I said, "You okay love? You know they're gonna love you, right?"

"I'm a bit nervous, but just because I want everything to be perfect. This will be the first check you can put on the list of requirements before we start trying for a baby." I smiled and pecked his lips.

"Everything will be fine." I took his hand and led him to the front door. I rang the doorbell and it was my mom who opened it. Her smile was bright as she embraced me.

"Hey Mommy."

"Hey baby girl." She looked at Bryce with a smile then embraced him too. "So nice to see you again Bryce. Come in."

"Nice to see you again as well Mrs. Stewart," Bryce replied.

When we stepped inside, I asked, "Where is Daddy?"

"He's in his office. He should be on his way out to join us," she said rather dryly, which struck me as unusual. Just as we were rounding the corner, Daddy came down the marble staircase that led to their bedroom and his office. That was all the upstairs consisted of.

He smiled and pulled me into an embrace. "Hey baby girl."

“Hi Daddy.” He turned and extended his hand to Bryce.

“Bryce. Good to see you again.”

“Likewise Mr. Stewart,” Bryce said as he shook Daddy’s hand.

“Well, come on you two. Let’s get something to eat.” Daddy placed his hand on the small of my mom’s back and I could swear her smile was forced. *What the hell was going on with them?* I kept my thoughts to myself as we followed them to the dining area. Bryce pulled out my chair and allowed me to sit before taking his own seat. My mother didn’t even bother to wait for Daddy to do the same for her.

Daddy cleared his throat and said, “I hope y’all are hungry for a little surf and turf.” I smiled at him.

“Steak and lobster,” I asked.

“My favorite,” Daddy answered.

“So, Bryce, tell us something about yourself,” Mommy said. “What do you do?”

“I’m a commercial loan officer for the Boston Private Bank in Pasadena. I’m also being considered for vice president of the branch as well.” I turned to him, eyes wide.

“Wow baby. I had no idea. That’s great!” Dean, my parents’ chef entered the dining room with his cart and sat our plates of salad in front of us.

“Thank you Dean,” Daddy said. “That IS great news. Congratulations.”

“Yes, congratulations,” Mommy echoed.

“Thank you,” Bryce replied then turned to me. “Sorry, I didn’t think about saying anything about it until now. I haven’t actually gotten the title yet, but I’m confident that it’ll be mine.”

“I’m confident that it will too baby,” he grabbed my hand and pulled me

closer, kissing my forehead.

“Thank you baby.”

“Shall we say grace,” Daddy asked, extending his hands to me and Mommy. When we all had joined hands, he blessed the food. We started to partake in our salad, when Daddy said, “Sheena tells us you have two children. How old, if I may ask?” Bryce nodded.

“Yes sir. My son is twelve and my baby girl is eight.”

“And are they accepting of your relationship with our daughter,” Mommy asked before sipping her glass of wine. Bryce shifted in his seat a little.

“My daughter fell in love right away. There was some difficulty with my son because of his mother, but all of that was handled and their last encounter was a pleasant one. We had a talk and got an understanding of what was going on and what wasn’t. He accepted what I had to say and apologized to Sheena. So, all is well with that situation.” I glanced from Mommy to Daddy. They both seemed pleased enough with his answer.

“Bryce, I’m not a hard man,” Daddy began. “All I want...we want...is for whoever our daughter chooses to be with to treat her like the queen she is. Although she is still my princess, she deserves to be treated like a queen by the man that claims to love her. As long as she is happy, you are more than welcomed here. You and your children.”

“Thank you sir. I can assure you that you don’t have a thing to worry about...neither of you. I love Sheena with everything in me. I don’t see a future without her in it. She stole my heart...which was an accomplishment within itself. Matters of the heart had been tough for me until she came along. Everything became crystal clear because of this beautiful woman you raised. So, thank you for blessing me with perfection.” My cheeks heated as I smiled at the man that I wanted to love forever. It felt good to hear the words that he spoke so confidently when it came to me and his love for me.

“Well, it seems we’re on the same page,” Daddy replied.

“We can see that you make her extremely happy. I wish you two the very best,” Mommy said with a smile. Dean returned, taking our dishes. As we waited for our next course, and Daddy and Mommy spoke in hushed voices, I squeezed Bryce’s hand and he caught my stare.

“You have no idea how much I love you,” I told him, leaning into him, practically begging him to kiss my lips. I wanted him to do more than that, but we had two more courses to go, so I was willing to settle for what I could get. After fulfilling my silent request, he smiled at me.

“Excuse me,” Mommy said as she quickly stood up from the table. I frowned and looked over at Daddy. He looked embarrassed.

“Daddy, what’s going on with Mommy?”

“Uh...she’s not feeling too great tonight. She needs to get some air for a moment.” Dean came in with our main course, placing our three plates in front of us.

“Will Mrs. Stewart be returning,” he asked my dad.

“Uh no...just put hers away please Dean. Thank you.” Something was going on with my parents and I had no idea what, but I damn sure planned to find out.

Although we continued dinner, conversing and enjoying the food, it was definitely awkward. My mother never returned and I was a little annoyed... and worried. Before Bryce and I left, I went up to their bedroom and tried to enter, but the door was locked. When I knocked, she didn’t answer.

As we rode back to my house, I was in my head. I didn’t really snap out of it until Bryce was helping me from the car. “Baby, did something seem weird about my parents to you? They seemed uncomfortable, but it didn’t feel like it had anything to do with us.”

“Yeah. They seemed to be arguing baby. Your mom’s body language towards him was off all night, like she was hurt or pissed.”

“That’s what I thought,” I replied as I unlocked the door and we went inside. “That worries me.” I headed into the living room and sat down to take off my shoes. He sat next to me.

“Maybe it’s just an argument baby. It could all blow over by tomorrow.” He pulled me close and kissed my forehead as he reached into his pocket for his phone. His fingers moved across the screen rapidly. When he was done, he turned back to me and said, “Sorry. I had to check on Hunter.”

“Why? Is he okay,” I asked.

“He’s at home alone for the first time. Patrice just HAD to go out tonight. She had the nerve to call me to ask for me to get Hunter,” he answered with a roll of his eyes.

“Oh,” I said softly before turning to him. “Despite my parents’ bullshit, I think the night went well love. I think you made a great impression.” He kissed my forehead again.

“I think so too. They seemed to be impressed with ya man. You know, the upcoming VP of Boston Private Bank. I can’t wait for the kids to meet them now. They were cool, despite the issues between them.” I gave him a small smile.

“I can’t wait either baby. My parents will love them. And since I didn’t say it earlier...I’m proud of you. My man...with the VP title.” He smiled a little.

“You up to showing me how proud you are? I mean, you were looking like you were about to be on savage mode earlier.” I climbed into his lap, tugging at my bottom lip with my teeth.

“I’m so glad you asked baby. I’ve been dying to give you this classy, bougie and ratchet all evening.” He grabbed my ass, placing me in position to appreciate his erection.

“Is that right?” I nodded as I started to undo the buttons of his shirt.

I leaned in close to his ear and said, “If it gets any wetter, you might need

to brace yourself for a tsunami baby.”

“Fuck. Drown me then girl. Shit! You done made him excited as hell to get up in that. So, you tryna get fucked up tonight?”

“That cannot be a real question love,” I answered as I started on the top buttons of my dress, my eyes on him. He flipped me over and roughly spread my legs. Desire was rushing through my body as I watched him get on his knees then put his face between my legs, sliding his nose over the fabric of my wet panties.

He took his shirt off then ripped my panties and wasted no time partaking in the sweetness I was always so willing to give. The sound that escaped my lips was something like the purr of cat as one hand eased down his back and the other held his head. He pushed my legs up to my shoulders as he sucked my clit, his tongue swirling around it, giving me chills and goosebumps simultaneously.

“As much as I love tasting your shit, my dick is begging to dip inside this wet shit. I’m ‘bout to make you nut fast as shit. You ready for daddy?”

“Fuck it baby,” I replied breathlessly, anticipating more of the pleasure he brought...whether it was his mouth or his dick. Both possessed magic unknown until I met him. Just when I thought he was about to bless me with the pleasure of feeling him inside of me, he went back to my sex with his mouth. Pushing his fingers inside of me, he strummed the strings of my g-spot as he sucked my clit. My legs started to tremble and my body was on pleasure overload.

Before I could fully indulge in the bliss of what his tongue did to me, he straightened and tore the clasp of his pants. His erection sprung free and he snatched me to him, filling me with his girth. “Ahh, shit,” he moaned as I bit down on my lip. The slow and deep thrusts made my spine tingle.

“Ooooh shiiit baby,” I whined as I rolled my hips into him. His pace sped and when he leaned over, he brought my legs with him. His mouth covered my nipple as he pounded so deep into me while I screamed.

“Fuck,” he thundered. My entire body began to quake and I cried out his name as I showered him with my juices. Not long after my orgasm owned me, his overcame him as well. He rested his forehead against mine as we both tried to regain our breath.

“Fuck! I can’t wait to put a baby in you. Shit girl. You make me weak.” I smiled lazily and kissed his lips.

“I can’t wait to carry your baby. In the meantime, I’m having an amazing time practicing the process love.”

“Mmm, me too,” he replied and began to slowly stroke me. “Got dammit.”

I was fully prepared to ride the wave that was Bryce Hardwick again when he slowly pulled out of me and said, “Come on. I need to get at you better baby.”

Chapter 6

I was exhausted. I was putting in work today and all I wanted to do was go home, but I had one more client left. Just as I pulled up to Under the Radar Records' first lady of R&B, Kierra's gate, my phone chimed, alerting me of a text. It was Bryce.

Hey baby. Are you available tomorrow evening to go to Inglewood?

Me: Hey! Sure love.

After security let me through the gate, I drove up to her house and parked in what she called her 'visitors' parking'. Just as I turned off my car, my phone started to ring. It was my brother calling me. "Hey," I said when I answered.

"Hey, what's wrong with your parents," he replied.

"I was wondering the same damn thing. When me and Bryce had dinner with them, it was so much tension between them. Then, Mommy excused herself from the table and never came back."

"Damn, for real? Amara said she noticed how Mommy kept discreetly shrugging Daddy's hand off of her at Aunt Juliana's premiere. What the fuck is going on with them two?"

"I don't know. How's Daddy today?" Junior worked with my father in casting, so they basically saw each other every day.

"Laser focused on working. I asked him did he want to go to lunch with me and he turned me down. Said he got a lot of work to do. That's never happened. Something is up and we need to sit them down and find out." Despite the severity of the conversation, I chuckled a little.

"You act like we're THEY'RE parents crazy. And as much as I want to

know what's going on, I still believe we should let them come to us when they're ready."

"Look at you lil' sister. Sounding all mature and shit. Maybe Bryce is good for you after all."

"He is definitely good for me. And nigga...I've always been mature, your ass still ain't caught up and you supposed to be MY older sibling." We both laughed. Even though Junior and I went back and forth a lot, we loved each other so much. We had each other's backs and just loved getting on each other's nerves.

"I am mature big head girl. But I do agree with you about Mommy and Daddy. I'm worried though sis."

"I know. Me too."

"Well, I gotta get back to work and I know you do too. Love ya' sis," he said.

"Love ya too brother. I'll talk to you later." After we ended our call, I read the text that came through while I was on the phone with Junior.

Bryce: Okay. That doesn't mean I don't wanna see you today. I love you.

Me: I miss and love you too baby. (kissing face emoji)

The entire time I was working, I couldn't stop thinking about my parents. I just had a bad feeling and I couldn't shake it. As I was working, my phone went off, but I wasn't in a position to see what and who it was. When I finished and had gotten back in my car, I saw that Bryce had sent another text.

Gotta go get Hunter. Patrice never came home last night. That's not like her.

Me: Oh wow love. I pray everything is okay.



After my last client, I went to the grocery store and grabbed everything I needed to make spaghetti, a side salad and Italian bread and some wine. While I was in the store, Bryce had called to tell me what was going on with Patrice and it just about broke my heart. I couldn't imagine being held hostage and being in fear for my life. Especially knowing my child was waiting and worried about me.

When I finally made it home, I showered and was preparing to get started when my phone rang. I grabbed it and saw my mom's picture on the screen. "Hello," I answered.

"Sheena, hold on baby girl," she replied then a few seconds later said, "Junior, are you there?"

"Yes ma'am," he answered.

"Deon? Are you there?"

"I'm here," Daddy said dryly. *Oh, something was definitely going on.*

"Well, I'm sure by now you two have noticed an...awkwardness between your father and I," Mommy began. "I think it's time we addressed it as a family. It's not fair that we keep you two in the dark any longer. So, Sunday, you two will come over for dinner and we will talk."

"What is this even about Mommy," I asked as I pulled a pot from the cabinet.

"Sheena, we will discuss everything on Sunday."

"Yes ma'am."

I found it odd that Daddy didn't speak up. He was on the phone completely silent until Mommy said, "Deon, is there anything you want to add?"

“No. Sunday it is,” was his reply.

“Ok. Well, I love you both and we’ll see you soon.”

“Love you too,” Junior and I said before Mommy ended the conference call. I stood in the kitchen numb and confused. I was racking my brain all over again. And every time I made it to divorce, I quickly shifted my thoughts. That wasn’t something I could fathom at the moment. Completely mind fucked after that call and the news of the horrible things that happened to Patrice, I poured me a big glass of wine and turned on my music then started cooking.

The entire time, I couldn’t settle my mind for shit. I was scatter brain as hell at this point. So, I picked up my phone to text Bryce.

Hey love. I just wanted to check on you guys and see if everything was okay.

As I was getting the meat started, my phone went off, alerting me of Bryce’s text.

Hey baby. As good as can be expected. I’m waiting on Patrice’s mother to get here, so I can go get Hunter from Watt. I miss you.

Me: I understand. I miss you too. I wish you could come and be with me. I think my parents are getting divorced.

Just seeing the words on the screen made me sick. My parents were my picture of love. Yeah, they worked a lot, but when we were all together, the love was felt. I watched my dad dote on my mother my whole life. But to see them at dinner, the way she seemed repulsed by his touch, it was shocking. As I stood staring at my screen, lost in my thoughts, Bryce’s response came up.

I’m so sorry baby. I’m gonna do what I can to make it to you tonight.

Me: I understand if you can’t. You’ve had a lot going on today.

How are you love?

His response was quick.

I'll be there in a couple of hours. I'm okay.

I don't believe you but I will see you when you get here baby. I love you.

Bryce: I love you too babe.

I sat my phone down and focused on the food I was cooking as I waited for him and sipped my wine. I was glad he was able to come to me tonight because the way I was feeling, I needed him. Needed to lay my head on his chest. Listen to the way his heartbeat. True, I was grown and if my parents divorced, I'd be okay, but I didn't want that. I wanted my parents together. I wanted to see them old and gray, loving on my kids together one day.

The food had been done by the time Bryce got to my house, but I hadn't eaten. I wanted to wait for him just in case he hadn't. I left the food on low to keep it warm. When I opened the door and he came in, I rushed into his arms and laid my head on his chest, closing my eyes and finally feeling safe enough to exhale the stress of the day. I know his had probably been more fucked up than mine. But I needed to be in his arms before any words were exchanged. Life as I had known it for the past twenty-eight years was about to change.

"I'm sorry baby. This has to be tough for you." I slowly lifted my head and stared up at him. He sounded exhausted.

"It's definitely hard to imagine. How are you though, really love?"

"I'm okay baby. Just a little tired. But you are my main concern. I need to make sure you're good. So, if it's okay with you, I'm gonna crash here with you tonight." I gave him a weak smile.

"Of course it's okay with me. Are you hungry? I cooked."

“Yeah baby. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome love.” Stepping out of his embrace, I headed to the kitchen, asking, “So, how is Patrice doing,” over my shoulder.

“She wasn’t doing well at first. She was extremely jumpy and clingy. But by the time I left, she was better, only in some pain. They fractured her jaw. She said all she could think about was Hunter and that she would have done whatever they told her to do to assure she would still be here for him. So, she didn’t want him out of her sight. Her mom is there with her too,” he answered then went to living room. I felt bad for her. Despite everything, I couldn’t ignore my sympathy for her, one Black woman to another. Hell, one human being to another. That had to be a very traumatic experience.

When I was done making plates, I brought both to the living room where he was. “I’m so sorry she went through that. No woman should ever be violated in such a way,” I said as I passed him his plate then sat my own on the table to go back for our drinks. “What are you drinking love? I’m having wine, but there’s lemonade, water and I have a bottle of Crown in here.” I rarely ever drank Crown, but I liked to keep it in the house for him.

“Let me get water with my food baby. I may have some Crown later. Thank you.” I grabbed a glass and poured a bottle of water in it, adding some ice to it then grabbed my glass of wine and rejoined him. After grace was said, I folded my legs beneath me and got into my food.

After a few bites, I took a sip of wine and said, “My mom arranged a dinner for Sunday night. She told me and my brother on a conference call with my dad. He sounded so unlike himself baby. Something happened to bring this about. And I hate to say it, but I think it’s on my mother’s end. I just have a feeling.” I sighed, then took a bigger sip of my wine. “I don’t even wanna go to be honest.”

“So, why are you going if you already know that they’re getting divorced? Why put yourself through the turmoil? I mean...I’m just asking honestly. I really don’t know what that tight family bond feels like.” I dropped my head, pushing my food around on my plate.

“I don’t know for sure, but I can feel it in the pit of my stomach. I have to be there. I wanna know what’s going on.” I reached over and ran my knuckles over the hair on his cheek. “Speaking of your family, are you gonna still wanna go to Inglewood baby?” He took a deep breath. Bryce didn’t really talk about his family. I often wondered why, but I didn’t ask questions. And judging by his reaction to my question, it had to be a serious reason why.

“Like you, I really don’t want to, but there’s a constant nagging on the inside of me telling me that I need to. I haven’t seen my mother in years. Never had a desire to because she was never a mother to me. But for some reason, something is telling me I need to go there.”

“Well, we should go baby,” I replied as I reached over and squeezed his hand. “Maybe the nagging feeling is telling you that it’s time. It’s time to go back love.” He glanced at me then withdrew his hand, going back to his food, which he seemed not to be too interested in anymore. Suddenly, I felt bad pushing the issue.

He looked back up at me and said, “I don’t know baby. We’ll see.”

“Ok,” I replied then turned my attention to my own plate. He regained it when he sat his plate down on the table then did the same to mine. He pulled me onto his lap.

“You know, through all this bullshit, you’re the person that I feel the most comfortable with. It’s like my issues are overtaken by your love.” He kissed my forehead then said, “We’ll go tomorrow. I know that I’ll be okay if you’re with me. I love you Sheena Stewart.” Placing my palms to his cheeks, I kissed his lips.

“Everything will work out just the way it’s meant to love. Just remember that and the fact that I’ll always be with you through anything. I love you too Bryce Hardwick.” His forehead rested against mine for a moment.

“I promise to always be there for you too. We both got some serious shit going on in our lives, but I’m grateful that the bond between the two of us is still intact and is as strong as ever. Thank you for putting up with Patrice’s shenanigans.” Just as I parted my lips to respond, he said, “I need to tell you

something.” He lifted his head and looked deep into my eyes, making my heart speed. I hoped like hell it wasn’t more bad news.

“Go ahead love. I’m listening.” He took a deep breath, exhaling slowly.

“I’ve been debating on whether to tell you or not, but I didn’t want to risk you hearing it from Patrice. I never know how petty she’s going to be day to day. When I got her to her house after we left ER, I helped her undress to soak. She broke down emotionally, screaming and crying.” I started to get a little uncomfortable then I felt guilty. Both those feelings were swirling around in me at once, but I waited for him to finish because it seemed he had more to say.

“I got undressed, leaving on my underwear, and helped her to the shower and held her...comforted her. My heart hurt for her. But afterwards, even though I have nothing but love for her as the mother of my kid, I felt like I cheated on you. I feel so guilty about it. You are the only woman I love...that I want. I just...I was trying to soothe her pain. What she went through...what I saw when I walked in that room...it was just hard not to do anything. I’m so sorry Sheena.” Although, I was uncomfortable with what happened, I respected the hell out of him in that moment. He could have kept it to himself and left me in the dark, but he didn’t. In all of my relationships, secrets were the problem. Being made a fool of was the problem. But here my man was, making sure that neither of those things would occur in our relationship. My heart swelled.

I turned and straddled his lap, taking his face into my hands. “I would be lying if I said I’m not uncomfortable with that, but I understand and I respect you more now than I ever had. You could have said nothing. I was so used to men saying one thing all while something else was going on behind the scenes. You have more than proven that I can trust you...with all of me. Thank you for loving and respecting what we have enough to tell me and not just let me find out.”

He wrapped his arms around my waist. “God, I’m so happy you understand. I’m sorry for making you uncomfortable. You leaving me was all I could see coming out of my confession, but I knew you deserved to hear the truth of what happened from me. Patrice is mild-mannered because of what

happened. But I know there could come a day where she gets a hair up her ass and decides to tell that shit like there was more to it. It feels like a weight has lifted off my heart.”

“You mean the world to me. There’s no way I would give you up that easily love,” I said and he seemed to relax from the reassurance that he had my love and trust forever. Not only was that reassurance for him, it was growth for me.

Chapter 7

I had just started the silk press that I had to do this morning when my phone chimed. When I was able to get to a stopping place and check it, the text from Bryce shot my eyebrows up.

Bryce: Watt just asked for Gia's phone number (wide-eye emoji)

Whaaat?! Finally! I replied to his text with the wide-eye emoji and her number then went back to my client. And my thoughts. Today, we were going to Inglewood and I was a little nervous. To be honest, I think I was only nervous because Bryce didn't feel good about going back. But I knew this was necessary for our future. As I zoned out, just about completing my client's hair, my phone rang and it was Gia. I answered through my AirPods excitedly. I couldn't wait to tell her that Watt was going to be hitting her up soon.

"Hey girl!"

"Hey. You working?"

"Yeah, I'm wrapping up right now. I got some news for you though."

"Oh really? What's that?"

"Bryce just texted me because Watt asked for your number." The line was quiet. "Um...hello heifer. Did you hear me?"

"I heard you. I'm just done getting my hopes up. If he hits me up, we'll see what happens. If not, at least I won't be disappointed again."

"I feel you boo. But what did you call for?"

"Oh! I just wanted to make sure spa day was still on tomorrow after work."

"Of course. I may need it," I replied.

“Why? What’s going on?”

“I’m going to Inglewood to meet Bryce’s family today and I’m kinda nervous. His past really bothers him.”

“Oh,” she said softly.

“Speaking of family, remind me to tell you about Mommy and Daddy tomorrow too.”

“Ok She She. I’ll talk to you later.”

“Later boo,” I said then ended the call.

When I finished up my appointment, I hurried home to shower and change. Before jumping in the shower, I texted Bryce and let him know that I would head his way when I was done. After showering, I moisturized my skin, did my makeup then ran the straightener through my bob. I put on my white shirt dress and brown sheer floor length button-down blouse, leaving it unbuttoned. Stepping into my khaki color strappy sandals, I gave myself an inspection then went to put on my silver choker and cuff bracelet. After another quick look, I grabbed my purse and headed out.

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The whole ride to Inglewood was quiet. Neither of us spoke as he held my hand and drove to a nursing facility. He parked and I waited for him to get out, but he didn’t right away. He kissed my hand then stared into my eyes before his hand dropped to my exposed leg. Resuming eye contact, he said, “I don’t know what to expect, but I felt like this was something we needed to do together. She’s never met my kids. So, depending on how this visit goes, I’ll make a decision whether or not to bring them.” I nodded.

“I understand,” I said. “You ready love?”

“No. I’m not ready, but we’re here. So, I suppose I should get it over with.” I squeezed his hand.

“You won’t have to do it alone and whatever the outcome, you get to say you tried baby.”

He nodded then got out of the car and came around to open my door. He helped me out and intertwined our fingers then we headed inside. When we got to the receptionist, before Bryce could ask for assistance, the nurse behind her said, “Oh my God. You’re Faith’s son.” I glanced at Bryce who seemed just as confused as I was as to how she knew him. “She has pictures that she shows everyone of you. I’ve seen them so many times over the years, I’d recognize you anywhere. Sign in and follow me.”

He did as she said then glanced at me, I could tell he was shocked by her revelation. As we followed the nurse, his grip on my hand got tighter. “I’m Nancy,” the nurse said. “I’ve been taking care of your mom for years. Since she was first brought here.” He nodded as she smiled at him. When we got to the room, the door was opened. Y’all wait right here. She’s going to be so surprised and happy to see you.”

Bryce turned and looked at me, his face was already starting to redden. I was sure if he really had his way, we would turn and leave. My heart went out to him as I watched how this plagued him. I was so focused on him, I tuned out until I heard a soft voice say, “There’s only one person that’s special to me and I know it ain’t him. So, bring ‘em in.” When I heard that, I did my best to blink back the moisture that was threatening to fill my eyes. Judging by the way Nurse Nancy had said his mother went on about him, she was speaking about Bryce.

His hand trembled and he stood frozen in place. I gently slid my hand up and down his back, reminding him that he was not alone. “Come in,” the nurse said. He pulled me close and we entered the room.

In a wheelchair by the window, there his mother sat in a housecoat and scarf. She turned to us and her eyes widened before she broke down in tears. I peered up at Bryce to see him swipe at a tear of his own. “Oh my God. Thank you,” she said in between sobs. I dabbed at the corner of my eyes with my fingers as I waited for Bryce to speak...or move...or anything. She wiped her face and said, “Bryce...my baby. Oh God. I missed you.”

He silently stared at her. “Bryce, I’m so sorry. Please...please forgive me,” she begged. “I was such a horrible mother...a horrible person to you.”

Finally, Bryce spoke. “I forgave you a long time ago, but I can’t seem to forget. But something was urging me to come here and I don’t know why. I brought my girlfriend...the only woman to ever reciprocate the love I felt for her, to be my support. So, maybe you can tell me why I’m here.” The small and frail woman look over at me and smiled.

“Hi beautiful. I’m Faith. Thank you for loving my son and rescuing him from the hell I left him in.” After she spoke, she started to cry all over again. I freed my hand from his and wrapped my arm around his, placing my hand on his chest. His heart was racing.

Peering up at him then back at her, I said, “Nice to meet you too ma’am.” She nodded then turned her attention back to Bryce.

“Maybe the Lord was hearing my prayers of forgiveness. I wanted to see you at least once more before I die baby. The doctor has only given me a couple months. So, to see you doing well and have a beautiful woman in your life does my heart good.” My heart sank and I felt even more horrible for him. With all that he endured even deciding to come here, he had to get this news?

When I looked up at him, he was crying. He broke away from my grasp and left the room. I glanced at his mother and said, “Excuse me,” then left the room. Bryce was squatting against the wall, overcome with emotion. I squeezed his shoulder and kissed the top of his head, saying nothing because I didn’t know what I could say to comfort him in this moment. I just wanted him to feel my love and support. He stood and grabbed my hand, kissing it then led me back into his mother’s room. She pressed a button and a nurse came in going to her IV. Another nurse came into the room and just as she was about to lift Bryce’s mother, he moved towards her, scooping her up. A lump began forming in my throat. I don’t know what was exchanged between them, but it was enough to pull emotion from him that I had never seen. He took her to her bed and more words were exchanged. After laying her down, the nurses began getting her situated and Bryce made his way back to me. When he was saw the tears slowing trying to spill from my eyes, he rubbed at

them with his thumb then kissed my forehead.

Pulling me into his arms, he whispered, "Thank you baby. I love you."

As I stared back up at him, I said, "I love you too." The nurse left and Bryce pulled me with him to his mother's bedside.

"Why are they saying you only have a little time left," he asked her.

"I'm in the final stages of liver failure."

He nodded and said, "Well, I want you to know that despite everything that happened in the past, I'm alright. I have two beautiful kids and this woman that will one day be my wife."

"I have grandkids," she softly said. "And a daughter-in-law." Her eyes found me and she smiled. I smiled back for two reasons. One because she seemed genuinely happy that he found someone that would love him until the end of time and two, because I loved whenever he said shit like that. It was consistent assurance that at the end of the day I was gonna be Sheena Hardwick.

"What are their names," she asked.

"Hunter and Jasmine," Bryce answered. She smiled again as she struggled to breathe then reached for his hand. When he placed it in hers, she kissed it and held it close to her face, falling asleep with a smile. Slowly, he slid his hand from hers and looked at me then her. When he kissed her, it touched my heart and gave me hope that before God took her home, Hunter and Jasmine would get to meet their grandmother.

When he came to me and grabbed my hand, we headed out of the room. Once we got outside, he pulled me close to him. "I'm sorry you had to see that today. I wasn't expecting all that to happen. I thought she would still be this angry, pitiful person that I remember her as. But I guess time and illness can change things, hunh," he said then gently stroked my cheek as I stared up at him.

“You don’t have to apologize to me for anything. What happened in there was supposed to happen. I only hope that you feel lighter now. Freer. Your mom has made peace with her demons and wrongdoings it seems. Now, maybe you can.” He rested his chin on top of my head as he held me. I wanted nothing more than for him to completely let go of what plagued him. He needed to for him. For the kids.

He lifted his chin from my head and said, “You right baby. I love you.”

Once again, I looked up into his eyes and said without hesitation, “I love you more.” He kissed my lips then opened my door.

“I need to talk to your dad baby. Text me his number.” I pulled my bottom lip between my teeth to stifle the big ass smile threatening to spread out on my face. It was unreal how close I was to getting everything I wanted in life. And the sad part about it was, just as I was getting my happiness, it seemed my parents’ was ending. Refusing to go there mentally, I nodded then got in the car and text my dad’s number to Bryce.

When he got in the car next to me, he said, “Don’t try to contain that smile. Let me see it beautiful,” he said. That was all that was needed for me to start beaming.

I leaned closer to him and said, “Sheena Hardwick sounds good don’t it love?” He grabbed my hand and kissed it.

“Better than good. And I can’t wait to call you Mrs. Hardwick and put a little Hardwick seed in here,” he said as he rubbed my stomach. His eyes fell to my belly and all I could think about was what it would feel like to wake up every morning next to him. What it would feel like to carry his child...or children. I had found everything right in this life and I would happily spend the rest of my life making sure he knew that. When he looked up at me, I smiled, completely drowning in my love for him.

“Thank you baby...for showing me something new. Something so right it almost feels perfect.” He slid his hand through my hair.

“You ARE perfect.”



I was so nervous, I couldn't stop pacing back and forth. Tonight me, Bryce and the kids were having dinner with my parents. I was unsure if they would be able to put whatever it was going on with them aside and make the kids feel comfortable getting to know them. It had been plaguing my mind all day.

I got to Bryce's house a couple of hours early to do Jasmine's hair and to be calmed by my love. It had worked up until Solomon's chef, Riley, arrived. I took the glass of wine he gave me and had been pacing...and drinking ever since. I was on my second glass of wine when Bryce walked up and asked, "Baby, you okay?" I turned to him and sipped again.

"I'm just hoping my parents can leave their bs at home for tonight. It's bad enough me and my brother are having dinner with them tomorrow to talk about said bs. Tonight, needs to be perfect."

"Come here baby," he said. I stepped into his embrace and he held me tight. "Listen. Tonight, will be fine. They wouldn't have kept our dinner date if they wouldn't be. Stop stressing. It doesn't have to be perfect. That's way too much pressure to be putting on yourself, especially when kids are involved. So, take a few deep breaths and let tonight be what its gon' be." I looked up into his eyes.

"You're right baby," I replied as I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. "Tonight, will be fine." When I opened my eyes, I leaned up and pressed my lips to his. "Where would I be without you?"

"The same place I would be. Somewhere in a loveless relationship, busted and disgusted." I chuckled softly.

"I would've been single for the rest of my life if I hadn't met you love," I wrapped an arm around his neck and slid my hand up his chest. "I appreciate you for sharing your world with me and accepting mine." He leaned over and kissed me again.

“You can’t be saying shit like that right now Sheena. You gon’ get him all excited.” I smiled.

“Sorry love. I’ll make sure his excitement isn’t for nothing later.”

“I’m gon’ hold you to that shit too,” he replied.

As I watched my fingers glide across his chest to his shoulder and down his arm, I said, “I hope that you do daddy.” He was about to respond, but the doorbell rang. He smiled and grabbed my hand.

“Saved by the bell,” he said. Chef Riley came and let us know that dinner would be ready soon and Bryce thanked him. As the kids were coming out of their rooms, Bryce and I headed to the door. I had to take a couple of deep breaths to relax. When Bryce pulled the door open, I smiled and greeted my parents.

“Hi Mommy. Hi Daddy,” I said. At first glance, they appeared to be on the same page of remaining civilized in front of the kids.

“Hi baby girl,” Daddy said with a hug and a kiss on the cheek. “Bryce, nice to see you again.” As they shook hands, my mother hugged me and kissed my cheek.

“The feeling is mutual sir. Come on in,” Bryce said.

As my father crossed the threshold, my mother gave Bryce a cheek kiss and said, “Thank you for having us for dinner.”

“It’s my pleasure,” Bryce replied. She walked in and Bryce closed and locked the door. I turned around and there was Hunter and Jasmine, looking like the most adorable and well-mannered children. They were perfectly coordinated with the black that Bryce and I wore.

“Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, these are my children, Hunter and Jasmine. Y’all this is Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, Sheena’s parents.” Jasmine was beaming as she stared up at my mother while Hunter shook my dad’s hand.

“It’s very nice to meet you both,” Mommy said as she reached for

Jasmine's hand. "You have beautiful children."

"Thank you," Bryce replied.

Jasmine stared at my mother and I couldn't help but smile. I knew it was possibly because me and my mother looked so much alike. She was still holding Mommy's hand when Bryce led everybody to the dining table. "Mrs. Stewart, what's your first name," she asked and my mother laughed.

"Well pretty girl, my name is Cheyenne. Cheyenne Stewart." When we got to the table, Daddy pulled out my mother's chair as Bryce did the same for me. I was completely shocked and in awe when Hunter pulled out Jasmine's chair for her.

"Can I call you Nana Chey," Jasmine asked and I chuckled to myself. I wasn't surprised though. It seemed when she took to you, she really took to you. I glanced over at my mother and she was smiling

"I think Nana Chey is very creative. I like it," Mommy replied. Jasmine's smile brightened as she danced a little in her chair. Moments later, Chef Riley brought our salads and filled our glasses with tea. He had already set the dressings and sweeteners for the tea on the table. The room was quiet...and I was still a little nervous. Bryce excused himself and shortly after, music softly filled the room.

When he got back to the table, Jasmine asked, "Daddy, what are we eating?"

"Ham, sweet potatoes and green beans. That cool with you?"

"Oooh. Is it the ham that me and Hunter like?"

"Hunter and I. And yes, it is," Bryce replied. Again, baby girl wiggled in her seat. Bryce grabbed my hand and squeezed, stealing my attention. I knew he could sense that I was still a bit on edge. I squeezed back and smiled. After we blessed our food, everyone began dressing their salads to their liking and began eating.

“So, Hunter, what are you into young man,” Daddy asked between bites.

After swallowing his food, Hunter said, “I love video games and I’m trying out for football at school.” He looked over at his dad and Bryce nodded.

“Well, that’s great. Maybe some time, if it’s okay with your dad, you can go and condition with the boys on my son’s football team. He coaches little league. Maybe if you like it when you try out, you can play with those guys too.” His eyes lit up with hope.

“That sounds great to me, but we’ll have to clear it with your mom. Thanks Mr. Stewart,” Bryce said.

“It’s no problem. I’d love to see him in action. My son used to play. So, it’d be a nice past time.”

“Mr. Stewart, what about me? Do you have anything I can do,” Jasmine said and I watched my dad melt right before my eyes. He was smitten. I knew the look all too well. It was designated for me and my niece...and now, it seemed Jasmine.

“Well, that depends on what you like to do sweetheart.”

She smiled big and said rather rapidly, “I like to dance. I used to before my mommy got sick. I like arts and crafts too.” Before Daddy could respond, Chef Riley brought out next course. Everyone else dug in but Jasmine excitedly awaiting my dad’s response.

After he had chewed his mouth full of food, he said, “Well, Nana Chey happens to be friends with a famous ballerina. Maybe she can get you in lessons at her new school. I’m not much of a dancer, but I’d love to come see you dance.” Daddy glanced over at Mommy and she looked at Jasmine.

“If it’s okay with your parents, I’ll give her a call.” I was so relieved that my parents were at least being considerate of the children. The last thing they needed to witness their first time meeting them was their drama. Jasmine turned her big pretty eyes on her dad.

“Like I told Hunter, baby girl, we have to talk to your mom first. Thanks Mrs. Stewart. Now, eat Jas.” She received what Bryce had said and turned back to her food.

After a few moments, she turned to Bryce and said, “Daddy, can I ask Mr. Stewart one more question?”

“One more then your voice box is on time out,” Bryce replied.

She giggled then her attention was on my dad. “What’s your first name?” My dad chuckled and wiped his mouth with his napkin.

“My name is Deon Stewart Miss Jasmine,” he answered. She giggled as she danced in her seat.

“Can I call you Papa D?” My dad laughed out loud and I couldn’t help but chuckle and shake my head.

“Papa D it is sweetheart,” he said. She looked over at Bryce.

“Voice box on timeout Daddy.” Bryce rolled his eyes as I chuckled behind my hand. Her eyes slid over to me and I gave her a wink and she smiled then continued her food. The rest of dinner of was small talk with the kids and actually light. Although my parents weren’t really talking to each other, they were pleasant enough not to raise any red flags that things were tense between the two of them.

When the chef brought out the dessert, me, Mommy, Hunter and Jasmine seemed to be the only ones excited about it. Bryce called my dad’s name and it was like he called mine too. “You care to have a Cuban with me?” Daddy stood from the table.

“I’d love to,” he said.

They headed out to the patio and left us to our dessert. “I think I know what the little pow wow is about,” Mommy whispered in my ear. I smiled. The reality of how far Bryce and I had come was hitting me. Hunter finished his dessert before any of us and politely excused himself as me and Jasmine

continued chatting with my mother. By the time Mommy and Daddy were ready to go, she knew everything about 'Nana Chey'. From her job, to how old she was when she had me. She even went into how much me and my mother looked alike. Mommy was eating it up and I was more than ecstatic that everything went well.

When they left, I was tired as hell. The anxiety and nerves before the dinner had zapped me. After we said our goodbyes, Bryce closed and locked the door. I wrapped my arms around his waist. "You might be stuck with me for sure now. Little Miss can't get enough of Nana Chey and Papa D."

"Mmm. I guess it's a good thing I wanna be stuck all up in you...I mean with you." I giggled.

"Both sound pretty damn good to me." He kissed my forehead.

"Well, that's a good thing. After we make sure the kids are situated, I'll be ready to get stuck in you for a while. You ready for that?"

I kissed his lips, pulling the bottom one between mine as his hands slid to my ass then up to the small of my back. When our lips separated, I said, "Are you?"

"Shiiid, ready ain't the word baby."

Chapter 8

Dinner was the last thing on my mind when I got to my parents' house. I was nervous as hell about how it would go and what my parents would be revealing. When I got inside, everybody already had glasses of wine. I hugged and kissed my parents then Junior and Amara. "We can go to the dining table now," Mommy said. When we did, the chef brought out a glass of wine for me and told us the first course would be out soon.

At first, there was an awkward silence as everyone tried not to appear uncomfortable. I damn near drank down the whole glass of wine in one gulp. When the chef came with our salads, I asked him to refill my glass. After we said our blessing for our food, it seemed no one was in a rush to eat. Noticing this, Mommy said, "Well, I guess there's no sense in prolonging the inevitable." I glanced over at my dad as he sipped his wine. He seemed so disconnected. Like he wanted no parts of whatever was about to come out of my mother's mouth.

"Your father and I have been having struggling lately," she said. She waited until the chef refilled my wineglass and left the room to continue. "Our marriage is strained. Now, although this is not something I feel I have to share with you, we've always been honest with you both and taught you to do the same. This strain...I caused it and although I caused it, your father tried to move past it. It was me who couldn't."

"Wait...did you cheat on Daddy," I blurted. Mommy dropped her head and Daddy gulped down the rest of his wine.

"Your father and I were spending a lot of time apart. He was working a lot and so was I. When we did come together, it just...wasn't the same. I felt we grew apart. I made a mistake." As she patted her cheeks where her tears had left their mark, she continued. "Your father said he forgave me and we had been going to counseling to work through it. For the past ten years, we have tried to get back to where we were. Especially your father. But I just don't

think we can. So, we've decided that we will be divorcing." *I knew it.* My gut instinct was right.

"What," Junior boomed. "After all these years, y'all are just gonna throw away your marriage?" I waited for their response because, I too, couldn't believe that this was happening.

"This was your mother's decision. Not mine," Daddy said before he slammed his glass down and left the table.

"Daddy," I called out as I got up and went after him. He halted his ascent up the marble stairs to their bedroom.

"I told your mother I didn't want this," he said quietly, his back still to me. "I love her enough to love her through her mistake. But I can't love her back into love with me. And that's what it is. She is no longer in love with me Sheena. We all have to respect and accept that."

"Yes sir," I replied and watched him continue up the stairs with tears in my eyes. My heart broke for my father. I never seen him so hurt. That twinkle that was always in his eye had disappeared. I turned to go back to the dining room but couldn't stomach the thought. So, I left. I went straight to the person that would make me forget about this shit.

As soon as he opened the door, I fell into him and cried. I didn't know what to feel or even think about what just happened. When I was somewhat calm, I lifted my head from his chest and looked up into his eyes. "My parents are getting divorced. My mother cheated."

"I'm so sorry baby. Come on in." He closed the door and led me to the couch. He sat and pulled me onto his lap.

"This is a lot to take in," I said as I laid my head on his shoulder. "After all these years, my parents are breaking up." Bryce held me tightly and kissed my lips.

As he rubbed my back, he said, "I hate that you're experiencing this shit baby." I ran the back of my hand over his cheek. This was why I came here. I knew he would have the consoling touch that I needed. But it wasn't just me

that needed consoling.

“I hate that my dad is experiencing this. I guess I’m struggling because I always looked at their marriage as ideal. The way he loved and doted on my mother, I wanted that so bad. Only I didn’t know what was going on behind closed doors. I had no idea she wasn’t happy with him.” I dropped my hand and eyes to my lap before my eyes found his again. “Bryce, promise me that if ever you are unhappy with me, you’ll tell me.”

He drug his fingertips over my cheek then his thumb slid over my bottom lip. “Baby, neither of us are them. We talk about everything. When I brought you to see my mom, I completely opened up to you in ways unimaginable. More than I ever have with anyone. I love you so much. But if there ever came a time that I felt neglected or unhappy, we would talk about it immediately. Letting it fester is where her mistake was made...it’s probably what led to her infidelity. So, promise the same.”

“I could never see myself ever being unhappy with you love. But if ever an issue presented itself, I agree that we should talk. I don’t want to lose you and I definitely would never dream of doing anything to hurt you.” He pulled me closer, kissing my lips with enough passion to push the dark cloud that was hanging over my head out of my mind. His hands slid to my ass and he stood from the couch, carrying me in his arms to his bedroom.

“You staying with me tonight,” he asked, brushing his nose against my ear. I slid my hand down the back of his head.

“There is absolutely no other place I wanna be more than right where I am,” I answered.

When we got to his room, he sat me on the bed then went to the bathroom. A few seconds later, I heard the water running in the tub. When he came back to me, he said, “I’m running you a bath for you to relax for a little bit, then I’ll lead you to euphoria when you get out.” I smiled lopsidedly then got up from the bed and walked over to him. I wrapped my arms around his waist and stared up at him.

“Thank you baby. Everything in me said I needed you in this moment. I’m glad I followed my intuition. I could use every bit of this euphoria you speak

of.”

He kissed my lips and said, “I always gotchu baby. Don’t ever doubt that. No matter whatchu need or when you need it. And euphoria? We can visit there as often as you want to.”

“And you do know how often I love to visit, so let me hurry and get my relaxation on.” He chuckled then popped my ass.

“Uh huh. We gon’ be there a while tonight too. You know multiple orgasms are normal activity fuckin’ witcho boy. Get in there girl.” Shit, my body shivered at just the thought. He wasn’t lying. I was guaranteed to bask in several orgasms fucking with him. That had me rushing into the bathroom to get in the tub.

I stripped down with a smile on my face then slid my body into the water and moaned. It felt so good and the tension in my body agreed. As I sat there, I thought about my parents and said a prayer that whatever God had for them in the future, it would make them both happy. I prayed that our family was able to accept where they were in their lives. I also prayed that my mother and I could be okay with this change. It would be new...different, but we had no control over the decisions of our parents. Well...of our mother. It wasn’t really up to my dad it seemed.

When I heard the music in the room, I knew it was time for me to get out. My man was probably creating a whole vibe for me. Tonight, was one of the things that made me love him the way I did. And that was with my whole being. He was catering to my feelings while making the reason I was in them fade to black. Even if it was only for tonight, I needed it.

After I was done, I showered then dried and buttered up my skin. I walked out of the bathroom and the room was lit up with candles as SWV was playing in the background. But the mouthwatering part of the scene was Bryce without a shirt on. And that was where my eyes landed and stayed as they slid over every inch of the tatted muscles bulging in his arms and chest.

As he walked over to me, he appreciated every curve of my body, licking his lips. Grabbing my hand, he led me to the nightstand and handed me a

glass of wine. He wrapped his arm around my waist, swaying a little to the music. "How was your bath?"

"Much needed. Thank you love," I answered then sipped from my glass.

"Good. It's only up from here baby." He slid his hand to my ass just as the song switched to "Love Faces". He gulped down some of the brown liquor in his glass then led me to the bed. As I continued admiring him, I sipped from my wine. When he came out of his shorts and underwear, I licked my lips and sat my glass of wine down. He eased over me, gently forcing me to lay on my back.

"Damn Sheena. You're so beautiful," he said as his hand moved up to my neck. I placed my hands to his reddening face, pulling him within reach of my lips. "I can't wait to taste every inch of you."

"Thank you baby," I said softly up against his lips before pressing mine up against them. "Every inch of me is yours for the tasting." I kissed his lips again, sliding my tongue across them. "Indulge in what belongs to you daddy."

"Mmm, with immense pleasure baby." He dropped his face to my neck, kissing me softly, letting his tongue slowly drag over my skin. He nibbled my ear then moved to my breasts, his tongue circling my nipple before taking it into his mouth. I pulled my bottom lip into my mouth as I hummed my appreciation for the skills of his tongue as he moved to the other nipple then headed down below to my well that freely gave him the waters he sought whenever he thirsted for them. And the way he licked, sucked, slurped and kissed it...*damn was he seeking a baptism of my love.*

My body started to let me know I was ready to go under as my legs startled to tremble. I grabbed his head, thrusting my middle into his face, fucking his fingers and hand until my orgasm shattered me from the inside out and I cried his name as softly as I could. He removed his fingers from my pussy and went up on his knees. Leaning over me, he slowly eased into me, making my eyes roll back. I was still in the grasp of my orgasm, muscles still contracting, as he filled me. "I love you so much Sheena," he said as he began to wind dick into me.

Curling my legs around his waist, I slid my hands down to his lower back, pulling him as deep as I could into me with every stroke he delivered. “I love you too baby,” I moaned. He rested his forehead against mine as he made love and fucked me at the same time.

“There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you baby. The world is yours. Just say what you want Sheena. Tell me what you want. Fuuuck!”

I kissed his lips and moaned, “You’re all I want Bryce. I want you and I have that. As long as I can have that forever that’s all I need.” I was ready to give up orgasm number two the way he had me feeling...mind, body and soul.

“Mmm...just the words I needed to hear baby. You’re all I need too. For the rest of my life. If I have you, I know that no matter what comes my way, I can handle it.” I forced the lump in my throat down as he continued driving home his point...literally and figuratively. “Look at me baby.” I opened my eyes and found his gaze. “You are my strength girl. You my weakness at the same time. I’m gon’ do my best to protect you, cherish you...ahh shit!” It was like he forgot Jasmine was there as he continued to rock my body and I was on the verge of explosion. He pulled my hand to his mouth and kissed it softly then slid a big ass rock on my finger. The array of emotions I was feeling in that moment, I felt high from my toes to the crown of my head. My heart was racing.

“Marry me and make all that official baby,” he said never ceasing his stroke...stroking me into an orgasm.

My nails dug into his back as I screamed, “Yes! Oh God, yees.” My body trembled and quaked as tears sprang from my eyes. He lifted my leg, giving me every bit of him and then some.

“Fuuuuck,” he grunted as he painted my walls with his love for me. There was no protection on either end stopping his seed from planting itself within my womb. I had been off my birth control for weeks. Bryce held every part of me in his hands. Every desire I had included him. Becoming a wife...a mother and feeling love so deep for the rest of my life. Bryce Hardwick was something new altogether for me. He was literally a prayer answered.

“Gah damn baby,” he said. Leaning over me, he kissed me so deeply, it was weakening. When our lips separated, I noticed the trail of a tear that had slid down his cheek. This was the second time he was that vulnerable in my presence, only this time, what we shared was the reason. I reached up and caught a glimpse of the huge gem on my finger. Still reeling from what just happened but so engulfed in the moment, I slid my thumb across his cheek.

“I love you. For the rest of my life, I’ll love you.”

“And I love you. This probably isn’t the way you imagined this happening, but I felt it. I felt the urge to make you my fiancée now. I can’t wait to wake up to this face every day and hover over it every night.”

“It happened the way it was supposed to love.” He lifted my hand, staring at the ring then kissed it. In that moment, I understood why my cousin rushed to marry Solomon. She had found the man of her dreams and wanted to marry him intimately and wasted no time doing so. I knew, in that moment, that I’d marry Bryce tomorrow if he asked me to. Like him, I couldn’t wait to wake up to him every day and be put to bed every night by my husband. Marrying him couldn’t come soon enough.



It had been a couple of days since Bryce proposed to me. The day after I had sent pics of the ring to my dad and brother. They both were happy for me, I was sure, but when I spoke to them on the phone, the weight of the broken family we now were was still heavy in their voices although they tried to hide it. I couldn’t blame them though. Which is the reason I couldn’t bring myself to reach out to my mother to tell her about it just yet. I had come to grips with the fact that I was angry with her and I needed to let myself move past that emotion before reaching out to her.

When I told Divine and Gia, they almost ruined my eardrum with their screams and squeals. Divine was ready to start planning a wedding already. I was right there with her though. As over the top as I was, I wanted something soft, intimate and lowkey with just family and friends. Now the reception,

that had to be lit! After all that talk, Divine finally asked me about my parents. I figured she would find out eventually. And she did...quick actually. I expected it because I was sure my dad reached out to Uncle Des. I assured them I was fine and was just ready to start moving past it. And for the next couple of days, that's what I did. Being super busy made that very easy too.

I had just wrapped my last client of the day and was heading to the beauty supply to reup on a few things when I got a text from Bryce.

Hey baby. I hope your day is going okay. I just left the office to get Jas.

Me: It's much better now love. I just finished my last client and I'm heading to the beauty supply. How was your day?

Bryce: It was great. Can I see you today? I miss you.

I waited until I got to a stoplight to respond.

As much of me as you like. (winking kissing face emoji) I miss you too.

When I got to the beauty supply, I was so focused on the things I needed to get that I wasn't really paying attention to my surroundings. Had I been, I would have walked right out and went to another one. I wasn't here for Mario's shit today. But there he was, smiling like a damn Cheshire cat. "I knew God would answer my prayer."

"Well, if that prayer had anything to do with me, you are sadly mistaken," I said, walking past him down the aisle. To my misfortune, he followed me.

"I asked the Lord to let me see you again...and look, here you are. Looking even more beautiful than before." I held my hand up.

"And very engaged Mario. So, whatever it is you're up to, you can forget it. Now, if you would excuse me..."

“Damn. I guess I should say congratulations then,” he said, his tone somber. “I hope you’re happy Sheena. For real. You deserve it. Yeah, I had a plan to try to win you back, but...looks like I’m too late.”

“Mario, it was too late before I even MET Bryce. You decided you wanted better than me and went behind my back looking for it. You found it and moved on. You didn’t value me. Now, I have someone who does.” He dropped his head and ran his hand over his waves.

“That’s fair. And you’re right. I wish you the best gorgeous. I’mma grab my beard oil and get outcha hair.”

“Thank you. I wish you the best as well.”

∞∞∞∞∞

It was four o’clock in the morning when I got up to go pee. When I stood to go to the bathroom, I felt like I had to throw up. For a minute, I just hovered over the toilet thinking something would come up. When it didn’t, I finally sat down to pee, washed my hands then went back to the bedroom. I checked my phone out of habit and noticed a text from Solomon and Gia. After reading their texts, I shook Bryce. “Bryce, baby. Wake up. Divine went into labor an hour ago.”

He woke up and looked at the clock then sat up. “Ok. Let me brush my teeth and get dressed.” Once we both had brushed our teeth and dressed, we headed to the hospital.

“I can’t wait to see the baby,” I said to Bryce. “And finally know her name. I can’t believe they really didn’t tell anybody her name all this time. I thought for sure one of them would have broke by now.” He chuckled.

“Right. Well, amongst our gatherings, Solo didn’t talk about the baby much. Just more of how Diving was doing. I mean...we knew he was excited about being a father, there was no need to continuously talk about it. So, that made it easy for him to not slip.”

“That makes sense,” I replied. “I’m just surprised Di Di’s ass didn’t spill it.” I reached over and raked my fingers through the hairs covering his chin. “You ready for this experience again love?”

“I’m ready for whatever the future with you has in store for us baby,” he replied then dropped his head and kissed my fingers.

“Speaking of our future, I know when I wanna get married.”

“Okay baby. When?”

“In January...on my birthday. What do you think?”

“I’d marry you tomorrow...so that’s cool. But I didn’t think you would wanna have the wedding on your birthday. That means your anniversary and birthday gifts would be combined,” he said with a smirk.

“Um...no love. That’s double the gifts,” I laughed. “Or bigger the gift,” I added with a wink. “But I’ve always said if I got married, I wanted it to be on my birthday. I get a new year of life and to start a new chapter all on the same day.”

“See...you tryna break the bank,” he said and laughed. “Naw, I’m cool with it baby. Whatever you want.” I leaned over in my seat and kissed his lips.

“I love you.”

“I love you too. Umm...I would like for you to meet Kamryn and Patrice, since the kids will be around you quite a bit and have been around you. Although Patrice’s ignorant ass had pissed me off, she was right about having a right to meet the person her child would be spending time with. So, I’m not sure if we should do that at once in a formal meeting or you meet them separately... informally. What do you think?”

“Whichever way is more comfortable for you.”

“Naw. It’s about what’s comfortable for you baby.”

“It doesn’t have to be a formal meeting. I’m cool with a casual introduction,” I replied.

“Okay,” he said as he turned into the hospital parking lot. He seemed relieved with the choice to just meet Kamryn and Patrice casually. Neither of us needed the added pressure. Me and the kids were getting along great and I had met his mother. Meeting and getting along with the mothers of his children was the next step in securing my future with the love of my life.

Chapter 9

I was dreading the hair appointment I had today. I was on a cloud the last few days and I knew seeing my mother would threaten to change that. Especially since i still hadn't told her I was engaged. I hadn't been ready to burst out of my bubble of happiness. Talking to her was sure to be the reason i would have to.

After seeing little Solé the other day, I had baby fever for sure. And couldn't wait to have a little one of my own. Life was great for me and Bryce and I just didn't wanna come back to the reality where me and my mother still weren't on good terms.

When I walked into the hotel room she was currently staying in, she seemed so uncomfortable as she led me into the living area. "How you been baby girl," she asked.

"Good," I answered as I laid out my supplies on the table.

"Sheena...I know you're still upset with me. But you're my daughter and I love you. What happened between your father and I is...horrible. I felt terrible for what I did to him and because I hurt him, I felt I had to make it right. So, I stayed and tried to work it out with him. But the truth was, your father and I grew apart. I'm tired of living a lie Sheena. Isn't that my right? To live my life for me? You and your brother are both grown and building your own families. It's time I get to building what I want the rest of my life to look like. But that includes you...and your growing family baby girl. I love you...and I miss my daughter."

"I love you too Mommy, but I'm hurt for Daddy. He's in love with you and you just leave him in that big house alone?"

"He knew this day was coming. He just...didn't wanna believe it. In time, your dad will find someone that gives him all the things I can't. I pray that for him every night because I still love him very much," she replied.

“I get it Mommy,” I said. “Can we just please change the sub-“ I bolted from the room into the bathroom and made it just in time to the toilet, falling to my knees.

“Are you okay baby girl,” Mommy said when she ran into the bathroom behind me.

“Yeah,” I answered when I could finally speak. I think I got seafood poisoning or something from the sushi I ate a few days ago for lunch. I’ve been feeling pretty queasy off and on for the last few days.” When my mother’s eyes widened, I said, “What?”

“When was your last period Sheena?” I grabbed the mouthwash sitting on the sink and swished some around in my mouth as I thought.

“Before I stopped...my birth control...a month ago.” My mouth went dry and my heart lurched in my chest.

“Let’s go,” she said.

“Where are we going,” I inquired.

“To get you a pregnancy test.”

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The remainder of my day was a blur. It seemed everything around me was moving so fast. Or it could have just been me. After going to get, not one, but two pregnancy tests, I returned to my mother’s room and put me and her out of our misery. I chewed on my lip as I waited for the results to appear in the window. My mother was just as nervous as me. When it was confirmed... twice that I was with child, me and my mother cried tears of joy in each other’s arms.

Aside from my happiness, I could feel hers. Did I think she would embrace Hunter and Jasmine as her own grandchildren? Of course. But I knew how long she and my father had been waiting for me to have a child of my own

and it was finally happening. Despite the way I felt about what was going on between them, I was glad that I shared the moment with my mom first. I finally told her I was about my engagement and we talked about baby things and how I would tell Bryce while I did her hair. I smiled at the thought of how excited he would be and a brilliant idea popped into my head.

On my way home, I stopped by a custom tee shop that a friend of mine from high school owned and had something made for him. Once I was done and back in the car, I decided that I would shoot him a text to see if he wanted to have lunch with me. Since my mother was my only client for the day, I was free for the remainder of it.

Hey love. I hope your day has been great. Wanna have lunch with me?

His response came fairly quick.

Hey baby. It's been a good day. So good that I'm almost done for the day. I'd love to have lunch with you.

Me: Great! Meet me at my house?

Bryce: Can I get a pre-lunch snack? Then, after lunch, I can indulge in dessert.

My face heated and my kitty leapt with joy as I replied.

Me: My job is to fill you up baby. So, pre-lunch snack, lunch, dessert, dinner, midnight snack...I got it all for you.

Bryce: You got my dick hard as hell. I'm gon' fuck you up as soon as I get there. OMW right now!

Me: See you soon baby!

After I hit send, I headed to Badmaash to get our fish and chips. When I got home, I was rushing to put the tee in the gift bag so that I had time to shower. I slid into my white wrap dress just in time. The doorbell rang and I gave myself another look, running my hand over my belly before heading to

the door.

I knew that the fact that this wrap dress was almost sheer, with a slit up to my thigh and I had on no panties and no bra, there was a chance I wouldn't get to give him his surprise until after his 'pre-lunch snack', but I was determined to try. I pulled the door open and my heart started racing. My pussy started weeping tears of joy at his presence alone. "Hi love," I said, stepping aside, tugging at my bottom lip with my teeth.

He walked in pulling off his tie and tugging his shirt from his pants. He took off the coat of his suit and undid his pants then turned to me. "You wore that to push me over the top. I was already wanting you on the way here, but shit. You fine as hell girl."

After locking the door, I walked over to him and wrapped my arms around his waist. As I stared up at him, all I could think about was the giftbag sitting on the couch. My heart was pounding in my chest, but I played it cool. "Thank you baby. BUT...before I let you unwrap all this, there's something else that I have for you," I said as I went up on my toes then kissed his lips. I took his hand. "Come with me please."

His reaction was everything I expected and although I was ready to have my feet to the ceiling, my little secret had to be revealed. Pulling me back to him with his arms around my waist, he slid his hands down my body. "Fuck. Do I have to wait," he asked, pressing his hard dick up against me. I turned around and grabbed his shirt, ripping it open, buttons going everywhere as I kissed the part of his chest exposed by his wifebeater then his neck while he gripped my ass.

"Please love. I promise if you give me one minute, it's gon' be worth it," I said softly in his ear. "Please?"

"Baby, you can't do all the shit you just did and then ask me to wait. Please tell me this won't take long. Ain't nothing as important as being inside them tight walls right now. Shit." I kissed his neck again.

"I beg to differ baby," I said, pulling out of his embrace. I went to the couch and grabbed the giftbag. "Open it," I said as I handed it to him and he

frowned. He had one thing on his mind and I felt bad for making him...us, wait any longer to tear each other's clothes off. But this couldn't wait. I braced myself for his response to the black tee that read, "Hey Daddy, See You In 9 Months!" in white. It was the perfect way to tell him that I was now growing the life we created inside me.

He groaned then stuck his hand in the bag, pulling out the shirt. I didn't miss the fact that he grabbed his dick while he was pulling out the gift that would change our lives. He unfolded the shirt and stared at it. He looked like he stopped breathing in that moment. "Sheena...shit baby. This was definitely worth the wait." Slowly he walked over to me and pulled me into him. "Damn baby. I'm so happy." He kissed my head as he held me tightly. When he let me go, I stepped back and reached for the ties to my dress.

"So, you wanna show me how happy you are daddy," I asked as I started to untie my dress.

"Hell yeah, but it's gon' be totally different now. I was ready to eat you alive earlier." I playfully pouted.

"So, you're no longer ready to devour me baby," I asked as I led the dress slide off of me.

"Mmm...damn girl. Not devour but take my time and indulge, treating myself to your exquisiteness. So, if you hungry, you better eat now. This could take a while," he answered, his eyes falling to my stomach.

"What I'm hungry for is in your pants," I replied as I stepped closer to him, pushing his pants down until they dropped to the floor. "I'm starving for it baby. For now...food can wait."

"Show me how hungry you are then," he said, grabbing my hand and leading me to the couch. He took off his underwear and shirt then sat down. His length was hard and begging to feel the warmth of my mouth. "Whatchu gon' do wit' it wifey...mother of my child...the last woman to every carry my seed? Show me something." I dropped to my knees then slowly kissed the head of his dick before I took as much of him as I could in my mouth with no hands and moaned.

“Mmm...shit,” he groaned as he slid his fingers through my hair. I slurped, licked and sucked him until his dick glistened and spit slid down to his balls. But I didn’t want him to come yet. When he did, I wanted it to be inside of me, when we were body to body. Freeing his dick from my mouth, I stood then straddled his lap, positioning his erection at my opening. When I sank down onto him, my eyes fell closed as my forehead rested against his.

“Babyyyy shiiit,” I moaned as I slowly lifted and rolled my hips. He drug his hands up my thighs to my ass and squeezed as he groaned. He dropped his head and covered my nipple with his mouth, letting his tongue swirl around it while he played with the other one with his fingers and lifted his hips into me. He snaked his arms around my waist and leaned back, killing my kitty with every slow stroke. Neither of us could control the moans and sounds of pleasure falling from our lips. I was gushing and my body began to tremble the closer I got to orgasming.

“Sheena, shit! Coat daddy dick baby. Fuck!”

“Oh my G-,” came out, but the rest of my words got stuck somewhere in my throat as I fell into such a perfect climax. My hips continued to roll and dip as I rode the wave.

Taking his face into my hands, I pressed my lips to his, giving him my tongue when his lips parted as he continued to thrust into me until he separated our lips and growled, “Oh fuck,” as he came. After he caught his breath and I had regained the normal rhythm of my own breathing, I was fully prepared to take our body party to the next location when he shocked me and said, “Move in with me baby.”

I smiled and ran my hand down the back of his head. I kissed his lips as I stared into his eyes. “I would love to baby.” He kissed me then stood from the couch with me in his arms and headed to the kitchen.

He sat me on the counter and said, “Aight now, let’s eat. You gotta keep your strength up. You carrying a Hardwick.” I smiled.

“Yes daddy.”



Bryce: I'm gonna be with Faith. It won't be long.

As I sat having lunch with my brother, that was the text I received from Bryce and it broke my heart. I had literally just gotten to the restaurant and ordered my tea when the text came through. I excused myself and went to call him. When I got no answer, I decided to shoot him a text.

I'm so sorry love. How are you doing? Is she in any pain or anything? Text me when you can. I love you.

I hated that he was losing her right now. Especially since he had taken the kids to see her a month ago and from what he said, it went well. She wouldn't get to really know them, nor they her. She wouldn't even be here to meet the baby. He had come around to her and now I wished they had more time.

When I returned to the table, my brother looked up at me, worry on his face. "Everything okay?"

"It's Bryce's mother. She doesn't have long. He's there with her right now."

"Damn. I'm sorry to hear that. Give him my condolences."

"Thanks. I will," I said, sipping from my glass of lemon water. "So, what's going on?" I looked over the menu of appetizers so that when the waiter returned, I was ready to put in my order. I was starving. I worked right through my lunch because I had three appointments back to back.

"Well, we haven't really talked since...you know. I wanted to check on ya', first of all. I also needed to tell you that Amara wants to throw you and Bryce an engagement party."

"Aww that's sweet of her. I'll make sure to text her and say thanks," I replied. "As far as how I'm doing, I'm okay. Just been a little sick these days." He frowned.

“Sick? What’s going on?” I smiled a little.

“Me and Bryce are having a baby,” I answered and his eyes widened.

“For real,” he asked and I nodded. “Congratulations.”

“Thanks brother. Nobody knows except Mommy and you. I’m gonna tell Daddy when I go by and cut his hair when we’re done eating.” He nodded.

“The party was my idea by the way. I knew that with Mommy and Daddy getting ready to go through a divorce, they would be a little preoccupied. So, I told Amara we should do it for y’all.” I smiled.

“Thanks...you always got ya’ little sister.”

“And I always will have you. Don’t matter if you’re about to be somebody’s wife and mother. I always got your back.”

“Same here big head.” The waiter came back around and we ordered our appetizers. My phone went off on the table and I rushed for it, eager to hear back from Bryce.

Bryce: I’m okay. She’s laboring really hard. I love you too.

I texted back the praying hands emoji. I felt like shit at that moment. Here I was being pressed about a mistake my mother made ten years ago and he was losing his. I couldn’t hold this grudge. Technically, it wasn’t my business in the first place. Both my parents loved me and my brother to no end. Was I closer to my father? Yes, but that took nothing from the love I had for my mother.

After lunch with my brother, I headed to my next client, breezing through that wig installation and the next. My dad’s appointment was my last one of the day. I hadn’t seen him in a few days and we had only talked through text since he was in Vegas to ‘get away’ as he put it. I didn’t know what I should expect when I got to the house. I took it as somewhat of a bad sign that he was working from home. The only time Daddy worked from home was when something was wrong.

However, that was not the case when I walked through the front door. The house was alive with the melodic rifts and runs of Charlie Wilson. I went from the kitchen to the living room looking for him and found him on the couch with his laptop in hand and headshots spread out on the coffee table. “Hey baby girl,” he said with a big smile. I was confused. I guess I expected him to still be...in his feelings a little.

“Hey Daddy,” I said as I leaned down and kissed his head then sat on the arm of the couch next to him. “How are you?”

“I’m good. How are you?”

“I’m good,” I answered. His eyes shifted from his laptop to me and narrowed. “You sure? You look like you got something on your mind. What’s up baby?” My dad...*how does he do that?*

“I’m pregnant Daddy,” I said, dropping my eyes to my hands before finding his gaze again. A slow smile spread across his face.

“Damn. Congrats baby girl,” he responded. “So, I’m gonna be a grandpa of five now? Sheesh, you and your brother are making me feel old.” He stood and pulled me into an embrace. “I’m so happy for you.”

“Thank you Daddy,” I said as he pulled away and stared into my eyes then caressed my cheek. “I guess God figured you finally kissed enough frogs huh?” I laughed and so did he.

“I think you’re right. And I’m so thankful for that.”

“Me too. I’m happy you’re happy.” He bent to close his laptop and said, “Go ahead and set up baby. I’ll be ready shortly.”

“What about you Daddy,” I asked. “Are you...happy?” He looked at me for a moment before he answered.

“I’m on my way to that destination again. I loved your mother. Still do honestly. But I won’t beg anyone to accept my love and adoration...not even her. If she feels her happiness is not with me, I wish her the best and no ill

will. We did what we were supposed to do...we tried. Now, it's just time to make peace with a far more different future than we all might have envisioned."

"I just want you to be happy Daddy. You deserve that," I said as I began to get emotional out of nowhere. He chuckled and pulled me into his arms.

"As long as you, your brother and your mother are good, I'm good. Maybe I'll find love again...maybe not. But I'll be happy either way." He kissed my head. "Now, come on and hook up my swag baby girl." I chuckled as I shook my head and rolled my eyes, dabbing at the corners of them.

"You and your swag..."

"Don't act like you ain't know I had some," he shot back as he brushed a hand down the top of his head and struck a pose. I laughed out loud.

"Come on ol' man."

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I had just gotten home when Bryce's text came through.

She's gone. My uncle is coming for dinner. I'm gonna cook spaghetti or something.

As I made my way to the front door, I replied.

I'm so sorry baby. Is there anything I can do? I just got home.

I had been living with Bryce for a while now and it took no time to get used to. I loved waking up to him every day and going to bed at night cuddled up with him. And when the kids come over, it really feels like a family. After our first doctor's appointment for the baby, I was more than ready to pack up my shit and be with my future husband and stepchildren. It was like seeing the little person growing inside of me made everything real... he or she made everything fall into place perfectly.

The doctor informed us that our baby should be due in May. She got a good laugh out of it when I asked her would my stomach be much bigger in a couple of months because I was planning a January wedding and needed to fit into my wedding dress. But overall, everything looked great and our family was moving along and getting into a nice groove. Although I had yet to meet the baby mamas. I knew it was coming soon though. Especially with us getting married and having a baby of our own.

The first thing I did when I got in the house, was come out of my shoes. I dropped my bag and purse by the door then headed to the kitchen for a water when my phone went off again.

Bryce: You can relax for me...put your feet up. We should be there in twenty minutes.

Me: Ok baby. See y'all in a while.

We still hadn't told the kids about the baby and there was a reason for that. I had ordered a special gift for them...and it had finally come in yesterday. So, today I had planned to give them to them, but I was now uncertain of if I should or not. But the more I thought about it, the more I figured we could use a reason to smile today, given what had just happened.

So, before I showered and got comfortable, I went to my work bag, pulled out the boxes and sat one on Jasmine's bed then Hunter's then made my way to the bedroom to shower.

A couple of years ago, I had bought myself a diamond S necklace and I never went anywhere without. Most of the time, it was around my neck. Jasmine mentioned me wearing it all the time and how she wanted one just like it. That's where the bright idea came from. So, I had her and Hunter one made, but with H⁵ on it the pendant. Of course, they probably wouldn't wear theirs all the time, but I was hoping that they got the sentiment.

After showering, I put on some gray leggings and oversized tee then went to the couch and stretched out with the remote. I literally had just started dozing when I heard them come through the door. "Hi Ms. Sheena," Hunter and Jasmine said.

“Hi cuties,” I replied as Bryce made his way over to me.

“Hey baby. How you feeling?” I sat up, crossing my legs underneath me.

“A little tired, but I’m good love. How about you?”

He sat down next to me and said, “I’m good,” then kissed my lips. “I’m gonna go in the kitchen and get started. Uncle Rick ought to be here in a couple of hours. The nigga is straight flirtatious at times, so hopefully, given the situation, he’ll be chill with that. Sixty years old and still a fool.” I leaned over and wrapped my arms around his neck.

“I can’t wait to meet him,” I replied then dropped my chin to his shoulder. “Are you good really love?”

He kissed my forehead and said, “Yeah, I’m good. Had it not been for you, I would have never gone to see her. My original reason was to show her that despite the bullshit I went through with her as a kid, that I had turned out okay. That I was good without her. That wasn’t what happened though.” He pulled me into his arms. “I was able to truly forgive her. Had it not been for you in my life, that wouldn’t have happened and I would have had some different regrets. I regret not doing this sooner, but I’m glad I did it when I did. Plus, you was on the fast track to becoming a Hardwick and having one in you. That made me go sooner too.” He smiled a little and rubbed my ass. Before he could really stoke my flame, in walked Jasmine.

“Thank you for the present! Can I open it?” Before anything could be said, Hunter walked in with his gift box. I looked at Bryce and he had a frown on his face because, he too, was clueless.

“Go ahead and open it,” I told them as I bubbled with excitement to spill the beans. They ripped into them with no hesitation. Jasmine pulled her chain from the box, examining it curiously as she celebrated it before she really knew what it meant. Hunter held his up, trying to figure out the meaning too.

He put it on and said, “Thank you Ms. Sheena. It’s nice.”

“Thank you Ms. Sheena. What does H-five mean,” Jasmine asked with a

little frown that made her look more like her dad.

“Ask Hunter,” Bryce said. She turned to look at him and he shrugged. It took everything in me not to giggle. I was already beaming from the whole scene. Bryce slowly shook his head and they both looked at us...completely confused.

“Why don’t you explain it love,” I said to Bryce with a gentle nudge. He smiled a little then bit his bottom lip, sliding his hand across my growing belly. It wasn’t big but there was a small pooch there. Hunter’s eyes widened then, indicating that he had figured it out.

“Sheena is having a baby...your little brother or sister. The Hardwicks will be a family of five. H to the fifth power or, as you said it Jas, H-five.”

Jasmine jumped up and down while Hunter smiled and said, “Congratulations y’all.” Jasmine flopped on the couch next to me and put her hand on my stomach.

“Your tummy is still flat. I can’t wait until it’s big and round.” She was bursting with excitement and could hardly sit still as she giggled then hugged me. “What’s the baby’s name gonna be,” she asked when she let me go.

“Slow down little one,” I giggled as she continued to grin. “First, thank you Hunter. Second, I can’t wait until it’s big and round too. And third, we don’t know yet. What do you want it to be? A boy or girl?”

“What if it’s twins and it’s both,” Jasmine asked excitedly. “I want a little brother and a little sister!” Bryce rolled his eyes and shook his head as I laughed.

“If it’s twins then we may have to get new necklaces,” I replied to her question with a wink and she giggled.

“I wouldn’t mind having a little brother. I can teach him just like you teach me Dad,” Hunter said. “Ms. Sheena, what do you want to have?”

“I don’t really have a preference,” I answered. “What about you baby?” I

turned and ran my hand down the back of Bryce's head. "Boy or girl?"

"It doesn't matter. As long as the baby's healthy, I'll be happy," he answered as he ran his nose up the side of my face and slid his hand across my belly.

"I'm glad you two are happy," I said looking from Hunter to Jasmine. "You two will be my family too. Your opinions and thoughts matter to me. I hope you know that."

Hunter nodded and said, "Yes ma'am." Jasmine frowned a little.

"Ms. Sheena, when you marry Daddy, you will be our step-mom. So, will we still call you Ms. Sheena?" I glanced from her to Bryce then back to her. I hadn't even thought about that.

"I guess...you can call me what you like. If you prefer to drop the Ms. and just call me Sheena you can. Or whatever," I answered, a little flustered because I didn't truly know how to answer that. I was prepared to leave it up to her...and her brother.

"How about we call you Mama Sheen," Hunter asked. "I say Sheen because you're always happy. I mean, it's like you have a sparkly sheen on you. If you don't like it, me and Jas can think of something else."

"Wow...well, I think that's just...perfect," I said, standing to hug him as I swallowed the lump in my throat and my eyes blurred a bit.

When I let him go, Jasmine was standing right next to me like she was waiting her turn. After hugging her too, I turned back to Bryce. "Now, let me make sure your dad makes this spaghetti right because I'm starving." I turned and winked at Jasmine and she covered her mouth as she giggled.

Bryce grabbed my hand as the kids went back to their rooms. When we got to the kitchen, he sat me on the island. "You can sit right here and supervise me baby."

"And I will enjoy the view too love," I replied then kissed his lips.

He spread my legs and I instantly got excited. He slid his hand between them, grabbing ahold of my pussy. “Hopefully, I don’t burn anything, looking at your pretty ass and all this shit in my hand. She sitting her probably drooling for me.”

“Mmm, isn’t she always,” I replied as I stared up at him with a smirk. “She always crying for you baby.” He licked his lips then checked the time. Untucking his shirt from his pants, he scooped me up and carried me to the laundry room. He locked the door then quickly took off my leggings and unbuttoned his pants. My body was pumping with adrenaline and excitement from the rush.

When he picked me up and lowered me onto his erection, my kitty cried for him alright. “Ahh fuck,” he whispered roughly. “Tell her to cry harder Sheena. Let my dick feel those tears.”

Chapter 10

“That’s a beautiful ring,” Bryce’s Uncle Rick said as he gently took my hand and lifted it closer to his face. He had arrived shortly after Bryce had finished our meal. Like Bryce said, Uncle Rick was very flirtatious and that was something I picked up right away by the way he grinned and kissed my hand. He seemed nice though. So, I didn’t mind entertaining him for a few minutes.

“Thank you,” I replied.

“When’s the wedding?”

“In January,” I answered.

“That’s only a couple of months away.”

“I know. It’s going to be a small wedding though. Only family and close friends.”

Before he could dive deeper into the conversation, Jasmine bounced back into the room. “Is the food done?”

“I think so. Why don’t we go set the table?” She nodded rapidly and grabbed my hand.

We were laying out everything when Bryce told Jasmine to go and get her brother. “Yes sir,” she replied. As she went to do just that, Uncle Rick walked into the kitchen.

“Is there something I can help you do nephew,” he asked Bryce.

“Naw, I got it. You’re our guest. Have a seat at the table.”

“There’s some things we need to talk about for Faith,” I heard Uncle Rick say as I was getting out the silverware. I guessed he had to be talking about her funeral and arrangements for her homegoing.

“I figured as much. We can talk after dinner,” Bryce replied as he came to the table with the salad bowl, giving me a wink that heated my cheeks. A wink that brought back memories of our quickie in the laundry room and I wanted more. After setting out the silverware, I followed him back into the kitchen. “He hasn’t been inappropriate with you, has he?” I frowned as I was sliding my arms around him.

“No...why would he do that? We were talking about my ring and the wedding until me and Jasmine came to set the table.” He slid his hand down his face.

“Ok...it’s just...never mind. Sorry baby. Let’s just have a great dinner.” I stared at him for a moment, wondering what he was about to say. But I wouldn’t dare push.

“Ok baby. You need me to help you bring anything else out?”

“Naw. I got it babe. Go get off your feet.” Before I went to take my seat. I took his face into my hands and pressed my lips to his. When our lips separated, I went to the table and took my seat with the kids and Uncle Rick.

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“I still can’t believe you’re about to have a baby,” Gia said as she rubbed my belly. I shifted Solé on my shoulder, rubbing her back. “You already look so cute pregnant and you barely got a little pooch.” I smiled and winked at her.

“Thanks boo.”

“Don’t leave out the fact that this bitch is also getting married in literally a couple of months,” Divine added as she spun around so I could see her in her gown for the wedding. She would be my matron of honor and Gia would be maid of honor. Today we were trying to find dresses in the exclusive boutique of one of my mom’s clients. I was very appreciative for the hookup because she could have them altered and ready in time for the wedding.

“I love that one Di Di,” I remarked in regards to the one-shoulder

cranberry colored gown that fit her body like a glove. The one strap on her shoulder had a cape attached to it that was floor length like the gown. She looked stunning.

“I love this too,” she replied.

“It is really stunning,” Kristi, the woman assisting us, agreed.

“Ok Di, we found your dress,” I said as I got chills thinking about how real this wedding was becoming. I was started to get more and more excited the more I planned. It would be in my dad’s backyard next to the waterfall that emptied out into the pool. My vision was to have a wedding dipped in white, cranberry with sprinkles of sparkles here and there. So, I got on the phone and called the only person I trusted to plan the wedding of my dreams. My aunt on my mother’s side. Her baby sister Shaudé. My aunt had put together some pretty major events in Hollywood and I knew she would pull out all the stops for me too...but not charge me as much.

I turned to Gia. “You’re next chica.” She stood from her chair and sipped a little more of her champagne as Divine made her way back to the dressing room. Kristi, gave Gia a three-hundred and sixty-degree inspection.

“Ok. I think I have two dresses that would be perfect for you.” Gia smiled and nodded and Kristi was off.

“How was dinner with Bryce’s uncle,” Gia asked as she stood on the pedestal waiting for Kristi to return.

“It was great. He seems nice. I can tell that there’s a little bit of awkwardness between him and Bryce for some reason, but I don’t know what it is.” She frowned a bit.

“Did you ask him?” I shook my head as I gently put Solé back into her stroller. She had fallen asleep.

“They’re literally preparing for his mother’s funeral. I didn’t think it would be appropriate. Besides, I feel like he’ll tell me when he’s ready.”

“You’re probably right,” Gia agreed. Just as Kristi was coming back with two gowns draped over her arm, Divine popped out of the dressing room and took her seat next to me, grabbing her glass of champagne.

“So, has Gia mentioned anything about Watt to you?” I shook my head.

“Has she talked to him,” I asked.

“She said he texts her every now and then, but nothing too serious. I wish he would step on the damn gas already.”

“Right,” I cosigned.

“You two DO know I can hear you, right,” Gia said from the dressing room before coming out two seconds later.

“We weren’t exactly trying to be quiet boo,” I replied.

“Look, I’m good. I have made up in my mind that whatever it is that Watt wants, he’s gon’ have to make that clear for me. Until then, if an occasional text is all he’s got for me...cool. I am dating and living my life...for once. Y’all have inspired me. I want love and a family too, but until I find the love of my life, I’m just going to live.” Gia was always the shier one of us three. She seemed to really be coming out of her shell these days. Her parents had pretty much tried to dictate how her life should go from eighteen to present day. I was glad to see that she seemed to be taking control of her own path.

“I can’t even get into what you’re saying because I’m into this dress,” I told her. She grinned and slowly spun. “You don’t even have to try on the other one.”

“Really? You like this one,” she asked. I nodded.

“I looove that one,” I answered. It was a cranberry colored strapless gown with a cape that fastened to a crystal choker.

“That is beautiful,” Divine said. “I agree with She She.” Gia clapped her hands together as she blushed. Kristi gawked at Gia, probably imagining the size of the commission she was gonna get off that dress.

“This dress is a beautiful choice. You’ll barely need alterations,” she said.

“Perfect,” Gia replied then went back to the dressing room.

“Ok, it’s time for the bride,” Kristi beamed. I had been viewing their website for the last week and had finally found a dress that I was absolutely obsessed with. It was a spaghetti-strapped mermaid style lace floral gown. There was scattered sequin that shimmered in the right light. I would wear my hair up with a birdcage. “We have your gown pulled already.”

“Oh good. I’m just in time,” my mother said as she joined us, grabbing a glass of champagne from the table. She leaned over and hugged Divine then walked around and hugged me, kissing my cheek. “Sorry I’m late baby girl.”

“It’s okay. Divine and Gia found their dresses.”

“Good. I think I’ve found mine too,” Mommy replied, taking the chair next to me as I stood. When Gia walked out of her dressing room and Kristi cleared out her gown, I went in. A few moments later, she came in with mine. After helping me into it, she and I both were in awe.

“It looks perfect on you already.” And it did. It fit like a glove...even with my little pooch. It was amazing and I knew for sure this was my dress.

“Will you be able to let it out just a bit the week before the wedding to make room for my belly,” I asked.

“Yes. Your mother has already made sure that that will be handled. She’s paid for your gown too by the way,” Kristi said as she straightened the bottom of the gown. My eyes widened as my emotions sat in my throat.

“What? Really?”

“Yep. She had been calling to ask if you had selected a gown. When you finally did, she said she’d cover the cost and had us send over the details then paid.”

“Wow,” I mumbled, dying to wrap my arms tightly around my mother.

“You ready to let them see?” I nodded as I dabbed at my eyes. Kristi smiled and opened the door. As soon as I walked out, Mommy, Divine and Gia’s eyes widened.

“Oh wow She She,” Gia and Diving said in unison. I felt like a princess. I was getting married! It was finally happening. I had found the man of my dreams. Someone that wanted to build with me. A man that wanted to share worlds with me while creating our own. I couldn’t love him anymore if I tried.

“You look beautiful Sheena,” Mommy said. I went to her and threw my arms around her. I could tell she was a bit taken aback because she chuckled then wrapped her arms around me.

“Thank you Mommy...for the dress...for everything.”

“You’re welcome baby girl. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

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“What’s wrong baby girl,” Bryce said. I glanced back to see Jasmine pouting.

“You always drop me off last, but today you’re dropping me off first,” she answered.

“I’m sorry baby girl. You know I always wanna spend time with you. We’ll talk to your mom about you coming back before it’s time.”

“Ok Daddy,” she said with a smile. Bryce smiled at me then grabbed my hand and kissed it. He got out of the car and came around to open my door and Hunter did the same for Jasmine. It was the cutest thing. When Bryce helped me out of the car, he gently kissed my lips.

“You cool baby,” he asked. I smiled and intertwined my fingers with his.

“I’m good love.”

Today, I joined Bryce to take the kids home because I would be meeting Kamryn and Patrice. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t a bit nervous, but this had to happen. I was about to become a permanent part of the kids’ lives. It was important that their mothers were at least aware of who I was. I wasn’t so much worried about Kamryn as I was Patrice though. Although it seemed everything had been cool with her lately, I still didn’t know what to expect.

We got to the porch and before we could even ring the doorbell, the door swung open and the woman on the other side stood there with a smile that somewhat dimmed when her eyes swung my way. “Hey,” she said. “Y’all come in.” I could tell she wasn’t expecting me to be present by her demeanor. It was a bit awkward. Bryce waited until Jasmine had hugged her mom then dragged her brother to her room to see something before he dove into the introductions.

“Hey Kamryn. I thought it was a fine time that you met Sheena. She’s going to be a permanent part in our family. We’re getting married in January and she’s housing the latest Hardwick.” Her eyes grew a size as she stretched out her hand to shake mine. “Sheena, this is Jasmine’s mother, Kamryn.”

“It’s nice to meet the woman that has claimed Bryce’s heart,” she said. I smiled as we shook hands.

“It’s nice to meet you too.” She let go of my hand and cleared her throat.

“I ummm...I’m cancer free,” she said to Bryce. Tears started to fall from her eyes and it confused me. Being cancer-free was amazing news to receive.

“Wow, that’s great news,” Bryce told her. “Why are you crying?”

“Tears of joy,” she replied and Bryce nodded. There was another awkward silence while we waited for Hunter to come back from Jasmine’s room.

“So, ummm...what day is the wedding,” Kamryn turned and asked me.

“Uh...it’s January sixteenth,” I answered politely. She nodded then looked

at Bryce. My antennas went up. Kamryn was feeling a way and I was trying to figure out just what way that was when she went and sat down.

“Y’all are welcomed to have a seat while you wait on Hunter.” Bryce shook his head.

“Naw. We gotta go. Hunter!”

Kamryn stood from her seat and said, “I have some things to talk to you about in private. So, I’ll just call you.” Bryce frowned then glanced at me. *Oh, I know exactly what sis is feeling now*, I thought to myself. I kept my face intact as the thoughts swirled around in my head. I was aware of Patrice feeling a way because she wanted to be with Bryce, but this was a new one on me.

“Kamryn, anything you need to talk to me about can be discussed in front of Sheena.” She dropped her head.

“It’s okay then. We won’t talk. Are you bringing Jasmine to the funeral?”

“Yeah,” he answered and I heard the slight irritation in his voice.

Hunter came into the room with Jasmine, who ran into Bryce’s arms. He picked her up and said, “I’ll see you Friday after school baby girl. I love you.”

“I love you too Daddy!” She turned to me and said, “Bye Mama Sheen!” When she hopped down from her dad’s arms, she ran over and wrapped hers around my belly and I leaned down and kissed her head.

“Bye sweet face. See you later.” She rubbed my belly before she took off.

“See you Friday Kamryn,” Bryce said.

“Ok,” she replied.

Hunter walked out the door first and held the door for us as Bryce started the car with the remote. As Hunter started for the car, I was about to do the same and had gotten off the porch when Bryce said, “You had years to get it

together,” and it halted my steps. *What the hell did I miss?* I stood where I was, unable to move and unable to turn around at the moment. “It took cancer to show you that you needed me? That’s crazy Kamryn. Sheena is the woman I love. Time ran out on us a long time ago.” I turned around at the same time that he did.

We made eye contact before my gaze turned to Kamryn. I would never disrespect Jasmine’s mother...especially not within her vicinity, but I thought it was quite rude for her to do the shit she was doing in front of Bryce’s pregnant fiancée. I did my best to communicate those thoughts through my stare as I said, “I’ll be in the car love.” I turned and walked away.

A few seconds later, he stalked to the driver’s side and got in. He grabbed my hand and my eyes found his. “I’m so sorry you had to hear that. I promise we’ll talk after we drop off Hunter.”

“Ok,” I replied.

When we dropped Hunter off, the energy I was expecting from Patrice was not that. She was so friendly and apologized for her initial reluctance when it came to me. I was completely shocked. The results of the introductions to the mothers of his children were completely reversed. Kamryn had been disrespectful and Patrice had damn near acted like I was her long-lost friend.

Bryce and I finally made it home. The ride had been somewhat silent as I let my thoughts run wild. We got inside the house and I went to the couch, waiting for him. More than ready for this conversation we were about to have. Some puzzle pieces were missing for me when it came to the parts of his world I had been recently introduced to...including Uncle Rick.

He finally joined me on the couch, handing me a bottle of water. His eyes were filled with sincere regret. “Baby, there’s so much to explain. I’m having trouble with where to begin. I need to explain my issues with my uncle first, I suppose. I feel like I’ve brought unnecessary drama to you when all I wanted was to introduce you to more of my life and where I come from.” I covered his hand with mine.

“Just talk to me love. You know you can.” He nodded and his eyes fell closed for a moment.

He turned to me and began. “So, my grandmother was who was raising me. According to my uncle, Faith hit the streets a week or two after I was born. My grandmother was raising me until I was four. That was when she died. Faith turned the other way, so my uncle took me. While it was probably better than being in state care, he taught me some things that I’m not proud of. He taught me to be a womanizer... a player. I didn’t have much respect for women. I was already angry that my mother wasn’t being a mother to me, so it made it easy to accept his doctrine... women ain’t shit.” He ran his hand down his face. Talking about this was making him uncomfortable, but I needed to hear this. I needed to know the man that I was about to spend my life with in every way.

“He introduced me to my first sexual partner when I was nine,” he continued. “I was never a physical abuser like he was, but I was still horrible. One thing I never did was sell false hopes though. Patrice was just somebody I was fucking. There was obviously a slip up somewhere, because she got pregnant, trying to trap me into what she wanted. When she didn’t get it, she became this extremely bitter woman.”

Taking my hand, he held it between his as he proceeded to bear himself to me. “I fucked around a lot. Going from woman to woman without any regard for their feelings. Things changed when I met Kamryn...well, not immediately, but after a few months or so. For the first time, I found myself having feelings for a woman. I think it was because she was a lot like me. She didn’t want a relationship, she just wanted to fuck. I fell in love with her. Uncle Rick and I fell out about her because he tried to fuck with her. But he’d told me that she was fucking other people still anyway. By that time, I thought Kamryn and I had something special. But months later she broke my heart...similar to the way I’d done so many other women. When she found out she was pregnant with Jas, she was gonna have an abortion.” He sank back into the couch as I eyed him sadly.

“I begged her not to. I felt like I would be connected to her for always and at the time, that was something that I wanted. Our breakup wasn’t dramatic or anything. She just explained to me that her intentions hadn’t changed. Mine

had. I pined after her until Jasmine was probably four or five, then I was finally able to let go of the possibility that she and I would get back together. However, recently, when she was in the hospital, she told me she loved me and that she was sorry about our past. I figured it was because she thought she was dying. She'd apologized for telling me her feelings now, knowing that I had a girlfriend."

His hand ran down his face again. "But it was because of how I was raised that she didn't take me seriously. I couldn't be faithful. Fucking around was part of who I was until I fell for her. I didn't want nobody else. But it seemed being with you proved to both of them that I had changed. And deep down, they felt some type of way that I didn't choose them. Patrice and I were able to have a talk about it recently, and we came to an understanding. I didn't think it was necessary with Kamryn, but apparently it is. I'm just sorry that it seems I don't have my shit together because I truly thought I did. Apparently, me showing that I care, threw out mixed signals to Kamryn."

Sitting up, he rested his elbows on his legs and looked at me and said, "Please forgive me for not shielding you from the drama. I don't want to stress you out in any way baby. I love you so much and I just hope that you aren't angry." I looped my arm around his and laid my head on his shoulder.

"I'm not angry with you," I replied softly, my mind still reeling from all the information as everything started to add up and make sense. Lifting my head, I found his brown orbs and stared into them as I said, "I love you and nothing you just shared could change that."

He kissed my forehead and said, "I love you too. And I promise, I'm gonna clarify our boundaries with Kamryn." I nodded and gave him a small smile.

"Ok love. Now, how 'bout you treat me and your baby to some ice cream."

"It'll be my pleasure baby," he replied with a tight smile.

Chapter 11

It was the day of our engagement party and I was more than excited. Last weekend was Bryce's mother's service. And if that alone wasn't heartbreaking, the fact that there wasn't much family made it worse. We were thankful that Solomon and Divine hosted dinner at their home afterwards. Ever since then, we've just been trying to get back to our life. We needed happy moments...and tonight was gonna be filled with those. I was determined to make that happen...especially for Bryce. He needed it.

Since meeting Kamryn and Patrice, we hadn't spoken about them again. I didn't know if and when he had talked to Kamryn, but I trusted that he had. Truthfully, I didn't care to know. My only concern was that she be fully aware that the feelings she had, held no relevance at this point. I could be spared the details.

As I came out of the bathroom wrapped in my towel, Bryce entered the room. "I tried to wait for you to shower love, but I have to do my makeup."

He pulled me close. "It's probably best that we didn't shower together. Looking at your beautiful body would have fucked my mind up and I would have lost all sense of time." He lowered his head and softly kissed my neck near my ear.

"Mmm...if you don't stop, that could still be a very real possibility," I replied, wrapping my arms around him, sliding them up his back. There were many things that I loved about being pregnant, but my sex drive had to be my favorite. Every chance I got, I wanted to feel him inside me.

Sliding his hands to my ass, he said in a low voice, "Do we have to be on time?"

"It's our party...we can be late if we want to. Whatchu tryna do daddy," I answered, goading him into extinguishing the rapidly building fire inside of

me.

He pulled off my towel, then pulled his dick out of his basketball shorts. He picked me up and filled me with his erection. “Shit...I’m tryna fuck up the way you walk baby. This pregnant pussy got a nigga straight fiending all the damn time.”

“Oooh, fuck it up then baby,” I moaned as I clutched the back of his head in one hand and dug my nails into his shoulder with the other, circling my hips into his. Walking us to the nearest wall, he pressed my back into it then sucked my nipples, one by one.

“That’s exactly what I plan to do baby. Hold on tight.”

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“Can you be on time for anything,” Junior asked when he opened the door for me and Bryce. After he took me down, I ended up jumping back in the shower with him...then that led to some things. So, it was safe to say we were indeed late. But still, he didn’t have to call me out like that.

“Junior, shut up and let me in the damn house,” I replied, pushing past him. He completely ignored me and went to Bryce with his hand outstretched.

“What’s up man. Can I get you a drink? We got Henn, wine and beer.”

“What’s up D. Let me get a Henn. Thanks,” Bryce answered.

“Well, thanks for asking me what I wanted to drink,” I said, dropping my purse onto the table in the foyer.

“I ain’t gotta ask you...you drinking water.” I rolled my eyes and he laughed, throwing his arm around me. “I’m playing sis. You know I love fucking with you.”

“I know.”

“Anyway, congrats you two. Everybody is out back where the party is. Come on. Bryce, I’ll getchu that drink man.”

“Preciate it,” Bryce replied. I intertwined my fingers with his and we made our way out to my brother’s backyard. It was beautifully decorated in our wedding colors. It had Aunt Shaudé written all over it. As soon as we walked out onto the deck overlooking everybody as they were eating, drinking and being merry, Divine was the first to see us.

“Heeeeey! It’s the happy couple! Nice of y’all to join us,” she said with a giggle. She had been drinking for sure. Hell, I didn’t blame her. *Mommy gotta have some fun too.*

We descended the stairs and my parents were the first to greet us. “Congratulations you two,” Mommy said hugging us both.

“Thanks Mommy.” She smiled and rubbed my belly, stepping aside for my dad.

He hugged me and said, “Congratulations baby girl. I love you.”

“Thank you Daddy. I love you too.”

He nodded and turned his attention to Bryce. With a hand on his shoulder and the other outstretched, he said, “I feel pretty confident saying welcome to the family now. Congratulations son.”

“Thank you Mr. Stewart,” Bryce said, shaking his hand with a smile. Daddy nodded and he and my mother walked back to their tables. I noticed that they weren’t sitting together. And although even THAT felt weird, I had to accept what was. At least they were able to be here for us and remain civil.

After all my other family had congratulated us, Divine, Solomon and Gia and Watt were the last to approach us. “Congrats you guys,” Divine said, hugging us both.

“Thanks boo,” I replied.

“Thank you,” Bryce said. Solomon embraced me then moved to Bryce. He

held out his hand and Bryce slapped it, hugging him tightly. As they embraced and exchanged pleasantries, Gia wrapped her arms around me.

“I’m so happy for you boo. Congratulations.” I gave her a squeeze.

“Thanks Gi Gi,” I replied, glancing over at Watt. “Did y’all come together?” She snickered.

“No. We did not. But...we might leave together,” she answered then giggled. I shook my head and laughed.

“Go ‘head then. How are you drunk already?”

“You know I’m a lightweight,” she answered, stepping aside to let Watt hug and congratulate me as she did the same to Bryce. After Watt hugged Bryce and they talked for a minute, he walked off to follow behind Gia. Bryce grabbed my hand.

“Well, they just might work out.”

“I think you might be right baby,” I said, staring up at him. Junior made his way over to us and gave Bryce his Hennessy and had brought me a wine flute of sparkling water.

“Y’all gon’ need this. It’s time for my toast,” he said. After thanking him, I gave him the side-eye.

“Junior...do not embarrass me. You and Uncle Des love to get tipsy and start making speeches.”

“Relax little sister. I gotchu.” He winked and walked off.

“Should we stay standing here baby, or can we be seated? You need to get off your feet.”

“I’m assuming the table in the front is for us since there’s only two seats,” I answered and my brother confirmed that when he waved us over to the very table I was speaking of. Bryce nodded and I led him to our seats.

“My dad isn’t one for speaking publicly,” Junior began when we were seated and everyone laughed. “But lucky for my sister, I am.”

“You sound like Uncle Des,” I said out loud and we all laughed.

“Watch it niece,” Uncle Des fired back and everybody was cracking up.

“Our whole lives I’ve felt like I had to protect you. Even had to flex on a couple of bums ‘cause they didn’t know you’re worth. You’re so full of life and have such a big heart, you deserve the world sis. And yeah...we bicker, I get on your nerves as my wife tells me, but you know I love you more than anything. I’m glad you found someone that recognized your worth. You’re glowing different now too and it looks good on you.” I swallowed the emotions that had crawled their way into my throat and swiped the lone tear that escaped my eye. “Now, Bryce, her butt can be feisty at times, but I’m sure you know she’s mostly bark.” I narrowed my eyes at Junior as I stood and went to hug him while our family and friends laughed. “I’m kidding sis. I love you.” I wrapped my arms around my big brother and squeezed.

“You don’t need my protection anymore,” he whispered in my ear. “But you’ll always have it.” I pulled back and playfully pushed his shoulder.

“I better,” I replied then went back to my seat.

"To Bryce and Sheena," Junior said and held his glass up. Our family did the same and echoed his words.

“I can’t wait to see more of your feisty side when we get home,” Bryce said.

“I got plenty to give you too love. I’m barking AND biting,” I replied. I thought he was gonna spit out his drink when I said that.

“Well shit. I ain’t never wanted to be bit before, but damn if you didn’t make that shit sound appealing as fuck.”

I kissed his cheek and giggled softly. “Drink plenty of that Hennessy baby.”

“You ain’t said nothing but a word,” he replied then downed the remaining contents in his glass.

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It had been a few days since our engagement party and life was great. Business was even booming for me too. After a shoutout from Teyana Taylor when I hooked up her pixie cut, I had added a couple of new clients to my already pretty extensive clientele list. I knew Bryce was more than likely ready for me to take leave now, given that he was always worried about me being on my feet. My mother had even began taking up his cause. But I wanted to stay busy. I loved working and moving.

Which was the reason I was at Divine’s doing yoga with her and Gia. Plus, I wanted the scoop on what went down with Gia and Watt. So, once we were done, and lounging on our mats in Solomon and Divine’s backyard, I dove straight in. “So, what’s new with you and Watt?”

She started blushing. “Well, I will just say we left the party together.” Me and Divine looked at each other then back at her with wide eyes. “Y’all know damn well I ain’t getting into details. We talk or text quite often too...even went out.”

“Well damn bitch,” I said, pretending to clutch my pearls. “You keeping all this shit to yourself?” I was only teasing her because I knew she was so damn shy but was as feisty and wild as me and Divine.

“Did you expect anything different?”

Divine giggled. “If she did, I don’t know why.”

“I do share with y’all though. So, y’all need to stop,” Gia blushed.

“Yeah, but not the juicy shit,” I countered.

“Anyway. It was just one dinner the other day. That’s it. We’re getting to know each other.” I smiled and nodded.

“Yeah yeah,” I said quickly. “But we wanna know was he worth the wait.” Again, her cheeks were tinted pink as she shook her head.

“I was waiting for your ass to be nasty,” she replied as her and Divine giggled.

“Well,” I insisted.

“Yes She She. It was worth it.” I started dancing where I sat, waving my arms in the air.

“My girl done got her some dick AND the man to go with it,” I said and we all laughed, falling all over each other.

“Your ass is crazy,” Gia laughed as I squeezed her.

“I know and you love me.”

“Don’t rub that shit off on my baby,” Divine said as she rubbed my belly and laughed.

“You don’t have that to worry about. Bryce’s genes are so strong on Jasmine and Hunter, I don’t think I have a chance.”

“Thank God,” Gia said and her Divine high-fived each other and cracked up.

“You bitches do know I still got time to find replacements for you in my wedding, right,” I shot back as I narrowed playful eyes on them and theirs widened. “Got y’all asses back, didn’t I? Teach you to play with a pregnant woman.” I got up from my mat and rolled it up. After straightening and stretching out my back, I said, “Now, if you two plan to eat with me, I suggest you come on because I am starving.”

“We’re gonna let your pregnant ass get away with that,” Divine said as she and Gia got up from their mats.

“I thought you might. God, I love being pregnant,” I replied on my way into her house, laughing at her and Gia’s frowns.



To say the day was one of perfection was an understatement. Bryce had surprised me with a full day of pampering and would be taking me out. From the maternity massage to having my hair and makeup done...I was in heaven the entire time. I was so relaxed by the time I got home, if I had laid down, I would surely have fallen asleep. So, I ate my broccoli and cheese soup from Panera then took a quick hot bath...mainly for my feet. I had been working hard lately since I was obsessed with building up my little nest egg before I went on leave. And tonight, I would be surprising Bryce by telling him that I had decided not to book anymore appointments until the baby came. I was officially putting myself on leave. I was just hitting the four-month mark and was starting to really feel it.

Aside from the bomb pampering that I had received, Bryce also bought a cute and sexy jumpsuit. It showed off my curves and baby bump. I was excited to get dressed up and go out to enjoy the evening with my man. After putting on my thong and the strapless bra I would be wearing, I was heading to the kitchen for a bottle of water when Bryce walked into the house. The way he looked at me said that I could be in a world of trouble...the great kind. "Hey baby. How was your day of pampering," he asked. I wrapped my arms around his waist, kissing his lips.

"It was amaaazing love. Thank you again."

"You don't have to thank me. It's not only my duty, but my pleasure to take care of your fine ass. I have something for you." He grabbed the bouquet from the counter and gave it to me. He was really pouring on the romance tonight and I was eating it up. I finally had something that felt so good, I desired nothing more than to bask in it. It was something I wasn't always sure I would have. But here he was giving me everything my brother said I deserved in his speech at our engagement party.

"Sheena, you deserve the world. And I plan on spending the rest of my days trying to give it to you," he said, with a jewelry box in his hand. My eyes started to mist and my feelings flooded my throat.

“Awww baby...please don’t make me cry. This makeup is so perfect,” I replied as a tear threatened my flawless foundation. I dabbed at it and waited for him to continue.

“I felt your outfit wouldn’t be complete without this,” he said, opening the jewelry box. My eyes widened as I stared at the sparkling diamonds of the necklace and drop earrings.

“Bryce...oh wow. They are gorgeous,” I replied, sitting the flowers on the countertop to run my fingers over the jewels.

“Just like the woman who will be wearing them. Turn around so I can put the necklace on.” I did as he asked and he draped the necklace around my neck and clasped it. I put the earrings on then wrapped my arms around his neck and his hands slid to my ass.

“Today has been amazing love. Thank you for my gifts, I love the necklace and earrings. Now, I have a surprise for you.” When his interest seemed piqued enough, I said, “You are looking at your pregnant fiancée who is now on leave. No more appointments until after the baby. And it won’t hurt my business at all because most of my clients assured me that they would be right back when I’m ready to get back to work.”

Saying to hell with my lipstick, he softly kissed me then ran his nose along my ear. “Thank you. You know I worry about your health all the time. People take a woman carrying a baby as no big deal. But it IS a big deal. Your body is constantly changing for the life growing inside of you and I want those changes to be as seamless as possible. I love you Sheena.” He lifted his head and our eyes met. He gently rubbed his hand across my belly as I found myself falling more in love with the man that thought the world of me and never hesitated to show me.

“I love you too. Which is why I had to put your mind at ease. I worry about you worrying about me,” I replied with a small smile as I let my hand slide up the back of his head. “Now, if we don’t start getting ready for our date, I’m gonna insist that we start thanking each other immensely with our bodies instead of words.”

He smiled then bit his bottom lip. “You nasty. As much as I would love to fall off up in this trap you just set, I want us to actually have a night out and build up to what you described to the point where we can barely make it back home. I have a romantic evening planned and timeliness is important. So, I’m gonna go take a quick shower and get dressed.” He kissed my forehead then stepped out of my hold, popping me on the ass on his way to the shower.

“Not helping,” I yelled after him before heading to the room to get dressed myself. When I passed the mirror over the dresser, I couldn’t help but stop and double back to admire the necklace around my neck. The diamonds were in the shapes of flowers, but the centerpiece of the necklace was a teardrop diamond that matched the earrings, only bigger. A smile spread across my face as I slid my fingers over the jewels once again.

By the time I had gotten dressed, Bryce was coming out of the bathroom smelling like heaven personified in nothing but his underwear and beater. He licked his lips at the sight of me and I just wanted to strip down all over again. But I knew, he wasn’t having it. My man had an amazing night planned and would not be deterred. So, I commanded myself to behave.

“You look so got damn beautiful Sheena,” he said, trying his best to focus on his clothes. When he grabbed his dick, I knew desire was getting the best of him, as it was me.

“So do you love,” I said, folding my arms across my chest while staring at the man that wanted to spend the rest of his life with me. “But thank you. You know, you really shouldn’t have come out here this way. You’re such a tease Bryce Hardwick.”

“Shit girl. I ain’t tryna tease you right now. I didn’t wanna get lotion and shit on my clothes from moving too fast in there. I’m torturing my damn self. Keep yo’ sexy ass over though,” he replied as he slid into his pants and worked a little harder to zip his pants over his erection. I smirked as I watched. When he glanced up at me, I couldn’t hide my amusement.

“Well, I’m gonna go wait in the living room because I won’t be able to keep my sexy ass over here if I keep standing here staring at you...eye-fucking you,” I said as I turned to leave the room. “After dinner though, all

that sexy you got going on is mine.” I headed to the living room and waited for him to finish dressing.

After a few more minutes, he entered the living room looking like a feast dressed in all black, the suit and shirt he was wearing fitting him to perfection. “You ready my queen,” he asked and I noticed he had my sweater draped across his arm. He walked over to me and held out his hand to help me from the couch.

“More than ready love. And you look amazing,” I replied.

“Thank you baby. I had to match your fly gorgeous.” After a soft kiss on the cheek, he led me out of the house and to his Audi. I glanced up at him.

“Oooh, tonight must be special love.” He rarely ever drove that car. It had to a special occasion for him to pull the beauty out. We reached the passenger door and he turned and looked at me. He ran his fingertips over my cheek, down my shoulder and arm, leaving goosebumps behind.

“Special indeed baby. I just want to celebrate where we are and where we’re going. Every moment with you is special though.”

“That’s sweet love,” I replied as I stared up at him, grinning from ear to ear. “I love it.” He smiled then opened the door for me. I got inside and waited for him to do the same. When he did, he backed out of the garage and we were on our way. He grabbed my hand as he drove and kissed it.

“So, I spoke with my father for the first time ever.” My eyes widened as I stared at him.

“That’s great baby,” I blurted then said, “Wait...that is great, right? It went well?”

“It went really well. He already knew about me. He’d been talking to Faith. He said he’s known for the past couple of years but didn’t know how to approach me about it. Sheena, I look just like this nigga. When I looked at his picture, it was like looking at myself twenty years from now,” he answered, tapping on the screen of his phone. He passed it to me and when I

laid on eyes on his father, he did not lie. He looked just like my baby.

“Oh wow love. You really do look just like him. I’m so happy for you. I think it’s great that you found your dad. I’d love to meet him...and thank him for his good genes,” I replied as I passed him his phone. When I caught his gaze, I winked and squeezed his hand that still held mine.

He smiled and said, “Yeah, a brother is kinda nice hunh,” then chuckled. “Since you’re going to be off, you can come with us to lunch next week.”

“Sounds good baby. I’d love to join you. And a brother is more than kinda nice,” I replied.

Tucking in his bottom lip, his eyes surveyed my body, raising the temp of it. “Keep it up. Flattery will get you everywhere.” I crossed my legs towards him as my tongue slid across the matte long-lasting plum lipstick that covered my lips.

“You promise?” He put his hand on my leg, letting it slide between my thighs and I uncrossed them, a little too damn eager to see what would happen next. When he firmly gripped my thigh, it was like an alarm clock for my pussy.

“On my life baby, I ain’t never fucked in this car, but there’s a first time for everything.” I unhooked my seatbelt and leaned over the center console and kissed his neck then his ear.

“So, you’re saying you wanna fuck me in this car Mr. Hardwick,” I whispered in his ear. He glanced at me then eased his arm around to my ass.

“I’m SAYING that I will fuck you on top of this car in the restaurant parking lot if need be. I’m just not trying to go to jail tonight. His fingers moved between my legs and he caressed my kitty from the back. I couldn’t help the roll in my hips. I knew he could feel how hot it was. My panties were pretty much soaked. “But whatchu trying to do? I’ll straddle you on my shit while I’m driving if you feeling that risky.”

“Well love, there’s no if need be. The only need here is my need for

you,” I replied, sliding my hand down his chest to his dick. “The minute we get into the restaurant parking lot, this ass is yours. I’d never make it through dinner without feeling you now that you have drenched my panties.” He smiled and chuckled a little.

“I knew I should’ve fucked yo’ hot ass up before we left. You gon’ be able to get out of that jumpsuit in here?”

“Yes...yes, you should have,” I replied as I continued to eye my fine ass man, only increasing my desire to let him get at it in the worst way. I slid my nose over his ear. “I’d like to think you know your fiancée very well. I’ll get out of anything to have you all up in my space...literally baby.”

“Mmm...I do know you very well...inside and out. So, why don’t you start taking this shit off so I can start hitting them spots in that pussy before we get there?” He started coming out of his jacket. Underneath the one sleeve on my jumpsuit was the zipper. I couldn’t start undressing fast enough. That was one of the things I loved about my baby. He was just as nasty as me and would never hesitate to give me the D. Whenever...wherever...he would give me my kitty’s desire. Which was always him.

As I slid the zipper down on the jumpsuit, his eyes stayed on me. He wanted me just as much as I wanted him. “All your favorite spots are waiting love,” I said as I allowed the top of my jumpsuit to collapse. I let the seat back and slowly pushed the jumper down, exposing my strapless bra and thong in their entirety.

“Take them drawz off. I don’t need that shit in my way,” he said then licked his lips. “I can’t be ripping shit. You gotta put all this back on.” As I eased my thong down my thighs, he was undoing his pants. When he pulled out his dick, just the sight of it made my mouth water.

“I need you to swallow my dick baby,” he said as if he read my mind. While he held it in his hand, I got on my knees and licked the tip. When he let go, I swallowed as much of him as I could. He slid his hand to my ass, popping me there before his fingers found my pussy. As I sucked him deep into my mouth, bobbing on his length, his fingers breached my opening, massaging my G-spot.

“Fuuuuck baby,” he said as I slowed my pace and began grinding on his hand. I was so turned on and horny...I need him to send me to the moon ASAP. And damn. was I close. Too close for him to stop which is what he did, removing his fingers to suck my juices from them. He pushed them back into me and started working on my spot again. My legs started to tremble as he rubbed my swollen clit.

“Fuck! I’m about to nut baby,” he said. *Me too*, I thought to myself as I took him into my mouth as deep as I could, his tip hitting the back of my throat. “Fuuuuck,” he groaned as his nut coated my throat and I swallowed every drop of him, on the verge of my own undoing. My hips moved feverishly as he continued to finger-fuck me. “Give it to me Sheena. Give that shit to daddy,”

He had barely gotten the words out before my body seized and my head swam. “Daddyyyy shiiiiit,” I cried as my body quaked and trembled. Pulling my lip between my teeth, I moaned and whimpered through the aftershock, completely satiated...for the moment.

He slowly pulled his fingers from inside of me and tasted my flavor once again. “Damn. That shit only made me want more baby,” he said softly. “When we get home, it’s on.”

“I want more too love. To be continued...after you feed my belly.”

He turned into the parking lot across the street from Providence, the restaurant we were going to. I’d been before with my parents and although they’re menu was mostly things I couldn’t consume because of my pregnancy, they had an amazing duck that had my stomach growling just thinking about it. “Once you get dressed, I’ll go over there. It’s valet parking only.” I nodded and licked my lips, picking up my jumpsuit to get dressed.

Chapter 12

After an amazing dinner, Bryce informed me that the night wasn't over. We drove out to Rancho Cucamonga and I was surprised that he had arranged a horse and carriage ride. When we arrived, he grabbed my sweater from the backseat and got out to come around and open my door. He helped me out of the car then assisted me in putting my sweater on. "You think you'll be able to keep your hands to yourself while we go on this romantic ride?"

Wrapping my arms around his waist, I smiled as I stared up at him. "Well, let's see...you bestowed amazing gifts upon me. Planned an amazing dinner...and don't even get me started on the car ride to the restaurant. And then this? I may not be able to contain myself after all this romance baby."

"Well, you are absolutely free to lose control as soon as we leave here. If we gotta have another snack in the car on the way home, so be it. At least the drive won't be as long. Only a twenty-five-minute drive instead of forty-five." He leaned in close to my ear and said, "But you best believe when we get home, I'm gon' lose complete control all in that juicy ass pussy." He gently bit my earlobe then kissed the spot underneath it as he grabbed my ass.

"If you keep it up, we'll definitely be having a snack on the way home," I replied, clenching my thighs together. It took nothing for him to get my juices flowing.

"Well, let me slow my roll then. I wanna take my time with you tonight. Come on baby," he said as he grabbed my hand and led me to the carriage. He helped me inside then joined me. "How's the planning coming along," he asked. "Is there anything you need from me baby?"

I snuggled in closer to him and said, "It's coming along great baby. My Aunt Shaudé has got everything under control. All I need from you is for you to show up with you fine ass and be ready to say I do."

“Mmm. What about the kids? You need me to do anything for them? I want Hunter to be my best man.”

“I like that idea love. And I just need him dressed and ready to go on wedding day. I’d love for Jasmine to be the flower girl. If that’s okay, next time she comes over, I’m taking her to the dress shop. They already pulled a couple that would be perfect for her.”

“Of course baby. She’s your baby too,” he replied and that made my heart smile. I fell in love with Hunter and Jasmine. To me...they WERE my babies too. “You don’t have to wonder if it’s okay.” He turned towards me a little. “So, let me practice right quick.” He stared into my eyes and licked his lips. “I do.” I giggled softly and reached up and slid my hand down the back of his head.

“I think you got it baby,” I said then gently kissed his lips. He moved his hands to my ass and gently squeezed then kissed me again. Sitting back in the seat, he pulled me closer to him and held me in his arms.

“I plan to make every night with you feel this way baby.”

“I trust that you will love. And I couldn’t be more grateful for you,” I replied as I rubbed my belly. “Everything I ever wanted, I have it with you.” He placed his hand on my belly too.

“So, I think we should start working on the nursery. Although we don’t know what the sex of the baby is yet, we can start the preliminary things, like flooring and furniture.”

“That sounds great. I was thinking yellows and maybe gray flooring that way when we do find out the sex of the baby, we can infuse the blue...or pink in with the décor of the room.”

“Sounds good,” he said then inhaled deeply. “So, have you thought of any names yet.” I smiled because I had indeed been thinking of names. Mostly boy names.

“I’ve had more boy names come to me than girls. I guess that emphasizes

what I'm hoping for. My favorite is Bryson Deon Hardwick...and for a girl, my favorite is Shanice Faith Hardwick."

"I love both names," he said then kissed my forehead. "So, why are you hoping for a boy now? I thought you didn't have a preference." I shrugged bashfully.

"I really don't, but whenever I think about the baby...I swear I feel like it's a boy. I could be wrong, but it's just a feeling. Plus, I'd love for my little Jasmine to be the only girl for a little longer."

"That's sweet babe. I'm good either way. But I agree with you. My princess won't have to share her throne just yet." Snuggling closer to him, I was ready to enjoy the rest of our ride. The night was absolutely perfect... peaceful. "I love you Sheena."

"I love you too baby."



Our wedding was quickly approaching. A fact that my aunt had been drilling into my head all morning the four thousand times she called me. She was more anal about the wedding than me. Everything was coming along smoothly, in my opinion, so I wasn't really frantic...yet. But as an event planner I could understand her need to be on a thousand to pull off the amazing events she puts together. I had just hung up with her when Bryce called. "Hey love."

"Hey baby. I couldn't wait to get home to tell you this. I had to tell you now. I've been promoted again...but to president in the corporate office. I really hope you love me, because you are going to be spending a lot more of your time with me."

"Oh wow! That's great! Congratulations. I'm so proud of you and do really love you. I'll give you all my time baby."

"Thanks baby. I'm on my way to come get you for lunch with Michael and

his wife. We have time though. So, I'm sure you won't mind helping me celebrate before we leave." Today, we were having lunch with Bryce's father. I was excited for him. I thought he could use the connection to the only parent he had left.

I smiled and said, "Well, hurry so we can get this celebration started."

"Say less. On my way."

The minute he walked through the door our 'celebration' began. Afterwards, we showered and got dressed to have lunch with his father. I was completely astonished by the fact that they looked more alike in person and had both worked in the police department. Bryce was more like his father than he knew and I found it refreshing watching them come to that conclusion as they chatted. His wife was very nice as well. We talked about the baby and the wedding and got along great. I was happy for my baby. He seemed so at peace now that his father was in his life. Our lives.

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"Today is the big day baby girl. You nervous," Daddy asked. I smiled and rubbed my belly.

"Not even a little. I'm excited to see who is responsible for the extra pounds I'm putting on. My son...or my daughter," I replied. Today was the day we'd get to find out the sex of the baby and my mom and dad wanted to be present. In their words, 'our baby girl is having her first baby. We want to be a part of as much as possible'.

I glanced up at Bryce who was standing next to the table I was currently reclining on, waiting for Dr. Foster. "What about you baby? How you feeling?"

He stared down at me and said, "Anxious...but excited. I need to be able to call my baby by name." He put his hand on my stomach and leaned over. "We get to know more about you today baby," he said to my stomach.

“I’m so excited,” Mommy said just as Dr. Foster walked into the room.

“How are we doing,” she asked me.

“Pretty good. Experiencing fatigue more these days, but I feel great for the most part.”

“Fatigue is to be expected,” she replied as she prepared to let us see the baby. “Well, I’m assuming everybody in this room is pretty excited to see if baby Hardwick is a girl or boy. So, I won’t keep you waiting much longer. Go ahead and raise your shirt for me Sheena.” When I did she tucked some of the paper that resembled the paper I was laying on into the top of my pants.

“It’s a little cold,” she said as she got ready to squeeze the gel on my belly. My heart raced with excitement. After sliding the wand back and forth across my belly a few times as, we all seemed to be waiting on bated breath. “Baby looks great you guys. And...if you look here, you’ll see that we are looking at a baby boy.” My heart swelled in my chest. *I knew I was right.* I felt it.

“Looks like you were right baby girl,” my dad said as he grinned. I had been calling the baby he lately. “Congratulations you two.”

“Thank you Daddy.”

“Thank you Mr. Stewart,” Bryce said then grabbed my hand. “Well, Jasmine gets to keep her throne all to herself for now.” He leaned over and kissed my lips then smiled at me.

“Yes, she does and Hunter gets the little brother that he wanted. I can’t wait to tell them that they’re gonna have a little brother. Now, I can call him Bryson with confidence. Bryson Deon Hardwick.” I glanced over at my dad and his eyes were wide. He cleared his throat and blushed.

“That’s a great name y’all.”

“I knew you’d think so. You’re so conceited,” I replied and he laughed a little. “You were the first man that showed me real love Daddy. I finally got it right,” I said then glanced up at Bryce. “Everything you poured into me, help

me know my worth and find somebody that knows it too. It was an honor to name our son after you.”

“It really is a beautiful name Sheena,” Mommy said. “I can’t believe my baby girl is having her first baby.” Bryce kissed my head as the doctor wiped off my belly.

“Well, it’s time to feed my boy. I know his stomach is growling,” he said.

“Mmhmm. Very much so,” I replied.

“Ok. Well, everything looks great,” Dr. Foster said. “Stop at the front desk and schedule your next appointment. I’ll see you then.”

“Ok. Thank you Dr. Foster,” I replied. When she left the room, I turned to Bryce and said, “I hope y’all are cool with Burger King because that’s what your baby boy is craving.”

“Naw, that’s what his fiancée is craving,” my mom said and her and Daddy chuckled.

“Same thing.”

“Hardwicks don’t really do Burger King like that baby, so that’s definitely you craving that,” Bryce said while trying not to laugh. I playfully narrowed my eyes.

“Well, maybe it’s my genes that make him do the happy dance every chance I get to get some. Either way...I need Burger King in my life.”

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Life had been good and time was flying. The holidays came and went and had been some of the best times of my life spent with our family and friends. Before I knew it, our wedding was upon us. Solomon and Watt had hooked up Bryce’s bachelor party and Divine and Gia had taken care of arranging my bachelorette party. They wouldn’t tell me the plans, but I knew it wouldn’t include alcohol or Mary Jane. It didn’t matter though. I was a day away from

getting married to the man of my dreams and I had my girls. I was gonna have a good time no matter what we did.

“You bitches really not gonna tell me what we’re doing,” I asked, glancing from Gia to Divine.

“Relax,” Divine said. “You are going to have the time of your life. We invited some of your favorite people and we are going to turn up for the night.”

“Yeah, well as long as it involves some hot wings and some Perrier, I’m cool,” I replied as my phone went off in my hand.

Bryce: I’m not even all that excited to be out. I miss you and Bryson already.

I smiled to myself as I typed my response.

Me: I miss you too. Try to have fun though baby. Enjoy yourself. I love you.

Bryce: I love you more.

When we pulled up to the lounge, I peered over at Divine and she grinned. “We rented out our favorite spot for the night just for you.”

“How’d you make that happen boo,” I inquired.

“Daddy pulled some strings. So, put this on,” she said reaching into the black plastic bag on the floor next to my feet. She pulled out a sash that said ‘Bride-to-be’ and a sparkling tiara. As I put on the sash, she placed the tiara on my head. “Now let’s go party.”

When we got inside, I was floored. The room was decorated in our wedding colors. From the cranberry colored tablecloths, seat covers and satin that covered the walls to the sparkling ribbon that tied around back of the chairs, the white roses that looked to have been dipped in silver glitter that were arranged into beautiful centerpieces. Everybody seemed so happy to be there. My sister-in-law, Mommy and my aunts all came up for hugs. They

had even invited some of my clients that I was close to. “This is absolutely beautiful. Thanks y’all.”

“Of course. We’re family,” Divine said.

“Plus, you’re our girl,” Gia added. “And we did make sure to put hot wings on the menu for tonight.” I threw my arms around her.

“Thank you boo,” I replied, going to Divine to give her a squeeze too. “I knew y’all loved me.”

“Most of the time,” they said, just about at the same time then busted into laughter. I couldn’t help but join them.

“I’m a give y’all a pass tonight,” I said.

“Good. Now, come on so you can sit down and get the festivities started,” Gia said.

They led me to a table that was set up with a throne chair and everything just for me. When I sat, they took to the stage and Divine grabbed the mic. “First, we’d like to say congratulations to Sheena and ask that y’all make some noise and do the same.” Everybody clapped and cheered as I soaked in all of their good energy and vibes. Everybody in the room was someone that I knew was genuinely happy for me.

“Now, we’ll eat as soon as the servers bring out the food. In the meantime, we have some entertainment here tonight. Now, being that you are very engaged and VERY pregnant Sheena,” Gia said. “We will NOT be having a stripper grinding and rubbing all on you.” There were a few ‘ahhhs’ in the crowd from women who were clearly hoping for that type of hoopla. “BUT,” she continued. “We did get a male exotic dancer to put on a show. Ladies, your entertainment for tonight.” When she put the mic back, the lights dimmed and the ladies started screaming as I laughed and recorded my mother and aunts cutting up when “Take You Down” started to play.

Now, the dancer had some moves...and he was fine, but my entertainment was watching these other freaks swoon over his ass while in the back of my

mind, I thought *My soon-to-be husband is SO much finer. But go 'head baby boy, get it how you live.* When he came and stood in front of my table, I tossed the stack of ones my mother (yes, my mother) handed me. She was having the time of her life and I wasn't really mad at it.

After the dancer had done his thing, there was a brief intermission in the evening. Some people hit the dance floor and some people sat and mingled. I went to the restroom and when I returned my mother stopped me on my way past her table. "You have a minute to talk to your mother?"

"Yeah, of course. You wanna step outside?" She nodded then grabbed her sweater and waited for me to go back to my table for my mink stole that complemented my body-hugging black knee-length dress. When we got out onto the deck of the lounge, we walked over to the railing in silence. I was curious and she seemed to be thinking.

"I'm so proud of you Sheena. You know that, right?" I glanced over at her and nodded, getting the gut feeling that she was about to really pull at my emotions. "I know that sometimes you and I have butted heads, but that was because I wanted you to be this fierce, feisty, strong woman that I see today. I wanted you to be better than me. Be confident in yourself and know your worth. You are all of those things. Now..." she said, reaching into her clutch that she brought outside with us. "I remember you were around eight when you started trying on my wedding rings. Every time your father upgraded it, you were in awe. You were in love with the idea of being married. Showing off the fact that someone loved you enough to give you a happily ever after. You were in love with love before you even felt it. So, I want you to wear this tomorrow...as your something borrowed." She opened the box she pulled from her purse and revealed the fourteen-karat white gold wedding ring that my dad had upgraded her to three anniversaries ago.

"Mommy...why would you," I tried asking until she cut me off.

"Because I want to see my baby girl...wearing my ring one more time before she steps into the next chapter of her life," she said before she began to cry and I did too as I pulled her into my arms. We held onto each other tightly for a minute. When we finally pulled away, both of us dabbing at our eyes, she said, "You have babies of your own now. So, think of it as my last

chance to remember you as my baby girl...so obsessed and in love with love.” She smiled as she placed the box in my hand and hugged me again. Then, the door to the lounge flew open.

“Hey! Oh, sorry Aunt Chey,” Divine said, covering her mouth.

“No, it’s fine sweetheart. We were just coming back inside,” Mommy replied.

“Good. It’s time to eat.” My mother and I walked back into the lounge arm in arm, closer than we had been in a while.

Chapter 13

After an amazing bachelorette party, I went back to my father's house which was where I was staying for the night. Everything had already been brought to his house and I'd scheduled hair and makeup to come here and get us ready. When I got in, he was asleep already or at least in his room. So, I went to my old room, showered then climbed in bed. For about an hour or two, I laid awake, rubbing my belly. As I laid in the bed alone, I realized how much I missed Bryce. I had gotten so used to sleeping next to him. Used to the way he'd lull me to sleep rubbing my belly. So, I rolled over and grabbed my phone to send him a text. If my intuition was right, he enjoyed himself and had probably had a few drinks. He was either passed out or still partying.

You're only hours away from having to deal with my crazy ass forever. Sure you haven't changed your mind? Lol I hope you had a great night love and I miss you.

Bryce: The question is are YOU sure? LOL. I think my crazy is worse than yours. I can be a whole nigga at times. We're still out but hopefully they'll be wrapping this shit up soon. I love you and I miss you too. See you tomorrow at 1.

Me: I've never been more sure of anything in my life. So...I guess it seems we're made for each other love. See you at the altar Mr. Hardwick.

Again, he responded rather quickly.

We were definitely made for one another. I can't wait to make you Mrs. Hardwick. Goodnight baby. Get some rest.

After sending the winking, kissing emoji, I placed my phone on the nightstand and drifted off, sleeping like a baby.

The next morning, I was awakened by my father knocking on the door. I got up and threw on a tee and some sweats then open the door to him standing there with a tray of breakfast. He smiled and said, "I had the chef make us something. I thought we'd eat breakfast in here and chill out before everything gets crazy." I smiled back.

"I'd like that Daddy." I stepped aside and let him in. He went to the table that sat in front of the huge bay window and placed the tray down, unloading the omelets, bowls of fruit and orange juice that were prepared for us. His drink was a mimosa I was sure, judging by the fact that it was in a champagne flute.

"So, how we feeling this morning," he asked and I grinned as I sat in the seat across from him.

"Excited. More happy than I've ever been."

After taking my hands and saying grace, he replied. "It shows baby girl."

"How are YOU feeling? You're giving away your baby girl today."

"I'm SHARING my baby girl," he said, correcting me and we both laughed. "No, but seriously, I'm just happy that you're happy. I'm happy you're loved. Today is gonna be great."

"I think so too," I agreed. I took a bite of the omelet and my eyes fell closed. I could hear Daddy's low chuckle. I had had these omelets many times in my life and they never disappointed. "On another note," I started after swallowing the mouthful of egg. "How are things with you and Mommy." He forked a strawberry into his mouth, chewing slowly before answering.

"I can't lie to you She She," he said. "I miss her a lot. Especially when she called and told me that she missed me out of the blue one day." My eyes widened.

"What," I shrieked. "Daddy, that's great! Are y'all gonna try to work things out," I asked, my excitement level on that of my little Jasmine. I

chuckled inwardly at myself.

“Slow down baby girl. Nobody said that. I need time to think about what I want to do now. She’s pulled the strings when it comes down to us being together or apart for so long. I need time to myself to see how I feel about all of this.” My excitement dwindled a bit, but I understood.

“I get it Daddy. No pressure from me. I just want both of you to be happy.”

“Thanks baby girl,” he replied. “Now, eat up. You know your mother and Shaudé will be here soon to get this thing started.” I nodded.

“Thanks for breakfast Daddy.”

“You’re welcome sweetheart.”

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Right after breakfast with my dad, I showered, brushed my teeth and was ready to be pampered and beautified by the time Mommy and Aunt Shaudé arrived. As they busied themselves making sure the decorators, caterers and everyone in charge of making my day special were on their jobs, I lounged, texting Divine and Gia to make sure they were in route.

As I was responding to them in our group thread, Bryce texted me.

Good morning baby. You will be Mrs. Hardwick in a hot minute. You ready?

Me: Good morning handsome. And HELL YEAH! Lol!

“Sheena, hair and makeup is here,” Mommy said just as Bryce texted again.

“Ok. I’m coming,” I replied as I read his message and you would swear I had the heart eyes like the emoji.

I miss you so much. I slept on your pillow.

Me: Awww that's so sweet love. I miss you too. Only a few hours to go! I love you.

I was walking through the foyer, waiting for his response when I heard, "Who you caking with? Your husband?" It was Divine as her and Gia made their way to me just as my phone went off.

I hugged them both and said, "I like the way that shit sound boo. And yes...I was caking with my husband." Her and Gia giggled.

"You ready," Gia asked as I read his message.

A few hours too long. I love you too.

"Just as ready as I am to meet my son." Like it was an invitation, her and Divine placed their hands to my belly.

"Seems like he might be excited too," Divine giggled.

"Right? Or it could be the eggs," I replied and we laughed. "Anyway, the glam squad is here. So, let's go get gorgeous girls."

"Ok. Well, I'm gonna run out and get me and Gia's dresses from the car then I'll join you two."

"Ok," I replied then me and Gia headed to my room.

By the time we made it to my room. The glam squad was already set up and ready. There were three of the six bar chairs my dad had in his mancave set up side by side. *Aunt Shaudé...down to the last detail.* Just as I was about to claim one, Divine entered the room and said, "She She, Jasmine and her mom are in the foyer waiting for you." My heart picked up its pace. Since our introduction, I hadn't been in her presence anymore. I knew that Bryce had spoken to her about the way she acted that day, but I hadn't seen or spoken a word to her since then.

When I got to the foyer, Jasmine ran to me. "Mama Sheen, are you excited? You and Daddy are getting married today!" I smiled and hugged her.

“Very excited,” I answered, glancing back at her mother. “Hey, why don’t you go find Divine and Gia so you can start getting even more gorgeous.” She squealed and started to run off but backtracked to hug Kamryn. When she had run off, the silence between Kamryn and I was awkward. Then, we both started to speak at the same time.

“Sorry. Go ahead,” she said.

“No. You go first,” I replied. She inhaled and exhaled slowly as her eyes fell to the ground then found mine again.

“First, let me say this house is beautiful.” I gave her a small smile.

“Thank you.”

“And I want to apologize. I behaved immaturely when it was crystal clear that you hold Bryce’s heart. It won’t happen again.”

“I appreciate that Kamryn. I really do.” She glanced around at the people rushing past us.

“Well, I guess I’ll get out of here. I know you have somewhere to be shortly and you should probably be getting ready.” I nodded. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you.” I wouldn’t say that Kamryn and I would be besties, but I was glad the air was clear for the sake of Jasmine and Bryce. I knew he would feel so much better knowing that the tension had been released and I was prepared to move forward and leave the drama in the past.

∞∞∞∞

It was time to get into my dress. Every face had been beat and every head of hair was laid for heaven. I was last to be done and after a thorough inspection, Jasmine came to give me one of her own. She looked absolutely adorable in the cranberry off-the-shoulder fluffy dress. “You look so pretty,” she said as she smiled at me in the mirror.

“Even before the dress,” I asked and her little head nodded as her curls danced around her shoulders. “And you my pretty princess are gorgeous.”

She giggled and said, “Thank you.” Divine stepped back into the room, letting me know that Bryce and the guys had arrived.

“Time to get into your dress mama,” Gia said, coming over with the garment bag. I was a little nervous though. Although we had taken it out enough to accommodate Bryson, you could never be too sure. I grabbed the garment bag from her and headed into the bathroom with her and Divine in tow. After they helped me into my gown, it was time to zip it up.

“Breathe She She,” Divine whispered as she took hold of the zipper and pulled it up. I closed my eyes as she slid it up with no problems.

“Wow...you look like an angel Sheena,” Gia said as she helped me place my birdcage in my hair and fix the veil. It seemed more real the moment that I saw my reflection. My eyes started to mist and just like the real best friends they were, Divine and Gia dabbed away the moisture, making sure I didn’t mess up my makeup.

“Thank you boo. Now, please don’t make me cry anymore before my man gets to see all this.” Her and Divine laughed.

“Ready Mrs. Hardwick,” Divine asked as she grabbed the doorknob to the bathroom.

“Hell yeah,” I said softly, feeling my heart flood with love and anticipation. The way I was feeling, I could run down the aisle.

She pulled the door open and I gained the attention of Jasmine, my mother, Aunt Shyla and Aunt Shaudé. “You look so beautiful baby girl,” my mother finally managed, trying to fight the emotion in her voice.

“Thank you Mommy. Please don’t cry because you’re gonna make me cry.” She dabbed at her eyes and held her hands up.

“I know I know...I’ll save it for the ceremony.”

“You really do look stunning niece,” Aunt Shaudé said and Aunt Shyla nodded.

I turned to my baby girl and said, “What says my princess?”

“Daddy might cry,” she said and we all laughed.

“You think so,” I asked and she nodded.

I winked and said, “Good that was just the look I was going for.”

“Time to have us a wedding,” Aunt Shaudé said. “And remember we are doing a light joyous bounce to the rhythm of the song down the aisle. I know it was a last-minute change, but let’s make it flow,” she said giving me a playful side-eye. “Now, let’s go get married.”

When I got to Daddy, who waited for me in the foyer leading to the backyard. The minute he laid eyes on me, he teared up. “Wow, baby girl. You look amazing. Such a beautiful bride.”

He kissed my cheek as I said, “Thank you Daddy.” Divine passed me my bouquet of roses, red and white, that were dusted with glitter to make them shimmer a little in the sun. My aunt lined us up in order and it was time. When John Legend and Jhene Aiko’s song “U Move, I Move started to play, my hand trembled a bit as I held onto my dad’s arm.

“You okay baby girl,” I peered up at him and nodded.

“I’m perfect Daddy.” When the beat kicked in, Divine lightly bounced out of the door, making me smile. It looked so good as they all filed out in such a light and cheery way. When Jasmine did her little shimmy down the aisle, dropping rose petals along the way, my heart melted as did most of our guests.

“When it was our turn, Daddy turned to me and said, “It’s time to go shut shit down baby girl. Stewart style.”

“You already know,” I replied as the guest stood to their feet and Aunt Shaudé gave me and Daddy the signal. We two-stepped down the aisle while

everybody either clapped or smiled. I laid eyes on the man of my dreams and my smile brightened a thousand watts brighter. The cranberry paisley print suit he was wearing fit him perfectly and made him even more sexy.

When Daddy and I got close to him, he walked over to meet us, extending his hand to my dad. After a firm handshake, Daddy placed my hand in Bryce's, kissed my cheek and walked to his seat next to my mother. Turning my attention back to Bryce, I smiled as I stared up at him. "You look amazing love," I whispered to him, wanting to kiss him right then. He lifted my hand and kissed it.

"And you look more gorgeous than I ever could have imagined," he replied, making me blush and horny at the same time. Before we got too deep, the officiant cleared his throat and there were a few chuckles. I smiled watching Bryce's face redden then he nodded, acknowledging the fact that we had to do this in the proper order.

The officiant began the ceremony. "Family and friends. We have gathered here today to witness the union of Bryce Jamal Hardwick and Sheena Deanne Stewart. Mr. & Mrs. Stewart, do you give this bride to be wed?" Mommy and Daddy stood together and smiled.

"We do," they said in unison then took their seats once again. When the officiant asked if there was anyone that objected to our union, I looked around, daring anybody to say a word. There was nothing and NOBODY that would stop me from becoming this man's wife. Yes, the mothers of his children, who were in attendance, and I were in a much more cordial place now, but shit...I was playing no games.

When no one objected, he continued with the ceremony then prayed and gave us words of wisdom on commitment, loyalty and how we should keep God at the center of our marriage. The entire time, Bryce's eyes never left my face, making my cheeks heat. His stare was so full of love...and lust, it was stifling. "The couple has chosen to recite their own vows, so I'm turning it over to you Bryce," the officiant said, regaining my attention.

After a hard swallow and a deep breath, Bryce said, "When I saw you at Solomon and Divine's engagement party, I knew that you were special.

Everything about you called out to me in a way I've never experienced." He bit down on his bottom lip when he started to get a bit emotional and it tugged on the strings of my heart.

"After dating you for three months, I knew I wanted you to be mine exclusively. But to be sure I waited a month longer to tell you. From talking, I knew about your past hurt. Listening to you made me realize how horrible of a man I had been. I'd crushed hearts in my past. But you...you pulled at my soul. No other woman was desirable to me after meeting you. You were and are the only woman I want. The traditional vows say that the woman should be submissive. But your spirit...your aura. My God." He took a slow breath and let it out just as slowly. "It made my spirit...my soul...want to submit to your every desire...everything you wanted from the man you loved, I was willing to give, plus some."

The emotions he was trying to hold back finally freed itself in the form of a lone tear. I reached up and swiped it away as my own emotions started to get the best of me. Placing his hand on my face, he caressed my cheek with his thumb. "You made me a better man without even trying. You made me want to be better to even consider myself worthy of your love. Having you as my wife is like a dream come true...it's like walking through the gates of heaven. You not only embraced me, but you took in my children and accepted my past relationships with graciousness and you love my kids as your own.

Hunter and Jasmine approached us and the display of love unfolding before me was almost too much. They placed their hands on top of ours and Bryce held them together. "We love you and we love our new family. They rubbed my belly then kissed our joined hands and went back to their places. It was such a beautiful moment. "You've been the missing piece to our family and I'm so happy that we found one another. I love you Sheena and I promise you forever bliss and passion... loyalty, honor, devotion and most importantly, love. You, my beautiful angel, have completed me and I look forward to spending the rest of my days as a man made whole by your love." He nodded at the officiant letting him know that he was done. I dabbed at my cheeks, trying not to rub off my makeup.

"Sheena," the officiant said, tellin me it was my turn.

I chuckled a little and said, I don't know if I can compete after such an amazing display of love from this handsome man and those beautiful babies." I smiled up at Bryce, staring into his eyes.

"You literally had me at hello. Before that if I'm being honest. I've never had someone love me a fraction of how much you do. That love breathes life into me. It covers me, shields me and makes me feel at home all at the same time. You have given me everything I wanted, including two beautiful bonus babies. I couldn't ask more of you if I wanted to because you give me so much just by being the man that you are to me. An amazing father and someone who cherishes me like a rare diamond. Bryce Jamal Hardwick, from today forward I love you unconditionally with my whole heart." I grabbed his hand and placed it on my belly so that he could feel his son moving inside of me. "You are my forever love," I managed before getting choked up. "I'm completely filled because of you." By the time I was done, we were both shedding tears.

"We're almost there you two. Can I have the rings," the officiant asked. When Solomon handed Bryce my ring, he gave it to the officiant and he prayed over it. Bryce repeated the officiant's words then slid the ring on my finger. I grabbed Bryce's ring from Divine and gave it to the officiant, he prayed then I repeated his words and put Bryce's ring on his finger.

"There's nothing more to do, so I now pronounce you husband and wife. Bryce, you can now kiss your bride." Placing his hand on the back of my neck, Bryce pulled me to him. His lips caressed mine and I couldn't wait to get our honeymoon started. Especially when he slid his tongue in my mouth.

Wrapping my arms around his waist, I was caught up in his kiss until I heard the officiant say, "I present to you Mr. and Mrs. Bryce Hardwick!" Everyone clapped and some whistles could be heard throughout the backyard.

"You stuck with me now girl," Bryce said with a huge grin that infected me as he grabbed my hand.

"I'm a lucky girl then hunh," I replied.

"We're both lucky...no, blessed."

Epilogue

1 year later

Jasmine's party hadn't even started and I was already tired. Baby girl was officially ten years old and I had asked Bryce if we could do her party at our house. All morning, I ran around like a chicken with my head cut off to get last minute gifts and the items for the swag bags for her friends while Bryce stayed home with Bryson. He was eight months old and already on the go, crawling around and pulling himself up on things, attempting to walk. Time was flying by and he was growing up so fast.

When I got home, I dropped the bags off in the foyer along with my purse and went searching for Bryce and Bryson. I got to the nursery and that's where they were at the changing table. I walked up behind Bryce and wrapped my arms around his waist, kissing his cheek. "I think Jasmine is going to have the time of her life. There is unicorn everything everywhere."

Slowly shaking his head, he rolled his eyes. "I'm sure she will. And I get to hear screaming girls all day long," he replied then leaned over and kissed my lips. "Let me get his pamper on before he baptizes us both in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." I laughed and let him go then caressed Bryce's cheek before planting a kiss on the top of his head.

"Well, I'm gonna go downstairs and make sure I get everything together. The family should be here soon. I told everybody I wanted them here before Kamryn and Jasmine arrives."

"Ok baby. Thank you for putting this together for baby girl."

"You don't have to thank me love. This was my pleasure." *For more reasons than one...*

I headed downstairs to get the last few things on my to-do list for the party done. I was just wrapping up the swag bags when Junior and Amara arrived

with my niece and nephew. Just as I was about to go to the back door to let them in, Bryce appeared with Bryson in tow. “I got it babe,” he said.

“Hey y’all,” I said, greeting all of them with a hug.

“I got Jas’s gift in the car,” Junior said. “And don’t be mad at me either.” I gave him a mean side-eye and Amara giggled.

“What did you buy Junior,” I asked, folding my arms over my chest.

“That’s between me and my niece,” he said then kissed my head before reaching for Bryson. “Come holla at your uncle nephew.” As soon as Bryson was in his arms, the doorbell rang and Bryce went to let in more of our guests who had arrived.

“He got her a Macbook,” Amara whispered when Junior lifted Bryson in the air and left the room lost in their play. My eyes widened.

“I told him that was a Christmas gift,” I replied.

“You know your brother. He’s hardheaded. Not to mention baby girl has wrapped us all around her finger.” I chuckled and shook my head because it was true. She was a ball of light and anyone in her world gravitated to her. Since me and Bryce had gotten married, my parents had worked through their differences and had gotten back together. Every chance she got, she wanted to be at their house. In their pool. The theatre room. She absolutely loved their house. And they loved having her. The kids spent time with them quite often along with Junior and Amara’s kids. I didn’t know how they did that many kids in the house at once. But they loved it just as much. Which was the reason I was afraid to see what they had gotten her. It would definitely be something to behold for sure.

“Hey Mama Sheen,” Hunter said when he walked into the room.

“Hey baby boy,” I said back as he hugged me. “Hey Patrice.”

“Hey,” she replied. Behind her came Bryce’s father and stepmother and Uncle Rick. Everybody was arriving on time like I planned. The only people

we were waiting for was my parents, Divine and Solomon and Gia and Watt and his mother, who would babysit for Jasmine sometimes.

Bryce made his way back to me and said, “Since Deon has Bryson, you might as well put me to work.” I turned and wrapped my arms around his waist.

“I’d love to put you to work but we have a house full of people love,” I said with a wink and a quick peck on the lips then giggled. “But you are more than welcomed to put these bags on the table by the door.” He chuckled and popped me on the ass.

“Keep it up and they gon’ be entertaining themselves, wondering where the hell we done disappeared to.” Before I could reply the doorbell rang again. I kissed his lips once more.

“Looks like we’re gonna have to get a raincheck on that work you wanting me to put you to. Could you get the door please?”

“Uh uh. That raincheck only good for a couple of hours. You got me out here finna embarrass myself,” he replied, adjusting himself.

“I got you daddy,” I chuckled as he grabbed all the bags and headed to the door. Everything was ready to go and I was super excited. I didn’t consider Jasmine my stepdaughter. In my eyes she was my baby. We spent a lot of time together and had grown so close. I went all out to make sure today was special. One of her gifts was a complete redo of her room in unicorn colors and décor. The other big gift was really her wishful thinking, but that wish must have been heard by God because I was almost sure he had fulfilled it. Partially at least for sure.

When Divine, Solomon and little Solé came in along with my parents and Gia and Watt, I knew it was almost time to start the party. Jasmine and her mom shouldn’t have been far behind then her friends would arrive. Bryce came to me and confirmed that when he said, “She’s here.”

“Ok baby,” I replied. “I’ll get everybody in the foyer for when she comes in. You go and meet her at the door.”

“Aight baby,” he replied. I headed to the family room where everybody was talking and mingling.

“Jasmine just got here. So, let’s go to the foyer. When she walks in, we’re yelling happy birthday Jas.”

“Gotcha sis,” Junior said and we all hurried to get in position.

The door opened and Bryce walked in in front of Jas and Kamryn. The minute she crossed the threshold, we all yelled ‘HAPPY BIRTHDAY JAS!’ The look on her face made it all worth it. She was beaming as she ran and hugged me.

“Happy birthday sweetheart,” I said and kissed her head.

“Thank you Mama Sheen.”

“You got it baby girl. Your friends should be here any minute.” She squealed then went to hug her brother then my parents and continued to make her rounds.

Bryce came over to me and said, “And that right there makes all this unicorn shit worth it.” I chuckled and wrapped my arms around him as I watched everybody fawn all over her.

“It does, doesn’t it? How would you feel if we could have another little princess?” Looking down at me, he tilted my head back by my chin and stared into my eyes.

“I would be happy to have as many babies with you as you want. Are you telling me what I think you’re telling me?” I shrugged sheepishly.

“I’m two weeks late. So, I snuck and took a test the other day when you went in to work for a little while. It was positive. Jasmine mentioned wanting a sister. So, I thought today would be the perfect day to tell everybody.”

“Tell everybody what,” Jasmine asked, in her true curious fashion. I didn’t even realize she’d made her way back to us. I peered down at her then glanced at Bryce. Everyone was looking at us at this point.

I turned to her and placed my hands on her face. “Well, remember that conversation we had? About a baby sister?” She nodded. “Well, you might get your wish. I don’t know if it’ll be a boy or girl but...you do have another baby sibling coming.”

She hugged me tight then pulled away and said, “Best birthday ever.”

“Yeah,” I asked and she nodded excitedly.

“Ummm...I’d like to think that I had something to do with it baby girl,” Bryce said and everybody laughed. I wrapped my arms around his neck and kissed his cheek.

“Yeah you did,” I said softly in his ear. “Surprise my love.” He kissed me softly on the lips as everybody clapped.

“I’m gon’ need to cash in on that raincheck quick as hell baby.”

“As soon as Jasmine’s friends get here, I’m all yours love.”

The End

Thank You!

To my Creator...every day I'm more grateful for the gift I've been given. Thank you.

To my S.I.C, Monica Walters...we did it again! Thank you for sharing your creativity with me for the world to enjoy. Every time we create...it's better than the last time. I look forward to more years of friendship and creativity.

Readers!!

Thank you for taking the time out to dive into every story and either enjoying it...or hating it. To those of you who have been rocking with me since book one...you are amazing! I appreciate you all more than you know!

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