

A wooden pitcher is pouring a stream of white milk into a glass of iced coffee. The glass is filled with dark coffee, ice cubes, and a swirl of milk. The background is a blurred indoor setting with greenery and a wooden table.

little
LOVE
STORIES
a coffee table book

GREYHUF
FINCTON

little

LOVE
STORIES

GREYHUF
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note

i've been waiting to make one of these for like forever. after working on the little love stories, i decided to compile them for the perfect coffee table book. the plan was for six book but after months of no one else from this series, i decided that five would have to be it. and, it actually feels complete.

enjoy.

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little love stories

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little

LOVE
STORIES

GREYHUF
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story #1 | blues

Indigo + Navy

friends to lovers



*To be loved and loved at the highest count means to lose all
the things I can't live without*

-Adele

one

. . .

HOME.

On Christmas Eve, nonetheless. There wasn't much that would've made this night any more perfect than it already was. The crackling flames from the fireplace kept my toes and fingertips warm to the touch while the hot chocolate that I sipped suppressed the coolness internally.

I'd waited a lifetime for this moment, though I'd imagined it to be more than just me, alone, on such a special night. It was the first night in my new place. In my home. And, as happy as I was about finally making such a huge purchase, it was bittersweet. I'd imagined the moment filled with laughter and cheer from my child and husband as I rubbed my growing belly.

You should be married with children by the time you're thirty.

It was all a hoax and an extra bit of pressure that the world decided to place on it's youth. By the time you're thirty, the only accomplishment that's necessary is sanity. That was my take on it now that I was thirty but the stable career and new home were added bonuses that I was proud of. The husband and the children seemed extremely far-fetched and even impossible some days. As a lover of all things love, it was a hard pill to swallow most of the time, but I digested it gracefully.

The silence was alarming. Telling in so many ways, forcing me deeper into my thoughts as I looked around my

fully furnished living room. The Christmas romance that played in the background had long ago lost my interest. *So, this is home?* A faint smile tugged at my lips.

While this moment meant everything to me, I couldn't help but wonder what it would've felt like hadn't I not been alone with my thoughts. Even if the husband hadn't come with the children, how much more special would this night have been with a few little feet stomping around while I tried enjoying a moment to myself? The question lingered as I rubbed my aching neck.

You're happy. So, be happy.

I chastised, hardly believing that I was turning this moment into a pitiful one. That wasn't my intention, but I'd be damned if I could help myself. Buying a home alone was never in my plans and neither was spending my early thirties avoiding every and anything that resembled a man. I'd had my fair share of their troubles, though small in quantity, the trauma had lasted forever.

Music. I reasoned. It was the only solution to my drifting. Springing from the oversized bean bag, I sprang to my feet and sat my hot chocolate on the mantle. The cashmere blanket that was draped over my midsection and thighs collided with the softness of my carpet, soundlessly.

Toward the front door and to my car where the boxes I'd yet to remove sat, I headed. *My vinyls.* I found myself rushing to their aid to save them from the blistering cold of Channing. Outside was nowhere for them to be, especially not a collection like the one that I owned. From classics to vintage and a splash of the present, I was proud of the records I'd been collecting over the last six years.

I slid my feet into the *Fenty* slides that imitated actual clouds, or so I imagined clouds felt as good, and wrapped the strap of my robe a bit tighter around my waist. It was no match for the uncompromising winters in Channing but it would get the job done. As I twisted the knob of my door, I knew that I'd begin making use of the three car garage that was built with my home. Or at least during the fall and winter months.

The moment I opened my door with my head bowed to pay close attention to where I was stepping, my world came to a screeching halt. I couldn't quite process much of anything, especially not the uninvited, unwanted presence at my doorstep. *Is this what the end for me feels like?* Was the only thought that registered then quickly vanished as I held my breath.

A pair of wheat-colored Timberland boots pressed against the large mat at my door, pushing my thoughts to the back of my brain and filling it with new ones. Unfamiliar ones coated in fear and confusion. I could feel my pounding heart in my chest and the handicapping of my limbs simultaneously. Crippling me to the point of numbness.

"Indigo," the low, sultriness of the voice cooled my iced veins and afforded me with enough mobility to lift my neck and give the suspected intruder my eyes.

"Navy?"

two

. . .

NAVY Nwigwe.

The one that always got away, or so he referred to both of us. As if the universe was against our union, each time that we attempted to see exactly where life would lead us, it led us nowhere. Well, with the exception of a few dead end romances that caused us to drift apart. However, when both coasts were clear, we'd find our way back to one another.

But, that was before the fame. Before the life that he now led. And, for the last three years, I'd written him off as the one who'd really gotten away. Besides sporadic Instagram posts that were obviously an obligation for operations, I hadn't seen any of him. Numbers had changed and communication had died with our last attempts at love with people who'd crossed our paths.

So, to see him at my door was both utterly satisfying and surprising, simultaneously. Especially with his new status and busy schedule. To know that little ole me was heavy enough on his heart to search for and find me was heartening. It hadn't been a full twenty-four hours since I'd turned in the keys to the apartment I'd fallen in love with four years ago. It wasn't easy, but it was necessary.

The apartment held so many memories, including endless FaceTime calls from the man at my door at the weirdest hours when neither of us could sleep or the distance had become too much to bear alone. There were also those memories that included the few times we'd both found the time to see one another. With Navy's fame rising and my unwavering

obsession with starting a successful business after leaving my government position of five years, time wasn't on our side. Eventually, communication ceased completely, never resuming until this very moment.

Around the time Navy made a name for himself, my consulting firm had done the same. I was swamped, but never too occupied to witness his rise to stardom. Always, I'd been cheering him on in the background. Whenever a new accomplishment arose and the public got wind, I found myself clapping until my hands tingled and smiling until the corners of my lips split.

"Hi," I mustered, holding my chest as it pained from the depths of it's beating.

Nature's cologne hugged his skin and the clothes that layered his beautiful frame. The greenery that he loved to ingest was as loud as the ringing of my heart. But, even after all of these years it meshed insanely well with his store-purchased scent of choice.

With eyes to match his scent, he smiled. The easily enjoyable gesture reached his lips shortly after as he brushed the snow from his short, even beard. It was a new feature that I was immediately appreciative of. In the past, he'd kept it trimmed extremely short, though still visible. The growth suited him well, framing his face so perfectly.

"Indigo Granger," slid from his lips in a low, yet confident tenor.

His pearly white top teeth glistened in the night, drawing my attention toward the bottom row which were partially covered in gold. I could feel my fluids exiting my body at an alarming rate, causing me to squirm in place while squeezing my thighs together. My throbbing center was simply a natural reaction to the man before me and had been since the day I met him.

"Navy Nwigwe, how... how did you find my address," I stuttered, hints of giggles falling from my lips as I downplayed

my nervousness. “I’ve only been here *officially* for about... uh twelve hours.”

“Money talks, Indigo. That’s understood.”

“Right,” I nodded, “Right.”

A brief silence followed his declaration. With status came connections. With connections came loopholes, shortcuts, and information that one was otherwise unaware or uninvited to. Hence the passing along of my home address from someone I’d later address, *or thank*.

To get lost in my thoughts is where I was headed before I felt his large, calloused hands at my chin, pulling me forward until... until his lips touched the side of my face. *Fuck*, I creamed with pouted lips, perked up and poked out in anticipation of his kiss. Though I hadn’t known what to expect, I craved the majiuanna stench that even the gum he chewed on couldn’t conceal to rest on my tongue too. And, I didn’t even smoke it.

“I missed you,” he admitted in the nape of my neck. My body melted against his, attempting to mend with his skin. Desperately, I wanted to be one with him. For this man, my feelings were inexplicable. On many occasions, I’d tried to verbalize the intensity of them and my undying desires for his presence, but I’d always failed. Tonight didn’t prove differently.

I couldn’t tell one person in the world how this man felt beyond a hug, but somehow he felt like mine the few times that he’d been around. He felt much like the house I’d just closed on. When around and even when he wasn’t, there was something about him that felt like home.

Warm like my grandmother’s sweet potato pie.

Thick and hearty like the beef stew that she cooked on winter days.

He was everything. And, for once, there wasn’t anything standing between me and his perfection. He knew it and so did I. It was part of the reason I was at a loss of words and he only said a few.

Refusing to part, Navy's fingers dropped from my face and caressed my lower back as he hugged me ever so gently. As if I was fragile to the touch, his hands skated up and down before disappearing until they reappeared at my arms, rubbing them in an upward motion to bring more heat to my frame.

“Are you going to let me in? You're freezing.”

Maybe externally, but I was in flames from head to toe. The brutal winds and snowfall had been long forgotten as reality slapped me squarely in the face. The realization that Navy, Navy Nwigew, was standing at my doorstep and this time there was nothing getting in the way of stopping either of us from continuing to be the one that got away.

“Sorry,” my lashes batted as oxygen returned to my lungs and my brain thawed. I stepped backward and into the house to let him in and out of the cold.

“Where were you headed with this on?” Navy plucked the silky fabric of my robe.

Then, it hit me. My records. I needed them - and now more than ever.

“I was headed to get the boxes of records from my trunk. I still need to do that,” I opened the door again, but he forced it shut.

“Stay inside and warm up. I'll get them. Pop the trunk.”

Nodding, I watched as he ventured into the falling snow and retrieved the boxes from my trunk. There were four in total, causing him to take two trips. When he returned, I locked up behind him and set the alarm in *Stay* mode. When I turned, I found Navy staring back at me, his brows acknowledging my insinuation. Without words, we were both aware of the moment, ourselves, and what it meant for us.

By the hand, I guided him into the large living room where the fire would keep us warm. On the mantle, my chocolate that was once hot sat. I removed it with the intention of remaking

another cup. Suddenly, the coolness that Navy had tried to brush off of me had hit me like a ton of bricks.

“I’m going to make us something warm. Please, make yourself comfortable, Navy.”

It was understood that if I had it my way, he would stay put for the duration of the day. There were only a few hours left and I wanted him to myself. The few times he’d visited in the past, he’d always had to rush off or vice versa. Everything about our time together was rushed or sacrificed or something. For once, it wasn’t. I had nothing to do and nowhere to be. I could only hope the same for him.

“Cause a nigga feeling overdressed, now,” he chuckled, sliding his coat from his arms as I headed into the kitchen to lose my shit.

I could feel his eye boring holes in my back as I walked away, giving me the extra boost of confidence his presence always had. If you’d ever asked him, I was fine China in his book or whatever the hell else out there that was better. Either way, he appreciated every perfection and imperfection of mine that was visible.

The minute I was alone and in the clear, I maneuvered my cell from the pocket of my robe and allowed the camera to scan my face. Once unlocked, I searched the short thread of messages until I reached Lo’s. Hardly able to contain my smile, I sent a message that I was certain would have her calling me the minute she was free.

Rapper bae is back. He showed up at my doorstep and suddenly I don’t feel so blue.

three

. . .

INDIGO FUCKING GRANGER.

Too much time had passed since I'd last seen her face, but it was my very intention to make up for lost moments and memories. With my tour coming to a screeching halt for the holidays, I had nothing but time on my hands. In fact, it was the first gap in my schedule in the last two years that didn't include some variation of a hectic, stressful schedule or someone who was occupying the little free time that I did have.

After little contemplation, I'd boarded the jet and made my way back home for the holidays. For the last few months, my heart had been heavy and my thoughts were occupied with the well-being and state of the woman just a few feet away from me in the kitchen. Though we had hardly connected physically, she'd always been part of my mental. On my darkest days, the remembrance of her smile pushed me closer to the light. That's how I knew that no matter how long it took to get back to whatever the fuck we called ourselves having, I would.

And, here I was. Standing in her living room, warming at the fireplace as I peeled my damp clothing from my frame. Pulling off layer by layer until I was left in my long johns and undershirt, I rubbed my hands against one another until I felt the heat the fire was tossing in my direction.

As ridiculous as I thought the undergarments were, they were necessary to battle the Channing winters. Them motherfuckers weren't shit to take lightly or to ever consider

playing with. Before boarding the jet, I'd made sure I was dressed for the occasion. The last thing I wanted was to be left pleading on Indigo's porch for her to open the door in the freezing cold after losing contact for so long.

Though she hadn't mentioned it, I knew she felt a way about it. Hell, I did, too. It was me who changed numbers for the hundredth time. It wasn't until months passed before I came to the realization that I'd never given it to her. When I tried correcting that by hitting her line, I was surprised to discover that she'd changed her number by then.

Since, I've been longing to see that face. To touch her soft, pecan-colored skin. To hear her gentle, reassuring voice. And, to acquaint myself with every single inch of her via the very tips of my fingers.

Indigo.

There was just something about this fucking girl. From the way she batted her natural lashes when she was deep in thought to the way her mouth widened when she thought something was utterly hilarious. Her light brown eyes were mesmerizing, especially combined with the sandy strands that fell from her roots and dangled far past her shoulders. Did I mention the small things like her natural aroma that was both pleasant and inviting? She was a woman that took pride in grooming herself and even the thought of it blew my fucking brain.

The crackling fire was subtle, but there was no denying its presence. It reminded me of the boxes of records I'd sat in the corner. It was time to let one loose. I scanned the boxes one by one to see what she was working with. To my surprise, baby girl was laced. From the classics to the new school, there wasn't a loophole to be discovered in her collection. It was thorough, starting with the one that had my face on the dust cover.

A faint smile tugged at me. Though we had lost contact long before my freshman album, I'd always known that she'd cop it. In fact, it was part of the reason I'd fought to keep two of the twelve tracks that were on it. Those, much like the lines

in some of my versus, were written with her in mind. *Got Away* and *Get Back*.

They belonged to her. Every chord and every word. That was all Indigo. And, just in case she was unaware, I decided to take them both for a spin on the vinyl player. Three tracks apart, they were both on side b and toward the slower pieces of the album. The last thing I wanted was them to be mixed in the grit and grime of the other tracks, blemishing their beauty and innocence. A great decision on my end, because they'd both been singles that topped charts for months. To this day, they were still being requested on the radio stations and during performances.

“And no matter the time or place... when I get back, know I'm with that,” I heard Indigo harmonize with Tan, the vocalist on the track, as it opened.

Immediately, she summoned my attention toward the cut-out that led to the kitchen where she'd been buried for the last few minutes. It wasn't until she appeared that I realized I'd missed her that quickly. Though she was under the same roof, I couldn't stiffen the urgency of my heart. It had been far too long for us both.

“Well don't you look comfortable?” She pranced into the room where I stood with my arms folded in deep thought.

In her hands were two mugs, causing her to take slow and deliberate steps toward me. Desperate to ease her discomfort as she focused on not dropping or spilling either, I rushed toward her to relieve her of the one she'd intended for me. Instantly, the chocolate aroma filled my nostrils, confirming my suspicions.

“Hot chocolate,” I chuckled, simultaneously shaking my head.

“The best,” she challenged.

From our hundred thousand phone calls and FaceTime calls, I'd remembered just how much she hated coffee. Though she loved the smell and its purpose, it fucked her system up every time she'd tried to indulge, which led her to a gentler

competitor. Her intolerance for coffee had come as a surprise in adulthood being that she often described how her grandmother used to fix her a cup often as a kid.

Indigo continued to bob her head to the beat, mixing and matching words that followed along with the track seamlessly as we settled near the fireplace. The entire set up was something straight from a movie. One of the mushy ones straight off the Hallmark channel, but I'd be damned if I wasn't enjoying every moment of it. Every moment of her.

"So," she started once we were both comfortable on the floor, "What brings you back to Channing?"

Indigo gave me her undivided attention as she blew near the rim of her cup before sipping. She waited patiently for my response, eyes never leaving mine as she sipped the hot liquid. And, even that fluffed the edges of my heart.

"You," I confessed.

four

. . .

“ME?” Indigo confirmed with pursed lips and furrowed brows.

“You,” I nodded, sipping on the cocoa she’d given me.

My approval was silent, but I appreciated the shot of brown she’d added to my shit. It took the edge off and added a kick to the sweetness - which I wasn’t a fan of. But, I’d be damned if I told her that. If she wanted us drinking hot chocolate, then that’s what the fuck we were drinking. End of story. I was essentially grateful for her presence and availability. The last thing I wanted to do was alter her Christmas Eve plans too much.

“Me? I brought you all the way back to Channing. I’m finding that so hard to believe, Navy. It’s been what... two? Almost three years?”

“Which means nothing,” I replied, “Not when it comes to you.”

“But why now?” Curiosity was heavy on her heart.

“Why not now?” I asked, sitting my cup on the ledge of the fireplace where there was a plethora of empty space.

“I’m just saying. It feels like it’s been forever and suddenly you show up to my door claiming that I’m the sole reason for you visiting the city?”

There it was. The emotions she’d failed to show upon my arrival. Indigo hadn’t been feeling the separation and neither had I. For the many years I’d been knowing her, we’d never

gone more than a few months without speaking to each other. It was about how long our dead end relationship lasted. Nevertheless, years had never escaped without us seeing one another's face. Whether it be FaceTime or in real-time, we'd always found our way back to each other.

"Because you are," I emphasized, needing her to understand that my words were true.

"Again, why now, Navy? I don't understand." The hesitancy and uncertainty in her voice fell onto my chest like a ton of bricks.

So much time had gotten in the way that it had her questioning the things that I said. Always a man of integrity who remained true to his words, her disbelief was to my offense.

"To tell you I'm sorry for letting so much time get between us and because nothing is standing in the way of giving you everything your heart desires, Indigo. I'm not a young nigga no more. That shit dead and though age has nothing to do with why I'm here, I can't help but mention the fact that a nigga is ready for something real. And, no matter how many motherfuckers I've encountered over the years, I knew that I couldn't truly step to you until I was ready. I also knew that with you, I'd get it right."

Silence penetrated the small space between us as she considered my words. Then, suddenly, she began to speak again, relieving me of the chronic aching of my chest. Her voice was the bandage to my wounds.

"Why didn't you call?" She fussed, sitting her cup beside mine while waiting for me to respond. "Why didn't you reach out? Say hello. Ask how I was doing... feeling... holding up. Anything. Years, Navy. For years, I've been so conflicted but you left me no choice but to conclude that you simply didn't care."

"You don't mean that shit, Indigo." She'd sliced right back into the wound she'd cured.

"But, I do."

“We loss touch,” I reasoned.

“No, *you* loss touch. I never did. I’ve been here in the real world, dealing with my feelings. Those of rejection from the man I sometimes imagined doing life with. Just before you came in, I was drowning in Christmas blues wondering where my husband and my children were. Why hadn’t life shown me some fucking leniency for once and blessed me with someone to make this house feel like home? You know, shit like that. Shit that we used to talk about. Shit that you used to promise me. They gave me so much hope. Now they give me a headache to even consider. My God, I was so gullible.” She was throwing blow after blow, hitting me a little harder in the chest with every word that she spoke.

“They’re still promises that I intend to make good on.”

“Then why didn’t you at least call?”

“I didn’t have your number.”

“Money talks,” she mimicked my words. Ones I’d just spoken on her porch. “Isn’t that what you said, Navy?”

“I did,” I admitted, rubbing my temple. This... this was the other side of Indigo. One I’d never been on the receiving end of which had made me an extremely worthy human in my opinion... until I wasn’t. And, right now, I was feeling like shit knowing that she was only a snap of the finger away.

“I fucked up, Indigo. I get that, but please.” I couldn’t bear the disappointment on her pretty face or the cracking of her voice. She was furious, but more than anything she was hurt. While I had no idea, the thought of causing her any pain caused me severe discomfort and... *pain*.

Fuck!

“Please? Please what, Navy? Huh?”

“Calm down, love.”

“I’ve been calm for the last two, nearly three years, Navy. I just... I just need to know if you ever even tried?”

Dropping my head in shame, I avoided her question altogether. I’d expected a bit of push back, honestly, but I

couldn't stand this shit. Not even a little. Indigo was my heart, whether she understood that or not, and to know I'd hurt her had me deep in my fucking feelings.

“The same apartment, you know? I was in the same apartment all this time. No matter how many times my number or your number may have changed, I was idle. And, you want to know the real reasons I was for so long? Hmmm?”

She didn't wait for my answer before continuing, “Because I was waiting for you. I kept waiting for you. I kept hoping. Praying when I woke up each day that it would be the day that you came for me. But you never did. And, the minute I finally let go of it all - the hopes and the dreams and the promises you made me believe were possible - you show up at my doorstep.”

“Indigo, please... Calm down,” I tried with her again, but it only seemed to anger her more.

“I'm as calm as I'm going to get for a nigga that left me high and dry like I didn't mean shit to him but suddenly decides that I'm worthy of his time again... On Christmas Eve, nonetheless,” she chuckled sarcastically, “And, I let you in. Good fucking job channeling your self-worth, Indigo!” She chastised herself and bruised every inch of me in the process.

“Did you try?” I didn't even recognize my own voice as I asked, needing her to understand that this wasn't one hundred percent my fault.

“Did I try?” She chuckled, again, voice heightening as her pitch changed drastically, “Did I try? So much that I felt like a fucking fool, okay? Every birthday. Every huge accomplishment. Every nomination, big or small. Every big break. Every Christmas. Every New Year... I fucking tried. And, I kept trying until I decided that I was done trying this year. If you'd checked your direct messages, then you'd see just how much I fucking tried!”

Instantly, I grabbed my cell and logged into the platform that I hated with every fiber in my bones. I scrolled through the hundreds of direct messages from those that I actually followed in return, Indigo being one of them. Near the middle

of the pile was the familiar face. Just as she'd said, there were a slew of messages she'd sent. The gray bubbles appeared one after the other, always followed by a signature and cell number.

I miss you.

Indi

(new number) 555-901-2121

Congratulations!

Indi 555-901-2121

Merry Christmas.

Indi 555-901-2121

Happy New Year!

Call me.

Indi 555-901-2121

Happy Birthday, twin.

Indi 555-901-2121

five

. . .

WE SHARED THE SAME BIRTHDAY. January fifteenth, which explained why we were so much alike. The messages went on for two more fingertip scrolls before I'd had enough. She had in fact tried. Over and over, again.

"I had no idea," I admitted as my heart crumbled before us, "I'm sorry, Indigo. I'm here, now and I don't plan to ever leave your side, again. That's all I have. That's all I've got."

She said nothing. Her silence was accompanied by thick, unyielding tears that made it difficult to breathe. With each inhale it hurt and on each exhale, I thought my life was ending.

"Don't do that, Indigo."

"No, because fuck you, Navy. I never forgot about you. I never could. But you... You forgot so quickly. I guess I should've expected it, right? Fame comes with that," she barked in my direction with tear-stained cheeks and a bleeding heart. I couldn't stand the look of her. "I was such a fool!"

Yelling, she tried standing to her feet, but I wouldn't let her. Couldn't let her. My hands circled her neck as I pushed her curves toward the floor, again. Submitting to my silent demands, Indigo laid flat on the ground with a heaving chest and tears that slid down the sides of her face.

"Watch your fucking tone when you're speaking to me, baby girl," I shoved out in one, labored breath as I pushed the bottom of her robe and whatever was underneath it up until her

thighs were exposed, “And, nothing has changed so show some respect when you open your mouth to address me.”

With my right hand still around her neck, I lowered my face until my lips met hers, “I can’t help that you got me all fucked up in the head, too. I’m sorry for leaving, but you can’t make me feel sorry for getting back to you. I’m invested, Indigo. No matter what bullshit you’ve made up in your head, I’m invested. Heart, body, mind, soul, and pockets. I’m invested.” I pulled back slightly and squeezed her bottom lip between my teeth. She squirmed in pain, but I didn’t give a single fuck. I needed her to calm her little ass down.

My dick was out of my briefs in milliseconds, striking the air before resting at her opening. With my left hand, I lubricated my dick courtesy of a glob of spit I’d removed from my mouth.

Upon entry, I could feel the contorting of my face as I reminded Indigo once more, “I’m invested.”

Fuck. This is home.

Her initial gasp left me speechless as my eyes wondered, too afraid that if I looked down at her, my journey would end rather abruptly. I couldn’t go out like that. Not for our first time.

Years. It had been years since we’d met and the most we’d ever shared was a kiss. Both of us were always extremely content with our roles and positions in one another’s life until it was clear that we were ready to take things to the next level. Today, that shit had been made crystal.

She was every bit of what I imagined over the years and this moment was nothing short of amazing. No matter how we’d gotten here, we were here. My dick throbbed inside of her slipperiness at the thought of it.

“You’ll feel so good inside of me,” she spoke, nearly making me blow the gasket, anyway.

Determined not to end our session so prematurely, I pulled out of her immediately and lowered my face until it met her

centerpiece. I'd waited an absurd amount of time to have a taste of it. Too fucking long if I was being honest.

I pulled the nectar from her canal one swipe of the tongue at a time, parting her legs a bit more with each. She clung to the sides of my head with her fingers curled around the back of my neck. My chain dangled between her legs, helping itself to the bodily fluid that seeded from her pussy and down her crack. With each movement I made, it announced its presence.

"Ummmmmm. Naaaavy," Indigo groaned as her stomach caved and the grip around my head tightened.

Though I wasn't in a rush, I still didn't have time to waste. I'd hurt this woman and the only thing I wanted to do now was patch up the pain. The orgasmic high that I was about to take her on was only the start of it.

Giving her swollen clit my full attention, I massaged the head of my dick as I felt her squirm beneath me. Even now, she was poised and back to the Indigo that I loved. Loved. It wasn't a secret. Not for either of us, though we hadn't verbalized the intensity of the love that we harbored for one another, it was felt. In moments like the one we'd just had and in moments like the one we were having.

"Oh God. Oh God. Right there."

"Right there?" I teased, sucking her clit into my mouth and swiping my tongue across it at lightning speed.

"Yes. Yes. Right there. Oh my Goooooooooooood. I'm going to cum."

"On my face?"

"Oh, yes. On your face!"

Back and forth, Indigo rocked, signaling she'd reached her peak along with the screeching that followed. Lifting from my position, I began thumbing her clit with my right hand to intensify the sensation while massaging my dick with the other hand. It was hard as a brick and ready to slid into her shit, but not before I saw what her pussy could really do.

“Nooo. No!” She fussed, shaking her head profusely. She knew exactly what was in store for her.

“Come on. I need to see it,” I egged her on.

“Please. Please. I can’t. Please. Stoooooooooop!”

She could and she did. Just as her pussy released a forceful stream of it’s potion, I slid back into her slice of heaven. Indigo had preached to me about her jealousy for the girls in the porns that could make their pussies squirt while thinking it was impossible. I’d told her several times before that she’d just been fucking with the wrong niggas. From the apparent shock on her face, I knew that she believed me now, too.

“This shit soaking,” I confessed, struggling to keep my composure in the mist of her gushiness. I couldn’t. And, as quickly as I’d slid in, I was unloading.

“Fuck, baby!”

**

I wanted to stay planted inside of her forever but I knew that it was impossible. Still with a semi-erection, I rolled over and onto the floor beside her before pulling her closer. She placed a hand on my chest and then her head. The feeling of complacency found me. I wanted nothing more than to do better by her. To do better by us. All the things that our hearts desired, I wanted to give. Marriage, children, anything. Her wish was my command.

“What do we do now?” Indigo sighed as her head rested on my chest. She was trying so hard to calm her breathing.

“We love... *at the highest count.*”

The end

story #2 | home

...

Pria + True

a second chance romance



Do you feel the way my past aches?

Adele

one

. . .

GRIEF.

Did it ever get better? Like ever? I wondered as I traced my top lid with liner. It was the waterproof one, because any other version would be useless. My face was free of any other beauty enhancing products, not that I needed any to begin with. And, it wasn't that I was too vain to admit to my love for all things beauty, but the truth was I hated it all.

The loads of makeup, extremely long false lashes, tailbone-touching extensions, and the genetically impossible figure. I was what I considered boring. The one who preferred a natural face, gloss, mounds of gold accessories, and my favorite fragrance. For me, that was more than enough.

"Mommy, are you ready to go?" my daughter pulled at my black fitted jeans as she asked.

No, baby girl, I wanted to admit, but couldn't. I wasn't ever ready, at least not on this day. Not this year, last year, the year before that, or the ones before that. No matter how much time passed, this day and this visit crippled me to the core. On this day, Christmas Eve, every year, I came down with an immobilizing, unbearable case of anxiety that stemmed from the sheer pain that I simply couldn't get past.

I wasn't sure if I wanted to.

"Yes, baby. Give mommy five minutes or less and we're out of the door," I pacified, still attempting the perfect line on my lid. Talia didn't have the slightest concept of time or how it

worked. All she knew was that I needed a bit more of it before we headed out. That, for her, was enough.

“Okay. I’ll wait by the door, mommy.”

“Sure thing, baby girl. Can mommy have a hug?”

Appreciative of her while simultaneously needing to fill her little arms hugging my neck, I pushed my knees forward while crouching to her size. The black, full coverage heels that I wore made it a bit more difficult, but I managed just in time for her tiny fingers to meet at the back of my neck.

“Mmmmmm,” from one side to the other, I rocked while humming.

Though grief consumed me more days than not, there was still a little being counting on me to be her mommy. That’s what kept me fighting. It kept me pushing. It kept me from losing my damn mind on my darkest of days. Talia was my savior, though her little mind couldn’t comprehend it just yet.

“I love you, bug,” I whispered as I pulled back, determined to keep the tears that threatened to fall at bay.

The last thing I wanted was her seeing mommy sad. It would only make her cry, too. My child without a doubt, Talia had adapted to my emotional intelligence and wore her heart on her sleeve, too. It was both a gift and a curse.

“I love you, too,” she responded, sealing our connection with a kiss.

Seconds later, she was darting out of the door of my powder room and headed down the stairs. By the time her little feet made it to the ground level and near the door, the time I’d requested would be up. Not only were her legs as tiny as her little voice, but our home was insanely spacious. In fact, it was too much space for just the two of us but it was the one thing I wasn’t willing to give up in the separation. I’d spent three years transforming it into my dream and I wasn’t willing to let it go. Not for anyone.

Get it together Pria, I encouraged, drawing the last line to perfection in only a few seconds. Pulling back, I admired the two crisp, almost identical winged lines that made my long,

slender eyes look that much longer. As I stared into the mirror, I hardly recognized myself. Physically, yes, but unfortunately, I was able to see below the surface.

Sad, no.

Lonely, yes. A little.

Happy... some moments.

On the same day, two of the most important people in my life had been snatched away from me with little explanation. Each day, I asked God why I'd been such a glutton for punishment all those years ago. Four spins around the sun later and I was still picking up the pieces of my heart.

Digging myself deeper into the hole that life had dug for me wasn't going to heal my wounds. I was aware of that now, which is why I dusted myself off, shut down my powder room, and headed for the main floor to find my Talia. I didn't have to look far, because the second the doors of the elevator opened, she popped out.

"Boo!"

"Ahhhhh," I screamed, playing my part in the plot though I'd noticed her long before she made her presence known.

"I scared you, mommy," she cheered and pointed.

"You did." Hand on my chest, I pretended to have a difficult time breathing.

I stepped into the elevator before the door closed, taking Talia by the hand. Her fingers curled around mine, serving as a quilt of comfort at a time that I needed it most. As if she was aware of the power of her affection, she tilted her head until it rested against my arm.

"I love you, mommy."

"I love you, too, bug."

two

. . .

CONFUSION PLAGUED ME. The fresh, bright red roses that rested inside the large vase that was cemented in the headstone was far from expected. In fact, they made the yellow ones that were dangling in my arms as my eyes darted across the gravesites that were in view of Tristian's memorial center look like shit.

My heart galloped a million miles a minute in my chest as I stared out into the open air from the enclosed space. Anxiety rode every wave in my brain, pushing me into pure oblivion. Everything was happening while nothing was happening at once. The familiar anxiousness didn't go unnoticed, but it was far from welcomed which was the reason I tried ignoring it.

"Daddy. Daddy?" Talia stated lowly as her little mind wondered if this moment was actually here. It was one that she'd secretly craved.

I couldn't ignore it any longer. It's presence was as valid as the man who caused it and always had. Talia's discovery was to my dismay, but I couldn't show it... not in front of her at least. She didn't deserve that. Not today or any day.

On the tips of my toes, I shifted until I'd turned one hundred and eighty degrees. And, there he stood waiting on Talia with open arms while crouched low enough for her to run right inside. That's exactly what she did. Ran into his outstretched arms until their chests collided and mine burst from both happiness and an inexplicable sadness that I'd managed to maintain over the last four years of his absence.

“Baby girl,” his words were forced, but only because they pained him to be released. It was obvious in his glossy eyes and from the veins that protruded in his forehead.

“Hi, daddy. Where have you been? I’ve been waiting for you,” Talia admitted and she was being very truthful. Each passing month, she wanted to know if it was the month that her father would finally come *home* with us. I’d never had the strength to deny her of that right, so I didn’t. Not verbally, anyway. Each month I told her that she needed to wait a little longer for their moment. And, now, it had finally came.

“Daddy... Daddy did some bad things and had to go away,” her father stumbled over his words, choosing to hug her instead of explaining any further.

“I know. Mommy told me,” she shared.

I had. My intentions were never to mislead Talia, especially in areas that taught life lessons. Her father’s imprisonment since the day she was born was one of those things. Our separation, well, I wasn’t sure how she could benefit from it yet which is why I avoided the topic as much as possible.

“Hi, mommy,” my ex greeted me, mocking our daughter. His eyes searched for mine. Unable to give him the satisfaction, I pulled down the shades that sat atop my head to conceal the pain that was ever so present. It never went away.

“Earphones, Talia,” I prompted, instructing her to go inside of her bag and put on her earphones.

“But, mommy, it’s not screen time, yet.”

“Let’s make an exception this one time, Bug.”

“Okay, mommy. Thank you, mommy!” She began, struggling to get the backpack from her shoulders while in her father’s arms.

The scene, him wrapping her in the same arms that I once loved, I’d waited for, for so long. Almost five years, the first seven months of them being during my pregnancy. The day that I gave birth to Talia, he was sent away to prison.

“Pria,” he spoke immediately after securing the headphones on Talia and letting her choose a cartoon from her iPad.

“True,” I acknowledged with a nod.

“She’s everything.”

There wasn’t a response to be given, so I didn’t even attempt. I remained silent as millions of thoughts rushed through my head at once. There were so many feelings... so many emotions.

“How are you, P?”

“If you came here to ask questions about me, then it’s best you leave. I won’t be answering any.”

“I came to visit our son,” he spoke, breaking the bit of me that was left standing.

Happy the shades were able to conceal my sadness, I turned back around until I was facing my son’s new roses, again. They were so beautiful. Just like him. Tears slid down my cheeks and I did little to stop them. Instead, I searched my small bag to retrieve the small pack of tissue papers that I’d brought on this trip with me faithfully.

“I’d like to spend this Christmas with Talia,” True spoke, voice a bit closer than it last was, confirming he’d closed most of the space between us. He stood beside me with his hands folded at his waist.

“She doesn’t even know you, True. Has never seen you in her life. Did you forget that you left us the day that they were born?”

“My heart won’t let me forget,” he stated, “And, Talia knows her father. It’s me that has to get to know her.”

“How do you figure, True?”

He’d always been this way. So full of himself. Arrogance. Cocky. Confident. Once upon a time, it had me creaming the center of my panties, but now i simply wanted to slap it out of his fucking genetic makeup. And, not just for that but for putting me through hell the last four years of my life.

“Because she has a good mother with a heart made of gold. It’s not in her nature to allow our child’s life to pass her by and she acts as if the child we created from love doesn’t have a father that loves the air she breathes... even if he’s never encountered her physically.”

“Fuck you, True!”

“When, because I haven’t had pussy since the last time I was in yours and I’m long overdue.”

Haughty. That was True.

“Were you not going to tell me that you’d been released? Hmmm? At least prepare me before coming to impose on my time with my son?”

“I deserved this time, too, Pria.”

“Really? Because the last time I checked, you are the reason we’re here to begin with.”

“I won’t let you do that to me... or you,” he shook his head and responded much too calm for my liking.

“Do that? Do what, True?”

“Place the blame for our son’s death on either of us. I didn’t wrap the cord around his neck and neither did you.”

Our son lived for five days after he was born with the machines breathing for him. With Talia and his birthday being on the nineteenth, visits to his grace five days later was always hard.

“But, stress... the stress of discovering that my fiancée was a drug lord and was being indicted on charges I couldn’t even pronounce did. When you got put into that car, I lost it and the stress of it all caused the twins to stress as well.”

“Still, Pria. Not our fault. The quicker you understand the power of God and his timing, you’ll understand that our story was already written before we tried to author it ourselves. Did I fuck up by not telling you about the things that I was into, yes. Is it the reason our son is not with us today, no. It was his time, P. When it’s our time, we will be subjected to the same.”

“I’m leaving, True,” I fussed, hating that he was always right and the way that his wisdom was always my weakness.

I hated the way I loved him, possibly even more now that so much time had passed us by without contact. I even hated the way my body responded to his presence, involuntarily. I wanted to cave knowing that now that he was home all would be well, but I couldn’t. I’d carried my own weight for the last four years and would continue.

“Christmas, Pria. I need that. This has been the shitiest four years of my life. From the woman no one could’ve told me would ever turn her back on me to the woman who pushed me from her pussy... shitted on me in that cell. If I could just spend an hour or two with Talia tomorrow, it’ll make it all worth it.”

“Maybe another day. We have plans. Talia!” I screamed loud enough for her to hear me over the cartoons she was watching. “Goodbye, True.”

three

. . .

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HIM, *Pria*. Besides your disapproval of his lifestyle, True was flawless and we both know it. It's the only reason I made sure that he didn't want a single thing while in that place... not even an updated picture of Talia. I'd send one before he could even ask. He and your father went up to that phone store after he picked him up day before yesterday to get him a new phone. Maybe you won't use it today, but don't stop Talia from using this number. He asked if I'd pass it along and I'm just doing my job.

My mother's words were still ringing in my ears though we had been gone from her home for over twenty minutes. With my eyes focused on the road and my hands gripping the steering wheel, I tried to come to terms with the fact that my mother had been taking such good care of True during his time away. It wasn't a surprise, however. She'd loved him since the day that he walked into my life. He made me happy and that made her happy.

Christmas, Pria. I need that. This has been the shitiest four years of my life. From the woman no one could've told me would ever turn her back on me to the woman who pushed me from her pussy... shitted on me in that cell. If I could just spend an hour or two with Talia tomorrow, it'll make it all worth it.

His words were loud and unavoidable, too. Admittedly, I'd decided to leave him at the worst possible moment of his life, but what else was I to do. For four years, I'd been told that the love of my life owned and operated a lucrative construction

company just to discover that it was all a front for his drug operation. The day they picked him up was the day that my life was turned upside down, starting with me prematurely delivering our twins and our son being strangled to death by the umbilical cord.

Pulling into the iron gates of my home, I considered everything my mother and my ex had left me with. Since parting ways with True, I had been a wreck. We'd spent the entire morning and half the evening at my parent's home celebrating Christmas. By the time we settled into the car and headed home, Talia was toast. She'd been asleep for the last twenty minutes and I had no plans to wake her up. It was one of those moments you'd rather sit in silence with the engine running while your kid slept in the backseat. This moment, I truly needed. My mind hadn't stopped racing since seeing True's handsome face.

Jail had done him justice. His paper sack skin, trimmed beard, large rounds, and sturdy frame were as enticing as I remembered them, but even more. Admittedly, I'd missed waking up to him. I secretly waited for the day that he'd be released to witness the dynamic he and his daughter would share and from the looks of my porch, I wasn't wrong about my assumptions.

"Oh, God, True. What have you done?" I whispered, trying my hardest to maintain my composure and not wake a sleeping Talia just yet.

Flooded with neatly wrapped gifts, my porch had been buried. The evidence was clear and the culprit was the father of my sleeping beauty in the back. With a shake of the head, I gnawed at the flesh of my jaw.

"Ugh," I groaned.

He wasn't playing fair. Not one bit. For one, he knew that there was no chance in hell that I could carry them all inside alone. Secondly, there was no way that I would deprive him from seeing the cheer on her face as she opened them all. Lastly, I could use the moment of quiet time as the two bonded over baby dolls and fake fine china sets.

After four long years, there was someone besides my parents that I trusted Talia with. It didn't matter how long he'd been gone, True was a father. Even from behind bars, he was still our provider. He'd made it clear the day that we discovered our pregnancy that I wouldn't work another day in my life as long as he was alive.

He'd kept that promise. My home, car, and bank accounts were courtesy of him and his dirty money. Though the thought was repulsive, it provided my daughter with a life of luxury that I was appreciative of. He'd waited on the arrival of our twins with just as much excitement as me. He was ecstatic about our son, but the joy he got knowing that he'd get a girl too was painfully beautiful.

"God, True," I felt the tears welling up in my eyes, "Why couldn't you just do the right thing? Ugh." I forced them back.

This is not about you, Pria. It's about Talia. It's about Talia.

The last thing I wanted was to deprive True or Talia any longer than necessary. I didn't have it in me and neither did I have the right. I'd been the only parent she'd experienced since birth. It was finally time to share the baton in this race. As much as I didn't want to, I knew I had to call her father. This walk wasn't mine alone, anymore. I had his help, now. Though he hadn't verbalized it, I knew this. That was just the man I'd fallen in love with all those years ago.

It's about Talia. I continued to repeat in my head as I unlocked my cell and retrieved the number my mother had given me. He picked up on the second ring, obviously eager, but equally calm.

"Pria," he already knew.

"I can't carry all of these things in the house and Talia, too," I complained.

"Say less. I'm on my way back."

"And, True."

"Yeah?"

“It’s a little overboard.”

“I missed four years. It ain’t e-fucking-nough in my book. I could’ve done better,” he stated as a matter of fact before ending the call.

I hated the way my patience began to wear thin, suddenly. The phone had barely touched my lap before I was checking my rearview to see if True had made it, what he was driving, and how good he looked getting out of it. Prison had only paused his life. It hadn’t stopped it. I knew that from the faithful deposits to my account monthly.

Maybe this isn’t all about Talia. I finally admitted as I felt the puddle form on the surface of my cotton panties.

four

. . .

IT WAS after six when True pulled into the driveway of the home we used to share. The Mercedes wasn't a surprise to me. I drove one, too. They were his favorite cars and he'd gotten me to fall in love with their luxury so many years ago. I'd never betray the brand as long as I live. I loved everything they made.

"She's sleeping," I rushed out as I headed in True's direction with my pointy finger at my lip.

"I like what you've done to your hair, P. And, that post baby body ain't shit to be played with. You're still as beautiful as ever, baby love," he rubbed his hands together to ignite the heat within his system. It was cold out and he'd always suffered from an iron deficiency.

"It's cold out. You need my jacket?" Forever a gentleman, he offered.

"Thanks and no thanks. We both know you need that jacket more than I do," I reminded him.

"Since you know what I need so much then tell me this... why haven't you figured out the obvious?"

"And, what's that, True?" I shook my head, assuming what his answer was already.

"That I need my family," he confirmed what I was already thinking.

"My bladder is weakening and I need to get to the bathroom. You can start by carrying Talia to her bed. Then, I'll

be out of the bathroom and able to help you bring the stuff in after that. I'm not sure that she'll wake up tonight so it's probably best that you tried back in the morning if you're wanting her to open the gifts with you in attendance."

"Yeah. I'd like that a lot," True nodded after I'd dodged his question. "Go ahead in the house. I got this. Toss the sheets back in her bed so that I can lay her in when I get up there. Same room we made the nursery?"

"Yes, same room," I released with a sigh. *Memories.*

**

No matter how much I egged myself on, I couldn't bring myself to exit my bedroom with True in my house. Not with the way his gray jogging suit was hugging the head of his dick or the way the scully hung from his head as if it would fall at any minute. Calling him over and allowing him inside was possibly the worst decision I'd made in years. It was the runner up with me deciding to cut all communication with him the day that he left me in the free world while he started his bid.

I watched the clock religiously, counting up until a full hour had passed. I figured it to be safe to check his progress before seeing him out of the door. An hour was enough time to have everything inside and be ready to head out of the door. To my surprise, I couldn't find True at all when I searched nearly the entire first floor. It wasn't until I made it to the kitchen that I found him helping himself to a shot of Hennessy.

"I see old habits die hard," True chuckled before tossing the shot back. He'd turned me onto Hennessy and the way he'd tossed his shot back was reminding me why.

"What are you doing, True?"

"I'm waiting to talk to you. I know you thought staying your pretty ass up in the room would save us both, but I'm ready to jump in the fire with you. I know you've got shit to

get off your chest, so spill it.” He poured himself another shot. I watched as he tossed that one and another back before looking at me, again.

“I don’t have anything to say,” I lied.

“Since when did you become a liar,” he asked.

“I’m not.”

“Then tell me the truth when I ask this next question.”

Shrugging, I waited for the question he was going to ask. The night slip that I wore was breathable and appreciated. Had it been anything else, I would’ve sweated it out with him staring over at me while he poured another shot.

“Don’t you miss me, P?”

Though I knew what to answer, I didn’t want to answer. He didn’t deserve that piece of information. I’d suffered for the last four years because I missed him so damn much but he didn’t have to know that. So, instead of responding, I waved the question off with my left hand.

“I need an answer, P. Cause a nigga miss the fuck out of you, baby love. I can’t even hold you. I’ve been sick as a dog for the last four years. The only thing that kept me from catching any more cases while in that fucking cage was the fact that I was trying to make it back *home*... to you. And, now that I’m here, you act like you don’t even want a nigga.”

“I do,” I spilled before I could stop myself. Immediately, regret consumed me, but I had no time to react. Not with True stomping his way toward me at an alarming speed. And, not at the sight of his long, thick and brown dick that dangled between his legs as he pushed his pants down toward his ankles.

“Then bend the fuck over and show me that you do, baby love. Daddy misses that pussy.”

I folded. And, I folded hard. Very hard. Embarrassingly so, too. I could only shame my damn self as my hands stretched the length of the island that sat in the middle of the kitchen as True stood behind me. Lubrication of any kind wasn’t

necessary as my pussy had been wet since our first encounter the day prior. Just like True, I hadn't experienced anyone since him.

"Tell me this is what you want, Pria," True pleaded, massaging my clit from behind. He knew just what to do and exactly how to do it. Being the man who'd taken my virginity, he'd taught me everything I knew about myself and my sex.

"Because if it's not, then I'll walk away tonight and never come at you sideways again. But, if you let me in this pussy and I stay, I'm never leaving."

"Stay," I responded, soaking from my center and impatiently waiting for him to enter me from behind. The wait was driving me insane.

"Stay?"

"Yes, stay *home*," I confirmed.

The magic words led his long, healthy rod straight into my sea. I coated him with my juices on the very first stroke. The second one ignited my sensitivity, silently acknowledging the fact that I wouldn't last long. From the profanity that True let off behind me, neither would he.

"You always liked your shit from the back, huh, P?"

"Just like that," I encouraged, gripping the island edges for support as I pushed back into my lover.

"Don't do that shit, baby love. I ain't got but a few strokes in me."

"That's fine, because we've got all night," I reminded him. "You're *home*."

five

. . .

FLIP IT.

Twist it.

Hit it.

Pull it.

Suck it.

Fuck it.

True treated my body like a Bop-It. Stroking me ever so gently while confessing his undying love for me. We were pathetic, tears meshing together as we protested our separation with promises to never part again. He'd even promised me a do-over as for our engagement, but only after he made up for the four years he'd been out of our lives.

Listening to all the good things that were in store for me on top of experiencing the best dick on God's green earth, I was done for. Whatever True wanted in my bed, he got. That included the sloppiest head that I could muster that had him nutting down my throat as he pulled my hair from the scalp.

I rolled over, expecting to discover a hard chest to rest my head on, but was surprised to find the space beside me empty. The clock on the other side of the bed displayed the time in big, bright numbers on the nightstand. It was going on five in the morning. I'd been sleep since around eleven. That's how long True and I had managed to tangle within the sheets before we both tapped out.

Every part of my body ached from the long, unexpected night I'd had. My pussy wasn't much better. Sore from the activity, but still functional. True was vicious with his slow, deliberate strokes that handicapped me upon receiving each one and nothing had changed in all the years he'd been away.

I couldn't help the smile that was smeared on my face - possibly even in my sleep - when I rose from the bed to go find him. My first stop was the kitchen where he loved to hide out. Unfortunately, he wasn't there. Then, I ventured down a level to visit the cave that he'd decorated himself years prior. I still hadn't changed anything in the room. In a way, I guess it meant that I was waiting for him to take his rightful place in it all this time. He wasn't there.

After searching high and low for him, I realized there was one place I hadn't looked. I pushed the door open to Talia's bedroom to find the two of them curled up together under her princess blanket. True was much too big for her bed, but it was obvious that neither of them cared. My heart swelled in my chest as I stared at the site before me. It was then that I realized my dreams had finally come *True* and I could admit to myself how happy I was to have them staring me back in the face.

Closing the door to Talia's room, I danced down the hallway with one thing on my mind.

Daddy's home.

The end.

story #3 | 31st

...

Nova + Tripp

strangers to ??

one

. . .

THE WAY the winds whipped my face as I tried turning my head in the opposite direction of their fierceness was extremely dramatic if you asked me. My sparkly thigh high boots did little to shield my legs and thighs from the Channing winter night. To make matters worse, I'd chosen the shortest dress on the rack because of them. While inside of the party, one would assume I had legs for days and that was the goal. But, standing outside as I headed toward the subway entry in the Huff Street foot traffic, I didn't want these legs any longer.

The holiday party that the company I'd given four years of my life to had the nerve to be at the butt of the month instead of early December or late November like the others. I wasn't complaining much because I'd enjoyed the eve of the new year much better than I'd intended prior to getting the invitation a week ago. Hadn't I, then I'd be sitting near the window, staring out into the snowy streets while sipping a steaming cup of cocoa. Though dreamy, the event was much preferred. It helped me to finally live out the New Year plans that I always said I would see through but never did.

"Shit," I huffed, "It's cold."

Suddenly, the train seemed miles away though it was just a few feet and a descending staircase away. Since I'd moved to Channing eight years ago, I hadn't found the need to buy a car, but winters always made me reconsider that decision. I had a bike that I loved as well as a motorized scooter that did the job when I was too lazy to catch the train. However, I was always able to wrap myself in multiple layers. Trying to be cute

tonight had completely disregarded my health concerns and I was kicking myself in the ass for that. I'd surely be sick by the time I woke in the morning.

"Nova." I thought I heard.

Stopping in my tracks, I immediately began searching for the source in the sea of people passing me by. After a brief pause and no luck, I continued. With the shivering my body was undergoing, I didn't have even a few seconds to waste wondering or searching. The quicker I was on the heated train and on my way home, the better for me. Before I could manage a second step, I heard my name being called again. This time, it was easier locating the source because it was right in front of me.

"Tripp?" I questioned, though I knew exactly who he was, "I mean... Mr. Launder?"

Quickly correcting myself, I remembered the boundaries necessary for our healthy work environment. I could feel my cheeks flush, but this time it wasn't because of the low temperature. It was purely because I'd managed to embarrass myself every time this man set foot in my sights. Heck, even when he wasn't. A simple phone conversation during our work day had me stumbling and falling on my face.

"Cut the bullshit, Nova," he chuckled, lightening the awkwardness of my spill.

"Get in," his silky smooth voice serenaded me, fighting against the howling winds.

"It's fine, the train should-," I started, but was quickly shut down.

"Get in," he requested again. This time firmer, with a stern gaze as he held the door of his enormous truck open.

"I..." I tried once more to save myself and save my soul because if I had one too many minutes alone with this man I might not leave the same way I'd come.

"I lift two-forty, currently. You're a feather in comparison. Get in, Nova. I'm cold as fuck and I've only been out for a few seconds. I'm certain you could use some heat."

This time, Tripp hadn't stayed in position. The foot traffic had magically parted as I imagined the Red Sea had once upon a bible story. Suddenly, he was in front of me while his truck door hung open. His confidence assured me that he wasn't worried about the desperate criminals looking for a come up near the holidays. Without looking back, he extended his overturned hand and welcomed my palm inside.

His bowed legs, chestnut skin, and musky cologne had me so woozy that I barely flinched from the current that soared through my veins as our fingers intertwined. The magnetic force that his presence propelled guided me forward, giving me little time to catch my breath or get my bearings together. I felt like a lost puppy. Hell, a stringed puppet, even, as I was pulled along. I wobbled to the car at his request, unsure of anything.

Seconds prior, I was aware that I'd be home in a few minutes, stuffing my face with prevention medicines, elderberry syrup, and an herbal tea concoction. Now, I wanted to ride the wheels of his insanely long truck until they fell off. Sadly, he'd never hear those words come from my mouth, so I'd be just fine if my home was where he dropped me in the next few minutes as planned.

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NOVA NETHERS.

The most valuable player on the Launder and the Public team and I wasn't just tossing that shit into the air because I wanted her to be the same for my personal joint. But, she was. She was truly a blessing to my firm and that was the sole reason I'd kept my paws to myself and *tried* to keep my eyes on my own computer. Tonight, though, that shit had come to a screeching halt.

The company party I'd cooked up last minute was an indirect attempt to get Nova out of her place after I'd overheard her complaining to one of the girls in the office about never living up to her holiday plans. For once, I wanted her to get out of the house and enjoy herself. As well, I wanted the chance to see Nova during the week-long gap that we had before returning to the office after the holidays.

As fucked up as it may have sounded, she was the only reason my attendance at the office was perfect. The few shots that I called could be done from home. Without me, my business could still thrive, which is how I'd structured it. However, my week didn't go well if I didn't get my Nova fix to start it off and end it with.

The day she strutted into my office demanding a higher salary than I offered and conditions that included the reinforcing of work/personal boundaries, I knew I had to have her. And, though she was well-qualified, it was part of the reason I hired her. I needed Nova around. I realized it the minute she left my office and my heart felt like it had been

bulldozed. The same day before shutting the floor down, I sent her a personal email welcoming her to the team before the rest of the team had a chance to send over the new offer letter according to her accommodations.

Since, a nigga had been walking into the office on needles, hoping it wasn't a day that Nova decided not to show. Though I typically received time off requests first, emergencies happened. But, since the day she'd started at the company, like me, she hadn't taken a single day to herself. I figured that was why I was at peace watching her sleep in my passenger seat. I hated to even wake her, and I hadn't for the last hour, but I had to. The way that her neck was twisted and her mouth hung open, it was obvious that she needed a bed.

Old ass, I shook my head. Baby girl hadn't even gotten a chance to bring the new year in because was knocked. It was twenty minutes until twelve and she just couldn't make it. I didn't blame her because had I been alone, I'd be on my way to bed, too. That wild shit, I'd lived that. I was ready to settle and though she didn't know it yet, she'd be the one I settled with.

Seeing her wrapped in the tiny mini dress and boots that came up toward her inner thighs, I knew that I was toast for the night. I hadn't seen her since we shut the office down the day before Christmas Eve and that had been too fucking long. Now that she was here, sleeping in my ride, I didn't want her to leave. Ever.

"Nova," I nudged before adjusting her neck. I'd imagine it would need an ice pack the next morning. "Nova, baby, get up," slipped from my lips but it felt too good to retract.

"Huh?" The same words that felt foreign to my lips penetrated her, waking her on contact. She woke, dazed and confused. "Where are we?"

"The parking garage of my loft. I hope you don't mind. You weren't ready to go home, and I refused to make you. So, I hope you don't mind."

"I don't," she assured me, "I don't mind."

“Yeah?” I asked as I listened intently at the change of pace in my heartbeat.

“No. Of course not. I just didn’t know how to tell you that,” she chuckled slightly as she pushed her hair behind her ear to expose her side profile. She was heavenly. The warm, earthy darkness of her brown skin and her natural curls as big as they came.

“Ah, me either,” I put into the atmosphere, causing her head to snap in my direction.

“Me either?” She responded, eyes wide and eager for more.

“I guess I haven’t made it abundantly clear... that I’m bout ready to stop fucking around and be that nigga that you keep fantisizing about with the other chicks in the office. I’ve heard your requests and they’re not too much to ask from a nigga. In fact, baby girl, I think you should be asking for more. Love, loyalty, and respect is just the minimum.”

“Am I always loud enough for the entire office to hear?” She questioned, face flushing a crimson color from sheer shame.

“Na, I’m just invested when it comes to studying my subject.”

“So, what else have you learned, Mr. Launder?”

“Though I like the way that shit roll from your tongue, I hate when you call me that. It reminds me of these fake ass boundaries that we should’ve crossed a long fucking time ago.”

“What else have you learned?” She reiterated, noting and bypassing my statement.

“That you spend your holidays alone,” I informed her. “And, I didn’t want that happening this time.”

“Which is why you threw together a last minute holiday gather...” It finally hit her.

“And to see you. I haven’t since we left the office before Christmas Eve. Though this happens every year, something

about this year killed a nigga. I hated Christmas,” I shared.

“I hated Christmas,” she retorted, “It was... *lonely*.” She finished with a chuckle.

“Which is why I had to have you in my presence for the New Year.”

“Did it help?” She wondered aloud, eyes glistening as she spoke.

“I think it just made shit worse,” I reclined, fully intending to get some shit off my chest before either of us stepped foot outside, “I mean, look where we are. Once I got you in my ride, I had no plans of taking you home. I’m not even sure why I asked. I wanted you with me, been wanting you with me since the day I met you. The old saying goes something like, how you bring the new year in is how your new year will be.”

“I’ve heard something similar,” she agreed.

“Well, I made it my business to bring that shit in with you because every year before I hadn’t and that got me nowhere. As simple as it was to come holler at you, I needed to make sure all of my ducks were in a row.”

“You seem to have it all figured out, Tripp. Your ducks are certainly aligned.”

“But, not yours. Me not stepping to you doesn’t have much to do with me but everything to do with you. I’m not a selfish nigga and I know what type of woman I’m dealing with. The day I voiced my plans with you, I’d lose you as my best fucking employee even if I gained you as a partner. In that situation, I win and you lose. I wanted a win, win.”

“So, why not? Because we both know there’s no way I can work alongside of you knowing what I know now.”

“With me telling you what you already knew,” I paused to watch her reaction. She wasn’t a fool. The shit was obvious, even if I’d never voiced it.

“Ok, well, that’s fair,” she sniggered with a shake of her head, “But, still, my resignation is coming.”

“It’s already been approved.”

four

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“EXCUSE ME?” I squinted, not comprehending what Tripp was saying. Not comprehending anything really. He’d hit me like a Mac truck with his confessions and was running over my dead corpse as he continued to spill.

“You no longer work for Launder and the Public, as of January 1st,” he confirmed.

“I’m sorry. I don’t understand. Losing my job over a silly crush was never in the plan, Tripp.” Suddenly, this wasn’t so fucking funny anymore. I had bills to pay, a lifestyle to maintain, and a savings to keep dumping the rest of my money into.

“A silly crush?” He scoffed, offended, “I’m a grown ass man and ain’t shit silly about me.”

A bout of silence covered the truck as we both sat with our thoughts for mere seconds before I couldn’t stay quiet any longer.

“I don’t understand.”

“Maybe not now, but you will. I’ve watched the way you move and the way you handle business in the office. You’re phenomenal at what you do. That’s why I took the liberty of setting some shit up for you myself.”

Tripp reached underneath his seat, grabbing a stack of papers that were bunched in an envelope for protection. When he sat them in my lap, I came to the realization that they all had my name in bold print. Nethers PR. On every page, it read

so well. I'd played around with the name for years, hoping that one day I'd get the guts to actually make it happen, but I hadn't yet. But, Tripp... he had done it for me.

"Everything is in motion. You've brought a shitload of contacts to the firm and I want you to know that they're all yours now. Every one of them have been notified of your new venture and are waiting in your new business email with congratulations and referrals. Again, maybe you don't understand now, but you will."

Stunned into silence, I simply looked from Tripp to the papers in my hand and then back to his aggravatingly calm features. I was losing my shit on the inside while he continued to lay in peace as if he hadn't just handed me the keys to my future.

"Business accounts, tax shit... You have to do it all yourself but everything else is in motion. I'm sending Tia over with you since that's your girl and you work so well together. She's still on salary with us, so she's free to you for the next twelve months. That Huff Street dream office that you've been designing on your Pinterest board during work hours, done."

He leaned the folder to the side and a ring with key fobs fell onto my lap. Still speechless, I could do no more than stare at the man before me. Everything I'd imagined him to be he was thus far. My waiting had not been in vain.

"Is there anything else your heart desires, Nova? Cause, I'm trying to make it happen. Happy wife, happy life, right? Ain't that what niggas say?"

"Wife?" I finally found a word to say.

"Someday soon, hell fucking yes. What you thought I would do all of this shit just to be your boyfriend for the rest of our lives? Nah. Happy wife, happy life. That's the shit I'm trying to tell my niggas every chance I get."

"I don't know what to say, Tripp?"

"Then say nothing. I know it's a lot so I'm not looking for many words in return. I'm just grateful to be in your presence at the moment. We can sit in silence for the rest of the night."

“Thank you,” I fought back tears and nodded.

“You’re welcome.”

“How did you know, though?”

“Know what?”

“That I would be your girl?”

“I haven’t asked, yet, so I don’t.” He chuckled.

I reached over and sucker punched him in the arm.

“Oh, wow. She’s violent. Maybe I should reconsider this shit,” he joked.

“I’m serious.”

Sliding closer and eliminating the nagging space that was between us, I waited for an answer.

“I didn’t. My heart did. Always has known,” he shrugged. “Patience. I just needed to practice that shit.” Wrapping his arm around my frame, he asked, “So, you riding with a nigga or what?”

five

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“UMMM HMMM,” Nova looked me square in my eyes as her hand massaged my inner thigh until it graced the head of my dick.

“Nova,” I warned, scooting back as much as my seat would allow, “That’s not necessary.”

The last thing I wanted was for her to feel as if she owed me something in return. Not even her loyalty was considered payback. Any decisions she made from this moment forward, I wanted to be because she desired. What I did for her was not a method of influence, but one of insurance. I wanted to make sure that her bag was secured regardless and the exact boundaries she’s laid out the day that she interviewed were never crossed.

“I know. It’s needed,” she assured me, “And, it’s something I’ve been fantasizing about for far too long. I guess you never heard that part of our conversations?”

“The part where you kept mentioning the bad sex from the niggas who didn’t stand a chance or the lack of sex you’ve had in the last year? Which part?”

“Both, which means you understand that you have to work overtime to make sure that I’m good and satisfied, right?” She purred, unbuckling the belt of my slacks with ease.

“Right here?”

“Name a better place? You said the way you bring the new year in is how... you know how the saying goes. And, well,

Tripp, I want you to bring the new year inside of me,” Nova moaned as she pulled my dick from my boxers without assistance.

Admittedly, she was blowing my fucking mind.

“Four minutes to midnight,” she announced before lowering her head into my lap.

“Nooooooooooooova,” I groaned in response to her hot tongue against my meat. “What the fuck, baby girl? What the fuck are you dooooooing?” I wanted to know. She was beyond wild for the shit she was pulling and I couldn’t help but feel like she had one up on me. The business and new office didn’t seem like so much as my dick met the back of her throat. I should’ve thrown in a fucking house, too.

“Killing time,” she managed through the insane amount of saliva her throat produced.

My fucking God, baby girl, my toes curled in my Gucci loafers.

My fingers dug into her curls, gripping a handful while pushing her head further onto my sword. Her throat bled for me as she gagged, only releasing that thick, bubbly saliva that I loved to see. Nova was a beast, unafraid to get sloppy when she sucked dick and that was my type of shit. Needing to feel her lips on mine, I pulled her head in my direction until our eyes met.

“My dick gets a kiss before I do?”

“He kind of asked,” she bit her bottom lip while putting her hand to work. She massaged my dick, never missing a beat as she replaced her mouth. I wasn’t sure which of the motherfuckers felt better.

“Oh, yeah?” I poked, “What did the nigga say?”

“Suck me, Nova... then, I want you to fuck me,” she responded without shame, nearly breaking my shit. I was hard as a rock.

“Kiss me,” I encouraged, desperate to feel her lips on mine.

Before doing so, I felt her switch positions. It wasn't until she'd straddled me completely that she lowered her lips. Simultaneously, I felt the warmth of her pussy being lowered onto me. As our tongues danced, Nova broke way, leading me into her oasis where I never wanted to leave. She felt incredible. She felt like a dream and she once was. But a nigga was woke and this was reality.

"You feel so good inside of me," Nova proclaimed, finally removing her coat and then her dress. Her small, round breast barely moved as she slid up and down my pole. Her body was perfection and for the rest of my life, I would be blessed to share it with her. I wanted forever and forever with Nova and the way she was fucking me, she wanted the same shit with me.

"I'm clean," she added, "okay?"

"Me, too," I claimed, knowing that I was free of any diseases or infections that could harm her.

Nova hadn't been sexually active in over a year. I'd known the facts due to the inappropriate conversations she was forever having with Tia in her office. While she was discreet, Tia was the complete opposite. Everything Nova told her, she repeated out loud. Nova hated it, but for my studies... I was appreciative.

Reclining my seat a bit more, I gave Nova the room she needed to do whatever she wanted with me. When the time came, I would handle my shit, but for now she had a point to prove. I planned to let her prove that motherfucker. Besides, the way that her ass bounced as she pounced on my dick, I wanted to sit back and enjoy the view. And what a view it was.

From her buttery skin that looked like she drowned it in the finest, purest oils to her dark ringlets with the light tips, her facecard was valid forever in my book. As I continued to explore her body, I was a mess after noticing the nipple piercings. Because her jewelry was the same color as her nipple, I'd missed it in the beginning. I thought back to our time at the office and wondered how I'd missed those. Then, I realized she'd always worn a blazer or something to cover her

arms. She was always cold and complaining about the low temperatures of the office.

“Shit, Nova.” Squeezing her small breasts into the palms of my hands sent her over the edge. She bowed out gracefully on the dick, looking me square in the eyes as she came for me... came on me.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Triiiiiiiiiiiiiip,” she gushed from above and below.

Utilizing the moment, I grabbed her by the waist with both hands and slammed her onto me, slowly and methodically, over and over until I felt my peak nearing. She was so damn sexy, riding me through her wave and even after it had subsided. Her pussy was dripping, allowing her to glide as I guided her movements.

“I’m bout to cum, Nova,” I warned.

Suddenly, her movements stopped. Puzzled, I wondered what the hell she was doing until I felt her heels flat against the seat on both sides of me. Once she was balanced, Nova placed her hands on my shoulders and returned her gaze. Eye to eyes, we tried contacting one another’s soul.

“This is mine, Tripp,” she preached, “Okay?”

Like the pudding I was in her hands, I nodded.

“Say it,” she demanded. “Tell me this dick is mine.” Nova was blowing my mind with her kinkiness and appetite for sex. She knew what she wanted and she went for it. The female version of me. I loved that for her and I damn sure loved that for me. This was her moment, so I’d let her shine knowing that I’d get the same treatment in return when I had her ass dazed from my deep strokes.

“This motherfucker yours, baby girl, and it’s bout to cum.”

In her shiny ass boots, Nova fucked me into a frenzy. I couldn’t control a single limb on my body as it began to spasm beneath her. She continued riding me, using her pussy muscles to pull every drop of semen from me with skill.

“Ummmmm,” she sang, patting my lips with hers.

“You’re playing a dangerous game Ms. Nova.”

“By playing it well enough, maybe I’ll be Mrs. a little sooner than later.”

“Without hesitation,” I agreed.

“Happy New Year,” she wished me before climbing out of my lap and leaving me limp like a ragdoll.

For the first time in my life, I felt like I’d gotten fucked and I’d loved every second of that shit. The 31st would forever be etched in my brain and I could honestly say that a nigga would never be the same.

Damn, she’s left me no other choice but to knock her ass up, STAT.

**story #4 | now that we're
here**

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Leah + Miller

second chance romance

one

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LEAH

“Maybe I’ll have just one more,” I shrugged as I signaled for the bartender. I was on drink number three and seriously close to my limit.

“Why not, you’ve already had like six,” Sherry responded with a snigger.

“Oh, liar. It’s only been three. This will make four,” I corrected.

“I don’t get it. It’s been what? sixteen years? What’s the big deal? Y’all both old and wrinkled now. I’m sure he is far from the man you remember, anyway. Possibly got a pot belly, face full of grays, and five kids running around the world. Meanwhile, you can’t even enjoy our 20-year class reunion because you’re worried about seeing him,” she fussed, upset that I was ruining her good time.

With three children and a husband at home, she was happy to get out of the house. Me, on the other hand, was a hopeless romantic who hadn’t run into a single man that could provide the love I desired. At least not in comparison to one that was causing me to drink past my limit and overthink every aspect of my life and night. Sherry had stopped me from walking out of the door at least twice. She’d practically dragged me from the coziness of my home.

“Maybe you don’t remember the same Miller that I remember. Because, if you do then we both know that he has neither. We’re not 68. We’re 38, Sherry. A kid or two, maybe, but the rest of it is total bull,” I shook my head as the bartender came into full view.

“What can I get for you?”

“Another lemon drop. Don’t go easy on the alcohol. I could use it,” I sighed, rotating my head between my shoulders.

“I know. I guess I just wanted to ease the tension you’re feeling, Leah. You’re so uptight right now and I desperately need you to relax so that I can do the same. Do you know how often I’m able to come out alone and enjoy a few hours of fun without my children, husband, or an errand list for my children and husband? I can’t even remember!”

“You’re right,” I settled, knowing damn well that my girl deserved this night, “I’m sorry.”

“No need to be sorry. Apologize by getting your act together, because I truly need this night. It’s my little reset. I don’t get those often.”

“Yes ma’am,” I nodded, picking up my lemon drop from the dark-stained wood of the bar, “Ummmm.” It was just as good as the last one, possibly even better. I turned around to see Sherry’s eyes lost on the screen of her phone.

With a hiss from her lips, she shut it down and returned her attention to our conversation.

“Is everything okay?” I asked, sensing the shift in her energy immediately.

Peering into the distance, she nodded. “It will be... for me. But, for you... I doubt it.” Nodding toward the door, Sherry warned me of the impending threat to my entire existence.

Miller Thorton.

He was the first of many for me.

First boyfriend.

First sexual experience.

First fiancé.

First husband.

First pregnancy.

First heartbreak.

First divorce.

First regret in love.

Before I could wrap my head around how fucking fine he looked walking through the door, I gulped the drink in hand. Turning around, I signaled for the bartender to give me another. Yes, I was past my two drink limit, but I didn't give a damn at this point. I needed the liquor courage to get through the night.

“This isn't fair. Why hasn't he aged a day since we were in our early twenties?” I huffed, nudging Sherry.

“I don't know what that man is drinking or eating but I need the secret,” Sherry shook her head, in awe just as I was.

“Pussy,” I assured her, “And, he does it so well.” Even the thought had my knees quivering.

Sherry choked on the measly drink she'd been nursing all night. I was more than certain it was now watered down just the way she preferred it. My bestie was a true mother and wanted to stay sober so that she could get me home and get back to her family in one piece. I respected it, which was why I was drinking enough for the both of us.

“What? It's true,” I shrugged as I took a sip of my new lemon drop.

“That doesn't mean I wanted to hear it,” Sherry replied, pulling her phone to her face, again.

Not seeing Miller on social media or out in public since he'd left Channing years ago was just unfair. Neither of us were prepared for the figure feet away from us. Apparently Ashley Reed wasn't either, because she was all over him the minute he stepped in.

“Of course she is all up in his grill,” I gagged, sarcastically, rolling my eyes in the process.

“Well, he doesn’t seem too happy about it because he is headed straight this way,” Sherry announced.

When my line of sight straightened, I nearly lost every drop of piss in my bladder. She was right. Miller was on his way to us. To me. And, for the life of me, I couldn’t figure out why the hell I couldn’t move my body suddenly.

two

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Miller

I was beginning to believe the saying that milk does the body good was a myth because Leah was lactose intolerant. However, her body seemed to have gotten better with time. From the insanely defined curves to the maturing of her facial features, I was digging every fucking thing about her.

It had been a full sixteen years since I'd laid eyes on her, but seeing Leah tonight was worth the exaggerated wait. Of course Sherry, her sidekick, wasn't far behind and I knew that I'd have to dig my way into their circle to get a little space with Leah. However, that was fine by me. She was the only reason I'd bothered coming to the damn reunion. According to my life and the way my heart was set up, it was time to stop running from what we both knew was real.

"Leah Jamerson," I started, standing in front of the pair.

"Miller Thorn," she returned, then took another sip from her drink.

"Sherry," I acknowledged, but she was so busy with her phone that she barely returned the gesture.

"Hey, Miller," she quickly replied with a wave.

"Leah, you mind if I had a minute of your time?" I proceeded.

“That depends, Miller. I gave you so much of it already and uh... That didn’t end well,” she countered, obviously feeling the drink she was guzzling.

“And, who’s fault was that, again?” I questioned, placing both arms in front of me and tucking them into one another.

“Nobody’s,” she nagged, not wanting to state the obvious.

“That’s what I thought. I just figured you knew something I didn’t or had developed some new information.” I teased. “So, though we’ve already had much of one another’s time, I’m asking for a little more. Can I have that?”

“I mean...” She hesitated, “I guess you can. But, let me grab another drink first.”

“Stay here. I’ll grab it for you. Lemon drop?”

“Yes. Lemon drop,” Leah confirmed as she handed me her empty glass.

From the slight slur in her words to the looseness of her movements, I knew that she had reached her limit. However, with Sherry and I at her side, I knew that she had nothing to worry about. She needed to enjoy herself. If Leah was anything like the woman I’d married at the budding age of eighteen then she was still busting her ass daily. She could use the break.

When I returned to her side, Sherry had made her way over to where we stood. The two were so enthralled in their conversation that they hadn’t heard me sneak up. Once I heard what they were chatting about, I handed Leah her drink in silence so that I didn’t interfere.

“I feel like I can’t have even a night to myself. Jeffery texted three times and just called when you walked off.”

“What’s the matter? Are the boys okay?”

“According to him, Jr. is wheezing and needs a breathing treatment before he goes to bed. I told him to make them come inside when I left or they’d be overstimulated and of course he didn’t listen. They didn’t come inside until Jr. came in complaining of chest pains. Now, I have to get out of here so

that I can make sure he's good," Sherry complained, "I'm sorry, boo."

"It's fine. I can just swallow this last drink really quickly and we can be on our way," Leah grabbed the drink from my hand and started sipping.

"I can't take you home, Leah. It's on the other side of town and Jr. is already having issues breathing. I have to get to him as soon as possible. I'll pay for you an Uber or whatever your preferred ride is. I'm so sorry friend," Sherry was so apologetic.

"Noooo. No. Don't apologize. Your babies come first. I'll be fine. I'm going to go ahead and request a Carriage now. I think I'm waaaaay pass my limit friend. I need to go to the HOUSE!" Leah emphasized.

"I'll take her," I spoke up.

"Huh?" Leah huffed, turning to face me. The lack of control of her limbs told me everything I needed to know about her state.

"I said I'll take you. I'm not letting you get into anyone's car in the state that you're in unless it's mine or Sherry's. And, I don't want to hear your shit, either. You really have no room for objections here. You're drunk."

"She is," Sherry agreed, "I'm going to get out of here. Call me when you make it home, okay?"

"I guess," Leah shrugged as she spoke.

"Goodbye," Sherry chuckled, knowing that Leah was good and fucking drunk.

"Sooooo, what?" Leah started as soon as Sherry walked off.

"Huh?"

"You said you wanted some of my time. So, what?" She bobbed her head between her shoulders, still as beautiful as I recalled. The royal blue dress made her pretty brown skin pop.

“It’s loud in here. I was thinking maybe we could go upstairs where it’s a little quieter?”

“It’s a hotel, Miller. There’s nowhere upstairs for us to go.”

“My room. I booked my room here for the weekend. Can we go there and talk?”

“Shit. Why not? My feet are killing me in these So Kates and I’m really, really tired of smiling for these people. I wish I was home in my bed,” she admitted.

“Same fucking Leah. Introverted but won’t ever admit it.”

“Because I’m not!” She countered.

“Yeah, aight. Get out of your heels,” I insisted.

“What?” Confusion plagued her beautiful features. The fullness of her lips arching.

“Take your shoes off and hand them to me. I’m going to carry them... and you.”

“Miller. Really. You don’t have to. I can make it u...p. Woah!”

Before she could protest any further, I’d dipped down and scooped her up. Her small frame dangled over my shoulder as I led us out of the reunion. If I had my way, it would be both of our final stops for the night and the two that followed.

three

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LEAH

Maybe I'd had one too many Lemon Drops, because being hauled up to Miller's hotel room was actually comical... and enjoyable. By the time we settled in front of his hotel door, I hardly wanted him to put me down. Without my shoes on my feet, I felt miles shorter than his tall, 6'3 frame.

"Are you okay?" He inquired as I settled on the carpeted floor.

His concerns were genuine. Always had been. Miller was simply good for the soul but life had gotten the best of both of us at some point in our marriage. We were young, ambitious, and both suffering from the traumatic impact of our miscarriage. We'd carried our son for six months and were ready to welcome him into the world in a few more. When we lost him, I lost myself and Miller followed suit. It was the beginning of the end of us.

"No," I admitted for the first time in sixteen years. There was just something about Miller and the underlying connection we were blessed with that didn't allow me to lie to him. Ever.

"What's the matter, Leah Wea?" He called me by the pet name he'd given me.

"You ever felt like you have everything in the world you've ever wanted but none of it actually makes you happy?"

I asked, leaning against the hotel room door.

Facing me as I looked up into his brown eyes, Miller nodded, “I know the feeling all too well, because that’s where I am right now and have been for the last sixteen years of my life. When we ended, so did any possibility of my happiness in the future.”

“So, then it’s you?” I shook my head at the realization.

It was one that I’d always known, but never admitted. Miller was the missing piece to my puzzle, the reason I hadn’t found love again, and the reason I protected my sex whenever another man was involved. I refused to have even the slightest pregnancy scare. There was only one person I wanted to share those kinds of moments and feelings with and he was standing in front of me.

“And, it’s you.”

“Sixteen years, though, Miller,” I sighed, “Maybe it’s just drunken words. I’ve had way too much to drink. We should get inside,” I tried diffusing the conversation, but Miller wasn’t having it.

“Don’t do that, Leah. It’s half the reason we’re here. Running from your truth doesn’t make it a lie. Yes, these are drunken words but they’re also sober thoughts. I couldn’t be more satisfied with them knowing that you would’ve let the night go by without me hearing any of this shit had you been sober enough. I’ve spent the last sixteen years of my life missing the most vital vessel of them all... my heart. And, as I stand here before it today, I’m wondering how I’ve survived all this time without it. Without you. I don’t want to do it anymore.”

“Miller,” I choked back the words that hadn’t quite formed properly, yet.

“Leah...” he responded. “Don’t run from this.”

Pulling my hand up to his chest, he forced me to feel his beating heart. Our rhythms matched just as they always had. Our hearts beat to the same drum and obviously felt the same pain. The pain of loss. Ourselves and our son.

“I know you feel it, too.”

“So, now that we’re here, Miller, what are we supposed to do about it?”

With a sigh of relief, he returned with, “Let’s begin again.”

Nodding, I gnawed at the corner of my bottom lip until I felt the coppery taste of blood in my mouth. The sound of beginning again with the love of my lifetime was like medicine to my soul. Since Miller had exited my world, it had been chaotic. While everything around me remained calm, my soul wouldn’t rest. No amount of therapy or prayer helped because this was the true resolution. We were. Us.

“I’ve missed you,” he confessed.

“Yeah?” I looked up to him, again, eyes filled with salty years and well-packaged pain. My years had been shitty without him.

“So fucking much.”

“I’ve missed you, too. Why didn’t you reach out? My number hasn’t changed.”

“I tried. I just didn’t have the words at the time. Emotions high every time I dialed your line. Before the phone could even ring, I’d hang up. Knowing you still probably powered your phone down after ten, I’ve called several times after just to hear your voice to get me through a tough day or tough week. Sometimes I’d end up leaving an entire voicemail, but I always deleted it before hanging up.”

“I still visit your mother once a year for Sunday dinner,” I revealed to Miller’s surprise. I’d asked Momma Kate not to disclose the information.

“Every time I do, I’m in the car kicking my own ass for not asking the questions that were on the tip of my tongue the whole time. Questions like how is he doing and if she minded sharing contact information so that I could reach out. I tried, but you’d gotten a new number and you don’t have any social media accounts... trust me. I’ve searched,” I chuckled.

“You know how I feel about folk in my business or thinking they know the real Miller because of an app.”

“I know, but I still looked. You know, just in case.”

“I feel you. Leah, when you walk into this room, I don’t want you to feel overwhelmed. And, the last thing I want for you to do is run from this. I want you to embrace every minute of our time together tonight and if you don’t mind... the next two nights. If it happens to be too much, too soon, then I’ll tone this shit down, aight?”

Nodding, I agreed and turned to face the door. Miller slid his key across the pad and gave us access to the room once the flickering light was green. I walked into the hotel suite and emotions of the last sixteen years of my life poured down on me at once. I hadn’t known I was actually crying until I could no longer see.

He’d recreated the night he’d proposed to me all those years ago. We were only twenty, but he’d made the best of our night and the money that we did have. The only difference between this night and that one was that it had been upgraded, seriously. The rose petals on the bed didn’t ask me to marry him.

Begin again? They read with a heart beneath them.

In addition to the thousands of petals that never ended were candles flickering around the room. It was obvious that Miller had planned to get me back up to his room by any means necessary and I wasn’t mad at him. My heart was filled with unimaginable joy.

Designer bags lined the couch that was a few feet away from the bed. In front of each of them was the item he’d purchased me sitting on the box that it had come in. Three purses, two belts, a bracelet, a necklace, shades, and luggage.

“Luggage?” I asked through the fit of tears.

“With the holidays coming up, I was hoping the time off from your job would be spent with me. After the new year begins, I’ll be back in Channing for good. January eighth is the final day of my contract and then I’m a free man.”

“It’s kind of like perfect timing, huh?”

“It is perfect timing. Everything is aligning. The reunion. The holidays. The contract’s end. The ability to move. Your seventeen hundred Lemon Drops. Everything is all aligning.”

“Did you really throw the Lemon Drops in the mix?”

“I couldn’t resist, Leah. But, uh. You haven’t answered the question, yet. Can we begin again?”

Nodding, I gave him exactly what he wanted. “Yes, I’d like that alot, Miller.”

four

. . .

Miller

“I usually don’t do this,” Leah purred with lusty, red eyes that were a result of all the crying she’d done.

“Oh yeah?” I asked, sliding into her wetness. She was as heavenly as I recalled. Her walls gripped me upon entry.

“No. I usually don’t,” She moaned.

She loved to talk during sex. It was her thing. It made her cream like nobody’s fucking business. And, it wasn’t anybody’s business except mine tonight.

“What, let a nigga hit on the first night?” I played along with her games.

“Ummm. Hmmm.” Leah whimpered. I’d finally stuffed myself into her folds, staring down at her beautiful face.

“So uh... why is your dress at the foot of the bed and your pussy so wet?”

“Ex husbands are the exceptiooooooon,” Leah howled, clawing my back as I dug deeper and deeper with each stroke.

I’d miss every bit of this.

“Well, it’s good you only have one,” I replied, picking up the pace at the realization that she’d readjusted to my girth.

With both legs in the crook of my arms, feet on my shoulders, and a boob in my mouth, I sent Leah’s body into

premature shock that resulted in a body-quivering orgasm that left us both drained. I couldn't remember the last time I'd slid between a pair of legs that caused me to mount so quickly, but I knew Leah would do just that. My stroked increased in speed as my nut reached the tip of my dick. I released within her walls before falling beside her in an attempt to catch my breath. Her shit was so damn good.

"Leah," I called minutes later, once my breathing had stabilized and I could think straight.

Silence confirmed my suspicions. She had fallen asleep. Between the alcohol and her peak, she didn't stand a chance. From a very intimate distance, I admired every part of Leah. Her beauty was timeless. Even with maturity, it was still undeniable.

Sixteen years, I marveled at exactly how well time had done her. She was even better than I'd remembered. And, as much as my body needed the rest that she was getting, my mind wouldn't allow it. I was still blown that it was Leah in my hotel bed. Leah. The love of my life and my ex-wife. The mother of my deceased child and the first woman to make me hate the hard parts of love. My woman.

I lifted from the bed and tiptoed to the kitchen area where I'd left my cell. The second it was in my hand, I unlocked it and put it on portrait mode from the camera app. For the next three minutes, I snapped Leah from every angle. Her hair dangled behind her as her body was entangled in the sheets. She was a dream. My fucking dream and also my reality.

Once satisfied with almost the only pictures in my camera - being that I hated taking pictures myself - I laid down beside Leah and pulled her head and chest onto my thigh. I searched the app store for both Instagram and Facebook, downloading them one after the other. After my account was made for Instagram, I decided to wait on setting up a Facebook profile. I didn't have the capacity for all of the questions they were asking.

@millerthorn222

I decided on my username.

Right after, I accessed the search bar to find the woman that was next to me in bed. After trying her name a few different ways that included her maiden and coming up empty, I followed my gut.

LeahThorn222

I found her as the realization that she still possessed my last name sunk in. The twenty second of February was when she'd miscarried. Instead of focusing on it being his death date, too, we decided that it would be his birthday. The date was etched in my heart and on my skin. From the looks of her user name, it was the same for her.

@millerthorn222:

When a man finds a wife, he finds himself a forever thing, or whatever the Bible said. #dreamgirl

I posted along with my favorite picture of Leah that I'd just taken. I didn't care that I didn't have one follower. I just needed the world to know that I was back home and I didn't mean Channing.

With a smile on my face, I slid down until my head hit the pillow beneath me. I pulled Leah into my arms and kissed the top of her head. *Leah Thorn*, I repeated in my head. She, too, knew we'd never end.

The end

**story #5 | where from
here**

...

Jaide + Dom

friends to lovers

one

. . .

TEN YEARS. Ten whole years and the pain was still fresh. I could still feel his blood on my skin as it seeped into my flannel, staining my clothes and heart forever. My mother's cries could still be heard when there was silence around me on any given day at any given moment. From the bottom of her soul, she'd pleaded with God to bring her baby back, but he hadn't listened.

Ten years later, I stood at my brother's casket for the very first time and I still wanted to know *why*. Why Jalen? Why us? Why then? Why? Why? Why?

"Jaide?"

Slowly, I turned in the direction of the familiarly deep, soothing tone. My chest hurt at the sight of its residence. Housed in the thick, healthy frame of the only one other than my mother who knew this type of pain when it came to moments like this, it spoke again.

"I wasn't expecting to see you here. Not even a little," Dom continued toward the headstone where I sat with my legs at my chest.

His revelation was like salt on my open wound, reminding me of how neglectful I'd been of my loved one. Though he meant well, it hurt. All of it. To be absent and present, *hurt*. It hurt even worse not knowing if the hurt would ever subside.

"Hi." I cleared my throat.

Using the fabric of my jeans, I wiped the tears from my cold cheeks. Suddenly, I felt the urge to try and pull myself together, at least. Without a piece of tissue in sight, the roughness of my denim would have to do for now.

“Damn. It’s been forever.”

I could hear Dom suck the skin of his teeth as he reached me. His large, familiar hand neared my frame, offering assistance that I truly needed to remove myself from the position I was in. Otherwise, I’d stay well into the night and after the sun rose again. That’s just how I was feeling... how much I missed him. *Jalen*.

Taking Dom’s hand, I allowed him to pull me from the ground. I lacked the strength to assist or do so myself. With a little too much emphasis on the assistance, he pulled me directly into his stiff chest. We collided slowly... painfully.

Memories, good and bad erupted in my head, immobilizing me. I stood in place, frozen and afraid. This felt too familiar. He felt too familiar. The guilt of it all felt too real. And, as much as I wanted to run away, again, I couldn’t. My feet wouldn’t move and neither would my mouth. I was stuck.

Almost instinctively, his arms looped around me as he held me in place. My chest ached as it pumped viciously, sending me spiraling even deeper into the pit of anxiety where I had been held captive the last twenty-

four hours. And, for the life of me, I couldn’t find my way out.

“You’re freezing cold, Jaide. How long have you been out here?”

Nothing. Words failed me as I stood, reaping the benefits of Dom’s husky frame. I’d lost count of the hours I’d stood in the freezing cold staring at his headstone. Even after ten years, there was something in me that still didn’t believe it to be true. But, it was. It always had been and my presence at the site today was to confirm so that I could finally begin to heal.

“I’m taking you to my place,” Dom fussed, “So that you can warm up. You’re going to catch yourself a cold out here

like this.”

Still, nothing came from my lips as I allowed him to clutch my fingers in his palms and pull me in the direction of a black Yukon. As we approached, a suited man jumped out of the driver seat immediately and ran around the truck to open the back door. I was first. Numb to the point of sheer oblivion, I climbed into the back of the truck. Dom slid in after me.

It wasn't until the door slammed that I snapped out of the fog that surrounded me, but it still wasn't enough to communicate my thoughts or feelings as I felt the raging glare from Dom's brown eyes. An eternity had passed since we'd last seen one another and if I was honest, that had been far too long. The facial hair, extra thickness, diamond chain and arm band were the gatekeepers of time, assuring me that he'd done well over the many years that had passed us by.

Meanwhile, besides a nice job and a bit more length to my hair, not much about me had changed. At least it didn't feel like it. However, the burning holes that Dom was staring into me proved otherwise. As so the next words to fall from his lips.

“I almost didn't recognize you, physically. But, the heart knows.”

“Dom,” I pleaded, not wanting to go there or anywhere for the matter.

“I've missed you, Jaide,” he confessed.

“I can't do this with you right now, Dom. I really can't.” Shaking my head, I scooted closer to the window in a desperate attempt to put more space between us.

“Then when, cause a nigga done waited ten years for the time to be right and I'm having no luck.”

“Right here? Right now? Even knowing how I felt... still feel about this? How he would've felt about this? Had he even known?”

“He knew,” Dom blurted out.

“He didn't,” I retorted, finally looking in Dom's direction.

It was an awful decision. The fresh tears that fell from my eyes and the fresh wound that opened on my heart were evidence. The day was far from done and I'd already bitten off far more than I could chew. It was the main reason I'd avoided this day for so long.

“He knew,” Dom repeated.

“He didn't!” I maintained, shutting down completely. “He couldn't have.”

two

. . .

SILENCE FOLLOWED us out of the large SUV, into the heavily secured building, onto the elevator, into the beautiful loft, and inside of Dom's massive closet. It was the size of my entire studio apartment with room to spare. But, as much as I wanted to marvel over the immaculate space, my heart wouldn't let me. Or, maybe it was the unfamiliar feelings of jealousy and rage that stemmed from my toes and ended with the steam emitting from my ears. I wasn't sure.

"Here. I'm sure this shit fits. I'll show you to the shower and make sure it's warm enough, alright? After you're comfortable, we can maybe go grab dinner or have the chef come whip us something up."

Dom handed me a pair of black leggings that still had the tags attached along with an oversized shirt with his name and jersey number on it. He was right. I was sure it would all fit perfectly, too, but putting it on was out of the question. Slowly, I pushed the clothes back in his direction.

"I'd rather not," I shook my head waiting for him to accept the leggings and shirt, "In fact, you can take me to my place and I will freshen up there."

Chuckling, Dom pushed my arms in the opposite direction, "Shit never change, huh?"

"I don't find anything funny, Dominic," I replied, voice elevated as my chest started to burn.

"You can calm down, Jaide. There's no need to stick your chest out. It's me, aight?"

“Oh really? Is it?”

“Yes, love. It’s me. And you. What’s with the clenching jaws and the tapping of your feet? Have I done anything to upset you?”

“No,” I lied.

“Then why are you gnawing at your bottom lip and avoiding eye contact? Talk to me. Use your words, Jaide. I’m a grown ass man and you’re a grown ass woman. We’re no longer kids. Say what’s on your mind.”

“For starters you bring me to a loft that is fitted for a queen. Then you ask me to wear her fucking clothes. Shower after her? And, then what? Play like we’re just old friends when she walks through the door and I’m still here?” I fired off.

“No one is walking through that door, Jaide.”

“Let me guess, you broke her heart, too?”

“I’ve never broken anyone’s heart, Jaide. Not one person. Especially not a woman I loved.”

“You broke mine!” I stated as a matter of fact.

“Nah, you’re remembering shit wrong,” Dom turned to walk away. I followed like the lost puppy I felt like. “You know it and I do, too. That was all you,” he turned and nailed a finger into my chest. “You broke my shit!” His voice, for the first time since seeing me, rose. “You left! You ran. You, Jaide! YOU!”

My chest had begun to hurt from his continuous pokes, but somehow the physical pain was nothing in comparison to the emotional and mental discomfort I felt.

“But, you never came looking!” I folded under pressure, screaming until my veins sprouted in my neck.

“And that broke your heart, Jaide? Please spare me the bullshit. I had just gotten a fucking scholarship and was leaving for freshman year the day my nigga was shot dead in the street like a fucking dog. I couldn’t come looking. A nigga was handicapped. Empty. Depleted. I’d lost my heart and my

soul in the same fucking breath. I stuck around for a week longer than I was supposed to in order to make sure he was laid to rest properly.

“Another second week scanning every corner of the city for your ass only to find out you’d skipped town after cutting off all communication with me. Have you forgotten you haven’t said one word to me since the day Jalen took his last breath? That also happened to be the day that we both lost our virginity on some dangerously in love shit? And then you bounced? Do you know what that shit did to me?”

I had nothing to say.

“Huh?” Dom closed the distance between us, forcing me to say something. Anything. The tears threatening to spill from his eyes along with the ones that were falling down my cheeks at an alarming rate left me no choice.

“No,” I returned.

“It got me filling my fucking closet with shit fit for a queen... my fucking queen while I sit back like a bump on a log waiting for her to run across my path knowing that if I ever get the chance, I’m not letting her go again. So, when I say ain’t no woman going to walk through that door I mean it because she’s already here. And, as much as anyone would believe she doesn’t have the right to be, my heart says otherwise. I know she does. So go get your ass in the shower, Jaide, before I put you in that motherfucker myself.”

Dom quickly turned and began to walk away. I didn’t miss the streaked tears on his face or the cracking of his voice as he finished up. My heart split as I watched his hand disappear in front of him in an attempt to clear his cheeks. Rushing behind him, I grabbed his right arm and forced him to face me, again.

“I’m sorry!” It was all I knew. All I’d felt for the last ten years.

“Are you?” Dom gritted, his large hand circling my neck as he forced me to the nearest hard surface. My back thudded against the wall, causing me to blink in the process. When I

opened my eyes, the pain in Dominic's rested heavily on my heart.

“Because the only apology I'm interested in is changed behavior. So, let me know now. Should I clear your side of the closet or what, Jaide?”

Unable to speak due to the tightness in my chest and the grip he had on my neck at the moment, I settled with a shake of my head. With that, Dom sealed our fate with his lips as they crashed onto mine. I'd missed this... *I'd missed him.*

three

. . .

“GOOD, because I don’t think I could stand you breaking my heart a second time.”

“I’m sorry, Dom, even about the first. I just... I felt so guilty. While I was losing my virginity, my brother was losing his life.”

“And how does that make it our fault?”

“He didn’t know,” she argued.

“He did.”

“He didn’t!”

“He did, Jaide, because I’d told him. He was waiting for you to tell him when you were ready. I’m loyal before I’m anything else, which is why I told Jalen the minute I became interested in you. We never discussed any details, but he knew. His only wish was for me to never break your heart and I haven’t yet. So, all of that guilt you’ve been holding onto has been for nothing. I tried telling you over and over in the week leading to his funeral but you wasn’t hearing shit that I had to say. I could’ve saved you years of misery and pain, baby girl. He knew.”

“He knew?” Jaide chuckled through her tears, nodding her head.

“Yes,” I kissed her lips once, “He knew.” Twice. Three times and her hand slid across the front of my pants.

“I’m so sorry, Dominic. I just felt like I’d betrayed him so bad.”

“Shhhhhhh,” I quieted her with a fourth kiss. Then, a fifth as I began removing running my hands over her curves. I remembered each and every one of them. Though they’ve sprouted with time, they were still well-proportioned.

“Did you miss me, Jaide?” I needed to know. One thing about this shit between us was that neither of us were afraid to be open for the other. We’d become each other’s safe space. Although so much had changed, my heart told me that, that aspect hadn’t.

“Every single day, Dominic.”

“Yeah?”

“Yes. So much.”

“Then show me.”

“I had every intention to.”

“How you want this shit, Jaide?” I asked as I peeled off each piece of her clothing.

My dick was about to break in my briefs if I didn’t free him soon. The quicker she answered me, the quicker I could let this nigga lose to explore her territory. It had been far too long, but I was about to make up for lost times.

“I want to cum on your face,” she purred with low eyes.

Vocal. She’d always been and I loved that shit about her, even when that trait didn’t exactly work in my favor. Though full penetration had only occurred once for us two, we’d explored months before we felt we were ready. I’d licked her pussy from the front, back, and both sides. She’s swallowed my dick whole on several occasions. Even young, we had an appetite for each other that couldn’t be suppressed until tragedy struck. And, even then, I still fought extremely hard to do so.

“And, I want you to suck this dick,” I revealed.

“You first,” Jaide called out as I removed her final piece. She dropped to her knees before I could protest and pulled my dick from my pants in one swift motion. By the time anything had registered in my head, she was swallowing me whole while massaging my balls in the process.

“You’re not playing fair, Jaide.”

“Fair wasn’t my intention,” she paused to say before gathering a glob of saliva and spitting on my dick. I trembled upon impact.

“Fuck!”

Grabbing her head, I assisted her in her mission to unman me. She wouldn’t succeed, however, not before I blew her fucking back out. She deserved some real hard loving and that’s exactly what I was going to give her.

“Shit, Jaide.”

All the saliva her little body could muster, it did and she smeared it over my thick, black wand each time she discovered more. Our eyes locked as she pulled me from her mouth and began massaging the head of my dick, a trail of spit falling to her chest. She was sending me over the top and she knew it, too.

“Did you miss me?” She asked, looking up at me as I barely kept my eyes open.

Refusing to tap out so swiftly, I snatched her little ass up from the floor, spun her around, and forced her forward.

“Grab them fucking ankles, Jaide,” I instructed.

“You’re taking it there?” She purred, slowly reaching for her ankles.

“Your ass deserves it.”

“It’s going to hurt,” she groaned in anticipation.

“That’s the point. Consider it your punishment.”

Her slob lubricated my dick, making it easy to slide straight in. Her warmth caressed me while her snugness

comforted me. Everything about her pussy felt like a dream and I didn't want to wake up. Not at all.

“Ummmmmmmm.” she took my shit like a G. “It hurts so goooooooooooooood.”

Her pussy was like quicksand, forcing me deeper with each stroke. Three in and I felt like I would erupt at any minute. Our bare flesh was reacquainted as I pulled out of her completely and allowed them to meet, again. Like a suction, she forced me deeper each time.

“Shiiiiiiiiit,” Jaide sang, still clutching her ankles.

“Don't let them go!”

She hadn't changed. Her flexibility was insane and it had driven me crazy all those years ago. Today, shit wasn't much different. With the way she was taking my dick, it was even more intriguing to be frank. When I'd taken her virginity, I was gentle. Still a baby myself, I was learning, too. We'd experienced each other for hours before coming up for air. By the time we left my uncle's crib, I could've sworn I was an expert on all things Jaide and that bad ass body she was in possession of.

“Dooooooooom,” Jaide howled, attempting to lift her body.

The deadly strokes that I was putting on her had her losing her balance and grabbing the wall while convulsing at the same time. The way she was cumming on my dick let me know that whoever had been hitting her shit in my absence hadn't been hitting my shit right. Running my fingers through her hair, I, then, yanked her in my direction with it. Though our height difference made it difficult, my teeth still met her neck. Sinking them, I tasted the bitterness of her skin before suckling until she begged me cum inside of her.

“I want you to cum deep inside of me,” she pleaded.

“Oh yeah? You going to make this dick spit up?”

“Yeeeeees,” Jaide responded, pulling forward and using the wall to push back into me.

Over and over, she threw her thick ass back onto my dick. I was covered in her creaminess. She'd made a whole mess, but I loved every bit of it. I watched as she worked me over, pulling my semen from my soul.

As requested, I let my minion go without the stress of wondering if I was knocking her up on our first round. I'd gotten a vasectomy the day I'd been drafted into the NFL. If it wasn't Jaide, then there wasn't a female on this planet that could have my babies. When ready, it would be reversed but for now I needed her undivided attention and as much time as I could possibly get to make up for the time that we lost.

four

. . .

THE SUN ASSAULTED my eyes as an embarrassing yawn stretched my lips. I couldn't remember the last time I'd slept so peacefully, even in my own bed. Over the last ten years, regrets and pain had kept me up through the night and busy throughout the day. I hadn't stopped going since the day he was laid to rest - too afraid my mind would overpower me. So, I kept going no matter what.

And, now that I was still, the silence I experienced was true beauty. It was alluring. I wanted more and more of it. For as long as time would allow. Unfortunately, that wasn't long at all.

"Sleepy head," Dominic's voice penetrated the air.

Lifting myself up until my back was flush against the cloth headboard, I rubbed the crust from my eyes. I wanted to see him better. When the crust cleared, there he sat at the end of the bed with a matching white tee and white pajama pants. I, too, wore white. A tee and briefs.

"It's extremely lame of you to only buy white sleepwear. Now we're what? Matching?" I teased.

"If you knew how long I've waited for this moment, then you'd understand. And, this shit ain't lame. It's fly as fuck and matches the vibe. Have you not noticed everything here is nude or white or brown? That's not by accident."

"I noticed and it's beautiful. But, none of it looks touched. Are you ever even here?"

“Because I don’t play for the city, I’m hardly here. When I am, I’m at this spot. It’s home though I’m here the least of my dwellings. The one in Indigo is all the same. Same vibe. Same pieces. Same style. Same wardrobe.”

“For us both?”

“For us both.” He assured me.

“Why though? I just felt like you would’ve moved on by now. I’ve always held my breath, waiting for the moment the world announces you’ve made someone your wife.”

“I already have a wife and when you know that, you move differently. We were separated, that’s it. And, before you start tripping, I’m talking about your ass. That wifey shit I used to spit back in high school, I meant that. Have a fucked women in the last ten years? Yes. But that’s all it’s ever been... a nut. Never nothing serious or consistent.”

“What do the women you bring home have to say about the mysterious wardrobe in your closet?” I chuckled, another yawn spilling from my lips.

“I’ve never brought a woman home. Not since you. I’ve always hoped I’d run into you and the last thing I wanted was to contaminate your space with another woman’s presence.”

“My space?”

“Have you not heard anything I’ve said? What’s mine is yours, Jaide. It’s always been that way, even with the time that has gotten between us.”

“My God, I missed you, Dominic,” I confessed, eyes prickling from the tears that appeared as a result of my relief. I had him. He was here and he was still mine. My heart had always told me so, but seeing was believing.

“You took such good care of my heart.”

“And, I still plan to. That’s what fucked me up most all these years. You knew I’d take good care of you... mentally, emotionally, financially... whatever you ever needed was my priority. Nothing has changed, Jaide. It never will. You are my quest. Forever.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too,” Dominic returned, still feeling so far away. I scooted across the bed until I reached the end to meet him with a kiss.

“Where do we go from right here?” I asked.

“Haven’t you noticed?” He sniggered.

“Noticed what?” Baffled, I questioned.

Stopping to bring my hand in plain view, Dominic showed me the enormous rock that he’d slipped onto my hand while I was in somewhat of a coma. I hadn’t noticed the extra weight until I saw the boulder on my finger. It was beautiful, causing the tears I was holding onto to fall.

“Really?”

“If you agree to marry me, then yeah. Really, Jaide. My mission is to give you everything your heart desires and I’m not wasting any more time. It’s too precious and I’ve lost ten years of it. So, Jaide Adaline Maze, will you be my wife?”

“Yes,” I answered immediately, not needing even the slightest moment to consider the offer of a lifetime.

I knew and he knew... we were just it for one another. Time had told us so, too. I climbed into Dominic’s lap and he lifted us both from the bed, spinning us around in circles.

“Goddamn, girl. I’ve missed you!”

“I love you.” Was all I could say. My tears and his tears and the perfection of the moment was too much for my heart to handle.

“I love you!”

“The ring, it’s so gorgeous, Dominic. When did you...” he cut me off.

“The minute my signing bonus hit, I found a jeweler. It was the first piece of jewelry I bought. Once that was squared away, I could think straight. My intentions were to come and find you, but something deep within me kept telling me that when the time was right, I’d bump into you and I did.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. Just promise to never run from me, Jaide.”

“I’ll never run from you, baby. I won’t get very far, anyway. This rock will hold me down,” I lightened the mood as he lowered me to the ground.

“That was the goal. That and a swollen belly every other year,” he joked.

“I see what you did there.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Kiss me,” Dominic puckered his lips.

Standing on the tips of my toes, I obliged. From this day on, it was whatever he wanted... whatever he needed. As long as it made him happy, I was willing and I was ready.

The end

little

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