



That's
ALL ME
JOHAN & KEIKO

CION LEE

That's All Me:

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By Cion Lee

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Prologue

September 12, 2001

Johan

“Bitch where my shit at?!”

“Rondo get the fuck out my house with all that noise!
My son in the next room! Nobody don’t have your fucking
money!”

“Bitch I don’t give a fuck! I’ll kill you and that lil nigga
if you don’t give me my fucking money that I left here! I know
yo thieving ass took it!”

The hairs on the back of my neck stood up when I heard
that threat. After I jumped in the last physical altercation
between my mom and her previous violent boyfriend I ended
up with a black eye. My dad told me to call him if any of her
other niggas got crazy because it wasn’t my place to be her
bodyguard. I just couldn’t help myself though. That was my
mama, and in my 11 year old mind any nigga could get their
round behind her.

“AHHHH!” I heard my mom scream, followed by a
gunshot. I jettted out of my room. I didn’t have a master plan
nor did I have time to think, I just knew my *mama*’s life was in

danger. I made a stop in the kitchen before running into the living room head first.

“Johan get out!” She screamed in panic as Rondo flashed his gun in her face.

My heart beat sped up. I was now in fear for both of our lives. That didn't make me want to flee, it made me want to fight. If he killed us he was going to work hard for it.

I moved quickly as I ran towards them. He obviously wasn't expecting my lil ass to get involved, so he was caught off guard when I charged at him head first. His skinny body went back and his gun flew out of his hand. Other than losing his gun, my little shove didn't impact him at all.

“YOU TRYNA GO TOE TO TOE WITH ME LIL NIGGA?” He roared before throwing a vicious punch aimed at my face. A huge perk of being much shorter than him was that I was able to easily duck and dodge that shit. If it had connected he would've knocked me out cold. My best bet was to move fast. I'd gotten into plenty of fights with other boys my age. Growing up in the St. Thomas projects meant that we learned everything early, and fighting was no exception. Sometimes there was no conflict and we would just fight each other for fun, so I knew how to fight. This was a grown ass

man though. I knew I couldn't square up with him. Since this wasn't a fair fight I had to play dirty. It was either that or let him whoop my ass and then proceed to kill my mama. My hands were tied.

“FUCKKKKKKK!” He bellowed, before collapsing to the ground dramatically. Blood quickly covered our carpet, and my mom started screaming. All the fear that I once felt had left my body and the remorse that I thought would be there was non-existent. I didn't give a fuck about what I had just done, and I found myself hoping that the knife I shoved deep into his stomach had killed the nigga.

“JOHAN WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU DO?!” My mom grabbed me up and shook me.

“Whatchu mean ma?! He had a gun to your face!”

“AND THAT WAS BETWEEN US! I TOLD YOU STAY YOUR ASS IN YOUR ROOM OR GO OUTSIDE WHEN I HAVE COMPANY! IF HE'S DEAD THEN THEY GON THROW YOUR BLACK ASS IN JAIL!”

“I don't care!!!” I shouted back. “He was going to kill you!”

“Waaaaahhhhhhh!!!”

“Fuck!” She squawked when she heard police sirens.

My mom was on the verge of tears, while I stood there emotionless. Going to jail was better than finding my mother's dead body. It was just too bad that she didn't appreciate what I'd just done.

Chapter 1

May 10, 2014

Keiko

“Keiko you know we love you...but you know the deal. School comes first. A 2.5 GPA is a requirement for the dancers and band members.” My band director, Mr. Jackson, explained. From the look on his face I could tell it hurt him to deliver this news to me. I was the first freshman he selected to

be on the dance team back in 2012. In band terms I was nothing more than a crab who had to earn the right to call myself a Dancing Diamond. That year was hard, and I had been on the verge of quitting several times thanks to some vets who went out of their way to give me and my crab sisters hell. Mr. Jackson would always talk me out of it. He would often tell me that I had the potential to be great and that nothing worth having would come easy. He was correct, because by the time my first season was over I was a fan favorite. Now that my second year on the dance team was complete people were dubbing me as the next captain. If only they knew...I didn't even have the grades to make the team, let alone be somebody's captain.

“Keiko just tell me what happened. You were a straight A student last year, and your grades in the fall were great. What changed this spring?”

I swallowed a huge lump in my throat, unsure if I should share my family's business. Mr. Jackson had become like a father figure to me, just like he was to everyone in the band and on the dance team, but he wasn't my blood. I was taught that what went on within my family stayed between my family.

“I had to get a part time job...and it was hard balancing that, school, and parade season. I would usually use my free time to study and do school work...but I didn't have free time this semester. That's why I have a 2.0.”

“Did you really *need* a part time job Keiko? You have housing here on campus, you have a meal plan, and the TOPS scholarship covers your tuition. What reason did you need mone-”

“My step-daddy went to jail!”I blurted out. “He was the sole provider for my family and without him my mom has been struggling. The money I've been giving her has been helping out a lot.”

My step father, Red, may have been a dog ass nigga that put my mother through hell, but one thing he did do well was provide. He took care of his home, and that included me and my sister even though we weren't biologically his. He came into my life when I was 13, and uprooted us straight out of the Hollygrove. His drug money no longer held any weight though. When he went away so did everything he brought us, and that included our house. My mom and my siblings stayed with her sister for about a month until she was able to get into her own place. The rent was \$1200 a month, and she was

struggling to pay that, plus take care of five kids. Before Red, my mom only had me and my sister, Kiyor. He changed that dynamic only a few years into their relationship by knocking her up four times back to back. Now we have three little brothers, and one baby sister. They were all spoiled rotten too thanks to their daddy. Honestly me and Kiyor were as well. The difference was we knew what it was like to rough it. Our younger siblings didn't know such a thing. They were in several extracurricular activities that cost a lot of money. On top of that Kiyor was in her senior year of highschool and had a huge senior budget that included the majorette team she was a part of, prom, senior vacation, and graduation. My mom had a huge load, and she never hesitated to let me and Kiyor know it. Therefore, the both of us decided to step up and get jobs. She was 18 so she got a job at Hooters. My sister had an amazing body that consisted of big boobies. She also had a sweet, outgoing personality. That resulted in her tips being very generous. I was able to get a job at a Victoria's Secret, and I would send my entire paycheck to my mama. Like Mr.Jackson mentioned, I had housing and free meals everyday. I didn't need any extra money for myself.

“Keiko,”he let out a deep breath and held his head.

“What you're doing for your mom is amazing, but I'm sure

she wouldn't approve of you failing school just to help her."

"I'm not failing."

"Damn near," he uttered. "You can't go on like this. Look at you...you look exhausted."

"I'll be fine."

"I know you love being on this dance team."

"I do." My voice cracked. Dancing in front of the band was my favorite thing to do, and the Dancing Diamonds was the main thing that attracted me to the University of Baton Rouge. I wanted nothing more than to complete my four rips on the dance team. If I got to be captain that would just be a sweet bonus. But I didn't meet the requirements to return and it was slowly breaking my heart.

"You've got the summer."

My heart beat sped up. "Huh?"

"You've got the summer to raise your GPA, and you can audition for the team and captain in August. Having a job during football season is not going to happen. I won't hesitate to put you off the team if I find out you do. There's no way you can get your education and do everything that's required of you as a Dancing Diamond in the fall if you have a job."

I nodded vehemently. I was ecstatic that I was just getting a second chance. I wasn't even thinking about how I was going to pay for summer school that started in a few weeks, or how I was going to continue helping my mother if I couldn't have a job. I had no idea what I'd just signed myself up for.

May 14, 2014

“Trust me bitch. This'll pay off.” My crab sister, Farrah, rubbed my shoulders to give me moral support.

“Easy for you to say. You're not worried about anybody seeing you here.”

“Bitch don't nobody be in this club but older niggas. I've never seen a college student here. Trust me, you gon be good.”

I focused back on the mirror and proceeded to doing my makeup. She didn't understand where I was coming from because she didn't care about being noticed. She was no

longer a Dancing Diamond and had no plans on returning because she'd transferred to Baton Rouge Community College last fall. Nothing she did here tonight could be held against her or ruin her reputation. I couldn't say the same, which is why I was giving great consideration to taking my ass home.

“And you look fine, sis!” She slapped my ass before wiggling it with both of her hands. “You might make everything you need for summer school tonight.”

“I don't know...maybe I can talk to somebody about putting me on payment plan or someth-”

“Now you know UBR don't do payment plans for the summer semester. All you need is \$2500. Bitch you better stop being scared and go make that money. I made over a thousand dollars my first night here. I bet you make more.”

“And what makes you think that?”

“Because them niggas gon love that exotic thing you got going on.”

I rolled my eyes as I inwardly cringed at the thought of being fetishized because of the Fillapino blood I had flowing through my veins. My mom was half Fillapino and half black, while my dad was fully black. Although I was predominately

black, I'd inherited my moms slanted eyes and that gave me away. People were always asking what I was mixed with and it was annoying how intrigued they were by it. They often used the word "exotic" like Farrah just had.

"And you know you know how to move that ass."

"I twerk with my friends in private. Not in front of a bunch of men," I snapped.

"Look...you seem unsure, so I'll leave you in here to make up your mind. I'ma be on the floor getting my money," she shot back before twisting out of the dressing room.

I stared at myself in the mirror and instantly felt uneasy about this. I thought about the public humiliation I would face if I were recorded shaking my ass in nothing more than a pink thong bikini and high heels. I thought about how I took on being a role model the moment I stepped in a Dancing Diamond uniform and how I not only represented myself, but the whole team. I thought about how I was here to get money for summer school so I could continue on with my journey as a Dancing Diamond, yet if somebody saw me and reported it to Mr. Jackson I'd be kicked off the dance team, totally defeating the purpose. Dancing Diamond's aside, this shit just

wasn't in me. I was scared out of my damn mind and I really didn't want to do it. Overall, it just wasn't worth it. I had too much to lose. There had to be another way, and I'd find it. I put my clothes on and got the fuck.

I kept my head low when I walked out into the parking lot because it was busy and I didn't want to be seen. Although I didn't dance, it could look like I had because I was rocking sweats with a huge duffel bag on my shoulder. I probably looked like a stripper who just finished her shift. I was almost to my car when I heard something that made me want to crawl in the sewer for the rest of the night.

“KEIKO! IS THAT YOU?!”

I had half a mind to run to my car, jump in, and pull off. However, that would make me look extremely guilty of something when I wasn't. I turned around and looked who was calling me right in the eye as they approached me. I just shook my head while I fought back the urge to smile. I was so happy I hadn't danced in that club if this nigga or anybody affiliated with him was lurking around. Ja'Keem or any of the other Martelle's I went to UBR with didn't strike me as the types that ran their mouths, but anybody in their little entourage could've been. Keem and I had gotten really cool because we

had Trigonometry together this past spring. He was the only freshman in the class, yet he helped me out several times. He'd even let me cheat on a few tests. That's why he was forever good in my book. Best of all he was still cool after I turned him down when he tried to shoot his shot. Most dudes would've been bitter, but he brushed it off like a g. That was probably because he was wickedly handsome and already had a roster full of girls. Me rejecting him was like a needle in a haystack.

“What you doing here, girl?”

“I was dropping something off to a friend.”

He smacked his teeth. “Sureee.”

“What you mean sure?! What the fuck you think I was doing?”

“Well the thong that's playing peek-a-boo is giving me a few ideas.”

“Shit,” I hissed, before pulling up my baggy UBR sweatpants. I knew I should've taken this damn bikini off, but I was in a rush.

“Times getting hard?” He guessed. He was attempting to get all in my business, but he wasn't coming across as

judgemental. I honestly couldn't see where he was going with this and that was a little scary.

“Ok...I admit I was *about* to dance, but I wasn't bout that life.”

“Not the Magnificent Dancing Diamond,”he gasped.

I smacked my teeth, before turning to walk away.

“Goodbye Keem.”

“Hold on.” He grabbed my arm.

I turned around impatiently.

“If you need money I have a proposition for you.” He pulled me over to the side of my car for more privacy, even though nobody could hear our conversation where we were.

“Keem I don't know what you have in mind bu-“

“Then just listen.” He cut me off. I hushed up, letting him have the floor. It was no use though. I already knew where he was going with this and I was prepared to say no. Keem's family was notorious in New Orleans for pushing drugs through the city, and there were rumors going around about Keem being into the same thing. There was no proof, but I was no fool. Where there was smoke there was usually fire.

“All you gotta do is get cool with this dude. Get him in a certain place at a certain time. My people will take it from there. If this goes well then the money will only get better for you.”

My eyes enlarged. I thought he was about to ask me to cook up some dope or something. It sounded like this nigga was asking me to help him set a nigga up. That was like playing Russian roulette with my life. No amount of money was worth getting involved with something so dangerous.

“You get 6k before and 6k once the job is complete.”

Suddenly all the voices telling me not to do it stopped in my head. That was my summer tuition and *then* some.

“You said all I have to do is get the dude in a certain place?”

“Yes. And don’t worry, no moves will be mad with you in the room. We’ll discuss the details somewhere more private. Whatcha say? We got a deal?” He held his hand out for me to shake.

“Well that depends on these details but I’m willing to hear you out.” I reached out to shake his hand. My heart was about to beat out of my chest, but I’d just walked away from

one way of getting fast money and I needed another. The universe had tossed this one into my lap and I couldn't let it go. Unlike stripping, nobody would know that I was doing this if I decided to go through with it.

Chapter 2

September 23, 2015

Johan

“Here you go daddy.” Taran said sweetly as she sat a plate of baked macaroni and fried fish in front of me.

“Thank you,mama.”I slapped her fat ass that was merely covered by a black thong. Damn she was fine...and if I did relationships she would be a top contender for sure.

I dug into my food knowing it would hit the spot because this wasn't the first time I'd had a home cooked meal from her. Knowing how to cook was a requirement for any female I had in rotation. I didn't do randoms because in my line of business that could be detrimental. I just stuck to the

few girls that I'd gotten to know a little bit over the years, and I had to be careful with their asses too. They couldn't come anywhere I rested my head, they couldn't know where my family stayed, when I pulled up to their houses I stayed strapped, and I never pillow talked about anything going on in my personal life or in the streets. Outside of some of my family members, I couldn't trust anybody, women included. My mama taught me that lesson early on.

“Breon I ain't going nowhere tonight! I told you Johan is in town for the week, so I'm bouta be laid up with him.”

My face immediately tightened. New Orleans had gotten a little too hot for me a few years ago. I knew some police officers that I'd grown up with and they'd put the bug in my ear about how I was being investigated for pushing drugs through the city. I knew they would come up with nothing because I was far from sloppy, and I had soldiers on the field doing the shit they were investigating me for. Just to be safe I shifted some things around with my operation and I relocated to Miami. That's where my plug, Gimoaldo, resided, and he'd been telling me to come down there and take over for years. He had just turned 46 and he was looking to retire. Outside of me being his best customer, he watched me from

afar and claimed that he wouldn't trust anybody else with what he'd built but me. He had sons, but they were all in college or already had honest careers. One of his sons was my lawyer as a matter of fact. Gimoaldo was what I aspired to be like. I was doing this shit so my kids never had to. My dad couldn't relate, but I guess he did the best he could. I was just a result of kids having a kid.

Anyway, now that the police were off my ass I still spent most of my time in Miami because that's where most of my work was. I still had an operation in New Orleans, but it was co-ran by my cousin on my mom's side, Zooley. He did such a good job that I rarely had to come here for that, but I did like coming to see my family. On top of that I just loved my city. Miami was amazing, but New Orleans would always be home and that's why it reigned supreme for me. With that being said, I still didn't like for people to know when I was in the city. The only people that needed to know were the people I personally notified. That's why I was looking at Taran sideways.

“What?” She asked, looking genuinely confused. After a few years of fucking with me you would think she'd be a little smarter.

I didn't respond to her, I just finished up my food. As soon as I was done I'd be leaving. I never planned on staying anyway. That was something else I didn't do where women were concerned; spend the night at their homes. That was the easiest way to get set up. I didn't think any of the girls I fucked with would do me like that, but I didn't put it above them bitches. Money would make a mutherfucker do anything. It was truly the root of all evil.

“Girl he must be mad I'm on the phone with you instead of giving him attention,” she giggled. My eyes shifted to the side because that was the furthest thing from the truth. I came here for wet pussy and a home cooked meal, not her for love and affection.

“What's wrong with you daddy?” She wrapped her arms around me after ending her call.

“Go head Taran,” I brushed her off. “Cause you blowing it.”

She pouted. “What did I do?”

“Telling random ass people I'm in New Orleans. You should know better.”

“Johan, that wasn’t a random. That was my bestfriend since Pre-K and she teaches 3rd grade math, who the fuck is she going to tell that you’re in town? She doesn’t even know you outside of being the nigga I’m crazy over.”

“Yea, that’s what you think,” I mumbled. Always expecting the worst kept me on my toes. Keeping my guard up helped me dodge so much shit in the streets, so that wasn’t changing.

“I’m tired of you not trusting me,” she complained.

“I’m tired of you taking it personal,” I chuckled. “I keep telling you I don’t trust *nobody* down to my own maw. Shit sometimes ion trust myself. Get out yo feelings, girl.”

“I’m not in my feelings,” she rolled her eyes. “I know how you are. I do wish you’d spend the night with me at least once though.”

I let out a heavy sigh, quickly deciding not to even entertain that. She had to know that was never going to happen if it hadn’t happened yet. I was saved by the bell, as my phone started ringing across the table. It was my cousin Ja’Keem, and I hoped this was the call I’d been waiting on. Yea this trip to New Orleans was mostly for pleasure, but I had some business to attend to as well.

“Wassup, nigga? You in the city?”

“Yea. I’ma swing by y’all before I leave.”

Ja’Keem and my other younger cousins Jigga, Julian, Jamaya, and Juri all attended the University of Baton Rouge. I was proud of all of them for staying out of the streets...well, minus Keem. But the fact that he even bothered with college was a clear sign that he wasn’t in this shit for the long haul and that was refreshing.

“Perfect because you gotta swing by anyway.”

“Oh yea?”

“Yea. You still tryna handle that situation. Cause I got somebody on it.”

“Who? I need to know who this somebody is.”

He laughed. “I knew you would, but it’s the person I always use so it’s all good. I’ll send you her location anyway though. You can go see her today if you want to. Just pull up.”

“Will do.”

I was in the process of trying to locate somebody who used to work for me. He got arrested because he was caught with weed on him. He didn’t even have enough on him for 10 years and he was singing like a church choir. Thankfully all

the claims he made couldn't be proven, but he still was the one who sprung the investigation on me. For that reason alone he had to be dealt with. That nigga thought he could hide in BR. He just didn't know that nowhere in Louisiana was safe as long as I was alive. Now I just needed to go see this girl and make sure she knew what the fuck she was doing.

September 24, 2015

Keiko

“Great practice girls! We just need to clean up that transition in the field show! Be ready to run that routine into the ground tomorrow.” I said before dismissing practice.

Sometimes it was hard to believe that I ran a squad that had been around for 45 years, but being a two year captain really tripped me out. My first year as captain was so good that

Mr. Jackson named me captain again this season with no formal audition. Only two other Dancing Diamonds could say that and they were 80's and 90's Diamonds. I was the first Dancing Diamond from the 21st century to be a two year captain, and I was beyond proud of myself. I was kind of sad that my tenure with the Mighty Marching Tigers was coming to an end, but I felt fulfilled because I got to have a full experience. Everybody couldn't say that. For example, I'd started out with six crab sisters, and now I only had three with me for our final rip. We were holding it down for our sisters though.

I was also looking forward to handing the reins over to Brooklyn next year. Just last week Mr. Jackson asked me who I thought should be captain once me and my crab sisters left and I didn't have to think about it. Brooklyn was the obvious choice. Not only was she one of the best dancers on the team but she was a natural leader. To say she was from New York she adapted to the Southern style of dancing with no

problems.

“Keiko!” Brooke called out to me as I was gathering my things.

”What’s up?”

“What are we wearing for the game on Saturday? This is about to be tmi, but my period just came down and it’s heavy. I don’t think I can handle a french cut uniform.”

I laughed hysterically because the Diamonds were historically known for wearing French cut uniforms ever since we’d debuted in 1970. It was extremely sexy and borderline risque, but that was what the founder had in mind when we were created. Anyways, I loved the french cut uniforms, but a con was that we couldn’t wear underwear with them. Only tights. My period being down was never an issue because I would just use playtex tampons, but a tampon couldn’t save everybody. Thankfully we had several other uniforms that were regular leotards, dance briefs, tights, skirts, and shorts.

“I haven’t even thought about what we’re wearing this weekend to be honest. You can pick out a uniform.” I said, throwing her a huge bone that most captains didn’t throw juniors. If anything I should’ve let one of my crab sisters do something like this if I wasn’t feeling up to it, but I liked giving Brooke captain-like duties because it was prepping her

for what was to come next year. I had put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into this team and I wanted the greatness to continue once I was long gone.

Her eyes lit up. "I got you captain. See you tomorrow."

I walked out of the dance gym and I saw Keem's white Range Rover parked in the front. I knew it was about business but I wasn't with him parking in front of the dance gym like this. Bitches loved talking about what they thought they knew or what they thought they saw. I could just see a messy situation in the making and I had way too much on my plate to deal with anything extra.

Keem blew his horn at me and I marched over ready to go off on his dumb ass.

"Nigga what I told you bout par-," my words trailed off when I saw that I wasn't speaking to Keem. Tinted windows were the devil.

"Who the fuck is you?"

He looked at me as if I caught him off guard, before chuckling, "I'm Johan, Keem's cousin and Jordan's son."

I had to admit that Johan was very attractive. He looked a lot like his dad and he even had those green eyes that seemed to run in the family. His lips were almost too pretty for a boy and he shared his dad's honey-like skin color. What made him

stand out from the family was his long dreads and beard. His Gold Jesus Piece and Rolex on his wrist shined next to his simple YSL tee and blue jeans. Although he was fresh and handsome, I wasn't moved. I needed to know why the fuck he was here and who had the audacity to send him my location like I knew him.

“Ok so who sent you?”

“Keem.”

“For what?” I questioned with a stank face.

“We gon talk about that in a more private setting. Get in” he urged.

“Nigga ion know you!” I snapped.

“Bitc-” he caught himself, before chuckling. “You already failing this test.”

“I don't give a fuck about some fake ass test you created in your head. Once again, I don't know you nor do I work for you! And tell Keem I'ma see him about sending a random ass nigga here. I don't give a fuck if you do have the same blood pumping through your veins as him.”

The corners of his cheeks turned up. He was amused? Me clicking out on him was comical? Maybe I needed to turn

the heat up on his ass forreal.

“Girl I don’t know your duck ass either, but if you want to get paid I suggest you get your bird ass in the car. You may have talked to Keem about this particular job, but I’m the reason this muthafucker exists in the first place. Shit I’m probably the reason most of your missions existed. You the random, not *me*.”

“Excuse me?” I scoffed.

I felt a light tap to my shoulder.

“What?!” I snapped, while turning around. All four of my freshman babies looked at me with wide eyes like they were terrified. In my opinion I was an all around captain. I was a mama bear to them and guided them in the right direction with dance and school because they were younger than me, and I was a leader so that was my job. But everything wasn’t always shits and giggles. My crabbing experience was tough, so I wasn’t making shit easy for them. I hadn’t made it easy for my 2014 crabs either. Pressure built Diamonds.

“What do y’all want?” I asked hastily because they still hadn’t said anything.

“Uhhh you forgot to ask us exit questions and we don’t want to run 10 extra laps tomorrow.”

“Oh yea,” I remembered. It was tradition for each crab to answer a question about the Dancing Diamond’s history after each practice. If they didn’t they would have to run extra laps the next day. It didn’t matter if I was the one who forgot to ask because they had the responsibility to remind me. They had just done exactly what they were supposed to do.

“Kyra, who was the first Dancing Diamond captain?” I asked my first crab in line.

“Betty Johnson,” she answered right away.

“Megan what was the name of the first uniform we wore?”

“Traditional purple.”

“Charm, who created the strut?”

“Tracy Linkford.”

“And Sasha...you better get this right since you got the last one wrong,” I threatened. I could sniff the fear out on her and I hated that. I was going to build this girl’s confidence up if it was the last thing I did. She was the youngest at 17 and so unsure of herself, but she was an exceptional dancer with a

face that turned heads. “Name the other two year captains that came before me.”

“Uhhhh,” she looked up, before looking back at me.

“Fallon Bethune was the first.”

“Correct. Who else?”

“Cassie Gregory was the second.”

“Mhmm. Who else?”

“Ummmm...you of course and uhhh, that’s it. I think.”

“You think?” I stared at her intently.

“Yea,” she nodded vehemently.

“That’s right. Be more sure of yourself next time or I’m making you do high kicks until your legs give out,” I smiled at her before winking. “Bye y’all. See y’all tomorrow and don’t forget to bring a new stand in.”

They all said bye and walked off. I turned back to Johan and he was looking at the time on his phone as if he were annoyed.

“Are you done playing 21 questions? Nigga not tryna play with you all night.”

“You lucky I’m even getting in this car. I could’ve had something to do,” I argued, as I slid in his truck and closed the door.

“Man direct me to your house cause I’m not discussing shit in a car.”

“My house?!” I exclaimed. “Oh baby, fuck no!”

“Well where do you suggest we go?”

“I could eat.” I crossed my arms.

“You think I want to discuss business at a restaurant?”

“You think I wanted to discuss business in a place where I rest my head?”

He stared at me for a moment as if he were in deep thought.

“What?” I snapped.

“I’m really not feeling you.”

“Ditto. Let’s go to The Gregory. They have private rooms. I’m sure the nigga that’s cutting my check can afford one,” I sneered.

He gave me the same look he gave me before, but this time my coochie responded. It had been a *long* time since she'd reacted that way for a nigga.

“Problem?” I questioned while returning his glare.

“Nah, we can go there Ming Lee.”

My eyes split into two evil slits.

“You don't need to make them eyes no smaller than what they already are.”

“Fuck you,” I flipped him off, resulting in him laughing.

Johan

“We actually were able to get you a private room available Mr. Martelle. Right this way,” the waitress said after appearing from the back. I knew she'd find something after I waived a rack in her face. Before that she was talking a bunch of shit about a reservation, now she was smiling at me like I was her long lost cousin. Money really made the world go round.

I gestured for Keiko to go ahead of me. I would've liked to say it was because I was a gentleman, but I really wanted to take a good look at that body again. She was taller than most chicks, and if I had to guess I'd say she was about 5'8. That was still short compared to me because I was 6'4, but she had legs for days. Since she just got out of dance practice everything was on full display. Her sports bra revealed the abs in her tight stomach. Her ass cheeks were playing peek-a-boo in her tight black shorts, and her sharp hips were clear as day. Her booty wasn't huge, but it was poking something serious. To top it all off she was a straight 10 in the face. Everything about her was beautiful from her warm and golden skin color, to her high way eyes, her pretty little lips, and the beauty mark on her left cheek. On the outside she was solid, but the inside was flaw as fuck for obvious reasons. It was easy to see how she could trick a simple nigga. Most men fell victim to a nice body and a pretty face.

After we had been seated and somebody came to take our drink orders, I got right down to business, while she scanned her menu.

“So tell me what you got on Bron.”

“I met him at the club last Saturday night. We’ve been talking all week, and he wants to link this weekend. Is that what all this was about? Cause I could’ve told this to Keem and he could’ve told you.”

I leaned forward, entering her personal space. “Do I have to remind you who’s paying you 20k for this job?”

I thought she’d be intimidated and back up, but she shocked me by moving in closer. “Well according to you you’ve paid me before, and yet this is the first time you’ve ever gotten this involved. I’ve never seen you before today.”

“This one is a little more personal to me.”

“Gotcha.” She nodded. “But he wants to come to my place and of course that’s not happening, so I’m gonna go to his house.”

“You got his address? Man if you don’t gimme that shit now,” I demanded. It made no sense to go through the dramatics of setting this nigga up if she already had his location.

“Sherlock if I had the lo I would’ve given it to Keem and collected my money. This nigga is paranoid and it shows in the way he moves. He’s going to pick me up from SU’s

campus and then bring me to his house. I guess I can share my location before I get in the car and then delete the messages. Please don't text me after that."

"C'mon," I smacked my teeth. "I ain't new to this shit. But why is he picking you up from SU campus? Don't you go to UBR?"

"To him my name is Jackie and I go to Southern University, and my dream is to be a dancing doll," she said in a totally different voice. She went from the typical New Orleans hood rat to a Opelousas country bumpkin.

"And where are you from?" I asked, trying my luck.

"Bogalusa."

Close enough.

"And how did you know what club to find him at?"

"Keem got a tip about the places he goes to. I was planning on trying them all until I found him. I got lucky with the first club. I didn't even have to approach him. I just put myself in his line of vision and he saw me. Of course he wanted to know why I was by myself, and I made up some bullshit about how my friends had ditched me. Suddenly he wanted to be my savior. That shit works every time with these

niggas. He brought me back to SU where we talked in the parking lot of a dorm that he thinks I stay in.”

“He didn’t watch you go into the building?”

“Of course he did, that’s why I waited until a group of girls were walking in so I could enter with them. I waited in the lobby until I was sure he pulled off.”

“Wait...how did you get to the club?”

“Uber. I always take a cab or uber. Never my own car.”

“How the fuck these niggas don’t be regonizing you? Ain’t you a popular dancer or something?”

She laughed. “That was one of my concerns when I first got into this, but the niggas y’all be wanting touched are always older and out of touch. They don’t know shit about colleges or dance teams to recognize me. Just to be on the safe side I disguise myself really well. You’ll see this weekend.”

“Mannn, whatever,” I shook my head, as I caught chills. Females like her were useful when it came to shit like this, but it terrified me to think that I could fall victim to a shiesty ass bitch like this. She was a perfect example of why I kept my guard up. “So this Saturday right?”

“Hell no. This Sunday.”

“Man I’m going back to Miami on Sunday.”

“Well go back on Monday. I have a game to dance at on Saturday night.”

“Fuck that game, bruh.”

“No fuck you! I’m the captain and it’s my last year. I ain’t missing no performance for yo ass. If you can’t make it on Sunday then send somebody else who can.”

Her attitude was so nasty, I had the urge to pop her in her mouth...or stick something in it. She probably would’ve liked that.

“Alright bruh, Sunday it is.” I relented, while silently dreading that I now had to eat dinner with this bird.

Chapter 3

September 27, 2015

Johan

Keem- Everything A1?

My patience dropped another level when I viewed the text message because I was expecting it to be somebody else. Everything was not A1. Keiko had told me she was getting ready to go to SU's campus an hour and a half ago. Baton Rouge wasn't that fucking big. If this girl had gotten herself popped and let this nigga know that we were on to him I was going to dig her back up from the grave he'd put her and kill her again for fucking this up. My hands were *itching*. That's how badly I wanted to pull the trigger and kill this nigga.

I'm getting annoyed. I replied, strategically keeping it vague.

Keem- Nigga relax,lol. She got this. You just make sure she's good.

I didn't have to read between the lines to know that he was telling me to make sure Keiko walked away untouched, but that was up to her. She'd already put a bad taste in my mouth, and now she was making me wait, so babysitting her was my last priority. Now I was sure Keem had to be fucking this bitch, but if she pulled any funny shit then I was popping her. I didn't care what Keem had going on with her.

"*She better make sure she's good,*" I muttered, opting not to text Keem back. Just as I was about to do one of the

things she'd instructed me not to do, I received a text message from a familiar number.

225-921-2000 has shared their location with you.

Excitement ran through my body, as I started my car up. Now the fun could finally begin.

Keiko

“Welcome to my casa,” Bron voiced as we entered his small home in East Baton Rouge. I was sort of relieved to see that he lived in the hood because I didn't have to worry about cameras or the police actually caring enough to dig and find out what happened to him. Ever since I'd started doing this I constantly had worries that something could be traced back to me. I'd go out of my way to cover my tracks but that didn't stop the paranoia, or maybe it was my guilty conscience. Whatever it was, the money kept me going. This was my highest paying job yet, and I was so close to the finish line that I could feel the money in my hands. This money combined with my savings was enough for me to fall back *if* I wanted to.

“You have a nice place,” I said in my fake country accent. I had encountered a few girls who were from Bogalusa at UBR, so I had the accent down perfectly.

“You think so? It was my grandma’s, but she died last year. The family was trying to sell this place but they had me fucked up.”

I guess so, your scary ass needed a place to hide, I thought to myself.

“Make yourself comfortable.” He gestured towards the couch. I hadn’t been lying. Although small, the house was nice and tidy. Now that I was really taking everything in, it did have a feminine touch from the brown color scheme to the family pictures on the wall. From the living I could see straight down the hallway to the back of the house and a back door was there. I had to get him away from the living room and I had to get to the back door.

“Can I get you something beautiful?”

“Hmmm, do you have any wine?”

“Hell no,” he chortled. “I got some Jack Daniels, Crown, and Hennessy.”

“You have mixers right?”

“Well I usually drink my shit straight, but I think I got some cranberry juice and lemonade in there.”

“Well do you think you can fix me some cranberry juice and crown while I go use the bathroom?”

“I got you beautiful. The bathroom is at the end of the hall.”

Jackpot.

“Ok cool,” I stood up with my purse.

He immediately raised a skeptical eyebrow that made my heart drop, but my poker face was in full effect.

“You need your bag to use the bathroom?”

“I sure do. My mama always told me a lady carries her purse everywhere she goes.” My mom had never told me that shit, but my grandma had.

“What you think I’ma rob you or something? I look like a bum?” He laughed.

“Hey, all I know is that I’ve known you for a week.”

“I feel you,” he nodded. “Just do me a favor and leave ya phone on the table.”

“Excuse me?” I scoffed.

I pretended like I was offended when I really could care less. Clearly his gut was telling him something and it wasn't steering him wrong. Yet he was still going against what he felt deep inside because he'd accepted me into his home. He obviously wasn't that bright.

“Don't take it personally baby, but just like you said you don't know me, I don't know you either. Leave your phone right there on the table for me, beautiful. I hope that's not a problem.”

I shrugged, before digging in my bag and retrieving my phone. “Nope, not a problem at all. It's just a weird request, that's all.”

“Not weird for a nigga like me, but I'm not surprised that a sheltered girl from the country doesn't understand.”

“I'm not sheltered!” I exclaimed defensively.

“You grew up on a farm in Bogalusa, shawty.” He smirked.

“Bogalusa has a lot of hood parts for your information.” I huffed, sounding like the ultimate square. That's what I was going for. I wanted him to think I was the greenest bitch alive.

That would make pulling the wool over his eyes a piece of cake.

“Man get the fuck outta here,”he roared with laughter while standing up. “I’m finna go fix our drinks.”

“Alright, I’m going to the bathroom.”

He watched me walk down the hall and into the bathroom, so I couldn’t unlock the door first like I wanted to. While I was in the bathroom, I pulled my burner iphone out of my purse and texted Johan that the back door would be unlocked. I also told him to wait ten minutes before coming in. I always brought a burner phone and a decoy phone on every mission. My real phone that was attached to my real identity was back at my apartment. I turned my burner phone off, put it back in my purse, and then I stripped out of my dress leaving me in a black lace bodysuit. I gave myself a once over in the mirror and I was elated because I didn’t recognize myself. The body makeup I’d worn for the evening had me looking three shades lighter than what I really was, the blonde wig I donned was passable for a sew in, and the expensive green contacts I had in looked all natural. I wasn’t Keiko at all anymore.

I poked my head out of the bathroom and down the hall before exiting to make sure the coast was clear. When I saw

that it was I hurried and unlocked the back door. Lucky for me it was a basic lock. I didn't have time to deal with something complicated. Usually I had more time on a mission and I'd be able to scope out a vic's house before shit hit the fan. But this was a rush job which meant almost everything was done on a whim. I hated it because it could be detrimental for me if I wasn't on my p's and q's. The extra money I was receiving for this job would make it all worth it in the end.

As I was walking down the hall, Bron was stepping back into the living room with two cups. There was no way I was drinking anything I hadn't watched him pour. As I entered the living room, his eyes were glued to me and his mouth hung open. Not to sound cocky, but I had a feeling he wasn't used to dealing with women like me. It wasn't because he was funny looking because I knew some ugly niggas who could pull baddies. Bron just came off as eager with me and he didn't hide it well. Like right now he was looking at me like I was his guardian angel. He wasn't used to this kind of attention.

“Damn, all this for me baby?” He asked while sitting back.

“You said you wanted to see me dance right?” I straddled him on the couch. I sat my bag and my dress down

next to us.

“I ain’t think I was gon’ be blessed with a dance this early on.”

“Well it’s your lucky day,” I pecked his lips sensually.
“Turn on some music.”

I didn’t have to tell him twice. He picked up the remote to his tv and got straight to it while I planted kisses all over his jaw and neckline. He was relaxing more and more by the minute. I had him right where I wanted him. When Rihanna filled the room, I climbed from his lap and got ready to put on a show. I even picked up the drink he’d made me and took a fake swig for good measure.

“The mood is set,uh huh! So you already know what’s next, uh huh ah! TV on blast, turn it down, turn it down Don’t want it to clash with my body screaming out, no-o-o. I know you hearin’ it, hu-u-uh. You got me moanin’ now. I got a secret that I wanna show you, oh. I got secrets I’mma drop ‘em to the floor, oh. No teasin’, you waited long enough. Go deep, I’mma throw it at you can you catch it? Don’t hold back, you know I like it rough. Know I’m feelin’ you ,huh, know you liking it,huh . So why you standin’ over there witcha clothes on. Baby strip down for me, go on take

‘em off, Don’t worry baby, I’mma meet you half way. Cause I know you wanna see me....’

I danced like it was the 5th quarter at a football game and I had the eyes of a massive crowd on me. This dance was 10 times more provocative than what I did in the bleachers with the band, but the same sex appeal was there. Working a crowd while dancing took the same amount of energy as working one person. Your presence had to be through the roof, the eye contact had to be strong, and your dancing had to be on point. I checked off all three boxes with ease. This shit was effortless for me and I meant that in the most humblest way possible.

“Damn baby, it’s no reason why you shouldn’t be a dancing doll. You probably shitting on all them hoes.”

For a moment I was confused until I remembered that I’d told this clown that I auditioned for dolls but didn’t make it. In actuality the dolls had never been on my radar. They were a great team but they were too damn prissy for me. Ironically, I probably would have made their team if I’d actually cared to try out.

I didn’t respond to his attempt to gas me up, I just looked back and smiled while popping my ass to the floor in a

circular motion. I couldn't help but think that I would've been a good stripper if I wasn't such a pussy. Then again, I couldn't be too much of a pussy if I was doing shit like this. I was giving a criminal a private dance while waiting on a big time drug dealer to bust in and kill him. Yea, this was definitely more outrageous but I'd become desensitized to it.

“Bring yo sexy ass over here.” He beckoned me with his finger. I obliged because I caught something out of my peripheral vision. If it hadn't been for that I would've been oblivious just like Bron, because the music was drowning out the sound the back door would've made. That had been my ulterior motive all along. If Bron was as paranoid as I thought he had to have a gun close by hiding somewhere. I didn't want to give him a chance to reach for it.

As I climbed into his lap I stuck my tongue into his mouth and kissed him nastily. I grinded against the tent in his pants, while he played with my ass. He was enjoying himself, but then I felt his body grow stiff. He pushed me off of him and tried to frantically reach for something, but a powerful voice made him freeze up.

“Don't even reach for that bitch.” Johan gritted.

“Oh my God!” I gasped while scurrying to the other side of the couch as if I was scared for my life. I’m not going to lie, the sight of Johan holding a gun to Bron’s head did give me goosebumps.

“Run Jackie!” Bron shouted frantically.

Johan laughed hysterically. “Damn nigga...you bouta go out as a snitch and a dumb ass nigga.”

“BANG! BANG! BANG!”

Johan shot him in the head *three* times. I looked away after the first shot because blood splattered everywhere. By the third shot, I was grabbing my shit.

“Let’s go!” Johan rushed, as I slipped my dress back over my head. “Shit I almost thought this nigga had a white bitch in here. You was bouta get popped too. Hurry up, man.”

“I’m coming!” I replied as I slipped my Tory Burch flip flops on. When I grabbed my decoy phone off the table, he’d already started walking towards the back door while making a call. He said “clean up” before ending the call, so it was pretty self explanatory. I practically ran after him because I did not want to get left here, and I had a feeling he would if push came to shove.

“Nice work.” He said as I caught up with him. He had a look of approval in his eyes, but his vibe still screamed that he didn’t like me. Deep down I was a softy so I liked to be cool with everybody, but life had turned me into a tough bitch. As of now I could care less why Johan didn’t like me because I wasn’t trying to be liked. I was trying to get paid, and I’d fully accomplished that tonight. Mission complete.

Chapter 4

October 2, 2015

Johan

Outside.

I assumed she had to be waiting by the door, because a few seconds after I sent that text message Keiko was twisting outside. She must’ve been doing school work because she had

nerdy reading glasses on. Those glasses would've looked goofy on anybody else, but they made her look sexy. The white half shirt, red booty shorts, and white and black knee high socks she had on didn't hurt either. Her physical beauty was really unmatched. I found myself thinking how did she even get wrapped up in all this shit. Surely she had other options for money. Then again maybe this is what she wanted to do. I'd been in the streets since I was a teen and I saw first hand that some people just wanted to be down in any way possible. Maybe this was Keiko's way.

“Wassup,” she grumbled as she climbed into my truck.

“You good?” I questioned in derision. I hadn't even said two words to this hoe, so I knew I wasn't the cause for the nasty attitude she had.

“No, not really,” she rolled her eyes. “I'll take my money now.”

I looked at her to gauge if she was dead ass right now.

“What?” She snapped with wide eyes.

“I'm tryna see what's up with all the animosity. We got beef?”

“I meannn, I’m a little annoyed that I had to wait a whole week to get the rest of my money.”

Okay so maybe that was a legit reason for her to be mad. I could’ve sworn I had 20k on me on the night of the set up, and I would’ve if I hadn’t given my mom five thousand two days before. I meant to replace the money before the mission but I never did. I promised Keiko I’d get her the rest of her money by the end of the week. It was now Friday and I was here, so she needed to chill.

“Alright, and I already apologized for that.” I reached under the seat and retrieved an envelope with her money in it, before handing it over. “I always keep my word, love.”

“Yea, yea. We’ll see once I count it.”

“Girl what the fuck I look like shortchanging you on five thousand dollars? That ain’t shit to me!”

“Shhhhhh,” she held a finger up to my face as she counted. I had the urge to slap it down, but I was in the wrong here for not having her money on time, so I let her blatant disrespect slide. She wasn’t going to get any more passes though...

After counting through the money she looked up in confusion.

“You know there’s 10 thousand dollars in here right?”

The fact that she’d mentioned that to me was surprising. I thought she’d gloss over it as if she was getting over on me.

“Well I can count, so yea, I know.”

She squinted her eyes at me before rolling them. “I was just trying to see why there was extra money in here smart ass.”

“Consider it a bonus.”

I really just felt bad that she didn’t get all her money when it was promised to her, but I didn’t want to express that.

“I appreciate it.”

I thought for sure the extra money would make her smile, but she still looked annoyed.

“Damn you still mad over the money being late?” I came out and asked.

“To be honest I was never really mad with you about the money being late. Annoyed? Yes. Mad? Not really, because I

knew I was going to get it. I do know some of your damn family. It wouldn't be that hard to track you down."

"They would never tell you my whereabouts."

"Maybe not, but somebody was going to pay up."

"I guess, man. So whatchu mad about then?"

I had no idea why I was inquiring about why she was upset. I should've been sending her on her way, but now I was intrigued. I also just saw a big scene back at Ja'Keem's apartment that had me curious.

"I'm bestfriends with a stupid ass bitch," she vented harshly.

"Damn, don't hold back nah."

She let out a small laugh, finally showcasing her pretty smile.

"I'm serious. This dumb hoe was tweeting about me and Ja'Keem like I fuck with him or something. Then she said he picked me up from practice today when he didn't. She just be pulling shit out her ass."

"That's interesting."

Her face twisted up dramatically. “And how the fuck is that interesting?”

“Because I just left Keem’s apartment and his girl saw those same tweets. She thinks y’all are messing around. I even lied and told Milla that I picked you up from practice today just to help him out.”

I downplayed the situation big time. Keem’s girlfriend had pulled up to his crib, jumped his ass with her friends, and caused an entire scene. I would never divulge all my blood’s business like that though.

“UGHHH!” Keiko threw her head into her hands. “Now I’m going to have drama over a dumb ass misunderstanding.”

“Is it really a misunderstanding though?”

“Fucking right! I don’t mess with Keem! Never have, never will. That’s really the bro.”

“I know bukoo girls that call niggas they bro but be fucking them behind closed doors.”

“I’m not one of those bitches! Somebody did pick me up from practice in a Range Rover today but it wasn’t Keem! I’m grown, so I have no reason to lie!”

“Alright,” I chuckled. “Calm down. I just don’t see how your best friend could think you’re messing with somebody when you claim you’re not. You gotta understand why that might look sus to some people.”

“I’m not in the business of proving shit to other people. I know the truth.”

“That’s cute Keiko,” I laughed. “But don’t dodge my question.”

“You asked me something? Because I missed it.”

“Alright, smart ass,” I threw her insult that was aimed at me back at her. “Let me rephrase. Why does your bestfriend think you’re fucking Keem?”

“Because ever since I’ve started working for y’all family we’ve spent more time together. Sometimes he’ll pull up here or to the band hall. She honestly just assumed, and I didn’t correct her immediately because what could I say? It wasn’t like I could tell her the truth.”

That was a plausible explanation, but I still wasn’t ruling out the possibility of her and Keem fucking around. Shit if I was Keem I would’ve been fucking her 24/7.

“Ohhh, okay. I got you.”

“Do you really?”

“Why? I thought you wasn’t in the business of proving shit to people?”

“You the one who made yourself smart by digging into my business in the first place.”

“Girl you got in my car like you wanted to fight. I couldn’t help but ask.”

“Ya know what, let me get out of your car cause you blowing it.”

“Yea go head cause I don’t need to be sitting out here with you anyway.”

She was halfway out the truck, but when I said that she paused and turned back to me. “Johan I’d never bite the hand that feeds me.”

“And I’m sure I’m not the only nigga out here that’s willing to feed you. Go head and go back inside.”

For a second I thought I saw hurt overcome her face, but she quickly masked it with an attitude. She exited my car, slammed the door, and strutted off back to her apartment. I watched her go inside before I left.



October 5, 2015

Keiko

“Bestie you killed that shit,” my friend Janae sang me praises as we sat in the union. I was eating Popeyes while she and my other friend Manny watched my team and I groove to the band’s rendition of Take You Down by Chris Brown from the past weekend. The video was getting a lot of attention but I was trying my hardest not to buy into the hype and all the social media praise I was getting. If I did my head would blow up into the size of a large balloon.

“How many times you gon’ watch that?” I asked. I was annoyed to the tenth power and still holding a grudge from her tweets on Friday. I probably should’ve been keeping my distance from her, but that was a challenge considering we lived in an apartment together.

“As many times as I want to, mean hoe,” she scoffed before laughing. Her language was vulgar, but she sounded prim and proper. Janae was from New Orleans like me but she’d lived in the suburbs her entire life and her demeanor

reflected that. Her voice was similar to a valley girl and she was spoiled rotten. Her parents funded her entire lifestyle since freshman year. Some people often questioned how we were close friends because we were complete opposites, but we were put together as roommates our freshman year and the rest was history.

“Are you still mad about that twitter thing Keeks?” Our other roommate Manny questioned in a voice that made me want to gauge her eyes out. Unlike Janae, Manny was putting on a show. She grew up in the hood, went to school in the hood, and I’d known her for most of my life because we attended elementary school together. This new Hilary Banks persona she’d adopted was so fake and it irritated the hell out of me. Although Manny had been my friend first and I’d introduced her to Janae, I felt like they’d been closer to each other for the past two years. I didn’t care either. Sure these were my friends, but I had girls I considered sisters on the dance team. So I wasn’t jealous of Manny and Janae’s relationship. I guess they just understood each other better than I did.

“Girl *please* don’t call me Keeks,” I asserted. “And of course I’m still mad. I feel like people have been looking at

me sideways since Friday and it's all because of this hoe." I pointed at Janae.

"How was I supposed to know that wasn't Keem's car on Friday? He has one just like it."

"Bitch even if it was him why would you tweet that bullshit about me messing with him when you've never seen us interact on that level? And you *know* that boy made it official with Camilla."

"Oh please!" She sneered. "Keem is a Martelle which means they don't take relationships seriously. He wouldn't be the first in that family to juggle two women at the same time openly."

That's when it finally hit me. Janae could be super cool one minute and then super vindictive the next. I usually didn't care how she moved, but she wasn't about to do it at my expense.

"Janae I know you're salty about Julian moving on and all, but that don't have shit to do with nobody else. For all we know Keem is being faithful to his girlfriend. And if he isn't I'm not the bitch he's cheating with. Stop projecting your shit on to others," I responded sternly.

“Excuse me! I’m so not worried about Julian. I have him on lock for the next 18 years.”

All I could do was shake my head because my friend who supposedly held herself to high standards sounded like the ultimate bird brain. For three years Janae had been Julian Martelle’s main chick and she basked in that glory. It was just too bad she was never his *only* chick. She’d try to throw her weight around, but Julian didn’t care about the relationship, so her antics to scare him straight weren’t effective. A few months back she broke up with him for the hundredth time because he got caught cheating for the millionth time. This time it backfired because when school started he met somebody else. He seemed to be really into her even though she was just a freshman. Janae’s position in his life went from girlfriend, to fuck buddy, to non-existent thanks to the infamous Felisha. Just last week we found out Janae earned the new title of baby mama. At first she was talking about getting rid of it and I 100% supported that decision. It was our senior year, Janae was a cheerleader, and she didn’t need to permanently attach herself to a man that wanted nothing to do with her. But of course Manny came with her opinion and Janae ate it up. Now she was keeping a baby for all the wrong reasons, but that was none of my business. As a friend I tried

to do my part and tell her the real, but it went in one ear and out the other.

“And as soon as he gets drafted to the NBA you gon be set for life,”Manny clapped excitedly.

“Exactly,”Janae smirked, before looking back at me. “Now back to you. I still think you’ve messed with Keem before. Anytime I’ve made little comments about y’all in the past you’ve never set me straight. You would just smile and shit.”

“Girl I don’t care what you think. I’m telling you what it is now. I don’t fuck with that nigga.”

“As in present tense. What? Are you in your feelings about Camilla? You look way better than her friend.”

I took a deep breath to stop myself from going off. Just as I was about to dig into Janae’s hard headed ass, two people plopped down at our table with us. I definitely didn’t want to get into anything at school because I had a rep to protect and I didn’t want to get expelled, but I wasn’t ducking no action either. A bitch would never be able to say that she punked me.

“What’s up?” I asked hastily. The look on Camilla’s pretty face appeared to be neutral but I knew better. Based on

the way she invited herself to our table I knew she wasn't coming at me on some respectful shit, so I was addressing her accordingly.

“You tell me,” she shot back, while sliding her phone to me. I kissed my teeth because it was Janae's tweets from Friday. She was showing me that shit like I hadn't already seen it.

“Girl, I don't have time for this childish shit.” I responded carelessly.

“Well bitch talk to your friend, because she tweeted that childish shit,” Daisy butted in. She was one of Camilla's best friends, and she just so happened to be in a fresh relationship with Julian's big brother and Keem's older cousin, Jigga. He was a senior along with me and a football star. I don't know if these bitches were smelling themselves because they were dating the most popular boys on campus or what, but I had better shit to do with my time.

“She doesn't have to tell me anything. I was just calling it how I saw it,” Janae spewed, pissing me off. I only had an attitude because of the way Camilla approached me, but I didn't want this girl thinking I was actually messing with her man.

“And she saw it wrong,” I corrected right away, while shooting daggers at Janae. “Keem’s cousin Johan came and got me from practice.”

I decided to carry on with the lie because Johan had already started it, and besides, I didn’t want to divulge who actually came to pick me up. I mean I could’ve because it was no biggie. I just didn’t want to.

“Which is nasty, by the way. How you gone fuck with Keem, then fuck with his cousin?” Janae quizzed. At that point I wanted to slap her stupid ass because she was still running with her own tired ass narrative. I needed to dismiss her ASAP.

“You know what?! Manny and Janae, I’ll meet ya’ll in African American studies, okay?!”

Manny appeared offended. “Why? Like literally I didn’t even do anything.”

Camilla rolled her eyes at Manny’s response and I felt her reaction on a personal level. Camilla had gone to high school with Manny in New Orleans, so she knew this wasn’t the real her as well. At least she didn’t have to deal with this fake shit 24/7.

“Can ya’ll just go, so I can tell her what I got to say?!”

I snapped. They both scoffed, but they got up, grabbed their shit, and stomped off.

“Your friend gotta go too,” I nodded my head towards Daisy.

Daisy lowered her eyebrows. “Keiko, you know my name.”

I did know her name because we had some classes together in the past, and I always thought she was cool until today. I wasn’t even mad with her though. She was just riding for her friend. I wished my girls could relate. Instead they insisted on making me look like a side chick. Well it was really just Janae, but Manny’s ass just sat there and watched it happen. I wasn’t feeling either one of them at the moment.

“Daisy, can you please give us a minute,” Milla said while touching her shoulder.

Daisy rolled her eyes dramatically but stood up. “I’ll be at Popeyes.”

When she was gone, Camilla gave me her full attention.

“I don’t appreciate ya’ll coming over here, causing a scene.” I said while nodding my head to the left where people were watching us like we were must see tv. Some people even had their phones out, as if we would actually fight. That wasn’t happening. At least not here in public.

“Keiko, I don’t respect Janae tweeting some shit like that. I know you know that we’re together, and she does too. That shit was out of line. Especially since you and Keem both are saying it ain’t true.”

“Because, bitch, it ain’t. I respect whatever ya’ll have going on. I’m not looking for a nigga, but if I was, I would get an available one.” I said, setting the record straight. She seemed to be believing what I was saying, but of course she had more questions and I didn’t blame her. Even I had to admit that this shit looked *bad*.

“Keem said you work for him. That’s true?”

I let out a deep sigh before focusing on Camilla. “I work for the family when they need me, yes. He didn’t tell you what I did, did he?”

“No, he didn’t.”

I instantly felt relieved, but I saw the curiosity on her face. She wanted to know what I did specifically, but that was a question that would never get answered. If she asked she'd be wasting her precious breath.

“That’s why Janae thinks we mess around. I can’t tell her I work for Keem’s family. She assumed I messed with him last year, and she’s still holding on to those assumptions. When she saw Johan picking me up in a similar Range Rover as Keem’s she automatically thought that it was him, and ran with it.”

Ok so I was still carrying on Johan’s lie, but it didn’t matter. The bigger picture here was that Keem did not pick me up from practice. That was the truth.

“So, are you fucking with Johan?” She asked. I immediately frowned. I couldn’t even see myself fucking with his mean ass.

“No, he was paying me yesterday, and that’s why he picked me up. I asked him not to park in front of the dance room. I knew muthafuckas would think I was messing with Keem, because they have the same truck with tinted windows.”

More lies. But Johan had started them. Technically Johan did pull up yesterday to pay me. There was some partial truth in the mix of what I was telling Camilla.

“But I’ve never messed with Keem, and I don’t intend on fucking with Johan,” I further explained. “He’s not exactly my type.”

She laughed as if what I was saying was insane. I guess the idea of a female not wanting anything to do with a Martelle was difficult for her to grasp since she was in love with one.

“You a lesbian, or something?” She jested.

I didn’t answer because she had gotten a little warm. I put my hand under my chin and gazed at her with a light smile. I watched her shift around in her chair as she gathered her stuff and stood up. I’d successfully made her uncomfortable. Now she could leave and stop asking me questions about *my* personal business.

“Thanks for the info.” She said as parting words.

“Oh anytime,” I waved, still smiling. I was glad we could clear that up. After that conversation the Keem topic could be buried for all eternity.

October 10, 2015

Johan

“THAT’S MY BABY!!!” My Auntie Jenesha screamed as Jigga made a touchdown. I couldn’t make every one of his or Julian’s games, but I made sure I carved out time in my schedule for the important ones. Homecoming was definitely an important one, and the packed stadium showcased that.

“They got this in the bag tonight,” Julian boasted. With sports I didn’t like counting anyone out, but I had to agree with my lil cousin. Jigga was in beast mode tonight and scoring touch down after touch down. When he played like this he was unbeatable. He also had a solid team backing him

up. He and his right hand Day Day had been feeding off of each other all night. They were really a dynamic duo on the field.

“That’s the Steelers Coach on the field next to Coach Jackson,” Keem pointed out.

“Oh my God,” Auntie Jenesha clutched her chest. I laughed because she was acting all surprised for nothing. Everybody knew Jigga was headed to the NFL in the spring. He could’ve been in the NFL two years ago, but he wanted to do all four years in college. I felt like his mom had something to do with that, but it wasn’t a bad decision. It was actually good that he’d have something to fall back on if anything went wrong with his professional football career.

“Y’all know the Steelers are my baby’s dream team,” she went on.

“Well he looks impressed with what he sees,” Uncle Jamal said. He was my dad’s older brother and Keem and Jamaya’s father. In total my grandma had three sons. From oldest to youngest there was Justin Sr, Jamal, and my father, Jordan. Justin Sr. is Justin Jr aka Jigga, Julian, and Juri’s father, but he was killed back in 1997. I saw a shift in my father after that. He was never quite the same.

“Baby Keiko is cutting *up*,” Juri said while looking over to the right. Hearing her name made me look in that direction as well. I’d been to plenty of UBR games but I never paid attention to the dancers. I enjoyed hearing the band, but I never really looked at their asses either. I came to watch the damn game. When I laid my eyes on what Juri was praising I felt so stupid for never paying attention. Keiko was in the bleachers popping her pelvis in a baby blue and purple high cut bodysuit that was covered in rhinestones. The skin tone tights she was wearing made her body look extra smooth and perfect. Her hair was up in a bun with a silver sequins headband showing off her pretty face. She looked like a real Diamond. On top of looking good, she danced even better. Her looks definitely didn’t get her into the position she was in because as I observed closely I noticed the whole squad was pretty. Keiko just stood out from them naturally. She just had *it*.

At the end of one of the songs I couldn’t stop my eyes from widening as she lifted her leg up effortlessly while standing up. Her thigh was damn near touching her ears and she didn’t crack a smile. Suddenly nasty thoughts entered my mind as I wondered if she could do all that with a dick in her...

“Our dancers are good, huh?” Jamaya asked, breaking me out of my trance.

“Obviously. That nigga stuck,” Keem’s best friend Tori replied. In response to him everybody shared a laugh.

“As long as you not looking at my girl,” he went on. That’s when I realized that the girl he’d recently made his girlfriend was dancing right behind Keiko. Brooklyn was cute, but she wasn’t fucking with Keiko.

“I ain’t worried ‘bout none of them children over there,” I said.

“Children? Everybody over there is around our age,” Juri argued.

“I rest my case.” I said with finality, making everyone laugh. I wasn’t that much older than them at 27 years old, but it felt like a lifetime. In my experiences girls in their late teens or early 20’s were usually bird brains. So I really wasn’t worried about nobody on that dance team. I just enjoyed watching Keiko. I was a man before anything else and she looked good.

I struggled watching the rest of the game because my eyes kept shifting back to Keiko. In the end it didn’t matter

because UBR won like we'd all predicted earlier on. The football team left, but the 5th quarter commenced. 5th quarter was when the band and dancers would stay behind and put on a show while battling the rival band and their dance team. I would usually leave my family behind and go to my car around this time so I could beat the traffic getting off campus. This time I followed my family over to the band. Now I was in the crowd that stood directly in front of the dance team as the band played songs back to back. Keiko didn't look phased by all the eyes on her nor did she seem tired. She just led her squad like a natural born leader. I think what was drawing me to her the most in that moment was her confidence. Her sex appeal was the cherry on top.

When the band director told them it was time to go she stood up with her hands on her hips and strutted off. Her girls followed her in perfect synchronization. Before she turned to exit the bleachers she looked directly at me and winked while wearing a smirk. Had she seen me watching her the whole time? I definitely didn't want her to know that I was scoping her out. I could see her getting the wrong idea now.

When I got back to my car I decided to text her so I could nip whatever thoughts were running through her head in

the bud.

Me-I see why you was hard up about not missing your game when we first met. You a beast at what you do.

When she responded I was knee deep in game traffic. That meant I had time to entertain the foolishness she'd replied with.

Keiko- I'm glad I turned you into a fan tonight. I'm sure this won't be your last time watching me. I have countless videos on YouTube for you to check out as well.

Me- You could just say thankyou. Chill out with that fan shit. I'm not a fan of nobody, love.

Keiko- Well there's a first time for everything. I saw how you were watching me tonight. You couldn't even look away. Nothing's wrong with being a fan of someone you admire.

Me- You blowing it son.

Keiko- Jtfo, I'm fucking with you but you gotta admit you was all up in my face. I was trying so hard not to make eye contact with you.

Me- Why? You was scared?

Keiko- Lmao, fuck no. If I looked at you I would've started laughing, and I can't break character while I'm dancing.

Me- Nah I think you was scared.

Keiko- That would make you feel better huh?

I started to smile, but a horn blowing made my face tighten. I looked up and noticed the traffic had moved slightly. I stuck a middle finger out the window, even though I was in the wrong.

Me- You waited until it was time to leave to look my way. It ain't about what I feel, it's about what your actions portrayed.

Keiko- Alright Johan. I'm not finna go back and forth with you. I got shit to do.

Me- Like?

Keiko- Getting out of this band hall so I can go finish my homework and study.

Me- Ain't its homecoming weekend?

Keiko- Yup. Which means school is still in full effect and my graduation is coming up in the spring.

Me- That's wassup. But I'm not buying what you selling. Yo nigga must be making you come inside.

Keiko- Actually my bitch is not controlling like that. She wants to go out. I want to stay in.

I almost dropped my phone when that message popped up on the thread. She had a girlfriend? I definitely didn't see that shit coming. Now I was wondering if she was a true blue lesbian or a bitch who was in between dicks and settling for pussy for the time being. It really wasn't my business, but she had piqued my interest. She had been doing that since the day I met her. I guess I was taking too long to respond because she double texted.

Keiko- Now who's scared? lmaooo.

Me- Did you say that shit for shock value? Or are you serious?

Keiko- Serious as a heart attack.

Me- So you got a girlfriend?

Keiko- No I'm single.

Me- Now I'm confused.

Keiko- Why? Do you have a girlfriend?

Me- No.

Keiko- Do you have a girl that you spend a lot of time with and sleep with from time to time?

Me- Maybe.

Keiko- Well then. It shouldn't be confusing. I'm single, but I have a special friend like you. You probably have a few special friends.

Me- I plead the fifth.

Keiko- I'm sure that's not the first time you had to do that.

Me- Man bye. Witcha gay ass.

Keiko- Lmao, grow up.

Me- I will when you stop eating pussy.

Keiko- As much shit as you're talking I bet you would love to taste my gay ass pussy, but I wouldn't even let you near it. Bye-bye!

My dick jumped. That sounded like a challenge to me and I was competitive by nature. We would cross paths again in the future. I didn't know where or when, but I made a vow

to make her eat those words up. Or perhaps I would make her eat this dick up. The possibilities were endless.

Me- Alright, we gon see carpet muncher.

Chapter 5

October 22, 2015

Keiko

“Girl can you back up!” I shrieked, while moving my face away from Farrah’s lips. I was trying to do school work but she wanted to be all over me. Unless it was my younger siblings, I hated too much affection with a passion. You would think she would understand that after almost four years of friendship.

“Why do you never want to kiss me?” She asked, looking visibly sad. I avoided looking at her face because she really knew how to make me feel guilty.

“I kiss you all the time. What are you talking about?”

“Keiko the only time you have no problem kissing me is when we’re fucking.”

That’s the only time it makes sense to kiss you, I thought to myself while trying to shield my aggravation. Lately Farrah had been complaining a lot and it made me regret the turn our relationship had taken last year. I met Farrah my freshman year at UBR on the dance team. We made the team together for the first time so that made us crab sisters. We had been the closest that year because we were the only two from New Orleans so we automatically had a lot in common. Although she didn’t return to the dance team our sophomore year we still remained close. Over the last summer we got closer than usual. For her birthday in July she got an air bnb and hosted a fantasy party. Between the drinks, sex talk, and wild games, it was a pretty interesting night. But things didn’t escalate until the rest of her guests left. Farrah had asked me to stay at the air bnb with her weeks before, so that was always the plan. I don’t think me or her predicted that we’d be in her bed having sex. All I could remember was us being extremely drunk and when she kissed me I didn’t back down. It wasn’t like that was my first experience with another

girl. I'd been there before a couple of times. It just wasn't with someone I considered a friend. That complicated things, which was why I tried to pretend like nothing happened the next morning. Farrah wasn't having that at all. She cornered me in the bathroom and ate my pussy like it was a supper plate. After that she made it clear that she wanted to continue having a sexual relationship. I voiced how I didn't want our friendship to take a hit if things went left, but she countered by saying we were mature enough to handle it. I knew I could handle a relationship where sex was the main focus but it wasn't me I was concerned about. I hadn't had a real romantic relationship since my senior year of high school with my ex boyfriend. After he broke my heart I just wanted to have fun, but it seemed like the people I'd enlist for some fun always got carried away. That's why Farrah felt like a breath of fresh air. We could shop together, get our nails and toes done, gossip, and then have sex with no problems. It felt too good to be true...that's why I should've known better. Good things never lasted, and maybe Farrah had *been* suffering in silence because her complaints were getting louder and louder.

“Do you ever think about what we could be in the future?”

See. I knew that shit was coming and there it was. She talked a good game and put on a brave face, but she wanted more. They always did.

“To be honest I just enjoy life for what it is now. Why get all worked up over the future?”

I was definitely dodging the question because I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I knew what she *wanted* to hear, but I wasn't about to lie.

“Keiko you know what the fuck I mean. Can you see us being together forreal? Like not sneaking around to fuck and being open with our love? I mean you won't even admit out loud that you're a lesbian.”

“Ok, ok, hold up!” I stopped her. “First off, I'm not a lesbian. I *love* dick. You can't erase a part of who I am just to appease yourself. You want to label yourself as a lesbian? That's cool because that's how God made you. But he didn't make me that way Farrah. I just do whatever makes me happy and I don't believe in labels. If anything I'm sexually fluid. Secondly, everybody knows that we're close friends. Why do we have to tell them what we do in private? That's our business. I came into this thinking we were just getting our rocks off whenever we needed to because that's how you put

it. But we're crab sisters and *friends*. And if you want a straight up answer then no, I can't see us being together forreal."

Farrah looked crushed, but she quickly responded. I knew that was her way of trying to appear unbothered.

"Whatever Keiko, I still say you're in denial. If you love dick so much then why haven't you fucked a man since freshman year?"

"You know what I went through with Desmon, that's why," I replied, seeing no need to elaborate. Desmon was my ex boyfriend and although we'd broken up before I started going to college, we still fucked around during that entire year. That was until he gave me Chlamydia and had a baby with a girl he told me not to worry about. Farrah knew what the fuck happened because she and the rest of crab sisters helped me get through it.

"So are you never going to allow yourself to love again because some dumb nigga didn't know how to treat you?"

"I have no problem with loving someone again, Farrah. It's just going to be on my terms. Not yours, or anybody else's. But I'm bouta get ready to go," I announced as I looked at the time on my Cartier watch that she'd gifted me with. Farrah

was a shopaholic and a generous soul, so that resulted in her always giving me nice things. She'd gone from being a lowkey stripper to one of the most popular in Louisiana. Her money was *long* and the house she owned in Baton Rouge with the white Range Rover in the driveway reflected that. Whenever I wanted to get away from Janae and Manny I'd come to Farrah's house for peace, but lately she'd been the same level of annoying as them. It was time for me to start making some changes in my life, and I needed to start with some of the people I had in it.

“Yea, go ahead and go,” she chided while climbing off the bed. I guess she wanted to start making changes too, because she normally would have begged me to stay.

October 30, 2015

Johan

“Yea I had to stop at the mall to cop me some tennis shoes , but I'ma be on my way right after that,” I explained as I

entered Lakeside mall. I couldn't believe I was in New Orleans for the second time this month, but Zooley's birthday brought me out this time. As usual he was having a Halloween party, and this year it was going to be at V-Live so I knew it was about to be lit. The downside was having to show up in costume because I wasn't trying to look stupid. I gave Taran the task of finding me a costume and she picked out a 70's pimp. I could definitely work with that.

“You better be, cause I then cooked all this food for you.”

“Grams you cook big meals everyday. I doubt you cooked just for me today, but I'm still coming,” I chuckled.

“Alright...your mama might be stopping by to get a plate too.”

I was silent for a moment.

“That's fine, Grams. You don't have to tell me who's coming to your house. You telling me my mama coming like she the opp or something,” I laughed.

“The opp?”

“My beef.”

“Shit that's how you treat her. I just had to make sure.”

“I take good care of my mama. I definitely don’t treat her like the opps.”

All of my opps were 6ft under, but I wouldn’t say that over the phone or to my grandmother.

“Making sure someone is good financially is way different then having a real relationship with them. Life is too short baby, you need to go ahead and forgive your mama. I know she feels bad about everything that’s happened and she’s changed so much.”

“A wise woman once told me that you have to deal with the consequences of your actions.”

“Don’t use my words against me child,”she scolded.

“See how your words can come back and bite?”I teased.

“JoJo I’m serious, baby. Just really *talk* to your mom and try to spend some time with her.”

“Since when you became her biggest advocate? I remember when you didn’t care for her at all.”

My Gram’s was extremely protective over her three sons and her grandkids, so if she felt like anybody was doing them wrong they were automatically on her shit list. When I was coming up my grandma didn’t hide the fact that she thought

my mom was a shitty parent. When I went to juvie for stabbing her abusive boyfriend that was really the nail in my mother's coffin. My dad's entire side hated her as a collective. That's why it was weird to see how my grandma had started tolerating her. Even my dad didn't seem to hate her the way he used to, although he had zero contact with her now. He felt like since I was grown they no longer had to attempt to co-parent anymore and I didn't disagree with that logic.

“It's called moving on and not living with hate in your heart, baby.”

“There's no hate in my heart. I love my mom. I just know where I stand with her and I'm cool with that.”

“Well I guess I can't make you forgive somebody. Hell I'm still mad that you had to sit in jail when you were a baby over a nigga she brought around you.”

“Man I'm not even mad about that. I did what I had to do. I'm mad that she continued seeing the nigga after that. It's whatever though.”

“It's not no whatever. It's okay to admit that things hurt you, baby.”

“Alright grandma, I'm finna walk in footlocker.”

“Ok, I get it. I’ll drop it,” she laughed. “See you in a few. Love you.”

“Love you too, Grams.”

I already knew what I was coming to get out of Footlocker, so there was no need to browse. I asked a worker to get me a size 11 and a half in classic all white G-Nikes. I wasn’t sure if pimps were rocking those in the 70’s, but that’s what I was wearing with my shit tomorrow.

“Can we pleaseee get the new jordans?”

“Ryan I already told you we were here for new school shoes. The new Jordans are not all black.”

That voice made me look up. The familiarity got my attention, but the tone she was carrying really drew me in. Keiko sounded like a parent, and considering she had four smaller kids around her maybe that wasn’t far fetched. Now I felt like I’d jumped the gun on pre-judging her. Everybody had a story, and most people didn’t do reckless shit without a valid reason being behind it. I guess my life experiences had tainted the way I thought.

“But you said we could get whatever we wanted!” A different little boy spoke up.

“That’s when we were in party city getting y’all costumes. Now I’m done with this conversation cause I already told y’all don’t ask me for nothing when we get in this store, and look at y’all.”

Yep. She was definitely their mom. My mom used to hit me with the same bullshit line when I was a kid.

“Ughhhh!” The youngest boy stomped his feet.

“Riley chill out,” Keiko gritted, before stopping the same sales lady I’d spoken to. She was so busy that she hadn’t even gone to the back yet to get my shoes. She told the lady the shoes she wanted with the kids’ sizes. She was getting them all black Roshes. That was a smart choice because the shoes were nice looking, comfortable, and on the cheaper side for Nike’s.

“Excuse me,” I quietly stopped the sales lady as she walked past me.

“Yea?” She looked up at me with a flirty smile. By habit I smiled back.

“I want you to put all of that lady’s shoes on my tab, and add the Air Jordan 1’s in the same sizes she just gave you.”

“Ok, and is this a secret?”

“Nah, but wait until I leave to tell her.”

“You got it.”

Keiko

“Oh no, there must be a mistake,” I said as the sales lady tried to hand me four large bags. “For starters, I didn’t get these many shoes, they didn’t even try on the shoes I did ask for, and I didn’t purchase anything yet.”

“I know, some guy told me to put your stuff on his tab. He also told me to throw the new Jordans in as well.”

My head bounced back. “What guy?!”

“You didn’t notice him?”

I shook my head no.

“Hmmp, well he sure noticed you girl. He was trade, too. Long brown dreadlocks, warm skin complexion, *pretty* white smile, and gorgeous green eyes. Whew! God bless his parents.”

After she said long brown dreadlocks I didn't need to hear anymore details. I knew exactly who'd purchased the shoes. How he got past me to do it was what I wanted to know.

“OUUUU! You got us the Jordans KiKi?” Ryan exclaimed, unable to contain his excitement. He was my mom's oldest boy and his father's junior. Not only did he have his daddy's name, he also had his daddy's ways. If he wanted something he just had to have it. Just a few seconds ago he was booted up because I'd told him no, but now he was all smiles along with our other two little brothers, Reign and Riley. The look on their faces was the only reason why I wasn't going to return the shoes.

“He left already?” I asked while standing up with my baby sister Royalty in my arms. Since I was usually away at school she'd cling to me whenever I was home. She was only four so in my eyes she was still a baby and I adored everything about her. She was like a mini me, and unlike my brothers who looked just like their dad with a sprinkle of my mom, Royalty looked just like me, Kiyor, and our mother.

“He just walked out. If you leave now you should be able to catch him.”

“Perfect. Thank you. C'mon boys, let's go,” I instructed.

When I walked out of Footlocker I turned my head to the left and right, but I didn't see him. I concluded that I missed him, but I wasn't disappointed. I had his number after all.

"KiKi I'm hungry and thirsty," Royalty uttered through yawns.

"Really? Cause I think you tired Ro," I laughed, before looking down at the boys.

"What y'all want to eat?"

"CANES!" They all shouted together.

"Wow that's so surprising," I replied in sarcasm. "You want that too, Ro?"

She nodded her head while laying her head on my shoulder.

As expected, the Canes' line was super long. I was thinking about giving Ryan the money and letting them order their own food while I watched from a nearby table. That's when the person I'd just been looking for walked past me. Sitting down was no longer a concern of mine.

"Y'all stay right here in this line and don't move," I said to my brothers before I speed walked to Johan and tapped

his shoulder.

A small grin overcame his face when he turned around and saw me. A strange feeling took over my belly.

“Wassup?” He nodded.

“I was bouta ask you the same thing. I can afford to give my family nice things, yea.”

“Good for you. What you telling me for?”

My head cocked to the side at the audacity he had. “I’m telling you because you took it upon yourself to buy their shoes. You even bought them Jordans.”

“I think the word you’re looking for is thankyou. The rest of the stuff you’re talking about is irrelevant.”

I was about to curse him out, but Royalty’s yawns stopped me in my tracks.

“Wassup pretty girl,”he spoke to Royalty. She waved at him shyly when she was far from it. “Tell your mama to relax and accept favors without back talk.”

My cheeks hiked up as I broke out into giggles. He thought my siblings were my kids? Now that was hilarious.

“Her my sister, not my mama.” Royalty replied. See what I mean? Not shy at all. I was thinking about having some fun for a little while and letting him think his assumptions were true, but lies never lasted around small children.

“Johan, you think it’s possible for me to have four kids while being a full time student at a university that’s out of town?” I questioned while laughing.

“Girl I ain’t even take all that into consideration. I just saw you in mommy mode and assumed.”

“Well, I guess I am their second mom so they’re my babies, too.”

“That’s wassup. I wasn’t trying to over step when I bought the tennis. I just heard your lil brother asking and wanted to do something nice. I remember what it was like to be told no.”

Now I felt bad for not saying thank you from the jump. He had done something generous and I was jumping down his throat.

“These kids are spoiled,” I rolled my eyes. “They rarely hear no from me. That’s why it’s a big deal whenever they do. I just treated them to Jordans last month. But thank you Johan.

That was really nice of you.” I turned to my brothers. “Ryan, Reign, and Riley come say thank you to Mr.Johan.”

“Girl you making me feel old. Them children can call me Johan,”he laughed.

What was supposed to be a short introduction turned into a conversation about tennis shoes when Ryan complimented the rare Jordan’s Johan was wearing. He was only eight and he was already morphing into a sneakerhead. Then the topic switched over to sports and videogames where Reign and Riley eagerly joined in. I found myself being confused while thinking how I could cut this short without being rude. Royalty jumped in and saved me the trouble.

“Kiki I hungryyyy,”she whined.

“Kiki?”Johan sniggered. “Isn’t that precious.”

“Shut up,”I hissed.

“I want my Canes,”Royalty pouted.

“Let me get it,”Johan volunteered. “Y’all go sit down.”

“Johan that’s not necessary I can ge-”

He cut me off. “Ryan, come with me to get the food.”

“Okay!” Ryan agreed eagerly. Something was telling me that he thought he had a new best friend. Wherever Ryan went, Reign and Riley would go too, so of course they followed them to the Canes line. I took Royalty to an empty table and sat down with her still in my lap. I watched my brothers carry on with Johan like they were old buddies and I was in awe. My siblings never took to outsiders that fast, and I didn’t know Johan could be this nice. This was a different side of him that I wasn’t aware of, but I liked it and I wasn’t opposed to seeing more of it.

When they returned with the food Ryan had made himself smart by asking Johan to eat with us. Of course he said yes, but all the excessive talking ceased when they started eating. I guess they were really hungry because their mouths weren’t taking any breaks. Even Royalty was now wide awake as she ate her chicken fingers.

“You sure she not yours?” Johan asked. He glanced at Royalty and then gazed up into my eyes.

“I’m positive. I watched my mom carry her for nine months and I was at the hospital when she was born.”

“Y’all look so much alike it’s scary.”

I laughed. “You should see my mom and my other little sister. If this is scary then you’d be terrified.”

“Strong genetics. I get it. So you have five siblings?”

“Yea.”

“And they all close in age?”

“Sort of, but not completely. My other sister is two years younger than me. My mom started having kids again when I was thirteen with my step dad. Ryan is 8, Reign is 7, Riley is 6, and Royalty is 4.”

“Damn...at least she gave herself a small break after Riley.”

“Royalty makes five next month so she didn’t really take a break. After three boys back to back she wanted to be done for good, but I guess God was like nah.”

“Nah it sounds like your step daddy was determined,”he chuckled.

“That too,”I giggled.

“Can I ask you something a little personal?”

“I don’t know...”I eyed him skeptically.

“It’s nothing too crazy,”he claimed.

“Alright, let’s hear it.”

“You said you were like their second mother, so my question is why?”

I understood what he meant. My siblings had two real parents, so the fact that I did a lot for them and put their needs before my own could confuse some people if they didn’t know my family dynamic.

“Their father is not around, so I do all I can to help my mom out.”

I wasn’t about to go into full detail because nobody had time for a sob story.

“That’s real, Kiki. I know your mom appreciates all you do.”

“Please don’t call me Kiki,” I scorned.

“Why not? We call you Kiki,” Riley butted in with a mouth full.

“Yea, why not?” Johan questioned in a teasing way.

“My family calls me Kiki. Nobody else.”

“Well that changes today. I like Kiki better than Keiko. It fits you.”

I smacked my teeth. “Boy ain’t nothing special about the name Kiki. Hell there’s a Kiki in every ghetto in the United States. It’s common.”

“Exactly. That’s why I like it.”

“Wow, so now I’m common?”

He burst into laughter. “Chill. I ain’t say that. You far from common, love.”

I wanted to dig deeper, but I wasn’t sure if I was ready for that with these kids here. Even if the kids weren’t here I probably wouldn’t be ready. He was making me feel a way I hadn’t felt since highschool with my ex and that was scary. I didn’t even know if what I was feeling would be reciprocated. He was probably only being this nice because my siblings were present. It was best that I didn’t get carried away by overthinking all of this.

An hour and a half later I was entering my mom’s townhouse and I instantly regretted eating at the mall because I smelled gumbo. I was definitely gaining about five pounds before I returned to school for the week.

“We back mama,” I announced when I entered the kitchen. My mom’s three bedroom townhouse was a far cry from the East Over home we once lived in, but it was still nice. Then once my mom added her special touch it looked beautiful. My mom still had her job in banquets but this was the time of the year where they made a lot of money, so she was doing well and in a good mood because of it. She moved around the kitchen with a natural glow because she bore no makeup. Her curly and silky hair was up in a slick bun. She rocked a tight maxi dress that showed off her curvaceous body. She had a little gut, but with a booty as large as hers with titties to match no one ever noticed. My mom was a Blasian baddie, and if I looked anything like her in 20 years then I had a lot to look forward to.

“I heard y’all come in. They found Halloween costumes?”

“Yea, and it didn’t even take them that long. We went to Footlocker too and got them some new school shoes.”

“Now Keiko you did not have to do that. Now I’d never stop you from doing nice things for your siblings, but I told you to let them wear them fucked up shoes for the rest of the year. They always want to be rough on shit and then expect

somebody to buy them something new. You could've given me that money you spent today and I could've paid a bill with it or something. Actually, what you need to do is focus on school and leave whatever you're doing for money alone before it bites you in the ass. Cause I don't know who you think you fooling but I know you don't have a regular 9 to 5. It's impossible with you being a full time student and a Dancing Diamond.”

I sighed heavily because she was being difficult for no reason. When I first started working for Keem I never sent my mom large sums of money at once because I didn't want her to grow alarmed. By the time the fall semester of school started for my junior year she was asking me questions about where the money was coming from. I just lied and told her I had an on campus job. I knew she didn't buy it, but that didn't stop her from asking for money or accepting it. That's why her rants would go in one ear and out the other.

“Mama what's done is done. Just say thank you,” I replied, before walking off. I didn't want to engage in the discussion anymore because I could never tell my mom what I was doing for money.

As I was walking to Royalty's room to lay down, I checked my phone for recent messages. I had put it on do not disturb during my last class earlier today.

Farrah: I'm sorry Keiko. Can we just forgot that I ever brought that dumb shit up? I really don't want to lose our friendship over this.

After days of not talking I honestly thought she didn't want to be my friend anymore. I didn't want to lose Farrah as a friend either, and that was the exact reason I planned on scrapping the sexual part of our relationship. It couldn't go on because she'd continue to get the wrong idea.

Kiyor: Bitch come with me to this Halloween party tomorrow at Republic. I know yo boring, grandma ass in the city.

I laughed because my sister's mouth was so reckless. She would always say that I acted like an old lady because I never went out. She just didn't get it though. Between being a mass communications major and being on a very demanding dance team, I was always tired. Partying rarely fitted into my schedule. Perhaps I'd make an exception for tomorrow night. I'd finished all my homework on Thursday and I had no tests for the upcoming week.

Manny: So there's a Halloween B-day bash at Republic tomorrow. This nigga is popular so I know it's going to be litty. Come with my pleaseee, friend!

Okay, that's it. I was sold. I guess me, Manny, and Kiyor were going to this Halloween party. Now I needed to find a sexy ass costume. I went to check the final message on my phone and I instantly smiled.

Johan: Y'all made it home safely?

Me: Yea we just got in. Thanks again.

Johan: Anytime, and I mean that too.

My heart skipped a beat. I already knew I was playing with something that wasn't safe.

Chapter 6

October 31, 2015

Johan

“I think somebody want yo’ attention,” my lil cousin Zane chuckled while nodding his head in Taran’s direction. She was doing some fake gay shit by grinding her ass on her bestfriend’s pussy, but she was locking eyes with me. Although they both looked good in their barely there maid costumes, I wasn’t impressed. They actually looked goofy, especially Taran because she was vying for my attention. I released a small laugh and looked back out into the crowd from our section. My cousin’s 27th birthday party was in full swing and as usual, the city came out in droves. Although Zooley wasn’t a Martelle his name still held weight in New Orleans, so niggas and bitches wanted to rub elbows with him. I was here because he was my day 1, and every year we got older was worth celebrating together because it was a miracle that we’d even made it this far.

I felt someone tap his shoulder and I automatically knew it was a female. A nigga would never. I would bet money that it was a female I had fucked too.

“Heyyy Johan,”Deva cheesed when I turned around. She leaned in for a half hug, and I returned it with no qualms.

My assumption was correct, only I was still actively fucking her. My last visit to New Orleans was our most recent hookup. She was the definition of easy going, unlike Tara. I still favored Tara more because her pussy gripped a little tighter. Other than that they were really one in the same. Even down to their appearances. They were both pretty light brown girls with stacked bodies. I didn't necessarily have a type when it came to baddies though. Any flavor was fine by me.

“Wassup De? You showing out tonight, huh?” I asked while holding her and observing her costume...if I could even call it that. She was dressed as a dark angel but she just wore black lace panties with a matching bra, fishnet stockings, patent leather knee high boots, and black wings. I couldn't say she didn't look good, and several niggas were watching her big booty.

“Hey, I was like why not go all out? I see you got into the spirit, too. I like this costume.”

“Good because I picked it out.”

Taran shocked the hell out of me. She popped up from the other end of the section out of nowhere, and she'd never done anything like this before. This wasn't the first time two or more females that I'd been fucking had been in the same

place at the same time. Taran *always* kept her cool to the point where I'd think she could care less, so I was confused as to why she had something to say now.

“Okayyy?” Deva’s eyes wandered in confusion.

“Congratulations, you did a good job.”

I stifled laughter. That shit was funny, but I knew it'd be childish if I fed into it. This was lowkey entertaining though, even Zane and his brother Diamond were tuned in with big smiles on their faces. We really needed to grow up.

“So Johan, are we getting a hotel tonight or are you coming by me?” Deva questioned while looking me in my eyes. It was cute that she thought I was choosing her tonight. Hell I didn't even know if I was choosing Taran.

“Girl, what makes you think he's ending his night with yo toe up ass?” Taran retorted, with her voice raising a few octaves.

“BOO! Bye maid!” Deva put her hand in her face. That right there started some shit. Taran slapped her hand down, propelling Deva to palm her face with her other hand. When Taran attempted to swing, I stepped in the middle halting all the commotion.

“Man both of y’all need to chill.” I finally said something.

“I DON’T NEED TO DO SHIT! She interrupted our conversation on some dumb shit!” Deva shouted, while trying to get around me.

“Well say, if y’all gon fight then y’all can’t do it at my cousin’s party. Take that shit outside.”

“No, tell this bitch to leave Johan!” Taran screamed while clapping her hands. “She acting all unbothered in front of you but she was just in my dm’s the other night telling me how you be eating her pussy!”

My head jerked back at the lies. “And you dumb if you believed that shit.”

“Bitch I dm’d you cause you be throwing subs over this nigga! Now I’m a fuck you up!” Deva threatened. She was finally successful in getting around me, so I just stepped out of the way and let her have it. I didn’t even care that much to break it up. That’s what the club’s security was for.

“Nigga you always starting some shit,” Diamond laughed as he watched Taran and Deva roll around on the floor like wild animals. Deva’s whole titty was out and Taran’s wig was

on the floor. It was sad they were embarrassing themselves like this when we were all friends and fuck buddies at best. This was just all so unnecessary. I wasn't even entertained anymore. I was disgusted. When security rushed over, broke it up, and carried them from the section kicking and screaming I looked off like I didn't even know them. In the midst of the chaos I locked eyes with someone on the dance floor. She must've been watching the commotion in the section too. My feet moved over to her because it made no sense to stare when I could speak.

“Whatchu doing here?” I asked as I gave her a hug.

“I heard this was the litest party in the city tonight, so...here I am,” she shrugged. “So far it's lived up to the hype. What was the fight in y'all section about?”

“Pshhh, I don't know. You know how girls be wilding out over nothing.”

“And niggas don't? If anything y'all worse because y'all do it with guns,” she tittered.

I laughed, because I was definitely the nigga who used to wild out at parties with guns. I was a lot more calculated with my gunplay these days.

“Man ion know about allat, but who you came here with?”

“Oh, my bad,” she giggled, while turning to the two girls she’d come with. The one who was dressed as a sexy nurse was her doppelganger. The only difference was that she was shorter, a little thicker, and lighter. “This is my sister Kiyor, and my best friend Manny.”

“Hello,” Manny waved, while fluttering her lashes that looked like they would crawl off her face. I was hoping that she wore those to go with her witch costume because they were definitely spooky.

“Wassup,” her sister nodded, reminding me of a nigga.

“Wassup? I’m Johan, nice to meet y’all. Y’all might as well come to the section.”

“Are all the girls over there on some rah-rah shit? Cause I look too pretty to be fighting tonight.” Keiko scoffed.

That I couldn’t disagree with. She always looked flawless, but tonight she was letting it all hang out. Her eyes would often make me wonder if she was mixed with some type of asian blood. The sexy Geisha costume she wore tonight had me leaning towards yes. Her hair was in two buns

with black chopsticks going through them. Her costume was a red and black floral print three piece set that included a tiny bikini top that made her full breasts sit high, a tiny mini skirt that showed off her long legs and sharp hips, and fingerless gloves. The red lipstick she was wearing drew me into her face and her pretty lips. I wouldn't let a bitch fight her, let alone touch her.

“Nah we chillin. It was just them girls causing confusion by fighting over dumb shit.”

Technically that wasn't a lie. We had been chilling before they started fighting over dumb shit.

“Well let's go because my feet are screaming in these shoes,”Kiyor winced, before stepping off towards the section.

I allowed Keiko to walk ahead of me so I could see if her back looked as good as her front. Wrong move. My dick rocked up as fast as it ever had. Her entire ass was out. The black boy shorts she had on did nothing to conceal her booty. It wasn't as big as Taran's or Deva's but she had a lil wagon on her. A nigga like me would have her walking around with a Deelishis booty if I started fucking her on the regular. The black stripper shoes she wore with the get up just made my dick swell up even more. If Deva and Taran had stayed they

would've been disappointed, because I was ending my night with Keiko.

Keiko

“Why you came out with all your ass out like this?”

I flinched when I felt Johan's warm and minty fresh breath hit my ears. My pussy twitched too. His strong hands gripped my waist, making matters worse. To my surprise I didn't swat his hands away. I let them rest there because it felt nice.

“If I look good then just say that,” I smirked while looking back at him.

“I don't gotta tell you shit. You know you fine.”

“Well maybe I want to hear you say it.”

“Alright. You pretty as fuck. Fine as shit. And you got my dick hard right now. That's good enough?”

Chills ran all over my body as I looked away from his lust filled gaze. Okay so maybe I wasn't ready for all that. My thong was warming up with my juices and everything.

"Don't get scared now," he laughed, while wrapping his arms around my chest. That weird feeling in my tummy came back, and I was starting to like it.

"Spend the night with me."

That should've been a question, but it sounded more like a demand. Either way, I was with it. He just didn't need to know that yet.

"Can you get me a drink?" I asked.

"You heard what I said?"

"Abouttt?" I played dumb.

"Man you playing," he removed his arms from around me. "Whatchu drinking, Kiki?"

I rolled my eyes dramatically when he called me by my nickname, but I secretly loved the way it sounded coming off his lips. Those lips. I couldn't wait to kiss them.

"Patron with lemonade if they have it. If not then Cranberry juice."

“Alright,”he nodded, before looking at Kiyor and Manny. “Say sister and best friend y’all want something to drink?”

“Yea, but let me come with you to see my options,”Kiyor said. My sister was only 19 and she could drink me under the table. She could literally drink anything and not get sloppy.

“Yea I wanna come, too,”Manny said in a soft voice that made me want to pop her over her head. She always went to talking like Paris Hilton when she was around niggas. That shit blew me.

“Well shit I’m coming, too.” I said.

Johan laughed. “Well C’mon.”

He led us over to two long tables where the drinks were. Even though I was standing right beside him he still fixed my drink.

“You can sit here sister,”he told Kiyor while pointing to a vacant section on the couch after we all had our drinks. He’d obviously remembered her complaining about her feet.

“Whew, thank you brother,”she snickered while sitting down and looking at me. One thing I disliked about little

sisters was they were embarrassing as fuck, no matter their ages.

“Kiyor,” I said in a warning tone while giving her menacing eyes.

“Keiko,” she replied sarcastically with her head tilted to the side.

“Stop bothering that girl,” Johan chuckled, while attempting to pull me away. He bumped into somebody that blocked our path.

“Nigga watch where the fuck you going!”

Aw shit. I should’ve known from the brawl I’d seen with those two bitches that everybody in this section was on some other shit. That little cat fight those two bitches had wouldn’t have shit on what this could potentially turn into. The nigga who’d bump into Johan was buff as hell, tall, and I could tell he played no games by the look on his dangerously handsome face. I could also say all those things about Johan too.

“Nigga make me watch where the fuck I’m going!”

The dude looked like he was about to throw a punch, and I just stood there paralyzed with fear. That fear quickly

transformed into confusion because they broke out into hysterics, while fake boxing each other.

“Can y’all chill with all that?” A beautiful girl in a playboy bunny costume giggled as she twisted over. She had to be this guy’s date because he was dressed like Hugh Hefner.

“Look who it is. My cousin can finally stop crying now.”

“Mannn....”the guy drawled, making Johan and the girl laugh.

“No he can’t. I’m only here for his birthday. That’s it.”

“You love stunting,”he commented.

“Whatever Zooley,”she giggled, before glancing at me.

“Girl your costume is cute! It really suits you.”

I was immediately drawn in by her energy.

“Aww, thank you! I like yours too. I’m Keiko.”

“I’m Zahara. And thanks girl, but I’m surprised my shit even came together nice because it was very last minute.”

“We have that in common,”I giggled.

“This you Jo?”Zooley grinned. I looked up at him to see how he’d respond to the question. I wasn’t expecting much

because I wasn't his. I was just curious about how he'd handle it.

"Nigga how about you tend your business," he gestured to Zahara. "And I'ma tend to mine."

Okay. That response was fine by me.

"I'm not his business," Zahara sassed.

"Man I'ma fuck you up," Zooley gritted, while dragging Zahara away. She was definitely playing hard to get. Anybody could see that. I didn't even know their story and I was rooting for them to work things out.

Someone rose up from the spot that was next to my sister and Manny on the couch, so I went to sit there. Johan stopped me and he sat there, before patting his lap. I sat my ass right in his lap, too. Hell, he'd insisted and despite my lack of complaining, my feet were hurting too.

As the party proceeded I was definitely having fun, and sitting on Johan's dick was the best part of my evening so far. When he wasn't talking shit in my ear, I was either jamming to the music, recording myself on snapchat, or sipping on my drink that had me buzzing.

“Can I take a picture of y’all?” The club photographer walked up and asked.

“Yea, man,” Johan answered for us. His hand rested on my ass as I sat in his lap sideways with my legs crossed. I gave a sexy smile to the camera for the first picture. For the second one I turned around to look at his face and he had his natural mug on. The camera flashed again as I was looking at him.

“Alright, that’s enough,” Johan said, dismissing him.

When he scurried away, Johan gripped my face and brought it closer to me.

“So we ending the night together or what?”

FUCKING RIGHT! I shouted in my head.

“What I’m ending my night with you for?” I sassed. I was stunting my ass off, but he couldn’t see that.

“Cause I’m trying to fuck the shit outta you. What you think?”

“Chill out Johan,” I giggled.

“Chill for what?”

“Becauseeee...”

“Because what?” He pushed.

This time I leaned forward to whisper in his ear.

“Cause you making my pussy wet.”

I swore I felt something grow under me, and my pussy throbbed in response to it.

“Nah,” he shook his head. “Let’s go.”

“Boy I am not leaving my sister here.”

Now if she wasn’t here I would’ve ran to the door.

“That’s cool. Just tell me you’re leaving with me.”

“Alright, I’m leaving with you,” I finally gave in verbally.

By the time I was on my second drink I’d surpassed tipsy, but I was still in control. The alcohol was making me do things I normally didn’t do though. Like dancing provocatively to everything that came on. Johan had the best view in the house too because whenever I’d shake my ass or wind my hips my back was facing him. He kept pulling my skirt down, but it wasn’t helping. I’d gotten this costume from the sex store, which meant it was made for certain body parts to fall out.

Around 2:40 am Manny and Kiyor were asking me if I was ready to go, and I grew nervous. I was really about to

leave the club with Johan to go have sex. I hadn't been with a man in years, and I was jumping back into the game with a man like this. I was hoping I didn't come out looking like a rookie on the dick.

“Yea I'm ready, but I'ma leave with Johan. Here sis,” I handed her my keys because we came together in my car. “Bring Manny home.”

“Alright,” she said while smiling at me like she was proud. “Text me when you get where you're going and be safe.”

“I got her, sister,” Johan said.

“She better be good or that's yo ass, *brother.*”

He laughed as if he were amused. “I got you, gangsta.” He popped my booty so I could get up. When I stood my skirt had raised up around my waist, totally revealing my boy shorts.

“Bruh,” Johan uttered in aggravation while pulling the skirt down for the umpteenth time. “Let's go before this skirt grows legs and walk away next.”

I giggled as he grabbed my hand and pulled me away. We said goodbye to his people, and then we walked my sister

and Manny to my car before we made our way to his.

“I love this truck,” I voiced, as he pulled off into the night.

“Forreal?”

“Yea.”

“Why is this your first time telling me that? You been in this truck twice before.”

“Maybe I just realized how much I liked it now,” I snapped.

“Yea, alright,” he smirked. “You know you was tryna play hard and shit. But it was cute.”

“Keep talking and I can easily go back to that.”

“Girl, your mouth can say anything, but that pussy gon be saying another.”

I went mute. Yea, I was definitely rusty when it came to dick. I could handle almost anything he was throwing at me except dirty, sex talk. I needed to tighten up.

“Scary ass.”

“I’m not scared,” I muttered weakly.

“Then let me see something,”he gripped my thigh.

“Open up.”

I obeyed his command. His hand slipped through my boy shorts and thong in one motion. I was left stuck when I felt his finger come into contact with my slippery folds. I hadn't been over exaggerating when I told him my pussy was wet. At this point I was like a waterfall.

“Damn this pussy wet. That's because of me?” He asked as he started playing with my pussy. He handled his truck effortlessly with one hand, and he handled my pussy with the same ease.

“Uh-huh,”I nodded my head while biting my lip.

“Uh-huh what?”He uttered, as his fingers traveled over my love button. When he started working his fingers across the sensitive flesh I could no longer contain myself. “Answer my question, KiKi.”

“It's wet because of you!!!”

“What's wet?”He pressed.

“My pussy!”

“Say that shit altogether.”

“My pussy’s wet because of you Johan!” I screamed, as my body took off like a track star. I had never cum that hard from somebody just playing with my pussy.

“Goddamn,” he sang, as he swished his fingers around in my gushy. After removing his hand I watched him look at it curiously. What he did next blew my fucking my mind. He actually licked his fingers as if he’d just gotten done eating a bag of chips. If he was this nasty then I was looking forward to the dick.

Johan

“Johan,” Keiko gasped as I ripped her boy shorts and thong off under the guise of asking for a hug. We were in the parking garage of Harrah’s hotel. I’d already had a hotel booked for the evening just in case I left with somebody. I was happy I thought ahead because I didn’t feel like going through the process of checking in. My dick felt like it was about to burst.

“Shut up,” I silence her with a kiss. I groped her soft and bare ass as we exchanged tongues. This was a nasty ass first kiss, but it felt perfect. I had to eventually pull away because if I didn’t we’d be fucking in this parking garage. If cars weren’t actively coming in and out then I’d be with the bullshit.

We had an elevator to ourselves, so the kissing resumed as we went up. I pulled her skirt all the way up and played with her booty. When the elevator came to a stop she pulled away.

“You got me out here naked.”

Her titties were protruding from her top showcasing her brown nipples, and her bare pussy was now visible to me and that muthafucker with fat and glistening.

“I’m getting you ready. C’mon,” I pulled her along before she could adjust herself. It’s a good thing the halls on the 22nd floor were empty because she was totally exposed. When we entered the bedroom in my suite I thought I was about to take control, but Keiko surprised the hell out of me by going for my pants. I curiously stood there and allowed her to do her thing.

“It’s so wide and long,” she gasped while holding my dick in her hand. Pre-cum oozed from the head as she stroked me with her hand. “And pretty.”

“Pretty enough to show me what that mouth do?” I asked just to fuck with her, so when she pushed me back on the bed and climbed to her knees I was caught off guard.

“I never sucked one this big before, so bare with me,” she said, before easing her warm mouth down my dick.

“Fuck...”

I don’t know why she had to say that shit about sucking dick before she’d started sucking mine, because now I was thinking about how I wanted to kill the last nigga she’d used this mouth on. The way she moved her jaws and head at a rapid pace had my mind blown. She still hadn’t succeeded at getting the whole thing into her mouth, but that didn’t matter to me because her hands were showing that part of my dick love. Whenever she’d try to work her mouth down the rest of my length, she’d gag, turning me on even further. I liked the fact that she wasn’t a pro and that her gag reflex still worked. Maybe I even loved it. I could be the nigga to help her improve her skills.

“Come here,” I lifted her head off my dick.

“I’m not done,” she mewled, making my dick jump.

“You don’t gotta be done.”

When I put her in a 69 position, she went right back to sucking my dick, but I shut all the shit down when I started sucking on her pearl. She could no longer focus on giving me head, and I didn’t even care. After tasting her juices on my fingers I knew I was putting my face in this pussy before the sun came up. That sample I had in the car wasn’t enough, I needed the whole meal.

“JOHANNNN!” She squealed, as she humped my face in a frenzy until her body started shaking. She came right in my mouth and I caught it all.

After she sucked my dick and I ate her pussy, I saw no sense in putting on a condom for penetration. She saw things differently.

“Condom Johan.” She voiced.

“No Keiko,” I said as I lined my dick up with her entrance.

“What?!”

“You sucked my dick and I just ate your pussy. What’s the point?” I snapped, as I pushed my way into her.

“Shit,” she winced, as pain took over her pretty face. “P-promise to pull out. I’m not on birth control.”

“I promise,” I agreed, as my eyes rolled up to the ceiling. I only had the tip in and her shit was already putting me in a trance like state. Taran had some competition in the pussy department. As my dick sanked further and further into Keiko I realized that there was no competition. Keiko had the juice, the sauce, the crown, all that shit. She was winning with this powerful thing between her legs.

“Damn this pussy feels good,” I grunted. The whole thing was in and I was now deep dicking her. I wanted to be balls deep inside of that pussy. “Fuck, Keiko.”

“You so biggg,” she whimpered, while clutching my back. Her sharp nails dug into my flesh and it felt so good.

“It hurt? Want me to eat that pussy again?”

“No baby, please don’t stop. Keep stretching me out,” she moaned, before lifting her head to press her lips into mine. I started beating that pussy up as we locked lips hastily. Her lil pussy was fighting back too. She even came with the back up by moving her hips under me in an upward motion.

“I ain’t gon be able to pull out if you don’t chill,” I warned. My voice almost dropped a couple of octaves but I didn’t even give a fuck. This pussy was too good for me to be worried about my ego.

“I don’t care, fuck meeeee!” She screamed.

“Oh yea? You want me to leave this pussy leaking?” I thrust in and out of her.

“YESSS! Oh shittt, I’m finna cum!”

“Me too, baby. Where you want me to nut at?”

“Nut in meeee!” She screamed, as her body shook. All of my common sense diminished and I ejaculated deep inside of her. I thought regret would consume me once I emptied everything in her, but I just felt satisfied. Right then I knew that this girl was not good for my health, but I wasn’t done with her in the slightest bit.

Chapter 7

November 1, 2015

Johan

“Kiyor wake yo ass up and come get me!.....Bitch I don’t care how early it is. Come get me now.”

Keiko’s voice got lower and lower the more I shuffled around in the bed. Trying to be quieter would do her no good now because I had already heard her moving around the room. By habit I lifted up on alert to see what the fuck she was doing. She had her costume back on, but she had my oversized pimp jacket on over it, and she was buttoning it up. When we locked eyes she smiled weakly.

“Goodmorning....”

“Good Morning. You sneaking out on me huh?” I asked as I stood up and stretched. I looked at the clock and saw it was almost 9 pm. We had gone to sleep around 5, but I slept so well that it felt like I had a full night’s rest.

“I wasn’t sneaking.”

“I can’t tell. And you stealing my jacket too?”

“I took your wallet and stuff out.”

“I would hope you did.”

In response she just stared at me, and I openly stared back. She was making things awkward for no reason, but I chumped that up to her age. She was only 21 and girls her age didn’t know how to act mature after casual sex.

“Kiyor, what time you gon be here?” She went back to her conversation with her sister.

“Keiko, hang up the phone.” I ordered.

She looked up at me in confusion. “Huh?”

“Huh?” I mocked her. “Hang the phone up. I can bring you home just like I brought you here.”

“Oh...”

I shook my head. “Tell your sister I’ma bring you home.”

“Kiyor, don’t worry about it. Yea...I’m sure. He’s going to bring me to you. Oh wait, do you have a plan b?...Bitch don’t worry about all that, just answer my

question.....alright, perfect. I'll be there in a few." She finally ended the call.

"My bad," I apologized as I approached her.

"For what?"

"For cumming in you all those times last night."

She closed her eyes shamefully before opening them again. "Well it wasn't like I was helping the situation by telling you to do it. I guess the alcohol had us out of our bodies because we really should've used protection."

I cracked a smile before laughing.

"What's funny?" She questioned.

"You, bruh. Alcohol ain't had nothing to do with shit last night. Yea, we both had some drinks but we knew what the fuck we was doing and we liked it."

"Speak for yourself," she crossed her arms stubbornly.

"So you saying you didn't like it?"

She looked off.

"See now you got me thinking about another round just so I can have your ass screaming in here again. As a matter of fact, come take a shower with me."

“A shower?” Her eyes enlarged.

“You scared?” I joked.

“No. If you really want to know, my pussy hurts from last night. There. That’s what it is.”

“Let me kiss it better.”

“O-okay.”

Alcohol definitely didn’t make us act up last night, because it was early in the morning and we were sober yet I still ate her pussy from the back in the shower while she touched her toes. She anxiously threw her ass back in my face making it clap, and that shit turned me on so much that I ran my tongue up her ass crack.

“Johan!!!” She squealed, as her legs almost gave out. I held her up by her waist and went back to slurping on her clit.

“Oh my God!!!” She cried out as she came. Instead of catching everything in my mouth, I stood up and entered her from behind so I could feel that fat pussy pulsating around my dick. She was too weak to meet my long strokes, but I didn’t care. I moved her hips for her as I fucked the shit out of her.

“Damn this pussy good!” I grunted, while slapping her ass. “Yea, you gon need that plan b.”

A few seconds after saying that I busted inside of her for the fourth time since last night. For once I wasn't thinking about the consequences of my reckless actions. I was just doing what felt right and good to me. Eventually we'd have to discuss birth control or something because I'm sure she wasn't ready for kids, and neither was I. But other than setting niggas up, she wouldn't be a bad catch for a baby mama.

“You want a t-shirt or something?” I asked Keiko. We'd exited the bathroom and she was drying off, while I pulled my large MCM duffle bag out of the closet.

“Sure. That's definitely better than wearing your pimp jacket.”

I laughed. “Nobody told your goofy ass to try and sneak out.”

“Boy fuck you,” she tittered as she took the YSL shirt and adidas sweats that I handed to her. “Do you have some slides or something I can put on too?”

“How you gon curse me out then ask me for shit?” I questioned in a joking manner while retrieving some Gucci slides from my bag and tossing them to her.

“You could’ve given me some shit from the same brand. I’m all over the place with a YSL shirt, adidas pants, and Gucci slippers.”

“Look. Beggars can’t be choosy.” I jested.

She flashed me the bird, making me laugh.

“I guess it’s a good thing I’m going straight to my sister’s apartment.”

“Exactly, so when you go back to school?”

“Later on this evening.”

“Text me when you get in to let me know you made it.”

“Will do.”

November 22, 2015

Keiko

I lied. I didn’t text Johan when I made it inside that day. He ended up texting me but I responded days later. It would’ve been nice if I could say I was moving this way because I was this player ass bitch, but that would be a bold

faced lie. I was really treading lightly because this was not the type of man you could just jump in head first with. I had to go into this with a safety net to protect myself. I'd spent the past two weeks doing a background check on Johan through google and social media. From google I found out that he'd been to jail one time when he was a kid for assault with a deadly weapon. I didn't overthink that because I didn't know the details, and I was only interested in hearing them from him because it was his story to tell. I didn't read articles on it or anything. If anything I was shocked about that being the only thing on his record. He was obviously a smart criminal. For social media I found an inactive facebook account where he was "in a relationship" with some bitch named Jasmine. The last time he'd been on that page was 2008, so I wasn't putting too much thought into that. I searched his name on twitter and he didn't have an account, but I sure did see at least eight different bitches discussing him from 2012 to now. Now I was putting a lot of thought into that for sure! Of course he had an instagram and he had almost 10 thousand followers with only five pictures. One of the pictures was of him and Julian after a basketball game, another picture was of him and Jigga after homecoming from this year, and the rest of the photos were solo pictures of him in different cities. For some reason that

rubbed me the wrong way because if I did take him seriously I'd probably never see him and that could lead to trust issues. He had to have hoes in different area codes.

Johan- You in New Orleans? I wanna see your funny acting ass today.

I definitely was in New Orleans for Thanksgiving break, but the thought of seeing him again after everything I'd learned made me nervous. Besides, it was my sisters fifth birthday and she was having a party at Chuck E. Cheese today. My mom didn't even want to give her an official party this year. Up until a few days ago we were only doing ice cream and cake at the house. I put this together because Royalty had asked me, and I couldn't tell her no. My mom stepped back and let me have it, but she said she wasn't lifting a finger to help and I believed her. I had a lot to do today so I couldn't play with Johan even though I kind of wanted to.

“KiKi where am I picking the cake up from?”Kiyor asked, as she popped her head into her spare room door. My sister was doing good for herself. She was a part time student at UNO, a waitress at Hooters during the week, and a bartender at a strip club on the weekends. I felt like she was

doing better than me because she was making an honest living while getting her education.

“From this girl on the westbank. I’m bouta send you the address now.”

When I picked up my phone to search for the address it started ringing. My stomach flipped because it was Johan calling me.

“Oop, that must be Johannnn,”Kiyor teased.

“Shut up Yori,”I said, calling her by her nickname.

“Answer hoe. I like him.”

“For what? You don’t even know him.”

“Because on Halloween night I could see that y’all liked each other. If you like him and he likes you why wouldn’t you fuck with that? Stop being difficult, hoe.”

Damn. She had a point. Maybe I was this hesitant because I knew this could lead to something special. I decided right then to say fuck it and take that leap of faith.

“Hello?”

“Damn I’m surprised you answered.”

“I answer most of the time. Stop it,”I snickered.

“We need to turn that most of the time into all the time.”

“Yea, maybe we should.”

“I ain’t gon hold my breath, Keiko,”he chuckled.

“I’m not KiKi no more?”

“I’m tryna see. What we doing today?”

“We?”I giggled.

“You repeated what I said so you heard me clearly.”

“Well it’s Royalty’s birthday today, so *I’m* throwing her a party at Chuck E. Cheese. I actually have a lot to do, so can we do something tomorrow or even late tonight?”

“I mean, yea, we can. But I’m not invited to the party?”

I laughed. “You would come to Chuck E.Cheese?”

“Girl I been there before, yea. I was a kid before.”

“Okay,”I tittered. “You can come.”

“Alright, send me the details and I’m there. What all do you have to do beforehand?”

“I have to pick up party favors from this girl Uptown, I gotta go get Royalty’s outfit from Clearview, I have to do her

hair, pick up balloons from party city, and I was gonna try to squeeze in a eye brow appointment but I'm not too sure now because I have like four and a half hours."

"Let me pick up the party favors and balloons. That should give you extra time to get your eyebrows done."

"Johan I couldn't ask you to do that."

"You not asking me. I'm telling you I'll do it."

"Oh...well, okay if you insist. I guess I'll text you that information, too."

"You sure? Cause I know you say shit then don't follow through."

I smacked my teeth. "That was one time."

"But it sticks out for me because you didn't keep your word. I don't like that type of shit. If you agree to something then you gotta stand by it. Cause I know my word is bond."

"And so is mine."

"Yea well you got some showing and proving to do."

"So do you. You need to be on time with my lil sister's stuff."

"Man I'm always punctual."

I laughed at his word choice. “You better be or we gon fight.”

“In other words we gon fuck?”

“Yea... that too,” I tittered.

“Well that gives me something to look forward to. See you later, Kiki.”

When we got off the phone I was all smiles, and my sister was just standing by the door shaking her head. I didn’t even know she’d stayed there the whole time.

“Girl what?” I snapped.

“You got it, you got it bad,” she sang in Usher’s voice before walking off.

Maybe I did already have it bad, but so did Johan if he was picking up Doc Mcstuffins balloons and party favors for my sister’s birthday party. After I texted him everything he needed to know, I received an incoming text message from Farrah.

Farrah: Is this the reason why you don’t want to have sex with me anymore?

For the first time ever I was seeing the picture that Johan and I had taken at Republic on Halloween night and we

looked good as hell together. I saved the picture to my phone before responding to Farrah.

Me: Nope. I made the decision to stop that part of our relationship before I ever started seeing him. Why does it even matter Farrah? Are we friends or not?

Farrah: Of course we're friends bitch, lol. I just wanted to know if you had a boyfriend now. Friends discuss things like that, lol. Anyways see you at Royalty's party later!

Shit. I totally forgot that I'd invited Farrah to Royalty's party during a random phone call. I wasn't nervous for myself, I was nervous for her. No matter what she said, I knew she wasn't okay with me cutting her off sexually. Seeing me with the same guy she'd just checked me about in person could cause drama. Drama was cool, just not at my little sister's party. It was in her best interest to chill because my family didn't play behind me.

Johan

“Let’s play one more time! I think I’ma win the next game!”

“Bruh you already beat me twice,” I said to Ryan as I collected my tickets. “Now you want a rematch cause I won one game?”

“Yea cause now I’m feeling like you let me win the first two games. I gotta see if my game really that tight.”

I laughed because he was smart. I had taken it easy on him in the basketball game. I mean what would I look like dunking on this child in a mini basketball game at Chuck E. Cheese. It was never that serious. I won the last game to teach his lil self a valuable lesson; you can’t win them all.

“Ryan I’ma tell you something I wish somebody would’ve told me when I was your age.”

“What’s that?”

“Quit while you’re a head. Here.” I handed him the tickets I’d just won.

“Yes!!!” He celebrated before running off.

When I was about to walk away to find Keiko I felt a little tug on my Robin jeans. I knew it was Royalty because that’s how she’d been addressing me all day. We were two

hours into her Chuck E. Cheese party, and I'd been here since the beginning because I had important stuff with me. Keiko had claimed that this was a last minute thing but I couldn't tell. Baby girl had two long tables in the party section, and it was fully decorated making her area stand out more than the others. She even had big balloons that spelled out Royalty. Her pink and purple tutu with the matching shirt that had her name and the number 5 on it was even Doc McStuffins themed.

“You must don't know my name, pretty girl,” I said playfully as I picked her up.

“I do.” She claimed with a big smile. The resemblance to Keiko was really crazy.

“Then what is it?” I quizzed.

“Jo-yan.”

I laughed. “Close. Jo-Han.”

“Jo-yan,” she tried again, but she was tripping her up.

“Just call me JoJo,” I said. Nobody but my older family members called me JoJo, but I was willing to make an exception for Royalty since she couldn't say my full name.

Her eyes lit up. “I'm RoRo!!!”

“You are?” I marveled, even though I already knew that was her nickname. “Our names sound just alike. Isn’t that cool?”

“Yea! Can you help me JoJo?”

“With what RoRo?”

“I wanna take pictures in that!!!” She pouted while pointing to the sketch photo booth.

“Why can’t you?”

“Cause people keep skipping me every time I get to the front of the line.”

“Oh they got you fuc-,” my words trailed off when I realized I was talking to a five year old child. For a second I really almost got mad. I hated bullies, and I had to beat a few up in my early years. “That’s not gon happen again, baby.”

I walked over to the sketch photo booth with her as some kids were getting out. I slid right in the booth, paying no mind to the kids that were waiting. They needed to know how it felt to be skipped and if it was a problem then their parents could see me.

“You gotta stand up on the chair or the camera not gonna see you RoRo.”

As she stood up on the chair, Keiko appeared on the side of the booth. She was dressed down from the last time I saw her in blue skinny jeans, a white crop, and brown Uggs. Her long hair was hanging in its natural curly state like she'd washed it and left the house, and she had some light makeup on her face. Nothing like the full face she had for Halloween. I could honestly say I didn't have a preference. I liked her either way, and I was sure she had more looks to her because most women did.

“Y'all taking pictures without me?” She asked, feigning betrayal.

“C'mon Kiki!” Royalty grabbed her hand to pull her into the booth.

“Yea, c'mon Kiki.” I co-signed.

Keiko rolled her eyes while holding back a smile as she sat next to Royalty who was standing up between us. She cupped both of our faces as we looked at the camera. The countdown to the picture being taken had begun.

“Smile JoJo!!!” Royalty demanded.

“JoJo?” Keiko chortled. “Oh I'm definitely calling you that shit now.”

“Man watch your mouth around this baby.”

“SMILE!!!” Royalty demanded again. This time she was talking to both of us because we had three seconds left until the camera went off. Keiko and I followed the bosses orders and smiled big with her.

“It’s pretty!!!” Royalty exclaimed while looking up at the monitor. “Y’all like it?”

“I love it,” I replied.

“Yea me too, Ro.”

“Is that the birthday girl?!”

A familiar looking girl had popped up on the side of the photobooth with a huge pink gift bag making it evident that she had just arrived. Based on the way Royalty smiled bashfully it was clear that she wasn’t too familiar with the girl. The greeting she gave almost had me fooled.

“Say hey Ro,” Keiko instructed.

“Hey,” Royalty waved, while leaning into me.

“You don’t remember me, Royalty? I’m hurt!”

“Girl you know she acts funny sometimes,” Keiko laughed. “Thanks for coming though, friend.”

I could've been tripping, but the girl's attitude seemed to shift when the word friend slipped from Keiko's mouth. What the fuck was really going on?

"Are you going to introduce me to your *new* friend?" The girl said while looking at me strangely.

"Oh yea, my bad. Johan, this is my friend and crab sister Farrah. Farrah, this is Johan."

"Hmmp, he didn't get the friend title so things must be getting pretty serious between y'all. How long have y'all been dating?" She asked me.

"Don't answer that," Keiko responded before I could even think of an answer. I was glad she did say something because I wasn't feeling genuine energy from this girl. It lowkey felt like she had an issue with me that I wasn't privy to despite the pretty smile on her face. Not only was she pretty, but her brown skin was flawless, and she had a nice body. That's when it hit me where I knew this bitch from.

"Yo, have you ever worked at KOD in Miami?"

"Yup. I go by Passion, and I've honestly danced everywhere in most major cities."

"That's cool. I knew you looked familiar."

Keiko cleared her throat. Now it was looking like she wanted to fight me. I was so confused.

“Our picture is ready,” she said as if that needed a formal announcement. I guess she just wanted to change the subject, or maybe she didn’t want me talking to her home girl anymore.

“You mind if I hold on to this?” I asked while plucking the picture from her hand.

She smirked. “Not at all.”

“Keiko, can you walk me to the table? I want to put this gift down.” Farrah interrupted.

“Alright,” Keiko agreed, while pulling me up with her. I tried to put Royalty down, but she wanted me to hold her.

“You sure you don’t have younger siblings?” Keiko smiled in awe.

“I’m positive. But I have one on the way.”

I could hardly believe that my dad was having another child after 27 years had passed, but I was excited for him and his woman. She was his girl from way back in the day but they’d been broken up since the 90’s. They’d just rekindled

their old flame a few months ago and she was already pregnant. I guess some things were just meant to be.

“Your mom is pregnant?”

“Absolutely not. My dad has a baby on the way with his fiancé.”

“Awwwww,” she gushed. “How do you feel about being a big brother at 27?”

“I don’t feel anything yet,” I chuckled. “I guess I’ll see when he or she gets here. I think it’s gonna be cool though.”

“It will be. It’s kind of like you’re a second parent, and with y’all age difference it’ll really be that way. But it’s so rewarding to have someone that looks up to you.”

“You would make a great mom,” I said the very thing that was on my mind.

“I know,” she smirked.

“Well let’s not make her one anytime soon,” Farrah butted in. I forgot that she was even walking with us as we entered the party area. “I hope y’all use condoms.”

“Farrah!” Keiko screeched in disbelief.

“Say, you don’t see this baby right here bruh?” I questioned in disdain.

“She don’t know what I’m talking bout.”

“So what, that don’t mean you can just say whatever around her.”

“Ok, it’s not even that deep,” she snapped, before twisting away from us towards one of the tables.

Chuck E. had come from the back to greet the kids, so Royalty finally wanted to get down. As she ran away I turned to Keiko who still appeared flustered.

“I don’t like yo friend.”

“She don’t like you either.”

“How she don’t like me when she don’t know me?”

“You sure she don’t know you? Cause you knew her from KOD in Miami.”

“Stop the madness, girl. I said she looked familiar. I’m just good at remembering faces. That’s all. I don’t know that hoe, and she don’t know me. All she know about me is that I’m fucking with you.”

“And that’s the main reason she dislikes you. You remember how I said I had a friend with benefits.”

“Yea...a female friend right? Wait, that’s her?”

“Yup.”

I bursted into laughter. “Mannn! This is something new forreal.”

“I’m glad you can have a sense of humor about this.”

“Why wouldn’t I? Whole time I’m wondering why I was getting a bad vibe from that girl. So, she jealous?” I smiled in amusement.

“Basically.”

“I thought friends with benefits meant no feelings involved or strings attached?”

“That’s what I thought too. She started getting all clingy so I cut her off.”

“Then why is she here?”

“Because that’s still my friend.”

“No KiKi,” I shook my head in disapproval. “You can’t do that.”

“Do what?” She frowned in confusion.

“If you know she has feelings for you then remaining friends with her is a no go. Imagine if you was fucking a nigga and caught feelings but he hit you with let’s just be friends. Wouldn’t you be a little salty?”

She thought about it for a second. “It’s possible, but I wouldn’t be all hard up.”

“I didn’t say you would. What I’m saying is you would be in your feelings and you definitely wouldn’t want to stick around to see him be with the next bitch. What makes you think Farrah is different? Because y’all both females?”

“I don’t know,” she sighed. “We were close friends before we did anything sexual, so a part of me doesn’t want to give that up.”

“Well the longer you stay friends with her the longer you drag her along, but do what you want. I tell you what though...”

“What?”

“I don’t want be in another room with her and your gay ass at the same time.”

“Johan fuck you,” she giggled. I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her into a hug.

“Keiko round everybody up. My baby want sing happy birthday.”

I looked up as her mom mugged me and walked off. I peeped mom’s wasn’t feeling me since the moment I walked in and Keiko introduced us, but I could care less. I’d never met anybody’s parents to worry about acceptance and it wouldn’t start now. Besides, her siblings already liked me and I knew that mattered so much more to her.

“That’s somebody else that got beef with me.” I chuckled.

“I don’t know what her problem is. She’s usually nice when I bring guys around.”

“Damn, how many niggas have you brought around?”

“That’s for me to know.”

“Alright, but I bet you never brought your bitches around her, ya lesbian.”

“Um actually I did. Farrah right over there sitting in the corner.”

I gripped her chin. “I’ma fuck the shit out of you. Keep talking”

“Please do fuck the shit outta me.”

Keiko

“Alright mama, I’m out,” I said as I walked to the door with my UBR Dancing Diamond duffel bag on my shoulder. Royalty’s party had ended over an hour and a half ago which meant the rest of my night belonged to me. Johan asked me to pack a bag and come chill with him and I accepted the invitation. He was currently waiting on me outside of my mom’s house.

“And where are you going?”

I *almost* caught an attitude, but I had to check myself. This was my mama and I was in her house. I just wasn’t used to her questioning my whereabouts anymore. For the last four years I’d been on my own, and whenever I was home for break she usually didn’t ask me where I was going specifically. She just liked being notified when I was leaving, so this was unusual.

“I’m going spend the night with Johan. You cool with that?”

“Don’t get smart, Keiko.”

“I’m not getting smart, ma,” I grumbled.

“Uh-huh, I hope your ass is on birth control.”

“I am.” I confirmed. A few days after Halloween I made a doctor’s appointment for a check up. When everything came back negative I asked for birth control pills. I’d been taking them religiously ever since.

“So you letting that nigga fuck you with no condom?”

“Oh my God,” I held my head in disgust. I did *not* want to talk to my mom about this.

“That needs to be how you react when he doesn’t wear a condom. STD’s are real, Keiko.”

“I know. I’m clean.”

“For now,” she muttered.

“Mama why you don’t like him?”

“What?”

“Why don’t you like Johan? He’s really nice, and he helped me out a lot today. He even bought RoRo a Barbie

Dream Hous-“

“I was going to buy that for my baby the next time I got paid,” she cut me off hastily.

“Well now you can spend that money on yourself.”

“Did it ever cross your mind that I wanted to spend it on my baby?”

“No, because at the end of the day she has the dream house now. But that *can't* be the reason you don't like him, mama. You was acting mean towards him before Ro even opened her gifts.”

“I didn't say that was the reason. You brought up that damn doll house like I'm supposed to be grateful or something.”

“Ok, so what's the real problem?”

“I know a drug dealer when I see one, and I'm not impressed.”

My face fell flat. She was judging Johan because she thought he was a drug dealer? Although she was spot on about his occupation, she was being the world's biggest hypocrite right now.

“Mom are you serious?”

“Lil girl I’m dead serious. I don’t want you keeping that type of company.”

“You kept that type of company and got four kids out of it, and you currently hold that type of company down while he’s in prison. Me & Kiyor call that type of company our father even though he’s not biologically our daddy.”

“What point are you trying to make?”

“I think it’s self explanatory,mom.”

“But it’s not. You think you’re making some deep argument by bringing up Red. He’s the sole reason why I don’t want you or your sisters to end up with a man like that. I don’t want y’all to go through the shit that I’ve had to go through. Hell I’m still dealing with the shit, and it’s no way to live life. Now you having all this access to money makes sense, and it bothers me.”

I fought the urge to roll my eyes because I was far from being Johan’s kept bitch. I hadn’t gotten “just because” money from him...yet. My mom’s concerns were valid, but I was not her and Johan was not Red.

“Mama, I have to live my own life.”

“No, what you need to do is learn from my mistakes.”

“But what mistakes did you make? You being with Red was meant to be. That’s why my little brothers and Royalty exist.”

“Being with Red wasn’t a mistake. It’s the way I was with Red. I became totally dependent on somebody who didn’t have a reliable source of income. When he went away, so did all of the materialistic things he showered me with. That’s what I’m trying to get you to understand. Enjoy spending that man’s money now, but know that it won’t be forever.”

“Mom I’m not depending on anybody right now and I don’t have plans to when I graduate. I’m in college so I can have a career of my own. You’re projecting a lot of stuff on me, but none of it is true.”

“Girl I’m not gonna go back and forth with you about this. You’re grown, but you’re still young so you think you know every damn thing. You’ll learn the hard way just like I had to.”

I wanted to scream “I’m not you” at the top of my lungs, but it wasn’t worth it. I just turned to leave.

“Be back by tomorrow evening to watch these kids while I go to work. You know I depend on you for that during holiday vacations.”

“I didn’t forget, mama.” I said before walking out the door.

“About time,” Johan said as I entered his truck. “What took so long?”

“My Mama was on some other shit.”

“She ain’t want you to leave?” He chuckled.

“No, she was just saying a whole lotta nothing.” I downplayed the situation. He didn’t need to know what my mom was saying. If I was going to fuck with him seriously then telling him that would only cause drama.

“You ain’t heard nobody run their mouth about nothing until you had a conversation with my mama. Lady be talking in circles.”

I laughed. “Must be all parents because when I talk to my dad on the phone he is the same way.”

“He stay outta town or something?”

“You could say that,” I tittered. “Angola is outta town.”

“Damn, my bad.”

“It’s okay. It’s my step dad.”

“So it don’t matter to you because he’s not your biological father?” He chortled.

“I mean, it does but I’m sure it’s harder on my younger siblings. He’s pretty much going to miss their whole lives.”

“Yea I hear you, but you acknowledged that man as your dad and if he cares enough to call you while he’s locked up y’all obviously have a close relationship. You’re allowed to be in ya feelings behind it too.”

My response was silence because I was in deep thought. That was the first time somebody acknowledged my feelings about Red going to jail. Everybody else just checked on my mom and my younger siblings. They never asked me or Kiyor how we were coping with the situation. It’s like we were invisible even though he was the only father figure we ever knew. Red came into my life when I was 13 and when Kiyor was 11. Not only did he spoil my mom with gifts, love, and attention, but he spoiled us too. In my last year of high school I started to resent him a little because I found out he was a serial cheater and I was hurt for my mom. Our relationship had taken a hit, but when he went to prison I was still hurt. Ever since he went away there was a huge void in my life, but nobody, down to my own mom, seemed to care. How was it

that Johan knew the right things to say and my own family didn't?

Johan

“Fuck meeee!!!” Keiko screamed as I thrust my dick in and out of her. I meant to put on a condom this time, but she gave me head as soon as we entered the hotel. I was convinced she wanted this shit raw because our last encounter played out the same way. Who was I to deny her of what she wanted?

“Tell me how it feel,” I demanded before dropping my head and flickering my tongue over her hard nipples. Her cries of pleasure got louder.

“It feel so good, baby! I never had dick this good!”

That omission made me fuck her harder.

“You ever had pussy this good?” I breathed into her ear before kissing and licking it.

I'd never been the nigga to question a woman about what she did when she wasn't with me, but the thought of Keiko liking bitches too was a turn on for me. At the same time it made me feel a little jealous. I didn't feel conflicted too often, and that alone had me confused.

“Fuck no. A bitch could never fuck me like this.”

My dick had a mind of its own after she said that and I skeeted inside of her for what felt like forever. I thought she would be mad, but she cupped my face and kissed me in a way that made me think she loved me. There was just so much passion behind it.

“Gimme a minute to get it back up and I got you,” I said, with my forehead against hers.

“Johan, I been came.”

“You serious?”

“Hell yea,” she snickered. “Twice. The first time was when I sucked your dick. And the second time was a few minutes ago when you started licking on my titties. I just didn't say nothing because I wanted to shoot for a third time.”

“I'ma make the third time happen. Don't trip.”

“I believe you,” she smiled before pecking my lips.

“I’m surprised you ain’t say nothing about me nutting in you. Let me find out...”

“Let you find out what?” She grinned.

“That you tryna trap me.” I kidded.

“Boy please,” she giggled. “If anything you tryna trap me. I went and got on birth control. That’s why I ain’t say nothing.”

That was awfully responsible of her. I had fucked with girls that would try and get off birth control while they were fucking with me. The fact that I had no kids only made females want to have my baby more. Keiko was obviously not one of them.

November 23, 2015

Keiko

“You sure your mama gon be cool with me being here?” Johan asked as he entered the house with bags of McDonalds breakfast. He had dropped me off on time so I could watch my brothers and Royalty for the day, but an hour later he was texting me asking if we were hungry. My siblings weren’t even awake yet and I said yes. I didn’t want to leave from by his side in the first place, so I was happy that he spent the block.

“Yea, she said it was cool,” I lied.

“Check you out,” Johan sniggered as he followed me through the hallway to the kitchen. I stopped to see what he was looking at, and it was my Kindergarten graduation picture. “Looking just like Royalty.”

“Ummm no, she look like me.” I asserted.

“Yea, alright,” he grinned as his eyes scanned over other pictures on the wall. I watched his face shift when his green orbs landed on a picture of me and Red at my homecoming game for McMain in 2008. I was crowned Miss Freshman that year and I remembered him going all out for my campaign. Till this day I was certain that the Plum Street snowballs he had passed out to my classmates for free won the race for me.

“This your dad?” He asked, beating me to the punch because I was sure about to ask him if he knew who that was.

“Yea, why? You know him?”

“Do I know him?! Hell yea I know him. He was good friends with my Uncle Justin. After my uncle passed in 97 he stopped coming around as much, but whenever I would see him it would be nothing but love. The crazy part was my dad told me that he settled down with a woman and kids he kept tucked away, but I just couldn’t see it.”

“Why? Because he’s a whore?”

“Mannnn,” he drawled. “I don’t know nothing bout that. I just couldn’t see it because I never saw it with my own eyes.”

“Well, like your dad said, he kept us tucked away.”

“Most likely to protect y’all.”

“Yea that was probably the sole reason. The fact that he got to cheat on my maa in peace was probably a bonus.”

“Either way, Red is solid. It’s fucked up that he caught that case.”

“Yea, real fucked up, but it comes with the territory I guess,” I shrugged, before twisting off to the kitchen.

“Well I guess you would know a lot about the territory Miss Set Em Up.” He chided.

I laughed because I thought it was a joke, but he didn't join me.

“Boy you could never come for me when you've done worse.”

“Have I?” He smirked.

“I'm sure you have. I'm just doing what I gotta do to survive.”

He started playing a fake violin and I threw a napkin at him. He howled with laughter.

“I'm sorry, i just can't take your lil sob story.”

“Excuse me?” I scoffed, feeling offended.

“You heard me, bruh. Yea I'm sure you started doing this initially because times were hard and you wanted to help your mom and hold it down for your dad, but y'all aint struggling no more.”

“And how would you know?”

“I'm lying?”

“.....no. I wouldn't say we're struggling, but you never know, things could get bad agai-,”I attempted to explain, but was cut off.

“Excuses,”I brushed me off. “Just say you got addicted to the money you making cause that's all it is.”

“You would know huh?”

“I definitely would. That's how I know you're full of shit. Your back is not against the wall, and I know a smart girl like you got a lot of money saved to where you can be doing something better. But no, you rather continue putting your safety on the line when you don't have to.”

“Ok for your information I was planning on chilling anyway,”I rebutted. That wasn't the complete truth but it wasn't a lie either. I had been entertaining the idea of sitting my ass down somewhere. I was graduating in May and all I needed was a passing GPA to obtain my degree. Making the dance team again would be a non-factor because this was my final rip. That meant I could go back to a regular job without worrying about my grades. I just didn't know if I could walk away from the money.

“You sound like a nigga who claim he walking away from the streets.

“Yea and you got a lot of nerve coming at me when you should be taking your own advice.”

“I could be taking my advice. You’re right. But I’m standing in my truth. I haven’t needed to do what I do since I was in my early 20’s, but I’m in too deep now to just walk away. You’re not. Then what you do is ten times more reckless and you have no way to defend yourself.”

“That’s not true. I carry pepper spray and my taser.”

“Point proven. Yea, sit your ass down somewhere and leave this shit to the big dogs.”

“You can’t be making demands like this not my last year of college and I don’t have needs.”

“So ask and you shall receive. If I got it then you do too.”

My pussy thumped, and I thought about saying fuck breakfast so I could ride his dick. Before I could make a move I heard multiple feet running towards the kitchen. My siblings were up.

“JoJo!!!” Royalty exclaimed while running straight to him and jumping in his lap.

“Johan you here to play video games with us?” Riley asked excitedly.

“No! We should play basketball. Right Johan?” Ryan asked. I think in his mind this was really his best friend.

“McDonalds!!!” Reign shouted while reaching for a sausage biscuit.

“I wanna go to Sky Zone,” Royalty pouted. Based on the way Johan looked at her I knew he was going to grant her wish.

“We can do all that y’all. No need to fuss about it,” he said calmly. I guess I wasn’t getting any time today.

Chapter 8

November 26 , 2015

Keiko

“Where ya lil boyfriend at?” My mom sneered. I just looked down at my phone because I knew she was trying to be funny. If it was just us I wouldn’t have been tripping too much,

but our whole damn family had come over for Thanksgiving. Even some of Red's people.

“Don't catch no attitude with me because you letting that lil nigga sell you dreams,” she snapped before taking a sip of her Hennessy and coke.

“Kendra leave that girl alone and come play cards with us,” Red's mama cackled. “You know we all been young and dumb before.”

Did that funny looking bitch just call me dumb? See, this is why I didn't care for Red's side of the family. No matter how much he treated us like his own they still acted funny with us. Since day one they resented the fact that he'd fallen for someone who they considered had too much baggage. Once my mom started having his kids they had no choice but to accept her, but they still didn't accept us. One time Kiyor tried to call Red's mom grandma, and that old bitch actually said “call me Miss Rema, baby.” When Red heard about that he went off on her. That led to her back tracking by telling me and Keiko we could call her grandma. At that point we were both good on her ass. If the love wasn't genuine then we didn't want it.

I wanted to go off on my mom and Miss Rema's ass, but I chose peace instead and went outside to sit on the porch. I entertained the thought of texting Johan but I didn't want to look desperate. He never told me he was coming today for sure. He specifically said he'd be busy but he'd try to swing by me. It was stupid of me to get my hopes up and to even tell my mom that he was coming when she asked.

I just really thought he would come. We'd spend every day of this week together. We only had one of those days alone because my siblings went by Ms. Rema. He never complained or even seemed bothered by my siblings' presence though. In fact he seemed a little disappointed on the day they weren't there. Since he seemed to like spending time with me and my family I figured him spending a family oriented holiday with me was a given. I guess I'd jumped the gun. Maybe it was still too early in the game for us to be spending major holidays together.

“What's wrong Kiki?”

My heart momentarily stopped when I heard Johan's voice. My head rose up more anxious than I wanted it too, but I didn't care. I was so happy to see his ass. He looked good too in his brown Balmain sweater, Balmain jeans, wheat

Timberlands, and a gold diamond cross was around his neck. He kind of complimented me. I rocked a brown two piece set that consisted of high waisted tights and a matching long sleeved crop top. My outfit wasn't high fashion like his, but I still looked bomb. I was the type to save my money instead of splurging on luxury items. Now if I got gifted with something then that was another story.

“You alright?” He asked after he kissed me. Now that I was in her arms I was great.

“Yea, I'm straight.”

“You looked upset when I walked up.”

“Family,” I shrugged.

“Mine was getting on my nerves too,” he laughed.

“That's why I left my mom's house and came over here.”

“Oh...did you go by your dad's people yet?”

“Nah, that's my next stop.”

“You could've gone there first.”

“I could've, but I wanted to see you.”

Goosebumps.

“And I’m probably be by my Aunt Jenesha’s house for the rest of the night, so it only makes sense for that to be my last stop.”

For a second I almost felt slighted that he hadn’t asked me if I wanted to come with him, but I had to be realistic here. This was still a fresh situation and he probably didn’t want to introduce me to his family yet. Even though I already knew most of them it would send a message if we walked into his aunt’s house together. Meanwhile, I was leading him into my house to meet my whole damn family. The irony.

Of course my siblings swarmed him. Even Kiyor gave him a friendly greeting with a hug. I could tell that automatically earned him brownie points with some of my older relatives. Everybody was being respectful and welcoming as I did introductions, but the friendliness Miss Rema threw at him caught me off guard.

“Nice to meet you, baby. You a Martelle aint ya?” She questioned. Okay, now the friendliness made perfect sense.

He smiled. “It’s that obvious, huh?”

“Yup. My baby was best friends with a Martelle so I would know. Who’s your father?”

“Jordan.”

“Oh okay, I can see that now that you’ve said it. Well shit, go head granddaughter. I see ya.”

Johan laughed while I forced a fake smile. I was just young and dumb before, but now I was her granddaughter? People were so fake.

“I see you finally came,” my mom finally acknowledged him. Initially she had just been sitting there with a stank look on her face. I was just going to stop bringing Johan around her if she was going to act this childish.

“Yea I had to stop by my mom’s house first. I hope I’m not too late for a plate.”

“Of course not. We got plenty of food. Go make your *man* a plate KiKi,” she uttered. The way she said *man* sarcastically garnered a few side eyes.

When I pulled Johan to the kitchen he asked me about it.

“Yo, what the fuck I did your mama?” He chuckled.

“I would like to know that shit, too. She got issues,” I rolled my eyes. “She been getting on my nerves all day. I might dip when you do.”

“Damn, she getting on your nerves that much?”

“Yup.”

“Where you gonna go?”

“I can’t go with you?” I asked, just to see what he’d say. I was really planning on going by Farrah’s people because she’d invited me, and her mom could throw down like nobody’s business. Two of my other crab sisters were spending Thanksgiving with her as well, so with them there it wouldn’t be awkward between us.

“I mean...if you want to,”he scratched the back of his neck.

With that response he didn’t have to worry about me going nowhere with his ass. He should’ve wanted me to come, but it was evident that he didn’t.

“I’m cool,”I tittered. “What you want on your plate?”

When he started listing off things he wanted to eat, my feelings couldn’t help but be hurt. He hadn’t even tried to change my mind. Now numerous thoughts were running through my head about why he didn’t want me to go with him.

November 25, 2015

Johan

Everyday you learn something new. For the past two days I learned that I hated being ignored. I'd never been blocked before, but I was sure that's what the fuck was going on because my messages or calls weren't going through to Keiko. Her phone could've been dead or something, but she was constantly posting on instagram and snapchat so that wasn't possible. The shit she'd posted had me hot in addition to being ignored. If this bitch was really gay and just wanted to try some dick then that was all she had to say because she was all up Farrah's ass when she just told me that she was falling back from her. The night of Thanksgiving she posted a picture with Farah and two other hoes that I didn't know. Farrah was all over Keiko in the picture. She had both arms wrapped around her neck, and she was kissing her cheek like a weirdo. Keiko's dumb ass was all smiles with her eyes closed and shit. The caption was what really got me. It read "I'm so thankful

for these girls. We have UBR and Dancing Diamonds to thank for this bond #12 #Sistersforever.” The last time I checked sisters didn’t fuck each other. Bitches could be so scandalous. She was probably fucking the other two girls in the picture too. I didn’t put it past her. I could see them all having one big orgy that night. That was most likely the reason why she didn’t press me about going to my Aunt’s house. She wanted to go by Farrah and do freak shit.

I’d sent her over twenty messages on instagram. Twenty. Yet she hadn’t responded to one. She just read them. That only made me want to blow her up more until I got a response. For the first time in my life I wasn’t too proud. Shit most of the time my pride was a non-factor because I never really gave a fuck about anything to begin with. But the fact that she was reading my messages and not responding was fucking with me. I wouldn’t be at ease until I heard back from her. I’d started dming her Thanksgiving night.

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: We have a problem I don’t know about?

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: You got me blocked????

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: You could at least be a woman about the situation and let me know why tf you mad.

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: Maybe that's the problem. We just have different levels of maturity, cause I'd never do you like this without telling you why or giving you a chance to explain yourself.

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: So you gon read my shit and not respond? Lol, bet.

@Jeauxhan to TheeDiamond: Fuck you too. Gay bitch. Yea, I know you with that hoe.

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: GM. I want to apologize for the shit I said last night. I was gon off the Henny. Unblock me though.

@Jeauxhan to @TheeDiamond: Come to Saks with me today.

When that offer didn't get a response I knew nothing would work, but I kept foolishly trying. I just dm'd her a few minutes ago to invite her out to dinner before I planned to link with my people for Bayou Classic. When my phone buzzed I thought maybe it was Keiko hitting me back, but I was wrong.

Taran- Thanks for coming last night. That meant the world to me.

Me-No problem.

She had a section at Eiffel for her birthday. I had forgotten all about the invitation she'd extended to me when my cousins asked me to go out, but I was quickly reminded when I saw her. We had the section conjoined to hers, so she assumed I had shown up for her. I just let her think that because I wasn't about to be an asshole to the girl on her birthday. That was also the reason why I didn't turn her down when she invited me home with her. Shit it wasn't like I was getting act right out of somebody else. Speaking of that somebody else, I found my way back to her instagram to see if she'd posted anything else. She did. It was a mirror picture of her and the same girls from Thanksgiving. That meant Farrah was there. I never wanted to see a bitch disappear so bad. Keiko looked fine in tiny high waisted denim shorts and an off the shoulder black crop top. She never did too much yet she always stood out.

Theediamond: Me & my sissy's outsideeee all day today! #BayouClassic15 #Diamonds #12

A smirk formed on my face. Now she would have no choice but to talk to me.

Keiko

Jeauxhan: I know you out here. I want see you ignore me when I roll up on you.

The hurricane I'd been sipping on for the past three hours made me laugh hysterically at the message. I never thought Johan would be the type to blow me up like this, and it honestly had my ego on 100. If I was uncertain about his feelings before, I was sure that he genuinely liked me now. I just wasn't feeling his actions, and that's why I blocked his ass. Of course I was salty about him not inviting me by his people on Thanksgiving, but I hadn't been planning on blocking him for that. If anything I was just going to pump the brakes on how we were moving. What I came across the next day made me jump the gun and do something more drastic like blocking him. Well, I didn't come across it. Farrah actually

brought it to my attention. That nigga was in the club with a bitch for her birthday and had posed for pictures with her. I tried not to read too deeply into that, but the tweets Farrah showed me had sealed the deal. She was bragging about him making her night, the money he gave her, and the birthday dick he dropped on her. I was in my feelings because she had to be his main bitch or something. That was probably the reason why he didn't want to invite me by his people on Thanksgiving.

“What’s funny?” Farrah asked while sticking her head into my phone.

“Damnnn Farrah,” our crab sister, Britney, stressed with wide eyes. “You all in her phone!”

The rest of our crab sisters had no idea about the turn our relationship had taken, and I planned on keeping it that way. I wasn't ashamed, but I felt like it would make things awkward if they ever found out.

“Ugh, he’s still dming you? Why don’t you block him?” Farrah fussed, while ignoring Britney.

“Maybe she wants to hear from him,” Marsha replied. Other than Farrah, I was the most close with her...minus the sex. She was still on the team with me, and she was really my

right hand when it came to the Diamonds. She'd help me design new uniforms, create counts, and she was a huge help when it came to my crabs.

“But I don't see why. He was caught cheating,” Farrah snapped.

“Cheating? Didn't you say y'all not official, Ki?” Marsha asked me. I'd given them a full rundown of everything while we were on our way to the game.

“Yup. He's not my boyfriend. We literally just started talking a few weeks ago.”

“Well then...I don't see a reason to cut him off cold turkey,” she stated.

I wasn't cutting him off cold turkey. I was just letting him sweat for a little while. I also needed to know who the fuck this girl was before I continued carrying on with him. But by no means was I done. I'm sure Farrah did assume that I was done with him and she had probably already rejoiced about it. That was her fault for assuming. I wasn't giving up on dick this good this early on.

“Are y'all really advocating for her getting all walked over?”

“What?” My face scrunched up.

“Keiko would never let a nigga walk over hoe,” Marsha said. “She’s teaching him a lesson right now. Based on the way he’s been blowing her up it’s working.”

“Ki don’t listen to these bitches. Cut that nigga off,” Farrah advised like she knew it all.

“I’m a do what I want,” I responded while flipping my hair that I’d straightened for the night. I was feeling like a bad bitch with my hair down my back, a deep purple lip, high waisted daisy dukes covered my behind that I paired with a black crop top, and black open toed over the knee boots. I’d been stopped by countless guys and collected six numbers. I didn’t plan on fucking with any of them but it felt good to be desired. I never got out much because I was either in my books or in the dance room, so I was having fun.

“As you should!” Britney high fived me. “I don’t know why Farrah is so gung ho for you to drop somebody you obviously like.”

I knew why, so I changed the subject as we walked down Canal street to Harrah’s parking garage. We were done with Bourbon street, but the night was far from over. We were going back to Farrah’s mom’s house so we could change and

go out to Eiffel for the official Bayou Classic after party. While we were headed up to the parking garage I got a text from Farrah. I knew it was something nasty because if it wasn't she would've just said it out loud. When I read the message my assumption was proven true.

Farrah: I want you to eat me until I come tonight.

Me: relax.

Farrah: Ain't no relax hoe. You didn't return the favor last night and I let you slide. That's not happening tonight. I will be sitting on your face.

I exited out of the messages because I'd severely screwed up by letting her eat me out last night. Now she thought things were about to go back to how they were. The reality of the situation was that I just had a moment of weakness. No more, no less. As we exited to the elevator we made small talk about the night ahead.

“Keiko what are you wearing tonig- AHHHHH!”

I wanted to scream with Marsha, but I couldn't because someone was covering my mouth with their hand and carrying my body like I weighed nothing. I tried wiggling out of their grasp but they had a strong hold on me.

“Johan put her down! She not going nowhere with you!” Farrah screamed.

“I bet you thought she was spending the night with you, huh? Keep dreaming,” he replied through laughter while throwing me in the passenger seat of his car. At this point I wasn’t even trying to get away. Now that I’d laid eyes on him I figured we might as well clear the air and talk. Clearly this nigga was losing his mind. I rolled down the window to address my crab sisters who were standing right there.

“I’ma go with him.” I said.

“Really bitch?” Farrah snapped. “What about tonight?”

“What about it? We’ll still go and have fun. Handle your business, Ki,” Marsha said.

“I second that. Have fun hoe,” Britney cheesed as they walked away.

Farrah stood there just staring at me like she wanted to kill me.

“Bye Farrah. She want some dick tonight,” Johan chided, while rolling my window up. My mouth fell, and I punched his arm.

“You didn’t have to tell her that! That was so mean!”

“Awww, I hurt your girlfriends feelings?”

“You find that funny but I bet you wouldn’t be laughing if I addressed Taran like that.”

I thought that would render him speechless, but he just stared at me intently before laughing.

“What’s funny?” I questioned.

“You. You did a lil lurking, huh?”

“Fuck all that. You worrying about me when you need to be worrying about your girlfriend.”

“Man I don’t have no fucking girlfriend. Taran is my friend and you should know that.”

“How would I know about you and the next bitch?”

“Because don’t you have a friend that you’re fucking?”

I was rendered speechless. I didn’t want to hear it, but he had a point. How could I check him about a female when Farrah was just eating my pussy yesterday?

“Exactly,” he nodded, before starting his car up and backing out of the parking spot. He blew his horn at another car, and they backed out too.

“Who’s that?”

“The person that always follows me and watches my back.”

“Wait...you mean to tell me every time I’ve been in the car with you there’s been somebody following us?”

“Yup.”

“Wow.”

That was all I could say. This whole time I’d been thinking he had a bitch or something, when it was actually simple. He didn’t trust me. Deep down I felt a way about it, but realistically I could see his point of view. He knew that I set niggas up, so he wasn’t going to let his guard down around me easily. He probably didn’t want to bring me around his family because some of them knew what I did. That would only make them look at him sideways. That also had to be the reason I’d only been to hotels with him. He had to have his own spot in New Orleans because he visited frequently.

“Where we going?” I asked after a few moments of silence.

“Well I guess we gotta go to one of my spots because all the hotels booked up around here.”

See, I knew he had a spot out here. I just didn't know he had more than one. If I had to guess I would say he was taking me to the one he rarely spent the night at.

“You don't have to have your boy sit outside your place all night. I'll leave after we fuck,” I volunteered.

He looked at me sideways. “What type of shit you on Keiko?”

“Baby I'm not on nothing. I know you see me as some low down dirty bitch who set niggas up, so I'm letting you know that this ain't that. As a matter of fact, pull over. We can do it in the backseat and then you can take me home.”

“Girl shut up,” he grumbled. “You right. I don't trust you. I wouldn't trust you even if you didn't set niggas up. No female has ever been to any of my spots because of the position I'm in. My potna following us has nothing to do with you on a personal level. Get outcha heart, Kiki.”

“I'm not in my heart,” I hissed.

“Shitttt, I can’t tell. Do you trust me?”

I thought about it for a second.

“No, not really. Sometimes I feel like I’m giving you nothing but space and opportunity to play me and have me in my feelings.”

“That’s not even my motive.”

“Then what is? I know we both like each other. Unless you have raw sex and spend this much time with every new bitch you come across.”

He gave me a look. “Fuck no. This shit is different for me, and that’s why I don’t know how to navigate it. Take Thanksgiving for example. I thought about inviting you by my people, but a voice in my head kept saying too soon.”

“Yet you didn’t mind coming by my people...”

“Bringing you around my people is a bigger deal because I’ve never brought a girl around them.”

“What about for prom?”

He laughed. “Girl I ain’t go to that shit.”

“So Taran never met your family?”

“I mean she met some of my cousins while we were kicking it , but that’s not special. And it wasn’t like she got a formal introduction. ”

“Mhmmm, what about Jasmine?”

He was taken aback before a big smile appeared on his face.

“Yo you been playing super spy, how the fuck you know who that is?”

“Just tell me who she is and if she ever met the family.”

“That was my lil work in highschool. We fucked around a few years after high school too, but she stopped fucking with me because she wanted more and I wasn’t willing to give it.”

“Hmmp, well you’re in a relationship with her on facebook. Maybe you should change that.”

His laughter increased. “Girl you speaking on a facebook page that she ran. I never even had the password to the shit. I think she ended up forgetting the password to that muthafucker too.”

“Whatever.”

“Yea whatever,”he mocked, making me stifle my laughter. “Anything else you want to ask me, stalker?”

“Stalker?!”I repeated in disbelief. “Says the nigga who dm’d me over fifty times on instagram.”

“I’m not ashamed. Don’t ignore me.”

“Don’t do anything to be ignored again.”

“I didn’t do shit this time. This was nothing more than a misunderstanding.”

“Oh so you didn’t fuck Taran after her birthday party?”

“Did you and Farrah bump coochies this weekend?”

“Not the same thing.”I crossed my arms.

“How? Because she a bitch? No fuck that. I don’t want nobody else touching that pussy but me.”

“And I want the same thing in return.”

“But I don’t have a pussy,”he grinned.

I slapped his chest. “You know what the fuck I mean.”

He chuckled. “Nobody else will touch this dick as long as you taking it.”

“You promise?”

He looked me in my eyes. “I promise.”

Chapter 9

November 27, 2015

Johan

“Ouuuu! Eat this pussy baby. Eat ittttt,” Keiko cooed as she rubbed her pussy into my mouth. She was sitting in the best seat in the house; on my face. I gripped both of her ass cheeks and spread them apart so I could really get all up in there.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” She shrieked as she humped my face before her legs started to shake. Her sweet juices poured into my mouth and I anxiously welcomed them.

Giving her no time to recover from her body numbing orgasm, I lifted her off of my face and slammed her down on to my dick that was at attention. She was visibly tired, but she still moved her hips up and down once my dick was inside her.

“I love this dick,” she panted with her hands on my chest.

“Yea?” I asked as I placed my hands on her ass to assist her with her ride.

“YESSSS!”

“Enough to let me bust up in this pussy?”

“You do that anywa-ayyyyy!” She moaned as I started giving her hard strokes from the bottom.

“I want you to tell me I can shoot my babies in this pussy. Tell me.”

“Johannnn,” she squealed, as she bounced her pussy all over my dick.

“Tell me Keiko,” I smacked her ass roughly.

“Cum in me!!! Shoot your babies in this pussy!”

Music to my ears, and to my dick. I held her in place, making her take everything I had to offer.

“Fuck JoJo,” she breathed, as she collapsed on my chest with my dick still inside her. “I told you we gotta stop doing that.”

“For what? You on birth control.”

“It’s not 100%, and you nutting in me 24/7 is not good for my PH balance.”

“That pussy smells, tastes, and feels just fine to me. Stop tripping,” I tongue kissed her while squeezing her booty in my hands. My dick was growing hard again.

“Nigga you tryna kill me this morning,” she moaned, as she started moving on my piece, making it rock up quicker.

“You want me to kill this shit with the way you been playing with me. Giving my good ass pussy to bitches and shit.”

“Shutup,” she snickered, before kissing me again.

We fucked all morning before sleeping well into the afternoon. When we woke up we decided to order Pizza Hut because we didn’t feel like leaving my apartment. I was supposed to be returning to Miami today, but I said fuck that flight the moment I woke up to Keiko giving me head this morning. We’d been fucking since the previous night, and we still couldn’t get enough of each other.

“Try it please, Jo,” Keiko begged as she put the Supreme pizza to my mouth while I was eating my pepperoni pizza.

“Man no, nigga don’t want that nasty looking shit.”

Her face dropped as she removed the pizza from my mouth and she looked off with puppy dog eyes. I automatically felt guilty, and I was certain that was her aim. Either way that shit worked.

“Let me taste it Ki...”

She smiled brightly and put the pizza in my mouth. As I bit off a nice sized piece and started chewing it I couldn't deny that it tasted alright. By the time Next Friday was going off I had helped her eat the entire box of Supreme pizza. I was officially a fan of it.

“Hmmp, see when you try new things you might like it,” she smirked, before pecking my lips.

“You got that, Kiki.”

I was just the typical nigga when it came to food. I wasn't trying shit that I wasn't familiar with because I didn't like playing around when it came to my taste buds and it pissed me off to waste money on things like food. That's why I would just stick to what I knew, but Keiko had just taught me something. Maybe I would start switching it up every now and then.

“I need to be leaving in a few hours.”

“For what? Where you going?” I sat up.

“I return to school tomorrow Johan,” she giggled. “My lil week off made you forget I’m in college already?”

“Shit...I did forget,” I admitted. “What’s your major?”

“Mass Communications.”

“Interesting. What you wanna do with that?”

“There’s a lot of jobs I can get with a degree in that, so I’ll take whatever’s available.”

“Damn,” he laughed. “Like that?”

“Absolutely. I’ve heard it’s hard for college graduates to find work, so I won’t be picky. I do have a dream job though.”

“What’s that?”

“I want to be an event planner.”

“All types of events?”

“Yea, but mainly parties.”

“Well based on the way you put your lil sisters party together in a short time I think you’d be a beast at it. You should dive into that right after college. It’s possible.”

“Yea I know it’s possible, but I don’t know if it’s realist-”

“It is. Go after what you want, Ki. Life too short.”

“Yea, you right,” she sighed.

“So do you have to return to school tonight?” I asked while looking down at her perfect face. I really wanted to chill with her all night, and I wanted to wake up to her. That was the main reason I’d fucked around and missed my flight.

“I would like to.”

“Oh so what you saying is that you don’t wanna spend another night with me?”

“Johan I don’t feel like waking up and driving to BR in the morning and then going to classes. I’d rather get the drive out the way tonight.”

“I’ll drive you in the morning.”

“But what about my car?”

“Shit I’ll drive you in your car.”

“But how will you get bac-oh yea, somebody will be following us,” she answered what was about to her own question.

“Right, so you staying or what?”

“Since you begging,” she shrugged.

“Man bring yo pretty ass here,” I scooped her up into my arms and laid back on the sofa, so she was laying on top of me. My condo in downtown New Orleans was tucked away and perfect for me but I rarely stayed here whenever I came home because I was usually in my house. It felt nice being here with Keiko. It was definitely better than being at a stuffy hotel.

“I can’t take no more,” she whined as I kissed all over her face.

“I know. What if I just wanted to hug and kiss on you?”

She locked eyes with me and I was enamored with the way she was looking at me. There was something in her eyes I couldn’t read, but I loved seeing it there.

“You sure you never been in a relationship...or done anything like this in general?”

“What did I tell you Keiko?”

“I’m just thinking it’s no way you’ve never made a bitch feel like this before.”

“Like what?” I chuckled.

“Nevermind.” She ducked her head into the crook of my neck.

“Uh-uh,” I chortled, while pulling her head back up by her soft hair as gently as possible. “How I’m making you feel?”

“I can’t even explain it...”

“Well guess what?”

“What?”

“The feelings are mutual, so don’t be ashamed to tell me what’s on your mind.”

“Noted...so when do you go back to Miami?”

“Let me find out you gon miss me.”

She kissed her teeth. “Nigga just answer the question.”

I laughed. “My flight is tomorrow evening.”

“Oh,” she replied solemnly before laying her head on my chest.

“You still not telling me what’s on your mind.”

“How about you tell me what’s on yours instead?”

“Shit I’m just thinking bout how I fucked up by getting used to you this past week. Now I gotta get adjusted to being without you for days or weeks at a time.”

“Well luckily we’re not in too deep.”

“Yet.”

Her face slowly turned a deep red, making me laugh.

“Nigga your game is tight.”

“Ain’t no game. I’m just being me and telling you what I’m thinking unlike some people who overthink every little thing.”

“Boy fuck you.” She gave me the middle finger. “Maybe I’m this way for a reason.”

“Enlighten me.”

Keiko

I was mentally preparing myself to share some things with him, including how I was falling fast for his ass, when my phone buzzed across the coffee table. A picture of Ryan was on the screen, which meant it was him calling. I had a feeling he didn’t want shit, but I still raised off of Johan’s chest to answer.

“Yea, Ryan?”

“Where you at Kiki?”

“I’m with a friend. Why?”

“Does JoJo know about this friend?”

The corners of my cheeks hiked up while my head tilted to the side. Was my little brother checking me behind Johan? I’d obviously underestimated how much Ryan liked him.

“Wait, say that again Ryan,” I instructed after placing the phone on speaker.

“Does Johan know you with a friend right now?”

Johan smiled proudly and all I could do was roll my eyes and laugh.

“Little boy I am with Johan right now for your information.”

“Forreal? Let me speak to him,” he demanded, as if he didn’t believe me.

“Boyyyy,” I drawled as Johan grabbed my phone out of my hand.

“Wassup chief?” Johan spoke.

“Johan?”

“Yea Ryan,”he sniggered.

“Oh, had to make sure my sister wasn’t playing with you.”

“Ryan I’ma whoop your ass. I’m your sister! You’re supposed to be riding for me, not him!”

“But since you’re my sister and you’re with Johan, doesn’t that make him my brother?”

My heart thumped. I loved how my siblings adored him because their opinions meant the world to me, but I did not like how they’d gotten attached to him this fast. I guess I couldn’t blame them. I’d gotten attached to fast as well. His energy was just magnetic like that.

“Exactly lil bro, your sister just hating on us.”

“Don’t hate Kiki, I still love you.”

I grabbed my phone back. “Little boy what do you want?”

“You remember how you asked us to make Christmas lists?”

“Yea, to send to Santa. Is yours ready?”

“Oh KiKi, you can drop the Santa charade. Riley and Royalty are nowhere around.”

My face fell flat, and Johan cracked up.

“Yo, he really reminds me of myself when I was that age. Lil nigga got no type of filter.” Johan cracked up with laughter.

“I only want one thing, Kiki.”

“What’s that Ryan?”

“I want to go to Disney World.”

“Ryan have you lost your min-” I started to go in, but Johan grabbed the phone again.

“What your grades looking like, chief?”

“I have four A’s, two B’s, and one C.”

“Alright, that’s not too bad, but get the B’s up to an A and get the C up to the B. And do whatever your mama asks of you around the house. After that you never know. Santa might bless you.”

“You believe in Santa?”

“I believe in the magic of Christmas and good things coming to those who work for it.”

“I’ll work for it! I’m a get straight A’s on my report card! Watch!”

“I will be watching. Bye Chief.”

“Bye, Johan!”

“What was that?” I asked the moment he ended the call.

“I have a business partner who has unlimited passes to Disney World. I can get them for you and the whole family for the week of Christmas.”

My eyes blinked rapidly. “Really?”

“Really,” he flicked my chin.

“But even with the free passes there’s still flights, hotels, and spending money. Nah, I can’t afford that for my whole family. I need to hold on to my mone-”

“I got you,” he said, shutting me up. “Why would I ever offer you something and make you pay? C’mon now. What type of bum bitches you be fucking with?”

“You know I’ve fucked with niggas too, right? I’m not a full blown lesbian, no.” I giggled.

“As long as it’s fucked as in past tense I could care less.”

My heart fluttered at his possessiveness. I knew it was nothing to glorify, but I loved how he wanted me all to

himself. I was the same way with him. I was just less vocal about it.

“You silly,” I tittered.

“No you silly, gon tell me you not a full blown lesbian like I ain’t peeped that. We been fucking, fucking and I’m a nigga soooo...”

I laughed so hard that my shoulders shook. I was going to enjoy tonight with him to the fullest because I had no idea when I’d see him again. Not only would I miss his company and his dick, but I could already see myself stressing over what the fuck he was doing in Miami. If he had hoes in New Orleans then he had to have them in the place he actually lived.

Chapter 10

December 3th , 2015

Johan

“So we find out the gender in two weeks.”

“That’s wassup. I know y’all excited,” I replied.

“What about you?”

“What about me? It honestly don’t matter if I’m having a lil brother or sister. I’m good either way.”

Everytime I talked to my dad on the phone recently it was about his fiancé and his unborn baby. At this point it felt like *I* was about to get married and have a kid. I guess that was a testament to how happy he was now with his life, and that made me happy. At one point my dad was so depressed he could barely be a father to me outside of taking care of me financially. That was how I’d gotten involved in the streets. I had no guidance. By the time my dad found out what I was up to I was already waist deep in and he couldn’t pull me out. Sometimes I thought about how my life would’ve been if he’d been more present in my teenage years, but it was what it was.

“Forever nonchalant, huh son?”

“I get it from you,” I laughed.

“Yea,” he agreed with laughter. “I guess I did pass that down amongst other things to you. But you know you don’t have to be like me right?”

“Dad, I’m 27. My ways are locked in.”

“Yea I thought the same thing. I was like I’m 41, my life is set. Then I linked up with Canary again and everything changed.”

“I get it dad, you got your groove back.”

“Johan don’t make me snuff you nigga. My point is as long as your breathing life’s not over and change comes with the territory. And yea, you’re a lot like me when I was young. Shit maybe just like me, but I have the feeling you can be better. When’s the last time you spoke with your mama?”

I sighed heavily because I felt another lecture coming on.

“Come on son, you gotta do better.”

“I’m not chasing her for no relationship. I gave her money on Thanksgiving anyway, so I’m sure she’s good on hearing from me for the rest of the year.”

“Now you *know* that’s not true.”

I was silent in response because maybe that wasn’t true. My mom had texted me a few times after Thanksgiving saying she wanted to see me, but I didn’t respond. I guess she’d given up.

“It’s time to stop holding grudges. I know if I can forgive her then you can.”

“What?! Was it you that had to see crazy ass niggas who hit her upside the head for fun come and go? Was it you that had to go to jail as a child for defending her? Was it you that had to come home and see that same nigga around?!”

“Alright Johan, maybe I misspoke.”

“Yea, maybe you did.”

“Hey, calm down because it was me who did something about that nigga.”

“I guess dad...”

I just wasn’t impressed by my father having Rondo killed. That shit should’ve been done the moment I went to juvie. Not months after I got out.

“Are you coming out here for your Aunt Jenesha’s birthday party on the 20th?”

“Yea I think I’ll be out there.”

“Cool, I was just telling Canary how you might as well move back with how much you visit. Then the baby can have you and Camilla around.”

Camilla was Canary's daughter and also Ja'Keems girlfriend. I know, the shit was weird and confusing. Camilla and Ja'Keem had met at college, so they had no knowledge that her mom and his uncle were a thing back in the 90's. In fact, Keem and Camilla's relationship had a hand in bringing Canary and my dad back together.

"I don't know dad, I like it out here. It's more lowkey."

"It's only more lowkey because you not from there."

"And that's what I like. I can fly under the radar."

"I hear you, but I know you be missing New Orleans. I understand though. Being in Miami is more beneficial for you right now."

The only thing I was missing right now was currently in Baton Rouge.

"Definitely, but I'm finna head to work."

"Alright son, be safe out there. Love you."

"Love you too."

Before driving out of my driveway, I wanted to call Keiko and talk to her. It was 6:35 pm in Miami, which meant it was 5:35pm in Baton Rouge. She was probably on her way to dance practice. A text message popped up at the top of my

screen just as I was about to call Keiko. It was my favorite Miami freak, Rosa. I'd been messing with her ever since I'd moved to Miami, and this was the longest I'd gone without seeing her while I was in the city. I guess that's why she felt the need to send me a video of her butt ass naked in bed. My dick rocked up as I watched her feel herself up and talk. She was a black Puerto Rican, so she had an accent and it was sexy as fuck.

“Did I do something wrong Papi? Because you've been in Miami for days now and I haven't heard from you. You found someone who can suck dick better than I can?”

“I actually did,” I mumbled to myself as she panned the camera down to her fingers in her pretty pussy. I exited my messages because I was torturing myself. One side of me wanted to stand on what I'd told Keiko, but the other side of me wasn't used to turning down some good and available pussy. Of course Keiko had lethal pussy, but she was way in another state. It felt unnatural for me to go without sex for this long. Something had to give, so I called Keiko right away.

“Hello?” She answered, sounding all sweet.

“Say, I'm flying you out to Miami tomorrow evening.”

“Well damn! Yes, my day was cool. I’m on my way to dance practice, and oh, I’m not busy this weekend.”

“I didn’t ask none of that because I already knew the answers to those questions. I don’t even see why you have dance practice if the football season is over.”

“Because it’s not officially over until the Louisiana Day Classic. You coming?”

“What day it is again?” I joked.

“Johan.”

“I’m fucking with you,” I laughed. “I’ll be there, KiKi. My cousin is playing in the game, yea.”

“Oh so that’s why you going?”

“Man I’m going for some big head ass dancer too. She fine as hell though, so she cool in my book.”

“Boy you so lame,” she tittered.

“But you like it.”

“Sure d- HEY, WHILE Y’ALL PLAYING Y’ALL BETTER HAD GLITTERED THEM CHARACTER SHOES!!!”

I broke out in laughter because I knew she was talking to her freshman dancers, or as she called them, her crabs. The first time I met her I saw her in action with them and I was honestly turned on. The way she took charge and led was sexy.

“Stop terrorizing them children.”

“They ain’t no fucking children. And they be testing my gangsta.”

“I would test yo gangsta too if I heard you saying shit like that,” I chuckled. “Was your captain that mean to you your first year on the team?”

She laughed. “I honestly got it the worst out of all my crab sisters.”

“Why?”

“Because I didn’t know how to shut up and I was cocky. I was humbled quickly because my captain did not play. I appreciate everything she did now. Hopefully my crabs will feel the same way in the long run. Everything I do is out of love.”

“Awww, isn’t that sweet.”

She giggled. “Nigga I’m serious.”

“I know,” I laughed. “So you ready for Disney World?”

“Of course. I’m so happy it’s the Monday right after LDC.”

“Your mama still tripping?”

“Nope. Her sister talked some sense into her. She was like Kendra why are you tripping over a free vacation?”

“She ain’t have nothing to say after that, huh?” I chuckled.

“Nope,” she tittered.

When Keiko told me her mom said that her siblings couldn’t go on a vacation I was sponsoring I was honestly confused. I knew she didn’t like me, but it wasn’t that serious to turn down a free vacation for the kids. I asked Keiko for her mom’s number so I could get through to her, but she said hell no. She claimed she’d convince her, which she did, but Kendra had one condition. I also had to pay for her sister and her three kids to go as well. For a second I felt like she was abusing my kindness, but I just said fuck it. It wasn’t like she was milking me because the money was nothing for me. Not to mention the Disney World tickets were free. I was just paying for flights and hotels. I was also giving Keiko spending money for her and her siblings to enjoy themselves to the fullest.

“I wish you were coming too,” she said.

“No offense, love, but I ain’t tryna deal with ya maw.

What you doing for New Years week?”

“Not a damn thing but babysitting.”

“Think you can get outta that?”

“Maybe... why?”

“I haven’t gone on vacation all year. I think it would be cool to end 2015 somewhere else.”

“I second that.”

“Do you wanna come?”

“Where are we going, Jo?” She giggled.

“That’s where I need your help. I always go to places like Atlanta and Vegas with my boy’s, but I’m tryna get away forreal this time around.”

“Do you have a passport?”

“Hell yea.”

That was non negotiable in my line of work.

“Okay, well let’s go to Bali Indonesia. This girl I’m subscribed to on YouTube just went there with her husband. It

was beautiful, and the Villa's they stayed in were everything. I think I want to stay there."

"Well how about you book everything and I'll send you my card information."

"You gon send me your card information?"

"What I just said?"

"Alright, don't say nothing if I go shopping or pay my rent."

"I could honestly care less."

"Wait, forreal?" She laughed. "I was definitely joking."

"I wasn't. Do you."

I'd given females cash before, and it was usually when they'd ask. Nobody ever asked for anything major. It was always for shit like an outfit, nails, or hair. That was light work and if I was fucking on a girl consistently I didn't mind. However, I'd never given a girl my credit cards to splurge. I guess there was a first time for everything. With Keiko it felt natural so I was going with it.

December 4th , 2015

Keiko

Sitting poolside in Miami with a pink thong bikini on was the perfect ending to my Friday afternoon. Johan being right next to me was the only thing that could make it better, but my baby was on the way. He had one of his workers pick me up from the airport because he was tied up. I was a little annoyed that he had me waiting in his big ass house by myself, but I was just happy that he even had me here. I was sure he'd have my ass in a hotel or something. Maybe he was opening up more to me. I turned the music on my portable I-home speaker up as I sipped Henny lemonade and relaxed.

“There’s a thug in my life. How am I gonna tell my mama? She’s gonna say it ain’t right, but he’s so good to me. There’s a thug in my life. And it’s gonna cause crazy drama. I’m gonna see him tonight. I’m gonna give him everything. I know his crew is kinda shady. Sometimes it gets kinda crazy. But he treats me like a lady. Gives me everything I need. I don’t care who’s hating on me. Cause every night he’s waiting

on me. He's got mad personality, a side they never see. My friends tell me to slow down. But every time that he's around. My heart's on lock down. I feel love and I'm so proud." I sang the throwback Rihanna song like I wrote that shit. It was just hitting on a personal level these days.

My phone buzzing interrupted my relaxation. I had several messages from different people.

Crabby Patty Megan- Hey cap, is it okay if I send you videos of me doing the new counts you made so you can critique them? I still don't feel 100% comfortable with them yet.

Me- Of course. Send as many videos as you need to. Practice makes perfect.

I was glad that she knew she looked a mess doing those counts. I was planning on cleaning her up during practice next week, but it was nice to see her taking the initiative on her own. I'd taught her well. I moved on to the next message. It was my mama.

Mama K- You made it to that drug dealer's house yet?

Me- Don't call him that.

Mama K- I'll call him what I want. I was counting on you to babysit this weekend.

Me- Mama they can go by their grandma, Auntie Kevia, or by Red's sister like they do any other weekend when I'm not in town.

Mama K- I know they can. But it makes it easier for me when I can just leave them in the house with you. You having fun?

I was surprised to see her ask that. I was expecting this whole conversation to be nothing more than her chastising me.

Me- Yea, I'm just chilling by the pool right now.

Mama K- By yourself?

Here we go.

Me- Yes, by myself. It's peaceful.

Mama K- Where's Johan?

Me- He's on his way back to the house now.

Mama K- If he was gon be away he shouldn't have invited you out there. I really don't care for him, Keiko. Sorry.

I decided that the conversation was over because she was just picking and looking for anything to complain about when it came to Johan. There was something deeper going on with her because I knew it wasn't just about him. She didn't even know him.

After talking to my mom I wasn't in the mood to text anybody else, so I left my messages and went to Snapchat to make some videos. In the midst of me standing up to make a 360 video of myself, I got a direct message from somebody named "ThegirlTaran." My memory was A1, so off I knew it was Johan's hoe. My question was how did she find me or my social media? I didn't go out of my way to let it be known that I messed with Johan. We'd taken that picture together on Halloween but neither one of us reposted it.

ThegirlTaran: Going to see Johan???

She'd replied to the video of me with my feet up on my suitcase in the airport with a destination to Miami filter. I guess that snap would give me away to a bitch who knew Johan stayed in Miami.

DiamondKi_: Why are you questioning me?

Sure I could've been nice by simply answering her question, but I didn't want to be nice. I was also confused

about why this bitch thought she could ask me anything let alone talk to me. This hoe was gone learn today.

ThegirlTaran: Girl I just asked a simple question.

Pipe down.

DiamondKi_: Asking me anything is not simple bc I don't know you nor do I answer to you.

ThegirlTaran: You don't know me, but Johan knows me well sweetheart.

DiamondKi_: Good for y'all. Why you think I need to know that?

ThegirlTaran: I'm just saying, don't be surprised about me being around.

DiamondKi_: I'm sure you will be around. You're an available hoe.

ThegirlTaran: Hoe???I'm far from that sweetheart.

DiamondKi_: I guess you can't acknowledge the available part, huh? Lmao, at least you know what it is.

ThegirlTaran: Bitch I'm available for an available nigga. Your man then fucked almost every fine bitch in New Orleans. You not special.

*DiamondKi_ : Keep telling yourself I'm not special.
Maybe it'll make you feel better.*

*ThegirlTaran: Bitch you not! You think because he
flew you to Miami you hitting on something, but you not!*

*DiamondKi_ : Alright, I'm not special and I'm not
hitting on nothing. What else? I'm chilling poolside right
now and you fw my vibe.*

*ThegirlTaran: Lmao, you so stupid I just fucked him
on my birthday.*

Now that hit admitley hit a nerve, but it was something
I was already aware of so I wasn't flustered.

*DiamondKi_ : Shit I was fucking somebody else the
night of your bday. We've moved past that, beloved.*

*ThegirlTaran: He gon continue fucking other bitches
on you dummy!!!*

DiamondKi_ : Awwwww, ya think so?

*ThegirlTaran: I know so, cause ima be one of those
bitches.*

*DiamondKi_ : Yikes. You too pretty to sell yourself
short like that sweetheart. Have a nice day.*

I blocked her so she couldn't respond to me anymore, then proceeded to screenshot the conversation. I didn't know if I'd need it later, but it never hurt to have screenshots on deck. The worst part was that I knew that this wouldn't be the last hoe to come my way over Johan, and I didn't even care. I was planning on handling all of them just how I handed Ms. Taran. She was at home in distress, while I was at his mansion in Miami chilling. The difference was clear, so there was no need for me to get mad.

Johan

“Man Keem shit is solid. I don't know what Uncle Jamal talking bout. He just needed a little light enforcement,” I said to Zooley over the phone while I walked into my house. As I walked deeper into the house looking for Keiko I heard music coming from the backyard, so I headed there.

“You know it's in his nature to give Keem a hard time,” Zooley chuckled.

“Keem better than me, because I would’ve been told my pops sum.”

“Yea right, nigga you know you don’t play with Jordan.”

“That’s cause Jordan don’t play with me, but I’m finna go.”

Seeing Keiko move around in her tiny pink bikini was enough for me to drop what I was doing.

“Oh yea, you flew your lil yea out today, huh? You must really like her.”

“What make you say that?” I asked just to pick his brain.

“You got her at your house. Usually you be preaching how niggas like us should never have females where we lay our heads.”

That *was* one of my rules, and for years I’d been living by it. I guess I really did like Keiko on another level, but I damn sure didn’t trust her. I didn’t outright think she’d do me dirty, but I didn’t put it past her. That was all the reason I needed to not have her at my house or to even be chilling with her on a personal level, yet I was doing both. This is why I

kept my heart and feelings on ice, because now that they were involved I was doing dumb shit. My Grams would often say that love made fools out of people.

“Nigga I’ma holla at you later,” I ended the call because I didn’t know what to say. Shit I was confused. To make matters worse, Keiko’s fine ass had me in daze. For a second I just stood back and watched her do her thing for her camera. She had no idea I was a few feet away from her as she posed in her bikini like a model. K Camp’s blessing served as her background music and I felt the song was extremely appropriate for her.

“Want you to know that you’re a blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. Yeah baby girl you’re a blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. The way you walk you got it. The way you talk you got it. The way you smile you got it. And you don’t take shit from nobody. I know you a bad little chick that I met right around the way. I see your mind want you to leave, but your heart telling you to stay. You ain’t gotta cry no more, you ain’t got you cry no more. I ain’t telling you I’m perfect but for you I’ll go to war.”

“Oh my God!” She squealed in fear when I appeared in her camera and wrapped my arms around her waist.

“What you out here doing?” I asked while kissing her cheek.

“Waiting on you.” She turned around, wrapped her arms around my neck, and her mouth anxiously met mine.

“You missed me?” I asked between kisses while playing with her ass. A thong bikini had never been sexier.

“So much.”

“Show me how much.”

I didn't need to say anything else. She dropped down into a squat and got to work. Right there in my backyard she sucked my dick like she had a point to prove. All I could gather was that no other bitch that I'd dealt with was fucking with her.

Since we started outside I saw no sense in rushing back inside. She hopped on my dick, and rode it wildly on the day bed under my cabana.

“Goddamn Keiko, this pussy so good it don't make no sense,” I grunted as she worked her hips like a seasoned stripper. She was a real life dancer, so her perfect rhythm made sense.

“How good is it?” She moaned.

“Good enough time give you all my safe combinations.”

“Ouuu,” she crooned, as I started penetrating her slowly. “What else baby?”

“It’s good enough to give you my first baby.”

“Ohhh fuck,” her head fell back when I started playing with her slick pussy. She had me soaking wet with her juices. “That’s it JoJo?”

“Baby this pussy so good I want to lock you down so nobody else will find you.”

“AHHHH!” She screamed as her body quaked. I was bursting off right with her. At that moment I was so happy that I waited for her because nobody else would’ve measured up.

Chapter 11

December 5th , 2015

Keiko

“So you been holding out on me?” Johan asked as he put his empty breakfast plate down on the table.

“Huh?” I lifted my head from my phone in confusion.

“Huh?” He mocked me, propelling me to laugh. “Why this your first time cooking for me?”

“Hmmm, I don’t know, maybe because most of the alone time we’ve spent together was in a hotel.”

“Not true. I was coming by your mama house everyday for Thanksgiving week. You always had me pick up food so I was thinking damn this girl must cant cook.”

“Well that’s what you get for assuming,” I giggled. “But I just fixed breakfast, JoJo. That’s light work. Anybody can do that.”

He gave me a knowing look. “But Ki that wasn’t no average ass breakfast.”

I laughed harder because he was right. I showed out today by making shrimp and grits, apple cinnamon french toast, home fries, sausage, and omelets. With the way he dicked me down yesterday he deserved a big breakfast. I was planning on making him lunch and dinner too.

“So what’s for dinner?” He asked, seemingly reading my mind.

“I don’t know. Maybe Lo Mein with sweet and sour chicken.”

“Yo, you serious?”

“Yes,” I tittered. “Does it look like I’m playing?”

“Shit I don’t know,”he chuckled. “So you mixed with Chinese?”

“Nope. How you just gonna assume that cause I wanna make you Lo Mein?” I laughed.

“Cause that’s a Chinese dish, and I never saw nobody black make it.”

“Well baby you need to get out more.”

“Maybe I do, but real shit Ki, what are you and your people mixed with?”

“Why you think we mixed?”

“Because my eyes work. Y’all look mostly black, but it’s obviously something else there. You must not know if you can’t tell me.”

“Boy I know,” I laughed. “I just hate when people act like it’s the most fascinating shit in the world.”

“Well I’m just curious, and I want to know about every part of you.”

My stomach quivered as chills ran up my spine.

“My mom’s half Filipino, so I guess that makes me 25%. So you were right. I’m mostly black.”

“You in touch with your mom’s Filipino side?”

“Yea, but we’re not super close. Most of them are still in the Philippines. I was really close with my mom’s mother but she passed when I was in high school. She’s the one who taught me how to make a lot of asian dishes. Come to think of it she taught me how to make a lot of soul food too. My Lola was a well rounded woman forreal.”

“Make me some Filipino food tonight.”

“You sure? I was tryna start off simple with the Chinese food.”

“Man, I’ve had Lo Mein and sweet and sour chicken bukoo times. I want to try something different.”

“You?!” I gasped. “Not the nigga who didn’t even want to try a piece of my supreme pizza.”

“Alright, but I ended up liking it didn’t I?”

“You did,” I laughed. “I got you tonight. We gon have to go to the store.”

“Alright, let me just chill for a second. That breakfast got me wanting to take a nap.”

“Before you go to sleep do you have gas?”

He lifted right back up with wide eyes.

“You asking me for weed?”

“Johan, you know what gas is. Stop playing.”

“You smoke?!”

“No, I’m just asking so I can look at it. Yea, I smoke. To be honest that’s one of the things that’s helped me through college thus far.”

“Damn,” he shook his head with laughter.

“What?”

“I’m just thinking how there’s so much we still don’t know about eachother, but fucking right I got gas. And it’s the best shit around, so take it easy.”

“You not smoking with me?”

“I’m trying to cut back...”

“Why?”

“Because it makes me drowsy and I get more shit done when I’m not high.”

“I mean you said you was bouta take a nap anyway sooooo...”

“Why you tryna get me to smoke so bad?” He interrogated. I wasn’t feeling his tone...it was like he was accusing me of something.

“....nevermind. Forget it. I don’t even want the weed any more.”

“Keiko you sur-“

“I’m positive. Cause you obviously got some pressure on your chest when it comes to me.”

“Pressure? Baby if it was all that then you wouldn’t be here.”

“Yea, I thought that until you questioned me like I had an ulterior motive just because I wanted you to smoke with me.”

He dropped his head in guilt before looking back up at me in my eyes. I looked off because I couldn’t take staring into his green eyes for too long without feeling weak.

“KiKi look at me.”

I folded my arms stubbornly and continued looking off into the distance.

He grabbed my chin and forced me to look back at him.

“I apologize, but can I be honest with you right quick?”

“Honesty is always good in my book.”

“Cool, and I hope you can take what I’m about to say without being offended.”

I wasn’t going to make a promise I couldn’t keep, so I remained silent.

“No matter how much I grow to like you I can’t get the way that I met you out of my head. You set niggas like me up for a living Ki, so sometimes me antennas will go up with you. It’s not in my nature to ignore what people have shown me.”

“That’s nice to know.” I attempted to stand up so I could get away from him, but he pulled me down.

“Don’t do that. Tell me what’s on your mind.” He urged authoritatively.

“Johan I’m just at a loss for words to be honest. All I can say is that I would never do something like that to you or anybody in your family when y’all gave me the opportunity to

make money at a time when I was desperate. Unlike most bitches I wasn't doing that shit out of greed. I was just trying to feed my family.”

“And I respect that more than anybody. But do you understand where I'm coming from?”

“Of course I do...but it still hurts that you even think that I would do that to you. I guess I have my own life decisions to blame for that though.”

Suddenly I was having regrets about the shit that I'd done because of the way it had Johan viewing me. I wanted him to feel 100% safe with me, but why would he feel that way with a bitch who set niggas up to be killed? I had to put my feelings to the side and be realistic. Realistically, I couldn't blame him for feeling the way he felt deep down.

“Hold on Ki, I don't want you regretting shit. You helped keep your family stay afloat when they needed it the most. That shows me how down you are for the people you love.”

“Then you should know I'm done for you.”

I hadn't realized that I was basically telling this man that I loved him without saying it verbatim, but the way he

smiled told me that he caught it.

“And I’m down for you too, love,” he pecked my lips.
“I’ve told you this before but I’m naturally paranoid. I’ve been on high alert with bitches who’re nurses and teach kindergartners for a living, so don’t be taking shit to heart.”

“Man fuck them hoes,” I snarled. Yea I was jealous, but with good reason. I still hadn’t forgotten about how that Taran bitch had hit me up. Her claiming that she could still fuck Johan if she wanted to wasn’t going to fly.

“Alright, fuck em,” he smirked.

“Mhmm, you know that Taran girl hit me up yesterday right?”

“What?”

“Yup. She messaged me on Snapchat talking shit about how I wasn’t special and how she was still fucking you. Blah, blah, blah.”

“Mannnn, that hoe out her top,” he spewed angrily, as he located something on his phone. I didn’t know what he was doing until he tapped a button and the speaker phone was on.

“Hey daddy,” a girl cooed into the phone, making me cringe.

“Man I ain’t yo fucking daddy. Why the fuck would you hit Keiko up? What was your reason for doing that, Taran?”

“Woah, are you really coming at me cause I reached out to one of your hoes? It’s never bothered you before.”

“Then you should know she’s not just one of my hoes. But I’m sure you peeped that already and that’s why you was in her DM’s on some lame ass shit.”

“WHAT? JOHAN FUCK YOU! I’M SO DONE WITH YOU! I SWEAR!”

It sounded like she was crying and I almost felt bad for her. That was until I remembered how she came at me unprovoked the day before.

“We never started Taran. We were friends at best, but it’s curtains for that since you don’t know how to act.” He ended the call, and then went on to block her number. I felt so satisfied.

“And if anybody else hit you up just tell me and I’ll handle it.”

“What if a million bitches hit me up?” I questioned with a smirk. There was no way he could control all the girls

that would be upset about us.

“Then I’ll make time.”

Then again, maybe he could control them. Only time would tell.

Chapter 12

December 23, 2015

Keiko

“Royalty keep your head still, this my fifth time attempting to do this part.” I complained. Anytime I was around my mom made me do her hair because it was one less thing she had to do. Royalty’s thick and long hair was *a lot* to do. Even two simple ponytails was a challenge to do on her.

“Then maybe you should stop trying KiKi,” she uttered so innocently that the shade almost went over my head.

“Or *maybe* I can pop you. It’s up to you.”

“Ughhh, I’ma keep my head still,” she sighed defeatedly, while I laughed to myself. This girl was a mess.

“Thank you. I know you want to look pretty for Elsa and Anna today.”

“You think I’ll be able to get pictures with them?”

“Maybe. We’ll have to wait and see.”

“KiKi?!”

“Yea?” I looked up at my Aunt’s daughter Paisley.

“My mama said can you do my hair too?”

As if dealing with Royalty’s hair wasn’t enough, they were now dumping Paisley on me too. This was far from the vacation I thought it would be. Everyday it felt like I was the sole caretaker of all these damn kids. My mom and aunt had been drinking and turning up this entire time. Kiyor wasn’t even here to help me because she couldn’t take an entire week off of work, but she was flying in tomorrow. She couldn’t wait to get here while I couldn’t wait for this damn trip to be over.

“Okay Paisley,” I replied dryly. As much as I wanted to say no I adored my little cousin too much to do that. My aunt was aware of this which is probably why she sent her to ask me instead of asking herself.

“Yayyy! Thank you Kiki, you do RoRo’s hair so pretty,” she clapped her hands before skipping away. See? How could I say no to that?

As I was finishing Royalty’s hair off with bows, I got a text message from Johan asking how my day was going so far. I kept it short and sweet by saying “cool.” I guess that rubbed him wrong.

Johan- What’s wrong with you?

Me- Why you think something wrong?

Johan- Idk. Your response felt dry.

Me- I’m just a little annoyed. That’s all.

Johan- Why?

Me- Too much time to explain, and I’m doing Royalty’s hair rn. I’ll call you later.

Johan- damn every time I hit you up you tending to a child. Your mama and auntie stayed at home?

Me- Lmao, stop tryna be funny.

Johan- I’m dead serious though. I can’t wait for our vacation next week. Seems like we both can use a break.

Me- I got my shit packed at home already.

Johan- Lol, bet. What you want for Christmas?

Me- You don't have to buy me a Christmas gift.

Johan- How you gon tell me I don't have to get you a Christmas gift on Christmas when I want to give you a Christmas gift on Christmas?

I broke out into giggles because his reply reminded me of a viral Tyler the Creator birthday skit. Johan's goofy side wasn't well known, and that's why I liked to see it so much.

Me- A. I won't even be with you for Christmas. B. You just brought me a Chanel bag and gave me money. I'm good.

The large Chanel bag with 10k that he gave me last weekend was a gift for the Louisiana Day Classic. The entire day was emotional for me because it was my last Classic as a Diamond and my crabs were crossing. That gift only made me more emotional because that money was going to help me out a lot for my final semester in college, and even though I wasn't obsessed with materialistic things I couldn't wait to wear my first Chanel bag. I appreciated nice things like all women did.

Johan- I'ma give y'all the gifts when y'all come back.

Me- y'all?

Johan- Yea you know I had to get the boys and Royalty a lil something.

Me- Johan we're currently on a vacation that YOU financed. Is that not a gift?

Johan- I guess it is. But I still got them something. Now what do you want?

Me-Nothing.

Johan- Why you so difficult?

Me- I could ask you the same thing,lmao.

Johan- There's gotta be something you want.

Me- I want my rent paid for the remainder of my lease.

Johan- Done.

“Can you finish my baby hair while you up in here smiling at your phone?”

My chipper mood was brought down quickly thanks to my mom. She was fully dressed for the day with her makeup done and all. Meanwhile I still had my hair tied up with my

pajamas on. At this rate I'd have about ten minutes to get myself together.

“Her hair is done. I just gotta put two more bows in it. But here, you can do it.”

“Keiko don't play with m-Red I'm not messing with her, I hate when you do that. You don't even know what's going on.”

I hadn't even realized she was on the phone at first, but I was happy she was talking to Red. He'd defend me to the end and get her together.

“Here, ya paw wanna talk to you,” she grumbled before throwing the phone on the bed, and picking Royalty up to exit the room.

“Hello?” I spoke into the phone.

“Hey KiKi baby, I haven't heard from you in a while. You doing alright?”

His voice alone made me feel warm on the inside. Spending the holidays without him had been weird for the past few years because he always made them special for us. When the boys were toddlers he'd dress up as Santa Claus and bring

us our gifts. He was flawed, but he loved us. I knew it was killing him that he couldn't be here with us.

“Yea, I'm doing good. My mama is getting on my nerves, but that's normal.”

“I can't take y'all,” he chuckled. “You finished school strong this semester?”

“I ended with a 3.6 gpa, so I did okay.”

“Okay? Baby girl that's amazing. Especially with you being captain of your dance team and having other distractions.”

“Other distractions?” I repeated, so he could clarify what he was hinting at.

“Yea, your mama told me you got a boyfriend or something. Why you didn't tell me?”

“Because we rarely talk...”

“And who's fault is that?”

“Mine...” I whispered. If it was up to Red we'd talk every other day, but I answered the phone for him when I felt like it. Talking to him too much just made me sadder, but he didn't understand that.

“Exactly, so who’s the lil nigga?”

“His name is Johan...”

“Johan?! I know a Johan!”

“Yea, he claims to know you as well. Said you and his uncle used to be tight.”

“Fucking right! Justin was my boy! That fucked me up when he got popped in ‘97. Shit a lot of niggas was dropping like flies around that time. New Orleans was so hot I had to lay low cause I thought I was gon be next.”

“Well thank God that didn’t happen,” I said sarcastically because although he didn’t get killed in the streets, the system still got him almost sixteen years later. That’s what happened to drug dealers who didn’t know how to bow out gracefully or have an exit plan. I sure hoped Johan was smarter than that.

“Yea,”he agreed. My sarcasm completely flew over his head. “But you with a solid nigga babygirl. Of course he’s rough around the edges, but I think you can smooth him out. Just be careful.”

“ I will. Thanks daddy.”

Having his approval meant everything because he never liked any niggas I dated in the past. His used to always say “man that nigga soft, KiKi.” I guess he couldn’t say that about Johan.

Chapter 13

December 29, 2015

Johan

“Who got you that bag baby? That shit looks nice.”

“Some fine ass nigga I’m fucking on.”

I reached out and slapped her ass roughly, making her ass wiggle in her jean shorts. The shorts were ripped up to the point where it made no sense for her to even have them on. Her ass was literally falling out, and I loved the sight of it. Her skimpy black monokini was visible through the shorts, and she wore Chanel slides I’d got her for Christmas to match her purse.

Even though she told me she wanted her rent paid for the rest of her lease for Christmas, I still went to Saks and splurged on her in addition to that. I couldn't be designer down while she wore ordinary shit. She had to match my fly.

“Let's go back to the Villa and take a nap before dinner.”

“But I wanna go to the pool,” she whined.

“We have a private pool. Let's go put it to use.”

We had been away from our resort all day doing some sightseeing and other activities. She was worn out now, and looking forward to relaxing by the pool. My dick was hard as muthafucker and I needed my daily dose of her. I didn't care if I had already gotten a dose this morning.

“I wanna use the public one.”

“For what?”

“Because it'll force you to keep your hands off me.”

“Shittt, voyeurism has always been something I wanted to try.”

“Fuck it, let's go back to our Villa.”

I laughed. “Yea, that’s what I thought and since when do you want me to keep my hands off you?!”

“Since I seemed to misplace my birth control pills today,” she eyed me suspiciously.

“I don’t know shit about that. You gotta keep up with your stuff, KiKi.”

“Yea, alright Johan,” she rolled her eyes. “You have condoms?”

“Now why the fuck would I bring condoms on this trip with you?”

“Alright, you better pull out.”

“No promises.”

“Ok, be prepared to search high and low for a plan b or be in the clinic with me.”

“The clinic?! For what?!”

“So I can get an aborti-“

She didn’t get to finish her sentence before I yoked her up.

“I’ll fuck you up and then never speak to you again. Don’t play with me like that.”

“Then don’t get me pregnant.”

“Man like you said, even birth control not 100% effective in preventing pregnancy, so as long we’re fucking it’s a chance. I wouldn’t be fully to blame, and neither would you. But why kill an innocent baby?”

“Ya know what, let’s just not have sex.”

“Girl shut yo dramatic ass up. You gon sit on this dick.”

“Oh my gosh, you’re so romantic.”

“I know,” I chuckled, while wrapping my arm around her shoulder. I leaned down and slithered my tongue in her mouth.

My phone started ringing in the midst of our nasty kiss, and it fucked up my good mood. I told everybody not to call me this week if it wasn’t important.

“Man, what she want?” I asked out loud when I saw the caller ID.

“Go ahead and answer,” Keiko said.

“For what?”

“Because that’s your mom nigga.”

“Nah, she good.” I ended the call and slipped my phone back in the pocket of my Versace shorts.

“That was so mean, JoJo. You could’ve at least answered and said you were busy.”

“Say, I know that may have just looked bad, but I really don’t give a fuck. I know my mama, you don’t.”

She jerked away from me. “And that may be true but you don’t have to be an asshole about it!”

She speed walked off, letting me know that she was pissed. I guess I did come at her kind of strongly but everybody was pissing me off by telling me what I should do when it came to my mom. Keiko just so happened to catch a delayed reaction from what had been building up.

When I got back to our villa she was sitting inside on the sofa and scrolling through her phone. I joined her and removed her phone from her hand.

“Excuse you?” She scoffed.

“I wanted to apologize for snapping on you about my mama.”

“You didn’t have to take my phone to do that.”

“I did because I want to talk and I need your full attention.”

“You got it. Wassup?”

“I went to juvie when I was 12.”

“Okayyy,” her eyes danced around in confusion. “What does that have to do with anythi-“

“It was for stabbing my mom’s boyfriend up badly. He was waving a gun in her face, even fired that muthafucker, so I stepped in on some captain save a hoe type shit. Nigga almost died...but he didn’t. The police showed up and of course they arrested my black ass.”

“Wasn’t it self defense on your part?”

“It should’ve been, but my mama hid the niggas gun before the police came up in the house. So it looked like I just got involved in an adult argument and stabbed somebody. Looking back I should’ve said something about ole boy having a gun, but I was taught not to snitch or talk to police at all. I just took my lick. At the end of the day I had saved my mama and I was content with that.”

“So is that why you’re mad? Because she hid the gun?”

“Yea, but that ain’t the main reason. Looking back she probably hid that bitch because she was on some dumb shit and the gun was in her name along with a lot of other shit that nigga owned. If the police got that gun she would’ve been responsible for all the bodies he’d caught on that bitch. So I think she was looking out more for herself than him.”

“I guess that makes it better,” she said sarcastically. “So what’s the main reason you’re mad with her?”

“Because she continued fucking with the nigga after I went to jail. Then he was still around when I came home.”

“What?!” She exclaimed in shock.

“Yea. That’s when I washed my hands with her...and that’s when I got in the streets heavy. I was never home because I didn’t feel safe there. And in order to be away from home I needed money. So I started getting it how I lived.”

“Where was your daddy?”

“Doing him.”

“Y’all seem so close now.”

“Yea...now. I ain’t gon stunt, I still resent him for not being more present when it mattered.”

“Have you ever told him that?”

“Fuck no. Nobody got time for that soft shit.”

“Johan expressing how you feel with people you love is not soft!”

“You would say that. You’re a female. Y’all can be all emotional and shit without looking crazy.”

“Well baby you sound crazy right now. Nobody would look at you in any type of way. All that shit is in your head. You feel like you have to be tough because that’s all you’ve been thus far. I’m not telling you to break down and cry everyday, but it wouldn’t kill you to just talk to your parents in depth about why you think they failed you.”

“Parents? Man I’ll entertain having a conversation with my pops, but I ain’t doing that with my mom. She don’t deserve it.”

She grabbed my hand. “It’s not about what she deserves. It’s about you. Forgive her for yourself.”

I stared in her slanted eyes before I grabbed her neck and kissed her passionately. I’d had the conversation about my mom with my grams and my dad, and she was the first person to actually make sense. I could see myself talking to her about important matters like this in the future.

Keiko

“YES! YES! RIGHT THERE!” I screamed as Johan worked his long dick in between my legs. When he went deeper than I anticipated I attempted to scoot away, but he gripped me back by ass cheeks.

“Don’t run, take this dick.” He growled before biting my lip.

“You killing me baby,” I moaned as I dragged my fingernails across his back.

“I’m tryna kill this pussy so stop running from this dick,” he ordered.

“I’m not gonna run!” I squealed as he twirled his dick around inside of me.

“Yea? You gon take this dick like a good girl?”

“YES!!!”

“Tell me.”

“I’ma take this dick like a good girl!!!”

“Yea, I know you is.”

He smashed his lips against mine, and they traveled from my mouth to my neck and then to my nipples. My body shook as I wet his dick up even more.

“That’s my baby. I know exactly what buttons to push,”he boasted. I was in the middle of a strong orgasm, so I had no choice but to let him have his moment. He deserved it.

“You gon take this nut, Ki?”

“My birth controlll,” I moaned.

“Answer my question,” he demanded, as his pumps grew quicker and more forceful. It instantly clouded my judgment.

“Ima take it, baby!”

“You gon take what?”

“Your nut!”

“Where at?”

“In my pussy!”

“You gon carry my baby if you get pregnant?” He questioned while fucking the shit out of me.

“YESSSS!”

“Say that shit.”

“Ima carry your baby, Johan!”

“Shittttt,” he groaned as his back stiffened. He blasted off in me for over thirty seconds.

We had a fancy dinner planned for that night, but we ended up sleeping through it. By the time we woke back up we were both too tired to do anything besides stay in the room. We ordered room service and we went swimming in our pool. While we were eating at the table outside, I got a text from my mom that instantly blew me. I had been dodging her calls but it was with good reason. She’d acted a plum fool before I left for this trip.

Mom- Choosing a man over your family will never roll over well.

“This lady here, bruh,” I vocalized, finally tired of keeping it all in.

“What?”

“My mama. I’m finna block her!”

“Don’t do that,” he advised seriously. “She might really need to hit you about something important and you’re

out of the country.”

“So I should let her continue bothering me for nothing?”

“What is she bothering you about?”

“She talking bout I’m choosing a man over my family.”

His face crinkled in bewilderment. “Where the fuck she get that bullshit from? You go hard for your family. Including her.”

“Thank you!” I clapped my hands. “She’s mad because I’m not spending New Years with them. She’s really hard up about all of us bringing in the new year together, but I never do anything for myself. The one time I do I’m all of a sudden picking a man over my family. She’s ridiculous sometimes.”

“Sometimes?” He repeated while scratching his head.

“Alright, all the time,” I tittered.

“You want my honest opinion?”

“Yea, but don’t be disrespectful.” I warned.

He laughed. “The nerve of your mama to ever question your loyalty.”

“Well I’m never gon let nobody talk crazy about her.”

“And you shouldn’t. What I’m about to say isn’t crazy. I think.”

“Let me be the judge of that.”

“Aight. Well I honestly think she’s jealous.”

“What?” I giggled. “Really Johan?”

“No forreal. She’s gotta be lonely with Red in jail, and you’re being carried by me the way she was probably carried by Red when he was home. It gotta get under her skin to see you in a position she was once in. She probably really misses you right now too since you’re usually home for the holidays.”

“Yea she misses me looking after her kids,” I grumbled, but I was really thinking about the shit he had just said. My mom being jealous never crossed my mind, but it made perfect sense in the way he put it. If it was something as simple as that then maybe she was going to get over it soon.

Chapter 14

January 15, 2016

Johan

“This nigga really got two babies on the way,” I mumbled to myself while scrolling through my family’s group chat on my phone. My aunt Jenesha had sent a mobile invitation for Julian and his girlfriend, Felisha’s, baby shower to us. Aunt Keemaya asked her what about the other baby on some messy shit, but nobody expected anything different from her. Her antics were actually kind of funny, and it wasn’t like she was lying to stir up trouble. Julian *did* have another baby on the way with his ex girlfriend. Everybody couldn’t believe it, but I was merely surprised that my lil cousin was having kids before me.

When I heard a sudden rush of commotion, I looked up and saw Keiko exiting the bandhall with the rest of her team. I thought she was done with the dance team now that the football season was over, but the band director asked her to stick around for parade season and she accepted his offer. They were only doing a few major parades, so it wasn’t going to take up too much of her time. It was definitely cutting into

our time, but she enjoyed dancing for the band, so I wasn't trying to come between that.

“Hey baby,” she smiled as she opened the car door.

“Wassup?” I responded as she reached over to kiss me. I'd been in BR for the past three days with her and I'd been picking her up from dance practice. She had been riding to school with her roommate.

“Nothing much, just tired. Practicing for parades ain't no joke.”

I could tell by looking at her that she'd been pushed to her limit in practice. Her hair was in a messy bun, her body was glistening with sweat, and she was slouching in the seat. Yea my baby was exhausted.

“Well we bouta go straight to New Orleans, so you can take a nap.”

“Wait, did you grab your mom's birthday gift out of my closet?”

“Now how I'm supposed to grab something you ain't told me to grab?”

“I honestly thought I did. You know I had to drag myself out of bed this morning because I was so tired.”

“Yea you was complaining about feeling nauseous too,” I reminded her.

“See, I obviously wasn’t feeling good. I’m all better now though.”

“Yea, alright,” I chuckled. “So I really gotta go back for this gift?”

“Yes! I brought that shit, so I want her to have it.”

“I told you buying my mama something wasn’t necessary. I don’t know why you went and bought a gift anyway when I told you I was still thinking about going.”

“Because I knew that would make your chances of going increase. Johan you already told that lady we were coming. We gotta go show our faces.”

“Man that was the Henny talking, not me.”

“You love blaming shit on Henny,” she snickered.

She was laughing, but it really was the Hennesy this time. On New Years we got so drunk at the bar in Bali, and my mom facetimed me to wish me a happy new year. She caught me at a good time because I answered and actually held a conversation with her. Of course Keiko’s drunk ass joined in on the conversation. Before the call ended, I was agreeing to

attend her 41st birthday party that she was having at her house. I had been thinking of a million ways to get out of it, but Keiko was obviously looking forward to it.

“That shit be having me out my body.”

“Uh-huh. You’re going Johan.”

“I’m a grown man, shawty. You don’t tell me what to do.”

She gave me a deadly look.

“But you could ask me and maybe I’ll agree.”

“Yea, that’s what I thought,” she giggled.

“Speaking of the devil,” I said when my phone started ringing. It was my mom calling.

“Answer,” Keiko urged.

I accepted the call and put it on speaker.

“Hello?”

“Hey baby,” she coughed. “You coming tomorrow right?”

“Yea, me and Keiko coming.”

“Hey Miss Meekayla!” Keiko spoke to her.

“Hey Miss Keiko,” she laughed. “I look forward to meeting you in person tomorrow.”

“Same here,” Keiko replied.

“I can’t believe you have a girlfriend, JoJo,” she gushed, before coughing again.

I winced in discomfort for her. That cough sounded nasty.

“Are you sure you want to have a party tomorrow? You not sounding too good.”

“Boy I’m fine. You know my allergies always act up around this time of the year.”

“I guess, but I’ll be there. I don’t know how long I’ll stay though.”

Keiko gave me menacing eyes, and I returned the look mockingly, propelling her to laugh under her breath.

“T-that’s okay,” she coughed again. “As long as you come...and hopefully we’ll get a chance to talk.”

“You think that’s a good idea at your party?”

“I don’t know. It seems like everytime we see each other it’s for a gathering of some sort. Anytime I invite you

some place where it'll just be the two of us you're busy or something. I'm realizing I need to take whatever I can get from you."

"Well now you know how I felt growing up."

There was silence from her end. I almost thought she hung up until I heard her voice again.

"I guess I deserve that, and even though I've apologized a million times I understand I can't undo my shortcomings as a mama. At the end of the day, I love you, and we need to talk. Can we do that?"

This was why I steered clear of talking to my mom. She knew how to make a nigga feel guilty when I hadn't even done shit to her to feel that way.

"Yea, we can talk. Bye," I said, before hanging up. I avoided looking at Keiko because I knew she had a mouthful to say.

"Go ahead and get it off your chest." I gave her the green light to tell me I was wrong. It was better to just get it over with.

"You're justified in how you feel."

I did a double take.

“What?”

“I said you have a right to feel the way you do.”

“But?”

“No buts. It’s just time to tell your mom how you feel. She obviously wants a better relationship with you. If you don’t want that then cool, but at least tell her why.”

“At her birthday party though?”

“Maybe schedule another time to talk if you plan on being harsh,” she advised. I couldn’t agree more.

Keiko

Farrah- Bitch are we friends or not? Because we haven’t spoken since Bayou Classic weekend. Our crab sister’s told me you and Johan are dating exclusively now, and that’s cool. But why throw me away?!

I let out an exasperated breath as I read the message and let myself into my apartment building. This bitch was really crazy. We spoke after Bayou Classic because I deliberately remembered telling her that I was going to fall back as a fuck buddy and a friend for a little while. At least

until her feelings for me went away and she met someone else. That hoe just changed the subject and asked me what I was doing for Christmas. I guess she was going the in denial route, but I wanted no parts of that shit. I did what I should've done a long time ago and blocked her number.

I heard Manny's voice as I walked down the hallway that led to our living room. I was about to cross the threshold and make my presence known, but I stopped dead in my tracks when I heard *my* name come from her mouth.

“Girl you know Keiko ass ain't coming. All she been doing is laying up under that nigga.”

My heart skipped a beat because I knew she was talking to Janae who'd recently just moved back home with her parents in New Orleans. She had asked me to come over to visit her with Manny today, but I declined her invitation. I already had plans with Johan. We were going to the movies and then to dinner. Of course I could've gotten out of those plans, but I didn't want to. I had no idea why this had to be a conversation between her and Manny, but I was all ears. I was just bothered that I couldn't hear what Janae's ass was saying. However, Manny was saying so much that she made it clear that Janae was talking shit right with her.

“Friend, I’ve been telling you she’s jealous of you. How much you want bet she gon’ pop up pregnant next? Anything to one up you. Just like she had to start dating a Martelle because you were with one for years. She’s been like that since we were lil girls. A real monkey see, monkey do ass bitch.”

I had the urge to jump from the behind the wall and fuck her up for playing with my character like that. The only thing that held me back was wanting to hear whatever she had to say next.

“Hold on bitch, let me put you on speaker so I can read what her ex best friend was tweeting earlier. I just know it’s about her.”

I was happy that I would now be able to hear exactly what Janae was saying, but I was also seething mad about this discussion with me as the center. This couldn’t have been the first one because they were way too comfortable with dragging me for fifth.

“Are you listening, Janae?” Manny asked.

“Yea,” Janae replied.

“Alright, so you tell me if I’m tripping. This morning Farrah tweeted ‘the bitches y’all put on a pedestal and make go viral every other day are not who y’all think they are.’ Then after that she tweeted ‘hoes be different people in real life then what they portray for the cameras.’”

“Bitch she is definitely talking about Keiko. That hoe always going viral with the dance team! I don’t know why either! The captain before her was *wayyyy* better. I think the public only likes Keiko because she is really pretty with a nice body,” Janae said.

“Girl, her looks definitely play a hand in it, cause she’s overhyped. And if she’s doing Farrah dirty she’ll do us Farrah. Yea Farrah a stripper and all, but she’s always been a great friend to Keiko.”

“Good thing I never really viewed Keiko as my friend, so she can’t do me dirty. That’s your childhood bestie.”

“Not! We’ve known eachother since childhood, but we were never besties. Yall about to be cousins in laws,” Manny tittered.

“Lies! I can’t see her and Johan lasting forreal. Those Martelle men are dogs, and you know Keiko gon’ think she’s

too good to stick around. She gon fold as soon as she sees him with the next bitch.”

“Yea, her dumb ass would do that.”

I’d heard enough. I’d listened to them carry on about me long enough. I rounded the corner, while thanking God that I was in my practice attire.

“Keiko!” Manny exclaimed with wide eyes.

“Get up,” I ordered, while making sure my bun was secure in it’s scrunchy.

“What?”

“Bitch I heard you talking shit. Get up!”

“Keiko you’re trip-“

I wasn’t about to allow her to play with my intelligence, and I’d already given her a fair warning, so she couldn’t say I blindsided her. I bald my fist up and brought it straight to her face. I stood over her on the couch and pummeled into her face viciously with my fist.

“AHHH! BITCH GET OFF ME!” She screamed, while trying and failing to hit me back. I had the leverage and the advantage because I was *pissed*. I was honestly more upset with myself because I knew these hoes weren’t on my level,

but I kept them around based on familiarity. It shouldn't have even surprised me how they were talking behind my back. I was the one constantly telling them how it was and encouraging them to make better decisions. Of course they'd see me as a threat or the bad guy. They weren't smart enough to know a real bitch when they saw one because they were fake. I guess that's why they got along so well.

“KEIKO!”

Johan's voice didn't make me let up on my attack, but him grabbing me by my waist and pulling me off of that bitch forced me to stop. She had the audacity to hop up and lunge at me, but Johan turned me away from her. When she tried to reach over him, he pushed her back forcefully, making her fly against the couch.

“CHILL THE FUCK OUT!” He barked at her.

“Nigga you run her! Not me! Don't be touching me or screaming at me!”

“Bitch you need to be thanking me! I just saved your dumb ass! I should let her fuck your ungrateful ass up again!”

I spotted Manny's phone on the floor, and I was able to slither out of Johan's grasp to scoop it up. The moment it was

in my hands, he grabbed me again. I already had what I wanted so I didn't care.

“JANAE WHEN YOU DROP THAT BABY I’MA FUCK YOU UP TOO! THAT’S A PROMISE YOU DUMB BITCH! AND THAT BABY NOT GON MAKE JULIAN WANT YOUR BIRDBRAIN ASS!”

“Alright, you cut up enough,” Johan yanked the phone from me, and threw it on the couch to Manny. “Let’s go get my mom’s gift so we can go.”

Chapter 15

January 16 , 2016

Johan

“Baby you alright?” My mom asked Keiko, who looked visibly sick. That nauseous feeling that she claimed

went away came back now that she was at my mom's party attempting to drink alcohol and eat party food.

“No, we gon' be heading out soon.” I answered for her.
“That's cool with you?”

I don't know why I asked because I didn't care about her answer. My grandma and dad talked all that shit about her changing but it looked like she was on drugs. Her hair was noticeably thin when it was usually thick and curly, her light brown skin appeared to be dull, and her light eyes seemed faded. I wouldn't be surprised if she was currently high right now. That had to describe her strange behavior tonight. My mom always knew how to party, but she was much more animated tonight. Shawty was jumping on tables, twerking on everybody in the room except me and Keiko, and she was crying every other second about making it to another year. I mean I was happy to see her enjoying herself, and I even laughed a few times, but now I was over it and ready to go. Keiko not feeling good just gave me the out I needed.

“Yea it's fine. I'm just happy you stayed for as long as you did. Thank you for coming baby. I really appreciate it.
Keiko you gon be alright?”

“I hope so M’am,” she replied, while standing up to give her a hug. “I’m glad you liked your gift.”

“Like? Sweetie I love it,” she gushed while clutching her necklace that Keiko has gotten her. Ironically it matched her birthday outfit perfectly. “How’d you know my birthstone was a blue sapphire?”

“Your son told me,” she smiled weakly.

She looked surprised. “Well god job, son.”

“You know I got a good memory.”

“You sure do. Hopefully we can do lunch or something soon...so we can talk.”

“Yea, we can do that.”

“Great,” she smiled, while tearing up for the millionth time that night. Yea, it was time to go.

“Let’s go KiKi,” I grabbed her hand.

“Take that girl straight to Walgreens and get her a pregnancy test,” my mom instructed.

Keiko’s eyes ballooned, but I wasn’t phased.

“That was the plan, mama.”

Keiko

“Please stop crying,” Johan begged, as he hugged me tighter on the bathroom floor.

“I-I-I was supposed to graduateeeee,” I cried hysterically.

“Yo you tripping...you can still do that. You can’t be nothing but a few weeks which means you won’t be shit but four months or five months in May when you graduate. I’m not saying being pregnant won’t make this last semester in college for you hard, but it’s possible KiKi.”

I had to be a rock for her right now, so I couldn’t even celebrate and express the main emotion I was feeling right now; happiness. I was going to be a daddy. Keiko was going to have my baby. I was completely content. I just needed her to stop being so damn dramatic. Shawty was acting like she was about to die. When the results came back as positive on all three tests that she’d pissed on, she collapsed to the floor and started kicking and screaming like a five year old child

throwing a tantrum. It just wasn't that serious to be doing all that.

"I don't want a baby!" She screamed. "I told your ass that! That's why I got on birth control!"

"And you know that shit ain't 100%, so what you tryna say?"

"It was working just fine until you hid my pills! You probably so happy right now!" She boohooed before punching my chest.

"Man calm yo ass down. You probably upsetting my baby!" I roared. I wasn't even going to acknowledge her accusations.

"FUCK YOU AND THIS BABY!" She shouted in my face, before hopping up quicker than a bat and running out my bathroom. We were at my house in New Orleans for the first time because it was closer to my mom's house on the Westbank. I wasn't about to drive way back downtown because I was too anxious to find out if she was pregnant or not. I never imagined her reacting like this. I knew there'd be some tears...but damn. She was freaking out.

I rushed after her to my room where she was slipping her feet back in her boots. She only had one half way on, so I yanked it off her and threw it across the room along with other one,

“Fuck my baby?! That’s what you said?! Say that shit again?! I dare you!”

She looked away, so I gripped her face and made her look at me.

“Say that shit again!”

“Johan I don’t want a babyyyy,” her head fell as she broke down again.

“I don’t give a fuck what you want! My baby is already inside of you so your ass gon be a mama. You don’t have a choice!”

Her head lifted in disbelief. “WHAT?!”

“Did I fucking stutter!”

“No, but it sounds like you’re trying to dictate what the fuck I do with my body! Are you out your fucking mind?!”

“Bitch is you out yours?! That’s *my* baby, too! I have just as much of a say as you do!”

“Yea, you have a say, but I don’t have to listen to you!!! I been fucking with you for a good 10 seconds, maybe I’m not ready to have a baby yet. Especially for a nigga that calls me out of my name after I just found out some life changing news!!!”

“If you can say fuck my kid then I can call you what I want!”

“Johan,”she placed her hands in prayer position. “I told you what I would do if I ended up pregnant. Why even test me?”

“Alright,”I laughed, despite myself. “Test my gangsta.”

“What does that mean?”

“Man you know how I get down. If you take my baby life then don’t be surprised if you meet the same fate.”

I watched all the life drain from her face at my threat. She stood up looking terrified, but I pushed her back down gently.

“Johan. I. Want. To. Leave. Now.” She expressed with tears rolling down her face.

“What you want to leave for?!”

“You just threatened to kill me!!! I don’t feel safe and I want to leave!!!”

“Girl, how is me telling you how karma works, threatening to kill you? Kill the dramatics. And why the fuck would I hurt you while you pregnant with my baby? Shit don’t even make sense.”

She looked at me like I needed a straitjacket.

“Nigga you’re fucking crazy, let me go. I need to think about all of this on my own.”

“YOU AIN’T GOING NOWHERE!” I shouted so loud that she jumped. “You’re pregnant with our baby, so we need to make every decision together.”

She crossed her arms while looking down. She was staying put, but I knew it was out of fear and that didn’t make me feel 100% good. However, I didn’t feel 100% bad either. I did what I had to do to keep her here with me. If she left she’d make a rash decision that would be good for no one.

“Keiko?”

She didn’t respond. I met her at eye level, and she tried to glance off.

“Look at me,” I demanded. She slowly met my gaze.
As soon as our eyes locked she became a blubbering mess.

“J-J-Jo I-I’m n-o-o-o-t ready to be a mamaaaaa.”

“You’re gonna be a perfect mom. Your siblings already gave you bukoo practice.”

She glared at me. “Stop tryna be funny.”

“I’m not, baby. You got this. We got this.”

“But we’re not stable enough in life yet.”

“Who’s not? Money’s no issue.”

“Yea money’s no issue until you catch a case and the feds take everything. Then I’ll be a struggling single mother.”

“Oh Keiko, your family has really corrupted you. I’m sorry that Red wasn’t playing for keeps, but that ain’t me. More than half of my money has been invested into legal shit and cleaned up. The portion that’s dirty is hidden in so many different places where they won’t be able to take that shit. You and my seed gon’ be straight for life. I put that on everything I love.”

“Ok, money’s no issue,” she whimpered. “But I want you here with me.”

“I am, what you mea-“

“Not if you get arrested or something. I’ll be raising our baby by mysel-“

“Bruh, why you going all dark on me?”

“Because it’s a possibility! I don’t feel comfortable having your baby knowing that the streets can take you out at any second.”

“Well damn Keiko, that’s a hell of a thing to say after letting me nut in yo ass for months. Why you ain’t say all this shit while you were agreeing to have my baby?”

“Because it’s hard to think when dick is being shoved in you at a rapid pace!”

My dick jumped, as laughter escaped my mouth.

“I’m serious!” She insisted.

“That’s the funny part...but look, I’ll work on stepping back from the game if you just promise that you’ll keep my baby. Please Keiko, I’m begging you.”

“You mean that? You’ll really leave the streets alone?”

“Yea.”

I was desperate, so I wasn't above lying to get what I wanted. I didn't plan on leaving the game until I was about 29 or 30.

“O-okay,” she sniffled. “Can you hold me while I sleep?”

“Why is that even a question KiKi? I got you for life.”
I hugged her tightly.

“You mean that?”

“Yea. I love you. You love me?”

“So much.”

“Tell me.”

“I love you so much.”

A nigga had never felt so good hearing those words. Our baby was about to only bring us closer than what we already were. That night Keiko and I made love, before falling asleep in each other's arms. It was probably my mind playing tricks on me, but her pussy felt so much better now that I knew she was carrying my child. Even being next to her felt better because I had planted my seed. I was making plans to take her on a big shopping spree the next day as a way to say thank you for keeping my baby. Imagine how shocked I was when I

woke up and she was no longer by my side. I didn't smell breakfast or nothing, so I assumed she wasn't downstairs cooking for me. My assumptions were proven true when I checked my whole house for Keiko. She had really dipped out on my ass. My first move was to call her, but she was ignoring my calls. I thought I'd been blocked, and I prepared myself to get into stalker mode, but she texted me,

Keiko- I need space.

Me- I swear I'll kill you if you hurt my child.

Keiko- I'd love to see you find me first.

Me- Bitch do you think this shit is a joke?

Keiko- Do you? First you hide my BC pills to get me pregnant, threaten to kill me, and then lie straight to my face about leaving the game when you know damn well you're not. Do I look stupid nigga?

I was at a loss for words. She really played me last night because I thought I'd really succeeded in convincing her to keep our child.

Me- So you gon kill my baby Keiko?

Keiko- I don't know what I'm going to do. I've heard what you want me to do, and now I need to decide what I

want to do.

Me- Without me though?

Keiko- Yes. I don't need you threatening me or barking demands my way. I'll figure this out.

Me- Well I'll tell you this here, if you kill my child you're dead to me. Ain't no coming back from that shit. I swear.

I thought for sure that would give me some leverage. She loved me, and she didn't want to lose me just like I didn't want to lose her. That's why her response surprised the hell out of me.

Keiko- Do what you gotta do. I'll respect it. Hopefully you'll respect whatever it is I do.

That backfired....

Chapter 16

February 6, 2016

Keiko

“5,6,5,6,7,8,” I counted loudly before throwing up a hand single for one of our struts. My girls followed my lead and we started jamming to the band’s rendition of “What About Your Friends” by TLC. The crowd cheered loudly, and several people encouraged my dancing or told me how pretty I was. I wished I could tell them all thank you, but I was focused on performing. Parades could get boring and repetitive fast, so I was relishing in the fact that I had people this engaged. My squad also looked beautiful in a purple Bobcat print French cut leotard. My feet were screaming in the gold character shoes we had on, but they matched the gold sequins on the uniform and our gold headbands too perfectly not to wear them. This was my second to last parade before Zulu on Mardi Gras day, so I had to leave a good mark on everybody.

The parade was almost over and I couldn’t be more grateful. Endymion was *long* and it would take everything out of me and the team to keep the same energy from start to

finish. I was worried about my crabs, but they had been hanging in there. I guess the other parades we'd done so far had prepared them for this. Zulu would be their ultimate test. Hell it would be my ultimate test too. I was taking a huge chance by doing these parades while I was pregnant. I hadn't started experiencing sickness where I'd throw up yet. When I went to the doctor I was told that morning sickness or barfing doesn't happen for every woman, but I had been getting intense nausea where it'd feel like I had to throw up. That was worse in my opinion because I'd much rather throw up and get it over with. Sometimes I'd feel nauseous and light headed while I was marching in a parade. Whenever that happened I'd let one of my crab sisters or Brooklyn lead for a few songs. I was worried that for Zulu I'd pass out or something. I probably should've stepped down, but as a senior I was holding my last performance close to my heart.

As we approached the last street of the parade, I bucked low to end the parade strong. I knew my squad probably hated me right now because this mirror count was no joke. However, when I turned around they were killing it with big smiles on their faces. My heart felt full because I knew I was leaving a great team behind. They were going to be just fine without me.

“We killed that parade!” Brooklyn celebrated as we hopped off the bus and made our way to the band room. It was almost one am and we were just getting back to BR. Parade season traffic was no laughing matter.

“Girl your daddy was screaming so loud for you,” one of her crab sisters giggled.

It felt like a little bee stung my heart. Brooklyn’s dad came all the way from New York to see her march in the parade this weekend, but my mom was right in New Orleans and hadn’t been to *one* parade to see me. She claimed that she couldn’t get out of work for parade season because it was one of their busier times. I would’ve believed that if she made her way to a few of my games this past season but she had been at *none*. Some of my family members came to a few games, but it was only when I offered them free tickets. I may have been a big deal to the band fans, but most of my family could care less.

Two band members laughing and whispering in close proximity to me broke me out of my thoughts. I looked over at them and they looked away suspiciously. One of them even shielded their phone like I cared about what was on it. Weird. They were freshmen, so my only assumption was that they were intimidated by me.

“Captain look!” Sasha held her camera up to my face, as all my crabs surrounded me for a selfie. I smiled big, while they gave me air kisses. It was crazy how in the beginning of this process Sasha was the shyest and super insecure, now she exuded sexiness and her confidence was through the roof. The fans loved her and were already subbing her as the 2018 captain. I knew any of my 2015 babies would be good for the job because I’d raised them well.

“Alright y’all, go home and get some rest,” I advised. The rest of the girls said goodbye to me, but Charm stayed behind. She was perhaps my most outspoken crab.

“Captain we gotta talk.”

“Is everything okay?” I asked with concern.

“No. There’s a video going around our crab class. I heard about it from one of my crab brothers because of course everybody else was too pussy to send it directly to one of us.”

“Oh God,” I held my head. “What kind of video? I told y’all that y’all have to be mindful of what you do because y’all represent this entire organization-“

“Captain none of us are in the video.”

“Then who is?”

Just as she was about to answer, we were interrupted.

“Keiko I need to see you in my office.” My band director said before storming off. My heart dropped to the pits of hell and fear consumed me. Mr. Jackson was usually way more warm and friendly with me. I was one of his favorites so he often put me on a pedestal. He never held that type of tone with me or looked at me that way. Even when my grades dropped he was still warm with me, so I was shaking in my boots. I forgot all about my conversation with Charm and I made my way to Mr. Jackson’s office.

“Yes Mr. Jackson?” I asked timidly with my head poking through his door.

“Come sit down, Keiko.” He nodded to one of the chairs in front of his desk.

My legs felt like they weighed 50 pounds each as I walked over, and the large dancing diamond jogging suit I

wore over my dance uniform had nothing to do with it.

“I-I don’t know how to say this, but there’s an inappropriate video going around amongst members of this band of you and another young lady who was once a part of this organization.”

The hairs on the back of my neck stood up and my mouth went dry. He had to be talking about Farrah...but what video? I never recalled us both deciding to record anything we did. I would never be stupid enough to make documented evidence of something I wanted to keep on the down low.

“W-what?” I stuttered incredulously.

“I was shocked myself, Keiko. Look, this is not about your sexual orientation because I don’t care what anyone in this band does in the privacy of their bedroom. The problem here is that there’s a video of you engaging in sexual activity.”

“O-oh My God,” I clutched my chest as my heart beat rapidly.

“Did you not know this video existed?”

“No,” I uttered as fresh tears sprung from my eyes.

Mr. Jackson let out a deep breath. “Keiko this hurts me to do, but I’m pulling the Diamonds from the parade on Mardi

Gras.”

“What?! Why?!”

“Because there’s no telling who else has seen this video. I always tell y’all that your individual decisions have a large effect on this entire band. When people see that video they don’t just see Keiko, they see Keiko the Dancing Diamond captain. I can’t have you as the face of the team for the biggest black parade on Mardi Gras.”

“I understand that,” my voice trembled. I was distraught and crushed that my last parade was being taken from me, but I did get it. He had to protect the band’s image first, not worry about my feelings. Besides, I had gotten myself into this nonsense by dealing with a crazy ass bitch. “But why make the rest of the team suffer? One of my crab sisters or Brooklyn can lead!”

“I love how hard you go for your team Keiko, but I’m not throwing one of those girls to wolves on Mardi Gras. Zulu is a hard parade and I don’t think any of them are ready to do that on a whim. Besides, I don’t want questions to be raised about why *you’re* not leading. I’m trying my hardest to have this video swept under the rug. Hopefully the video hasn’t made its way out of this sacred band hall.”

I was mortified that the video had made its way *into* the band hall. My reputation had already been trashed. I wasn't ashamed that people knew that I'd been with a girl, because the band was full with openly gay males and females. I was ashamed that people were actually seeing me have sex. Now when they saw me they'd no longer see the legendary two year captain who had the diamonds looking flawless. They'd see a freak hoe. I was sure that's what Farrah wanted. Now I just had to figure out how she wanted this ass whooping I was going to bestow upon her.

February 8, 2016

Johan

A few weeks have passed. I've given you your space.

It's about time we talked now. This is not even like us.

The erratic messages I'd been sending Keiko since the day she ditched me at my house in New Orleans were long gone, and I'd resorted to begging. I hadn't heard from Keiko

or saw her in weeks. If it wasn't for me seeing her march in parades over youtube I would think she was dead somewhere. Of course I initially did the obvious shit like pulling up to her apartment, but I learned through Manny that she no longer lived there. To make matters worse I went to the band room for two days straight and that bitch was dead. Campus security actually came and asked me who I was waiting for me because the band was practicing elsewhere in preparation for Mardi Gras. When I asked him where that was he refused to tell me. He claimed that whoever I was waiting on could tell me that information. I even tried to bribe him with money but his noble ass wouldn't budge.

I had been ghosted in real life, but she hadn't blocked me yet. In my mind that meant she still wanted to hear from me, and she did every day. I wasn't even expecting a response anymore, I just needed her to know that I was still here for her. That's why I was surprised when I saw the three dots pop up. She was finally hitting me back!

Keiko- I'm going through a lot right now Johan.

Me- Me too, Keiko. I'm worried about you and my baby.

Keiko- Boy how you know this baby still exists?

*Me- Because I know you ain't crazy. I'm finna
facetime you.*

Keiko-Okay.

I wasted no time calling her because she was obviously in a mood to talk. I couldn't let this opportunity pass by.

"Hello?" She said with just the top of her head in the camera.

"Let me see your face, baby."

The camera slowly panned down to her face and her eyes were wet and red. She was laying down and her room was dim despite it being the middle of the day.

"What's wrong, KiKi?"

"Everything."

"You still crying over spilled milk? You know I got you, girl."

She laughed weakly. "Crazy enough this baby is the least of my worries right now."

"So you keeping it?"

"I don't know. I'm still thinking about it."

I almost bit my tongue because I didn't want to upset her, but I wasn't set up that way.

“Stop thinking about it. If you haven't done it yet then that means you don't want to.”

“I actually do want to. I just can't bring myself to make the appointment.”

“Man then that means you don't want to do it. Stop talking like that.”

She just looked down.

“So what's making you cry? Who I need to fuck up?”

“A bitch named Farrah if I don't find her first.”

“Man what the fuck that hoe do? I told you I never liked her.”

“This bitch sent a video of me and her fucking to people in the band. It got back to my band director and he pulled me and the entire dance team from Zulu because of it. Now the shit is making its way around campus and I'm currently a trending topic. I'm so embarrassed all I want to do is lay down. To make matters worse one of my mom's friends who works on campus called her and asked if I was doing

okay because of the video. As if that wasn't damaging enough she sent the shit to my mom."

"What?! Man you gotta be fucking with me."

"Johan I'm laying down in bed on Lundi Gras crying. Does it look like I'm fucking with you?!" She snapped.

"Man that bitch is foul!!! She gon get her karma, don't even trip on that."

"Don't trip?! Are you serious?!"

"Where you at? You in BR?"

"I'm at a hotel in New Orleans."

"Why?"

"Because I was at home for Mardi Gras break, but my mom told me to get the fuck out of her house when she saw that video," her voice cracked.

Seeing her like this had me seeing red.

"Get your stuff together, I'm finna come get you."

"Johan I jus-"

"It's not up for debate! You don't need to be by yourself while you're like this. Especially while your pregnant. And fuck your mama! Forreal!"

“Alright Johan, calm down. I’m at the Marriott on Canal.”

“I’ll be there in about 10 minutes.”

Keiko

He got to me in less than 10 minutes. I had already paid for my room for the whole week, so I wasn’t going to check out. I’d probably need to come back here if Johan started getting on my nerves, so I wanted that option. When I got in his car his face shifted. He went from pissed to semi relaxed. The mug on his face didn’t disappear though.

“You been to the doctor?”He asked.

“Yea, just once. I’m just a little over a month pregnant.”

“You’re already in love huh?”

“What?”

“You’re already in love with the baby. I can tell.”

I'd never know how he saw right through me because it wasn't like I was smiling big or giving myself away. Either way he was correct. I was already attached to my child and hearing it's heartbeat just last week did something to me. The more I thought about an abortion the more I felt like I'd be betraying the life growing inside of me.

“Well it's mine, so of course I love it.”

“Don't call him an it, and it's mine too.”

“Him?” I chortled. “Let's not get beside ourselves. The first child in my family is usually a girl.”

“Well the first child in my family is usually a boy. Don't be shocked when we find out we're having Johan Junior.”

“What makes you think we're naming our son after you?”

He looked at me out the side of his eye before howling. “Girl, don't play with me.”

“You lucky I like your name.” I crossed my arms. “If it's a girl I want her name to be Jamiko.”

“That's...different, but it's nice for a girl. Where you got that from?”

“Well I really love Jhené Aiko’s daughter’s name which is Namiko. So I just substituted the N for a J. I was thinking about Jordan too for a girl, but then I remembered that’s your dad’s name.”

He laughed. “It’s funny you say that because that’s not stopping them from naming their daughter Jordan. They’re going to spell it with a y instead of an a though.”

“Awwwww, that’s so cute. Do you find it weird that you and your dad have a baby on the way at the same time?”

“Hell no. That nigga’s old ass might find it weird, but I don’t.”

“Johan that man is 41,” I giggled.

“Which means his life is almost over.”

“You play too much!” I pushed his shoulder playfully while laughing hard. It was strange how I was just at a low point no more than ten minutes ago and now I was smiling. I still wasn’t 100% okay, but Johan was a good distraction from my problems. He was making me feel better with his presence alone.

“We’re going to your house?”

“Nah, we was actually finna go to my apartment.”

“Ugh...I hate that hard ass bed at your apartment.”

“Girl ain’t shit wrong with that bed.”

“Tell that to my back. It still got ptsd from that brick you call a mattress.”

“Alright, you doing the most. We can go to my house.”

“You would want to, because I would’ve gone back to my hotel.”

“And I would’ve been right with you in that bitch.”

I stifled a smile. “Whatever Johan.”

“You gotta meet my people tomorrow for Mardi Gras since you not marching in Zulu any more.”

“Ugh,” I groaned, as my stomach tightened. “Don’t remind me. And I already know some of your people, Johan.”

“*Some*. And the people you do know are through business. I need to bring you around as my girl.”

His girl. He still considered me his girl even though I’d been ignoring the shit out of him. I still felt as though my actions were justified. He threatened to kill me and gave me an ultimatum on *my* body. I had to show him that shit wasn’t cool,

even though I'm sure he didn't regret it. He ass was crazy like that.

"I guess..."

"You don't sound too enthusiastic."

"I'm not. I told you that video of me and Farrah has started making its way around campus. I kind of wanted to lay low."

"That's what that hoe wants. She wants that video to make you crawl into a black hole. Don't give her the satisfaction. What was y'all doing on the video anyway? Could your face even be seen?"

"She was eating me out and then we tribbed. My face was clear as day."

"Damn. You was that comfortable with her to agree to be on camera?"

"Fuck no. That hoe filmed it without my permission. I didn't even know the camera was set up."

"Interesting."

He was being way more mute about this then I thought he would be. I could see the wheels in his head spinning though. He was just as upset as me, but he had to be holding

his composure for my sake. I was sure of that until we entered his house.

“Where that bitch be working at?”

I got chills so icy that I shivered.

“Johan I want to whoop her ass, not kill her. I don’t know if I can live with that on my conscience.”

“I ain’t gon kill that hoe. Ima just make her life harder like she’s trying to make yours harder. And you not whooping *nobody* ass while you pregnant. You got a freeby with that bitch Manny cause we ain’t know yet, but that shit dead now. Like Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder dead.”

My eyes squinted in confusion. “Baby Stevie not dead.”

“Man Ray Charles or whoever, you know what the fuck I mean.”

I almost laughed, but he was obviously serious. I hadn’t had any luck in finding Farrah anyway, so I was ready to hand the task over to him.

“What are you gonna do?”

“I got bitches on deck who fight for a living in almost every city she dances in. That hoe gon get fucked up

everywhere she works, and she gon gain a reputation for being problematic so that's gon mess with her money.”

That sounded good to me.

Chapter 17

February 9, 2016

Johan

“PUGHHHH!” Keiko threw up in the toilet while I held her hair. She was just fine the night before because we had sex all night. Then this morning she woke up puking her guts out. I was scared for her. The only time I saw people throw up like that is when they were drunk.

“Maybe we should go to the hospital, Ki.”

“Don't be ridiculous Johan,” she wiped her mouth with a napkin. “It's just morning sickness...I'm not used to this shit though.”

“This your first time throwing up in the morning?”

“Yup and I feel terrible.”

“Well maybe we should chill today.”

“Don’t let me ruin your Mardi Gras.”

I couldn’t imagine spending my favorite holiday inside, but I would do it for Keiko and our baby.

“Johan it’s just morning sickness,” she went on to say. “I’ll sleep it off. What you gon do? Stay here and watch me sleep?”

“Yea.”

“It’s not necessary. You can go and have fun.”

I eyed her strangely. “Is this a trap?”

“Boy no,” she laughed weakly. “You know I wasn’t really tweaking to go anyway. I feel like this was God’s way of giving me an out.”

“Oh so you happy you sick?”

“Not happy, but I’ll gladly go back to sleep after I brush my teeth.”

“Alright bruh, you can stay here and sleep while I go uptown by my people, but yo ass gon meet them before your

Mardi Gras break is over.”

“Okay Johan,” she signed in annoyance.

I kissed her cheek as she grabbed her tooth brush from her bag. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

I had only been at the parade for a few hours and I was already wishing I'd stayed home with Keiko. Anytime I was in New Orleans for too long I was reminded why I liked living in Miami. Then again maybe it wasn't New Orleans, maybe it was my damn family. These niggas were hot headed and forever in some bullshit. Ja'Keem had cut somebody off from his team, and ole boy was salty about it. That led to him talking shit and making threats that Keem didn't take lightly. Long story short ole boy had a funeral a few weeks ago and now niggas from his family wanted smoke. Usually we didn't care about people's families talking shit, but this niggas family had made threats to Keem's face today at the trucks parade on St.Charles. I hadn't witnessed it myself but my young hitta,

Benji, had informed me about what happened. Thank God he wasn't there to witness it because them niggas would've walked away limping.

"Lets go ride out and find them niggas,"I said to Benji. I was always ready to put in work, especially if my family was involved. Everybody's Mardi Gras was cut short a little earlier than we expected because of this bullshit. I was beyond ready to fix this minuscule problem and get back to more important matters; namely Keiko.

As Benji talked about places he thought they might, I texted Keiko to check on her.

Me- You good baby?

Keiko- Yea. I threw up again when I woke up but my headache is gone. I think the worst has passed.

Me- You ate something?

Keiko- Yea I ordered pizza and it was so good. You having fun?

Me- Man I was.

Keiko- What's wrong?

Me- Niggas losing they mind, but nothing I can't handle.

Keiko- come home pls.

Me- Girl I'm good. I just wanted to tell you to stay put. Don't be running off or going nowhere. I might be back late.

Keiko-Alright Johan. Just be safe.

Me- You need to be telling these other niggas that shit.

Keiko- you have a child on the way. Don't be stupid.

Me- Stupid is not in my nature. Hold down my crib.

Keiko- I got you. Just come back in one piece.

Chapter 18

February 12, 2016

Keiko

I was losing my damn mind and Johan was the culprit. I hadn't seen his face since Mardi Gras morning, but he had the audacity to demand me to stay at his house. I knew for a fact the city was hot based on the news alone. His little cousin Jamaya had been shot, and that rattled me because that girl was not affiliated with street bullshit. I guess being attached to the Martelles in any way made her or anybody in their family a sitting duck. I couldn't help but feel like I was bringing an innocent child into a bunch of bullshit. At this point I'd have to deal or try to talk some sense into Johan. It's too bad he was dodging my calls left and right. There'd been blood shed all over the city since Mardi Gras and I knew it was Johan's doing. That's why he hadn't been back yet. I was scared that I would wake up and find out that he'd been killed if he didn't come to his senses, so I played the only hand I had left out of desperation.

Me- I'm done with your ass.

Johan- Alright Keiko.

Me- Really?

Johan- Yea really. I don't have time to chase your ass right now. You know wtf going on. So if you wanna fold then do that.

Me- Okay.

Johan- okay what?

Me- I'm folding.

He didn't respond to that message, so he must've really meant business about not chasing me right now. I understood he had a lot going on with his cousin getting shot and everything, but he had a baby on the way. That should've trumped everything else. I was just more mad at myself because I didn't even have the balls to fold on his ass. I knew under that hard exterior he was hurting. Whenever he walked through the door I was going to be here for him.

“What this lil girl want?” I muttered as I watched my phone vibrate with Royalty's picture on the screen. Although my mom made me get out of her house, that didn't stop my siblings from contacting me. Just yesterday Ryan called and asked me to order them some pizza. I didn't ask where my mom was, I just did it. My mom had left such a bitter taste in my mouth that I didn't even want to think about her.

“Wassup RoRo?” I asked after answering the phone right away.

“Kiki the kitchen smoking!”

“What?!”

“Ryan tried to make noodles now the kitchen got smoke coming out of it.”

“Where’s mama?!” I asked in panic, as I hopped up to find my shoes and gather my things.

This was different from yesterday. It sounded like they were about to burn the damn house down! The adult who was the closest to the situation needed to handle it right away.

“Her been gone since Mardi Gras.”

“What?!” I exclaimed. “Who the hell been watching y’all?”

“Her had said that our brother could watch us because he old enough now.”

“Y’ALL NEED TO GET OUT THE HOUSE NOW IF THERE’S SMOKE IN THER-“

“Royalty what are you doing?! Gimme that phone!” I heard shuffling before Ryan spoke to me. “...KiKi?”

“RYAN IS THE KITCHEN ON FIRE?!”

“What?! No! I just forgot to put water in my noodles so it burned. That’s why there was smoke, but there’s no flames

or fire. Royalty just makes herself smart.”

“I was scared!” Royalty defended herself.

“I’m on my way. Y’all don’t need to be there by y’all selves. Royalty did right to call me. And why the fuck you ain’t tell me y’all there alone yesterday when you called and asked me for some damn food?”

He breathed heavily. “Because mama told me don’t call anybody and tell them we’re here alone. Not even you and Kiyor. I called you and asked for food because we were hungry and tired of eating sandwiches and noodles. But mama said I’ma get a whooping for that because Riley accidentally told her last night.”

I wanted to say I was surprised my mom was being this petty but I honestly wasn’t. When she kicked me out she told me to stay away from the rest of her kids with my “filth.” My mom was solely pissed off about that video because I was with another girl in it. She wasn’t overtly homophobic 24/7, but she’d made some comments in the past that made me aware that she wasn’t an ally for the LGBTQ community. That’s why I’d never shared my interest in girls with her, and that was a large reason why I kept any relationship that I had with

females on the down low. New Orleans was small and it was easy for anything to spread. Take Farrah for example.

I wasn't worrying about my mom today. My concern was my siblings safety. That's why I hopped my ass in an Uber to the Marriot so I could get my car and go straight to my mom's house. There was no way we were staying there though. I had too much pride to chill in a place I wasn't wanted. I called my sister to make something shake. I almost thought she wouldn't answer because like always she was at work.

“You lucky I'm on my lunch break, hoe. Wassup?”

“Can I swing by your job in like an hour to get the keys to your apartment. Your mama left her kids at the house by herself and Ryan almost burned that bitch down.”

“Girl what?!”

“Yes bitch. I can't believe her.”

“Shit me neither. You don't think nothing happened to her do you?”

That notion had never crossed my mind. When I factored that in with how the city had been a blood bath since

Mardi Gras night, I grew nervous. That was until I remembered something vital that Ryan had told me.

“Nope, Ryan talked to her last night. She told him she was going to whoop his ass because I ordered them pizza.”

“Girl..she’s still mad at you over that video?”

I was stunned into silence. I hadn’t talked to Kiyor about that yet out of embarrassment. The fact that she knew about it meant it was either getting around or my mama had run her mouth. Knowing her she was probably telling the whole family. She loved telling me and Kiyor’s business; good or bad.

“Yea, I know hoe. Ya mama told me. I was just waiting on you to call me and vent.”

“Girl that was gon never happen. This shit is so embarrassing.”

“You have no reason to be embarrassed. You grown. We gon fuck that bitch up though. Either you or her put that shit out, and I know it wasn’t you.”

“Yea, it was her bitter ass. Mad cause I don’t want fuck with her no more or be friends. She was giving me stalker vibes, so I started ignoring her. Next thing you know my band

director is calling me into his office to tell me about the video and how he's taking me out of the last parade. Oh not just me, but my entire team."

"Damn, so that's the real reason why you couldn't do Zulu! I'ma really slap that hoe if I see her."

"Please do," I huffed. "Slap your mama too."

"Bitch that lady is crazy. She called me *dragging* for you. Was calling you a dyke and every other gay slur you can think of."

My stomach churned as Kiyor continued to explain what happened.

"I was like ma, you seem more mad about her liking girls then you are about the video. She just came out and admitted that she was mad about that. Even said you were using Johan as a coverup, and that she knew that shit was fake all along."

That made me burst into laughter.

"What? She said that forreal?!"

"Yes! So I'm like, you know being bisexual is a thing right? She said there's no such thing as bisexuality. Either you're gay or you're not."

“Wow.” That was all I could muster up to that ignorance.

“Exactly bitch, so I’m irritated at this point and I want to shut her up. I told her bisexuality is real because I’m living it,” she tittered.

“Wait...bitch you like girls too?!”

“Hell no bitch,” she laughed. “I’m strictly dickly round this bitch, but I wanted to defend you. Well guess what?”

“What?”

“She’s mad at me now too,” she cackled. “She cursed me out so bad. Called me a nasty carpet munching hoe and told me don’t come around her with my devilish ways no more.”

“Yea...that sounds about right,” I mumbled. She’d pretty much told me something similar. “Kiyor go ahead and tell her you were joking. Don’t be taking an L for me.”

“Girl I ain’t telling her shit to get back on her good side. She’s our mother. It shouldn’t matter if we’re gay, straight, bisexual, or whatever. She should love us unconditionally. So when she stops being stupid she can call

me and you to make amends. Don't be kissing her ass like you usually do."

"I do not!" I scoffed.

"Alright hoe," she chortled. "But you can come get my keys. Don't let them children ruin the little shit that I worked hard for."

"Girl you know they don't play with me. They gon sit they asses down and watch tv or something."

"Okay, see you in a few KiKi."

When I got off the phone with her it crossed my mind to hit Johan up and let him know I had to leave his house just in case he returned. Then I started thinking how it would do him some good to let his mind wander about where I was. Hell I'd been doing it for three days. He'd be alright.

Johan

Girl I know you see me texting you. What the fuck you know want to eat? Im finna come back to the house in

like two hours.

I figured Keiko would be mad about our argument because I didn't play into her little games. Now I was starting to think maybe it wasn't a game. I was sitting on pins and needles wondering if this girl was really folding on me. She had expressed concerns about me being in the streets and what that would mean for our baby. It was possible that these past few days amplified her concerns and she was now running scared. I wanted to go see about her but I was in the middle of something important now.

“You think we can have your attention son?” My dad asked. We were at Uncle Jamal's house in Chalmette having a meeting on his patio about all the shit that had been unfolding and how we could wrap it up. We all knew better though. Shit like this didn't just wrap up overnight. It was really never ending until somebody threw in the towel because they were tired of death. It wouldn't be us. None of our people had died in the past few days. The oops couldn't say the same.

“Whatchu need my attention for? That's y'all guy right there,” I pointed at Keem. Technically this was *his* beef. I was involved by default because his beef was mine and vice versa.

“Nigga I thought you told Benji to find these niggas who shot Jamaya.”

“Oh yea,” I remembered. “He can’t find their exact location. And the location ole boy told us about was a bust. But the niggas that was there talked too much so we handled that.”

Bodies were dropping left and right and I felt no remorse. My little cousin who was innocent in all of this wasn’t spared, so we weren’t sparing nobody. Anybody could get it. Mama’s, sisters, brothers, aunties, uncles, and even grandmas if they wanted smoke. This shit wasn’t a game.

After rehashing all the details Camilla, Juri, and Brooklyn had given us, because they were out with Jamaya that night on Basin street, we came to the conclusion that Jamaya getting shot was related to Keem’s beef. Them pussy ass niggas knew she was his sister, and that Camilla was his shorty. What they did was a classic sucker move. They got at the weaker targets because getting at Keem would be too much of a struggle. I didn’t respect niggas like that, but if they wanted our attention then they had it. In the midst of all of this chaos we were going above and beyond to keep our families safe. That was the number one priority.

Keem and his mom had been staying here with Uncle Jamal. Grams, Aunt Jenesha, Julian, Juri, and Jigga were staying with Canary and my dad in their new East over home. Grams was mad as hell about not being to go home but we didn't care. It would be easy for anybody to find out where she stayed because she'd been in that same house uptown since the 70's. I'd been floating between both homes whenever I did need to get some sleep. If I went back to my house there was a big chance Keiko would guilt trip me into staying and I didn't have time for any weaknesses right now. I was in beast mode.

“This shit is crazy. You mean to tell me Benji can't even find the niggas?” My dad questioned as if he were disappointed in Benji.

“C'mon, you know like I know that if Benji knew he would be all over that,” Keem spoke up.

“Nigga, I know. I'm just saying, these lil niggas can't be that hard to find,” my dad assumed.

“I don't even know the rest of them. I only dealt with Jarvis, and I knew Dinero because he'd gone out of his way for me to know him. Lame ass.” Keem spewed hatefully.

“So, you didn't even know who you were beefing with?” His dad concluded. Usually I'd think Uncle Jamal was

just going out of his way to give Keem a hard time like he always did, but he'd made a valid point there.

“That wasn't beef,” he argued.

“Yet my daughter is in the hospital over it. So, what you plan on doing about this?” Uncle Jamal rebutted. Once again, he had a point.

“This sound like a job for Keiko. She's good at luring niggas in. I bet she'll be able to get to them dumb ass niggas through social media by saying some freaked out shit. Then once we get a location, we'll take it from there,” Keem suggested like he'd found the ultimate solution. Then my dad eagerly agreed with that fuck shit.

“I'm fucking with that, neph,” he dapped Keem off.

“That's dead.”

Everybody's eyes bounced to me at the same time. I could see their thoughts all in their expressions. They were thinking why would this matter to me in the first place. I didn't have to give a play by play. I had spoken and that was that.

“And why is that, nigga?” My dad was staring right through me, so he already knew the answer to his question. He just wanted to hear me say it. He wasn't going to get what he

wanted today. In these type of settings I never explained myself. I didn't care if I was with my family. They could take advantage of my weakness at any given moment too.

“Because that’s what I said. Y’all can find another bitch to do that reckless shit,” I spat.

“This nigga fucking that girl,” my dad shook his head in disappointment. “I’ma call her up and ask her if she wanna work, and I’ll double her pay,” He went on as if that would trump what I said. I guess I couldn’t blame him for thinking that. To him Keiko was a bitch who did anything grimy for the right price.

“Call and ask. I bet she won’t do it,” I said, feeling fully confident. I was privy to things they didn’t know about her, so I knew for a fact she wouldn’t be down fo set no niggas up.

The conversation was cut short when Auntie Keemaya waltzed outside with her phone to her ear. “Okay, I’m bouta talk to his ass, right nah.”

“C’mon Keemaya, we talking,” Uncle Jamal grumbled in frustration. As usual she blew him off and started talking to Keem. She was the only person I knew who could get away with disrespecting the fuck out of Uncle Jamal and I got my

kicks out of it. While she went back and forth with Keem about the state of his relationship with Camilla, my mind wandered back to Keiko. I offered some input on the conversation they were having but I mostly checked my phone to see if she'd hit me back. There was nothing. When I tried to text her again my messages didn't even send, so I assumed she'd blocked me. Now I wanted to go home and see if she was there. If she wasn't she had to be at the Marriott because her mom put her out...but I didn't know what room she was in because she came down to meet me. This girl was going to give me grey hair forreal.

The conversation with Keem and his mom ended with Keem storming off. Since he was leaving that meant I could go now too. While I was walking to my car my dad was behind me calling my name. I didn't feel like talking anymore because I was ready to go, but I still gave him my attention.

“Wassup?”

“Nigga you fucking with Keiko?”

“Yea. You followed me to my car to ask me that?”

“Fucking right nigga! Out of all the bitches in the world, why her? You know what she do rig-“

“Man don’t ask me why I’m with her. I’m not asking you why you with Canary.”

“Don’t speak on her!”

“Well don’t speak on Keiko!”

“Nigga Canary is my fiancé and the mother of your sister. She hold more weight than a bitch that set niggas up!”

“That *bitch* is pregnant with your grandchild nigga!” I barked, before shoving him away from me.

He swung at me, but I dodged it. Before he could throw another blow, Uncle Jamal ran to us and jumped in the middle.

“What the fuck y’all doing?! Johan I know you not out her raising your hand to your daddy!”

“Move out the way Jamal! I’mma teach his disrespectful ass a lesson!”

“Yea nigga, go ahead and teach me something for once!”

He looked stunned by that statement.

“Johan you outta line,” Uncle Jamal scolded. “This is your dad.”

“Man this nigga my sperm doner! He ain’t never did shit for me but go missing. I don’t know who he is to think he can speak on my girl like she ain’t shit when he ain’t!”

“Nigga you coming at me over a bitch who would have you off’d if the price was right?! This what you doing?!”

“Wait, this about Keiko?” Uncle Jamal asked.

“Yea, dumb ass got her pregnant. I guess she used a different method to set him up this time.”

I reached around Uncle Jamal and punched my dad in the face. Of course that didn’t roll over well. He hit me with a haymaker so powerful that I almost lost my balance, but I wasn’t backing down. I wasn’t going to just stand there and let him disrespect Keiko.

“Man y’all stop!” Uncle Jamal begged, as he desperately tried to separate us. I tasted blood dripping down my nose, but I was also landing powerful hits, so I wasn’t tripping.

Eventually Uncle Jamal was able to push my dad away forcefully towards the porch. He turned to me fast.

“Get in your car and leave Johan,” he begged desperately. “We in the suburbs and y’all gon make my house

hot.”

Out of respect for where he rested his head, I decided to take heed and leave. While I was in my car my emotions came at me full force. Now that the anger had subsided I was actually *hurt* that I’d went blow for blow with my own father. I thought we were better than that, but I guess I was wrong.

I wanted to talk to Keiko so badly about this shit, but her phone was still going straight to voicemail. I was rushing home to get to her ass and she probably wasn’t even there. I really wasn’t in the mood for games right now. I just wanted to lay up under her and relax for the first time in days.

As I pulled into my driveway my antennas immediately went up. My front door was cracked open. That was the number sign that a person had been robbed...

“GET OUT THE CAR BITCH ASS NIGGA!”

“DON’T REACH FOR SHIT NIGGA.”

I couldn’t believe this shit. Two masked men had just ran out of my front door and were now drawing big ass guns at me. Keiko crossed my mind first and I felt sick to my stomach. Maybe this was the reason she wasn’t answering her phone.

With her on my mind defending myself against these niggas was secondary. I just wanted to make sure *she* was good.

“Yea nigga! Get out the car and come in this house to show us where the money at.” One of them said as I got out my truck.

“Man I don’t leave money in this fucking house.”

“That’s not what your bitch said nigga!”

“My bitch?”

“Yea, she gave us the full run down on where you stay and that you got bukoo money here. You must got it hidden real nice cause we can’t find shit. Take us to it.”

My mind was so fucked up that I was momentarily stuck. The pistol being put directly to my head didn’t even wake me up. I heard them making demands but it was going through one ear and out the other. I couldn’t believe this shit. That’s when I thought of me and Keiko’s last conversation this morning. She told me she was folding...and now this. She wasn’t even answering her phone for me anymore. This was no coincidence. On top of that she was the only bitch I’d ever brought back to my crib. Some of my family knew where I stayed, and I knew they didn’t give up my address. What I did

know was that bitches could be spiteful when they didn't get their way, or maybe this was her plan the whole time. It wouldn't have been the first time she'd pulled the wool over a niggas eyes. I was so deep into my thoughts that it took muffled gunshots to get my attention.

For a second I thought my life was over. The fucked up part was that I didn't even care. I deserved to go out like this for trusting a shiesty bitch.

“JOHAN MOVE NIGGA! What the fuck you doing?!”
My dad shouted in my face.

That's when I realized that it was him and my Uncle Jamal who'd fired the gunshots at the two masked men.

“Nigga you so lucky your daddy wanted to follow you so he could apologize, because you not on your p's and q's like you normally are.” Uncle Jamal said.

“No need for him to apologize,” I said. “He was right about everything.”

Chapter 19

February 12, 2016

Keiko

“KiKiiii...KiKiiii...KIKI!”

I jumped out of my sleep and looked around Kiyor’s living room. The boys were still knocked out like I was a few seconds ago until Royalty ruined that. Sofia the First playing on the tv was a clear sign that she had never taken a nap like we had.

“Whatttt Ro?” I asked groggily.

“I want a snack. Aint you ‘spose to be watching me? How you gon watch me if you sleep?”

“How about you take a nap too?”

“I might take one after I have a snack.”

Royalty was not going to let me be at peace, so I got my tired ass up and went to see what Kiyor had in her kitchen. I fed them Popeyes right after I picked them up, but that was hours ago. Royalty was probably really hungry.

“You want a ham and cheese hot pocket?” I asked while looking down at her.

“Yes.”

After popping her hot pocket in the microwave I went to locate my phone. It was starting to get dark outside which meant I had been sleeping for a few hours now. I would have to wake the boys up soon so they wouldn't be up through the whole night, but for now my focus was finding my phone. It was hiding between the sofa cushion and it was also dead. I was sitting on pins and needles as I waited for it to turn back on after I'd put it on the charger. I didn't know if Johan had texted me back or called because our last conversation didn't end well. If he had been hitting my line he was probably irate at this point. He probably even thought I'd blocked him if my phone had been dead for a while.

“KiKi, my hot pocket is ready!” Royalty yelled from the kitchen. I got up, got her food, and sat her at the table with some juice before going back to the living room. When I sat down my phone started powering on. When I unlocked my phone I started receiving message notifications from two people; Johan and my mom. My mom had the audacity to curse me out and ask where her kids were. I replied by saying

“with me” and left it at that. I’d deal with her for real once I saw what Johan had to say. I was sure it was an apology and him asking me to come back to the house.

“What the fuck,” I muttered as my heart dropped. The most recent message I was looking back at was no apology...it was a cryptic threat.

Johan- Lol, you had a front row seat to how I handle snakes and you still thought it was wise to cross me???
You’ve been warned.

I was sincerely confused. He had sent a few messages before that saying he’d be home in a few hours and he even asked me what I wanted to eat. I needed to know what changed between those few short hours, so I called him. The phone rang for so long that I didn’t think he would answer, but he did.

“Let me guess, you didn’t do it?” He questioned as soon as the call connected.

“Did what? What are you talking about? How am I a snake?”

“Bitch you know what the fuck you did. When I see you, it’s up.”

“It’s up?! What the fuck is that supposed to mean?!” I exclaimed furiously. It sounded like this nigga was saying he would bring harm my way. I knew what he was capable of, but up until that moment I never saw him hurting *me*. “And who the fuck you calling a bitch? I don’t even know what you talkin about!”

“If I never witnessed you in action before then you *probably* could fool me. I’ll be seeing you.”

“Joh-“

I was cut off by the call ending. My heart was about to pop out of my chest because it sounded like something had happened to him and he was blaming ME. My past wasn’t squeaky clean but the fact that I was being blamed for something I didn’t do was insane. That fact that my safety was now in jeopardy because of some shit he’d cooked up in his head was even more insane and terrifying. He had to tell me exactly what happened so I could clear my name. After I did that I would seriously fall back from him. I didn’t need to be with a man who would put me in this type of position.

I tried calling him back several times but all calls were met by the operator. I’d never been blocked before so I didn’t know what that looked like, but I was pretty sure this was it.

Now I was on the verge of panicking as anxiety started to creep in. This nigga had his mind made up about whatever he *thought* I did and he was ready to do something about it. My life was literally on the line.

“KiKi, answer your phone,” Ryan grumbled with his eyes still closed, bringing my ringing phone to my attention. It was my mom.

“Yea?” I answered the phone. My mind was still on Johan, so when she started screaming I wasn’t even phased.

“WHERE YOU AT WITH MY DAMN KIDS?”

“I’m at Kiyor’s, you can come get em.”

“I shouldn’t have to come get shit! You need to bring em to me cause nobody told you to take em out the house.”

“First of all, they would still be there if you hadn’t left them there by themselves! You need to be thanking me because they were about to burn your house down and you would’ve been homeless again! Nobody is tweaking to keep these kids, so if you want em back then come get them like I said! If you leave them at home by themselves again you better hope CPS don’t show up to get them! I should be the

least of your worries!” I screamed into the phone before hanging up.

Maybe I went a little harder than I should’ve, but I was tired of her acting like I was the enemy. She was somebody I *really* needed to fall back from because she was constantly pushing me away like I wasn’t her daughter. I didn’t have to put up with being disrespected when all I’d ever tried to do was help her.

To my surprise she came to pick the kids up about 40 minutes after I went off on her. When I walked the kids downstairs to her car there was some roughneck looming nigger in the seat next to her. I assumed that’s who she’d spent the last few days with. I always wondered if she’d move on from Red because they hadn’t been together officially since he got sentenced. He told her to go live her life. I guess she called herself doing that now. If slacking when it came to being a mother came with that then she could go back to moping over Red.

She didn’t introduce me to her new friend nor did she speak to me, and I didn’t give a fuck about either or. I was

about to go back upstairs and go to sleep. I was just grateful that Johan didn't know where my sister stayed.

“Shit,” I whispered as I had an ephiany. He didn't know where Kiyor stayed, but he knew where my mama stayed. That was worse because my young siblings stayed there too. I didn't know if Johan was the type of nigga to shoot up a house or hurt family but that was a chance I couldn't take. I went to my contact list as I opened the gate to Kiyor's apartment. I was about to step in when somebody grabbed my hair so roughly I thought my neck would break. My first instinct was to scream, but my mouth was covered by a hand. I recognized the familiar scent immediately. It was Johan.

He carried me to the side of the complex where it was dark and nobody could see us. He slammed me against the brick wall and I teared up. I just knew I was about to die.

“Bitch you thought I wasn't gon find you?! I know where yo mama stay.”

That's when it hit me that he had to follow my mom here from her house. I guess that meant he wasn't that type of nigga to hurt an opp's family if he couldn't get to the oop. But he sure was about to hurt me. He moved his hand from my

mouth but I couldn't scream. My voice box was being squeezed by his hands.

“You sent niggas to my house and thought I wouldn't find out?! Is you stupid?!”

“I...I....”I could barely breathe, so talking was a reach. I grabbed his hands and tried to pull them off my throat to no avail. That's when I remembered something that he may have still had a soft spot for in the midst of these wild allegations. I took my hands off his throat and started pointing at my stomach. He looked down and laughed wickedly. I swear I saw the devil in his eyes.

“Bitch you wanted an abortion anyway huh? I guess you getting pregnant wasn't a part of your plan.”

He finally let go, and I dropped to the ground gasping for air.

“You know what's fucked up? I then found you to kill you and I can't even do it. I actually fucked with your grimy ass. Really thought you was bout something.”

“I...I AM!” I gasped, as tears poured out my eyes.

“Where you found them niggas at that you sent to my house? Or did they come to you?”

“I didn’t send niggas to your house Johan!” I cried.

“They was supposed to kill me huh? That’s why you went ghost and wasn’t answering your phone.”

“My phone was dead!”

“Mannn, I’m tripping. I’m really trying to get honest answers from a bitch who sent niggas to my house for me. This shit weak. The fact that I haven’t killed your ass yet is weak.”

“You know it’s not true deep down! Because if you really felt that way about me I’d be dead by now.”

“Keiko don’t test me. Cause I’ll pump your body with hot lead right now and leave you laying here.”

“Then do it.” I called his bluff. Hell maybe I wanted to die. It seemed like I couldn’t catch a break lately.

“Bitch stay away from me. And if you know what’s best for you then you’ll get rid of that baby, cause I’m not raising it with you.”

He walked off, leaving me on the ground with a broken heart and a pool of tears.

Chapter 20

March 5, 2016

Keiko

“Keiko, the only place I ever see you is in between classes these days. Did I do something to you, sis? I don’t want you to feel weird about that video or Farrah. We’re still crab sisters regardless,” Marsha said all in one breathe as if she was scared I might hang up or something. I guess I could understand because I had been distancing myself from her and the rest of my crab sisters. I’d honestly distanced myself from everybody except Kiyor because she was the only one I’d confided in about everything. Even down to the work I’d done for the Martelle’s. I played it down significantly, but she’d reacted as if I told her everything. She told me everything I already knew. That it was stupid, reckless, and that I could’ve gotten myself killed. My response was that I was alive and well. Well I was alive. Me being well was up for debate. I was honestly depressed and didn’t know how to deal with it.

The man I loved had abandoned me during my first pregnancy, my mom still wasn't talking to me, people were still whispering behind my back about that stupid video, school was only getting harder as graduation got closer, I missed my younger siblings so much but I didn't feel like fussing with my mom over seeing them, and the baby in my stomach only amplified all of these problems. Bringing a baby into this wasn't the smartest thing to do, but I was going to do it because I was attached to this little life now. Regardless of anything else this baby was a part of me so she or he would be just fine, but not having a support system put a dark cloud over my head everyday. Having to pretend the dark cloud wasn't there was even worse. I wanted to fall apart but I couldn't. With the exception of Kiyor I kept all my problems to myself. That included my baby. Keeping my pregnancy a secret wasn't hard considering I only had a small bump that could be hidden with over sized t-shirts and sweatshirts. I hoped my belly stayed little the entire time.

“Marsha, school just been kicking my ass. And I know y'all don't see me differently because of that video...but everybody else does.”

“I ain’t gon lie, I was a little shook that you and Farah had something going on and *none* of us knew.”

“Yea we agreed it would be best to keep it on the down low...and out of no where she starts acting like she wants more.”

“That’s not shocking. Farrah is a clingy person naturally. You should’ve found another bitch to fuck for fun.”

“I should’ve! Maybe my business wouldn’t be all over campus.”

“Nobody’s really talking it about anymore since Miss UBR got caught having sex with the dean of students last week. That scandal beat yours, sis.”

“Well that’s a relief,” I laughed sarcastically.

“Seriously though,” she giggled. “I know it’s embarrassing for you and everybody has it embedded in their brain that Dancing Diamonds are these classy and perfect women who can’t make mistakes like everybody else, but fuck those people. You’re human, you’re a good person, a bomb ass dancer, the best captain ever, and an even better crab sissy.”

“Awww bitch,” I gushed, while blinking away water in my eyes. Nothing but this baby was making me over

emotional. “Thank you, and you know I love y’all. I just needed a little space. That video is not the only thing I got going on.”

“Oop...does Johan have something to do with this?”

“Yup.”

“I knew it. Niggas are the root of all evil. What he did? It’s not about that video is it?”

“Girl hell no.”

“I’m bouta say. Most niggas I’ve heard talking bout it said it was sexy. You know niggas only like gay shit when it’s two girl...sexist perverted pigs.”

“Damn Marsh. Tell me how you really feel,” I laughed.

“Girl forreal. And did you hear what happened to Farrah a few days after Mardi Gras?”

“Yea. I saw the video of her getting jumped in V-Live in Miami. They said one of the girls slashed her face. That’s *crazy*.” I stressed as if I cared. In reality I was happy to see her get her ass beat. I wouldn’t have ever green lit somebody stabbing her face, but it wasn’t my call. It was Johan’s. I was sure the call was made *before* he accused me of setting him up.

“That’s a fact. I saw her in person a few weeks later. She got a gash from her forehead to her cheek. I told her to get some bangs to at least cover her forehead.”

I laughed a little. “Bitch that’s fucked up.”

“No what she did is fucked up. It’s one thing to tell everybody about y’all, but it’s another to post a private video. We trash niggas who do that lame shit, so I don’t know why she would do it. I told her all this and she claimed I was picking sides.”

“That girl needs help.” I sighed. I was tired of talking about her.

“That she does, but fuck her. Tell me about the drama with Johan.”

“To make a long story short he thinks I did something and stopped fucking with me for it.”

“I’m assuming you didn’t do it?”

“You assumed correctly.”

“You don’t think y’all can get past it. It sounds like a misunderstanding.”

“Not really. He has his mind made up. The ball is in his court and he no longer wants to play, so I’m not about to force

anything. It's cool....well it's really not, but what can I do?" I asked no one in particular. For a second I was good with what I said, and then what I said actually hit me. I could do nothing about this. I broke down and started crying.

"Keiko...you crying?!"

"N...no," I lied through sniffles.

"You are! I was going to ask you if you wanted to come out tonight, but we'll come over there and have a girls night."

"As sweet as that is Marsha y'all don't have to do that. Actually y'all don't need to do that because I have way too much homework to do. If y'all come I won't get shit done."

Although what I was saying was true, I really didn't want them over here because it was harder to hide my pregnancy at home where I wore virtually nothing.

"You trying to say we're distractions?"

"Yup."

"Fuck you," she laughed. "I guess I understand cause my ass got homework I need to be doing too, but Vice gotta see me tonight."

"Priorities bitch."

“Yea yea, that homework will be there when I get back. You owe us a sleepover before the month is over hoe. Not just us, but the crabs too because they miss you.”

“Chile please, I text them and talk to them on the phone all the time. They call me for any little inconvenience they have. Just the other day Sasha called me talking bout her lil boyfriend is insecure about all the attention she’s getting from being a Diamond. I told her to drop his ugly ass if he can’t handle being with a bad bitch.”

Marsha hollered. “AMEN! Sasha is way too cute for him. But your crabs miss *seeing* you bitch. It’s not like they get to see you around at school since you go to class and then leave. Oh, and you better be coming to Miami for spring break with us next month too.”

“We’ll see,” I lied. I wasn’t going on a spring break vacation to Miami pregnant. That sounded like a buzzkill.

“Don’t play games, sis. We need one last turn up before we all go our separate ways.”

“Who is we all?” I wasn’t even going but if she was asking me to go on a trip Farrah would be on then I’d curse her out.

“All of your crab sisters of course, minus Farah. She ain’t in college no more, so she doesn’t get a spring break.”

“Bitch Destiny not in college anymore either,” I tittered. Destiny was one of our crab sisters who’d dropped out of school to pursue a singing career. I was actually proud of her because I’d never be brave enough to do something like that. I didn’t talk to her as often as I would’ve liked to, but whenever we did talk or link we’d pick right back up where we left off like time hadn’t passed.

“But Destiny didn’t leak anybody’s personal videos. To keep it real with you the only one whoever really liked Farrah was you, Ki.”

“Yea you would say that now hoe.” I tittered. “I don’t know about Miami, but we can definitely do a sleepover one of these weekends.”

I couldn’t hide my pregnancy forever, so it was time for me to start telling people no matter how much I dreaded it. I dreaded it as much as I dreaded going to doctors appointments alone. One person had offered to start accompanying me to my appointments, but I politely turned her down. Johan’s mom was nice and all, but it felt weird getting close to her when Johan wasn’t even close to her. I

didn't want him thinking I was clinging to him in any way possible because it wasn't even like that.

His mom had reached out to *me* a few days after he threatened to take my life. I forgot that we exchanged numbers at her party. I was quickly reminded when I saw her name on my screen along with the selfie we'd taken at the party.

I'd been in my room just laying down and staring up at the ceiling. I had cried a river already so I had no more tears left. My heart was still hurting though. The music I was listening to only intensified what I was feeling. I turned it down so I could answer Meekayla's call.

"Color me blue I'm lost in you . Don't know why I'm still waiting. Many moons have come and gone. Don't know why I'm still searching. Don't know anything at all. And who am I to say you love me. I don't know anything at all. And who am I to say you need me." I turned my depressing ass music down so I could answer Meekayla's call.

"Hello?" I answered.

"Hey Keiko," she coughed. "You busy?"

"No, just laying down."

"Ahhh, that baby got you tired huh?"

“W-what? D-did Johan tell yo-“

“Baby I knew you were pregnant at my party. Not only were you glowing but you looked so sick. I hope I get an invitation to the babyshower.”

“I don't think I'm having one.”

“And why not? It's you and Johan's first child.”

“I guess I’m just not feeling it.”

“Well I hope you change your mind about that one. But look, I don’t want to take up too much of your time. I was calling to see if you could remind Johan that he promised to have lunch with me so we could talk. He’s not answering my calls or text messages. Tell him it’s really urgent.”

“I wish I could tell him...but he’s not exactly talking to me right now either.”

“Whatttt? Trouble in paradise?”

“Trouble is an understatement. More like paradise is in hell. You’re probably an angel in his eyes compared to me right now.”

“Damn it’s that bad?” She asked.

“Yea.”

“He has to still be talking to you about the baby though.”

“Nope. I just had a doctors appointment the other day and I went by myself. I think that’s how it’s going to be for the entire nine months.”

“It doesn’t have to be. I’m sure my son is just mad right now and he’ll come around, but if he doesn’t I can always come with you.” She coughed.

“That’s really sweet of you. Thank you.” I said graciously, making sure I didn’t accept the offer.

“So since he’s mad with you I’m guessing you did something?”

“He thinks I did something and that’s enough I guess.”

“He loves you Keiko. I can tell. Just let him go through whatever he needs to go through. He’ll be there for you and y’all baby.”

He told me to get an abortion, I said to myself. I didn’t dare say it out loud. Some things just didn’t need to be said to his mother.

“No. I have a feeling I’ll be doing this thing by myself.”

“If that is the case, and I highly doubt it will be, I’m sure you’ll do a better job as a single parent than I did. Always put that child first because you’ll regret it if you don’t.”

“Noted. Hopefully everything works out with you and Johan so you can talk. It’s needed.”

“Yea, hopefully. But I think we both know that boy can be stubborn.”

I couldn't argue with that.

March 10, 2016

Johan

“R.I.P to all the real niggas worldwide. Salute! Real shit! I ride for my niggas dawg, I ride for my niggas. I slide for my niggas dawg, I ride for my niggas dawg. Stay schemin’. Niggas tryna get at me. I ride for my niggas. Stay schemin’. Niggas tryna get at me. I ride for my niggas. Damn, life so short, fuck it, I don’t wanna go to court. Fuck it, got a budget for the lawyer though. Fuck it, I’m on the run for the money. I’m in the bucket, paid 200 for it. My lil’ niggas thuggin’, even got me paranoid. I’m gettin’ money, that’s in any nigga category. Double M I got G’s out in California.”

“Stayyyy schemin, niggas tryna get at me,” I sang along to the chorus of the Rick Ross song as I pushed my

Rolls Royce through Miami. It felt good to be back in a city where I didn't feel as paranoid, but I wasn't sleep on these niggas or bitches out here either. They were just as hungry and shiesty.

The thought of shiesty bitches made me think of Keiko. If she was still pregnant she had to be about two and a half or three months now. As much as I wanted to be ruthless and not give a fuck, that wasn't the case. This was a baby I'd once begged her to keep. I told her to abort it when I was heated, and I was still heated. I was mainly mad with myself for letting that bitch keep her life. Nobody who'd violated me ever got to live to talk about it or try it again. I felt like a soft ass, dumb ass nigga. A bitch who'd set me up was potentially still walking around with my baby in her stomach, and I was still concerned. I wasn't concerned enough to call or be there though. If she actually had this baby I didn't know what I was going to do because dealing with her directly was nonnegotiable.

I decided to call Keem and fish for some information so I could put my own mind at ease. As always he accepted my call fast.

“Juannn!” He greeted me the New Orleans way, although he had a country accent. Yea he’d been born in New Orleans but his mom uprooted him and Jamaya to Atlanta when they were still kids. They both had ATL accents because of that. Their accents combined with New Orleans lingo was hilarious.

“Wassup country ass nigga,” I chuckled. “Everything good out there?”

The question sounded simple on the surface, but it was really loaded. Things had calmed down significantly since Mardi Gras and the events that followed that, but sometimes there was a calm before the storm. I wanted to make sure he wasn’t sleeping at the wheel.

“Good for now. You know I’m not sleep.”

“That’s what I like to hear. But let me ask you something.”

“Alright, wassup?”

“Have you seen Keiko around campus?”

There was a small pause on his end followed by laughter.

“Yea I see around, but not as much as I used to. She been lowkey lately and wearing sweatshirts and shit even though it’s starting to get hot. I think she got senioritis or something cause she’s acting weird.”

Yea she was definitely still pregnant if she was wearing big clothes and laying low. She was probably keeping it a secret, but I doubt I had anything to do with that. I was sure if I was still in the picture she’d be doing the same thing because she cared about what people thought.

“But nigga why you wanna know? Because if I heard correctly I thought you wrote her off.”

I should’ve known somebody was going to run their mouth, and I knew it wasn’t my father. It was my chatty ass uncle.

“Nigga what your messy ass paw told you? He then probably told the whole New Orleans by now.”

“Nah he ain’t do that. If he wanted to tell the whole New Orleans all he’d have to do is tell my mama.”

“Facts,” I agreed, while laughing. “But what he told you bout Keiko?”

“He told me that you think that she set you up.”

“I think?” I repeated offensively. “No nigga I know this shit for a fact. Them niggas said my bitch sent them.”

“Man that’s why you think she did it? Niggas can say anything. Better yet, niggas will say anything when they’re paid to say it. And do you seriously think Keiko would tell them niggas to say that shit and incriminate herself like that?”

“She wasn’t worrying about incriminating herself because I was supposed to get killed.”

“Nigga you really believe that girl wanted you dead? What would she get out of that?”

“Money.”

“She thought you had money at that house or something?”

“Nigga I’m not tryna get in her head. All I know is that niggas was up in my crib after I left her there. She conveniently went ghost for hours, and on top of that I was finna take her to my apartment but she insisted on going to my crib. That bitch probably let them in my spot and left.”

“Probably. That just don’t sound like Keiko to do something so reckless though. I can’t see her planning that out

knowing it could be traced back to her if something went wrong. You know how she operates.”

“Yea, I know exactly how she operates. That’s why I don’t understand why this is a conversation,” I snapped.

“Nigga I’m just tryna get you to look at it logically, but you’re in your feelings so ain’t no getting through to you right now. You thinking with your heart and shit.”

“Thinking with my heart? Keem don’t play me like I’m some soft ass nigga. If anything you not thinking logically because you go to school with her and shit. Based on the evidence I have and what I know about her, what I’m thinking isn’t far-fetched at all.”

“I ain’t say it was far-fetched. I’m saying Keiko would be smarter *if* she did some shit like this. And I approached that girl about putting in work because she needed money and she was visually perfect for the job. It ain’t like she came to me.”

“So what’s your point?”

“My point is she not as grimy as you tryna make her out to be, but you was fucking with her so I think you know that already.”

“Yea, I thought that until she tried to set me up. I’m good on that hoe now. I swear.”

“That’s why you called me to check on her?”

I smacked my teeth and ended the call. He was blowing it. I didn’t have to answer to him or anybody else. Unless he wanted to tell me who else could’ve set me up, then Keiko was the number one and only suspect. There weren’t that many coincidences in the world that could excuse her.

March 18, 2016

Keiko

“That’s all you gon eat?” Britney asked as I closed my Popeyes box that was still full. For the first time in a long time I was having lunch with some of my crab sisters. It felt good to be around other people again, but I felt so miserable. I was nauseous, constantly thirsty, and I couldn’t be the only one

who was freezing in this union. Usually Popeyes made me happy but the sight of it today made me feel sick. Actually the sight of a lot of food made me feel sick which is why I'd barely been eating anything lately.

"I had a really big breakfast," I lied. There was no point in attempting to have a big breakfast because all I'd do is throw it up. "So where y'all staying at in Miami."

"At the Mondrian. These hoes wanted an air bnb, but most of them are too far away from everything," Marsha replied.

"Comeeee, sissy," Wendy pleaded. She was one of my crab sisters who'd done all four rips with me on the dance team, so we were really tight.

"I told y'all I'm thinking bout it." I lied.

"Which means she's not coming," Britney tittered.

"Boooo, you whore," Holly did her best Reginae George impersonation and she was spot on, making us all laugh. We called her our valley girl because she was really from Calabasas, California. Her family was loaded, but she didn't have a superior complex because of it.

“But seriously, why can’t you come? Is it because of money? If so I can totally pay your wa-“

I cut Holly off. “Sis I’m not broke. Why can’t y’all just accept the fact that I’m thinking about it?”

“Maybe because we know you’re full of shit. Just comeee, it won’t be the same without you.” Marsha cheesed, showing off her deep dimples. She reminded me of a dark skin Lauren London, so she was drop dead gorgeous.

“Yea, we want the whole 12 to be there, and your birthday is in April. What better way to celebrate?” Holly posed. If I weren’t pregnant her point would’ve reeled me in. My birthday fell on the week of spring break so that would’ve been *perfect*.

“If y’all want the whole 12 to be there then why is Farrah not being included?” I giggled, being petty.

“Who?” Wendy uttered.

“Right, that name doesn’t ring a bell.” Britney added on.

“Yup, I don’t know her.” Holly scoffed like Mariah Carey. It made it no better that she had fair skin and blonde hair just like her.

Call me petty or immature, but it made me feel good that the rest of my crab sisters were standing by me when it came to Farrah. If Farrah and I had fallen out over something trivial then I'd never be looking to them to pick sides or to stop fucking with her, but she'd done something criminal and violating by sending a private video around. A private video that I never even consented to. If any of my crab sisters were still fucking with her like nothing had happened then I would've politely cut them off.

“Yea, so like we were saying, we want *you* to come,” Marsha said.

“Once again...I'm thinking about it.” I replied. I could've just said no, but I didn't want to start an uproar. They were going to find out the real reason why I couldn't make it at our sleepover anyway.

“Ugh, whatever Keiko. As long as we're still on for our sleepover next weekend.”

“Of course we are. My new roommate will be visiting home, so it's going to be perfect.”

After I beat Manny's ass I didn't want to live in the same apartment as her anymore, so I put in a request to be transferred to another one. It was approved within a week, and

I got a new asian roommate who attended LSU. She was nice, quiet, and stayed out of my way, so she was fine by me. My rent was also still paid up for the remainder of my lease that ended in June thanks to Johan, so I didn't have to worry about that. In fact, money wasn't an issue at all for me right now. I had a nice little nest egg in my savings for the first few months of my baby's life, after that I'd have to find work.

As my crab sisters continued to talk about Miami, I started to feel light headed. I still had two more classes for the day where attendance was taken, so going home wasn't an option. My doctor swore feeling like this was natural during pregnancy due to low blood pressure, but his white ass had to be snorting coke because nothing felt natural about feeling like I had to pass out all the time.

"Keiko you alright?" Marsha touched my shoulder as I held my head.

"Yea," I breathed, feeling exhausted. "Just tired."

"Girl we all are. But we almost done with this shit. Maybe you should eat your food for some energy," Britney suggested.

"Y'all hoes almost done. I'ma still be here," Holly whined.

“Hey, that was you who wanted to be a nursing major. So enjoy that extra year,” Wendy teased, making me laugh weakly. As they started talking about graduation and other senior things, I got a text from a person that I thought had written me off. My mother.

It felt good to see her name pop up on my phone screen. Sure I had Kiyor and my crab sisters to lean on, but there was nothing like having my moms full support. I was hoping she was ready to apologize and move on because I was. When I opened the message, disappointment consumed me and I felt like someone had sucker punched me in the stomach.

Mama- Girl why you ain't tell me you wasn't with Johan no more? I just saw him in the mall with some pretty ass girl. Your brothers and sister ran up to him and spoke. Ryan asked him why he don't come around no more and he told him to ask you.

This is what she finally unblocked me for? I had to excuse myself from the table and go to the bathroom because I felt my emotions getting the best of me. When I entered the privacy of a stall, tears ran down my face freely. This shouldn't have hurt this much. Johan made it clear he wasn't

fucking with me anymore, so him fucking with other women was a no brainer. It was just something about me going through this rough ass pregnancy alone while he whored around that made me angry, jealous, disappointed, and sad. I eventually mustered up enough strength to text my mom back.

Me: I haven't spoken to you since February and this is what you finally reach out to me for? Johan is no longer in my life so you don't have to tell me nothing about him.

Mama- Damn you really dropped the ball. It looked like he was spoiling the fuck outta that girl.

I had no more words for her. She supposedly hated his guts but now she was claiming I'd drop the ball? It was time for me to turn the tables by putting her on *my* block list. If she was only going to reach out to me about nonsense that stressed me out then I didn't want to talk.

March 19, 2016

Johan

“You ate here before?” My dad asked as he scanned the Rum House menu.

“Bukoo times, everything is A1.”

“Cool, I think I’ma get Mr. Biggs Plate and the Cuban sandwich.”

Silence followed his poor attempt to make conversation. This dinner felt very forced because it was. We hadn’t talked since our big blow up. Someone must’ve told him I was in town because he invited me to dinner. I was tired of the weird energy between us so I agreed.

“You know the baby shower next week right?” He asked.

“Yea. I already cleared out the stores for baby girl.”

“As if she needs another damn thing,” he chuckled, before clearing his throat. “Well look, I guess we might as well just go ahead and talk about what happened last month.”

“*A lot* happened last month.”

“I’m speaking on our fight and them niggas pulling up on you at your crib.”

“Let’s discuss our fight. I wanna apologize for putting my hands on you. At the end of the day you my daddy and I need to respect that.”

“Apology accepted. You’re right, as your father you were out of line, but as a man you were justified.”

I was at a loss for words.

“At that moment I was disrespecting your family. You *weren’t* supposed to let that fly. I’m not even tripping on us throwing blows, Jo. We both know I would have whooped your ass if Jamal wasn’t saving you.”

This time I cracked up with laughter. I would let him think that shit if it made him feel better, but deep down he knew I could keep up with him. He was the one who’d taught me how to fight in the first place.

“Yea alright, old man.”

“Old and can kick your butt,”he chuckled before growing serious. “You said some things...and I know you were mad, but they felt like the truth.”

“What things are you talking about?”I asked. I had an idea of what he was speaking on but I needed to clarify.

“I don’t remember word from word, but you were basically saying I wasn’t a father to you and didn’t teach you shit.”

“Yea, I remember saying that.” I nodded. I wasn’t apologizing for that because it was the truth.

“I’m not looking for you to explain yourself or apologize because I agree. When me and your mom made you we were *kids*. We weren’t even 15 yet. When you were born we didn’t let you slow us down at all.”

“No shit,” I chortled sarcastically. My mom and my dad ran the streets when I was a kid.

“I also let my personal shit with your mama keep me away from you. She was a pain to deal with, but I should’ve pushed through that for you. Instead I would just throw in the towel until she called me to come get you.”

“I don’t remember you being a bad father when I was really little though. I mean you weren’t perfect but you were solid for the most until Uncle Justin died.”

“Yea,” he dropped his head in shame. “Losing my big brother took a big piece out of me. I *know* I was deadbeat after Justin died. For me everything was out of sight, out of mind.”

“I wouldn’t say dead beat. You used to send money and clothes.”

“Johan money and clothes don’t raise no child, and I think you know that. If I was actually doing my part as a father during those years your life would be drastically different.”

“I didn’t turn out that bad. Shit I’m just like you.”

“Which means you could’ve been way better, but it’s not too late. I should’ve done this a long time ago, but I’m sorry for not being a better parent for you.”

“I appreciate that, dad.” I reached over and dapped him off with a hug. “With me it was trial and error. With Jordyn you might be close to perfect.”

“I feel like I’mma fail her too by spoiling her rotten.”

“Well that makes two of us.” I seriously jested.

He laughed. “Don’t you have a baby on the way nigga? Or did you do something about ole girl since you think she did you something?”

Why the fuck did everybody keep saying think like they had doubts? If they knew something I didn’t I would’ve liked to know.

“Yea I still got a baby on the way and I don’t want nothing to do with it or the mama.”

He laughed again like something was funny and I grew irritated.

“I’m glad you find this funny.”

“I don’t find the situation funny at all, son. I find *you* funny. You claim you don’t want the girl or the baby, yet she’s still breathing. How is she even still breathing if you truly believe she set you up? It’s just not adding up, and that’s why I’m laughing.” He said in a hushed tone.

I didn’t have a response for that because I was stumped. My father was the only nigga who could pick my brain like this and I hated that about him.

“You know what I think?”

“No, but I know for a fact you’re going to tell me.”

“I think that you’re lying to yourself. Initially the shit added up on the surface. Why wouldn’t this girl who does this shit for a living do the same thing to you? It made a lot of sense at first, so I will give you that. But you’re my son, so I know you took time to think about this shit in depth. Some shit ain’t adding up all the way and *that’s* why you haven’t handled

ole girl. You don't want to tell nobody else, shit not even ya self, that you're having doubts because you think it'll make you look dumb or weak. Trust your gut, JoJo."

My gut. My gut was telling me that Keiko would never do anything to bring me harm. But what if that was just my heart drowning out my gut? Maybe my gut was really telling me not to trust that bitch. I'd seen Keiko set a nigga up first hand. That nigga was begging *me* not to hurt her when she was responsible for me being in his house in the first place. She was capable of pulling the wool over a niggas eyes. Was I just supposed to ignore that because I thought we loved each other and she was carrying my child? I didn't know.

"I can't let my heart get in front of my common sense, pops."

"Too late, but you got this Jo. I'm just glad you didn't make any permanent moves yet because you would have regretted it if it came out that that girl didn't do that. If you're unsure the best thing to do is keep your distance for now, but that's gotta stop once she has the baby. Do better than me. Oh, and call your mama nigga. Life is too short."

I smacked my teeth. "Man she thinks we're best friends because I went to her birthday party. I don't want talk

to her.”

“I always thought you were observant.”

“I am.”

“Well pay attention to the signs. She keeps begging to talk, she looks bad, and I told you life is too short.”

“Yea I saw her for her birthday. It looks like she’s on drugs. I might catch up with her one of these days.”

My dad breathed heavily. “Johan you grown. Do what you want.”

Chapter 21

March 26 ,2016

Keiko

“So what do you want for your birthday Ryan?” I question, before popping a pain pill in my mouth and chugging down some water. I felt so bad last week that I went to the

hospital, and my doctor gave me a list of over the counter drugs I could have to relieve me. I'd been feeling much better since.

“Jordan’s or money.”

“Figures. You’re so predictable,” I giggled. I was just happy to be talking to my siblings. Maybe my mom was letting up a little bit now.

“I would’ve said a PS4, but Johan already got me that. It’s coming tomorrow.”

“Wait, what?!”

“Yea, when we saw him in the mall I told him I had a birthday coming up and he asked me what I wanted. When I told him he said he’d get it for me and send it to the house. He texted me tracking info later that day.”

“Oh wow...you said thank you right?”

I knew my brother said thankyou, but I didn’t know what else to say. For one, my mom had totally left that out when she texted me. What she relayed made me think he was blowing my siblings off when they loved his dirty drawers. I was raging mad for days because of that. Had she included this I would’ve felt better about the whole exchange.

“Yea, I have home training yea, Kiki.”

“Alright boy,” I tittered. “Sooo...did Johan say anything about me?”

I felt desperate as soon as the words left my mouth, but I needed the truth from my little brother. It wasn't like I got it from my mom.

“No. When we asked him why he don't come around no more he said it's because he lives in Miami. RoRo asked do you live with him in Miami because we haven't been seeing you either...”

That crushed me. My mom was so childish for keeping us apart. My poor siblings probably thought I'd abandoned them.

“He just laughed and said no, she don't live with me, and then he asked us what we've been up to. That's when I brought up my birthday. We were in Champs so he treated us to some shoes and then he got RoRo a Build a Bear as a present for her upcoming dance recital.”

“And what was mama doing while all of this was going on?”

“Huh? She wasn’t with us. We were with grandma. She likes Johan, so she was nice. She told mama we saw him.”

“Was he with someone?”

“Yea he was with some guy. I think it was his cousin.”

I couldn’t believe this shit. My mom had rushed to tell me some shit that she hadn’t even witnessed for herself. Then she had the nerve to make up lies. I was too done with her ass.

Johan

Tired wasn’t the word. I was beat. That’s why I was annoyed that my phone had started ringing once I laid down. Once I saw that it was Benji’s newest burner phone, my energy shifted. He probably had some information for me. After talking with my dad I told him to look into something for me.

“Wassup?” I spoke into the phone.

“You was sleep?” He asked.

“Almost.”

“My b, but I got some news on that lil situation that happened at your house.”

“Yea?” I sat up in bed. I knew it wouldn’t take Benji long to find out who they were. Especially since my dad snapped pictures of their faces as they laid dead in my driveway.

“Yea.”

“I’m listening. What you find out?”

“Alright, well off Instagram alone I found out that they’re blood brothers from the Westbank.”

That wasn’t useful at all. I knew plenty of people from the Westbank. Hell I had fucked with bukoo girls from the Westbank, like Taran for example.

“Once I had their names I was able to ask some of my goons about them. I didn’t learn much except they’re known for doing what they tried to do to you. They usually pick easier targets though...”

This information wasn’t what I thought I’d be so far and it wasn’t worth breaking me out of my sleep for. I was

about to tell him bye when he finally said something that was worth hearing.

“I went to one of them niggas tagged photos and saw something interesting. Check your messages and tell me if that girl looks familiar in the picture.”

When I went to my messages and opened the picture I was confused for a second. The picture had *a lot* of people in it and they wore matching shirts. When I read the caption I found out it was an old family reunion photo from 2010, and some old lady had posted it to her account. I was guessing it was a relative. I spotted the two niggas that tried to rob me, but I didn't know what else I was supposed to be looking for. Just when I was about to say fuck it and ask, I spotted a familiar face squatting off to the side of the picture. She looked a lot younger because the picture was five years old, but that was her alright. I had this bitch now.

“Okay. I see what's going on.”

“Alright, so I'm not tripping. I knew I saw that girl around you a couple of times when we'd be kicking it. You think it's a coincidence that she's related to them?”

“Hell nah, but let me make a call right quick.”

“Bet. Just say the word when you ready for me to do what I do.”

“Nigga I do the same shit you do, but I appreciate the info.”

“Aye, it’s all up you. Just know I’m here. Handle your business.” He said, before hanging up.

I was going to do that alright.

Mystery POV

No matter how many times I showered or bathed myself I couldn’t wash away the guilt that covered me like a second layer of skin daily. I had to look at the woman who’d helped raise me in the eyes and give her hope for her sons being missing when I knew they were never returning. I’d sent them to Johan’s house on some stupid, get back shit.

Something was telling me they were the ones that had gotten got. Johan still being alive and well, while they’d disappeared off the face of the Earth was all the proof I needed.

Even though they asked me about him because they'd heard through other family members that I fucked with him, I should've discouraged them from even thinking about that. I should've told them it was a death wish. I did the exact opposite. I told them that he had a Westbank mansion and that's where he kept all his money and other valuables. I learned about his house on the Westbank because I overheard a conversation he was having with his dad in my bathroom. I didn't know the exact location, but that was for my cousins to find out. It took them a few weeks but they eventually got his address.

All I wanted was to get Johan back for playing on me. I never thought I'd turn into some serious thing where my cousins would get caught up or lose their lives. I also told them to wait until Johan was gone when they ran up in his spot. That was my way of protecting them.

I felt so shitty about this, but with the life my cousins were living something like this would've happened anyway. I was just glad this shit couldn't be traced back to me. Ever since my cousins had gotten in the streets heavy I distanced myself from them because they were too reckless. I didn't want anybody marking me as guilty by association for some

dumb shit they'd done. That's why there was no trace of us being related online. You'd have to actually know us to know that. Johan may have known me, but he never met any of my family. So I was good.

“Who the fuck is this?” I mumbled as my phone rang showcasing an unsaved number. I had half a mind to ignore it but since it was a 504 number I answered.

“Who is this?”

“Damn, that's how you answer your phone girl?”

My heart beat slowed down before stopping completely. I thought he had me blocked and never wanted to speak to me again.

“J-Johan?”

“Girl you know what it is. Wassup?”

“Whew, so much,” I huffed. For a second I was about to start venting to him until I realized I couldn't. “I thought you were mad at me over ole girl.”

“Fuck ole girl.”

“Ouuu, y'all having problems?” I smiled. I knew it was only a matter of time. I should've just waited until they fell

apart instead of doing what I did. I wish I could just take that shit back.

“Man, what? Let’s just say I don’t do snakes.”

Chills crept up my arms leaving little goosebumps. This guilt was going to eat me alive.

“How is she a snake? You were just all in love with her. Even cut me off for her.”

“Man and that was the biggest mistake I could’ve made. Everybody not loyal and hold shit down like you, love. I mean would you set me up in any type of way?”

“Never.”

I said that shit so quickly that I wanted to slap myself. I probably sounded suspicious as hell. Or maybe it was just my paranoia, because Johan continued talking like he hadn’t noticed anything. I needed to get out of my head before I fucked around and exposed myself.

“I know you wouldn’t baby. That’s why from here on out it’s just me and you. I put that on all my dead podnah’s.”

“Wait, are you serious? You want to be with me forreal? Like boyfriend and girlfriend?”

“Yea, man. What’s so hard to believe about that? You a real one and I want to reward you for that. You with me?”

“Baby I’ve always been with you. Even when you started acting funny I was still loyal to you. I didn’t give this pussy to nobody else.”

“That’s why I like to hear. When I come back to New Orleans I’m a fuck and spoil the shit out of you. I might even give you a baby and put a ring on your finger.”

I could’ve cried tears of joy or got up and did backflips. I was finally getting what I wanted out of him! Suddenly I didn’t regret sending my cousins to his house. That one act made him get rid of Keiko and see me the way he should’ve been seeing me this whole time. I still wished my cousins could’ve made it out alive but they knew the consequences that came with what they did. The guilt that I felt would subside as soon as Johan and I started our lives together.

“Johan I can’t believe it took Keiko sending two niggas to your house to make you finally realize that this is where you need to be,” I teared up.

“How you know Keiko sent two niggas to my house?”

I swear I could've died. My excitement had gotten the best of me and I slipped up.

“Because you told me.” I attempted to trick him.

“I never said that shit.”

Fuck!

“Oh well I just assumed that she sent niggas to your house on the Westbank.”

“How you know I got a house on the Westbank?”

My eyes enlarged. I'd fucked up *again*. My heart was racing and I knew anything I'd say from here on out would make me look guilty, so I panicked and hung up. Surprisingly he didn't call me back.

I was about to shit my pants thinking about my next move. All I knew was that I needed to *move*. I couldn't stay here because he knew where I stayed. About an hour later while I was packing a bag I received a text message from the same number.

504766201- I didn't want you leaving this world thinking I would've ever married you or put a baby in your flock ass. Jokes on you and your cousins for thinking I was

the nigga you could fuck with. Nice family picture btw

Taran.

A picture from my 2010 family reunion pretty much sealed my fate. I said fuck my clothes, and just grabbed what I already had packed along with my keys before jetting for the door. When I opened my door I jumped right back. I should've made my move an hour ago. I was too late. A masked man pointed a gun at me and pulled the trigger ending my life.

Chapter 22

March 27 , 2016

Keiko

“I don't fuck with these niggas cause they shady. These bitches they just wanna have my baby. Born in the 80s, crack baby. Mama she was in the streets so guess who raised me. The streets! You muthafuckin' right couldn't get it from my mama so I got it off the block. Been working my whole life

but I ain't never punched the clock. 9 years old I seen a nigga get shot, damn. Niggas quick to run their mouth when they get jammed. Pussy ass nigga tell it on his own fam. Same nigga that you break your neck for. Be the same nigga that cross you out and wet you up. Post to be chasin' money but you chasin' bitches. Real bosses don't talk we just sit back and listen. Stack that paper up then make boss moves. She like to argue so I sent that bitch to law school. Keep it real with your dawg no matter what. Preach! Same bitch that claim she love you she'll set you up. Preach! Out here in these streets it ain't no such thing as love. Preach! The only thing I trust is this pistol and these slugs." Johan rapping this song on his Snapchat in the club from the previous night had me every bit of pressed and distressed.

It was definitely the line about the bitch claiming to love you but setting you up that triggered me. I had never done such a thing to a nigga I loved or even claimed to love, but that's why he thought. His dumb ass was applying songs to me as if that was my character. I was really starting to *hate* his ass.

"Ou," I winced as I clutched my stomach. The pain pills my doctor told me I could take relieved me of my daily sickness but now they were starting to give me cramps. I knew

light cramps were normal, but these felt unusually heavy. My period cramps didn't even feel this bad. I called my doctor to ask him about it and he claimed it was normal much like my other first trimester symptoms. I was going to ask for another doctor at this point because I was starting to feel like he didn't take me seriously. At first I thought I was just being dramatic but I wasn't going to chance it with my child.

“KEIKO! COME ON! DON'T MAKE ME COME IN THERE!” Marsha screamed from the other side of the door. We were having our sleepover tonight. My crab sisters and crabs were all in my living room having a grand ole time while I was worrying myself about Johan and in physical pain. I needed to get a hold of myself. I hadn't even made my pregnancy announcement to them yet.

“I'm using the bathroom! I'm coming!”

“Damn bitch, you shitting?”

“Go away, Marsha,” I laughed. “I'm about to be out!”

“Alright, I'll be back if you're not!”

After washing my hands, my phone vibrated twice on the sink. I looked over to see who was texting me. I thought

my eyes were playing dirty tricks at first. I anxiously opened the message up because there was no way this could be real.

Johan- Let me just start by saying sorry. I know that word probably doesn't hold enough weight for how I treated you or what I accused you of, but it's a start. You probably want nothing to do with me, and I don't blame you. I know you're still pregnant so I wanted to reach out to let you know I'll be present from now on. Again, sorry for accusing you of something you did not do. I'm sick over this shit so I can't imagine how you've felt. I don't expect a response or for you to accept my apology. Just know I mean everything I'm saying from the bottom of my heart.

I couldn't describe how I felt after reading that message because my feelings were split. One side of me felt boulders lift off of my shoulder because something was on me that I didn't do. He had to find out who really did it, so I was relieved. Then the other side of me was enraged. I'd been stressing over something I didn't do while I was pregnant and that wasn't fair to me or my baby. He was right, I didn't owe him a response, and that's exactly why I didn't give him one. He could suffer just like I had.

When I rejoined the slumber party all the girls were either dancing or fixing themselves a plate of the party food I had made. I joined some of my crabs who were throwing their ass in a circle. I bounced my booty easily, putting them all to shame. I didn't twerk or shake my ass often, but I was from New Orleans which meant I was great at it.

“COME ON CAPTAIN!!!”

“CUT UPPP!!!”

As they egged me on and slapped my ass, my back started hurting out of nowhere. I stopped twerking abruptly, leaving them all looking at me crazy.

“You good, sissy?” Holly asked as she walked over with a plate of Rotel dip.

“No,” I shook my head while rushing to the couch to sit down. On top of the back pains my stomach had started cramping again. This time the cramps felt tight like someone was slicing my stomach. Then out of nowhere it felt like I wet my pants.

“KEIKO YOU'RE BLEEDING!” Sasha screamed in horror while looking at the crotch of my pink sweats.

I held my head as I grew teary eyed. I was in so much pain but I was trying to stay calm. I guess in my mind that kept me in control of the situation even though I felt like I was losing my baby.

“Sis are you pregnant?” Holly asked. It looked like she was tearing up too. That didn’t come as a surprise to me. She was always the first to shed tears about everything. I guess this was an emotional site. Everybody was looking at me with long faces and they’d even turned the music off.

“Yes,” I cried.

“Okay, we need to get you to the hospital. You might be having a miscarriage.”

Chapter 23

March 27 , 2016

Keiko

“We’re going to sue them!!! We’re going to shut that low budget hospital down!!! I know people in very high places and I won’t let them get away with what they did to my cs!!!”

“Holly shut up, she’s sleeping and you don’t need to wake her up with that shit,” Britney whispered harshly.

“But she’s right,” Kiyor said. “She needs to sue that white ass doctor or he’s going to pay her, one or the other.”

“Thank you, Kiyor! I say we shut every hospital in New Orleans down! I bet they do stuff like this all the time out there!” Holly expressed passionately.

“Forreal Holly, stop screaming. I understand this is messed up, but you loud as fuck.” Marsha scolded.

I wasn’t asleep. I was wide awake with my eyes closed wishing I had gone to heaven with my baby. It felt like someone had robbed me of the last bit of hope I was holding on to. The worst part was that I was just shy of three months in. I never got to learn my baby’s gender, give them a name, or even see a 3D ultrasound. I was devastated. To add insult to injury I’d learned a few hours ago that this could’ve been avoided.

Apparently women who took painkillers from the class of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs had a greater chance of miscarrying during their first trimester. The doctor at the hospital in BR actually asked me if I was *trying* to kill my baby when I told her I'd been taking Naproxen for the past week . I presented her with a digital list of over the counter medicine that my doctor back in New Orleans said I could have. She looked over the list and said some of the stuff was fine, but she had no idea why he would recommend Naproxen or Ibuprofen to me.

My crab sisters were hysterical. Wendy, who was attending law school next fall, went into lawyer mode, and asked for my doctor's number. She turned the audio recorder on before she called him. As usual he had an attitude because it was late and he was woken out of his sleep. I didn't care how late it was. He needed to answer for this shit.

He actually *lied* about putting those medications on the list he'd given me. Wendy told him she was looking directly at the list from my email, which she was. Then all of a sudden his story switched. Now it was a typo. I was actually stunned that he was blaming his medical malpractice on a fucking typo. Wendy must've felt my pain because she ditched lawyer

mode and started going *in* on him. When he heard the words “sue” fly out of her mouth his story changed *again*. He claimed that studies weren’t clear on NSAIDs being linked to miscarriage before saying I had no case. I was going to be the judge of that shit because I would definitely be talking to a lawyer. He wasn’t getting away with this shit.

April 18 , 2016

Johan

“Man I hate when these college kids come out here for spring break,” I vented as I walked down Ocean drive with my number one Miami goon Enzo and his little brother who he recruited, Marco. We were looking for somewhere to eat right quick but most of our favorite restaurants had over one hour waits. I had to go around and collect my money today, so I wasn’t trying to be out here for hours.

“I don’t mind with all these hermosas mujeres negras.” Marco replied while looking around like he was in heaven. I

could agree with him on that. There were a lot of beautiful black women around, but I wasn't tripping on no bitches right now. The one girl I really wanted had shut me out of her life completely by going ghost on me. I couldn't call or text her phone. She'd deactivated all of her social media accounts so I couldn't stalk her online. I went to UBR campus for a week straight and would just pick a different parking lot to sit in for hours at a time but I never saw her. I went by her mom's house a few times but that was a dead end. Keiko or her mom was never there, and I'm sure the kids were probably in school. One time I pulled up on a Saturday so I assumed everybody would be home. I wasn't expecting Keiko to be there, but I was hoping to get some answers from somebody on where she was currently staying. Kendra still wasn't there, but the kids were there by themselves. I went and got them some McDonalds, and I stayed over for a little while hoping their mom would pop up. I know she left them alone, but I didn't want to do that. None of her kids were even 10 years old or hit middle school yet. In my eyes that meant none of them were fit to babysit or were equipped to handle the many things that could go wrong. When night started to fall, I made Ryan give me his mom number. He didn't want to because he claimed he would get in trouble. I eventually convinced him

that he wouldn't, but it was useless anyway. Her phone was going straight to voicemail so either she'd turned it off or it was dead. Both options were irresponsible on her end. Her kids were home alone and they had no way to reach her. I asked him to call Keiko next. When he told me her number didn't work any more I was shocked. She was icing her siblings out too? Now I was really worried.

We ended up calling their grandma and when I told her they were by themselves she was pissed off. I got an earful about how Kendra was using the kids to be petty because she found out Red had two more kids for somebody else....blah, blah, blah. I didn't care about none of that shit. I just wanted her to come and get these kids so they wouldn't be alone. She rushed right over to pick them up. Since that day I'd call Ryan every other day to make sure they were good because now I felt like Kendra was trash, and Keiko obviously wasn't as invested as she used to be.

"I think I might have to switch up on my people and get a black girl." Marco voiced, breaking me from my thoughts about Keiko and her family.

"Nigga you are black, what you mean?" I questioned in confusion. This nigga was darker than *me* and my most of my

damn family talking bout he was going to switch up on his people.

“I’m Dominican and Puerto Rican.” He responded.

“Dios Mío...you too old to not know the difference between ethnicity and race. Look at your skin color, nigga.” Enzo said, not hiding his disappointment.

“Like I said, I’m Dominican and Puerto Rican,”he stated firmly. I don’t think he was aware of how ignorant he looked and sounded, but that was on his black ass.

“How y’all come from the same family?”I asked. It sounded like a joke but I was serious. I’d been knowing Enzo for about five years and I’d met his brother a few months into knowing him. Enzo was definitely the smart one out of the two even though they were only two years apart. I kept Marco around because he had a lot of heart and he was always on go.

“I keep telling you we share the same father. His mama raised him and taught him how to hate his blackness in the process,”Enzo chuckled. Marco didn’t find that funny because his face balled up.

In the midst of them going back and forth about their identities, we decided to eat at a Cuban spot because it wasn’t

too busy and we knew the food was straight. After we ordered our food I excused myself to the restroom. As I stood I heard a laugh that made me look right in the direction I'd heard it from. It was Keiko. She was alive and well, and sitting a few tables away from us with a big smile on her face like the world was hers. I was so confused.

Our eyes connected right away and she froze. Her reaction gave me time to scope her out. The first thing I noticed was her perky breasts in a bikini top from behind the table. She had to be creeping up on four months pregnant at this point, so I was sure she had a little pudgy that I couldn't see right now. That's when I peeped the alcoholic beverage that was in her hand.

“What you doing?” I interrogated as I stormed to her table and knocked the drink from her hand making it splash everywhere. She was with a bunch of other girls. A few I recognized and a few I didn't. I just hoped that she learned her lesson with Farrah and she wasn't fucking none of these girls.

“What the hell did you do that for?!”

“You pregnant! Why you out here drinking? Better yet, why are you out here in the first place?!” My voice raising

caught random people's attention, but I was so mad I didn't care.

She looked severely embarrassed as she glanced around, but I also noticed hurt in her eyes. She stood up and pointed to her body that was clad in nothing but an orange thong bikini. Her friends seemed to all be wearing orange swimsuits too. They looked like a gang of orange hoes.

“Do I *look* pregnant to you?”

It felt like someone slapped the breath out of me as I looked at her perfectly flat belly. Did she actually listen to what I said after all?

“So you went ahead and got the abortion huh?” I came out and asked.

I could see the rage overcome her in real time as she lost it and started swinging on me. This was the last thing I was expecting from Keiko and in *public* at that.

“BITCH YOU A STUPID ASS NIGGA! I HATE YOU!” She screamed as she swung on me and hit me in the face several times. When she popped me in my eye I felt the ring that I'd gotten her as a Christmas gift cut into my flesh. I had a reflex and shoved her ass. Suddenly that made me public

enemy number one. All her friends hopped up and swarmed me. It was crazy how last year I was making fun of Keem for getting jumped by his girl and her friends. My, had the tables turned.

Of course my goons rushed over to get these crazy bitches off me. Them getting involved did no good because they just focused their anger on them too. A really light skin bitch with blonde hair picked up a bottle of Champagne and slammed it over Marco's head. That nigga was swole as fuck, so he didn't pass out, but it sure made him whoozy.

Meanwhile, I was trying my hardest not to lay one of these bitches out. We all were. If we started throwing real blows this shit would be over, but I wasn't trying to do them like that. Keiko would probably really be done with my ass then. I had to do something though or else we'd all end up in jail.

With all my strength I pushed all of them away from us and they flew back towards their table making it topple over.

"Y'all hoes tripping!" I shouted, as blood dripped from my mouth.

"No bitch you trippin!" Keiko screamed from the ground, covered in food.

"I asked you a simple question!"

“Bitch that’s not a simple question when she had a miscarriage no more than three weeks ago!!!” One of the girls screamed.

Keiko

It looked like all the life had been zapped from Johan’s body when Britney’s ass blurted out my business. I understood why she did it though. He kept saying stupid shit, and I was in no rush to tell him what happened. Telling him just made it more real, and I was finally starting to grasp the fact that my baby was no longer inside of me.

I recognized the emotionless void in Johan’s eyes because that was me at first. This vacation was the first time that I’d been outside since everything happened. My professors had graciously allowed me to complete my assignments online once Marsha wrote them a detailed email about what had happened. One of my female professors had even sent me a list of lawyers I could hire for my lawsuit. I was waiting until after I graduated to focus on that.

“Uh-huh!!! Don’t got nothing to say now, dumb ass!” Marsha jabbed. Johan was still standing there looking stupid and hurt.

“I’m going to have to ask you to leave or I’ll call the police!!!” The owner bellowed after marching up.

“Oh sir, it’s no problem!” Holly said as we were all standing up. “I’ve been kicked out of better places! Most importantly, I’ve been to better places! This Cuban food you call yourselves giving to your patrons isn’t even authentic Cuban food. My parents have a vacation home in Cuba, so this food tastes like back that ass up in comparison to what I’ve had. Me or my bitches don’t need this low budget shit. You could’ve at least sent security when you saw these hooligans attacking us!”

“What?!” One of the niggas Johan was with exclaimed. He had brown skin with a glow like he lived in the sun, he was really tall, and had waves for days in his fade. At that moment I was wishing I’d met him before his friend and maybe I wouldn’t have been going through this nonsense. “Anybody with eyes can see we were trying to make y’all stop!”

Holly had nothing to say because she knew they didn’t really try to fight us forreal, but I didn’t feel bad about shit. I

owed Johan one anyway for when he choked me out. Now that his face was fucked up we were even.

“Let’s go y’all.” I ordered, before marching off.

“You have to pay for the food!” The owner screamed at my back.

“Girl go to hell!” Marsha screamed back.

“Exactly. We ain’t even get to start eating that shit. She better go head,” Destiny added on.

“I say we get this whole place shut down.” Holly said.

“Bitch bring your ass on here. Always tryna get somebody business shut down,” Britney snapped.

All I could do was shake my head. This was a hell of a way to kick off spring break and my birthday week. I wasn’t about to let it ruin the rest of my trip though. As long as Johan stayed out of my way I’d be good.

***“I gotta let you know I feel so weak without your touch. I never thought that I could ever love a man so much.*”**

I gotta let you know I think that we are destiny. For you I'd cross the world, for you I'd do anything. That's right baby I'm going crazy. I need to be your lady. I've been thinking lately. That you and me, yes we can make it. Just ride with me, roll with me, I'm in love with you baby. That's right baby I'm going crazy.'

“Alright, that’s it bitch. You off the bluetooth.” Marsha twisted into the bathroom with half of her hair curled just to disconnect my music. “We want to hear some turn up shit.”

A few seconds later “Ayy Ladies” by Travis Porter blared through the Bluetooth speaker and the vibe instantly switched but I was still feeling down. Now that I’d seen Johan I actually wanted to talk to him. I didn’t owe him shit, but a conversation was due for my own sake. I was heartbroken and needed to start the healing process. If I didn’t I would start a downward spiral.

“How you feeling?” Destiny asked as she looked at me through the mirror while doing her makeup.

“I wish I hadn’t seen him.”

“Can’t stop thinking bout him now?” She guessed.

“Yup. But I ain’t gon lie...and I hope you don’t think I’m weak for this.”

“You know I’m never one to judge because I don’t want nobody to judge me. What’s up?”

“I want to whoop his ass and be up under him at the same time. Am I being soft?”

“Yea,” she snickered. “But that’s expected with what you went through. Of course you’d want to confide in your baby daddy about losing *y’all* baby. Even though I think that nigga’s presence could’ve prevented some shit.”

“Could’ve, should’ve, would’ve. We’ll never know now.” I sighed. My heart was starting to feel heavy so I needed to stop talking about this before I got emotional. I promised myself I wouldn’t break down this week, and I wanted to stay true to that.

“Ok now ladies!!!! If you know you bad!!! Don’t need no man, got yo own bands, put up yo hands!!! If you a top notch bitch let me hear you holler!!! Bend it over, touch ya toes, whip it out, show them hoes ya bank roll!” Britney barged into the bathroom rapping with her phone in her hand, recording. Destiny immediately bent over and started twerking her *huge* booty. She was the thickest Dancing Diamond to

come through UBR in a long time. It was rumored that Forever Diamonds who were judges at the 2014 tryouts had an issue with how “big” she’d gotten and that’s why she was cut from the team. After that she dropped out of school and started pursuing a career in music. She hadn’t made it yet, but with a voice like hers it was only a matter of time.

“Keiko throw that ass in a circle!!!” Britney screamed while panning the camera over to me. I usually didn’t dance for cameras because of my position on the dance team, but I was done with the dance team. I could do whatever the fuck I wanted to do now without worrying about the image of the band. I was finally free.

“Ayyyye!!! Bitches pay for asses like these!” Britney egged us on as we twerked while holding on to the bathroom counter.

“Y’all in here twerking without muah?” Holly asked as she stepped into the bathroom with her face fully made.

“Girl please,” Destiny scoffed, making us all laugh. Holly couldn’t twerk for shit which was weird because she had a nice helping of ass and she could buck down just like us. For some reason she struggled with clapping and controlling that

ass no matter how much we tried to teach her. I guess that's what happens when you grow up with all white people.

We were done getting dressed within the next hour and we looked *good*. Like earlier at the beach we decided to color coordinate tonight for the club too by wearing red. I donned a sheer red mini dress with a matching bra and red lace panties underneath. This was more on the risqué side for me, and the red stripper heels I paired with it didn't make it better, but this was Miami! Over the top sexy outfits were acceptable out here. I felt like a bad bitch with my natural hair flat ironed to perfection with a middle part. My smokey eyes made me look super seductive along with my bright red lips. I just knew tonight would make up for the chaotic day we had.

"Somebody's birthday is in an hourrrr," Wendy sang as we stood outside waiting for our uber.

"Forreal? Who?" I clutch my chest dramatically. I couldn't believe I was about to be 22 years old. It felt like I was just making 18 and entering college. Now I was getting ready to end this chapter of my life to start another one. It was bittersweet for sure.

"WHO IS THAT?!" Marsha exclaimed as a tall shadow emerged out of nowhere and stalked towards us like a serial

killer in a horror movie. It lowkey reminded me of how Michael Myers walked after bitches instead of chasing them. All of us backed up as a collective. As the person got closer the light from the hotel revealed them. It was nobody but Johan. How he learned where I was staying was the first question that popped into my head.

“AHHHH! He’s here for revenge!” Holly screamed dramatically. I almost laughed, but I didn’t need Johan thinking this was a joke.

“I know Ms. Slam a bottle over a nigga head ain’t scared,” he quipped before looking directly at me.

“How that eye feel?” I asked while looking at the purple bruise under his eye.

“It feel fine. I ate that shit up.”

“So you came to eat another one up?”

“Man we did that already. We need to talk now.”

“Okay.”

“Okay?” He looked unsure like I was playing.

“Yea, but not now. I’m about to go to King of Diamonds to enjoy my birthday.”

“It’s not your birthday yet. You still got like 50 minutes.”

“Okay, and I’m not going nowhere with you to talk. We’ll talk on my time.”

“Keiko come get in this car with me.”

“I just told you we’re going to King of Diamonds and I’m not going nowhere with yo-“

“I’m going to KOD too!” He cut me off.

“I don’t feel like rehashing details about what happened with the baby right now Johan. That shit hurts,” I said quietly. “I just wanna have fun tonight.”

His stern face turned empathetic quickly.

“Then we won’t talk about it. Just let me take you to King of Diamonds, and we’ll talk after the club.”

“I’m not leaving my crab sisters and our uber on the way.”

“Yup, and I already paid for it.” Marsha sassed.

He whipped a one hundred dollar bill out his pocket and waved it. “Cancel the uber.”

Marsha looked at me to see what I wanted to do before she made a move.

“Can we all even fit in your car?” I asked him.

“No, but my niggas drove their cars. Your friends can ride with Enzo in his Escalade.”

“Alright.” I gave in. Marsha took his hundred dollar bill.

“Is that the guy I hit over the head with a bottle?” Holly asked, looking terrified. This time I did laugh.

“No, that was his brother. Hopefully you knocked some sense into that nigga.”

They all laughed, and we started walking towards their cars on the side of the street. I saw about six luxury vehicles behind Johan’s white Aston Martin.

“All these niggas with you?” I asked after he pointed my girls in the direction of Enzo’s truck.

“Yea. They always do KOD on Monday’s so I decided to pop out with them tonight.”

“Hmmm, you did huh?” I asked skeptically. He opened my door, and I slid in. When he got in he just looked at me instead of pulling off right away.

“What?!”

“Why the fuck are your underwear showing? You think it was cool to step outside like that? You could’ve just worn the bra and the draws for all that.”

“I meannnn...it’s not too late. I can take this dress off right now if you insist. I’ll blend right in with the strippers at the club.”

“Alright, you got jokes I see.” He nodded while starting his car up and then pulling off. The cars behind him followed.

“Johan don’t worry about what the fuck I got on. I’m grown. I got a better question. Like how the fuck did you find out where I was staying?”

A smirk gradually appeared on his face. “I had somebody follow you when you left the restaurant. It wasn’t hard either. I just told them to follow the pack of orange birds.”

“Boy fuck you! Stupid ass!” I exploded.

“Damn, I was just playing.”

“You think I feel like playing with you?!”

“I’m sorry Keiko. I know I fucked up really bad. We had something good going before I jumped the gun about some shit I should’ve done more research on.”

“I told you I didn’t want to talk about this right now.”

“You said you didn’t want to talk about the miscarriage. I’m talking about the other shit.”

“That other shit practically led to my miscarriage, so I don’t want to talk about it right now.” I asserted.

“Wait, you trying to say it’s my fault?”

“Would you disagree with that?”

He appeared to be in deep thought before responding.

“The fact that I even gotta think about it says a lot. The shit probably stressed you out so I guess it is my fault. That’s something my dumb ass gotta deal with too.”

“Yea, you did stress me out. I was going *through* it and I had no help, but I wouldn’t say that’s the sole reason.”

“Then what is it?”

“I’ll tell you after the club like we agreed upon.”

“Keiko...”

I reached over to the radio to turn it on. This song had perfect timing. Being the petty bitch I was, I cranked it up even louder and sang it while recording myself.

“I was good on my own, that’s the way it was, that’s the way it was. You was good on the low for a faded fuck, on some faded love. Shit, what the fuck you complaining for? Feeling jaded huh? Used to trip off that shit I was kickin’ to you. Had some fun on the run though I give it to you. But baby, don’t get it twisted. You was just another nigga on the hit list. Tryna fix your inner issues with a bad bitch. Didn’t they tell you that I was a savage. Fuck your white horse and a carriage. Bet you never could imagine. Never told you you could have it. You needed me. Oooh, you needed me. To feel a little more, and give a little less. Know you hate to confess. But baby ooo, you needed me.”

“Alright, bruh.” He turned the radio off. “You doing too much now. You ain’t even no fucking savage.”

“Baby you don’t know what I am.”

“Alright Keiko, I get it. You tryna make me feel it. Wild out.”

It sounded like he was doubting me and how far I could go. Underestimating me would be his number one

mistake. I didn't like to act out but I was capable of doing so. My ex could attest to that. Johan had never really felt my getback, but he'd definitely find out in the near future. Tonight could be a different story depending on my mood at the end of it.

Johan

I had told Keiko to wild out as a way to call her bluff, but *damn*. She'd really taken heed. I didn't know if she was cutting up like this because it was her birthday or because her friends were here with her, but she was putting on a show on the other side of our huge section. Some of my niggas were over there too, chosing up on her girls. Marco was in Holly's face even though she banged his lights out earlier. It was obvious she was peeping Enzo out though.

"This girl here..." I mumbled as Keiko took a shot and started twerking. Her cheeks were visibly bounced in the dress and I could've killed everybody in the damn club because I

felt like they were all looking. I wanted to ring her fucking neck for wearing that shit out in the first place.

There was no way we'd have a clear discussion tonight with the way she was throwing patron shots back. As long as she left with me then I'd be good. We could always talk in the morning. I just didn't want to let her leave without talking to me because I didn't know how she'd act once she got to BR. I was surprised she even agreed to come with me to the club or talk with me. I expected her to put up a fight or be more mad. The calm energy that was now around her had me worried. It wasn't like she had beef with me over something minor like a female. I accused her of setting me up, put my hands on her, threatened to kill her, and told her to abort our baby. Then she ended up miscarrying the same baby I told her to abort. If this girl continued to fuck with me it would be a miracle, and I'd walk around on egg shells for the rest of our lives.

Thus far I'd been sitting back and letting Keiko enjoy her birthday. That was extremely hard for me because I wanted to yoke her up for how she was behaving. I just couldn't do that and chance her running off. I knew I had to stay out of her way tonight if I wanted my way.

However, that mindset changed when I saw one of Marco's podnah's grab Keiko's hand and kiss it. When I saw a smile come from her I jumped up and made me way over there.

When the nigga saw me approaching him he looked confused and scared, yet he was still holding my girl hand.

"Give my bitch her hand back, nigga." I shoved his flock ass, making him drop her hand.

His first instinct was to start pleading his case like a bitch. "Oh shit, this your girl big dog? I apologize, I ain't know. You know it's all respect on my end."

I didn't respond to his pussy ass. I just grabbed Keiko and pulled her off to the side. This girl actually looked like she was entertained while I was trying my hardest not to go crazy in this bitch.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" I spoke into her ear.

"What's wrong with you? I'm meeting new people. I don't have to be in this section, no! I can go somewhere else if it's gotta be all this confusion."

“Mannn, it ain’t no confusion. Just keep these niggas that I be around out your face. How would you feel if I tried to holler at one of your crab sisters?”

The flash of jealousy couldn’t be missed in her eyes. “They’d *never* entertain you.”

“Exactly, so don’t entertain these niggas.”

“I wasn’t entertaining that nigga. I just smiled.”

“Yea, and that’s too much.”

“No, what’s too much is telling me to abort my baby over something you had no proof over, bitch.”

My heart dropped. The pain in her words couldn’t be missed and that shit fucked me up.

“Keiko let’s go.”

“No. It’s my birthday. You just stay out of my way for the rest of the night. We can talk at your house after this.”

I swore the sun came out when she said that shit. I couldn’t wait to get the fuck out of this club.

Keiko

The Patron officially had me out of my body. The club was closing and the music was off, yet I was still on top of the sofa in the section dancing. My crab sisters were just as fucked up, so they were on the same bullshit as me.

“It’s my bitches birthdayyyy!!!!” Britney chanted as I squatted and wiggled my ass cheeks. My shoes were off at this point and I had no idea where they were. That was a testament to how drunk I really was because I frowned upon taking off my shoes while I was out.

“How old you made, sis?!” Marsha asked while giving me an imaginary microphone with her hand.

“Deuce, deuce!!! I’m grown, grown bitchhh!” I screamed. I swear it felt like I was floating on a cloud or something.

“Alright, miss grown grown, it’s time to go.”

I looked back at Johan who was standing there impatiently and for the first time all night he looked good as hell. His locs looked freshly twisted with a lining, his Balmain threads looked like they came straight from the store today, his jewelry was icy as always, and I could *never* deny his

handsome face. Our baby would've been perfect. Damn. Now I hated his ass again.

“You can go,” I snapped.

“You said you was coming with me bruh.”

“You did?” Wendy raised an eyebrow.

“I did?” I questioned, playing dumb.

“C'mon bruh,” he uttered in frustration. “You promised we would talk. Let's not do this.”

“Keiko go ahead,” Holly urged.

“Yea, listen to your friend.” He co-signed. I rolled my eyes in response.

Johan's friend, Enzo, walked up to Holly and wrapped his arm around her shoulder. “Ladies my brother Marco is going to bring y'all back to the hotel. You ready to go, mami?” He looked at Holly and she visibly blushed.

“Girl I know you lying...” Marsha mumbled. We were all surprised. Holly did not leave the club with niggas she didn't know. She believed in dumb shit like the 3 month rule and playing hard to get. On top of that Enzo didn't strike me as her usual type which was the pretty light skin boys with

light eyes and soft, curly hair. Don't get me wrong, Enzo was wickedly handsome but he had serious roughneck appeal.

“Yea, let me say bye to my friends first.”

“Alright. I'll be over here waiting for you.” He said before swaggering off.

“Don't judge me, but he's so fine! Do any of y'all have condoms?” She asked us.

“He got some. Trust me.” Johan answered. “Lets go, y'all.”

Once I was in the car with Johan, I was able to put my phone on his charger that had gone dead in the club. I had reactivated my social media accounts when we landed in Miami because I was ready for things to start going back to normal. That included posting pictures of me living my best life. When my phone came back on my Instagram was blowing up. I had over 15k followers thanks to being on a popular dance team and being captain for two years. All of my supporters pulled up in droves under my most recent picture of me in the orange bikini I had on earlier on the beach to tell me happy birthday. What was special to me was the people writing sweet messages about how I was an inspiration to them and how much they admired me. It was really heart

warming and made me feel satisfied with my college experience despite the dysfunction I'd had lately.

“What you over there smiling for?” Johan asked. We had just made it back to his house and I was still on my phone reading birthday messages.

“Just reading birthday messages.” I said as we entered his living room. I walked straight to the couch and flopped down. The ride home had sobered me up a little but I was still lit. Johan entered the living room behind me and walked straight to the table to pick up his tv remote. He turned his huge flatscreen TV on and put on music.

“Damn. I guess everybody got your new number except me.” He said while sitting down on the opposite end of the couch from me. He didn't really have a choice since I was spread out.

I laughed at his poor attempt to guilt trip me. “Didn't you block my other number? You shouldn't even be concerned with this one. I'm on Instagram anyway.”

“How? I've been trying to go on your Instagram and it hasn't been showing up for me.”

“I deactivated it at first but when I reactivated I blocked you.”

“Mannn...”

“Mannnn,” I mocked him. “What the fuck do you expect? Real shit.”

“I expect you to be mad. I’ve admitted to tha-“

“Oh yea, you did admit to that in that pooh ass apology you gave me. A text message, nigga? Really?”

“I knew if I called you wouldn’t answer.”

“True, but you should’ve tried as many times as you needed to. As a matter of fact you should’ve been at my door, on your knees, and begging for my forgiveness. You could have kept that text message.”

“I had to say something as soon as I found out the truth, Kiki, so I reached out to you in the best way I could at that exact second. I was way out here in Miami, and even if I was in Louisiana it’s not like I know where you stay now. I went to your school more than once. I even went to your mama’s house more than onc-“

“You did what?!”

“Yea, I went to your mama’s house. She’s on some other shit by the way.”

“How? What happened?”

“I went there one Saturday and them kids was there by themselves. I sat there with them for hours and she never showed up. I tried to call your mama and you from Ryan’s phone, but y’all ain’t answer, so I had to call their grandma. She came and she was pissed off with your mama.”

“That lady sad, bruh. I don’t know what’s going on with her these days.”

Now I felt terrible for neglecting my brothers and sisters after my miscarriage. I just really needed some “me” time. I also assumed that after I’d gone off on my mother the *last* time that she wouldn’t leave my brothers and sisters at home alone anymore. I guess that wasn’t the case after all. Along with reactivating my social media accounts, I also reached out to my siblings to give them my new number so I’d been talking to them recently. They hadn’t mentioned any of this to me.

“Maybe your dad can give you some insight on that.”

“Whatchu know that I don’t?” I looked over at him curiously. It seemed as if he was more in tune with my family than I was. What the fuck was really going on?

“Man that ain’t my place. Talk to your pops. I’d much rather talk about us right now.”

“Nigga you brought up my family, not me.”

“I brought that up to make a point that I tried my hardest to get to you so I could apologize face to face.”

Okay so maybe I had made it difficult for him. I wasn’t trying to hear his bullshit ass excuses though. He could’ve gone harder just like he went hard when he thought I’d set his dumb ass up.

“So who really did it?”

“Did what?”

“C’mon. You know what I’m talking about.” I gave him a knowing look.

“This bitch.”

“Ohhh, so it was a female. Were you fucking her?”

“I used to fuck her before you came in the picture.”

“Nigga tell me her name.” I demanded. He was acting like he didn’t want to tell me or something.

“It was Taran.” He revealed.

“Is that the bitch that was tweaking to beef with me?”

“Yup.”

“Did youuu...” I put a fake gun to my head with my hands and pulled the imaginary trigger.

“Yup.” He repeated.

I laughed. “Wow, that’s really something.”

“What something?”

“Cause I was the first person you suspected and I bet that raggedy hoe didn’t even cross your mind.”

“Why would she cross my mind? That bitch never been nowhere near my house nor was she significant enough for me to even think of. When shit like that happens to niggas who move like me it’s usually somebody close to us. Not somebody we kept at a distance.” He explained. I had to admit that made sense, but I wasn’t about to let him make it.

“Yet that bitch that you kept at a distance was able to still set you up like she was somebody close to you.”

“Alright, you got that, Ki. I was just explaining my thought process, and I admit that I was wrong. It’s just when them niggas said your bitch sent us my mind automatically went to you.”

“And that’s fucked up.”

“It is, but I never viewed nobody else as *mine*.”

“And even with that it’s still fucked up. Like you seriously should’ve known better than to play with my character like that.”

“But Keik-...nevermind.”

“But what?! Say it!!!”

“Nah. I don’t think you want to hear it.”

“It’s not about what I wanna hear. Tell me the truth.”

“Alright. As much as I love you I couldn’t forget how you used to be setting niggas up on a consistent basis before we started fucking with eachother. I got to thinking that you was running game on me like you ran game on all the niggas before me.”

“ I hear you, but if you gotta feel that way about the person you fucking with then maybe you shouldn’t be fucking with them. Like do you seriously think I would drag a mission

on for this long and even go as far as carrying your child?
Baby you've worked with me before to know that I don't
move like that. Your paranoia and trust issues outweighed your
common sense, but apology accepted."

"Apology accepted?" He repeated with a puzzled look
on his face.

"Yup. I accept your apology. I feel like it's sincere, and
I know you gotta feel dumb as fuck."

"I do, Ki," he sighed heavily. "I love you and I'm so
happy you're willing to move past this and work on us."

"Wait..." I laughed. "When you heard me say all that?"

"You said you accepted my apology."

"I do accept it. That doesn't mean I'm trying to work
on us. I think you need to work on you first."

"Really Keiko? C'mon, I know I'm not perfect bu--"

"You accused me of trying to get you killed!" I lashed
out. "Then you choked me out while I was pregnant with your
baby and you told me to abort it!"

"I thought you was responsible for setting me up! How
was I supposed to react?!"

“That’s the point, dumbass! You weren’t supposed to react at all without asking me first or looking deeper into the situation.”

“Keiko at the time you looked suspicious as fuck. You went missing and you weren’t answering your phone. It looked bad from my end. You gotta understand that.”

“I don’t gotta understand shit!” I clamored. “I didn’t go missing. I went to go pick up my brothers and my sisters because they called me! When I got them we went to my sisters apartment and fell asleep shortly after that. I thought about telling you I was leaving your house but I was pissed with you that day. So sue me for that. Are you sure you’re sorry for this? Because it sounds like you’re still defending your actions.”

“No, I swear I’m not defending that shit. I’m just explaining my thought process that day.”

“Well your thought process was trash that day. What the fuck was going through your mind when you told me to abort a baby you begged me to keep?” I asked as I teared up. I wasn’t getting emotional about what he had said because although it hurt, I knew he didn’t mean that shit. I was getting emotional because I still ended up losing my baby.

“My babyyyy,” I busted into tears.

“Fuck,” Johan hissed. “Come here.”

He pulled me into a tight hug and I let him. I needed his comfort on this particular topic. He’d never know in a million years *exactly* how I felt but he was the closest person that could understand because it was his baby too.

“I’m so sorry. I fucking failed y’all.”

Hearing him place all the blame on himself didn’t make me feel as good as I thought it would. Maybe because I knew he wasn’t the primary blame.

“You know I didn’t mean that abortion shit. I was mad and just talking stupid. Even when we weren’t talking and I thought you did foul shit I still wanted our baby. I even went as far as calling Keem to ask him if he’d seen you around. I wanted to know if you were getting a belly,” he laughed weakly.

“I did...but it wasn’t noticeable, thank God,” I sniffled. “I think this would’ve been harder to deal with if more people knew.”

“I can understand why you don’t want to want to work on us, bruh. I can’t believe I stressed you out to the point

where you lost our bab-“

I stopped him. “It didn’t exactly happen that way.”

“Whatchu mean?”

“I mean, I was stressed, sick, and miserable. And yes, you are to blame for the stress part. But I had regular pregnancy symptoms that were whooping my ass.”

“If they were regular then what was the problem?”

“The problem was that it was hard to function. I needed to function as a full time student that’s close to graduation.”

“Understandable, what happened next?”

“I asked my doctor what I could do to relieve myself of the misery that I was in. He gave me a list of medications. To make a long story short, most of the stuff on the list pregnant women can’t even have. After a week of taking naproxen that he recommended I lost the baby.”

I watched Johan’s emotions shift from devastation to cold blooded killer. He didn’t say anything right away, but that crazed look in his eyes couldn’t go missed. He wanted to murk somebody.

“What’s his name?” He questioned evenly.

“Why? What do you want to d-“

“Keiko. What the fuck is this niggas name?” He questioned more harshly.

“His name is Bill Evans, but look Johan, don’t do nothing to him.”

“What?!” His head jerked back while looking at me like I sprouted another head. “You tryna protect this cracker?!”

“Fuck no! I wanna sue his ass! But I’m not gon be able to do that if you kill him!”

“Mannnn, that shit can take forever and I want that white mutherfucker to be dead by next week.”

“I did my research. On average it takes 6 months to a year for malpractice lawsuits.”

“So you gon sue him and the hospital right?”

“The hospital? How’s it their fault?”

“Because they hired his ass. I guarantee you he’s done shit like this before and they’ve gotten complaints. If you sue him and the hospital they’ll want to settle outside of court to protect their reputation and you’ll get more money.”

“But I want him to be held accountable. I want him to get fired and never work in medicine as anything again.”

“He won’t. Once you get your money that nigga getting put in the dirt. It’s a win, win for me and you. You with that?”

“I’m not going to agree with you putting your freedom on the line for someone who’s not worth it.”

“Well maybe I won’t do it then if that makes you feel better. Either way, that nigga getting off’d. And don’t settle for less than a million.”

“Johan on average people get between \$380,000 and \$300,000 for malpractice lawsuits.”

“Well I guess you gon’ need a big wig lawyer to get you more than that, huh? I got you on that. In fact, I’ll pay all the lawyer fees in full.”

That was good to hear because I’d been adding up how much this lawsuit would cost me and I was already stressing over it. I’d gladly let him finance it.

“Ima hold you to that.”

“You don’t gotta hold me to shit. I promise I’m a keep my word.” He squeezed me tighter and kissed my forehead.

His lips started moving all over my face, and before I knew it they were on my lips. I allowed him to peck them a few times before pulling away.

“I love you so much .” He professed. “You hear me?”

“Uh-huh.”

“And I’d do anything for you. You know that?”

“I don’t know shit.”

“What I gotta do to prove it?”

“Give me some birthday dick.” I wiped my tears, while climbing on top of him. The effects of the alcohol that was still in my system combined with his kisses had me nice and horny.

A smile formed on his face. “Girl how you gon’ claim you done with me and then ask for some dick?”

“Because I can do that.”

“That’s what you think, huh?”

“Boy shut up. You know I can sit on this dick whenever I want.”

Johan

Keiko was right. She sure could sit on this dick whenever she wanted to. As long as I had a dick or a face she'd have a place to sit. The fact that she still wanted to sit on it was proof that she *did* want to work on us. Otherwise the thought of fucking me would disgust her.

My dick bricked up as she ran her closed hand up and down it. Pre-cum was already oozing from the head. I hadn't fucked anybody else since February so I was backed up and tweaking for a release.

“Suck that dick for daddy.” I demanded while looking at her pretty mouth that was still covered in red lipstick. I missed that nasty mouth so much.

“Daddy don't deserve to have his dick sucked. But daddy can eat this pussy.”

She stood over me on the couch, pulled her panties off, and then climbed on my shoulders. I eagerly grabbed her ass and assisted her in humping my face. She was smothering my ass with her pussy but I missed this meal so much that I didn't mind being without oxygen. Jam by Kevin Gates played from the tv as she rolled her hips perfectly on beat to the song. I was in heaven.

“Bad, but I won’t push it. Never break flower but she won’t quit lookin’. Look at her dress, look at her thighs. No draws underneath, with the slits in the side. Squintin’ my eyes, locked in with the notion. If she squint back, bet I’m approachin’. Playin’ my song, slow dancin’ to Strokin’. Track number seven, told me it was her jam. Do you kiss with your friend? Oh you roll with your friends? Start the car and I get in, we rollin’. Let the leaf hit the green, we smokin’. Slow motion coupe just floatin’. Kissin’ on her finger with my hand on her breast. Tongue doin’ circles round the ring of her nipple. Would you mind on repeat but she might be trippin’. Really, not really, sayin’ it was her jam. Hit her right like Nikon do. Stays back on W. I’m a show her what this pipe game do. I’m a hit her till the sky turn blue. And I’m a jam on it, jam on it. Jam on it, jam on it.”

“Yessss baby, eat this pussy. Eat it!” She moaned while pulling her dress off over her head. She tossed her bra off next and then started playing with her own hard nipples.

“Fuckkkk!!! Right there! Right there! YESSSSS!” She screamed as her body convulsed. I had to grab ahold of her to catch her from falling straight off my shoulders. I guess that orgasm was strong.

“You want some dick now baby?” I asked as I helped her get down.

“I need some,” she replied before reaching for her purse. I was confused because I didn’t know what the fuck she was getting. When I saw her pull a gold wrapper out I started going off.

“What the fuck you got that for?!”

“Because I’m not on birth control, I’m extremely fertile right now, and you don’t pull out.”

“So you gon make me feel my pussy with a condom?”

“That’s the only way you gon feel this pussy.”

I yanked the condom from her, tore it open, and put it on. I’d never felt her with a condom, so I was drove until I climbed between her legs and penetrated her. This pussy still felt like home with a rubber. That’s how I knew this shit was top tier. There was no way I was ever letting her go.

“I love this pussy so much,” I confessed as I thrust in and out of her. Her back was against the arm of my couch and her legs were wrapped around me, forcing her to take the dick. My baby was taking it like a big dog though.

“You love me?” I asked after sharing a nasty tongue kiss with her. I needed to hear her say she still loved me because she hadn’t said it back earlier. I definitely felt some type of way about that.

She didn’t respond this time either. She just moaned in my ear for me to fuck keep fucking her good. I fucked her good, alright. I started beating that pussy up, making her scream.

“YOU LOVE ME?” I asked, as I ventured deeper than I ever had before.

“YES, JOHAN!”

“Say it!” I ordered.

“I love youuuu! I’m finna cummm!”

“Me too, baby. Me too,” I groaned, as my back went stiff. “Fuck.”

“What the fuck,” she voiced while looking down. “Why does it feel like you’re cumming in me if you’re wearing a condom?”

I was so hypnotized that I just stayed right where I was until she slapped the fuck out of my shoulder. I pulled my dick

out of her, giving us both a full view of the condom that was now broken.

“Shit!” She hissed.

“See, you then made me wear a condom for nothing.”

April 18 , 2016

The next morning Keiko woke me up to take her back to her hotel even though I told her she could stay with me for the remainder of her visit. She politely declined and said the purpose of this trip was to spend time with her crab sisters. I had no choice but to respect her wishes and bring her back to the Mondrian. For most of the ride back she was on the phone with her siblings who'd called to wish her a happy birthday. When she got off the phone she was unusually quiet. That was a clear sign that she was about to go back to acting funny with me.

“So I'm gonna give you my number.” She announced when I pulled in front of her hotel.

“Oh forreal?”

“Yea. I’m gonna need to hit you up whenever I meet up with a lawyer so you can pay them.”

That was a huge blow to my ego. I thought she was giving me her number for more personal reasons. She was just trying to make sure I paid the damn lawyer.

“Alright, Keiko.”

She eyed me strangely. “You okay?”

“No, bruh. Cause I know you bouta act stupid with a nigga.”

“I’m not acting, Johan. I told you what it was last night.”

“And then you asked for some dick right after that.”

“I was horny!”

Was this girl admitting to using me for some dick?

“I get it. It meant nothing to you.”

“That’s not true. When I said I loved you I meant it from my heart, but we need to go our separate ways for now.”

“For now? So there’s a chance for us in the future?”

“Who knows,” she shrugged. “Time can heal anything. I just want to focus on me right now. I hope you can respect that and I hope we can remain cool.”

“Keiko I have no choice but to respect it, but I’m not bouta be your friend. If I can’t have you all the way then I don’t want nothing.”

She looked a little hurt by my response but I wasn’t taking it back because I meant what I said.

“O-okay. I guess I have to respect your wishes too.”

“I’m a have somebody drop money off to you for the lawyer. I’ll throw in a lil extra, too.”

“Johan I don’t nee-“

“Look at it as an early graduation gift.”

“Okay. I guess I can accept that.”

“Cool. Give me a hug.”

She moved into my arms and we hugged each other like we didn’t want to let go.

“Can I kiss you?” I asked.

“Yes.”

I kissed her passionately for several seconds before she broke away.

“Alright. Bye, Johan.”

“Bye.”

“I love you,” she said.

“I love you, too.”

Chapter 24

May 12, 2016

Keiko

“So is she gonna let them come?” I asked Red’s mama over the phone. I was in the nail shop getting myself together

for my graduation that was now two days away.

“I ain’t ask her shit. I just told Kiyor that I’ll have em this weekend and she can come pick them up on Saturday for your graduation.”

“Well that works for me.” I laughed. It was sad that I had to go through all this just to get my siblings to my graduation but my mama was still on some fuck shit. In addition to her finding out about my interest in women, she was now mad at me because she felt like I conspired with Rema and Johan to snitch on her to Red which was ludicrous. Red had called me while I was in Miami to wish me a happy birthday and he spilled *all* the tea to me about everything that had been going on.

“You getting up there, Kiki. Whatchu made...26 today?”

I laughed. “You know I’m not no 26.”

He chuckled. “What you doing to celebrate turning 22, babygirl?”

“I’m in Miami on spring break.”

“Oh word? I know you having a good time. That used to be one of my favorite vacation spots.”

“We gotta take a family trip here when you get outta jail.”

“That’s very optimistic of you, KiKi,” he laughed. That response made me sad because he had a 40 year sentence for drug trafficking, but that possibility for parole made me hopeful. Him not so much.

“You staying with Johan out there?”

The night before entered my head and I caught sex flashbacks propelling my coochie to thump. I still wanted that nigga very badly.

“No, why you think that?”

“I thought that was your boyfriend.”

“No we broke up.”

“Damn, what that nigga do?”

“It’s...complicated,” I sighed. I didn’t want to explain how he accused me of setting him up over the phone and I definitely didn’t want to tell him about miscarriage. I tried to keep the conversations as positive as possible whenever I talked to him because I knew he was dealing with so much negativity behind bars.

“That sound like a regular young relationship to me. Y’all will get past it.”

“Let me find out you his biggest cheerleader or something,” I teased.

“I don’t know about a cheerleader, but I think he’s a solid cat. My mama told me how he called her when Kendra left the kids at home by themselves for hours. He could’ve easily just left when he saw you wasn’t there, but he got them something to eat and stayed with them. Shit everytime I talk to the kids they always talking bout what he got them or did for them. They actually talk more about him then they talk about you lately. What’s up with that? Johan taking your place?” He chuckled.

“Me and my mama haven’t been seeing eye to eye so she’s been acting bad with the kids. I’m able to talk to them sometimes on their own personal phones though.”

“See, she ain’t gon be driving wedges between my kids and shit. I ain’t even gon ask you why she mad at you because it’s irrelevant. That don’t have nothing to do with them kids. Kendra do shit like that though. When she’s mad at somebody she tries to ice them out the best way she can. I’ma have to get in her ass about that just like I did when it came to her leaving

my kids at home by themselves cause she ain't wanna call my mama."

"Why she didn't wanna call Miss Rema?" I asked. I already knew the answer thanks to Kiyor. I made her spill the tea to me earlier that day after Johan dropped a hint. I still wanted Red to tell me from his own mouth though.

He sighed deeply. "Look, I don't want you to be mad okay?"

"Okay." I easily agreed. I couldn't be mad about something I'd already been privy to.

"I have two more sons with somebody else."

"How old are they?"

"They're a year older than Royalty."

"And you been knew this?" I questioned. I wasn't mad, but I was disappointed. He'd been sitting on this secret for years and as someone who looked to him as a father figure I felt slighted. I definitely understood why my mom was so angry. Most of her relationship had been a lie.

"KiKi I never claimed to be perfect bu-"

"You can't claim it."

“Alright, I guess I deserve that attitude. I’m sorry for not being honest about this from the jump. I know this affects y’all as well as ya mama, but she can’t be leaving my kids alone because of this shit. It’s not their fault I couldn’t be faithful.”

“Yea, she definitely shouldn’t be doing that. So why she mad at Miss Rema? You never answered that.”

She was mad at Miss Rema because her ass knew and she’d been in those kids lives since day one. Kiyor knew all this because mom had called her accusing her of knowing too. She probably tried to call me too but I blocked her and she didn’t have my new number. It was only a matter of time before she got it out of one of my siblings.

“She’s mad because my mama knew about my other kids. She was trying to keep my mama from our kids over that, but I told her ass that my mama will call CPS if she don’t call her to babysit whenever she leaves that house. We haven’t had a problem since.”

“So she’s still been talking to you but she was beefed out with Miss Rema?”

“Isn’t that crazy? Sometimes I really don’t understand Kendra. She always takes my bullshit out on other people.”

“Don’t I know it,” I mumbled. I used to stay clear of my mom whenever her and Red argued because she’d flash out on me if I asked a simple question.

“Look, just do me a favor and check in on your siblings every now and then. I know you got your own life and you’re graduating soon, but just make sure my babies are good.”

“I’ll always do that, daddy.”

“That’s what I like to hear. You know you my favorite daughter right?”

“Don’t let Kiyor or Royalty hear that.” I laughed.

“Then again you probably tell them the same thing.”

“Never. You enjoy the rest of your time in Miami and stay safe.”

Ever since that phone call I became more present in my siblings lives again. Working my way around my mom was hard, but it wasn’t impossible. The fact that my mom wouldn’t be at my graduation tomorrow didn’t even bother me. I wanted positive energy only. Everybody else was going to have their

parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins there, but it was just my siblings for me and I was satisfied with that.

May 14, 2016

You looked so beautiful walking across that stage. I'm proud of you forreal. Think I can get a hug and a picture with the college graduate after the ceremony?

I smiled as I stared down at my phone screen. Seeing this text message from Johan the minute I sat back down in my chair after walking across the stage was exhilarating. The only reason he was at the graduation was because Justin and Ja'Keem were graduating today as well, but it still made me feel good to know that he had witnessed my big day. It felt even better knowing he wanted to document the moment with me.

Thank You so much! Of Course you can. I replied while smiling against my will.

“What you smiling for sissy?” Wendy asked. Here last name was Paterson and my last name was Patel, so we got to be right next to each other for the entire ceremony. I was happy because I would’ve been bored otherwise.

I showed her my phone.

“Bitch take him backkk. He said he’s sorry so he’s sorry.”

“I know he’s sorry,” I giggled. “And if his ass ain’t have issues then I’d be all over that, but I’m good on him for now.”

“For now, eh?” She smirked.

“You know the vibes bitch.”

She laughed. “Alright, you just better hope no other skank swoops in on you.”

“Hey, maybe that’s what he needs.”

“Come again?”

“Another bitch will only make him realize how good he had it with me.”

She slapped my palm with hers. “I know that’s right!”

After the ceremony ended I was tipsy because Wendy had a small bottle of Hennessy in her gown. I felt like I was on top of the world because I'd conquered one of my biggest challenges in life; college. It definitely wasn't for the weak and that's why I was coming out stronger than ever. What I went through these past few months alone could have broken me, but it didn't even bend me. I was still strong as a rock and now ready to face the real world and adulthood.

“Congratulations, KiKi!” My siblings shouted in unison as I approached them. My eyes grew watery. Kiyor was holding big graduation themed balloons and my other siblings held a homemade banner that read “congratulations Keiko!” It was nothing extravagant, yet it tugged at my heartstrings. They all ran to me and embraced me in a big, warm hug.

“I'm so proud of you!” Kiyor shrieked.

“You next,” I smiled.

“From your mouth to God's ears,” she laughed.

“I'm next!” Royalty stomped her foot.

I laughed, before swooping her up. “You sure are, baby. That girl bout to graduate Kindergarten at the end of the month.”

My mom was going to have to suck it up for Royalty's graduation because I planned on being there and celebrating with her afterwards. She'd actually have to get over it before that because Reign's birthday was next week and he wanted a party with his classmates at school. I was no longer walking on eggshells to keep whatever dry ass beef she had with me at bay.

"JoJo!" Ryan exclaimed. His entire face lit up and that made me smile. I loved the way my siblings adored him.

"Wassup chief," he dapped Ryan off as well as Reign and Riley. He spoke to Kiyor and hugged her before focusing his attention on me and Royalty. She jumped in his arms before he could even say anything.

"Hey JoJo!"

"Hey RoRo," he chuckled and then pecked her cheek.

"Congratulations, KiKi."

"Thank you," I smiled.

"Royalty get down so they can hug," Ryan ordered. Johan and I laughed because it was no secret he wanted us together.

“He can hug me and hold her,” I said as I walked into his arms and hugged him. “See?”

“Yea, see!” Royalty poked her tongue out.

“What’s in the bag JoJo?” Reign asked. For the first time since he walked up I noticed he was carrying a large gift bag. I guess that was a testament to how good he looked today because I didn’t see shit else but his perfect face. His hair looked neat and freshly done and he wore casual Balenciaga gear.

“It’s not for you lil boy,” Kiyor answered. We all laughed because Reign often thought everything was for him.

“Yea this for your sister lil man. But I got you something for your birthday next week.”

“You remembered?!” He replied excitedly.

“Of course I did.”

“You coming to my party at school? My sister bringing me a cake!”

“Rei-“ I opened my mouth to let him down easily, but Johan cut me off.

“Yea I’ll be there lil man.”

“You coming to my graduation?!” Royalty asked.
Okay, now this was going too far. How could we really be over if my siblings were stuck on him like this? This wasn’t healthy.

“Yea I’ma come. I’ll even bring you another Build-a Bear.”

“YAY!” She clapped her hands.

“Alright, it was good seeing y’all, but I need to be getting back to my people. Let’s take this picture right quick, KiKi.”

Kiyor took our picture and the rest of my siblings made themselves smart and hopped in it too. All I could do was pray that I could remain strong because it looked like Johan was going to be around regardless of our relationship status.

Chapter 25

May 27,2016

Johan

“Royalty Ryana Santiago!”

Keiko and Kiyor stood up, clapped, and screamed at the top of their lungs for their baby sister as she walked across the stage in her white Dior dress. I knew because I gave Keiko the money to buy it.

“That’s my sister! That’s my sister!” Kiyor screamed, making everybody around us laugh.

“Sit down and stop being ghetto!” Kendra whispered hastily.

“Ghetto? Ma look in the mirror,” Kiyor threw back, making me laugh under my breath. Kendra’s outfit choice for a kindergarten graduation was a little out there and she definitely looked like the signature hood rat with low rider true religion jeans, a midriff top, and a bedazzled baseball cap. She didn’t look bad, she just looked like she was going to a block party or second line. Not to mention she had platinum blonde hair now, making her look like a knock off Misa Hylton. Yea, she didn’t need to be talking about nobody.

“Baby I look good. Y’all think y’all look like something cause y’all wearing sundresses?”

“Kendra cut all that out,” Ms. Rema chastised.

“Messing with them girls for nothing.”

I looked down at the time on my Audemars Piguet watch. I had business to attend to at 2pm and it was almost 1. I was hoping I could stay long enough to give Royalty my gift and let her know that I’d shown up. It was only right since she’d been texting me every other day asking me if I was coming. I had to admit she was giving me a mild case of daughter fever. If Keiko and I had a little girl she probably would’ve looked a lot like her.

“If you have somewhere to be you can go. I’ll let her know you were here,” Keiko whispered in my ear. Having her lips that close to mine just made me want to kiss her, but I had to respect her mind. That’s why the only time I came around was if her siblings were involved. Controlling myself around them was slight work.

“Nah, it’s almost over. I can wait.”

“So you leaving as soon as it’s over?” Kendra questioned me. “You could at least treat us to some lunch.”

The word bitch wanted to fly out of my mouth so bad, but I’d never do that in front of her impressionable young sons who looked up to me. Unlike her I knew how to conduct

myself. I stared at her blankly before focusing back on the little stage.

“Hmmp, I don’t like his rude ass,” she went on.

“He don’t like you either.” Keiko spoke for me. “And lunch is gonna be on him whether he’s present or not. You just looking for something to complain about.”

“Forreal, you blowing it.” Kiyor co-signed.

“Who the fuck y’all talking to?” Kendra asked. I guess that was all she could come up with being that she was wrong.

“They talking to you, now shut the hell up,” Ms. Rema asserted. “I can’t even enjoy the graduation with you all in my ear.”

I couldn’t wait to leave. I loved Keiko’s family, but her mama had a nasty ass attitude. Being around her was draining. I was happy they were nearing the end of the alphabet with last names.

“Joy Elease Washington.”

“That lil girl looks like she could be a Martelle,” Keiko giggled. I laughed too because she kind of did with her light skin, brown hair, and facial features. I couldn’t see exactly what color her eyes were because we weren’t close enough,

but I could tell they were light. Yea, she could definitely pass as my little cousin or something. It was also funny that her name was Joy because I used to always say that if I had a daughter I'd name her that. I had to be in high school the last time I said that shit though.

“WOOOOO!!! Go head mommy baby!”

My eyes instinctively went to that voice because it was so familiar. Jasmine. I hadn't seen her since 2010 and she looked different. She was thick now with black hair and her skin was a little darker, but I still recognized her right away.

The wheels started spinning in my head as I focused on the stage. I fought to keep myself composed as I started connecting dots. The last time Jasmine and I fucked was five years and some change ago. Now she had a daughter whose name was Joy and resembled me? It didn't take a mathematician to add that shit up.

“Are you okay?” Keiko asked.

“Yea.” I gritted.

“You sure? I already told you that you can go if you have somewhere to b-“

“I'm good, Keiko.” I snapped.

“Oop, well excuse me.” She grumbled before rolling her eyes at me.

I wasn't concerned about her having an attitude with me. I was more concerned with Jasmine's trifling ass. I wanted to confront her but I knew it wasn't the time or place for that. Then my mind posed the question if not now then why? Up until today I thought this bitch had dropped off the face of the earth. We had a genuine friendship but she wasn't my girl exclusively. I missed her at first, but I wasn't all torn up over her absence. Had I known there was a possibility she was carrying my child I would've been more concerned.

When the graduation was over I took pictures with Royalty, gave her my gifts, and said my goodbyes before departing. I didn't know when I'd see them again, but if I was invited to anything else I was coming. They could count on that.

On my way to my car I spotted Jasmine walking with Joy and some other relatives. It was now or never. I walked up behind her and touched her lower back. She jumped and turned around. When she saw me she looked spooked. Like her cover was blown or something. She didn't have to say shit because her reaction gave her away. She was guilty.

“Long time no see, huh?” I questioned. “How y’all doing?” I nodded to her family. They spoke back while Jasmine just stood there looking crazy.

“I-I-um-w-what are you doing here Johan?”

“This your daughter?” I looked down at Joy. My heart skipped a beat. Up close this little girl had my entire face *and* my green eyes. This shit couldn’t be real.

“Ummm,” she turned to her people. “Can y’all give us a second? Mama take Joy to the car.”

Once they waltzed off I dropped the nice facade.

“Yo, you a fucking trip.”

“Johan I didn’t kn-“

“You didn’t know that she was mine?!”

“I didn’t know how to tell you! I found out months after we stopped talking. You didn’t want me, so I thought you wouldn’t want a baby either.”

“I’m supposed to accept that? Bitch you could’ve told me that shit like you told me everything else. Who’s last name she got? She damn sure don’t have yours.”

Her eyes were tearing up but I didn't feel one ounce of sympathy for her. I could sniff out the bullshit all over her.

“The man she once called dad.”

My blood started sizzling.

“You got her thinking somebody else is her daddy? Man you really a trifling ass bitch.”

“Ok, you have no right to disrespect me for the decisions I made with *my* daughter. You and I both know you weren't ready to be a daddy. I thought I was sparing you.”

“Bitch you was sparing yourself. You lucky I don't kill your dirty ass right here. But you know what? You right, you made your decision as her mother so I'll respect it. You don't want me in her life? I won't be.”

“Johan!” She called to my back as I stormed off with my heart beating fast.

My mind was still reeling as I drove to my next destination. I needed to tell somebody about this shit because I felt like I was going to explode at any given second. I had a real life daughter. My flesh and blood had been on this Earth for five whole years and I'd known anything about it. Even though it wasn't by choice I still felt like less than a man. Joy had an entire side of herself that she knew nothing about thanks to her sad ass mammy. I wasn't joking when I told that bitch she was lucky I didn't kill her. I didn't buy her bullshit ass sob story about why she kept it a secret. If anything she was just acting off of bitterness because I didn't want to be with her ass.

An unknown number calling my phone interrupted my thoughts. I ignored the call because I rarely answered numbers I didn't have saved and I wasn't in the mood. This caller was persistent though, leading me to believe that this had to be some type of emergency. If it wasn't I could always hang up and then block the number, so I finally accepted the sixth call.

“Who this?”

“Is this Meekayla's son Johan? You're listed as one of her relatives to call on her paperwork, and she keeps asking for you.”

My mouth went dry. In my experience the only time people resorted to a list to call family was over something tragic happening. That couldn't have been what was going on. I had literally just texted my mom back the other day and told her I'd get up with her soon. That meant she was just okay.

“Yes, I'm Johan and who am I speaking with?”

“Nurse Schwarzwald. I'm your mom's hospice nurse.”

“What's going on?!”

My heart was racing because I couldn't think of one reason my mom would be in hospice.

“Y-you don't know about her illness?”

I almost ran into the car in front of me. The passengers screamed at me and cursed me out. I blew my horn and shouted obscenities back at them. They were acting like I killed their asses or something.

“Just get to her house as soon as possible, Johan. This isn't something you should hear over the phone. You *do* know where your mother's home is don't you?”

“I put her in that house, bought it, and I pay the bills every month. Hell yea I know where it's at,” I snapped, before ending the call. It sounded like she was getting slick and trying

to insinuate that I didn't know my own mama. I was sure if she hadn't told me about her "illness" it was because it wasn't that serious. Medical workers loved to over exaggerate. It was a part of their job description.

As I sped to my moms house, I made another call to somebody else.

"Wassup son?" My dad answered right away.

"What's going on with my mama?! I know you know."

My dad knew everything. Sometimes before people even told him what it was. Sometimes I really thought the nigga was clairvoyant.

"I been telling you to go see her, Jo. But no, you insisted on being stubborn."

"I would've went had you just came out and told me what was wrong! You know how I can be!"

"And you need to stop being like that, nigga. You so damn smart sometimes that it make you dumb. When you have your mind fixed on something there's no changing it, so I just washed my hands with the situation. I figured it would play out the way it was meant to."

"That's bullshit, dad."

“That’s what? Who the fuck you talking to like th-“

“YOU! You could’ve told me!”

“I could’ve but it wasn’t my news to tell. Your mama wanted to tell you and I told her I’d respect that.”

“Man, both of y’all whack as fuck for that.” I ended the call as I pulled on to my mom’s street. I don’t think I’d ever made it to the Westbank from Uptown at a quicker pace than I did today. I could’ve killed myself, but I was too anxious to care.

As I was approaching the door, I felt someone walking up behind me. I grabbed my gun and turned around.

“Nigga don’t pull the gun out on me.”

“Whatchu doing here?”

“My whack ass came here to support you.”

I was angry with my daddy because the ball was in his court to put me up on game and he hadn’t done that, however, his presence was appreciated right now. I didn’t know what I was walking into and I would most likely need his moral support.

“You ready to go in?” He asked.

“Yea.”

“Let’s do it.”

I didn’t recognize the inside of my moms house when I entered. Her entire living room had been converted into a hospital room where she was connected to various machines. The sight of her in that position alone made my heart stop. When I fully took in her appearance my heart broke. I thought she looked bad for her birthday, but now she was unrecognizable. My mom was never big as it was, so the drastic weight loss was obvious. Her entire face had sunken in making her look dead. The fact that they’d put her in hospice meant that was almost her reality. If you asked me before today about my mom being dead or alive I would’ve given an indifferent response out of bitterness and ill feelings, but actually seeing her like this changed everything. I didn’t want my mom to lose her life this early on. Especially like this.

Ironically, she seemed to come to life when her eyes drifted to me. She even gave a weak smile.

“I think she’s been waiting on you.” An unfamiliar face said. I’m guessing she was the nurse I’d spoken to over the phone.

“What’s wrong with her?” I asked once my voice felt like working again.

“Let’s talk in the next room.”

When I started to back out, my mom attempted to raise her body in panic.

“He not going no where, Meekayla. Lay down,” my dad instructed. She obliged, but she still looked scared like I’d run out at any given second. I couldn’t escape the guilt that immediately invaded my body. I really had my sick mother on edge like this.

“What’s wrong with her and how bad it is?” I asked the moment I was alone with the nurse.

“She has stage four small cell cancer. It’s an aggressive form of cancer that commonly occurs in smokers. We’ve tried it all, but we caught this way too late for anything to be effective. The tumors keep growing back and metastasizing.”

“So they’re spreading to other places?” I asked for clarity.

“Yes. Our sole focus now is keeping her comfortable.”

“S-so she’s dying?”

“The doctor said she may be gone in the next 12 to 24 hours. She hasn’t eaten or had anything to drink since yesterday morning. When that happens it means the time is near.”

I turned around from her with my hands on my head, not knowing what to say or do. Anger was the emotion that came easiest to me, so I knocked over the first thing I saw in sight. A glass vase. It shattered all over the floor. Doing that just made me even more upset because that didn’t make me feel better. The things I wanted to do like scream or cry didn’t come easy to me. I’d been programmed not to show that type of vulnerability, but this situation was trying its hardest to pull it out of me.

“I think she’s been saving her last bit of strength for you. Go talk to her.” The nurse advised, before walking off towards the kitchen.

I entered the living room at a slower pace. My eyes felt heavy, but no tears were coming out. If anybody should’ve been crying it should’ve been my mom, and she seemed to be holding herself together. If she could do that on her death bed then so could I with good health.

“I’ll let y’all talk.” My dad excused himself.

“I’m so happy you came.”

Her voice was like a dagger through my heart. Not only was her appearance unrecognizable, but so was her speaking voice. It sounded severely strained like somebody had choked her half to death.

“I’m sorry for not coming sooner, mama.” I apologized. Usually I was prideful as fuck with my mama because I felt like I’d been taken advantage of when I was a child. I never wanted to give her that satisfaction again. But now wasn’t the time to be prideful. Being too prideful had led me into deep regret because I really did wish I’d just talked to her sooner like she’d been begging me to do for months.

“Y...you called me mama,” she smiled weakly while reaching out for my hand. I grabbed it and I almost lost the internal battle I was having with my emotions. Her hand was freezing cold like a dead corpse.

“You haven’t called me that in so long...and,” she coughed. “I guess I can’t blame you. I was a piss poor mother.” She coughed again. This time her eyes grew watery.

“Mama maybe we shouldn’t talk. Let’s just sit her-“

“Baby I’m about to die regardless of if I talk or not. Just let me say what’s on my mind before I leave this earth. I want to hear what’s on your mind too.”

“No, I’ll just listen to you.”

I felt like it was highly inappropriate to go down a list of how she wronged me at a time like this. I wouldn’t be the cause of her dying hours earlier than what the doctor had predicted.

“I-I don’t want to make excuses,” she coughed. “I’m sure you got tired of hearing those from me and that’s why you kept me at a safe distance for most of your life. I j...just I didn’t know how to be a mom or a parent in general. I had you while I was still in an abusive environment with my mom and dad. He would beat my ass, molest me, and my mom would justify it.”

That revelation was mind blowing because I’d grown up being around my other grandma until she passed and she was damn near an angel. Especially in comparison to my mom.

“I know it’s hard to believe that her perfect, church going ass would allow her kids to be abused but everybody has a past. Some people are just better at saving face than others. I

didn't bring that up to demonize her. I brought that up to explain how much it fucked up my maternal instincts as a mother. I figured because I wasn't causing you physical harm that I was doing a better job than my parents, but I continued the same cycle as my parents. Maybe I didn't hurt you physically, but I did a number on your mental state by not putting you first and loving you properly. I was looking for love in niggas, but negelecting the love I was supposed to be pouring into you. I-I fucked up, Johan. I don't blame you for not wanting to talk to me or see me this whole time. I just wanted to tell you that even though I did a terrible job at showing it, I *do* love you. With all my heart." She cried hysterically. Hearing her express herself and seeing her bare all of her emotions, I lost it. I cried with her like I was a baby again while she squeezed my hand.

"I love you, too mama. And I forgive you for everything."

It felt like everything I'd been holding on to for years has finally been released off of my back once I said those words. I didn't realize it before but I was damaged on the inside. A lot of what my mom had just said made me feel better. Before today I would've swore up and down that I

didn't need to hear any of this stuff or that I didn't need any type of validation from her. I guess lying to myself was a done deal now. It was just fucked up that something this tragic had to happen for me to open my eyes.

“And you're going to be a great daddy. Your son is going to be perfect.”

My heart dropped. I had to correct her even though I dreaded doing so.

“Mama Keiko lost ou-“

“I know she had a miscarriage, but just wait until y'all son get here. I know you're excited about getting a second chance. I sure wish I got to meet him and your daughter. How's she doing?”

I was witnessing my mom crossing over to the other side. Nobody had told her about Keiko's miscarriage, we never found out what we were having the first time for her to know about another son, and speaking of that other son, he was nonexistent. She damn sure didn't have any knowledge of a daughter that I just found out about. The only logical explanation was that the ancestors were talking to her. I pulled up a seat next to her because I planned on listening to them until she moved on. I wasn't leaving her side.

Chapter 26

May 31, 2016

Keiko

“Bitch your booty is getting huge.” Holly said as I walked out of our new apartment complex office with her and Wendy. We’d just signed a lease for another apartment together that started in mid-June. Unlike my other apartments this one wasn’t a designated college student spot, so it didn’t come with furniture. The rent however was significantly cheaper since we were all on one lease.

My decision to stay in BR was solely based on the fact that I had two job opportunities out there that I didn’t have in New Orleans. One was a talk show host at a popular urban radio station. They offered me the job for the segment to give women advice because they were aware of my large following thanks to *Dancing Diamonds*. I was also offered a job as a dance coach at a high school in East Baton Rouge. I already knew those kids would be rough around the edges, but I had

the experience to handle anything. I was starting off adulthood with two sources of income, so I was feeling great. My only dilemma had been finding somewhere to stay until I moved into my new apartment since I moved out of my old one right after graduation. My sister quickly solved that problem by offering her extra room to me.

“I know, huh?” I turned around with a smirk. “I’ve been eating my rice and cabbage.”

“Well bitch point me to that rice and cabbage so I can eat some,” Wendy replied, sounding rather serious on the matter. My sis did have a model body, and that’s why she was tail the majority of the time she’d been a Dancing Diamond. In the majorette dance world “tails” were always the last girls in line and formation because they were the tallest. In the stands they often got the spotlight because during sit downs they got to be dramatic and add their own sass, flare, and sex appeal to whatever the sit down was. Wendy was an extra dancer anyway, so that position was perfect for her.

“Having ass is overrated,” Holly scoffed.

“Says a bitch with a big ass. Ugh, I’m tired of y’all thick bitches.”

“Yet you’re moving into an apartment with us. You know you love us, hoe.” I tittered.

“No actually I just needed to split the rent. You know with me being an LSU law student and all,” she popped her invisible collar.

“Feel free to flex all day, sis. But don’t play us,” Holly giggled. “How do you feel about having to do a few more years of school to become a lawyer? I only have *one* more semester of college to become a nurse and I’m drained.”

“Girl it’s gon take God and multiples prayers to get me through it, but I’m ready. Y’all hoes just better not leave me like the rest of our crab sisters did.”

We laughed because Destiny had moved to Atlanta for better opportunities in show business, Marsha had moved back to her hometown of Mobile Alabama to work as a dental assistant, and Britney moved to Houston to work at a chemical plant. We’d known that the time for us to be split up was coming but it didn’t make it easier once it started happening.

“Girl, now you know I’m not continuing my fabulous life in Baton Rouge of all places,” Holly said in a snobby like fashion. It used to annoy me because I wasn’t used to bitches like her, but now I found it hilarious. Besides, she had a good

heart even if she was a spoiled princess. “If anything I would settle in New Orleans before I settled here.”

The only reason Holly and Wendy were still around was because they weren’t done with school yet. I was here because my jobs just so happened to be here. By no means was Baton Rouge the place *any* of us planned on settling.

“Ayyyy!” I gave her a high five. “That’s what I’m talking about, sis.”

“Ugh, why don’t y’all settle down in Atlanta?” Wendy asked. Holly and I smacked our teeth because Atlanta was her hometown.

“Atlanta’s too crowded for me,” Holly rolled her eyes.

“But LA isn’t?” She countered.

“It’s crowded out there too but it’s bigger. I honestly see myself settling in a city like Houston or Miami.”

“Miami, huh?” I sniggered. “Girl you is not slick, no!”

“What you talking bout?” She giggled, while blushing.

“You know what she talking bout. Hot in the twat ass,” Wendy laughed.

“Whatever,” she waved her hand in the air while strutting to her Benz. “My mom is on her way to my apartment so I gotta go. See y’all in a few weeks. Love y’all!”

“Love you too!” Wendy waved.

“Love you too! Have a safe flight.” I said as she dropped down into her car.

“You bouta get on the road to Atlanta?”

“Yup, where you finna go?”

“New Orleans. You be safe and call me when you make it.” I hugged her.

“You too, sis. Love you.”

When I got in my car I cranked up the AC because it was hot and humid as hell in Louisiana right now. That was the main reason I had on no clothes today. Just a pink sports bra and matching booty shorts with pink Rihanna Puma slides. I even had my hair in a bun, and I was tempted to cut the shit off so I didn’t have to deal with it.

My heart skipped a beat when I saw Johan’s name pop up on my phone as I pulled off. I texted him the day after Royalty’s graduation to invite him to the meeting I’d set up with a lawyer, but he never responded so I didn’t push it. We

weren't together after all. Yet here I was ready to rush my way to New Orleans because he'd texted me three simple words.

Johan: I need you.

I was used to this man being as hard as a rock. I didn't even know he possessed the emotions that he was now displaying so openly. Even though these circumstances were unfortunate and I wished he didn't have to go through this, it was also refreshing to see him be vulnerable for once.

“All the signs were there and I ignored them, KiKi.”
He vented as I held him like a baby. We were in his apartment and by the looks of it he'd been here for the past few days.
“Everybody was telling me to forgive her and I didn't listen.”

“But you did forgive her, baby. You forgave her on your time and nobody else's. I'm sure that's what she would've wanted.”

“I think she wanted us to make amends a long time ago but I was too busy holding grudges. My daddy kept telling me life was too short but I wasn't trying to hear it.”

“Because you hardheaded,” I laughed a little to lighten the mood. “Your mom knew that, and she loved you regardless. I think you’re being too hard on yourself when you had good reasons to feel the way you felt. Even she acknowledged that. I’m just glad she got to apologize and you got to accept the apology before she passed away. All the regret you’re feeling is normal, but at least you did get to have one final conversation with her.”

“Yea, on her dying bed.”

“Maybe that made it more authentic and raw.”

He stifled a grin. “You just gon find the good in everything, huh?”

“Always,” I smiled back, while wiping a tear that was falling down his face.

“She was talking a lot before she died. And she kept bringing up our sons.”

“Our sons?” My heartbeat skipped.

“Yea, about three hours before she died she said it didn’t matter that we lost our first son because we’re about to have another one. Then I got thinking how that condom broke in Mia-“

“Ah-ah, I’m not pregnant. That was way in April and it’s June now.”

“And? Have you checked?”

“I know my body. I’m not pregnant.” I maintained.

“Okay, I’m just saying because she was saying a lot of shit that was true.”

“Like?”

“Like the miscarriage for example.”

“And what else?”

He hesitated. “Sh...she said my daughter was beautiful.”

“Your daughter? Didn’t you say she was saying things that were true?”

“Kiki don’t be mad at me...”

My hands flew to my mouth. Was he about to tell me that he had a child that was already in the world?

“I just found out myself and I can assure you that I had zero knowledge of this shit. It’s fine if you want to be mad at the situation in general because so am I. I missed out on five years of my flesh and bloods life because her mama wanted to

be childish. Just don't be mad at me. I can't take you being mad at me right now."

I wasn't mad at him or even at the situation. I was *hurt*. To hear him refer to a child that wasn't mine as his own did something to me. I couldn't help but feel blindsided, envious, and devastated. I *just* lost my baby a few months ago and now I was being presented with this? Worst of all I felt like I couldn't really show my true emotions the way I wanted to because of what he was currently going through. I'd look like such a selfish bitch if I made this about myself when he just had two life changing things happen to him.

"You remember that lil girl from the graduation? You said she looked like she could be kin to my family. That's my daughter."

"Wow." I marveled.

"Right?"

"I guess I manifested that one. Who's her mama? What's y'all history?"

"Her mama was somebody I started messing with in high school. The last time we talked was 2010. Her name is Jasmine."

Another revelation hit me.

“Is that the girl you were in a relationship with on that Facebook account that you claimed she ran?”

“Yea, but what you mean claim? You think I’m lying?”

“Johan I don’t know what to think. Why would she hide a baby from you? Most bitches want to keep your ass. Wouldn’t a baby do it?”

“If most bitches wanna keep me then why you left me?”

“Oh boy please, stay on topic.” I brushed him off. His charm almost worked, but he had to step harder with me.

“Alright it’s like this Ki, I don’t know what type of shit that girl was on. All I know is I saw her at the graduation, started adding shit up in my head, and it made sense. I can’t say why she did what she did.”

“Well what did she tell you?”

“Something about how she thought she was sparing me, but I don’t buy that shit. Oh yea, she also said since I didn’t want her she automatically thought I wouldn’t want the baby.”

“She sounds like a bird brain.” I said with my face balled up.

“She wrote me on Instagram. She sent me condolences about my mom and said she wants me to have a relationship with Joy because life is too short.”

“Was she denying you a relationship after you found out or something?”

“Not really. I told her ass that things could stay how they were.”

“Johannn, now you know that’s not right.”

“I know, and I didn’t mean that shit. That bitch just had me hot.”

“So you’re going to be a part of her life, right?” I quizzed.

“Of course. I just don’t know where to start. This lil girl knows somebody else as her daddy.”

“Well that’s a conversation her maw need to have with her first. It’s not on you to explain somebody else’s lies.”

“Facts. But I’m still nervous. I don’t know how I’m supposed to act around her.”

I let out a small laugh. “That’s cute. A little girl got you scared.”

“Chill, bruh,” he chuckled, while flicking my chin.

“Johan just be yourself. I feel like the connection will be immediate....and from what I’ve seen most kids love your ass. It’s also kind of cool that she’s Royalty’s classmate. That gives y’all something to talk about.”

“Ou, you mind if I bring RoRo with me when I meet up with them?”

“Royalty is not my daughter. I can’t just hand her off to you,” I tittered.

“Then why don’t you come to? Please? It’ll really make me feel better if you were there.”

Everything in me wanted to scream no. I was putting on a brave face but I was very much uncomfortable with this situation.

“Okay,” I agreed. My empathy wouldn’t allow me to say no to him at a time like this when he needed me. “When are y’all meeting up?”

“This upcoming Sunday after my mama’s funeral. You coming to that with me, right?”

“Of course.”

Now that was something I didn't have to put on a brave face for. Being by his side for that day was nonnegotiable and I was more than happy to accompany him. I wish I could say the same thing for this surprise baby situation. I already had a bitter taste in my mouth about it.

Chapter 27

June 5, 2016

Johan

It was scary how this little girl was walking around with my entire face and I didn't even know that she existed. I told my dad about her a few days ago and he insisted on getting a DNA test to confirm it. I wasn't opposed to his suggestion but I told him there was no need because the little girl looked *just* like me. He told me not to be blinded by that and to get a DNA test anyway. I showed him a picture and

suddenly he was singing a different tune. Now he was telling the whole family my business, buying her gifts, and he wouldn't stop asking me when I was bringing her by to meet my little sister who'd been born a few weeks ago. I appreciated his enthusiasm, but I was still sticking to the advice he'd initially given me about the dna test. It wasn't that I had doubts about Joy, I just didn't want there to be any confusion moving forward.

“Johan look at that big fish!” Joy pointed at the glass excitedly. Hearing her call me by my first name repeatedly was just chipping away at my lil feelings. I was her daddy and she didn't even feel comfortable enough to call me that. I never thought this was how it would be with my first child, but here we were. All thanks to her stupid ass maw.

“Baby call him daddy,” Jasmine touched Joy's shoulder.

“Sorry...I keep forgetting.” She mumbled. There it was again, my feelings taking another hit. Jasmine had informed me that she had a talk with Joy already about me being her biological father, but I don't think she understood the gravity of the situation. This little girl wasn't just going to magically be okay with that and start calling me daddy overnight. It was

kind of weird because for Jasmine to be the person who'd kept her away for five years, she sure was trying to rush things now. That was confirmed when she tried to bring Joy to my mom's funeral yesterday. I shut that shit down with the quickness. That wasn't the first place I wanted my daughter to experience me on a personal level unless I wanted her to be terrified of me.

"It's alright baby girl, do whatever feels natural to you. Pay your mama no mind." I said while patting her head. Not only did she look like me, but she resembled both of my parents too. Her eye shape and hair reminded me a lot of my mom.

"Excuse you?" Jasmine smirked, making her dimples sink into her cheeks. Jasmine looked different than the petite, blonde haired, cute faced girl that I once knew, but she was still gorgeous. Perhaps even more gorgeous since she was a brick house now. She was the type of thick woman that Drake often boasted about in his songs. If Keiko wasn't a factor in mind I would definitely fuck Jasmine one more time if nothing else. She just wasn't worth it though.

"You heard me, man," I grinned.

Someone cleared their throat loudly. Jasmine and I looked over at Keiko who was standing off to the side. She looked a little on edge, but I didn't understand why. She had agreed to come and she seemed to be my biggest supporter over the past week. She hadn't left my side once. Maybe witnessing my daughter this up close and personal was hard for her, but I didn't know what to do about that. It wasn't like Joy was going anywhere unless she ended up not being mine, and I highly doubted that. I could feel it in my gut that this was my child, so if Keiko was going to be in my life she'd have to accept that. However, that was the million dollar question; was Keiko really in my life or was she just helping me through this rough patch? I couldn't help but assume that it was the latter because she hadn't mentioned anything about getting back together. I didn't know what to think when it came to us.

“Wassup KiKi?” I asked.

“Royalty wants to go to the touch pool. I'm just letting you know because I didn't want to walk off.”

“Ou, mommy can I go with KiKi and Royalty?!” Joy asked.

“Of course baby. Behave yourself.”

I could definitely say that Jasmine had no problem with Keiko's presence, but I didn't expect anything less. It wasn't like she wanted me. If she did she wouldn't have kept the one thing that bonded us away from me for all those years.

"You got yourself a gorgeous one." She said once they walked away.

"Who? Me?" I pointed at myself. That may have been a dumb question but I wasn't expecting her to bring up Keiko to me. Of course I'd introduced them and they had other little side conversations outside of that, but I wasn't expecting her to acknowledge us as a pair.

"Who else Johan?" She laughed. "I must admit, I'm shocked to see you in a relationship but it does prove that *anybody* can change."

"Man you said that like I was the world's biggest hoe or something."

"You weren't?!" She raised an eyebrow.

"Go ahead, Jas."

She snickered. "Hey, I'm just calling it how I remember it. But there's no need to focus on the past because it's obvious you have a good, monogamous relationship now."

“Me and Keiko are friends.”

I could've allowed her to think that Keiko was my girl, but why would I let a false narrative live like that? Keiko had broken up with me, and I was respecting that like I'd done since day one. I wasn't about to switch up around Jasmine of all people.

“Not from the way y'all look at each other.” She smirked.

“We were together, but we decided to take a break.” I downplayed the situation.

“If y'all are still enjoying each other's friendship then that's not much of a break, but lemme mind my business chile...”

“Yea, let you mind your business cause you got other shit you can be talking bout right now and Keiko not one of em.”

“Hold up, I wasn't coming for her in any type of wa-“

“I didn't say you were. I just said there's better things we can be discussing right now. Like Joy for example.”

“Okay, what do you wanna know?”

“How often can I get her?”

“Well it’s the summer and I haven’t enrolled her into a camp or anything because I’m not working right now, so we’re always free. The ball is in your court with that one.”

“We?” I repeated. “I can’t get her without you?”

“Of course you can...eventually. I think it’s best we take baby steps because she doesn’t really know you that well yet. I wouldn’t want her to feel uncomfortable, and I’m sure you don’t either.”

“Yea, I guess that makes sense,” I agreed. I wasn’t sure if I was ready to be around her on my own yet anyway. I was good with kids and all but I’d never had to deal with one by myself. “So where that other nigga she was calling daddy at? He knows he’s not her real father?”

“Yea, he’s known since day one.”

“And he agreed to take care of the next man’s baby?”

“You’d be shocked at the amount of men who would sign up for that type of situation, Johan. He’s no longer in the picture because we didn’t work out. He claimed he still wanted to be a father to Joy, but it was all lies.”

“Fuck him! It ain’t his responsibility no way and he should’ve never been put in that position. You know you have

a lot of making up to do because our daughter is probably so confused right now. And you know what makes this really fucked up?”

“What?”

“It didn’t have to be like this. I was alive and well, and I would’ve taken care of my seed no matter what. You robbed me and Joy of that relationship, but that’s a wrap now. I’m here and I’m not going anywhere like your substitute daddy.”

She looked visibly shaken up.

“I-I’m sorry Johan. I was being selfish.”

“Yea, I noticed that, but no need to cry over spilled milk. I just hope we can co-parent amicably for the sake of Joy.”

“Me too! That’s all I want. Other than that I’ll stay out your way.”

“Well that makes two of us, Jas.”

“Your sister is gorgeous. Y’all look just alike.”

I looked to my right to see Jasmine standing beside me. The bitch was so pretty it made my skin crawl. One thing I could say about Johan was that he had great taste in women. I could never clown him on his dating history.

“Thank you. Your baby is really pretty too.”

“Me and Johan’s baby,” she corrected.

I didn’t know if she was trying to get sassy, but the smile she bore made me think otherwise. I couldn’t detect an attitude.

“Right, and she looks just like his ass too. It’s just weird because I thought he had no kids for the longest.”

“Yea, I can understand how it would be awkward for you. I’m surprised you came today.”

Okay, now that was definitely a backhanded comment. The nice demeanor and smile was a front for her to insult me in a way that I wouldn’t question it. I had too much experience dealing with nice nasty girls in college for me to be ignorant to what she was trying to do. She had the wrong one. As much I wanted to give the nice nasty shit right back to her it would turn into a full blown argument with the mouth I had. I turned around to look for Johan.

“He went to the bathroom, so answer my question.”

“You asked something?” I questioned with an attitude.

“Oh my gosh, did I offend you? That wasn’t my intent. I just wanted to know why you came today since you and Johan are no longer together. Did you want to watch him or something? Because I’m letting you know now you don’t have to worry about me.”

“Sweetie trust me, you’re *nothing* to worry about. Johan made that clear. I’m here today as a supportive friend because that’s what Johan asked of me.”

“Oh well that’s nice of you. I know how valuable Johan’s friendship can be. And I’m glad he told you that I’m nothing to worry about. I just want him and my daughter to have a great relationship.”

“Hmmm, then maybe you should’ve told him about her the moment you became pregnant.”

“Maybe I should’ve,” she shrugged. “But me not being the picture worked out just fine for you didn’t it?”

I had to pause. Was this bitch insinuating that I wouldn’t have been able to bag Johan if she were in the

picture? If she kept talking I was going to take *my nigga* back *just* to prove a point.

“It would’ve worked out for me regardless, girl.”

“Spoken like a true youngin,” she tittered. “I’m here for it. I was super cocky too until life humbled me. How old are you anyway?”

“Grown.” I asserted.

“Hmmp, I’m a go with early 20’s. But this conversation is getting kinda sassy and that wasn’t even what I was trying to do, so let’s just drop it. I’m sure you’re going to be around and I don’t want any awkward energy.”

“Girl you knew exactly what you were doing but since you’re back peddling I’ll let it slide today,” I winked.

Her face twisted up. “Back pedd-“

“What y’all over here talking about?” Johan questioned as he walked up and put his arm around my shoulder.

“Nothing,” she answered. “Just watching these kids and getting to know each other better.”

“That’s wassup,” Johan smiled as if he were proud. He was being so naive when it came to this bitch it was sickening, but I was on to her ass now.

June 10, 2016

Johan

“She’s so pretty!” Joy raved as she held Jordyn in her arms.

“They look *just* alike,” my dad said as he smiled down at them both.

“They really do,” I co-signed. The resemblance was really uncanny. They looked more like sisters than auntie and niece. It was just funny that my daughter who was older was the niece. My family was the textbook definition of unconventional.

“Y’all think they look alike now then y’all should see Joy’s baby pictures.” Jasmine said.

“Well let’s see them,” Canary said. To say she just had a baby she looked amazing. I could see why my dad was so in

love.

Jasmine had her phone out in seconds and showed us countless baby pictures of Joy. Not only did Jordyn look just like her, but so did my baby pictures. Just thinking about how I missed those priceless days when she was a baby and toddler further pissed me off. It was hard for me to fully forgive Jasmine when I was constantly reminded of what she'd taken from me.

“We have a lot of making up to do. Ain't that right paw paw baby?” My dad squeezed her cheek.

“Yea. Can I come over here all the time? This house is big!” Joy praised while looking around. We all laughed in response. I was learning that she wasn't shy at all. She spoke her mind at all times. It reminded me a lot of myself.

“You can come over anytime baby. As a matter of fact I'll get you a room together. How do you want me to decorate your room?” Canary asked.

“Ouuu, I like Frozen, Moana, Princess Tiana, Ariel, Cindere-“

“So you like Disney princesses?” I chuckled. “That's good to know because I have tickets to where all the Disney

Princesses stay.”

She gasped. “You do?”

“Yup, ever been to Disney world?”

“Nooo,” she shook her head. “But I’ve been to Disneyland before.”

“Well Disney World is a lot different. You’re making six next week right?”

“Yea,” she answered eagerly. “Can we go for my birthday?!”

“It’s up to your mom.”

Joy looked up at her mom and started begging right away.

“Please mommy! Can we go?! Pleaseeee?!”

“Of course we can go lil girl,” she chuckled.

“Ouuu, can Royalty come too? And Keiko? She was nice!”

I smiled because it made me feel good to know that she liked Keiko.

“I’ll ask them baby girl.”

“I sure wish we could come with y’all, but this baby ain’t ready for a vacation yet,” Canary giggled before taking Jordyn from Joy. Joy looked panicked when the baby was removed from her arms.

“Come help me lay her down for her nap, baby.” Canary tittered before sauntering off. Joy anxiously ran after her.

“Girl stop that running!” Jasmine hollered after her before laughing. “I think she’s in love.”

“Well she’s not the only one,” my dad chuckled. “I meant it when I said you got a lot of making up to do. Bring my grand baby around as much as possible. She’s always welcomed here.”

“That’s good to know Mr. Jordan. I’ll definitely hold you to that when I need a babysitter.”

“Mr. Jordan?” I laughed. “Damn nigga you old as hell.”

“I wouldn’t laugh so hard cause you pushing 30 nigga.” He laughed. That shut me right up. “Yea, that’s what I thought. I’m finna go put these steaks on the grill.”

When he left the room Jasmine focused on me.

“Wassup? Why you eyeing me?” I chuckled.

“I’m just thinking how you made Joy’s day with that Disney World news. You also made my day because I did not know what I was doing for her birthday.”

“Well I’m glad I was able to help out, but it was really something slight. One of my business partners gets free passes to Disney World year round and he passes them on to me.”

“Whew, that’s some business partner.” She giggled. Her smile was still as pretty as I remembered with her white teeth, thin but plump lips, and dimples. “What do you do exactly these days?”

I laughed. “Jas you ain’t been gone that long.”

“What do you mea-“

“Aint shit changed,” I answered. “My money is just longer now. That’s all I’m willing to share and that’s all you need to know.”

“Hey, say no more,” she held her hands up in surrender.

“No more is said.”

“Nigga you just gotta get the last word in,” She giggled.

“I told you ain’t shit changed.” I chuckled, as my phone started ringing. “Hold on, I need to take this.”

“Of course.” She said as I accepted the call.

“Wassup KiKi?”

“Where are you?”

“Huh?”

“Huh?” She mocked me. “What happened to us having lunch today? You forgot?”

“Shit! That’s today? I thought that was tomorrow.”

“Johan we talked about this shit *yesterday*. You said we’d do lunch at New Orleans Food & Spirit. I guess I got my answer. You forgot about me.”

“Never that, baby. I just got my schedules mixed up. My dad asked me to meet Joy today so I’m over here with her and her mama.”

There was a pause that I couldn’t miss if I tried.

“.....Oh.”

“Whatchu mean oh? Why it gotta be all that?”

“Baby it’s nothing. I’m just blowed because I’m sitting in this restaurant waiting on you, but I guess I’m tripping.”

“Keiko don’t do that. Why don’t you just come over here?”

“Tuah...I’m good. You wasn’t thinking about me before I called, so my presence is not needed. Talk to you later.” She ended the call, leaving me lost.

“Is she mad?” Jasmine asked.

“I think so...”

“I see you still making girls fall in love and acting oblivious when they start bitching,” she tittered.

“Man mind yo business.” I pushed her head while laughing. “Cause maybe she made me fall in love first.”

“Oop...well you better not let her stay mad.”

Keiko

“Wait, slow down, sis!” Holly urged. “You don’t think you’re overreacting? I mean the little girl is his daughter. Is it

not possible that he just wanted his father to meet his grandchild officially?”

“Holly you’re not listening to me! I don’t have a problem with that! It’s the fact that he’s over there having family time with that bitch when I’ve never been introduced to his dad and Canary on that level. Shit I haven’t even met his little sister yet, but *Jasmine* gets to meet her?”

“Sissy she gets those perks by default. Johan just found out about the little girl, so of course her mom is going to tag along everywhere until they’re comfortable around each other.”

“Fuck that, Holly!” I declared. “He forgot about plans we made but he was at his fathers house posted up with the next bitch. He didn’t even think oh let me invite Keiko. I was an afterthought.”

“Sis, I think you’re being dramatic. You were with him and his dad at his mom’s funeral.”

“Yea, but he didn’t introduce me as his girl.”

“Dramaticcccc,”she sang.

“No, I think I’ve been too understanding and now my kindness is being taken for weakness, but I’ma just fall back

from now on.”

“If you say so, sis. I just think Johan may be going through a lot right now. Do you really think he forgot about you intentionally?” She posed.

“Maybe not, but he still did it and my feelings are still hurt! Aren’t I entitled to my feelings?”

“Of course you are, sis. Maybe you should talk to him.”

“I don’t feel like whining and complaining. Especially since we’re not together right now.”

“Yet you’re on my line complaining about his ass,” she tittered. “You know that nigga is yours, bitch. Go tell him how you’re feeling neglected.”

“He doesn’t feel like mine right now...” I muttered.

“Am I detecting a little jealousy?”

“You might be. He’s got what I couldn’t give him right now. Maybe I should just cut my losses while I can.”

“Sis you’re talking *crazy*. If anything he’s just doing right by his child and making up for lost time. Now that doesn’t justify him forgetting about you, but I don’t think it was purposeful.”

“You keep saying that, but I feel like it’s worse that he *naturally* forgot about my ass. I’m here for him being there for his daughter, but if that includes his bm then I’m good on that shit. I wish y’all was out here so we could do something to get my mind off this.”

“Didn’t you say that you and Camilla got along well when she visited Johan’s house with Keem?” She quizzed.

“Yea, but I don’t think that girl wanna go somewhere with me.”

“You never know until you ask. Shit it’s time for us all to start making new friends cause all we know is each other.”

“Maybe because every time we tried to have other friends it was ghetto as fuck.” I said.

“True,” she giggled. “But Camilla seems like she would be cool company to keep.”

“Well we exchanged numbers so maybe I’ll hit her up about this pool party that’s happening later on today.”

“You should! Do something so you can stop calling me about Johan.”

“Girl fuck you.” I tittered.

“Alright, keep that same energy when we move into our apartment next week.” She said before hanging up.

Moving into my new place was something I was looking forward to because I was starting my new jobs, and that would keep my mind occupied. I was spending too much time thinking about a nigga I wasn't even with anymore.

“Oh, love!!! Never knew what I was missin'. But I knew once we start kissin'. I found, loveeee! Never knew what I was missin'. But I knew once we start kissin'. I found, found you. Now you're gone, what am I gonna do? So empty. My heart, my soul, can't go on. Go on, without you. My rainy days fade away when you come around, please tell me baby. Why you go so far away? Why you go? LOVEEEEE!” I sang the Keyshia Cole song to the top of my lungs while dipping to the bounce beat that the dj had added to it. The pool party that I was currently at was just the outing I needed and it was finally starting to feel like summer.

“Bitch you feel this, huh?” Camilla asked, while Daisie laughed. To my surprise Camilla accepted my invitation and she even brought one of her best friends with her. I had been kind of nervous about how the energy would feel between us since we didn’t know each other like that, but it had been good vibes so far from both of them. Most importantly we’d been having a great time.

“I’m bouta say...she must be in love with somebody,”Daisie tittered. “Does he have green eyes with long dreadlocks?”

I smirked while rolling my eyes. Camilla had clearly told her that she’d seen me at Johan’s house, but I didn’t care. “He’s nonexistent because I’m single.”

“Hmmm, are you playing single or single single?” Daisie pried.

“Friend, that’s a question you could ask yourself too,” Camilla giggled.

“Girl fuck you. I’m single, single! Fuck Justin!”

I laughed so hard that my stomach started hurting. She was talking about Jigga. They’d dated for most of the school year and based on what I’d seen I thought they would be

locked in for a long time, but I guess shit had transpired that put an end to it. Perhaps long term relationships weren't something Martelle men excelled in.

“Well I'm single, single too.” I answered.

“Then you might as well fuck with me.”

I turned around with a natural mug on my face. I was expecting that comment to come from a dusty nigga but it was a fine ass man with a perfect beard, a light brown skin complexion, nice lips, pretty brown eyes, and he was buff as fuck. He was even tall. Not as tall as Johan, but tall nonetheless.

“Who is you?” I sassed, not letting his appearance make me sweat.

He chuckled. “My name Lamont, love, and I would really like to get to know you. What's your name? How old are you? What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations? You need your bills paid?”

Me, Camilla, and Daisy were joked out. He was doing the absolute *most*, but it was flattering. Niggas had been trying to get at me all day and I couldn't say I was shocked. I'd stepped out in nothing more than a silver two piece bikini and

I didn't bother putting on a cover up because my body looked too good for one. My stomach was flat as ever but my thighs were spreading and my booty was poking more than it ever had. So of course the niggas were at my top, but nobody had stepped to me that I was attracted to. That was until Lamont approached me of course...

"I'm Keiko and I'm 22. Those other questions would probably be better answered on another occasion."

"Bet. Let's exchange numbers so we can set something up."

"Okay," I turned my phone on.

"Damn, I guess you really are single, single," Camilla laughed.

That I was. Johan was probably doing his thing with his baby mama, so I was going to do mine. We were just friends anyway right now, so I wasn't doing anything wrong.

Chapter 28

June 14, 2016

Johan

“Johan you were so cute,” Keiko gushed as she looked through a photo album that was in my mom’s living room. I had put this off long enough, but I’d finally decided to stop avoiding the inevitable and come clean my mom’s house out today. The lease to the home was up at the end of this month, so I had to go through everything to make sure there was nothing I wanted. Now that I was here I was realizing I wanted almost everything, down to her furniture. I wasn’t really trying to let none of this shit go.

“Let me see,” I leaned over her shoulder to look at the picture. It was me and my mom on our porch in the St. Thomas projects. I was a small baby and she was holding me up with a big smile on her face.

“Damn she looked young,” I marveled.

“Well you said she had you when she was 14, so that’s about right. I always thought you looked just like your daddy, but you kinda look like her too...so does Joy.”

“Yo, I be saying that. My dad said he don’t see it,” I chuckled.

“He prolly just hating,” she laughed.

“Speaking of Joy, I’m taking her to Disneyworld for her birthday.”

“Oh, that’s nice.”

I frowned because I detected something that I couldn’t quite call in her response. It was hard to explain but it didn’t sound like she was being genuine.

“Why you said that like that?”

“Like what?” She stared at me in confusion.

“I don’t know...it sounds like you not cool with it.”

“Johan I have no problem with anything you do for your child.” She rolled her eyes, before slamming the photo album shut.

“Man what the fuck wrong with you? Why you gotta attitude?”

“Nigga nothing is wrong with me. I’m starting to feel like you *want* me to have a problem with your lil family trip.”

There it was. She was feeling salty because she knew Jasmine was coming. I was just relieved that her issue wasn’t with Joy, because then we’d have a problem. The DNA test proved that Joy was 100% mine, so if Keiko and I were going to be in each other’s lives she’d have to respect and accept that.

“My lil family trip, huh? Well before you caught an attitude you should’ve let me finish because I was going to invite you and your siblings on this trip.”

“We don’t wanna impose. It’s Joy’s birthday and y’all could use the alone time.”

“How would y’all be imposing? Joy’s the one who’s asked if you could come.”

She stifled a smile. “Stop lying, you know she asked for Royalty.”

“She did,” I chuckled. “But she asked for you too...and we can’t leave the boys behind.”

“Sure can’t,” Keiko laughed. “So when is this trip?”

“This weekend. We leave Monday morning and we’re staying the whole week because her birthday is that Thursday.”

Instead of agreeing to come, she let out a laugh that seemed rooted in disbelief.

“What’s the problem now?” I asked in aggravation. She was blowing it.

“There’s no problem. I’m just moving into my apartment on Monday. The same apartment you told me you’d help me move into. I also start my job at the radio station on Tuesday.”

“Shit...my bad, Keiko it sli-“

She held her hand up. “It’s fine. Of course your daughter’s birthday comes before me needing help to move into my apartment. I’m not mad. I swear.”

“I don’t believe you.”

Everything about her demeanor screamed passive aggressive.

She laughed. “Alright, you want me to be real?”

“All day.”

“Okay, I’m a little bothered that you won’t be here to help me, but your daughter’s birthday is more important, so I’ll get over it.”

“And what else? Because I know there’s more.”

“I’m not feeling the fact that ole girl gotta go too.”

“Ole girl?” I repeated. “Really, KiKi?”

“Yes, really.” She crossed her arms.

“That’s Joy’s mama. She wants to spend Joy’s birthday with her too. I can’t just not invite her. What’s your beef with her anyway?”

“Well for starters she tried me at the aquarium by coming at me sideways, but I let it slide because she claimed it wasn’t like that.”

“Maybe it really wasn’t like that and it was all in your head. I know Jas, and if she had a problem with you she would’ve been more straightforward.”

“Oh really? You know *Jas*?” She sneered.

“You serious, Ki?”

“Yes! Cause you going hard for a bitch who hid a whole human from you for five years. Y’all haven’t spoken

since 2010. You don't know that bitch that well!"

"Is calling her out of her name necessary?"

"Wowww," she tittered. "You got your cape on for her, huh? This conversation is high key telling me everything I need to know."

"You tripping, bruh. I just want there to be respect on all ends so I can be in my daughter's life drama free. I don't have time for no petty bullshit."

"And I'm guessing I would be the 22 year old child causing petty bullshit between you and your baby mama who's drama free, right? Got it," she stood up, and grabbed her purse. I jumped up with her.

"Who said something about your age?! It sounds like your own insecurities eating you up."

"Okay, well let my insecure ass go."

I moved to the side. "Bye."

She looked stunned that I gave up that easily, but this wasn't a discussion I wanted to have. Jasmine and Joy were going to be in my life and she didn't need to have this attitude towards them. She may have not been directing any negative energy towards Joy, but she was directing it towards her mom.

If they had drama that would affect Joy. Now I was thinking it was probably best to keep them all apart since Keiko wasn't feeling Jasmine.

When I heard the front door open the reality of the situation set in. If I let Keiko leave like this she would probably never talk to me again. I couldn't live with that.

"Keiko wait," I pulled her back into the house as she was walking out.

"Don't touch me!" She snapped while swatting my hand away.

"Why are you crying?" I started wiping her face and my insides were turning into tissue paper. This girl didn't understand her power when it came to me.

"Because you still want that bitch. Y'all probably already started back fucking with the way you going so hard to defend her!"

My eyes ballooned in horror at her wild accusations. Jasmine and I hadn't even been alone to even think about doing something like that. Joy was always in the middle of us, and that's how it was always going to be. It was strictly about

the child and nothing more. I didn't even know where Keiko pulled that shit from.

“Man I'm not fucking that girl nor do I want her! Why would you even assume that?”

“You not fucking me! All of a sudden you are content with just being my friend. Admit it, you want that old thing back with your bm.”

“We not together because of *you* and I respected your decision long before Jasmine and Joy came into the picture, so what the fuck is you talking about?”

“Okay, I'm crazy.” She sniffled while wiping her tears. Damn, she was emotional.

I laughed while pulling her into a big hug that she tried to resist. “You not crazy, baby. If you want us to go back together then just say the word and we lit.”

“Why the fuck would I do that? You're basically telling me you gon' be spending unlimited time with another bitch and going hard for her. You think I wanna deal with that?” She looked up at me in my eyes.

“I didn't tell your ass that. You making up shit in your head.”

“Fuck you, stupid ass.”

“That’s the problem.”

“What?”

“You wanna fuck me.”

“Boy plea...”

Her words trailed off when I grabbed her throat with both of my hands and kissed her lips deeply. My hand eventually slipped down to her ass that was covered in a long blue sundress that hugged her figure. That booty was looking and feeling like it had gotten bigger over night.

“I’ma give you some dick, baby. Don’t trip.” I said as I started undoing my Gucci belt.

“No, not in your mama’s house.” She protested.

“Girl my mama is gone to glory. You acting like she in this bitch with us.”

“She might still be watching.”

“Well hopefully she’ll respect us and cover her eyes.”

“Joha-“

I shut her up again by sticking my tongue in her mouth. I wasn’t about to go back and forth about my mother who was

no longer on this earth. Keiko was being ridiculous, but I had something for her ass.

“Bend over and touch ya toes.” I whispered in her ear before licking it. She whimpered in response.

She obeyed my orders after I pulled her dress up over her ass. She wasn't wearing any panties, and I noticed that the moment I laid eyes on her today. I concluded that she was going out of her way to tease me or she wanted me to fuck the shit out of her. I was now leaning towards both.

“Ohhhh,” she moaned as my dick penetrated her pussy. She threw her ass back greedily like she'd been yearning for the dick, while I was trying to catch my bearings. Her pussy felt tighter, warmer, and wetter. As her ass slapped against my balls I had to give myself a pep talk so that I wouldn't nut early.

“Goddam Keiko!” I grunted as her juices coated my dick. I was stroking her at a slow pace on purpose, but that just made her throw her ass back on me more. She wanted me to tear her ass up, but I was trying to prolong it.

“Fuck me harder!” She screamed when my dick sunk deeper into her deeper than I anticipated it to. I typically gave Keiko whatever she wanted, and this time was no exception. I

started thrusting into her so hard that her ass was clapping together. I had the perfect view of her booty hole so I said fuck it and spit in it before slipping my finger in. She went crazy and so did her pussy.

“JOHAN IM CUMMINGGG!”

“Me too baby, me too. FUCKKK!” My body shook as I emptied my seeds into her womb.

“I think I just gave you triplets, KiKi.”

“Ugh,” she grumbled, while standing up right. “Let’s not ruin the moment.”

I laughed, because she was so in denial. “Give me a kiss.”

She stood on her tippy toes and kissed me while I wrapped my arms around her. I was hoping that this trip to Disneyworld wouldn’t put us in a bad place, because I loved being around Keiko.

Keiko

June 21, 2016

Goodmorning beautiful. I was happy to help you move into your apartment yesterday. I hope you have a good first day at work. You gon kill it! HMU whenever you get off.

I smiled at the text message as I sat in my car with my nerves through the roof. I was so nervous that I was at my job two hours early. The encouraging words I just received helped take the edge off just a bit. Now if it was Johan telling me this maybe I would've felt 100% better, but he was contributing to my bad nerves. He hadn't called me since Saturday, and the text messages I was getting from his ass every now and then wasn't cutting it anymore. I did something I said I wouldn't do and called his ass first.

"Hello?"

I instantly regretted calling.

"Ummm, where's Johan?"

"He's in the bathroom. Would you like me to tell him you called?"

"Does he know you're answering his phone?" I asked without even thinking. I instantly felt stupid because I just let

this bitch know I was bothered.

She giggled as if I was her own personal entertainment. “I mean there wasn’t a conversation about it but he left his phone out here while he went to the bathroom, so I answered it. I thought not answering it would do more damage...didn’t want you getting the wrong idea or anything.”

“He left his phone out where?” I questioned. All that other shit she was yapping about didn’t mean a damn thing to me because it was phony. She wanted me to get a few ideas and that’s why she answered the damn phone.

“In the living room of our hotel room. I need to be getting back to doing Joy’s hair though. This lil girl got bukoo hair just like her daddy,” she chortled. “I’ll make sure to tell JoJo to call you back.”

JoJo? She was calling him by his nickname now? My heart rate sped up just thinking about all the things they were probably doing out there in Florida. I didn’t want my mind to venture to those places but under the circumstances I couldn’t help it. Jasmine ended the call leaving me sick to my stomach. Literally. I pushed my car door open with the quickness and upchucked everything I had for breakfast on the ground.

“Hey there, aye what we doin’? Hey there, aye what we doin’ then? Hey there, hey there! Aye what we doin’ baby? Aye what we doin’ then? I still taste you on my lips, yeah I do. Last night we made love ‘til the Sun came. I know it’s hard when I leave, I’m not with you. But when I’m gone, hold it down, you’re my love thing. You be doin’ it, that one and two, that four thing. Let’s slow it down a bit, I’ll hit you with that foreplay. Hop on top, I start to ride you, that’s that horseplay.”

Dej Loaf singing from my phone only meant that Johan could be calling me back because that was his ringtone. I wanted to be petty and ignore his ass, but I was beyond that. Quite frankly, I wanted him to *know* for a fact that I wasn’t feeling his ass at the moment.

“Wassup baby? You called?” He had the audacity to answer the phone all sweet.

“Yea, I called. Your girlfriend answered the phone.”

He laughed. “You petty, bruh. The woman I want to be my girlfriend is in Baton Rouge about to start her new job.”

“Wrong bitch.”

“No, I got the right one. What you had wanted though?”

Keiko missed me and it was so obvious. Instead of just coming out and saying that she was going to be passive aggressive and snappy. Sometimes that shit was annoying, and other times I found it funny. Right now it was kind of funny.

“Well I just wanted to call and say wassup before you started your day because it was obvious you weren’t gonna call me. I haven’t heard from you in days.”

“We was just texting last night.”

“You didn’t call.”

“I didn’t know you wanted to talk over the phone, Keiko, damn. You could’ve just called me, yea. I would’ve answered.”

“No you wouldn’t have. You wasn’t bouta carry on a full blown conversation with me with your baby mama and kid right next to you in the same room.”

“I was in the room by myself. We have a suite with two rooms.” I clarified, while looking over at Jasmine and wondering what the hell she told Keiko. I was sure these accusations weren’t coming out of thin air. Jasmine just shrugged and focused back on combing Joy’s hair.

“.....Oh.”

“Yea, oh. So how was move-in day? I forgot to ask last night.”

“Easier than I thought.”

“Forreal? Cause you swore you needed my help.”

“I did. I found somebody else to help me.”

“What?!” I clamored. “Who?!”

“One of my friends.”

“It better not be no nigga...as a matter of fact, it better not be a bitch either.”

“Boy don’t worry about who I got to hel-
PUGHHHHH!”

My face twisted up in disgust. “You throwing up
KiKi?”

“What it sound like?” She chided.

“You catching an attitude with me when you need to go get a pregnancy test.”

When I said those words Jasmine’s eyes flew to me like a hawk. I looked away because this wasn’t something we needed to be making eye contact over.

“Boy I don’t need no fucking pregnancy test. I had shrimp and grits for breakfast and my stomach just doesn’t agree with it. That’s all.”

“You right, my baby don’t agree with that shit. Go get a pregnancy test witch a delusional ass. That’s probably why you so pissy with me lately.”

“Johan get the fuck off my line and go enjoy your family vacation...and keep this same energy when a nigga answer my phone.” The call ended. She may have been jealous, but Jasmine gave her ammo today. I had to check it because she was right. Had the shoe been on the other foot somebody would’ve probably got sent back to their maker.

“Say Jas, you can’t be answering my phone.”

“I’m guessing I caused some drama for you?” She asked innocently. I don’t know who she thought she was fooling. Her ass wasn’t green.

“You guessed right.”

“My bad. I saw who it was and I didn’t want it to look like you were ignoring her calls. In my opinion that would’ve looked more shady then me answering. I hope she doesn’t think I was trying to be messy.”

“I don’t think you meant no harm Jas, but intent and outcome are two totally different things.”

“True. I apologize and it won’t happen again. Can I ask you something?”

“Wassup?” I asked unenthusiastically.

“I thought you said y’all were just friends. Why does it matter who answers your phone?”

“You just heard that whole conversation right?”

“Right.”

“So there’s your answer. Even if it’s not official that’s still all me and vice versa.”

“Okay,” she smirked. “I heard that. Congratulations on the baby by the way. You’re gonna have a little brother or sister Joy.”

“Now why are you telling her that when it’s not confirmed yet?”

“She has ears and she heard the conversation, too. Technically you spilled the tea first in front of her.”

“I guess I did,” I laughed. “You ready to be a big sister, Joy?”

“How would I be a big sister if mommy’s not pregnant?” She asked.

“Oop,” Jasmine snickered.

I released a hearty laugh. “Because I’m your father. That’s how.”

“So does that make Keiko like.... another mommy to me?” She questioned. She was trying her hardest to understand this and it was the cutest thing ever.

“Uh, fuck no!” Jasmine bellowed, making Joy jump.

I frowned. “Man you don’t gotta scream at her like that! She just asked a simple question!”

“My daughter calling a woman who didn’t push her out mommy is simple to you? Cause I think the fuck not.”

My head tilted in disbelief. If that wasn’t the world’s biggest contradiction I didn’t know what was.

“Yo, do you *really* want to go there? Or do I need to refresh your memory?”

I didn’t want to take it there in front of Joy, but she definitely had a nigga who didn’t plant their seed in here taking care of my daughter for years. Yet she was about to blow a gasket because Joy asked if Keiko would be like *another* mom to her. Based on the look that now covered Jasmine’s face her memory was already refreshed without me having to remind her.

“Ok, you got that and I guess I know how you feel first hand now. But my daughter is not calling nobody mommy but me.”

“She didn’t ask to call anybody else mom. Did you Joy?” I looked at her. When her eyes connected with mine she bursted into tears, jumped up, and ran into my arms. My heart swelled as I picked her up and patted her back while she bawled her eyes out.

“Ugh, she’s being *so* dramatic.” Jasmine scoffed while poking her lips out.

I glared at her. “Chill out, bruh.”

“Daddy, mommy hurt my feelings,” Joy whined while hugging my neck tighter.

My heart damn near stopped. I’d been patiently waiting for her to call me daddy, and that time had finally come. I guess this moment made the most sense for her because I was making her feel better and comforting her. I guess I finally earned the right to be called that, and it felt like I’d hit the lottery.

Chapter 29

June 27, 2016

Keiko

“KiKi! I missed you!” Royalty ran up to my car and jumped up in my lap. I hugged her tightly because I hadn’t

seen her in two weeks.

Both of my jobs had started at this point so I'd been hella busy. I had to make time to come to New Orleans this weekend because I had a meeting with my lawyer early this morning. I figured since I was already in the city it only made sense to pick my siblings up so we could do something. I was just surprised that my mom was actually allowing me to come get them from her house. I guess she couldn't stay miserable forever after all.

“Ro didn't I tell you to get dressed? Whatchu got on, girl? And what's going on with your hair?”

“I dressed myself and did my own hair!” She answered excitedly.

“I can tell, baby,” I laughed. She wore a pink sundress, a yellow cardigan, purple shoes, and a orange boa. I was all for her self expression but she wasn't coming behind me like this.

“You can keep the dress on, but take the bow off, and get your pink saltwater sandals. Bring me a brush and gel too, so I can comb your hair into a ponytail. And grab a big hair bow. Oh, and take this cardigan off girl. It's too hot for that.”

“Ughhh, okayyy,” she grumbled, before hopping down and running off. As she walked in the house, Ryan walked out. He looked nice with his True religion jean shorts, Red Jordan shirt , and Jordan Breds on. The only flaw I saw was his hair. He always had long hair that nobody ever cut off because it was too pretty to do that, but it was always braided and he kept a lining. It looked like my poor brother had just rolled out of bed today. I could tell he tried to style it but he didn’t know what he was doing. Reign and Riley were right behind him and they had on similar outfits, so they looked fine, but just like Ryan they needed their hair done. They always sported curly bushes but they were long overdue for a trim and a lining. We were definitely stopping by the barbershop before we did anything else.

“Hey KiKi,” Ryan hugged me tightly.

“Hey little boy, you look nice.” I patted his head to tame his hair.

“Thank you, but my hair looks crazy.”

“It’s nothing we can’t fix.”

His eyes lit up. “You gon take me to the barber?”

“I sure will.”

“Hey KiKi!” Riley and Reign exclaimed as they ran up to my car.

“We going to Chuck E Cheese today?” Reign asked.

“No I wanna go to the zoo!” Riley exclaimed.

“I don’t care where we go, I just want a snowball and nachos,” Riley commented.

My stomach rumbled at the sound of that. “I’m with you on that lil bro.”

“Sister your face getting fat,” Reign volunteered out of nowhere.

I wanted to be offended but I just laughed. “Just for that we’re not going to Chuck E. Cheese.”

“I wasn’t being mean,” he pouted. “I think you look really pretty. Your hair is longer too.”

“Awww,” I smiled while pulling him into my lap for a hug. “Gimme a kiss.”

He pecked my lips and got right back down. He was at that age where he thought he was too cool to be babied.

“Johan coming today, KiKi?” Ryan asked.

“No. I figured today would be about us and us only.” I told a half truth. I did just want my siblings to myself for the day, but Johan wouldn’t have been available to me even if I asked him to join us. Just yesterday he made it clear that he was spending his entire day with his daughter. I couldn’t say that I was surprised because that was turning into the norm. I just wasn’t making the cut when it came to his schedule these days, so I wasn’t even going to ask.

“Man, ever since he got a daughter he never comes around no more,” he grumbled.

I bursted into laughter. “Boy, I know you’re not jealous.”

“I’m surprised you not.”

My head jerked back. “I can’t be jealous over something that was before my time, boy. Now fall back. If you hit Johan up he’ll respond.”

“I’m good. Everybody always leaves...” he muttered. Hearing those words come from his mouth hurt *my* feelings. This was the main reason I didn’t want Johan getting close to my siblings. It was out of fear that he’d introduce them to certain behavior he couldn’t maintain, and here we were. I was mature enough to understand he was making up for lost time

with his child, but my siblings, mainly Ryan, didn't get that. He just felt neglected.

As I was thinking of something to tell Ryan so he'd feel better, the front door to the house opened and my mom walked out with Royalty and that thuggish nigga she'd yet to introduce me to. My mom now had fire engine red hair and she was on one with her outfit choice. She'd always been a hot girl but damn, she never went this hard before. She wore jean booty shorts with a jean bikini top. The oversized red Chanel bag on her arm was obviously new and it matched her red Chanel slides perfectly. I knew for a fact her job wasn't paying for that shit, so maybe her new man was spoiling her. I wasn't mad at her, it was just kind of ironic that she got on me about Johan being a drug dealer and spoiling me but here she was back to her old ways. I guess the pot was still out here calling the kettle black.

"I got the brush and gel, KiKi!" Royalty ran to me. She already looked much better without all those unnecessary accessories she had on.

"Hello daughter," my mom stepped in front of me with her hand on her hip. Her man posted behind her, looking stupid. "I don't think I've introduced you to Dee."

“No, you haven’t. Hello, I’m Keiko.”

“Nice to meet you. You look just like ya mama.”

“Lucky her,” she snickered while fluffing her hair. She needed to chill with the bleach or her hair was going to fall clean out.

“So where are you taking my kids today?” She asked.

“I’ma take the boys to the barber shop because they’re well overdue for some linings.”

“That’s a good idea.”

I guess a thank you would’ve been too much to ask for, but I never got thank you’s from her, so I wasn’t shocked. I wasn’t doing it for her anyway, I was doing it for my brothers. As long as they appreciated it I was good.

“And then we’ll probably go to a snowball stand uptown and then Audubon Zoo.”

“Whew, you really want to spend your Saturday with these bad ass kids in that hot and funky zoo?” She scrunched her face up.

“We’re not bad,” Royalty mumbled as I brushed her hair into a slick ponytail.

“Y’all sure not bad, baby. Mama just talking.” I replied.

“Girl you can say whatever. I live with these rugrats. They bad as hell! Reign hid my damn keys from me last weekend when I was trying to go out. By the time I found them it was too late to go somewhere.”

I hollered. That sounded like Reign.

“Maybe he wanted you at home with them for a weekend. Ever thought of that?”

“No, maybe when you have kids you’ll understand how therapeutic weekends away from them are.”

“Whatever,” I mumbled.

“Hmmm,” she observed me closely. “Girl you pregnant right now ain’t cha?”

“W-what?”

“I didn’t stutter. Your ass is glowing, your face all fat, and you looking mighty thick. Shit you look like me when I was about two to three months pregnant with you.”

“Oh forreal?” I replied dryly.

“Yea I was in denial too. I just know God wasn’t about to sit me down, but he did. Congratulations to you and Johan,” she said sarcastically.

“Ma I don’t know what you talking bout...”

“It’s fine. I *know* what the fuck I’m talking bout. I’m not babysitting overnight or throwing no baby shower.”

“Mama you wouldn’t babysit my child at all and I wouldn’t let you plan my baby shower any way.”

“Good. Glad we’re on the same page. At least I know the baby will be cute...I hope it looks more like it’s daddy though. No offense.”

“Ro get in the car so we can go. Ya mama blowing me.”

She laughed. “You wanna run from the truth so bad. Ignoring it won’t make it go away though.”

Johan

“Now this lil girl asked for this ice cream and got the nerve to be knocked out now,” Jasmine shook her head. We had been in the River Walk mall for hours where I got Joy everything she glanced at. Her being tired was understandable.

We were about to leave but Joy wanted ice cream and to watch the boats on the river. As soon as we sat down she was in my lap and dozing off.

“You may as well eat that ice cream,” I chuckled.

“Oh no baby I’m lactose intolerant. I’ll light this bench up if I just take a lick.”

“Man you could’ve kept that to yourself.”

She giggled hysterically. “I guess I’ll throw it away.”

“No, don’t throw it away. Give it to me.”

I thought she’d hand it to me, but she put the ice cream cone up to my mouth. Not thinking about it, I started eating it. Her ass took it to another level, when she smashed it into my nose.

“Really bruh? You childish...”

“I’m sorry,” she tittered. “I couldn’t help myself. It was too easy. Here, let me wipe it.”

She scooted closer to me and proceeded to wipe my face with napkins while staring into my eyes. I'm not going to lie...there was some sexual tension between us, but nothing too heavy to where I felt a dire need to act on. Evidently Jasmine felt differently, because she kissed me on the lips. I let it last for a few seconds out of curiosity to see if I felt something...but there was nothing. Whenever I kissed Keiko my heart would beat out of my chest, I'd get chills, goosebumps, all that shit. With Jasmine I just felt a nice pair of lips on mine. I pulled away and put some distance between us.

“What was that?” I asked.

“I thought you wanted me to...”

“I didn't, Jas. No disrespect, but I'm not interested in going backwards with you.”

“I couldn't tell by the way you were just looking in my eyes and shit!”

“You were looking at me, so I looked back. Let's not make that into something it most definitely wasn't.”

“Johan don't try to play me like I'm crazy.”

“I'm not tryna play you, bruh. I'm just telling you how I feel, and I'm not into you like that no more. Now I'll always

have love and respect for you as Joy's mom, but that's where it ends. I don't want this to mess up what we have going on because we've been doing good at this co-parenting thing."

"Yea, we have been doing great and I want that to continue as well. I guess I got carried away. I always told you those green eyes could hypnotize a girl."

"That's what happened to you? You were hypnotized?"
I chuckled.

"You laughing, but I really think I was in a trance or something."

"Johan is that you?"

I turned around to see Keiko's mom approaching me. Fuck. I had no idea how long she'd been watching but I was praying she hadn't witnessed that kiss. Her ass would definitely take that and run all the way home with it.

"Yup, I knew that was you." She smiled big once she saw my face. "I was just talking to my daughter about you. And who is this cutie? She looks just like you."

"This is my daughter."

She looked amazed. "Your daughter?! Why is this my first time hearing about this?"

“Because it’s the first time I’m telling you.” I retorted. I wasn’t explaining Joy to her. Keiko knew everything already, so what her mom thought didn’t matter.

“Ouuu, well I guess you told me. And this must be your baby mama, right?”

“Right,” Jasmine grinned. “I’m guessing your Kimiko’s mom.”

“Baby my child’s name is Keiko. Get it right.”

If I wasn’t so spooked about what would get back to Keiko, I would’ve laughed. Kendra was a sad ass mama, but at least she didn’t allow Jasmine to play with her daughter in her presence.

“I’m bad with names.” Jasmine shrugged.

“Hmmp, well you better learn her name. Y’all gon be sharing a baby daddy after all.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. If her mom knew she was pregnant that meant Keiko confirmed it with her. Yet she kept denying it whenever I brought it up. If she was trying to pull a fast one she was going to get popped.

“Alright, I’m finna get back to my man. Y’all finish enjoying y’all lil family outing.” She cheesed before strutting

off. She was gorgeous but her nasty ass attitude really made her ugly.

“I don’t like her,” Jasmine voiced.

“I’m sure she doesn’t like you either after you deliberately fucked up her daughter’s name.”

“That was an accident.”

“And you’re a liar. C’mon, I’m ready to get the fuck.”

I didn’t want to stay out here any longer and give anybody else the wrong impression when it came to me and Jasmine. As a matter of fact, it was time for me to start spending time with my daughter alone. She was comfortable now. Jasmine’s chaperoning services were no longer needed.

Keiko

“Damn...”

I lifted my head up anxiously. “What? What does it say?”

“Sis...you’re fertile as fuck.”

My stomach twisted and my heart fell as she showed me my positive pregnancy test. I'd been putting it off for a few weeks now but that shit my mom had said really put it on my mind. I couldn't even enjoy my day because all I could think about was the strong possibility of being pregnant. After leaving the zoo, I went to Walgreens and got a few tests before coming to Kiyor's apartment. The truth that I'd been running away from out of fear was now confirmed and I was terrified again. I mean I still had PTSD from miscarriage.

However, that fear just made me extra protective of myself and my baby this time around. For starters, I was going to do my due diligence when it came to finding a doctor. Secondly, I was going to look into everything my doctor told me and not take their word for it. Lastly, I wasn't going to let a soul stress me out or make me miserable. Yea, I was going to make sure that this time was different. I owed it to the baby I lost.

"How you feeling, KiKi?" Kiyor asked with her hand on my shoulder.

I sighed heavily. "Not as bad as I thought I would to be honest. Maybe this is a second chance from God."

“Well that’s one way to look at it. How far along do you think you are?”

“If I had to guess I’d say like two months. The first time I slept with Johan after my miscarriage was for spring break.”

“Damn. So bitch you been knowing?”

“Lowkey,” I admitted. “I just didn’t want to admit it and I pushed it to the back of my mind. Other people noticed it though like Johan, his mama, and your mama.”

“Bitch that’s your mama,” she laughed. “But I guess her crazy ass knew what she was talking about this time.”

“That she did.”

A knock at the bathroom door startled us but we relaxed when Ryan revealed it was him.

“Boy what you want?!” Kiyor shouted.

“Mama wanted me to give Keiko my phone so she could see something!” He answered.

“What is it?!” I replied.

Dealing with Kendra there was a 97% chance that it was something negative. That’s why she wasn’t allowed to

have my new number and even if she got it from one of my siblings it was useless because I'd already blocked her number in advance. It could stay like that too now that I knew for a fact I was pregnant. I meant it when I said *nobody* would be stressing me out this time around.

“I don't know! I was told not to look when she called!”

“Get the phone from him.” I said to Kiyor. Maybe it was something of importance if she didn't want Ryan's eyes to see it.

“What y'all in here doing?” Ryan asked while trying to poke his head in the bathroom door after Kiyor opened it to get his phone.

“Minding our business, now move.” She pushed his head back out the door and closed it shut. “Now let's see whatcha mama talking about.”

She pulled up Ryan's text message with our mom, and she gave me the phone. The last thing she sent was a 36 second video. I didn't even know what this was, but my heart felt heavy all of a sudden. I was about to be disappointed. I could feel it in the pit of my stomach.

“Is that Johan?” Kiyor asked as she looked at the video over my shoulder.

It was Johan alright. The angle may have only captured his back, but I knew how every side of him looked. Even if it weren't for that his locks gave him away, and he was definitely sitting next to that bitch Jasmine. I could see the side of her face because her head was turned and she was all in his face feeding him ice cream.

“Bitch they are too friendly for me,” Kiyor commented as we watched Jasmine laugh and move closer to him. She whipped his mouth before leaning in to kiss him. I clearly saw him kissing her back before the video ended. My prediction had been accurate but not only was I disappointed, I was also hurt. This would be my last time feeling like this if I had a say.

“Call mama.” I said to Kiyor. She grabbed her phone off the sink and dialed our mom's number before putting it on speaker. She answered right away. Her messy ass was probably waiting by the phone.

“Ya sister saw the video?” She asked.

“Yea, I saw it. Why did you send me that?” I questioned.

“Don’t I get a thankyou or something? I’m looking out for you.”

“No you being messy!” I lashed out. “Johan is not my boyfriend! I could care less what the fuck he got going on with the next bitch. Don’t bring shit else to me concerning him! I DON’T CARE TO SEE IT!”

“Alright, calm down.” Kiyor urged while rubbing my back. Off the bat I could tell she was concerned for the baby in my belly, but my mom took it another way.

“Yea, you would want to tell her to calm down before I come over there and whoop her ass.”

“What you could do is come over here and get your kids because I’m bouta go back to Baton Rouge. Unlike some people I actually work for a living and don’t rely on men.”

I’d gotten the tea from Ryan today about how my mom had quit her job because Dee didn’t want her working anymore. Her dumb ass obviously hadn’t learned shit from Red.

“Oh so that’s supposed to be a shot?! Fucking right I’m getting taken care of! You was fucking with a man with all that money and what you walking away with besides a baby?”

Meanwhile he's over there playing his house with his number one choice.”

That admittedly struck a nerve. Ever since I'd found out about Joy I'd been insecure about the entire situation. A big part of my insecurities came from the history that Johan and Jasmine may have shared. Obviously there was still some fire left in their old flame and they were exploring that. I couldn't have been a factor in his mind because he hadn't been carrying me the same way since he found out about that bitch and her baby. I'd been understanding and I stood down to let him have that time with his daughter, but now I was done being humble about the situation. Being humble was getting me walked all over, and I'd never been a doormat ass bitch.

“Ok mama, Johan's with his number one choice. If it makes you feel better as my mother to rub that in my face then you got that. It still doesn't change the fact that you're in your 40's depending on a man that you just met to take care of you and your kids. You did all that preaching to me when I got with Johan just for you to be going down the same road again. Congrats, you're playing yourself.” I ended the call feeling relieved that I got all that off my chest. Now it was time for

me to go back to my peaceful world in BR. I just had to handle one more thing before I left.

“I need a minute, Yori.”

“You must be about to call that nigga. Stay strong bitch.” She urged before dismissing herself.

She was spot on. That was *exactly* what I was about to do. I thought about calling him so I could pull up but what I needed to say wasn't an in person matter. Johan was too powerful in person anyway. Handling it this way gave me all the power and this wasn't the time to show weakness or even feel it. I had to be strong for me and my baby.

“Hey KiKi,” he answered the phone like everything was copacetic. “I was just about to call you to see if we could have dinner or something.”

“Oh yea?”

“Yea...it's something I gotta tell you but I know it's gon' be some shit.”

“Tell me now.”

“Keiko I'd rather do it over dinner.”

“Nigga I'm not having dinner with you.” I gritted. I was tired of playing with his ass. The jig was up.

“Keiko I don’t know what your mama told you bu-“

“Nigga she didn’t have to tell me shit! I saw it on video for myself! I want to see you try to explain why a bitch was feeding you ice cream and kissing you!!!” I shrieked.

“Alright...that shit probably looked bad but I swear it wasn’t like tha...wait, did you just say your mama showed you a video? Man that bitch really praying for our downfall!”

“And nigga you gave her ammo today! I’m so done with your ass. Be with Jasmine and y’all live happily ever after as a family of three because I’m removing myself from the equation.”

“You been did that though, so whatchu mean? In case you forgot we’re not together and that was your call.”

“Fucking right it was my call because your ass is stupid and I see nothing has changed. I’ve been by your side through your hard times because I really thought we were friends before anything else but the energy that I’ve been putting out is not being reciprocated and I’m tired of you blatantly ignoring my feelings for a bitch who hid a child from you.”

“So Keiko you really gon fall back from me because of some shit your mama got mixed up? Right after the kiss I told Jasmine that I didn’t see her like that. When I dropped her off I let her know that I wanted to start taking Joy on outings by herself. But of course you’re just gonna take that video and run with it because your mama put it in your face.”

“This don’t have shit to do with Kendra! It’s about you and your actions. All of them! Even the ones leading up to the kiss. I obviously don’t have a place in your life right now so before things get worse I’ll remove myself and save you the trouble. For once in my life I’ma chose peace.”

“KiKi where you at? We need to talk in person right now.”

He was smoking crack if he thought I was falling for that set up.

“I’m going back to BR.”

“Send me your address.”

“Fuck no. You would know it had you followed through on your promise to help me move in. Now you’re shit outta luck.”

“MAN WHERE THE FUCK YOU AT?” He roared. I jumped at the sound of the bass in his voice. Whew, somebody was *mad* and it was about time.

“Johan we need space...but don't trip. If God says so we'll have a lifetime together because I'm pregnant again.”

“You took a test?!” He asked, sounding excited. Poor baby probably thought that was his saving grace. He evidently didn't know me all that well. This baby in my stomach wasn't going to make me run to him. “Where you at?! Man this just what we need right now to make us close-“

I hung up right in his face. I'd still have to deal with him because I was carrying his child, but it wouldn't be today, tomorrow, next week, or next month. I'd call him about the baby whenever I felt like it.

Chapter 30

January 4, 2017

Johan

“Juri, she looks just like her paw,” I chuckled while looking down at my baby cousin’s baby named Brylie. Juri was 19 years old going on 20 in a few months so she wasn’t exactly a baby anymore, but she’d always be one in my eyes. That’s why it was weird that she had a little baby girl of her own now, and with Benji at that. When I first heard that they’d been seeing each other on the low and that she was pregnant I lowkey wanted his head, but I had to fall back because I could tell they really loved each other. Additionally, Benji had been through *a lot* these past few months himself but he still held his home front down with Juri. They appeared to be happy, so I couldn’t do shit but be happy for them.

“Ughhh, don’t tell me that,” she grumbled. “It’s not fair that I carried her for 9 months and she looks just like him.”

“Life’s not fair,” Benji threw in as he walked through the living room, making us all laugh. Most of the whole damn

family was chilling at Juri's house because she'd sent out a mass text saying that she was cooking crawfish etouffee and frying catfish. One thing my family came out for was food. It was me, Auntie Jenesha, Auntie Keemaya, my dad, Canary, baby Jordyn, Uncle Jamal, Ja'Keem, Camilla, Jamaya, Grams, and Benji's mom Neffie. Of course I brought Joy with me too. My family would often make jokes about us being like Velcro because we were always together. I was basically living in New Orleans again because I liked taking her to school and picking her up. I also didn't want to lose any more time that I'd already lost out on. I couldn't front though, Joy wasn't the only reason I'd been in Louisiana a lot more lately.

“I'm finna bust out the Henny anybody want some?”

Benji asked us.

“Boy is that even a question?” Auntie Keemaya replied. “Give me mine straight.”

“See. That's your problem now,” Uncle Jamal pointed. Everybody erupted with laughter. They were a show by themselves.

“Nigga you got a laundry list of problems but I minds my business.”

His lips pushed out to the side. “Lie again.”

“Alright Ike and Tina, chill out,” Jenesha tittered.

“I must be Tina cause she’s the violent one,” Uncle Jamal said.

“Uh-oh, I hear some little people coming,” Grams said as Baylie and Joy ran in the room. Although there was a five year age gap they’d been playing well together. It was cool for me to see because I was just imagining Joy as a big sister.

“Daddy look what I did to Elsa’s hair!” Joy squealed while shoving the life size doll in my face.

“You did that baby?” I asked in amazement. She nodded eagerly. “I think I got a lil beautician on my hands.”

“I know! I can’t wait to comb my brothers hair!” She exclaimed before running back out the room with Baylie on her heels.

“Never thought I’d see the day...” Auntie Jenesha giggled.

“You?!” My dad’s eyes widened. “This nigga really a father...and got another one on the way.”

I’d told my entire family about Keiko’s pregnancy and I’d even sent them pictures that I had to steal off her Instagram because she refused to send me any. Her due date was this

month on January 15th and my access to her had been very limited ever since she declared being done with me in June. I'd only been invited to doctors visits and that was all. I tried to get her alone countless times but she wasn't having it. I was sick as fuck because all I wanted to do was rub her big ass belly and kiss it but I couldn't even do that. I knew she was on one when I offered to rub those swollen ass feet and she told me to go to hell.

“I can't wait for the baby shower this weekend,” Canary clapped her hands excitedly. It was no surprise that my dad was excited about my baby boy, but I didn't expect Canary's level of enthusiasm to match his. One might say hers *surpassed* his. Every other day she was texting me stuff that she bought for the baby or things she thought he should have. She even claimed that she was vicariously living through me because she secretly wanted Jordyn to be a boy. That wasn't shocking considering she already had Camilla.

“Same. I just wish we could've had a hand in the planning or something,” Auntie Jenesha added on.

“I'm saying, I would've liked to cook a lil dish or something. Ima tell your lil funny acting baby mama about herself at the babyshower.” Auntie Keemaya smacked her lips.

Keem groaned. “Do you always plan drama everytime you go somewhere?”

“The answer is yes,” Canary laughed. “It’s been that way since we were kids. Keemaya’s ass loves the mess, but don’t be acting a fool at that girl’s shower. If you gon’ do that then just stay home.”

“Oh so she must’ve involved you in the planning...” Auntie Keemaya responded.

“Now you know damn well she didn’t, and that’s fine. I’m not taking shit personal because whatever reason she’s distant I’m sure Johan knows and he probably got something to do with it.” Canary said while glancing over at me.

“I already told you that girl wants her space. Ain’t nothing I can do about that. I’m kind of surprised she even extended invitations to my family for the baby shower.” I said.

“Yea I know what you said, I just don’t see what her wanting space from you got to do with us. She could come around and get acquainted with us before the baby gets here.” Auntie Keemaya said.

“No, Johan should have *been* brought that girl around because they’ve been dealing with each other since 2015,”

Camilla spoke up.

I looked at her. “Really sis?”

“Really bro,” she laughed.

“Alright, I see where your loyalty lies.” I joked. Over the past few months we’d gotten closer because we shared a sibling and losing my mother made me want to be around family a lot more. Shit happened way too fast to be distant for no good reason.

“My friend said you was playing with her too much so she had to cut your head off,” Milla laughed.

“She really said that?” I inquired.

“Well damn, I guess we know which baby mama you want to be with,” Auntie Keemaya said with a big grin on her face.

“You didn’t know that? I could’ve told you that shit. This nigga tried to fight me over her last year.” My dad said. I smacked my teeth because bringing that up could take the conversation to a place I didn’t want it to go.

“Tried to? He was finna beat yo ass before I got in the middle and saved you,” Uncle Jamal chuckled. The whole

room exploded with laughter while my dad denied that ever happening.

“So what was this fight about? And Jordan how is this boy still breathing after raising his hands to you?” Grams questioned.

“Mama I was wrong and I was being judgemental. I don’t parent like you. It’s not my way or the highway.”

“Baby y’all young folks is *different*,” Grams huffed. “Couldn’t be me!”

“I wanna know what happened between you and ole girl.” Auntie Keemaya stated.

“Her name is Keiko.” I asserted.

“I know that’s right cuz, don’t let her address your girl any ole kinda way,” Keem instigated.

“I hate y’all,” Jamaya said while giggling hysterically.

“So what happened Johan?” Auntie Keemaya pressed again.

“You know this boy not bouta sit up here and tell all his business. That ain’t never been my grand baby,” Grams smiled while pinching my cheek like I was still a baby.

Secretly I loved that shit.

“Well his mysterious ass needs to clue his family in on what he got going on. We need to know what we walking into with this baby shower.” Auntie Keemaya countered.

“Y’all ain’t walking into nothing crazy. The only person in her family that don’t like me is her mama and I doubt she’ll be there.”

“Why wouldn’t her mama be there?” Jamaya asked.

“Because her mama is miserable.” I grumbled. I was still mad about her mama sending Keiko that video of me and Jasmine. That shit was so uncalled for, but it was my fault. There would’ve been no video if I didn’t put myself in that position. It was just unfortunate that Keiko falling back from my ass made me realize that I needed to stop including Jasmine in me and Joy’s time together. She played it cool at first it, but was obvious that those outings we’d take with Joy started getting to her head. Jasmine was never going to get a family or relationship out of me. I was even more dry with her now that Keiko stopped fucking with me over some bullshit that involved her.

“Well I slap miserable hoes.” Auntie Keemaya said.

“Mama chill out. You stay looking for a fight.” Keem chided.

“And I’m probably end up fighting for her,” Jamaya rolled her eyes.

“No I can handle this old hoe by myself if she acts up.” She claimed.

“It’s not gon’ be none of that,” Grama scolded. “Everybody gon show up to that baby shower and act accordingly. If her mama acts a fool then that’s on her mama, but we gon behave ourselves like respectable adults.”

Uncle Jamal’s eyes shifted and we all laughed because it was evident that he wasn’t buying what she was selling. My grandma was known for being a hell raiser back uptown and having lethal hands. Now that she was older she liked preaching maturity and positivity, but her older self still lived inside of her. She wasn’t fooling anybody.

“JoJo?” Grams called out to me.

“Yea?”

“I’m cooking dinner on Friday. Bring that girl by to meet us. I agree with your Auntie on one thing, that babyshower shouldn’t be the first place we meet.”

“I’ll try to get her there.”

“Don’t try. Just do it. As a matter of fact, tell her it’s in her best interest not to upset her future babysitter.”

I let out a hearty laugh because Keiko wouldn’t be moved by that. That girl could be stubborn when she wanted to.

“I’ll try my best, Grams. That’s all I can promise.”

January 6, 2017

Keiko

“Mhmmmm,” I closed my eyes as I savored the taste of my chilli cheese fries from Rally’s.

“It’s good?” Lamont chuckled.

“So good!” I raved. “Thanks for bringing this.”

“Anything for you, best.”

I inwardly cringed at him referring to me as his best friend because I knew the nigga liked me on a deeper level. After taking the pregnancy test back in June I attempted to cut

him off because I couldn't foresee us going anywhere. Not only was I still in love with Johan but I was carrying his child. There was no way I could drag this poor boy into my life under false pretenses. However, he was *persistent*. I felt bad for him so I thoroughly explained why I couldn't deal with him. I thought he'd appreciate my honesty and cut his losses, but he just suggested that we be friends instead. I was skeptical of that at first but as time went by he really showed me that he was capable of being a true, platonic friend. It was still evident that this man was into me and settling for whatever he could get for now. Sometimes I'd feel bad for dealing with him in any capacity because I knew that he'd expect more eventually, but that wasn't on me. I told him what it was and he insisted on proceeding as friends. It wasn't like I was leading him on.

“You ready for the baby shower tomorrow?” He asked.

“Yup. Kinda nervous though.”

“Why?”

“Because I don't know who's all coming. I invited my whole family and Johan's whole family, but what if nobody shows up?”

“I doubt that would happen, best.” He laughed. “But even if nobody comes, I’ma be in that bitch.”

I laughed as if everything was cool but I was praying that inviting Lamont wouldn’t blow up in my face. It wasn’t like Johan would be asking me who every single guest was and my relationship to them. Lamont could easily slide under the radar and go unnoticed, and I was positive he would because he wasn’t the type of nigga who did the most. He was actually very lowkey. He was a former street nigga who now had a regular 9 to 5 job at Amazon, he wasn’t popular, and he was genuinely nice. He would’ve been a nice catch if I had never crossed paths with Johan.

“I just hope everything comes together perfectly.” I vented, although I was sure it would. Just earlier today I met up with the decorator at the venue so we could go over everything. My Lion King theme had come to life in ways I couldn’t have even imagined. I was so appreciative of my crab sisters and Kiyor for helping me plan everything.

“It will. You worrying yourself for nothing.”

“Yea, maybe I am...ugh,” I groaned as Johan’s name appeared on my phone screen. Trying to keep communication with him to a minimum was like a side job that I didn’t have

time for. Usually I liked when he'd blow my line up or beg me to spend time with him because it made me feel good to know that he still cared enough to try hard. Today I wasn't in the mood for his begging because I'd already told him I wasn't going to a family dinner at his grandma's house. I wasn't ashamed to admit to myself that meeting his people on this level scared me because I wasn't sure what they'd heard about me through his dad, Jamal, and Keem. They probably were assuming all types of bad things about me, and I gave them more room to speculate by distancing myself for my entire pregnancy. I'd been looking forward to official introductions happening at the babyshower because it wasn't an intimate setting. I could literally just speak and keep it moving. Dinner would force me to have long, drawn out conversations that I really didn't want to have.

“What Johan?!” I snapped after accepting his call. “I told you I'll see you at the damn baby shower tomorrow! Stop fucking calling me!”

“Oh Lord...child call down before you upset my great grand baby.”

My eyes went wide and my heart stopped. I'd answered the phone clicking out and this was his grandma. I

felt so embarrassed and stupid.

“Oh my gosh, please forgive me. I thought this was Joha-“

“I know baby, and I understand you not fucking with his narrowed behind right now and I respect that. Shit, to hell with him.”

“Grandma really?!” Johan’s voice roared from the background. I laughed under my breath.

“Boy hush!” She clamored. “Now back to what I was saying. You don’t gotta deal with him, but I would like to get to know you better since you’re pregnant with my grandson’s baby. Of course I’ll be at the baby shower tomorrow but I know you’ll be getting pulled every which way and we won’t have anytime to talk. I was hoping we could do that tonight if you aren’t doing anything.”

“Ummm, I-I-I,” I stuttered, finding it hard to bluntly tell this sweet old lady no. Now if it was Johan I would’ve shot him down in an instant. Knowing him he probably told his grandma to call because of that exact reason.

“You should go, best.” Lamont advised.

“Who the fuck is that?!” Johan roared, scaring the hell out of me.

“Boy shut the fuck up! You worried about the wrong thing!” Grams shouted. “So baby you coming?”

“Yea I’ll be there, send me the address and time please.” I said before rushing off the phone so I didn’t have to hear Johan fussing anymore.

“My b, I ain’t think ole boy was gon’ be able to hear me.” Lamont apologized.

I wasn’t even mad. Johan deserved to sweat a little, and it wasn’t like he was about to do my big pregnant self something. His jealousy was fine by me.

“This looks so good Grams,” I complimented while trying my hardest to avoid Johan’s strong gaze. I already knew he’d be mad about hearing a niggas voice while his grandma was on the phone with me, but actually dealing with his anger was a different story. Dealing with a pissed off Johan was not for the weak.

“Thank you, baby. Johan told me you like cornbread and cabbage, so I changed my menu last minute just for you.”

“Awww, you didn’t have to do that,” I gushed while clutching my chest.

“Well she did.” Johan growled.

“Nigga you alright?” His dad asked while looking at him crazy.

“Evidently not,” his Aunt Keemaya laughed. “Girl whatchu did his mean ass cause he’s in his feelings!”

“Ask him what he did to me,” I replied.

“Who the nigga you was with earlier?” He asked bluntly, making my face drop. Was he really going there in front of his family?

“Why were you letting your baby mama feed you ice cream and kiss on you? Answer that and then I’ll answer your question,” I countered. A series of “ouuuss!” and amused laughs followed my response. I was starting to think me and his family would get along just fine. Perhaps it was my own conscious eating me alive about my past with setting niggas up because no one seemed to even care about that.

“Alright, you want bring up old shit that I’ve apologized for a million times but you can’t explain why you chilling with a nigga while you pregnant with *my* baby.”

“Johan stop all that!” Grams chastised. “She can have friends.”

“Exactly,” I cosigned before poking my tongue out. That was my way of saying ‘ha-ha, your grandmas on my side!’ without verbally saying it.

“Yea, I’m sure that wasn’t bout nothing but what’s up with you letting Jasmine feed you ice cream and kiss you? You want her?” Keemaya interrogated. I looked at Johan and waited for his answer.

“She kissed me bruh. I don’t want that girl.”

“So there’s no explanation for you allowing her to feed you ice cream or for you kissing her back?” I inquired.

“That was stupid on my part. I’ve admitted that time and time again, but I told you I put her in her place right after that. Why don’t you believe me?” He questioned desperately. I was stunned that he was carrying on like this and pleading his case in the middle of a family diner at his grandma’s house. This nigga was wilding.

“Nigga at the dinner table?” Jamal questioned in bewilderment.

“I’m finna say...save that shit for later. We invited Keiko here so we can get to know her on a personal level.” Jordan said.

“Yup, and I like her already because she came through spilling tea,” Keemaya smiled. “Jamal didn’t I tell you I wasn’t feeling that Jasmine girl and that it was just *something* about her.”

“Keemaya you think it’s *something* about most people you come across,” Canary rolled her eyes while shifting baby Jordyn in her lap. She was 8 months and the prettiest thing ever. Just looking at her kind of made me wish I was having a girl, but I was satisfied with my boy and I’d had a lot of practice with them thanks to my brothers. I was prepared and ready to meet my baby.

“Yea, and I’m usually right.” Keemaya poked her lips out.

“*Anyways*, where do you live, Keiko?” Grams asked.

“I’m in BR until my lease is up in June.”

“Why are you in BR?” She questioned. “Johan told me you’re from here.”

“I am, but I attended and graduated from college in BR and I was offered jobs in BR, so that’s where I am for the time being. Right now I’m on maternity leave, so I’m going to be staying with my sister until I have the baby.”

“Well whenever you start work just call me and I’ll babysit,” she volunteered.

“You can call me too,” Canary chimed in.

“Girl you got your own baby. Let me have this one,” Grams argued, propelling everybody to crack up. “Keiko you gon share your baby with me right?”

“Of course,” I giggled. “But I was actually thinking about being a stay at home mom for a little while.”

“Did Johan put that in your head? Because I’m a tell you right now, don’t rely on no nigga to take care of you and your kid,” Keemaya apprised.

“Excuse me? Her and my baby will forever be good by me. I’m not no bitter nigga that use money as a form of control.” Johan defended himself. Although I wasn’t feeling him, I agreed. He always made sure I was straight whether we

were on good terms or not. However, my decision to stop working for a few months had nothing to do with Johan. It had everything to do with wanting to be with my baby and finally settling my lawsuit for 1.5 million dollars. It took seven long months, but it was worth the wait with the amount of money I got in the end. Johan was right when he told me to go after the hospital too, because that's where the real money was. By the time my lawyer got done digging up black women that my doctor had done wrong as witnesses, the hospital was offering me big money to protect their reputation. The doctor's reputation was non-existent because he'd been tragically killed shortly after the lawsuit was settled. Somebody had slit his throat, and I didn't have to think too hard about who that somebody was.

“Johan you got something you wanna say to me?”

Jamal questioned.

“No, but if the shoe fits...”Johan shrugged.

“You might as well go ahead and wear that muthafucker Jamal,” Keemaya jested. “But forreal Keiko, I meant what I said.”

“I know, and I hear you. I wouldn't depend on anybody in any way. Johan didn't put anything in my head. It's my

decision.”

“Oh so now you can’t depend on me? You really on one tonight.” Johan shook his head while laughing.

“I believe she said she wouldn’t depend on anybody. Like in general,” his dad explained.

“That’s definitely what I meant, but let him act like a child.” I shrugged. I wasn’t concerned with Johan and his attitude. He was just mad because he’d heard Lamont on that call and there wasn’t anything he could do to check me about it.

The rest of the dinner went by smoothly despite Johan being pissy towards me. Everybody else was cool and they really embraced me. If things stayed this way then my baby would be in great hands because my side of the family was very questionable.

“Alright now Keiko, don’t go back to being a stranger nah, ya hear?” Grams said as she walked me to the door and hugged me.

“I promise I won’t. Sorry it took me this long to come see y’all.”

“That’s not entirely your fault baby,” she replied before looking back at Johan who’d walked with us to the door.

“Alright, it’s my fault. I wanted to bring her to come meet y’all a while ago but shit kept on happening.”

That was true. I could vividly remember him begging me to come with him last Mardi Gras to be formally introduced to his family but I was too sick to go. After that shit really went downhill.

I said goodbye to grams one more time before I made my way to my car. Of course Johan was right behind me. He was so predictable at times.

“Johan, leave me alone.” I demanded as I tried to get in my car, but he held my door in place.

“What do you want?!” I snapped.

“Who you was with earlier?”

“My friend!”

“You fucking this friend while you pregnant with my baby?”

“No!” I squawked. “But if I was that wouldn’t be any of your business! I’m single!”

“Your single ass gon get a nigga popped!” He slammed his fist down on the hood of my car making me jump. “Keep playing with me!”

“You wasn’t worrying about what my single ass was doing when you was kissing your baby mama in the mouth!”

“I DONT GIVE A FUCK ABOUT THAT BITCH!”

“Hmmp, well it’s a shame you let a bitch you don’t even care about come between us.”

His anger dissolved and regret overcame him. “Keiko I’m sorry. When Joy came into my life I was eager to get to know her because I’d missed out on a lot. I wasn’t thinking shit through all the way. It was never my intention to hurt you. I was just tryna do right by my daughter, but I fucked up big time. Can you please forgive me?”

“Yea, I forgive you. Now can you move?”

“No, cause you don’t mean it.”

“Then let me get over the shit on my own time. You can’t force me to magically forgive you after you fucked up and took my friendship for granted. Now despite what you might think, I’m not dating or talking to anyone. Now can you

stop terrorizing me and let me go? I'm tired and tomorrow's going to be a long day."

"Go head Keiko, bruh." He moved out my way and allowed me to get in my car. When I was in he was still holding my door so I couldn't close it. He leaned down, pecked my cheek, and rubbed my belly. I automatically got butterflies. "I love you. You hear me?"

"Uh-huh, I hear you."

I knew he loved me. I just needed him to make better decisions when it came to me and maybe I'd reconsider some things.

Chapter 31

January 6, 2017

Johan

"You bouta pop," I said as I looked down at Keiko's belly emerging from her gold floor length gown. She looked

beautiful from head to toe. The long split in her dress revealed her leg and how thick she'd gotten. Her belly was big now but for the majority of her pregnancy she was all legs and ass. Don't even get me started on how long her hair had gotten and how her skin seemed to have a natural glow to it 24/7. Today she had on a face full of makeup that only made her look prettier than she was. The headpiece she wore was appropriate for the theme and made her look like an African queen. She was already blessed in the looks department, but my son had her looking like an angel.

“You look so pretty,” Joy said while staring up at her with admiration in her eyes.

“Thank you Joy, gimme a hug. I haven't seen you in a long time,” Keiko held her arms out and Joy ran into them. She hadn't even spent that much time with Keiko and she was drawn to her. I think kids were just good judges of character naturally.

“ I love your hair hanging like this girl,” Keiko said while touching her Shirley temple curls. The top was in a bun and the rest was hanging. Her mom had done it because she claimed she didn't want anybody else touching her hair. I

didn't care because it wasn't like I wanted to do it. "And I love your pretty gold dress! Who picked it out for you?"

"My G Baby got this for me. We match, KiKi!" She exclaimed as if she was just noticing it for the first time. They did match. We all actually matched and it wasn't by chance. Keiko showed me a sketch of the dress she was getting made in advance so I could coordinate with her. I showed it to Canary, also known as G Baby, so she could get Joy something and she found a Dior dress that matched Keiko's dress perfectly. I wore black Versace bands with gold lining and a classic Versace print button down with gold and black loafers. We looked like one little happy family.

"We sure do match." Keiko giggled.

"Except I don't have a pretty crown like you."

"Actually..." Keiko turned around and retrieved a box that was on the table behind her. She handed it to me so she could open it. A smaller version of her crown was in the box. She took it out and I watched Joy's face light up.

"Is that for me?!"

"Yes indeed, and your hair is perfect for it." She placed the crown on her head and it fit her head just right. "See, now

we're twins.”

“So you're a queen, I'm a princess, and my brother is going to be a prince?!” She quizzed.

“That's about right,” Keiko laughed.

“And what about me, baby girl? How you gon leave me out?”

“I guess you could be a king daddy but you don't have a crown like me and KiKi,” she shrugged.

“Well ain't that some shit...”I muttered, while Keiko laughed hysterically.

“Thankyou Joy, tell daddy let us have our moment.”

“Can I touch your belly so I can feel my brother?” Joy asked while staring at Keiko's big stomach. She looked infatuated with it.

“Of course.”

Joy reached out and touched her belly. After a few seconds she jumped back and squealed.

“Something moved!”

“He kicked,”Keiko giggled. “He only does that for people he really likes.”

Joy looked up at me in excitement. “Daddy, my brother likes me!”

Keiko and I shared a hearty laugh once again. We hadn’t been coexisting this well around each other in a well. Joy was definitely breaking the ice between us. It would probably be a good idea to always bring her around Keiko with me from now on.

“I think he might love you, Joy.” I said.

“Oh great! Y’all are all in here,” Holly said as she walked in the back room of the event hall.

“I wanna take a picture of you guys before y’all walk out. Huddle up!” She instructed while holding up her iPhone.

Keiko allowed me to pull her into my chest, and Joy stood in front of Keiko which allowed me to touch her shoulder. After taking a few pictures with all three of us, Keiko and Joy took some, and then me and Keiko took some. When we were done Holly let us out so we could enter our babyshower. She walked out first and told us the dj would announce us. This was much grander then the baby showers I’d grown up seeing, but Keiko’s boujee ass crab sisters helped her plan it while I financed it, so I wasn’t surprised. Based on what I’d seen so far they’d done a good job.

“INTRODUCING THE PARENTS AND BIG SISTER OF BABY J.MARTELLE!” The dj shouted over the microphone. We didn’t have a name picked out yet, all we knew was that we wanted his name to start with a J. I wanted him to be a junior because I always dreamed of passing my name down to my son, but Keiko was being difficult, claiming she wanted our son to have his own identity or some bullshit

“We’ve gotta hold on. I’ve gotta hold on. You’ve got a hold on. You’ve got a hold on, a hold onto meeee! Make it last forever. Come on baby won’t you hold on to me, hold on to me. You and I together. Come on baby won’t you hold on to me, hold on to me.” Beyoncé played as we entered the baby shower. Our families stood up cheering us on and I couldn’t help but feel the love in the room. Speaking of the room, it looked like real royalty up in here. The Lion King theme was a no brainer because my son was a king in the making.

“This is nice, KiKi,” I said in her ear as we walked through the room speaking to everybody.

“I knowwww, it’s so beautiful.” She teared up.

“Emotional ass,” I chuckled.

“Shutup,” she giggled while slapping my chest and clinging to me tighter. I was starting to see why she decided to

keep her distance. If she was around me too much she'd naturally show affection and forget why she was mad. She was doing it now.

For the first half of the baby shower we spoke to everybody and took a lot of pictures. Eventually I had to cut that shit short and sit Keiko down because I could tell she was exhausted and her due date was right around the corner. I told her that we should've had the babyshower earlier but she wanted to be hard headed.

"Let me take these shoes off," I said after handing her a plate of food I'd just fixed. I bent down to remove her YSL heels from her feet that were starting to swell. She was pushing it by wearing these motherfuckers.

"You know you should've never worn these shoes," I scolded.

"I shouldn't have, but the dress demanded that I wear them and who am I to disagree with the dress?" She said with a mouth full of red beans. She was looking like a goddess but eating like a 15 year old boy. My Keiko.

"The same way you disagree with me all the time."

"The dress is good to me."

“I’ve never been good to you?” I gazed into her eyes. She looked back for a few seconds before shying away.

“Johan get out my face.”

I laughed before standing up and sitting in the throne chair next to her.

“You can’t run forever.”

“JoJo!” Royalty skipped up. She was wearing a gold dress too with a small crown similar to Joy’s. It was obvious that Keiko had gotten her as well as her little brothers together for the day. Her mom wasn’t here but that wasn’t surprising.

“Wassup RoRo?” I picked her up and sat her on my knee.

“Nothing, I just wanted to sit by y’all.” She smiled.

“Daddy I wanna sit by you too!” Joy popped up out of nowhere.

“You better make room for her,” Keiko snickered.

In the midst of Joy climbing into my lap, my eyes caught something alarming on the opposite corner of the room. It was a familiar face sitting in a corner by himself. He had a polo sweater on with a brown skully cap. It was obvious he was trying to lay low and up until I peeped him he had been.

“Keiko you invited that nigga?” I asked her in a low, but authoritative tone.

“Who?”

She knew who the fuck I was talking about. I could tell by the look on her face. She was trying to buy time to think of a lie or an answer that would roll over well with me. Too bad there was no good explanation for inviting the opp to our son’s babyshower or anywhere around our families.

“The nigga who tryna lay low in the corner.”

She sighed heavily. “Baby that’s my friend Lamont. He’s harmless, trust me.”

I laughed I’m disbelief. Now I was her baby? This girl was crazy.

“That ain’t yo friend and his name ain’t no fucking Lamont.” I said in a hushed tone. “That’s Bron’s brother Bryant. His flock ass used to work for me too but he dropped off the face of the earth when his brother started snitching.”

Bryant may have cut his dreadlocks off and cut his beard shorter so he looked more clean cut, but I never forgot a face. Especially a face that I wanted dead.

“B-but he works at Amazon.” She stuttered.

“I’m sure he does now, but you led him straight to me. Congrats.”

“Oh God...” She looked sick to her stomach. Probably because she knew she was partly responsible for that man’s brother getting popped. I on the other hand wasn’t worried because if he knew what she’d done she would’ve been dead by now. He had definitely gotten close to her to get to me, but on my mama that shit was going to backfire on him before the night was over. He probably thought I’d be off my p’s and q’s because of the environment, but he had me twisted. I could be at a ballet recital and I’d still watch my surroundings.

“I’mma handle this.” I promised. “Don’t you start worrying and upset my son.”

“Johan nooo, not here.” She begged.

“Keiko, I said Ima handle it and that’s all you need to know. Your friend not leaving this bitch untouched and I put that on my mama.” I vowed while pulling out my phone. I had bukoo hitters here that could watch his every move while I went on like I suspected nothing.

Me: Inform everybody to keep their eyes on ole boy with the polo sweater on that’s way back in the corner. When he tries to leave, come get me.

Benji: You got it.

Keiko

After Johan dropped that bomb on me all I could do was think about how I'd put us in danger. I thought there was no harm in having a little friend to occupy some of my free time, but that shit could've ended *bad* for me and people that I loved. This nigga actually knew where I stayed at this entire time. There was a strong possibility he was plotting on Johan. I thanked God that I'd been keeping him at a distance for my entire pregnancy. If Johan was around me 24/7 I would've made it easy for Lamont...I meant Bryant to get to him.

“That is so pretty!” Wendy raved as I pulled a Dior diaper bag from a large gift bag. I could barely focus on all the great gifts I was getting because my stomach was in knots. I'd brought unnecessary drama into my life with a nigga I didn't even care for like that. I felt so stupid.

“My baby boy got that!” Jenesha stood up while recording me on her phone. “Both of my sons wished they could’ve been here today but they had to work.”

She definitely wanted to flex a little and I didn’t blame her. Jigga had been drafted to the Pittsburgh Steelers last year and Julian had been drafted to the Miami Heat. Shit I’d be bragging to if that were my children.

“Thank you for the gifts Julian and Jigga!” I smiled at her camera while waving.

“Y’all better be at our next babyshower!” Johan said.

I looked at him sideways, making the room explode with laughter.

“I guess my cousin ain’t thinking bout no more kids after this one,” my cousin Angel giggled. It was weird that most of my mom’s side of the family was present down to her own sister and she wasn’t. I’d caved last minute and invited her but her response made me disinvite her. She actually told me “you inviting me to a baby shower but have yet to offer me some of your lawsuit money when you know I’m raising four kids by myself.”

I was actually going to offer her some money for the kids. I was just thinking of a safe amount. The fact that she felt entitled to my money made me not want to give her shit. I loved doing things for my siblings, but I wasn't obligated. That was her problem now, she thought me and Kiyor were her baby daddy ever since Red got sent away. She could stay her ungrateful ass at home for all I cared. Yea, it kind of sucked that me and mom didn't have a relationship at such a crucial time in my life but I wasn't crying over it. It was for the best.

“Oh my goshhhh,” I gasped when I pulled the cutest little Gucci jogging suits. I looked at the name on the bag right away. “Thank you Auntie Keemaya!”

“You're welcome baby. My nephew gotta stay fresh.”

“Cousin you got good in laws!” Angel's mom, Kimmy said, propelling everybody to laugh. I couldn't agree more. They seemed more excited than me and Johan combined. His dad had brought our baby an entire bedroom set that included a changing table and a rocking chair. I cried tears of joy. We could afford our own everything, but the fact that they went out of their way to do it all for us made me feel good.

“Alright this the last one we’re going to open before we play the last few games,” Wendy announced while handing me a big blue bag. Before I could dig in, there was an interruption.

“OH SO THIS IS WHAT A MILLION DOLLAR BABYSHOWER LOOKS LIKE!!!”

My mouth hit the floor as my mom waltzed into my baby shower looking like a high end street worker. She wore a Burberry mini dress with red bottoms and a Chanel bag. I found it funny that a woman who stayed draped in designer clothes was begging for some money like she was about to be homeless.

I didn’t even have the energy to deal with her. I just dropped my head in embarrassment. Putting my hands on my mom had never crossed my mind, and now that it was I couldn’t even go there because I was big pregnant. I’d be winded after the first swing and lose.

“Kendra either sit down and enjoy the shower, or leave.” Johan ordered.

“No, she needs to leave.” I said. “She’s not invited.”

“You heard her Kendra, you gotta go.”

“I GOTTA GO?! Bitch you think you the shit because you came into some lil money and your baby daddy is talking to you again? Any nigga gon go where the money at! If it wasn’t for that he’d still be playing house with that bitch and that lil girl he was hiding from you!”

“BITCH YOU GOT ME FUCKED UP!” Johan stood up and shouted into her face while clenching his fists. Johan had never lost his cool with her, but I guess she’d finally gone too far. I was just hoping *he* didn’t go too far. She was dead ass wrong but I wasn’t going for him putting his hands on her especially in front of my siblings

“Move Johan,” Canary pushed him out the way and decked my mama right in the face. My mom’s sister tried to run up and defend her, but Kiyor held her back. From there, Canary and my mom had a fair one. My mom was trying to hang, but she was getting that ass tapped. For a moment I felt vindicated because Canary was doing what I didn’t have the balls to do, but then sympathy took over. I didn’t feel bad for my mom, I felt bad for my younger siblings who were screaming and crying.

“Johan break it up!” I screamed.

He picked my mom up off the floor and put her in a bear hug before moving towards the door.

“FUCK ALL Y’ALL THAT’S SUPPOSED TO BE MY FAMILY! Y’ALL LET A RANDOM BITCH PUT HER HANDS ON ME!” My mom screamed. “Y’ALL DIRTY BITCHES WILL NEVER SEE ME OR MY KIDS AGAIN! I SWEAR!”

“Mama just leaveeee! You’re embarrassing yourself and ruining Keiko’s babyshower,” Kiyor pleaded.

“Fuck Keiko and this babyshower!”

“Alright, well then leave,” Johan made it to the door, opened it, and put her outside. There was security outside that Johan had hired, so they handled it from there.

“I’m sorry baby, but she was talking too much,” Canary said to me.

“It’s fine,” I breathed. My day had started off so great and it was getting worse and worse. I honestly just wanted this baby shower to be over because peace was nowhere in sight.

Johan

“Y’all can put all this stuff in my car and bring it to my sister’s house,” Keiko said as different male relatives carried the gifts to my truck.

“Y’all do exactly what y’all doing and pay her no mind.” I declared before looking at her. “Your car can’t even hold all this shit and it makes more sense for my son’s stuff to go to my house.”

I gave up my house on the Westbank after Taran set me up but I moved into my mom’s house in July. I just went ahead and bought it after the lease was up instead of letting it go. I realized it didn’t make any sense to hold on to most of the items in the house to remind me of my mom when I could just keep the house as a whole. I’d made a lot of renovations and additions since I’d be there to make it more to my liking. I didn’t know if I’d stay there forever, but I was going to always keep it. That was now my official New Orleans home. All I needed to do was add a pool and it was lit. Bringing my son back there from the hospital was my ultimate goal because I wasn’t feeling the idea of him going to BR for his first few

months in this world. I had to step in and start delegating the situation or else Keiko was going to do whatever she wanted.

“He’s my son too!”

“Alright, and his stuff will be at my house so you might as well get in your car and make your way over there so you can go through all his gifts.”

“Ughhh, you want to control everything,” she complained.

“Me?!” I asked in perplexity. “I been letting you control this entire pregnancy but you not ‘bout to have my son cramped up somewhere when I have more than enough room for both of y’all. I’ve given you space. That shit is over now.”

“Excuse me? Says who?!”

“Me. You not running shit, Keiko. Don’t even get me started on the company you was keeping.”

She rolled her eyes. “How was I supposed to know that? And I think he left. What if h-“

I cut her off. “Didnt I tell you I got it?”

She nodded.

I stepped closer to her. “My word don’t hold weight for you any more?”

She looked away, so I moved her face back to me so she could look me in the eye. I pecked her lips. “It’s already handled.”

“Ok, so get in the car with me and let’s go.” She challenged.

“I’ll catch up with you. Go straight to the house.”

“Johan!”

“Go to the house, and if it’s no problem can you take Joy with you?”

“Of course I can take her with me.”

“Alright, I’ll have somebody follow y’all to make sure y’all good. I’ll be right after you.”

I watched Keiko say goodbye to everybody before getting in her car with Joy and leaving. Her crab sisters and Kiyor were right behind her. They were going to my house too, and I didn’t mind. They were cool in my book.

I stood by my truck and watched everybody load as many gifts as they could into it. Anything that couldn’t fit went into Keem’s truck.

“Y’all talked all that shit about how I needed to behave myself just for Canary to be the one to show her ass. I think we all learned a valuable lesson here today.” Auntie Keemaya said. Her car was parked right by mine.

“And what’s that ma?” Jamaya snickered.

“Bitches be stunting down. Canary used to stay beating bitches up back in the day. I knew she would be the first one to step.”

“Girl, I don’t be stunting. I’ve come a long way from that rowdy girl I used to be. She just made me so mad with how she barged in talking to them children, and I didn’t want nothing between her and Johan to pop off so I got involved.”

“And I appreciate it, ma. But now I think Keiko lil brothers and sister don’t like you,” I snickered.

She smacked her teeth. “Kids are fickle. Bring them by the house and they’ll love me after I feed them and let them run amuck. They mammy had to get touched today though. As long as Keik’s cool then I’m good.”

“Keiko’s cool,” I chuckled. “Her mama has been asking for that since 2015 but she never gave it to her.”

“Which means she’s respectful,” Auntie Jenesha nodded. “I like her for you.”

“I like her for me too.”

“Then you better stop playing,” Canary advised.

My phone vibrated notifying me that I had a text message.

Benji: Parked behind the building next door. Come on.

“I’m finna go do one more final sweep of the building to make sure we ain’t leaving shit behind.” I announced before swaggering off. I walked into the venue and walked straight to the back and out the back door. I traveled through the alley over to the next building that was abandoned. I saw Benji standing by the car with two of his friends and goons, Brandon and Gerald.

“Pop the trunk,” I demanded while removing my gun from my waistband. Gerald opened the trunk and Bryant was right inside. He wasn’t even tied up, just beaten up really badly. When he saw me he tried to jump up but I punched his ass right back down. His eyes rolled to the back of his head as blood rushed out his nose.

“Damn I think that nigga dead,” Benji laughed. “Johan, we found Bryant here trying to leave, and he was about to take a picture of your license plate.”

“Nigga you that weak that you had to use my bitch to get to me? You could’ve just got at me on some real shit, but pussy must run through your bloodline. Now you bouta go out sad just like your brother.” I pulled the trigger.

Chapter 32

January 9, 2017

Keiko

I was sitting with my feet up and pouting while Wendy, Holly, and Kiyor organized my baby’s nursery at Johan’s house. It was never my plan to stay with him after I had the baby but after he broke it down to me it made sense. My room in my apartment wasn’t big enough for all of his stuff and I’d

have more help in New Orleans. I wasn't giving up my apartment just yet though.

“What’s your problem girl? You mad that your baby daddy wants you to live in this big ass house?” Kiyor questioned as if I was the dumbest broad on the planet.

“No, because I agreed to be here, hoe. I’m mad because my stomach hurts,” I whined.

“What are you feeling?” Holly asked.

“Feels like period cramps.”

“Contractions.” Holly stated. “You’re definitely going into labor before the 15th, sis.”

“I think so too,” Wendy smiled before clapping. “I can’t wait! Have you finally decided what you’re naming him?”

I smirked. “I’m a go ahead and make him a Junior. I honestly always was.”

“Hoe you evil,” Kiyor snickered. “You just wanted to make Johan mad.”

“Guilty,” I held my hands up with a big smile. “His ass needed some time to think about how he had me fucked up.”

“And now?” Wendy quizzed.

“What you mean? That’s my baby daddy and we in this for life.”

“Girl you know what she means. Where does y’all relationship stand?” Holly reiterated.

“That’s my baby daddy and we in this for life.” I repeated, making Kiyor laugh.

“Girl you know you love that nigga. Stop capping,” Kiyor said.

“Who said I didn’t love him? I’m just moving forward with caution this time around. That’s all.”

“There’s no harm in that,” Holly shrugged. “But something tells me he knew you’d end up here, sis.”

“What tells you that?” I raised an eyebrow.

“These walls are painted blue with Lions and other animals on them. Clearly he was getting this room ready for his baby.”

“Ok so maybe he wanted to have a room for our son at his house. That don’t got shit to do with me.”

“Girl you know that man wasn’t letting you be in another city with his new born baby,” Holly rolled her eyes. “You play too much. But guess what?”

“I don’t wanna guess, just tell me.”

“Your mama called me and she basically said we can’t see her kids no more.”

“That’s original,” I muttered. That seemed to be my mom’s go to when she got mad at us and I was over it. I wasn’t going to kiss her ass to see my siblings. At the end of the day all she wanted was someone to bow down to her so she aimed for our weak spot. I was hip to the games she played and I was no longer participating in them. She’d need me before I needed her.

“You guy’s mother is like...weird,” Holly uttered. “No offense.”

“None taken,” Kiyor replied. “That’s actually nice compared to what other people say about her. Oh, she also said she hopes you blow through that money you got since you didn’t do the right thing by sharing it.”

“The right thing?” Wendy laughed. “I’m sorry, this isn’t funny but wow!”

“Girl fuck Kendra,” I spat. “She wants me to be down and out just like her, but I’m highly blessed and favored. Tell her that the next time you talk to her because her access to me has been revoked indefinitely.”

Johan

Keiko: Baby daddy?

Me: Wassup babymama? What you need?

Keiko: Wya?

Me: Waiting outside Joy’s school for her.

Keiko: You coming back home after that?

Back home. That sounded good. Keiko claimed that staying at my house would be a temporary thing but she was already calling it home. That was a good sign. Then again I never knew what to expect with Keiko. She definitely kept me on my toes.

Me: Yea after I bring her to her mom. Why? You miss me?

Keiko: Nigga you wish. I'm hungry.

Me: Lmao, of course you are. What you want?

Keiko: Don't play with me. The kid you put in me made me this way. But I want Canes, Oreos, bluebell vanilla ice cream, and hot Cheetos.

Me: man you gon be shitting.

Keiko: let me worry bout that.

Me: Lmao, alright I'll see you in a few.

“Daddyyyy!” Joy screamed as she hopped in my truck. She hugged me and kissed my cheek.

“How was school?”

“It was fun! Me and Royalty are going to audition for the school play! They're doing Peterpan.”

“That sounds fun. What parts do y'all want to be in the play?”

All of Keiko's siblings attended school with Joy, but I never got to see them when I dropped her off or picked her up

because they rode the bus.

“I want to be Tinkerbell but Royalty said she doesn’t care. Oh yea, look what I got!” She pulled a piece of paper from her backpack and held it up. It was a spelling test and she had an A +.

“You got em all right baby girl?”

“Yup!”

“I guess that means I gotta treat you to some Canes and get you a couple of toys from Walmart then.”

“Yayyy!” She threw her hands in the air and did a celebration dance. It never ceased to amaze me how she lived up to her name.

“Can I stay by your house tonight daddy?” Joy asked as we entered the checkout line at Walmart. She had a basket full of toys and it looked like Christmas came again for her. I was spoiling her rotten and I owned it. My daughter wasn’t going to grow up being impressed by the bare minimum, and the same was going to go for my son.

“I don’t know...we’ll have to ask your mom Joy.”

We had worked a schedule out and Joy was only mine full time on the weekends.

“How long is Keiko staying with you? I don’t wanna miss her.”

“She’s going to be staying with me for a while? Her and your brother.”

“Awwww, what about me?” She muttered while pouting.

“Baby girl that’s your house too and you can come over anytime.”

“But I wanna stay with y’all too.”

“Ask your mama how she would feel about that.”

I knew Jasmine would never go for that shit and her feelings would probably be hurt. Shit mine would definitely be if my child told me they preferred living with the other parent over me. Still, it made me feel good to know that my daughter wanted to stay with me 24/7. I was obviously her favorite right now and I was gassed about it.

“Joy? Is that you baby girl?” A voice asked from behind as I finished loading the car with our bags.

“Hey...” she spoke quietly. That was unlike her.

Joy clung to me tighter like she was scared. I put her in the car and gave ole boy my undivided attention. I was fully prepared to whoop his ass if it came down to that.

“Hey, I didn’t come over here for all that,” he said while gesturing to my fighting stance.

“Nigga who the fuck is you and why are you speaking to my daughter?”

“So you’re Joy’s biological father? I can see that.”

My guard started coming down as I noticed the hurt in this man’s eyes. Then I recognized his face from somewhere else. I’d seen him on my tv before!

“Aye, don’t you play for the Saints?”

“Yea, I’m Jaron Washington.”

That’s when it all made sense.

“You the nigga that was playing step daddy to Joy right?”

“Step daddy?” He chuckled. “Nah, I was told that she was mine. I’d been dealing with Jasmine since 2009. When she came up pregnant I had no reason to believe it wasn’t mine because we had unprotected sex plenty of times. She wasn’t my girl or anything, but when I found out she was pregnant I figured I’d do the right thing and make it official. From day one my mama told me to get a DNA test but I wasn’t trying to hear that shit. It wasn’t until I got somebody else pregnant that she admitted Joy wasn’t mine out of spite. I blacked out that day and whooped her ass in front of Joy. That’s why she reacted to me that way when I spoke to her.”

“Damn...”

That was all I could say. Jasmine had straight up lied to my face about this man. It was obvious that she had been indulging in unprotected sex with us both and she didn’t know who the fuck her baby daddy was. She obviously went with the safest choice. Jaron had a consistent and legit income, while I was a wild street nigga at the time. In her mind it probably made more sense to settle down with him and there was a possibility that he was the father. But when that baby came out her pussy she had to know that she was all me. That was the chance for her to do the right thing, and she still

didn't. The last bit of respect I had for Jasmine finally disappeared.

“Yea, it's just a fucked up situation because I really love Joy and I still can't believe she's not mine.”

“Yea, that's gotta be rough but you'll bounce back nigga. Thanks for holding it down for her first five years, but I got it from here.” I dapped him off, and dismissed myself to my truck.

When I made it to Jasmine's apartment complex, she came out to greet us like always. She would usually be wearing a smile, but today she looked upset with the world. I didn't give a fuck about what was bothering her. If anybody should've been mad it should've been me. I was the one that had been gypped out of my child's life because she was a dirty, money hungry hoe, yet I was big chilling. There was no need for me to go off or have her handled because the truth came straight to me. God wanted me to know exactly who she was as a person and now I did. Going forward I knew exactly how to handle her.

“My baby wants to stay with me tonight.” I said.

“Is that girl there?” She questioned.

I had to do a double take. Since when did she think she could question me on who was at my house?

“I’m not answering that question until you put a name on it. As a matter of fact,” I looked back at Joy. “Go inside and pack a bag baby girl.”

“Excuse me?” She scoffed as Joy hopped out of the car and ran inside. “Maybe I’ve been being too nice because you got me fucked up! What I say goes and I don’t want my daughter around your bitch! She posted slideshows and shit on Instagram from her baby shower with my daughter in it like she’s hers or something. They were even dressed alike on some mommy and me shit! I’m cool about a lot of things, but I’m not sharing my child!”

“MAN SHUT YO THOT ASS UP!” I exploded. “Bitch Keiko is having Joy’s brother! If you think you about to dictate her relationship with Joy then you smoking dicks! You should be happy that Keiko loves our daughter and treats her well. You tripping over some pictures and sharing our daughter when you had her thinking that the next nigga was her daddy for years! Not to mention you lied about why you didn’t tell

me! You thought you was about to live over there with Jaron for the rest of your life with no problems huh?”

It was like her life flashed before her eyes.

“Yea, you thought you was gon get away with that bullshit you told me right? Well let me tell you something, there ain’t too much I don’t find out about. So your best bet is to move out the way and let me and my daughter be. Me or Keiko are not your enemy. We just wanna be there for Joy, and she wants to be there with us. She even asked could she stay with us. Now I would never take her away from you, but don’t test me Jas.”

She stood there speechless as Joy ran back out the apartment with a backpack.

“I’m ready daddy!” She sang, before stopping in front of her mom. “Mommy you didn’t give me a hug or a kiss.”

“I-I’m sorry baby,” she leaned down to embrace her.

Joy kissed her cheek “See you tomorrow mommy. Love you.”

“Love you too. Have fun and behave yourself.”

“I will! Bye!” She waved.

“Daddy?” Joy uttered a few minutes after I drove away.

“Wassup baby girl?”

“I don’t really want to leave my mommy...I just don’t want you and Keiko to forget about me once my baby brother gets here.”

“Joy that would never happen. You know the best part about love?”

“What?”

“There’s always enough to go around. I’m going to love you and your brother equally no matter who lives where. You hear me?”

“Yes daddy, but you can’t do anything fun until I come over. Okay?”

“I got you,” I chuckled. Kids were forever worried about missing out on something, so I wasn’t tripping about that. As long as she knew that I’d show no difference between her and her brother then that was all that mattered.

Keiko

“Your love’s like a back rub when I back up and you catch what I throw down. Your love’s what I breathe from, I would go numb if you left me here right now. Our love gets stronger when we break up. We’ll be right back in no time. And our love’s made of concrete when you rock me I just feel so safe and a million, million, million, people tell me not to trust in you. But there’s a million, million, million, million reasons why I fuck with you, in love with you, I run with you, oh yeah. I fuck with you, in love with you, I run with you, oh yeah. Your love’s like my drug, I can’t live without it. That’s just what you do to me boy. For your love I’d proudly climb a mountain. That’s just what you do to me boy. You are, yeah, yeah, you are. One in a million, one in a million, one in a million to me.”

I sang the Tink song while I folded the rest of my baby’s clothes in his nursery. My help left an hour ago so now I was by myself. In my own company I was realizing that this was the best environment to bring the baby back to. I’d never

admit it out loud this was the environment I preferred being in as well.

“You up in here singing like you in love,” Johan poked his head in the door, making me jump. A contraction hit me at the same damn time too, making me wince in pain.

“You alright?!” He asked on full alert.

“I’m just having some contractions,” I laughed. “That’s normal with how close I am to my due date.”

“You sure? You don’t wanna go to the hospital?”

“I’ll go to the hospital when my water breaks. I’m good Johan,” I giggled.

“I’ll take your word for now. Here’s your food.” He walked in with a Canes bag. After giving me my food, he sat on the small couch we had in the nursery with me.

“You look exhausted.” I pointed out while digging into my bag and grabbing some fries.

“I am. I ran into Joy’s fake daddy at Walmart.”

“You lying!” I exclaimed in astonishment.

“Yup but the full story gon blow your mind...”

By the time he got done telling me what happened my mind was indeed blown. Now I naturally assumed that Jasmine wasn't wrapped too tight from the jump but I didn't know she was this scandalous. She was lucky I liked her daughter as much as I did because I lowkey wanted to whoop her ass on Johan's behalf.

"That bitch is tore up forreal. Now I really don't like her." I said.

"That makes two of us. The only reason she's being spared is because of my daughter. I just feel stupid for not taking you serious when you first raised concerns about her."

"Hmmp, as you should!"

It may have been immature to throw this shit in his face but he deserved it. I still hadn't forgotten how he jumped to defend that bitch. Now he had egg on his face and I would gladly hold up the mirror so he could see it.

"I just really believed in all that shit she was kicking about wanting us to be cool for Joy. Now I know she was tryna friendly bob her way back onto my dick."

"Which would explain why she was being nice-nasty with me, but you swore I was just starting drama."

He signed deeply. “ I was so focused on everything running smoothly concerning Joy that I was disregarding everything else. My judgement was clouded by the guilt I felt for missing out on my daughter’s life. My head clear as fuck now, KiKi.”

“I would hope so. If you was still defending that bitch then I would think you really want her or something.”

“Man go head...”

“Ain’t no go head. You was the one letting her feed you ice cream and shit. You never really explained what was up with that.”

“Ain’t nothing to explain when it comes to that. I admit I was playing with fire and I kissed her back, but I shut her down right after that shit. I even stopped letting her come whenever I’d pick Joy up.”

“Of course you did. I cut your ass off right after that.”

He smacked his teeth. “Yea, but I already made my mind up about that shit before you called me. I realized that I was giving Jasmine the wrong idea and that’s why she felt comfortable enough to kiss me. I was just being too nice.”

“Definitely...and since we’re being honest right now can I admit something to you? Promise not to get mad.”

“Alright, I won’t get mad.”

“I was so hurt when you first told me about Joy. Maybe even a little jealous. I knew I couldn’t be mad because it was way before my time but finding out you already had a child after I miscarried was a huge blow.” I expressed.

“Damn...why didn’t you tell me that shit? I think that would’ve made me proceed with more caution.”

“I just didn’t want to be selfish. You just lost your mama and found out you were a father back to back. I didn’t need to drop my dramatics on you.”

He grabbed my hand and peered into my eyes. “Telling me how you feel is not dramatic Keiko. You only do yourself a disservice when you hold shit in like that. I told you that shit right away because I knew how it could potentially hurt you and I wanted you to get it straight from me first. I actually expected you to feel some type of way because of the miscarriage, but when you didn’t bring it up I just assumed that wasn’t an issue. We just gotta always keep it a stack with each other no matter how we think it may look or what the

reaction is going to be. Honesty can help us avoid a lot of bullshit don't you think?"

"Absolutely," I sighed. "I guess we'll have to keep that in mind for the future."

"Ain't no guess. That's what we're going to do. We don't need a repeat of anything we've been through thus far." He stated.

"Whew, who you telling? Because Lord knows I don't want a repeat of being blamed for setting you up."

"Awww man," he held his head. "I thought we got past that."

"We did but I'ma still remind you every now and then so you can remember how you were tripping."

"That was a crazy time, bruh. And you know I had trust issues badly."

"Oh so you over that now?"

"Fuck no," he laughed. "I'm still paranoid as fuck, but not with you. I'm surprised you not paranoid and shit."

"Why would I be?"

He just stared at me before laughing.

“It’s crazy how nothing happened to you while you were setting niggas up because you don’t have the mentality for that shit at all.”

“Johan I’m not a street nigga like you. I did what I did for some quick money.”

“And that shit could’ve been the death of you. Shit just recently you was hanging tough with a nigga’s brother that you helped set up. You lucky that nigga had no idea that you were involved because if he did you and my baby would’ve been gone and I would’ve lost my mind.”

I swallowed a lump in my throat. The fact that he had to break it down to me proved that he was correct. I wasn’t built for the shit I’d gotten myself involved in. Going forward I definitely needed to be more cautious about who I allowed into my space because I’d done some unspeakable things and people were always out for revenge. Johan having trust issues or being paranoid was a product of the life he led, and I needed to adopt some of his ways ASAP.

“You’re right...but I guess it’s a good thing I was acting bad with you for most of my pregnancy.”

“And why is that?”

“Because if I was all up under you I could’ve led Lamo- I mean Bryant to you sooner.”

“Shit. I didn’t even think about that. You would’ve been leading him to me and important people in my life, like Joy.”

“Surely would’ve. I guess everything happened the way it did for a reason. And just so we’re clear, I adore Joy one hundred percent. I don’t want you to still think I’m jealous or anything.”

“I have eyes, Keiko. I can see for myself how you treat her and I know that it’s genuine. She asked to come back tonight so she wouldn’t miss you before you left. I told her you weren’t going anywhere for a while.” He chuckled.

“Awww, you should’ve still brought her back. She could’ve kept me company while I finished organizing the baby’s stuff.”

“She still can. She’s right downstairs right now eating.”

“Of course,” I giggled. “You don’t know the word no around her.”

“Aye, it is what it is.” He laughed. “Baby boy bouta get the same treatment. Speaking of baby boy, what are we

naming him? We need to discuss this forreal.”

“I told you we’ll name him once we see him. I’m sure something will come to us then.”

“Man you full of shit.”

I just laughed because I was. Our son’s name was already picked out, I just refused to tell him because I liked keeping him on his toes.

Johan

Night time had fallen and I was doing a sweep of the house to make sure everything was locked up. After making sure the lower level was good, I went upstairs to Joy’s room. Keiko had gotten her ready for bed, but I wasn’t expecting to see Keiko snoring in the full sized bed next to Joy. There was a little golden book in the middle of them so if I had to guess I’d say they both fell asleep reading that.

I kissed Joy goodnight, before swooping Keiko up in bridal style and carrying her to my bedroom. I was taking advantage of her being knocked out because she’d been

sleeping in the guest room for the past few days that she'd been here. When I laid her down in the bed she shuffled around before opening her eyes.

“You think you slick,” she muttered before closing her eyes.

“What you talking bout girl?”

“Nigga shut up and lay next to me.”

“I ain't doing shit if you don't ask nicer.”

I really just wanted to hear her admit that she wanted to sleep next to me and that she wanted things to go back to normal. I wanted to hear her say that she wanted to be with me again. I needed to hear all that shit because I knew she felt it in her heart.

“I feel like cuddling. So come on and rub my belly because it hurts.”

“I still say we need to go to the hospital,” I said as I got in bed with her and spooned her.

“And I still say that you need to calm down. I'm okay,” she replied as I started rubbing her belly. I felt three kicks back to back.

“You want out, huh man?” I talked to her belly.

“I want his ass out too so I can have my body back.”

“What if he takes this with him?” I grabbed a handful of her ass cheek that was covered by a nightgown.

“I had a booty before this pregnancy and I’ll have one afterwards. Stop hating.”

“It was never this big though. Don’t lie to yourself.” I laughed.

“Whatever...” she giggled before yawning

“And why you not wearing panties?” I asked as I squeezed her booty and nuzzled my face into the crook of her neck. I could hear her breathing now, making it evident that she was getting turned on.

“I tried putting some on but it was so hard that I said fuck it...Johan what are you doing?”

“Whatchu mean?” I feigned ignorance as my fingers sloshed around the wetness of her pussy.

“Why are you fingers in my pussy?”

She was questioning me like there was a problem while opening her legs to grant me further access. My poor baby was so confused, but I was here to help her figure it out.

“Hmmm,” she moaned as my tongue slithered around her neck. She turned her head and caught my chin so she could pull me into a nasty kiss. We tongue kissed until it felt like my dick would explode.

“Your stomach still hurts baby?” I asked in between kisses as I freed my dick from my sweatpants and started jacking myself on.

“A little,” she whimpered. I was still applying pressure to her clit with one hand and by the way she was rocking her hips upwards she was definitely on the brink of cumming. “But you can still give me that dick.”

“Say less.”

I pulled her nightgown up over her ass, opened her legs further, and then pushed my dick in from the side.

“Oh God,” she gasped as I stroked her long and deeply. “I missed this dick so much.”

“You don’t gotta miss it. Just ask for it whenever you want some. It’s always yours.”

“Aw shit!” She cried out. Not only was I fucking the shit out of her but I was still playing with her pussy. “Ima cum daddy!”

“Wet this dick up then.”

When I said that I didn't think she would literally squirt all over me. That was a first, but it was such a turn on that I nutted in response.

“I can't believe you been keeping this pregnant pussy from me...”I muttered.

“Well it's yours until I go into labor. Make the best of it.”

I intended on doing just that.

January 10, 2017

Keiko

“Girl you have so much hair,”I said as I brushed the last section of Joy's hair into a ponytail. Three simple ponytails had me feeling like I'd just ran a marathon. At first I wanted a girl but now I was happy I was getting a boy because I didn't have time for combing hair everyday. Then again, my

genes combined with Johan's was most likely to result in our baby boy having a head full of hair too. I'd probably be combing hair regardless.

"You have a lot of hair too, KiKi." She responded. Her dad was going to get her ready for school this morning but she insisted that I get up and do her hair really pretty how I did mine. I wasn't feeling good, but just like Johan, I found it hard to tell Joy no. She was just so sweet.

"I know, and I don't like dealing with it," I giggled.
"Sometimes I think about cutting it off."

"You would still look pretty."

See, she was just such a sweetheart.

"And you look pretty," I gave her my hand held mirror so she could see the finished product of her hair.

"I love it! Thank you, KiKi!"

"You're welcome bab- Ou," I winced, while clutching my stomach. That contraction was by far the worse one I'd experienced thus far. I felt that shit all in my back, and it felt like I'd pissed on myself. I looked down and my heart dropped.

"Joy get your daddy."

“Okay. Do you want me to tell him anything?” She turned around and looked up at my face.

“Tell him your brother is ready to come out.”

“You doing so good, KiKi,” Johan held my hand while kissing my face. I’d been instructed to start pushing, so I was doing just that. The past few hours had been hell but once I got my epidural I was okay. Now I was more than ready to get this child of mine out of me.

“I see the head! Give me another push mama!” The doctor instructed.

I squeezed the life out of Johan’s hand and pushed. Shortly after I heard piercing cries that made my heart stop. That was my baby.

“KiKi he’s beautiful,” Johan gawked. His eyes were noticeably wet now and that alone made me emotional.

“One more push!”

I pushed with all my might and I watched the doctor pull my baby out. He had the lungs of life because his cries were so powerful. The doctor asked Johan if he wanted to cut the umbilical cord and of course he rushed over, and almost knocked a nurse over in the process.

Usually moms would be the first ones to hold the babies, but Johan just wasn't having it. Tears ran down his face as he looked at our baby.

“Man I really have a son,” he voiced.

“*We* have a son.” I corrected as if I was offended. Truly I loved seeing how infatuated he was with our little creation.

“Look at him KiKi. He looks just like us.”

My heart exploded with love when I laid eyes on his little face up close. His eyes were slanted like mine, proving that my Filipino genes were strong. The nose, the lips, and head shape were his daddy's. His skin was light but I could tell it was going to get darker and he had a head full of silky hair that was laid flat. He was perfect.

“Hey Johan Kairo Martelle Juniorrr,” I cooed, before kissing his cheek.

Johan's face lit up as his entire name rolled off my tongue. "Oh word?"

"It's only right." I smiled.

Johan finally gave Junior to me upon the doctors orders because I was supposed to be breastfeeding. The doctor warned me not to be discouraged if he didn't latch on to my nipple right away, but he did the exact opposite. He was already going against the grain, and I knew he was going to change me and Johan's lives for the better.

Chapter 33

February 13, 2017

Johan

"You think I can hold my baby now Johan?"

"I don't know. Can you?" I jested while looking down at him. He was wide awake and staring up at me. He offered

me a small smile before yawning. “Man this lil nigga look more and more like me everyday.”

“Lies.” Keiko uttered while rolling her eyes. “You know he looks just like me.”

“Delusion doesn’t look good on you baby. He’s all me,” I declared while giving Kairo a kiss. For whatever reason my middle name just stuck to him and everybody called him that over Johan or Junior. Going by our middle name just meant that my boy had no choice but to be victorious in life because that’s what the actual name meant.

“Please, my Asian blood is all over him. Just look at the eyes.”

“And that’s the only thing he got...is your eyes.” I threw back. Kairo had Keiko’s eye shape and eye color, but I didn’t care. I thought my green eyed trait would reign supreme but he was perfect just the way God made him.

“Sounds like you hating.”

I looked over at her and just took a second to admire her beauty. She’d given birth over a month ago and she looked flawless. She expressed to me how she had been feeling down because she wasn’t feeling like herself. I was right there to

assure her that she was prettier than ever in my eyes. Most of the weight she'd gained in the thighs, hips, and ass from carrying Kairo stuck around. Her stomach went back to the size it was before minus the abs she once had, and she was really upset about that. I assured her that it wasn't nothing the gym couldn't fix and even volunteered to go with her.

I knew she was tripping about her appearance because a lot had changed, but I loved the change. Kairo left her with a grown woman body and she'd grow to appreciate it eventually. Today she was scantily clad in mini brown biker shorts with a tan sports bra. Her hair was neatly brushed into a ponytail and her face was makeup free. She'd been walking around looking this good since she gave birth and that's exactly why I found it hard to obey the no sex for six week rule. She found it hard too which was why she gave up on trying to fight me off and just stocked up on plan b's.

We hadn't talked about being back together officially, we just fell back into that routine we once had with the addition of our son. I personally felt like there was no need to have a discussion about something that was self explanatory. We were living together, raising our new born son together, we slept in the same bed every night, we professed our love for

each other daily, and we were actively fucking. We were together and I dared her ass to say otherwise,

“Why are you staring at me, weirdo?” She stifled a smile.

“I can’t look at you?” I questioned with a grin. I didn’t take my eyes off of her.

“Oh my gosh,” she picked up a pillow from the sofa and hid her face with it. “You’re creeping me out.”

I reached over and yanked the pillow. “Stop acting goofy. I’m looking at you because I think you look pretty.”

She smacked her teeth. “Now I feel like you tryna be funny because I know I look a mess right now.”

“Your mama tripping, man.” I said to Kairo. He cracked a smile, making me and Keiko laugh.

“He looks just like you when he does that,” she giggled.

“Finally some honesty.”

We’d often go back and forth about who he looked like more but the truth was that we’d gone half on a baby. People would say he looked like either one of us depending on who was holding him.

“Johan I’m not bouta play with you. You know my baby looks like me too.” She giggled.

“If you think so, but Grams is gonna watch him tomorrow night. You cool with that?”

“Yes, but what’s the occasion?”

“Man you know tomorrow Valentines Day. Don’t play with me.”

“Oh, I didn’t think you’d want to spend it with me.”

“Why the hell would you think that?”

“I thought Valentines Day was reserved for girlfriends, and I’m just a baby mama.” Her shoulders went up and down.

“Keiko, I know you not serious right now.”

“Why wouldn’t I be? I mean you haven’t asked me to be in a relationship with you.”

“I thought my actions would be enough.”

“Your actions are worth like 80%, but verbalizing it is the other 20.”

“Well shit, I learn something new everyday. Keiko, would you like to be in a real, committed relationship with me?” I asked right away. If all she needed was for me to ask

then that was fine by me. Anything to make the shit real in her eyes. It was already real to me though.

“Yes, but under one condition.”

“What’s that?”

“You can’t let nothing or no one come between us again. If we fail then it better be because of us.”

I knew where she was getting at because the first time we crumbled it was because I let those niggas who were trying to rob me get in my head. The second time we got off track was because I allowed Jasmine to cause confusion. I would have to continue proving myself to her but I’d learned my lesson. Doing right by her wouldn’t be an issue moving forward because this is where I wanted to be. This was home.

“Sounds good to me, KiKi.”

February 26, 2017

Keiko

“My whole life has changed. Since you came in. I knew back then. You were that special one. I’m so in love. So deep in love. You make my life complete. You are so sweet. No one competes. Glad you came into my life. You blind me with your love. With you I have no sight.” I dipped to the bounce beat of the Ginuwine song as I styled my hair in a high bun in Kiyor’s bathroom mirror.

I couldn’t believe I was away from my baby tonight just to go to the Bacchus parade with Kiyor, and I couldn’t believe that Johan had agreed to watch Kairo by himself. He’d never done that before, and his load was twice as heavy tonight because Joy was spending Margi Gras break with us. When Johan first asked Jasmine could Joy stay with us for the entire break she was acting like she didn’t want her to at first. Johan brought to her attention that she’d be child free to party however she pleased and she was suddenly all in. She dropped Joy off straight from school on Friday afternoon.

Besides a few slick comments here and there, Jasmine was not a problem for me. She was actually more of a non-factor. If it wasn’t pertaining to Joy then she and I had nothing to talk about. If she stayed in her lane then I’d stay in mine.

“Bitch you almost ready? We need to be leaving soon if we plan on finding close parking.” Kiyor asked as she stepped into her bathroom. She was dressed cute and casually in a purple puma two piece that consisted of tights and a long sleeved crop top. Although the outfit was simple, her curvaceous body brought it to life. She had on a festive Mardi Gras headband, and fuzzy Mardi Gras leg warmers.

“I’ll be ready as soon as I lay my baby hairs. You look cute by the way, hoe.”

“So do you...the snapback is real,” she slapped my butt.

“Girl please. My ass is two cheeseburgers away from being fat.”

“Girl fat where? This is what you call real thick. Before you was the play version of thick,” she laughed. “And you can’t think you’re too fat with the lack of clothes you’re wearing. I see why your ass got dressed here. You know Johan wasn’t letting you leave the house like that.”

“I’m a grown ass woman. Johan don’t control me.”

I wasn’t just bumping my gums. Johan had never tried to dictate the things I wore or what I did. He was protective and a little jealous at times, but he wasn’t controlling. What I

was wearing tonight was no different then shit he'd seen me in before. I rocked black booty shorts with a black crop top that read "NOLA Girl. I also had on the same fuzzy Mardi Gras leg warmers as Kiyor with purple adidas. Of course this outfit would've looked drastically different on my old body. My ass was playing peek-a-boo from the shorts and I was giving a little camel toe action. I made a mental note to revamp my whole closet because I was positive I wasn't a size small anymore.

"Well let me take a picture of you and send it to him."

"Bitch move," I pushed her camera out the way and walked out the bathroom. She followed behind me laughing hysterically.

"That's what I thought, hoe! We taking your car right?"

"No, we can take yours."

I drove my brand new S-Class Benz over to her apartment. Johan had gotten it for me as a push present last month and it was safe to say that it was the best give I ever received. I loved my car and I was extremely protective over it already. I wasn't driving it to the parade where I'd have to park it in a place where someone might hit it, piss on it, or bust the windows out.

“Bitch I’m tryna stunt in the Benz.”

“We can stunt in the Benz another time. The Lexus will get us there, and I’ll even fill your gas tank up.”

“Shit, say no more. Let’s go.”

We stopped and got Daiquiris on our way uptown to the parade so by the time Kiyor was parking we were both a little tipsy. I was a little more lit than her because I wasn’t driving. I had also been sitting at home for months and this was my first time popping out in a long time without my man or my baby, so I really didn’t know how to act. One side of me missed my family at home, but the other side of me wanted to let my hair down and just enjoy my night with no worries. About an hour into the parade my other side was winning.

Kiyor had parked close to the bridge by Lee Circle but we walked all up and down the parade route having the time of our lives. We ran into people we knew, we made conversations with friendly strangers, and we danced to any music we heard. Kiyor had a buzz going, but I was beyond drunk.

We were feeling so good that we walked our asses all the way to Canal street and from there we ended up on

Bourbon club hopping. Once there was a crowd of people surrounding us in V-Live encouraging us to take shot after shot I had to question how the hell we were going to make it home. Kiyor had been holding it together but she lost it once we hit Bourbon street.

“Ayeeee! FUCK IT UP, SIS!” Kiyor slapped my ass repeatedly as I stood on the couch in a section I would’ve never paid for had I been sober. If somebody put a castle in front of my face while I was drunk I’d buy it.

It was just the two of us in the section so we had to look crazy to anybody watching us. We weren’t even dressed for the club nor did we think we’d end up here. The fact that it was spontaneous made it that much more fun.

“The niggas out the three! They fuck wit me! I an never have a foe, my hoes know how that go! Dipped through the 6, holla at jigga! Saint Bernard projects, got them dog ass niggas! T out the A, so I’m fucking wit dat! But my hoes say the 9, is where it’s at! 10 Ward niggas, I heard they bout them figures! 11, that 12 ward, 13 killas!” I rapped that part a little harder because my baby was from the 10th ward. “Fucking with that Fisha, you gonna get that issa 17 BTYP P Town Nigga! He my hitta, but that’s my hitta, that’s my hitta! Hold on! Put that dick

in my face, let me see how it taste! If it taste like water, I'm gonna suck it even harder! I'm gonna rock on that dick, Ima drop on that dick, Ima eat that dick, Ima with that dick, Ima creep with that dick, Ima sleep with that dick, Ima eat with that dick, while I'm all on that dick, just rocking on that dick!!!”

I bent over and started shaking my ass to the popular bounce song by Reedy. I heard an array of catcalls from behind me, but I just continued doing me. That was until I felt multiple hands on my ass. I jumped up like my ass was on fire.

“Bitch nobody told you to be in here cutting up like this,” Camilla snickered.

“Milla!” I squealed before jumping on her for a hug.

“Bitch we walked up in here and I was like who the fuck is that clacking they ass like that, and Milla was like I think that's Keiko,” Juri laughed as we hugged.

Most of Johan's people were in our section now. It was Camilla, Keem, Juri, Benji, Brandon, Gerald, their girls, Jamaya, and Bishop. Bishop was the goon that Johan liked keeping by his side whenever he was out and about in New Orleans. I never liked looking at him for too long because

everything about him screamed scary. At the same time he was extremely handsome.

“Hook me up with Mr. Dark,tall, and handsome, KiKi!” Kiyor attempted to whisper in my ear, but she really screamed that shit and everybody heard her. Including Mr.Dark, and handsome; Bishop. He just cracked a small smile and shook his head.

“Bitch I’m not the love connection, you better make your own move.” I responded, making Camilla and Juri laugh.

“Alright, how do I look?” She touched her hair that was all over her head.

“You look good, but hold up,” Jamaya reached into her bag and pulled out a wig brush. She brushed Kiyors hair a few times until it was neat. “There ya go, now you ready.”

“Y’all realize y’all getting her ready to go talk to this nigga and he’s witnessing this shit? Way to play it cool,” Camilla giggled hysterically.

“Fuck playing it cool, he gotta nice face that I want to sit on. I be right back,” Kiyor switched off. If I wasn’t so drunk I would’ve been mortified, but I just laughed instead.

“How y’all drunk asses got here?” Camilla asked.

“Uh, I think we drove in Kiyor’s car.”

“You think?” Keem butted in. “Say, my cousin know you out here like this?”

“For your information my man told me to go out and enjoy myself tonight.”

“Well you definitely took his advice,” Juri tittered. “Why he ain’t come out?”

“Because somebody had to watch them kids.”

“Bitch I know that’s right!” Camilla screamed before slapping palms with me. In the midst of us carrying on, Keem walked over to me and put his phone in my face.

“Look at ya girl, Jo. We found her in V-Live.”

“V-Live?! You said you was going to the parade! How the fuck you end up in V-Live? That shit not no where on the parade route!”

I had to ask myself if I was in trouble because he sure sounded upset. About what I didn’t know. Instead of responding I walked off from the phone because he wasn’t about to embarrass me further by talking to me like I was his child.

“Keem, Bishop there?!” I heard him ask from a distance.

“Yea, he here.”

“Tell him to make sure Keiko and her sister get home safe. Don’t let her drunk ass drive.”

How’d he know that I was drunk when I hadn’t even said a word to his ass?

“Bae you a snitch!” Camilla scolded.

“That’s called looking out, girl. Mind yo business.”

I looked down at my phone as it buzzed in my hand. I had a few text messages from Johan.

Johan: No more night outs for you since you don’t know how to act.

Johan: You just had to do the most, huh? Give you a inch and you take a mile. Never again.

Johan: & when Bishop brings you home you better walk up in here with something respectable on or that’s yo ass.

Call me crazy but those irate text messages just made my pussy tingle. I had a feeling he was going to fuck the shit

out of me tonight and I couldn't wait. I was tempted to tell Bishop I was ready to go right now, but the longer Johan waited, the worse I was going to get it. I wanted it in the worst way possible.

Johan

“AHHHHH! FUCK MEEEE!”

“Shut the fuck up, my kids sleeping. If you wake them up then I'ma stop fucking you. You want that?” I gritted as I hit her with thunderous strokes from the back. Her ass slapped against my abdomen and my balls was knocking against her pussy. This position was truly undefeated. I just needed her to stop screaming so loud like we didn't have a curious six year old down the hall and a month old baby who slept lightly in the next room.

“No! Don't stop fucking me! Don't stop! Please!!!”

“Bruh,” I threw my head back and laughed. The alcohol had her out her body and that's why she was screaming like a

maniac. Of course the dick was good but she knew how to control herself better than this. We'd been doing it ever since we brought Kairo home.

I laid her on her back and pulled her to the edge of the bed, before thrusting back into her. This time I covered my mouth with hers so she couldn't scream to the top of her lungs.

“Why you was cutting up tonight? You wanted me to fuck the shit out of you, didn't you?” I questioned before leaning down to slosh my tongue over her nipples.

“I was just having funnnn daddy! I swear I wasn't trying to make you mad!”

“Then why you wore them hoe ass shorts? You knew what the fuck you was doing. Admit it.” I was balls deep inside of her. Based on the way she was whimpering and creaming my dick up I knew I was knocking against her g-spot.

“Okayyy, I wanted you to fuck me goodddd! Aw shit, I'm cumming!”

Her body shook ferociously and I continued fucking her through it. When I felt myself about to cum she tried to jump off the bed but I held her down.

“Johannn, let me swallow it please,” she begged, turning me on even more.

“Nope, this nut belongs in this pussy.” I affirmed as I bursted a big one inside of her followed by an animalistic roar. I talked a lot of shit tonight but she could have a night out every month if it led to sex like this. Nothing was wrong with fighting and fucking on occasion.

Chapter 34

September 2, 2017

Keiko

“How old is daddy today making, KiKi?” Joy asked. She was holding her brother while I blew up balloons in our luxurious Villa in Maldives. Johan and I had been working all summer. He’d been cleaning up his dirty money and I’d been working on getting my event planning business off the ground. This vacation was long overdue, and it falling on Johan’s 29th

birthday just gave us a reason to celebrate. He wasn't trying to make a big deal about his birthday but this was his last year in his 20's. I had to do something a little special for him to make this memorable.

“He’s making 29, baby.”

“Is that old?”

I giggled. “Not really, but your daddy might think so.”

“Are you 29 too?”

“Nope, I’m 23.”

Growing up I was taught that it was disrespectful to ask an adult their age, but now that I was an adult myself I realized that shit was stupid. I didn't feel an ounce of disrespect from Joy's question. She was just an inquisitive child, and because of my siblings I was used to dealing with kids around her age. Being around Joy so much also made me realize just how much I missed my siblings.

They had their own cell phones so I was still able to call and check up on them on occasion, but my mom still had not budged when it came to letting me see them. One time when I was on the phone with Ryan I heard her in the background saying “tell your sister she can come and get y'all

if she gives me some of that money.” She was banking on me giving in to her but I wasn’t folding. If I did the disrespect would continue to fly. Besides, she was so oblivious that she didn’t even know that I still got to see them occasionally. Whenever Red’s mom would get them she’d call me and Kiyor to come over. They’d met their nephew already and everything. Kendra ass wasn’t stopping shit, and she definitely couldn’t come between our bond.

“KiKi when are you gonna have another baby?”

I did a double take. “Girl where that come from?”

“I want a little sister.”

“Have you asked your mom to give you one?”

“Yea. She said she not having no more babies.”

“I’m afraid I’m on the same page as your mama as of now.” I laughed before patting her head. She had some cute box braids in. I was relieved because that meant I didn’t have to comb her hair every day of the trip. Doing her brother’s hair everyday was enough work by itself.

“But don’t you want more kids?” She pouted. “Look how cute Kairo is. Don’t you want to make him in a girl version?”

At this point I was joked out because she was really negotiating with me on having another kid.

“Yea, I guess that would be kind of cool. But I like having just you and your brother around for now. Don’t you like having all the attention as the only girl, Joy?”

“Yea, but I can share the attention!”

“Girl you a mess,” I snickered. “Sit down on the sofa with Kairo. I’m about to go wake ya daddy up. Okay?”

“Yes Ma’am.” She slid on the couch with Kairo in her lap. He leaned on her chest, making himself comfortable and my heart swelled. He loved his big sister so much. Maybe giving them another sibling wasn’t such a bad idea. I liked the idea of them being close in age and growing up together, and it wasn’t like Kairo was a handful. He was actually easier than any infant I’d come across. He barely even cried. As much as his daddy held him I thought he’d be spoiled by now but he wasn’t. My baby was so chill and always happy.

“JoJooo,” I walked into the room thinking I was going to wake him up, but he was already wide awake and dressed in one of his vacation outfits that I’d picked out. It was green and yellow Versace drawstring shorts with a matching short sleeved sheer button down that he left open. With his perfect

abs no undershirt was needed. The multiple gold Cuban links around his neck made me want to lick his face off. I wasted no time running into his arms.

“Happy Birthday!”

“Thank you baby,” he cupped my face and kissed me deeply. “Ya man getting old.”

“My man is getting better with time.”

“Alright that’s a nice way to say I’m getting old,” he chuckled.

“Ok you might be getting up there, but you still have me to make you feel young.”

“Shittt, you getting up there too.”

I slapped his arm while he laughed hysterically. “Fuck you, whicha old ass.”

“Now see, just a few seconds ago I was aging like fine wine and getting better with time or some shit like that, and now I’m old? Bet. I don’t even care, ya know why?”

“Why?” I sniggered.

“Because we’re growing old together.”

I grabbed his face and pulled him into a kiss. “I love you.”

“I love you, too. Where my kids at?”

“*Our* kids are in the living room. C’mon.” I grabbed his hand, not being able to conceal my smile. I put a lot of effort into decorating, packing his gifts into my many luggage’s, and I had room service make him a cake along with a special breakfast. It was nothing major, but I was happy with the finished product. I was hoping he’d be happy with it too.

“Happy Birthday daddy!” Joy shouted as me and Johan entered the living room.

He looked genuinely surprised by the set up. I had black and white balloons everywhere from the ceiling to the floor, his cake was set up on the table, and his gifts were next to it.

“Thank you daddy baby.” He walked over to her and picked her and her brother up. He kissed them both before looking at me. “Now this is the way to bring in my 29th birthday.”

Later on that day we went on a yacht ride. Joy and I turned up while Johan held Kairo and answered bukoo birthday calls. Everyone that he knew from New Orleans to Miami was calling to wish him a happy birthday.

“Beautiful, I just want you to know. You’re my favorite girl. Oh, oh, oh, oh! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! See, I just want you to know that you are really special Oh why, oh why, oh why, oh why! I just want you To know that you are really special!”

I was pretty sure this was Joy’s first time hearing this song because *I* was around her age when this shit came out, but by the time the chorus rolled around for the third time she was singing it with me. We were both dancing with fruity drinks in our hands. I had a Daiquiri while she had nothing more but a mocktail, but I could tell she was feeling herself and I loved it.

“Get it girl!” I amped her up as she threw her arms in the air and danced around the boat. I started laughing my face off because she was dancing like somebody’s auntie with her glass in her hand.

“KiKi!” Johan called out to me authoritatively.

I stopped what I was doing and looked over at him beckoning me with his finger. I twisted to him and sat down.

“You ready to come dance with us?”

“In a minute. I got two things to show you.”

I looked at his phone screen as he played a video. It was my siblings telling him happy birthday. I hadn't gone out of my way to tell them it was Johan's birthday so I didn't know how they knew. I could tell that he really appreciated their little video. He especially got a kick out of Royalty saying she was coming on our next trip. Bringing them on vacation wasn't an issue for us, but my mom was stuck on her bullshit so they'd have to get around her. I damn sure wasn't begging to take her three kids somewhere nice.

“Alright, nah check this shit out. Watch your reaction though,” he warned with his eyes shifting to Joy. I automatically knew it was something concerning her mother, and I was right. She sent him some friendly ass text message that made me roll my eyes.

Joy's mother- Happy Birthday baby daddy! Wow, 29 already? You getting up there, lol. It feels like we were just meeting each other our Junior year at Cohen yesterday. You was mean as fuck and not much has changed today,lmao.

Anyways, I know I've done a lot of foul shit but I appreciate you for not holding it against me. You're an amazing father and not allowing you to be one from day one will forever be one of my biggest regrets. Love you always, and I hope you have an amazing day. Have Joy call me later and send me some pics of y'all.

She was still trying to befriend her way onto Johan's dick, but that shit was never going to work. She'd gotten close the first time but he wasn't even going to entertain her ass anymore. That's exactly why he showed me the message right away. He knew what it felt like to be iced out by me and he didn't want that anymore. Especially over a bitch he wasn't even feeling.

I held my hand out. "Gimme your phone."

He handed it over with no qualms.

"Joy come here!" I called her over after pulling up the camera.

She ran over and hopped in my lap.

"Smile everybody!" I held the phone up and captured a selfie of all of us. Even Kairo had offered a toothless smile,

and what a pretty smile my baby had. Johan had copied and pasted that feature onto him.

“Perfect. You can go finish dancing baby,” I said to Joy. After she ran off I went back to Johan and Jasmine’s messages.

“Man, you petty,” he chuckled while watching what I texted back.

“I’m actually handling this a lot more maturely than I want to.”

I sent the selfie we took back to Jasmine with a message that read “*We appreciate the birthday wishes.- Keiko.*”

A bitch like me would’ve felt played and not said anything back, but Jasmine wasn’t a bitch like me. She was a lot dumber.

Jasmine- Alright Keiko, I see you feel like being messy today but you don’t have to use my child to do it. I was just wishing my bd a happy birthday.

Me- You asked for a picture so I sent you one. Even said thanks for the birthday wishes on behalf of Johan. Not sure why you thought I was being messy or using an

innocent child to do so. Johan showed me the message btw, so keep that in mind anytime you text him. My eyes will see it because he wants my eyes to see it. Have a nice day Jas.

“Your baby mama is a mess,” I tossed him his phone back. Kairo started laughing and I pinched his cheeks.

“Her a mess, huh man?” I cooed, before leaning in to kiss his lips.

“Can daddy get some sugar too?”

“Daddy can always have some sugar.”

I gripped his cheeks, pushing his lips together, before pressing mine against them. Even with the minor drama, today was still going perfectly. Honestly Jasmine probably made the day better. The way Johan had handled that turned me on to no end. I was going to make it my mission to make him nut as many times as possible tonight.

Chapter 35

December 30, 2017

Johan

“What is this supposed to symbolize?” Keiko asked while pointing to keys on my vision board.

I couldn't believe she had me sitting down on the living room floor making vision boards for 2018 with her. This year had started off rocky for us but it was ending great. She claimed a good way to keep the greatness going into the New Year was to make vision boards. She said something about manifesting exactly what we wanted. After explaining that to me and sucking the skin off my dick I was fully convinced. Now she had me on the floor with big poster boards, different magazines, scissors, glue, markers, and tape. It felt like I was in 5th grade again minus the Hennessy we were sipping on.

“You talking bout the keys?” I asked to make sure she had pointed at that.

“Yea.”

“They symbolize the keys to the game. I think it’s about time I passed them on to somebody else.”

Her mouth fell. “Are you saying you’re going to go completely legit?”

“I’ve been feeling like I might as well. I’ve been investing my money left and right into shit to clean it up. I might as well start a business or something. That’s a problem with you?”

“You not putting your life on the line everyday anymore? Hell no that’s not a problem! Shit this the best news I then got all year.”

“Alright, calm down,” I chuckled. “This shit not going to happen overnight, so don’t expect me to be out immediately.”

“As long as you mean this shit and not josing then I’ll be patient. I’ll also be expecting results by 2019.”

“That’s a challenge?”

“Call it what you want.”

“Alright, I’mma show yo ass.”

“Please do.” She giggled.

“Man what the fuck you got on your shit so far?” I glanced over at her poster. “Why you got a picture of this skinny bitch on here?”

“Because I want that skinny bitches stomach.”

I kissed my teeth. “Ain’t nothing wrong with your stomach, KiKi.”

“To you!” She pointed at me. “I like that you love what you see in my appearance, but I’m not satisfied. I just want my abs back and I’ll be straight.”

“Then I guess we gotta stop playing and really get in the gym this year. We gotta watch what we eat too. What is this supposed to represent?” I pointed to a mini-collage of balloons and other party related items.

“It means I want to continue expanding my business. I want to get hired for bigger and better parties next year.”

My baby had officially started her event planning business “Luxe Events by Keiko” in late August. She jumped out the gate swinging by planning a birthday party for her former dance teammate’s daughter who was now married to a Pelicans basketball player. That event gave her a lot of exposure to the who’s who in New Orleans. She’d put together

four different events since she started, and she was currently planning an engagement party for a really popular saxophone player and his fiancé.

“Well you’re already on the right path for that to happen, baby.”

“I know, but I just want to make sure I stay consistent.”

“I’ll make sure you stay consistent.”

“Boy please, you’ll distract me.”

“Oh forreal? That’s how you gon do me?”

“Just being honest,” she giggled.

My phone started ringing from the floor.

“Who’s that?” Keiko asked as she glued something else on to her vision board.

“Unsaved number...”

She gave me a suspicious look. “Answer it.”

“For what? I don’t know who this is.”

“Sounds like more of a reason to answer it.”

Her head was in the gutter. She probably thought it was a bitch or something, but another woman would never be an issue between us. I’d put that shit on my mama’s grave.

“If you insist, KiKi.” I accepted the call and put it on speaker. The voice that came from the phone surprised us both.

“Johan? This is Kendra. I got your number out of Ryan’s phone. I tried calling Keiko but she got me blocked. I don’t understand how because I changed my number a few months ago.”

I looked at Keiko while laughing under my breath. She blocked that lady’s new number as soon as she found out from Kiyor that she got a new one. Keiko meant business when she said she was through with her mama until she got some sense. Sometimes I’d try to tell Keiko to let bygones be bygones, and to talk to her mom. I was coming from a place of regret because I’d lost my mama after holding a grudge for years. I didn’t want Keiko to find herself in that same situation if something were to happen to Kendra.

At the same time I also understood that my situation with my mother differed from Keiko’s situation with hers. My mom was actually apologetic and wanted to work things through. That was a big reason why I was filled with so much regret. Kendra on the other hand had basically said fuck Keiko on all levels. She wasn’t there for her during the first short

lived pregnancy, she wasn't there for her graduation, she wasn't there through the second pregnancy, she hadn't called or been around for any of her birthdays, and she didn't even pick up the phone to see if she could meet her first grandchild. Not only that but she had the audacity to act entitled to some money that wasn't even hers. I could understand why Keiko wanted to write her off.

“Do you want to talk to Keiko? Because she's busy.” I lied.

“It really don't matter I can talk to either one of y'all. I know y'all playing house and shit.”

Keiko looked stunned by her mother's rudeness.

“We not playing house, Kendra. We're a family. That's the only reason I'm still on this phone with you...because you're family. By blood at least. What you want?”

“Girlll,” she drawled like she wanted to go in but she held back. “I need one of y'all to come get these kids and keep em for a few days.”

Keiko's head bounced back as if she couldn't believe her mom would be so bold to call and ask that after not letting her get her siblings since January.

“Oh we can see them now?” I asked sarcastically.

“Don’t get smart with me. I know y’all been seeing em through Rema fake ass anyway. Now she can’t get them no more because she had Red’s little bastards over there the other day and she knows I don’t play that bull shi-.”

“We’ll come get them.” I said hurriedly. I just wanted her to shut the fuck up. I also felt comfortable agreeing to pick the kids up because I knew that Keiko would be okay with it. She’d been waiting for the day her mom would need her to watch these kids, and that day was finally here.

“Good, and don’t be calling me for them either. I’ll be back on the on January 2nd to pick them up.” She ended the call.

“Your mama is something else.” I shook my head.

“Who you telling?” She cracked a smile.

“What you grinning and shit for?” I teased while poking her cheek.

“Because I get to spend New Years with my babies.”

“Yea I’m excited to see them too, and we’ll finally be able to give them their Christmas presents.”

“I hope this means she’ll finally stop using the kids as pawns when she’s mad at me.”

“I doubt it.” I stated honestly. “She’s currently using the kids as pawns with Ms. Rema because she’s mad at her. That’s the only reason she called us to watch them. We were her last resort. I’m sure she would’ve called Kiyor first if she wasn’t on vacation in Miami right now.”

“Well just rain on my parade why don’t ya.”

I chuckled. “We agreed to always be honest with each other.”

“I know...and you’re right. I just wish I had more access to my siblings and then I’m constantly worried about them. Like is she taking care of them, does the nigga that she’s with treat them well, what the fuck is she pouring into their impressionable minds? I just wish I could be around more... but then her kids. What can I do?”

“You can’t do much but be there whenever they need you and you’ve been doing that ever since I’ve known you.”

“I was doing it long before you too.”

I held my hands out. “I rest my case. Just keep doing what you’re doing. And you know I always got your back

when it comes to your brothers and Royalty.”

She puckered her lips and leaned into me for a kiss. I grabbed her throat with my hand and tongue kissed her sensually. In the midst of us swapping tongues the music that was playing from the tv changed. Me, U, & Hennessy by Dej Loaf and Lil Wayne set the mood for us to get into some nasty shit.

“Can we stay home tonight? Try something new tonight. This drink got me feeling right. I’m ‘bout to lose my mind. You, me and Hennessy look what you did to me. Fuckin’ so crazy, you twirling and spinning me. My head keep on spinning. My legs on keep on shaking but my head keep on spinning. I’m out of mind, let’s keep on sipping. Let’s make some babies and make it official. I feel you inside, no better feeling. I throw it back again, you catch my drifting. You shifting inside, you got me screaming. You got me yelling out yo name ooh I need you. You kiss on my thighs and then you eat it. Pause for a minute then, I let you beat it. I’m loving this ride, smooth like a Beamer. Smooth like that Henny. This what happens when we drinking. I’m not gonna lie, you got me speechless. Got 69, more than 25 reasons. Me, Hennessy and you.”

She straddled my lap and humped her bare pussy against my hard dick that was still in my basketball shorts. She had on nothing more than a pink silk slip dress, so it was easy for her to get right to it. It also granted me easy access.

The straps of her dress fell on their own, exposing her taut breasts to me. I wasted no time flickering my tongue over her nipples. Instead of moaning in pleasure like usual, she squirmed before moving my head.

“It hurts,” she bleated.

“Since when?”

She covered her mouth with mine and resumed grinding in my lap. I was growing tired of this dry humping shit, so I gripped her hips and told her to lift up a little. When she did I whipped my dick out my shorts and it jutted out like a sword. She sat right on my shit.

“Ohhhh fuck,” she moaned as she worked her pussy up and down my dick.

“Damn you wet as fuck, KiKi. That pussy loves this dick?”

“Yes daddy! She loves it so much!!” She screamed. She could get as loud as wanted to tonight because Joy was

with her mom and Kairo was by his G-Baby and Paw Paw's house.

"Pussy creaming already," I voiced as I looked down at her thick cream covering my dick. Now this was my type of night. Hennessy, planning our futures, and fucking. It got no better than this.

December 31, 2017

Keiko

"Okay one more picture!"

"KiKiiii," my brothers complained in unison, propelling me to laugh.

"We tryna pop fireworks!" Ryan grumbled.

"Okay, right after y'all take this picture. Y'all look so handsome." I gushed, suddenly feeling emotional. They were getting *so* big I really couldn't take it. Ryan was now 11,

Reign was 10, Riley was 9, and Royalty was 7. I was missing out on so much of their lives which is why I was taking it upon myself to document this night. I was going to get all the videos and pictures I could.

“Alright, that’s enough. My boys are ready to help me with these fireworks.” Johan said as he ambled over with Kairo in his arms.

“You ain’t poppin shit with my baby in your arms.” I snapped.

“That’s why I was bringing him to you.”

When Johan tried to give Kairo to me, he clung to him tighter

“Let me take y’all picture as a family. Y’all look too cute,” Canaray said after walking over to us with Joy and Royalty. They’d been in Gram’s house eating, and she sure had a lot of food for us to eat. Probably enough to feed the whole block.

The Martelle family did this huge New Years Eve family block party every year and this was my first time being at one despite being invited to the one last year. I declined Johan’s invitation in 2016 because I was sick from carrying

Kairo and I wasn't fucking with him like that. A lot had changed, but some things remained the same. I had taken a few sips of a house special daiquiri that Auntie Keemaya got for everybody, and now I was feeling nauseous. For the second New Years Eve in a row I felt sick, only this year I wasn't letting it stop my fun. From experience I had an idea of what the problem was, but I'd deal with it in 2018.

“Go ahead and stand in front of the boys Joy and Royalty,” Canary instructed. “Keiko you put these outfits together?”

I laughed because I could see why she would assume that I would put these coordinating outfits together. Women usually did stuff like that. All of us except Joy and Royalty had on black leather pants. The two girls wore leather pleated skirts with black Gucci stockings and red Doc Martens. Collectively everybody wore different versions of black sweaters. I had on a slightly cropped Balmain sweater, and Johan had on the full length version. Ryan, Reign, Riley, and Kairo had on different black Balenciaga sweaters while the girls had on black Gucci sweaters to match their stockings. Kairo and I wore red Doc Martens like the girls, while all the

boys wore red Balenciaga sneakers. I wished I could take credit for pulling all these looks together.

“No, that would be your step-son.”

After picking the kids up from my moms house earlier today we went shopping and Johan found everything for everybody in under two hours.

“Oh okayyy. You did your thing, JoJo,” she praised while holding up her camera. We all smiled for the picture. The moment the camera flash went off the kids ran away. I was weak with laughter because they were really tired of taking pictures.

“Alright, go to your mommy Kairo.” Johan said while trying to hand him off to me. He clung tighter.

“Junior.” Johan uttered as if he were annoyed, but he loved when Kairo wanted to be under him, which was quite often. My baby was a daddy’s boy. The only edge I had over Johan was when I was breastfeeding, but I stopped doing that when I was five months. One thing about Kairo though, he still picked food over everything. That’s why he was so chunky.

“Let’s go eat eat mama baby.” I held my arms out. He jumped into my arms.

“That’s too fat,” Johan chuckled.

“Now I really gotta go feed him,” I laughed. Johan and I kissed before I made my way inside with Canary. Most of the women were chilling in the living room and in the kitchen, so this was more of my scene anyway. I settled with a big plate of food in the living room with Camilla, Juri, Brooklyn, Ariyella, and Jamaya. There were other family members in the room that I wasn’t as close with, but they were cool too so far. I would hate coming around new people and having to force conversations, but it wasn’t like that at all.

“Y’all hoes giving me baby fever,” Ariyella said as she looked at Juri and I feeding our baby boys. My baby boy was going to be a one year old in a few weeks, while Juri’s baby boy was born two weeks ago. Now she was a mother of three. Her oldest wasn’t hers biologically but I knew from personal experience that blood or pushing out a child didn’t mean shit. I loved Joy and my siblings like my own. Sometimes I had thoughts of taking my siblings off my mother’s hands because I knew I could do a better job. Needless to say, Baylie was just as much as Juri’s child as Brylie and Benjamin Junior aka BJ.

“I knowwww. I want one,” Brooklyn co-signed with dreamy eyes. She was watching BJ drink milk from his bottle.

“Be careful what you ask for. This mommy life ain’t easy,” Juri tittered.

“That’s exactly why I ain’t asking for it,” Camilla jumped in while taking a long sip of her Daiquiri.

“Okay miss team no kids,” Ariyella huffed, making us all laugh.

“You on that same team, hoe. Don’t try me.” Camilla responded.

“Yea, but I’m open about wanting them one day.”

“Bitch Camilla wants them one day too. I think her ass just be talking,” Jamaya laughed.

“One day dont count. We talkin bout today, and as of today you bitches,” she pointed at Brooklyn, Jamaya, and Ariyella, “are a part of team no kids with me.”

“Whatever girl,” Ariyella waved her hand. “Keiko, are you having anymore soon like this bitch?” She nodded her head to Juri. We all shared a laugh.

“Well I’m not *trying* to...”

“But y’all not doing shit to prevent it?” Juri quizzed. I guess she would know first hand how it was.

“Yea, you could say that.” I replied, making them all laugh.

“So you’re not on birth control?”

“No. This might sound really shallow but birth control makes me gain weight and I was already feeling fat after I had Kairo. I was like fuck that. I’ve been dodging pregnancy with prayers and plan b’s.”

At that point everyone was laughing hysterically, but I was dead serious.

“You funny,” Camilla snickered. “But girl you were not fat after Kairo. If you were fat then I must be obese.”

Camilla was stacked. She had the titties, ass, hips, and thighs that bitches were flying to the DR for.

“Okay maybe not fat. Just bigger than I usually would be. Everything on my body used to be so tight, now everything just jiggles freely.”

“Shit I wish my skinny ass could get a little jiggle.”
Jamaya bleated.

“You gotta keep in mind that you used dance 24/7 and that’s most likely why you had abs and everything was tight.

Your body probably would've changed with or without the baby because your lifestyle did," Ariyella said.

"You might be right." I responded. I never even thought of that. Dancing was what kept my body in tip top shape back then.

"But bitch you still look good so fuck the abs and everything else. You look like a real southern woman." Ariyella added.

"Easy for you to say," I smirked. Ariyella was currently in the body I used to have. She was way more toned than I'd ever been, but that was due to her being a cheerleader. Gymnast bodies and dancer bodies differed.

"Shittt, I can't wait to have a baby and get super thick."

"Same! And God I promise I'll be grateful and won't complain like some people." Jamaya prayed while throwing shots at me.

I laughed. "Girl forget you."

I looked down at Kairo. He was now chewing the red beans slowly which meant his little self was full. I felt his stomach and it was big and tight. He didn't want anymore.

"You full, huh baby?" I kissed his cheek.

“See, I think I would be a bad mama cause I wouldn’t know that type of shit. My dumb ass would probably keep feeding my baby until they throw up.” Camilla said.

I laughed. “Girl no you won’t. A mother automatically knows her child.”

“And bitch you would be a good mama. I can tell by how you are with Jordyn.” Juri said.

Jordyn was like Camilla’s baby. She doted on that little girl. Johan did as well, but Camilla was like her biggest fan.

“I can always give Jordyn back to her parents though.”

“That’s how I used to feel about my siblings,” I laughed. “I loved the fact that I could spend time and then drop them back off.”

“Why you speaking in past tense?” Brooklyn questioned. “You don’t like doing that no more?”

“No I still love getting them. I just wish I could keep them now.” I said while patting Kairo’s back as he fell asleep.

“You wish you could keep four extra kids? Why?” Juri asked, looking puzzled. Everybody laughed, including me. I guess to anyone who didn’t know my family dynamic it sounded crazy. Just when I was about to explain the situation

with my mom a little, the energy in the room shifted. My eyes danced around to see what was going on and I saw a bitch that I vowed to beat up on sight. I hated not being able to keep my promises.

“Hey y’all!” She spoke all friendly like with a plate of food in her hand. A pretty light brown girl was right behind her, and she spoke too. I recognized her as Julian’s current girlfriend, Gabby. I’d seen her in person plenty of times before because she attended UBR but I didn’t know her personally. I recently determined from social media that I didn’t like her. Call me childish or petty, but I knew a fake bitch when I saw one.

The backstory behind Gabby and Janae was enough for one to see she was shady. Gabby and Janae had been teammates on the cheerleading team together for three years. Gabby used to be one of the main bitches commenting heart eyes under Janae and Julian’s pictures. Now she was dating her ex boyfriend and Janae’s weak ass was pretending to be cool with it. Being friends with Janae for a long period of time made me privy to how she operated. She could fake the funk better than any bitch I knew. That’s how I knew that when she announced that she was in support of Julian’s and Gabby’s

relationship it was out of spite to make Julian's other baby mama, Felisha, mad. All that did was make her look like a fool, though. She looked like an even bigger fool now being here with Gabby and Julian. From social media I could see she was their third wheel these days. I had to give Felisha props for not participating in the circus.

“Hey Janae, hey Gabby,” Ariyella spoke first. They were her old teammates, so it was only right. Everybody else followed up with polite hellos, but they weren't as enthusiastic as they were when they first greeted me. I opted not to speak to either one of them.

“Where's my baby Janae?” Juri asked, referring to Julian Junior, whom everybody called Junie. He was Julian's oldest son by a month at one.

“He's outside with his daddy and brother.”

“Juelz is here?” Camilla asked rhetorically. Juelz was Julian and Felisha's son. “I wonder why my girl Felisha ain't come.”

I wanted to burst into laughter but I was trying my hardest not to be petty or even acknowledge Janae. Saying I would fight her on sight after she had her baby was easy a year and a half ago. Today I was at my grandma in law's house and

my baby was in my lap. Not only was I being forced to practice self control, but I also didn't care that much to fight Janae anymore. If I did it would be for shits and giggles, not because I was still holding a grudge over the horrible things she'd said about me. I wouldn't say I was over it, I just didn't care enough to fight her anymore. By the looks of her life, karma had already handled it. She could put as much sugar on her shit show as she wanted to, but I saw right through it.

“Everybody can't be on their grown woman shit like us,” Janae scoffed.

This time my petty laughter won and I literally hollered. That resulted in everybody else, except Gabby, laughing. Her dumb ass was just sitting there with an uncomfortable smile on her face, not knowing what to do. That only intensified my laughter.

“What's so funny?” Janae sneered.

“Obviously what you said.” I chortled.

“Well a lot of stuff is funny about you, but you don't don't see me laughing in your face.” She pointed her finger while twisting her neck. I stopped laughing, because it was looking like this bitch was bucking. Maybe she didn't think I was built like that. Perhaps she thought I wouldn't step

because of where we were and because our kids were here. What she didn't know was that I didn't give a fuck about none of that shit if she wanted to act up.

I leaned forward. "What's funny about me, Janae?"

Jamaya spoke up. "Woahhh, y'all chill out because I can see this is about escala-"

"No, I want her to tell me what's funny about me because I'm not the one that's so desperate to hold on to a man that I'll kiki with his new bitch that used to smile in my face."

"Oh shit," Brooklyn uttered as her eyes shifted to meet Ariyella's and Camilla's.

"I guess you wouldn't since you really like girls and your only using Johan to uphold a certain imag-"

"Hold my baby." I passed Kairo off to Camilla and stepped to Janae. I was tired of talking and I wasn't going to entertain lies. "Get up."

"Girl, I'm not about to fight. I'm too classy for that but you wouldn't know nothing about tha-"

MINK! MINK! MINK!

I snuffed Janae in the face three times back to back. She was lucky I didn't do more. I didn't see a point in all that.

She wasn't fighting back, her nose and lip were bleeding from my three mediocre punches, she appeared to be dazed, and I managed not to cause too much commotion in Grams house. Of course the people in the room were reacting, but that was nothing compared to if we had got into a full out brawl. My work here was done. I picked my son up and exited the living room.

“Grams, can I put Kairo in your bed?”

“Yea, go ahead baby. Jordyn up in there sleeping too.”

She replied before going back to her conversation with a relative. She was clueless about what had just happened in her living room not even a full minute ago.

After laying my baby down I sat in Grams room for a minute just scrolling through my phone. I was mostly looking at pictures that had been taken that night. When I finally stood up to rejoin the party, Grams' door opened and Johan entered.

“Yo, why you did that to that girl?” He asked, trying to be serious. The smile that was creeping up on his face said otherwise. He found it funny.

“Did what?” I smirked.

“Why you stole off on Janae? She ran outside crying to Julian.”

I broke out into giggles. “What he said? Is he mad at me?”

“Hell no he’s not mad. You know that nigga don’t take shit serious. He asked her why she ain’t get her lick back if it was that serious to her. She cursed him out and left. She tried to take the baby too, but he wasn’t having that.”

“Oh God,” I held my stomach from laughing so hard. Tears were starting to cloud my vision and everything.

“Man you so mean,” he chuckled. “Then you joked out after ruining that girls night.”

“I tried to ignore her.”

Technically that was the truth. Me laughing in her face did kind of kick everything off, but it was her fault I laughed. She made a stupid yet comical statement, so of course I was going to laugh. That wasn’t on me!

“She was talking shit?”

“Yea. Something bout how I’m really gay and I’m only with you for my image. I didn’t even respond to that shit. I just gave Kairo to Milla and started punching her.”

He smacked his teeth. “Man you could’ve ignored that petty shit. I know you not gay...no more.” He sniggered.

I punched his shoulder. “Do I have to sneak your ass too?”

“No, you don’t gotta do that,”he laughed while pulling me into a hug. “Just admit that you been wanting to fuck that girl up ever since you overheard her taking shit with your other old friend.”

“I never said that wasn’t the case,”I laughed. “But did I have a burning desire to whoop her ass once I saw her tonight? No. I was actually going to be cool because we’re at your grandma’s house. Does she know?”

“Man Juri and Jamaya then ran the story down to everybody.” He laughed.

“Aw man,” I shook my head.

“You know this ghetto ass family don’t care about somebody getting beat up. Especially somebody they don’t care for. Now let’s go back to this party Miss Laila Ali.”

Chapter 36

January 7, 2018

Johan

“How do those feel?”

“They’re straight,” Ryan answered as he stood up in the all black Jordan’s he’d tried on.

“We’re gonna get these and the air max they tried on,” I told the footlocker employee. When he went to the back I glanced at Keiko who appeared to be in another world. With what was going on I couldn’t say I blamed her.

“So are we staying with y’all now?” Riley asked brazenly. I expected nothing less from him.

“I think they’re gonna send us by grandma Rema,” Ryan answered. He seemed like he was upset but trying to mask it.

“Why do you think we sending y’all over there? We never said we were.” I said.

“I don’t know,” he shrugged.

“Don’t do that chief. You said that for a reason. Wassup?”

He sighed. “Well my mama said y’all have y’all own life and kids when I asked if I could spend a weekend with y’all.”

“She told you that?” Keiko marveled.

“Ryan let me tell you something, and the rest of y’all hear this too. Y’all always welcomed to stay at me and your sisters house. Your mama was just talking because she ain’t heard that bullshit from us. Excuse my French.”

“So are we gonna stay with y’all since my mama is not answering the phone and she wasn’t at the house?” Royalty inquired.

“I don’t know, but we got y’all.” I answered.

Kendra did not come back and pick the kids up after New Years. She’d been missing for the past few days and she hadn’t even posted anything on her very active Facebook page. Keiko called multiple family members and they claimed they hadn’t heard from her either. For the first few days we thought she was just taking advantage of the fact that they were with us and running wild, and we honestly didn’t care. If she had asked us to keep them for a few more days we would’ve done that because we liked having them around. Now that a full

week had passed and the kids were due back at school the next day, we were worried that something bad had happened to her.

We went by the house early this morning even though we knew Kendra wasn't there. Ms. Rema lived close by and had already informed us that she'd passed by and her car still wasn't there. We were pulling up to get the kids school uniforms and more clothes for them in general because it was unclear when or if their mom was coming back to get them.

When we pulled up the door to the house was wide open. I immediately went into protective mode. Somebody had to enter the house shortly before we got there because Ms. Rema hadn't mentioned anything about the door being opened. I made Keiko and the kids sit in the car while I went to go see what the fuck was going on. I had my gun on me and I was ready for whatever.

Upon entering the home and doing a quick canvas, I realized it was empty, but somebody sure did ransack that mutherfucker looking for something. There was no way I was going to have the kids come in here just to get some clothes and have to see this shit. I didn't want their minds to start wandering or be filled with bad thoughts that something happened to their mom. They probably just assumed that she'd

abandoned them or something, so I figured they'd be better off thinking that over what could've been a harsh reality.

I took pictures of the house and returned to the car. When I pulled off everybody was confused because the purpose of coming to the house wasn't fulfilled. I just responded by telling them we were going to the mall to get new stuff, and that excited them. Once they went off into their own world and started talking about something else, I told Keiko to take a look at my camera roll. Ever since then she'd been stoic and quiet. I knew she was thinking those bad thoughts that I'd protected her siblings from. I didn't know what to do outside of being there for her and her family.

Keiko

“You good?” Johan asked me as we drove to his dad's and Canary's house in East Over. She'd made Sunday dinner, and although I didn't feel like going I'd already given her my

word that I would. The kids also had her Gumbo on their minds and they wouldn't appreciate it if I took it off.

"I have bad anxiety right now." I admitted. He probably thought I'd been weird all day because of my mom. She was part of the reason why but there was also something else going on with me...well us.

"Everything gon' be alright. Trust me."

"How can I trust you about something you have no control over?"

"Because no matter what happens I got you and we got each other. We have plenty of control over that, KiKi. So do you trust me?"

"Of course I trust you."

"Good, because I trust you with everything in me."

My heart trembled. Not too long ago this man swore up and down that he didn't trust a soul, and his actions reflected that. He had done a complete 180 from that person he used to be.

"I can't wait to have some of this gumbo," I voiced as my stomach growled.

“Shit I can tell. I know we ain’t eat nothing since breakfast but damn,”he chuckled.

“Don’t do me that,”I laughed. A text message notification came to my phone from Kiyor while Johan was talking about how my appetite had been bigger lately. When I opened the message everything around me went radio silent. I was staring back at my mom’s mugshot. She’d been booked on first degree murder and credit card fraud yesterday. My first instinct was to call Kiyor to see what the fuck was going on but I couldn’t because these kids were in the car. Johan noticed something was wrong with me and he gave me a look. I tilted my phone in Johan’s direction and he looked at me in incredulity. I couldn’t believe this shit either!

“What the fuck son...”Johan muttered as he pulled into his dad’s driveway. He turned to the kids. “Y’all go inside. Take Kairo, too.”

After Johan watched Canary let them in the house and told her that we’d enter in a few, she closed the door, and he turned to me.

“What the fuck did she do?”

“It says first degree murder and credit card fraud.”

“Noooooo,”he drawled.

“I need to call Kiyor and see what the fuck is going on.” I said while going to my call log.

Kiyor answered right away and I put her on speaker so Johan could hear too.

“Kiyor I got you on speaker. It’s just me and Johan.” I warned, so she didn’t say anything outlandish.

“Okay, I’m at work so I can’t talk for long.”

“Girl just give the short version of what the fuck happened.”

“You didn’t read the news article?”

“No, you just sent me a screenshot of her mugshot.”

“Shit, I meant to send the article too. Well the article says that mom hooked up with a man at the Hilton on New Years Eve for sex in exchange for money. I guess he didn’t pay her what he promised so she ended up stabbing him up and robbing his ass. She then went on a shopping spree using his cards at Saks. She blew over 500k.”

I was speechless. Yea, the murder and credit card fraud was fucked up, but I just couldn’t get past the fact that my

mom was fucking men for money. She was really a whole prostitute.

“Damn she traced that shit back to her...” Johan breathed heavily.

“Even if it weren’t for the cards she would’ve gotten caught.”

“How so?” Johan asked.

“Because apparently this man was some type of sick bastard who liked to record the prostitutes he slept with without their knowledge.”

“Oh shit.” Johan put his hands on head.

“Yup. She’s on video stabbing this man because he didn’t give her \$1500 like they agreed on. He only gave her \$300.”

I glanced at Johan as tears formed at the brim of my eyes. “She really had us come pick up her kids so she could go fuck for money...”

“That ain’t all KiKi. Cause who’s her pimp? That nigga Dee! Before she stabbed him she tried to use Dee as an intimidation tactic. She was like Dee gon fuck you up if you

don't give me all my money and he told her he wasn't scared of her pimp."

"Wow...I-this is crazy." I couldn't even process this shit effectively because it was so much hitting me at once. My mom was a prostitute who'd killed a John because he didn't pay her the amount he promised, and then she used his credit cards to go on a shopping spree. She was a shittier parent than I thought she was, and it really just broke my heart for my siblings. I was hurt as well, because I really didn't know this lady that well.

"I know, girl, but I gotta get back to work."

When she hung up I looked at Johan. "Can you believe this shit?"

"No. I didn't think your mama was capable of something like this. I mean I knew she was crazy, but this is just different. What do you want to tell your brother's and Royalty?"

My stomach balled up in knots.

"I don't know, Johan. How the fuck do I tell them that they lost their other parent to the system?" My voice cracked as tears started free falling.

“Shit. I’m sorry, KiKi.” He wrapped his arms around me and I buried my head into his chest. “I know it won’t be easy but I’ll help you tell them. We gon get them through this shit. I promise. We have six children now.” He spoke with conviction.

I had to pull away to look in his eyes. “You would be okay with taking them in?”

“I wouldn’t be okay with them being without a home, so hell yea. We got enough space and we got the means to take care of them, so let’s do it.”

“O-okay.” I sniffled. “By the way...it’s seven.”

“What?”

“We have seven kids on the way.”

A smile broke out on his face.

“You pregnant, KiKi?”

I nodded while wiping my tears away. “I found out this morning.”

“So that’s why you’ve been quiet all day. I’m over here thinking you was doing all that because your mama was missing.”

“That was partially the reason...but the baby news had me shook. I’m not gon lie.” I laughed weakly.

“What you shook for? We don’t use condoms, you not on birth control, and you don’t always take plan’s.”

I glared at him for throwing the truth in my face. I shouldn’t have been shocked, but it was still surreal to think that I’d gotten pregnant not even a year after my first baby. I lowkey wanted to blame Joy for manifesting that shit.

“Don’t be staring at me like you want to do something. You know honesty is our policy.”

“Yea, but sometimes you just be a lil too blunt for me.”

“Why? Because I don’t let you stunt in peace?” He chuckled, before reaching over and touching my belly.

“I don’t have a bump yet, crazy.” I giggled.

“I know, but my baby is still in there. I know it’s a girl. Joy be talking about us having a girl too much for it not to be one. I hope she looks just like your pretty ass.”

I blushed harder than I should’ve, but compliments from him never got old. Even simple ones like being called pretty. I’d been called pretty my whole life, but it was different coming from Johan. Everything was different with him.

“Uh-Oh, this the one right here.” Johan said while turning the volume up on the radio. “You gon sing it with me, baby?”

“Johan go ahead.” I laughed.

“Uhh, uhh, uhh You ready Ki ? Let’s go get ‘em?” He questioned, sounding just like Jay-Z did on the intro of ‘03 Bonnie & Clyde. I had to laugh at his silly ass. If he was trying to make me feel better then he was succeeding. He always did that effortlessly.

“Look for me, Young, Ki, cruising down the Westside highway. Doing what we like to do. Eyes behind shades, this necklace the reason all of my dates been blind dates. But today, I got my thoroughest girl wit me. I’m mashing the gas, she’s grabbing the wheel. It’s true to the heart, she rides with me. The new Bobby and Whitney. Only time we don’t speak is during ‘Sex and the City’. She gets Carrie fever but soon as the show is over. She’s right back to being my soldier. ‘Cause mami’s a rider and I’m a roller. Put us together, how they gon’

stop both us?. What ever she lacks, I'm right over her shoulder. When I'm off track mami is keeping me focused. So let's, lock this down like it's supposed to be. The '18 Bonnie & Clyde, Jo' and Ki." He remixed the song to fit us, propelling me giggle my head off.

"All I need in this life of sin, is me and my girlfriend..." he looked at me.

"Down to ride 'til the very end, it's me and my boyfriend." I managed to sing through laughter.

"All I need in this life of sin, is me and my girlfriend."

"Down to ride 'til the very end, it's me and my boyfriend." I sang again. We ended up singing the whole damn song together and by the time we were pulling into our driveway my heart didn't feel as heavy. I had this man to help me through every hardship, so I was forever good.

"They knocked out," Johan looked back at the kids with a grin. They had all fallen asleep as soon as they got in the car.

"Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Do what?" His eyebrows knitted together in confusion.

“Take on four more kids when we already have two and one on the way. You don’t think we’re in over our heads?”

“Shit we might be,”he chuckled. “But I wholeheartedly believe it ain’t nothing we can’t handle. I also think we both know that they’re better off with us. It ain’t like we’re doing this shit alone. We’ll have Kiyor’s help, Ms.Remma’s help, and you know my family will be down to help in any way possible. Maybe this happened for a reason.”

“Yea, maybe. Thanks for accepting all of this.”

“You don’t gotta thank me for what I’m supposed to do. Your family is my family and I’d never have my family outchea bad.”

“Give me a kiss.” I leaned into him and collided my lips with his. “I love you, daddy.”

“I love you too, baby.” He flicked my chin. “Let’s get out of this car. We need to get up in this house so you can put me to sleep.”

“I ain’t putting shit to sleep but the kids.” I fronted. The smirk on my face was probably giving me a way.

“Yea right, you know you can’t wait to jump on this dick whicha nasty ass.”

“I actually can’t wait to suck it.” I smiled before wagging my tongue.

“Mannn, c’mon. You playing,” he pushed his door open and I followed his lead while laughing. Before we could even get out of the car, another car pulled into our driveway like a bat out of hell behind us flashing their high beams. My heart dropped and I almost pissed my pants. The only thing I was concerned about was my babies. They were still sleeping and oblivious to the danger they were in.

“FUCK!” Johan exclaimed.

He reached for his gun hurriedly, but the person had already gotten out of their car and rushed to my passenger side.

“Don’t do it nigga!” He warned while pointing his gun at us.

My heart dropped. It was my mom’s so-called boyfriend, Dee. My mind was all fucked about that because why was he here doing this?! If he was going to do it he could’ve waited until Johan and I were by ourselves.

“The kids are in the car!” I screamed frantically as if he couldn’t see for himself. He had to be blind or something to

pull some shit like this with these innocent babies here. Four of the innocent babies were kids of the woman he was fucking with. Had to be the scum of the earth to not care.

“I don’t give a flying fuck about these kids! Take me to the money! I know you got 100k here!”

“Nigga the most I got in the house is 20 bands. If you want more than that then you gotta follow me to one of my traps.” Johan stated calmly. He looked unphased but that was just a facade that he’d mastered. It probably wouldn’t have been a facade had my siblings and our son hadn’t been in the car. The reality of the situation was that he was nervous about the outcome of this. Which is why he was bowing down to the money request. This was no time for him to let his balls hang and be prideful.

“NIGGA YOU MUST THINK I’M STUPID! I’M NOT WALKING INTO THAT SET UP! I NEED THE MONEY THAT’S AT THIS HOUSE!”

“I told you what I have here.”

“NIGGA YOU THINK I WONT KILL YOU?”

“Then do it nigga.”

My heart almost popped out of my chest. Maybe I spoke too soon about the pride thing.

“I’LL KILL YOU AND YOUR BITCH! YOU THINK IT’S A GAME? CAUSE IT’S REALLY NOT! I’LL EVEN WET THESE KIDS UP IF YOU DONT GIVE ME THE MONEY...”

While he was hysterically ranting I noticed Johan reach for his gun and succeed. He didn’t get a chance to aim it though because Dee peeped him.

“NIGGA YOU THINK YOU SLICK?”

POW! POW! POW! POW! POW!

I blacked out.

Epilogue

Johan

I hated coming to church. The last time I’d been was for my mom’s funeral and it was a traumatic experience because I wasn’t ready to say goodbye. I was back in that same exact church today so feelings from that unresolved hurt

along with what was going on today lingered in the air. What was going on today hit differently though because it involved my kids. They were the ones being impacted the most by all of this today.

“I want to thank everyone for gathering here today on January 6, 2019. My name is Pastor Jones, Officiant and we’re here today to participate in the christening sacrament, and to give thanks and celebrate our joy in the arrival of these precious children.”

I looked over at Keiko and she smiled at me. It had been a full year after Dee had gotten killed by me in front of Keiko and the kids. There was no way they could stay asleep after my gun had gone off three times. Seeing a dead body traumatized them and the only thing we could do to get them through it was therapy and prayer. We decided to take the prayer one step forward by finding an actual church to attend. Our first step in making this church our home was getting these kids christened. That’s why we were today.

“Johan Kairo Martelle and Keiko Ebony Patel want to share their joy with you and they look forward to your continuing involvement with their children’s lives in the years ahead. They are also aware of the great responsibility that is

now theirs. A great deal of their lives will be involved in caring for their children, and guiding them through the many paths of life. As the years go by, their role as parents will be assisted and enhanced by each one of you here today, as well as by the friends that are not present, but here in spirit. The christening of a child is an important rite of passage to those that recognise the role that God plays in our lives.”

Growing up I always felt like church wasn't for me because of all the hypocrites and fake people that congregated there. There were hypocrites and fake people everywhere though, so we couldn't let them stop us from building a better relationship with God. Without him we would not have made it through this past year as a family.

Kendra ended up getting 50 years to life in prison, and the kids took that hard. She may have been a sad ass mother, but she was still theirs and they didn't want to be without her. They often expressed how they liked staying with us over her though. We allowed Ms. Rema to let them talk to her over the phone because neither of us were doing that. Nor were we taking them up to the prison to see her. She actually told a nigga where we stayed because she thought we had money. Apparently Dee owed somebody money and she was selling

pussy to help him pay his debt off. His deadline was the day after he pulled a gun on us, so he was desperate. Kendra claimed she didn't know he was going to do it like that and she thought he'd just ask. That bitch could rot in hell for all I cared. I didn't even want the kids talking to her ass because she'd put them in danger too, but Keiko didn't want to tell them all that yet. I felt like it was best to just be honest up front, but I left the final decision up to her. They'd learn the truth one day.

On top of all this drama that 2018 brought in, we also welcome our baby girl on July 19. We named her Jamiko Ebony Martelle. We had the same baby for the second time because she looked just like her brother. Our kids were physical proof that we both put in work equally whenever we had sex because they were both a perfect mixture of us.

Getting adjusted to a full house of seven kids was harder than either of us expected. Somebody always needed some type of attention and as parents we had to give it to them. Then there were the extracurricular activities that we had to be involved in on top of making sure they stayed on top of their school work. A parent's job was really never done. We would have to squeeze in personal time for ourselves and time

for each other. We also had to make a living in order to feed these kids. Despite not being able to do as many events as she would've liked, business was still booming for Keiko. Staying true to my word, I was out of the game by 2019.

Keiko's business gave me the inspiration for mine. I brought several abandoned properties for dirt cheap all over the city and turned them into event halls. People in New Orleans were always throwing parties and all types of events. My halls stayed booked up and I didn't charge less than a rack for any of them. Keiko planned most of the events that were held at my halls too, so we were kind of like business parties and we often worked close with each other.

"Where are we going to eat?!" Joy asked as we all piled into the family Audi Q7 after church.

"Eat Eat!" Kairo uttered. I couldn't believe my boy was about to be two in a few days. Time needed to slow down. Joy and Royalty were making nine this year and that shit had me fucked up. They were just little 5 year olds and now they were one year away from double digits.

"G Baby made us a big dinner," Keiko answered.

"YAYYYY!" Everybody celebrated. If they didn't love anything else they loved Canary's cooking. Keiko was actively

trying to learn how to burn just like her even though she was a good cook herself.

“Aren’t you happy we did this today?” Keiko asked. The kids were having their own side conversations by this point.

“Absolutely. I used to always tell myself I wasn’t stepping in church for shit except funerals.”

“My how times have changed.” She giggled.

“Who you telling? Because today I kept thinking about how we would make that church look for our wedding.”

She paused before looking at me. “Boy stop playing with me.”

“I’m serious. You don’t wanna get married?”

“I mean...it’s on my bucket list. I just didn’t think that was on your mind. I’m cool either way; but I’d never say no if you asked. Oh my God, are you asking?”

I hit a red light so it was perfect timing. I pulled the box from my glove compartment and opened it up. It’s like everybody in the car stood still and grew quiet, minus Kairo and Jamiko. They were still talking in their own baby language because they didn’t understand what was going on.

Keiko on the other hand had started crying and screaming.

“YES! YES!”

The kids started screaming and clapping as I slipped the 6 carat Diamond ring on her finger. That ring had been in my car for weeks. I didn't know when or how I was going to ask her. I didn't know if I'd do something over the top or simple. I just knew that today and in that moment it felt *right*, so I went with it. I was happy I'd followed my heart because she seemed to appreciate that.

When we reached another red light she grabbed my face and kissed me repeatedly. This time the kids reacted in disgust, making us laugh.

“I love you so much, JoJo.”

“I love you too, wifey. You ready to be mine forever?”

“Boy I was yours the day you pulled up to the band hall at UBR talking shit. I just saw me written all over you. I can't wait until you're officially my husband.”

That shit made me feel all mushy inside. Keiko was the only female outside of my daughters who could make me feel soft. I was never letting her get away.

“Then it’s settled. We in this for life.”

*The End! For updates, visuals, and
sneak peeks join my reading group on
Facebook, “ That’s All Cee Reading
Group .”*