

THREE  
IS A  
*MORNIN'*

CHENELL PARKER



Three Is A Crowd  
by  
Chenell Parker

## **OTHER TITLES BY CHENELL PARKER**

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**AS LONG AS I'M THE ONLY ONE**

**TWO MILLION REASONS WHY**

**HEARTBREAK AND PAST MISTAKES**

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I'm so thankful to God for EVERYTHING. My self-publishing journey has been a blessing and I can't complain. To every reader, new and old, thanks for taking a chance and rocking with me.

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Thanks to Elle Welch for this bomb format and for finding my rings (Insider). Hit her up if you want to add a little life to your book and make it pop!

Quo Vadis...no words, just on to the next one!



Jersi felt his eyes on her the entire time she got dressed but she continued to ignore him. She had been knowing Blake all her life and his attitude was still the same. She got to know him even better since he became her boyfriend three years ago.

Their families had been friends for generations, dating back to their great-grandparents. Since there was a five year age difference between them, Jersi's mother, Dena, didn't agree with them being in a relationship. Jersi was only seventeen at the time and he was twenty-two. By law, she was considered an adult but that didn't matter to her mother. They all knew that Blake had been crushing on her since forever and the age difference didn't matter to him. After a while, it didn't matter to anyone else either. He loved Jersi and his actions always showed it.

Even when it came to intimacy, Blake waited until her eighteenth birthday to take her virginity. As crazy as it sounded, she took his virginity that day too and he was twenty-three years old at the time. That was a secret that he never wanted to come out because it was too embarrassing. He promised to save himself for her and he made good on that promise. They became inseparable after that until Jersi went to a college that was over four hours away. She and Blake drove back and forth to visit each other every weekend for the first year but he was already over it. Jersi was now a twenty-year old sophomore with two years left. He was used to seeing her every day and he was having a hard time adjusting to the distance. Blake was a pre-med student and his curriculum was getting harder by the day. He needed her

there to help take some of the stress away.

“Can we not have an argument today? I’m home for the holidays and I want to enjoy my stay,” Jersi said when she got tired of him staring at her.

“I didn’t even say anything,” Blake retorted.

“Not verbally but your eyes are saying a lot,” Jersi noted.

“I thought you were going to the gym just to tone up. You’re almost disappearing,” Blake frowned as he eyed her curvy frame.

“Stop overexaggerating Blake. A size fourteen is hardly disappearing,” Jersi replied while rolling her eyes.

“You were a size sixteen a few months ago,” Blake pointed out.

She knew that he loved her thick frame but it wasn’t about him. Since going to college, Jersi ate nothing but fast food and she’d packed on a few extra pounds. She and some of her classmates decided to start a workout group and they had been going strong for months. Jersi cut down on the fast food and snacks and she was pleased with the results so far.

“I go to the gym four to five times a week Blake. Losing weight is inevitable. Stop always looking for shit to start an argument,” Jersi snapped.

“I’m not trying to start an argument. I’m just voicing my opinion,” he replied as he continued to look at her.

Jersi’s skin glowed like a firefly at night. Her complexion looked as if smooth chocolate was melted and poured over every inch of her. She’d never had a relaxer in her entire life and she didn’t need one. Her hair was jet black and wild with curls. Her teeth were straight and beautifully white. Her hazel eyes were exotic and one of her best assets. She looked like a dark chocolate baby doll and she got compliments everywhere she went. Blake loved when people looked at her when she was on his arm. His chest swelled with pride because he knew that Jersi was all his.

“You need to get dressed so we can go,” Jersi said when she looked at him still stretched out in the bed.

She was home for Thanksgiving break and she went straight to his house when she drove in. Blake’s family, just like hers, had what was considered generational wealth. They had millions of dollars that were passed from one generation to the next. She didn’t know where his family’s money came from but her father’s funds were a result of oil and gas. He always told them that he would never live long enough to spend all of his money and he wanted to make sure that his kids and grandkids were financially stable. He never verbally disclosed how much he was worth but Jersi knew that it was a substantial amount. All three of her brothers were driving Bentley trucks that were purchased by him, so that said a lot. When she asked for a Range Rover a year ago, he told her to pick out the color and she had it the very next day. Even with all they had, her father was all about giving back. He donated to charities all the time and they all volunteered at the homeless shelter several times a year. Her mother did a huge toy giveaway for Christmas and they were always covering several grocery bills for people when they went into the store. Her father always told them that they were blessed and they should be a blessing to others.

Blake’s family was a little different though. They took care of their kids but that was about as far as it went. They weren’t into doing for others and they weren’t ashamed to say it. They wanted their money to stay within their family. Blake was already a homeowner and he was the youngest resident in the upscale subdivision that he lived in. The plan was for Jersi to move in with him and attend Tulane University when she graduated high school. When Grambling State University offered her a full scholarship with lots of other perks, the plans changed at the last minute. She could have gone anywhere with her father’s wealth but she was proud to attend the HBCU in her home state. Jersi was a finance major and she did what was best for her. Unfortunately, Blake never let her forget about the broken promises that she’d made. He was focusing on his career and Jersi was doing the same. She wasn’t about to help him accomplish his goals and let hers go unfulfilled.

“Who’s hosting Thanksgiving this year?” Blake asked when he sat up



in the bed.

“My parents,” Jersi replied as she stepped into her jeans.

Since their fathers were best friends, they each took turns hosting different functions at their homes. Their fathers and grandfathers had done the same thing years before them and they wanted the tradition to live on. Jersi and Blake never had to divide their time up in between families because they always did everything together.

“What should I wear?” he asked her as he opened his huge walk in closet.

Jersi sighed, trying not to speak on one of the things that she hated about Blake. He acted like he couldn't think for himself. He always depended on Jersi to tell him what to do and he always did exactly what she said. Jersi walked over to his closet and started sorting through all of his designer labels. Blake was preppy and he didn't really have many clothes to just chill in. It took her a few minutes but she finally found a pair of the Levi's that she bought him and paired it with a polo and some Nikes.

“Here you go,” Jersi said when she walked out of the closet and handed him his attire for the day.

“Thanks baby. What else do you have planned for us today? Can we go catch a movie or something after dinner?” Blake asked as if she were his mother and not his girlfriend.

“We can do that. I have to go see Tabby first though,” she replied, making him frown.

“I hate going over there. I don't know why you even bother. Her husband hates you and it's always so uncomfortable,” Blake complained.

“I know Blake but it's Thanksgiving. I hardly ever go over there when I'm home and she begged me to come over today. It's okay if you don't want to come. I can go alone,” Jersi replied.

“As if I would ever let that happen. I’m going with you but I hope you don’t stay too long,” he replied.

Jersi smiled as they continued to get dressed. Once they were done, she and Blake left his house and headed over to her parents’ house for dinner. When they pulled up to the security booth, Jersi smiled and waved at the guard right before he opened the gate for them to enter. Being that her mother was a Christmas fanatic, Jersi wasn’t surprised to see that their huge two-story home was draped in Christmas lights and décor. Dena had been paying the same company to come out and decorate for years. It was always done the week before Thanksgiving and she kept it up until after the new year. Luxury cars lined their paver stoned driveway but it was still big enough for Blake to have somewhere to park. As soon as they got out of the car and walked up the stairs, the front door swung open and her father greeted them. He was always watching the cameras so Jersi wasn’t surprised that he knew they were there.

“There’s my baby,” Jacob said as he pulled Jersi in and gave her a tight hug.

“Hey daddy,” Jersi smiled as she hugged him back.

Everything, including her complexion and thick curly hair, came from her father. Jacob’s smooth chocolate skin and snow white teeth had lots of women turning their heads to get a second look. He was over fifty years old and barely looked a day over forty.

“Look at my baby. You look great Jersi. The gym is definitely agreeing with you,” Dena said as she moved her husband out of the way and hugged her daughter.

“Yes, you look amazing baby,” her father agreed. “How are you Blake?”

“I’m good Dr. Bradford. Hey Mrs. B. Happy Thanksgiving,” he smiled while giving Jersi’s mother a hug and shaking her father’s hand.

Jersi's father was the head of the cardiology department at Tulane Medical Center and Blake's father, Braxton, worked under him. Blake's mother was a housewife, while Dena ran her own medical coding and billing company from her home office. Add their income to the money that they already had and Blake's family couldn't touch them financially.

"Hey son," Blake's father, Braxton, greeted when he and Jersi walked into the dining room.

They both walked around greeting everyone before they sat down to eat. Jersi's father said grace and everybody dug into the catered spread of food. Jersi watched what she ate every other day but that rule didn't apply on Thanksgiving. Her mother was a great cook but she never prepared her own meals for holidays. She had one of the best chefs in New Orleans to do it for her.

"Where's Dray?" Jersi asked her mother, referring to her older brother, Draymond.

She actually had three older brothers but Dray was the only one by Dena. Her two oldest brothers, Jacob Jr. and Justin, were by her father's ex-wife who was now deceased. Their offshore jobs didn't allow them to come around very often but she talked to them a lot. She loved all three of her brothers but she was closer to Dray. They were only four years apart and they grew up under the same roof. She also had an older sister but they didn't talk or see each other as much.

"Who knows where he is. He called earlier and said that he was on his way but that was hours ago," Dena replied.

"Is Dray or Draya showing up?" Jersi snickered, making her mother laugh too.

"That's another question that I can't answer but I guess we'll see," Dena shrugged.

Dray was openly bisexual and he loved the company of both women

and men. Every time he came to a family gathering, they didn't know what to expect. Unlike some affluent families, Jersi's parents loved and accepted who their son was. They didn't care who he was with just as long as he was happy. Blake had an openly gay brother as well but his parents practically disowned him. Blake and his other siblings stayed in contact with him but they were the only ones. His brother, Evan, was the second oldest and he was married to a man. He and Dray were best friends but he didn't see his parents too often. He did drag shows and Dray was always there to support him. It was almost as if Blake and his other brothers and sisters were the only kids that existed to their parents. It was a total of six of them but the other three boys and two girls were the only ones who they ever spoke of. Dena didn't agree with what they were doing but she kept her comments to herself.

A little over two hours into dinner, the doorbell rang and Jersi rushed to answer it. She knew that it was her brother because she looked on the monitor and saw his car parked out front.

“Dray!” Jersi yelled as she fell into her brother's arms.

Her brother had also inherited the same complexion as their father and he was just as handsome. Dray did everything from personal styling to choreography and he was well known. He had been a background dancer and did choreography for a few well known singers and Jersi was always right there with him. She loved when he got backstage passes to concerts because she got to meet some of her favorite entertainers. Jersi had pictures with everyone from Beyoncé to Drake and lots more.

“Calm down bitch. Stop acting like it's been that long,” he replied as he smiled and hugged her back.

Just by his conversation, Jersi knew that Draya had shown up for family dinner. The handsome man who was standing there with him confirmed it.

“Hi,” Jersi said as she greeted their guest.

“Donovan, this is my baby sister Jersi who I'm always telling you

about. Sis, this is my boo, Donovan,” Dray said as he introduced the two of them.

“It’s nice to meet you Jersi,” Donovan said as he shook her hand.

“Same here,” Jersi smiled as she ushered them inside.

As soon as they walked into the room, Blake’s mother, Eva, discreetly turned up her nose. She didn’t understand how her best friends could be okay with their son’s lifestyle. She wanted no parts of her son or his husband and he knew it. He barely came around and that was fine with her. When Dray introduced his friend, she and her husband gave a dry wave while the Bradford’s greeted him like he was family.

“It’s nice to meet you Donovan. Feel free to eat and drink as much as you want to. We have more than enough,” Jacob said to his son’s companion.

Jersi could see the shocked look on Donovan’s face at such a warm welcome. He was probably looking to be shunned but their family was nothing like that. Money didn’t change them because they’d had it all their lives. She loved that they didn’t care about appearances, unlike Blake’s family. Braxton and Eva Harding demanded perfection in every area of their lives. When their oldest son got his girlfriend pregnant, they made sure that he married her before the baby came. He wasn’t in love with her and he was always cheating. That didn’t matter to them as long as things appeared to be normal. There was no in between and they made no exceptions. Jersi made sure to take her birth control faithfully because she refused to be forced into anything.

“I’m gonna be leaving in a little while. I have to go see Tabby,” Jersi said as she helped her mother clear some of the dishes from the table.

Everyone had eaten and the men had retired to the theater room to watch football. Dray and his friend were outside lounging by the pool while some of the other guests were still at the dining table talking.

“You be careful over there baby. And call me the minute you get

there. I don't like that husband of hers," Dena replied.

"I know ma, but I won't be too long. She asked me to come over and I just wanna go show my face. Her husband doesn't scare me," Jersi replied.

"Is Blake going with you?" Dena asked.

"Yeah, he's coming," Jersi replied.

"Good. That makes me feel better," Dena said.

"Are we still playing some games?" Jersi asked once she and her mother were done straightening up.

Her mother loved to have game nights and they always had fun. Blake wanted to catch a movie but that all depended on what Dena wanted to do.

"That's the plan if everyone wants to play," Dena replied.

"Okay. Let me go now, so I can come right back. Is it okay if Ariel comes over for a little while?" Jersi asked.

"You know you don't even have to ask me that. Ariel is always welcome here. And tell Toni that I said hello," Dena replied.

"I will. I should be back in less than an hour," Jersi said as she went to go get Blake.

He was all into the football game but he got up as soon as Jersi called his name. Just like her, he was ready to get the visit to Tabby's house over with.

"One hour Jersi, just like you promised," Blake said as they pulled up to Tabby's house.

"Hopefully it won't even be that long," Jersi replied.

She smiled when she saw that Ariel's car was amongst the others that were parked near Tabby's house. She and Blake got out of the car and slowly made their way up the stairs. They both had the same look on their faces and they dreaded going inside. They heard the loud music playing before they were even close. Jersi sighed audibly as she rang the doorbell and waited for someone to open up. As soon as the door swung open, the cigarette smoke greeted them before anyone else did.

"Hey pretty black. I was just about to call you. I thought you forgot about me," Tabby said as she grabbed her arm and pulled her inside. Jersi grabbed Blake's hand and pulled him right along with her.

"I told you that I was coming," Jersi replied as they walked further into the home.

They had people littering the house playing cards, smoking and drinking. Jersi let Tabby pull her along as she turned down the music so that she could be heard.

"Y'all say hello to my baby, Jersi. She's in college and she came to see her mama on her Thanksgiving break. Ain't she pretty? Looking like a chocolate Barbie," Tabby said as she beamed proudly.

Tabitha or Tabby, as she was called by everyone, was Jersi's biological mother. Jersi had only started to go around her when she was about ten years old and that was only because her auntie Toni took her over there. Tabby was married but Jersi was the result of an affair that she'd had on her boyfriend, Marvin, who was now her husband. Jacob was married to Dena at the time and the entire situation was complicated.

"Happy Thanksgiving everybody," Jersi waved and smiled awkwardly.

Tabby's husband, Marvin, scowled at her while everyone else returned the greeting. Marvin hated Jersi and everything about her. He and Tabby both had a daughter from previous relationships when they hooked up and Jersi was supposed to be the child that made their blended family

complete. Marvin was already separated but he divorced his wife and married Tabby while she was pregnant. He was crushed when the baby came out with dark skin and hazel eyes. Marvin had a light tan complexion and so did his daughter. He just knew that the baby wasn't his but Tabby swore that she was. When the paternity test confirmed what he already knew, he gave his wife two options. She could either keep the baby and find her another place to stay or she could give the baby up and come home with him.

It was a no brainer for Tabby, especially since she no longer had a job or a place to stay at the time. Marvin left his wife for her but she was almost sure that Jacob wouldn't even entertain the idea. Jacob knew that Tabby was pregnant but she swore to him that the baby belonged to her husband. She was too embarrassed to call him and tell him that she had lied. Her sister, Toni, wanted to keep the baby and raise her but she already had a small baby to care for. Besides, Jacob had a right to know about the baby they'd conceived. She gave Toni all of Jacob's information and asked her to contact him on her behalf. The moment he laid eyes on Jersi, he didn't even care what the results of the test said. He knew without a doubt that she was his and he loved her already. He was honest with his wife and told her about the month long affair that he'd had. Tabby was a waitress at the diner that was close to the hospital where he worked. They would talk all the time when he went there until, one day, they took things a step further.

Being that she'd always wanted a daughter, Dena opened her door and her heart and welcomed Jersi in. She was the one who chose her name since Tabby didn't bother trying to name her. In only a weeks' time, Jersi had a nursery filled with more than any infant would probably ever need. Dena stopped working to take care of her and eventually moved her business to her home. Jersi's auntie Toni kept up with her and that was how she got so close with her cousin Ariel. Tabby got pregnant after she had Jersi but the baby was stillborn. She had to have a hysterectomy after that, making Jersi the youngest of her two girls. That didn't sit too well with Marvin and he despised Jersi and her father because of it.

"You look like you're losing weight pretty black," Jersi's sister, Talena said when she walked over to her.



Jersi hated when they called her that and she'd told them that a million times before. Talena was Tabby's oldest daughter and her only sister. They weren't close and they didn't talk unless Jersi went to their house. Since that wasn't very often, the sisters barely knew each other.

"Yeah, I've been working out," Jersi replied.

"Do you want something to eat baby? We have lots of food and liquor," Tabby offered.

"No, I'm good. I ate at home," Jersi smiled.

"What about you light bright?" Tabby asked referring to Blake, who was even lighter in complexion than her husband.

"I'm fine, thanks," Blake replied as he looked around in disgust.

"Why y'all standing there looking all scared and shit? Sit down and relax," Tabby instructed as she took a sip from her cup.

"I just wanted to come see you for a minute. My mama is waiting for me to come back over there," Jersi said, making the other woman roll her eyes up to the sky.

"You mean your daddy's wife," Tabby corrected as she rolled her eyes again.

Jersi was about to reply until someone rang the bell and interrupted her. That was probably a good thing because her words wouldn't have been nice. Tabby rushed to the front of the house to answer the door and Jersi was ready to follow her and walk out of it. She could tell that Blake was ready to get going too.

"What's been up with you Jersi? I barely get to see you anymore," Talena said as she looked at her little sister.

Jersi was beautiful but the two of them looked nothing alike. Jersi was

a female carbon copy of her father, while Talena looked more like Tabby. Their looks weren't the only thing that set them apart. They were raised totally different as well. While Jersi was raised by her millionaire father, Talena was stuck in the house with Tabby and her husband trying to help them keep the lights and water on. Neither one of them could keep a job and she often had to pay her portion of the bills and theirs too. She hated that she had to move back home with her mother but she didn't have a choice. When she and her boyfriend broke up, that was the only place that she had to go.

“Nothing much, just school,” Jersi shrugged while pulling Talena out of her thoughts.

“It must be nice to only have school and not money to worry about,” Talena said right as Marvin's daughter, Mariah, walked into the room.

The entire atmosphere changed and the tension was thick. Talena looked like she was ready for war as she looked over at the man who Mariah had walked into the room with. Damien had the nerve to be smiling as he walked around the room and greeted everybody. He was no fool and he knew not to even come Talena's way.

“Don't even trip Lena. She just came to see her daddy and she's leaving,” Tabby whispered to her daughter.

Mariah was an evil bitch but she did no wrong in her father's eyes. If it were up to Tabby, she wouldn't even be allowed in her house at all. Since she was Marvin's one and only daughter, that would have been impossible to accomplish.

“Are you okay Talena?” Jersi asked.

“Yeah, I'm good. Fuck that pill poppin' bitch and fuck him too,” she fumed as her eyes filled with tears.

Jersi shifted uncomfortably as she took in the scene around her. Ariel looked just as uncomfortable as she did and she understood why. Just a little over a year ago, Damien was Talena's boyfriend and the father of the child

that she was carrying. When she learned of his affair with Mariah, the stress caused her to miscarry and he broke up with her while she was still in the hospital recovering. Talena ended up moving back home with her mother and Mariah and her ex were still together. She thought it was fucked up how Marvin was okay with it and even welcomed Damien into their home. They flaunted their relationship in front of Talena like it was nothing and that drove her crazy. Mariah was a beautiful girl and she used that to her advantage.

“What’s up Ebony and Ivory?” Damien chuckled as he walked over and spoke to Blake and Jersi.

“Their names are Jersi and Blake,” Tabby corrected with a scowl, even though she had just called Blake something other than his name too.

“I was just playing but my fault. What’s up Jersi? How you been beautiful?” Damien asked her as Blake grabbed her hand possessively.

“Hi Damien. I’ve been fine. How about you?” Jersi asked.

“He couldn’t be better,” Mariah answered for him as she walked over and planted a kiss on his lips.

She was high as a kite but that didn’t stop her from being petty. The smirk on her face had Talena ready to pounce but she didn’t want to cause any drama. Truthfully, she needed a place to stay and she didn’t want to be into it with her mother’s husband behind his daughter.

“Hey Mariah,” Jersi spoke, hoping to lighten the mood.

“Hey cutie. I’m surprised to see you over here. You don’t visit these parts too often,” Mariah pointed out.

“My baby is always welcomed here,” Tabby snapped.

“I never said that she wasn’t. She usually just doesn’t bother to come around,” Mariah snickered as she looked over at Blake.

She was sizing him up from head to toe like she had never seen him before. Something about him was different but she couldn't figure out what it was. Maybe seeing him dressed so casually is what threw her off. Her and Blake were around the same age but she still looked at him as more of a boy than a man. He followed Jersi around like she was his mother and Mariah could tell that he really loved her. She never realized how cute Blake was with his warm vanilla complexion and smooth skin. He looked like the actor Jesse Williams with darker eyes. His and Jersi's skin tones were like night and day but they complimented each other well.

"We better get going Tabby. I promised my mama that I wouldn't be too long," Jersi said as she prepared to make her exit.

"Your mama, huh. Damn Tabby, that has to hurt," Mariah instigated as her father tried to stifle a laugh.

Mariah was a pretty girl but she was a product of the hood. She wore a grill at the bottom of her mouth and her long blonde weave touched the crack of her ass. Her and Damien wore the same striped shirt and boots but she wore leggings instead of jeans. Her nails were extremely long and loud in color. She was ghetto fabulous and threw shade like it was a hobby. Poppin' pills was her and Damien's thing and they did it often.

"Come on sis. I'll walk y'all out," Talena said as she rushed towards the front door.

She needed some fresh air because it felt like she was suffocating. More than that, she needed to get away from Mariah and Damien before she snapped and committed a double homicide. Jersi put her hand up to her ear signaling for Ariel to call her before she and Blake left.

"That bitch is about to work my last nerve. Marvin better do something with that evil hoe," Tabby fumed as she walked outside with them.

Talena was pacing the sidewalk with tears streaming down her face and Jersi felt sorry for her. She let go of Blake's hand and went to give her

big sister a hug.

“It’ll be okay Talena. She’s only doing that because she knows that it gets under your skin,” Jersi said as she rubbed her back.

“I already know. And he’s too damn stupid to realize that he’s being used in her games. I don’t even know why I’m surprised. We’re talking about the same bitch who fucked her best friend’s husband the night before their wedding and she was a bridesmaid,” Talena said, telling the same story that she always told.

“That bitch can’t get her own man. That’s why she’s always going after somebody else’s. Damien better hope his drug money never runs out,” Tabby fumed.

“No good will come from what she’s doing. Don’t even let it get to you,” Jersi said.

“Thanks for stopping by baby. I can’t wait until you finish school so I can see you more often,” Tabby said as she gave Jersi a hug.

“Yeah, I’m halfway through so it won’t be much longer,” Jersi replied.

“I know you’re coming back home for Christmas. Make sure you come see me. I’ll have a few gifts here for you,” Tabby said, even though Jersi knew it was a lie.

The only thing that Tabby had ever done for her was bring her into the world. Dena took over from there and that was the only mother that Jersi knew and acknowledged.

“Okay, I will. See y’all later,” Jersi replied as she waved and walked away to the car.

“Thank God,” Blake sighed once they drove away.

“I know right,” Jersi laughed.

“That’s so messed up what your stepsister is doing to Talena,” Blake commented.

“That bitch ain’t my stepsister and Marvin is not my daddy. I don’t even consider him to be a stepdaddy because I don’t look at Tabby like a mother. I’m good with Dena and Jacob,” Jersi noted.

“I’m happy that we got that over with,” Blake said as he grabbed her hand.

“That makes two of us,” Jersi replied as she looked down at her name that was tattooed on his finger.

It looked like a promise ring and he got in before they had even made their relationship official. He claimed that he knew that Jersi would be his one day so he didn’t think twice before he got it done. He didn’t want to do the traditional thing and give her the ring, so he got it tattooed on him instead. Jersi was scared of needles so he knew not to even ask to her to get one.

“Another Thanksgiving down and a lifetime to go,” Blake said as he leaned over and planted a kiss on her soft lips.

“Yes,” Jersi smiled, agreeing with what he’d just said.

Neither of them had any way of knowing that it would be their last Thanksgiving as a couple.



“Ugh, shit,” Jersi moaned as her face was forcefully shoved into the pillow.

Carter was behind her putting in work as the sweat from his body dripped onto hers. Jersi’s phone was ringing off the hook but she didn’t even attempt to answer it. Carter had the stamina of three men and his sex game was official. Over thirty minutes later and he was still going strong. She attempted to get up on all fours again, and again, Carter pushed her head back into the mattress. He placed a pillow underneath her stomach and gripped her hips firmly. When he started drilling into her harder and faster, Jersi came again for the third time. Carter said that she was his stress reliever and he seemed to always be stressed.

“Damn girl. I think this shit gets better every time,” Carter said as he grabbed a fistful of her hair and pulled her back into him.

A few more strokes and he released into the condom before collapsing on top of her. It only took a minute before he regulated his breathing and got up from the bed. Jersi heard the shower water running a minute later as she got up and put on her robe. She ripped the sheets from the bed and threw them on the floor. After checking to see who had been blowing her phone up, she grabbed a fresh set of sheets right as Carter walked out of the bathroom. He got dressed while Jersi started to make the bed.

“You need help?” Carter asked when he saw Jersi going from one side of her California king size bed to the other with the sheet. He didn’t even wait for her to answer before he walked over and gave her a hand.

“Thanks Carter. See you at work Monday,” Jersi said when he walked over and gave her a peck on the lips.

“See you later. Come lock up,” Carter said before he walked out the front door and closed it behind him.

Once she locked up, Jersi grabbed her phone and called Talena back to see why she had called her so many times.

“Hey sis,” Talena said when she answered for her.

“Girl, this better be important. The hell you called me five times back to back for?” Jersi questioned as she lit her blunt.

“Giiiirl,” Talena drawled as she popped her lips dramatically.

“What bitch?” Jersi asked.

“That nigga Blake is still in love. I just saw him at the grocery store and he talked about you the entire time,” Talena replied.

She couldn’t see it but Jersi’s face was a mixture of annoyance and anger. It was the same thing every week and she was over it. Over four years had passed since she and Blake had broken up but Talena just couldn’t seem to let the shit go.

“Girl, fuck Blake! I don’t know how many times I have to say it before you finally get it. I see his bitch ass all the time and ignore him. You need to do the same,” Jersi replied.

“Four years later and that nigga still ain’t over you,” Talena said.

“Too bad because I’m over his ass,” Jersi noted as she blew smoke



from her mouth.

“I think you should at least talk to him,” Talena said.

“And I think you should just let it go. We talked a long time ago and both of us said what we needed to say. It took me a while to get over what happened between us but I finally did. Blake is married with kids now and I’m good on him,” Jersi countered.

“Fuck that bitch and them ugly ass kids,” Talena snapped.

“Don’t do that to the kids. They’re innocent,” Jersi replied with a giggle.

“I hate that hoe. She’s been a pain in the ass from day one,” Talena said referring to Mariah.

“Oh well, that’s life,” Jeri shrugged as she continued to smoke.

“I just don’t see how you’re so nonchalant about everything. Don’t get me wrong, she did me dirty when she messed with Damien, but she fucked all over you when she got pregnant and married Blake,” Talena argued.

Yep, of all the bitches in the world, her ex had not only gotten Mariah pregnant, but he ended up marrying the bitch too. They had three year old twin girls and Mariah now lived in the house that Jersi was once asked to occupy. Only two months after the last Thanksgiving that they spent together and he started fucking with Mariah behind her back. Jersi saw the changes in him but he swore that nothing was going on. Since he was a pre med student, she believed him when he told her that he couldn’t come visit her because he was studying all the time. Even when she came home on the weekends, he was sometimes nowhere to be found. Imagine her surprise when she found out that he had not only cheated on her but he had gotten another woman pregnant too. It hurt Jersi even more to know that Mariah was that woman. Knowing the kind of family that he had, she wasn’t even surprised when she learned that they had gotten married. They barely knew each other but that

didn't matter to his mother. She had to keep up appearances.

Jersi went into a deep depression and almost flunked out of college. It was so bad that her mother had to come stay with her for a few months just to get her through it. All the weight that Jersi was trying so hard to lose dropped off in no time. She actually felt like she was losing her mind and she probably would have if her mother wasn't there. A whole year was how long it took to get over it but she was thankful that she did. A whole year of praying and asking God to remove the pain and she was finally able to see him and hear his voice without breaking down. Now, it was like she never even loved him at all. Their families still hosted gatherings at each other's houses and Jersi went to them all. Mariah hated when she came around but that was something that would never change. It took two years before Jersi and Blake finally discussed what happened and agreed to be cordial with each other. Their families were together too much and they didn't want any animosity between them. Blake wanted more than a friendship but Jersi wasn't having it. He made his decision when he chose Mariah and now, he had to live with it.

"You seem to be more upset than I am. I cried for an entire year behind that bullshit. I'm fresh out of tears now," Jersi replied.

Truthfully, all the love that she had for Blake turned into hate a long time ago. For a while, Jersi wanted revenge but she decided to let it go. Sometimes, those feelings of catch back resurfaced but she tried hard to shake them off. She would have loved to make both Blake and Mariah hurt the same way they'd hurt her. If it weren't for her mother talking her out of it, she probably would have.

"I am upset because that bitch keeps winning. She's always going after somebody else's man," Talena fumed.

"Girl let me get off this phone. I need to take a shower and make a few runs for my mama," Jersi replied.

It was Saturday and Thanksgiving was in a few days. It was her parents' turn to host the dinner and Dena was driving her crazy. Her mother

was still having the food catered but she wanted to make a few of their favorite desserts. Dena hated going to the store around the holidays so she left that job up to her daughter.

“Okay. Call me later. Maybe we can hook up and go to the hookah bar,” Talena replied before she hung up.

Jersi didn't feel like being bothered with her, so that was a call that would never come. Over the years, the two of them had gotten a little closer. Jersi knew that it was because of their mutual hate for Mariah but she liked spending time with her sister. She just hated when Blake and Mariah became the topic of their entire conversation. Talena had finally gotten her own apartment and she worked from home taking reservations for a hotel. She still visited Tabby a lot and Mariah was there just as much to see her father. They always bumped heads and that would probably never change.

“Now what,” Jersi sighed when her phone rang again. She smiled when she saw Ariel's number and she wasted no time answering it.

“What are you doing cousin bestie? I'm bored as hell and Mike is working a double,” Ariel said referring to her boyfriend.

“I'm not doing a damn thing either. Carter just left and I'm about to hop in the shower,” Jersi replied.

“Yeah, go wash your ass from all that casual sex I know y'all had,” Ariel laughed.

“Bomb ass casual sex too bitch,” Jersi laughed.

When Jersi graduated from college, she landed a great paying job with the IRS. Carter was already working there as a senior accountant and the two of them clicked immediately. He was recently divorced and wasn't looking for a serious relationship. That was fine with Jersi because she wasn't looking for a commitment either. They were attracted to each other, so they came to a mutual understanding. Sex was what they both wanted and that was all there was between them. No cuddling, staying the night or feelings were

involved. It was straight sex and nothing more. Carter was also a great listener and Jersi loved talking to him. She valued his advice and he always kept it real with her. It had been almost a year since they became cuddy buddies and they never crossed the line with each other.

“What’s on your agenda for the day?” Ariel asked.

“Nothing much girl. I need to run to the store for my mama but that’s about it,” Jersi replied.

“Come get me. I don’t want to be in here all day by myself,” Ariel said.

“Okay. Let me freshen up and I’ll call when I’m on my way,” Jersi said as she put her blunt out in the astray.

Over the years she had developed some bad habits and smoking weed was one of them. Draymond started her out as a way to relax when she was going through her breakup with Blake. Since then, Jersi was addicted and it drove their parents crazy. She was happy that they didn’t get tested at work because her and Carter both smoked like chimneys.

Once she found what she was wearing for the day, Jersi went into her bathroom and started the shower. She dropped her robe and stared at her reflection in the mirror. She couldn’t remember a time when she was as small as she was now. Her stomach was flat and that was a first for her too. Being a size ten was new to her and she wanted to maintain her new weight. After her and Blake broke up, she had gotten down to an eight but she picked some of her weight back up. Now, she felt like she was the perfect size and she needed to join a gym to make sure she stayed that way.

After taking a shower and getting dressed, Jersi grabbed her purse and excited her home. Her two bedroom, two bath condo was a graduation gift from her parents and she loved it. The house was a nice size and it was in a quiet gated community. It was well lit at night and her neighbors were friendly. As soon as Jersi got into her car, she called Ariel to let her know that she was on her way. When she hung up with her, the phone rang again and

Dray was the caller.

“Hey brother,” Jersi answered.

“What’s up sis?” Dray asked.

“Nothing much. I’m going get Ariel and then I have to go to the store for mama,” Jersi answered.

“Y’all come get me. I don’t feel like driving and I’m tired of being inside,” Dray said.

“Okay and you better be ready. I’m not trying to be waiting on your slow ass to get dressed,” Jersi replied.

“I’ll be ready,” he assured her before he hung up.

A few minutes later, Jersi pulled up to Ariel’s house. She smiled when she saw her cousin waiting for her out front. Unlike Dray, Ariel was always prompt and ready to go.

“Hey cousin,” Jersi said when Ariel got into the car.

“Hey boo. You look cute,” Ariel complimented.

Jersi had on yellow and white joggers with the matching crop top. The color looked great against her chocolate skin as did most bright colors. Her hair was pulled back off of her pretty face and she looked beautiful without even trying to.

“Thanks cousin, so do you. We have to swing by and pick up Dray,” Jersi replied as she got on the bridge.

Fifteen minutes later, she and Ariel were pulling up to the gate of the condos where Dray lived. Jersi waved at the guard but she went to the side of the gate that was for residents only. Once Jersi entered the code, she drove through and parked in front of his house.

“I wonder who’s coming with us today,” Ariel giggled.

“What do you mean?” Jersi asked.

“Are we hanging with Dray or Draya today?” Ariel questioned as they both laughed.

“Oh, girl I don’t even know but we’re about to find out,” Jersi replied.

She called her brother to tell him that they were outside. As soon as she hung up with him, another car pulled up right behind them with an Uber sign in the front. When Dray’s front door opened, she and Ariel watched as he walked out.

“Dray!” They both laughed thinking the exact same thing.

Dray walked out of his front door dressed in a pair of baggy ripped jeans with a button down shirt and some boots. A pretty woman with exotic features followed him out and over to the Uber. Dray pulled some money from his pocket to tip the driver before pulling the woman closer to him for a kiss. He lifted her off of her feet as he tongued her down with no shame. Once he was done, he opened the door and helped her get inside. When the driver pulled off, he walked to Jersi’s car and hopped into the back seat.

“That bitch is fine as fuck, ain’t she,” Dray remarked as soon as he sat down.

“I don’t understand how you do it. How do you switch back and forth like that so easily?” Ariel questioned.

“His ass is just confused. He don’t know if he’s gay, straight or bisexual,” Jersi replied as she pulled off.

“I don’t like to be defined by anything, especially labels. Why do I have to choose? I just enjoy people, both women and men. It all depends on what I have a taste for when I wake up. Yesterday I wanted sausage, but fish

is on the menu today,” Dray shrugged.

“You’re honest with everybody and that’s what I love about you. You don’t deal with nobody without telling them what they’re getting into,” Jersi said.

“Nah sis. People get killed behind shit like that. I keep it real and they can take it or leave it. The men are easier to deal with than the women though,” Dray noted.

“How so?” Ariel questioned.

“A lot of women can’t fathom the idea of the man that they’re having sex with being with another man,” Dray replied.

“I don’t understand,” Ariel said in confusion.

“Sis, explain to your slow ass cousin what I’m trying to say. I really don’t have it in me right now,” Dray sighed as he replied to a text message on his phone.

“A lot of women don’t like to get fucked by a man who gets fucked,” Jersi blurted out bluntly as Ariel’s eyes bulged in shock.

“Basically,” Dray shrugged.

“Oh, wow. I didn’t know that Dray was on the receiving end,” Ariel said.

“I’m not a selfish lover sweetheart. I give and I take. That too depends on whatever mood I’m in at the time,” he replied honestly.

Ariel was as green as they came and she didn’t know as much about Dray’s lifestyle as Jersi did. Her brother was one of the most honest people that she knew and he was very forthcoming whenever she asked him anything.

“Do you think you’ll ever settle down?” Ariel asked him.

“Only if I can settle down with one of each. Like I just said, I love the best of both worlds and that will never change,” Dray answered.

“When did you start liking men?” Ariel inquired right as Jersi pulled up to the Whole Foods Market and parked.

“I’m staying in the car but take this bitch inside with you. I don’t have time for the Q & A session,” Dray said while pointing to Ariel.

“Come on cousin,” Jersi laughed as she got out of the car.

“He’s much nicer when he’s Draya,” Ariel said as she followed Jersi inside.

“Leave my brother alone and grab a basket. You drive him crazy with all the questions you ask,” Jersi replied.

“I’m just curious about a lot of things. You know I’m dumb to that lifestyle,” Ariel replied.

Jersi wanted to tell her that she was dumb to a lot of stuff but she kept that to herself. Ariel pushed the basket as they walked around getting everything that her mother needed. Dena had sent her a list and she wasn’t leaving until she got everything that was on it. Jersi wasn’t in the mood to be going to multiple stores just to pick up one or two things.

“Where are all the workers? I need some help,” Jersi said as she looked around.

She was on the baking aisle and the flour that her mother used was way on the top shelf. That was the last thing on her list and she wasn’t leaving without it.

“Just get one of these,” Ariel said as she motioned to a few other brands that were on the bottom shelf.



“Hell no. You don’t know my mama honey. She only uses specific brands or she swears her stuff won’t come out right,” Jersi replied.

“You better get down before you hurt yourself,” Ariel said when Jersi climbed on top of the basket to reach what she needed.

“Just hold the basket still,” Jersi instructed as she reached way up top and got the box of flour.

“Be careful Jersi,” Ariel said as she steadied the basket.

She saw what was about to happen before it even happened. Jersi lost her footing and was on her way to the hard tiled floors that was beneath them. Ariel screamed but there was nothing that she could do.

“Ahh!” Jersi yelled as she flapped her arms helplessly.

She was ready to feel the impact of her fall until a pair of strong arms caught her, sparing her the embarrassment and the pain. Jersi’s heart was beating a mile a minute as she held on to the muscular arms of her rescuer. His body was hard as a brick and he had to be as strong as he felt. Although Jersi wasn’t as big as she used to be, he was holding her in his arms like it was nothing. Her eyes were closed tight but she just knew that he was fine.

“Are you okay?” He asked as he put her down and let her stand on her own.

Even his deep, raspy voice was sexy and Jersi couldn’t wait to see his face. When she opened her eyes slowly, she was sadly disappointed at what she saw. He was indeed fine as hell but his face didn’t match his body. His fitted tee, jeans and boots looked great on his physique but he just wasn’t her type. Still, she was grateful for his help and happy that he was in the right place at the right time.

“Yes, thank you so much,” Jersi replied with a sincere smile.

“We can’t have you getting all banged up before Thanksgiving,” he replied flashing a beautiful smile of his own. His teeth were so even and white that they almost looked fake.

“I know, right,” Jersi giggled.

“What do you need? I can get it for you,” he offered.

The flour that Jersi had in her hand fell to the floor and made a mess. He was tall enough to reach the top shelf and she needed another one.

“Can you get me that red and white box of flour, please?” She asked politely.

“Yeah,” he replied as he reached up and effortlessly grabbed what she needed.

“Thank you so much. I really appreciate everything,” Jersi said when he handed it to her.

“No problem. You be safe,” he replied as she and Ariel walked away.

“Girl, he is fine,” Ariel commented lowly.

“Yep, fine and ugly,” Jersi countered as her cousin laughed.

“He was staring you down,” Ariel noted.

“Nope, I’ll pass,” Jersi replied.

Since they were done, she and Ariel went to the front of the store and got into one of the long lines. Thankfully, the lines were moving quickly and they made it up to the front in no time. When Jersi looked back and saw that the man who helped her was in line behind them, she looked in his basket to see what he was buying. It was only four cases of water, so she discreetly told the cashier to add it to her total. It was the least that she could do to show him her appreciation. Once they were done, she and Ariel headed outside to the

car. They spotted Dray standing in the parking lot talking to an unknown woman. When they started to load the bags into the truck, they were interrupted momentarily.

“Thanks for the water. You really didn’t have to do that,” the mystery man said as he walked over to them.

“It was the least I could do to show my gratitude,” Jersi replied.

“Let me get those for you,” he offered as he grabbed the rest of the bags and put them in the trunk of her car.

“Thanks again. I’ll always owe you one if you keep doing stuff for me,” Jersi joked.

“That doesn’t sound like such a bad thing to me,” he flirted with a wink.

“Well, happy holidays to you,” Jersi said.

“Thanks beautiful. Same to you,” he replied before walking away.

Jersi was happy as hell that he didn’t ask for her number or nothing like that. Since he saved her from busting her ass on the hard floors, she would have felt obligated to give it to him. He wasn’t horribly bad to look at but she wasn’t interested. He had thick, full lips that were considered big by most people’s standards. His caramel completion was smooth and tattoos littered both of his muscular arms. His hair was cut low and he had lots of waves. His body was a work of art and that earned him a few extra points. From the neck down he could make any woman fall in love.

“Bitch! I told you that he was interested,” Ariel yelled.

“Maybe he is but I’m not,” Jersi replied.

“I mean, he’s not the cutest but he might be nice,” Ariel said.

“I’m sure he is,” Jersi replied dismissively as Dray walked back over to them.

“Who was that Dray?” Ariel asked him.

“I just met her. Who was that putting the bags in the trunk? That nigga was fine,” Dray noted.

“He was but Jersi doesn’t think he’s cute,” Ariel said as they got into the car.

“I agree but he has lots of potential,” Dray replied.

“Potential for what? You think you’re the teacher, so school us,” Ariel teased.

“Get it right bitch. I’m not the teacher, I’m the principal. His body gets an A plus but his face should be sent to detention. But still, he does have lots of potential despite his less than flattering looks,” Dray said making them both laugh.

“Enough about him. What’s up with your new prospect?” Jersi questioned.

“She won’t be a prospect for long,” Dray smirked with a wink.

Jersi laughed as Ariel asked her brother a million more questions while she drove to her mother’s house. Once she dropped everything off to her, the three of them went to get food and chilled at Jersi’ house for the duration of the day.



**M**ariah smiled as she watched her husband and daughters in their bed playing around. Married to a doctor. She still couldn't believe it herself. Not many girls from the hood could say some shit like that. She'd gone from living in the projects to the palace with top of the line clothes and cars. The old Mariah who used to sleep with dope boys for money was replaced with a classier version. She no longer hung out in the hood at parties and card games. The long weave and nails were gone and so was the grill. She missed getting high but it was a small price to pay for her new life. Reinventing herself was a must. She was the wife of a doctor and that's how she had to behave. Of course, people from her old neighborhood started hating on her but that was to be expected. She had moved up in the world and some of them were still in the same place they were in before she left. Hood rats were all that they were destined to be. Marrying Blake was one of the best things that she had ever done and she didn't regret it. Even better than that were their twin girls, Blair and Bleu, who she had to thank for the huge rock that was sitting on her finger. She loved her husband dearly but she knew that it was because of them that she got it.

“We need to start getting ready before we're late. You know Eva will have a fit if we are,” Mariah said as she discreetly rolled her eyes.

It was no secret that her mother-in-law wasn't very fond of her as if

she gave a damn. Eva was team Jersi all the way and that's who she wanted her son to be with. When Mariah got pregnant, that derailed her plans and she wasn't too happy about that.

After seeing Blake at her father's house with Jersi all those years ago, Mariah did some research on him. When she found out that Blake came from a wealthy family and was going to school to become a doctor, she was ready to put in some work. Coincidentally, her friend Karma's husband, Josh, was also a pre-med student at the time. Mariah met Karma and a few other ladies at the nail salon years ago and they all hung out occasionally. It was like an act of God when Josh told her that he and Blake were classmates and unintentionally gave her all the info that she needed. She got Josh to invite him over to their house one day and she took it from there. Damien had gone to jail and she needed another sponsor. Blake was naïve, so a bomb ass blow job was all it took to make him temporarily forget about Jersi. It only took about two weeks before they started having sex. Mariah showed him all her best tricks and had his head gone in no time. He started lying to Jersi just to be with her and things were going good for a while.

Then, out of nowhere, he tried to break it off with her claiming that he loved Jersi and felt bad for doing her wrong. Mariah was pissed but she quickly got over it. When she missed her cycle, she already knew what was up. She'd stop taking her birth control pills and her plan worked like a charm. Blake was excited to be having a baby and he and Jersi were a done deal once she found out. It was the best day of Mariah's life when she found out that she was having twins. Blake's mother hated her from day one but she was the one who suggested marriage. She didn't want her son ruining their good name by having babies out of wedlock. They had a small service in his parents' backyard and it had been sunshine and rainbows since then.

"Okay. Get them ready while I get dressed," Blake replied, pulling her away from her thoughts.

"Come on girls. It's time to get dressed," Mariah said making her girls jump up from the bed.

The twins had just turned three two weeks before and they were the

best thing to ever happen to her. They looked just like their father and he was crazy about them. They secured Mariah's future and she loved them even more for that.

"Can we go by Mimi today?" Bleu asked, referring to Blake's mother.

The twins spoke well thanks to the private daycare that they were enrolled in. Blake paid a lot of money for them to attend at his mother's insistence. The place had been around for decades and all of her children and her husband attended when they were younger. Mariah was home every day, so it didn't make any sense to her. Now, all she had to do was look pretty all day since they hired somebody to clean for them three times a week. She didn't cook very often because they always went out to dinner. She was living the life that most women could only imagine.

"We'll see Mimi in a little while. We're going to Thanksgiving dinner and she'll be there," Mariah replied.

She hated when the Bradford's hosted the dinners because she didn't feel comfortable at their house. They never made her feel that way but she just didn't feel right being around her husband's ex-girlfriend's family. It didn't help that Jersi was always around too. Even if the dinner was by her in-laws, she knew that her husband's ex was going to show her face. The family's were close and had been that way since forever. Mariah would never voice her opinion to her husband because that would be a losing battle.

Mariah got her girls dressed before she got herself together. Her closet was full of designer labels and she always made sure to look her absolute best before she went anywhere that Jersi would be. There was no way that she was going to let her husband's ex catch her slipping.

"Do you wanna take your car or mine? We'll have to move their car seats if you want me to drive," Blake said once he was done getting himself together.

"I'll drive," Mariah replied as she grabbed her purse and ushered her girls out of the house.

They walked to her silver Lexus SUV that her husband had just purchased for her and strapped both girls in their car seats before driving off. She knew that Blake's parents were already there because his mother had called asking for the kids. Mariah wanted to go see her father too but she knew that Blake would never agree to go. He despised her father but she never knew why. She didn't let his feelings discourage her from bringing the girls to see him though. Since her mother had died eight years ago, her father was the only parent that she had left. Although she hated his wife, she loved him unconditionally.

It was because of Tabby that her father left her mother and that was just unforgivable in her eyes. Mariah's mother was beautiful and she just didn't understand her father's decision. Marvin was discreet when he cheated on his wife but Tabby made it known that they were messing around. She drove her mother crazy until she ended up putting Marvin out of their house. Tabby wasted no time moving him in with her and her daughter though. Mariah knew that it was Tabby who convinced her father to file legal separations papers because he would have never thought of that on his own. Tabby was even controlling the money and Marvin barely gave his wife anything for the bills. Things got so bad that Mariah and her mother had to move into income based project homes. Her father helped every now and then but it was still a struggle.

By the time Tabby got pregnant with Jersi, Marvin and his wife had been legally separated for two years. He wasted no time divorcing her and marrying the other woman who was carrying his child. As fate would have it, Tabby was an even bigger hoe than they imagined and the baby turned out to be for someone else. Mariah's mother was still crushed and she never got over Marvin's hurt and betrayal. Breast cancer claimed her life when Mariah was twenty years old and she died with a broken heart. Her mother went to her grave hating Tabby and her daughters and Mariah felt the exact same way. That's exactly why she took Damien from Talena and Blake from Jersi. She wanted them to hurt just as she and her mother had done. Mariah looked like a younger version of Vanessa Williams with the same beautiful hued eyes. Her beauty had always been her gift and she knew how to use it. As much as she wanted to hate her father, she just couldn't do it. He was her



only living parent and she didn't have it in her. Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for his wife and her kids. Her presence annoyed Tabby and that's why she made sure to always go around. Blake hated going over there so he never accompanied her.

"How long do we have to be here?" Mariah asked when she pulled up to the Bradford's huge estate.

"A few hours, just like always. You know how my parents are Mariah. The Bradford's have been like an extended part of our family for years. They do everything together and always have," Blake replied.

"I know baby but we have our own family now. Why can't we start our own tradition?" Mariah asked.

"This is our family tradition. The Harding and Bradford families have been friends for generations. I can't be the generation to break that up. If you want to do something the day before or after, I'm all for that. We just can't do it on the actual holiday," Blake replied.

"We have to think of something to do for just the four of us around the holidays," she suggested.

"We can do whatever you want baby," Blake replied making her smile.

They got out of the car and grabbed their daughters before ringing the doorbell to the Bradford home. In spite of how they got together, Mariah could honestly say that she and Blake were in love. He catered to her and their daughters and got them whatever they wanted. They had an amazing sex life and they got along great. They rarely argued because he always let Mariah have her way.

"Happy Thanksgiving," Mariah and Blake said when Dr. Bradford opened the door and welcomed them inside.

"Hi, y'all come on in. Your Mimi and Papa have been waiting for

you two,” he said as he smiled at the twins.

Mariah and Blake followed him into the huge family room and spoke to everyone. Blake’s oldest brother Braxton, Jr. and his wife, Catina were there as well but no one else had arrived yet. Mariah and Cat were cordial to each other but she wouldn’t say that they were friends. It wasn’t that she never tried but Cat didn’t seem to be interested in a friendship. Blake was very close with his brother and she wanted that kind of closeness with his brother’s wife. Cat was more cool with Jersi so Mariah just had to accept that.

Over the next few minutes, more family from both sides came over and joined in on the festivities. When Jersi walked into the house, Mariah discreetly watched her the entire time. Jersi’s skin always seemed to glow and she was the center of attention everywhere she went. She spoke to everyone before going to sit at the table right next to Cat.

“Jersi, you look beautiful,” Eva gushed as Mariah rolled her eyes unnoticeably.

Jersi had dropped a lot of weight over the years but she still had her curves. The coral colored maxi dress that she was rocking showed them off perfectly. Her curly hair was pulled into a ponytail being held up by a printed scarf.

“Thanks Ms. Eva. I need to get back in the gym before I start gaining all that weight back,” Jersi replied.

“How did you lose it? I’m still holding on to baby weight from years ago,” Cat laughed.

Cat was thick just how Jersi used to be but she was beautiful. Jersi used to call her Kelly Price because that’s who she reminded her of. Cat had full kissable lips and she rocked the cutest bob that Jersi had ever seen.

“Working out and eating right,” Jersi replied, giving her the generic answer.

She loved Cat and they often talked on a personal level. But she would never tell anyone that she had no appetite for months when she and Blake broke up. She would never give him and Mariah the satisfaction of knowing that.

“Okay guys, it’s time to eat,” Dena said when she walked into the room.

Everyone got up and followed her to the dining room where all the food was set up. Dr. Bradford said grace and everybody dug into the food soon after. Hours had passed and everyone was having a good time. When Dena said something about dessert, Jersi got up and started clearing the food from the table. Cat got up to help her and Mariah knew that it was only so that they could talk in private. They made it a point to exclude her from everything, which was childish in her opinion. Cat was still her sister-in-law, no matter how she felt about it.

“That is one of the best feelings in the world. How long do you have left?” Jersi asked Cat as they put the food into containers.

“Six more months and I’ll be a certified elementary school teacher,” Cat beamed.

“Damn girl. That time passed so fast,” Jersi said as she drank from her bottle of water.

“Yep. Time really flies when you’re fucking one of your professors,” Cat replied making Jersi spit her water out and cough uncontrollably.

Cat rushed over and slapped her back to offer her a little comfort. She didn’t think that her sudden outburst would garner that kind of reaction.

“Shit girl, you almost killed me,” Jersi coughed.

“I’m sorry Jersi. Are you okay boo?” Cat asked her.

“Yeah, I’m good. I just wasn’t expecting to hear that,” Jersi replied as she continued to clear her throat.

“I don’t know why. BJ has been cheating since before we got married. And before you ask, yes, I knew,” Cat noted.

Jersi wasn’t about to comment on that because it was no secret that BJ was doing him. Blake used to tell her everything but it wasn’t her business to repeat anything to Cat. She would have never expected that she was doing the same thing to her husband though.

“How long have you been dealing with him?” Jersi asked.

“It’s been almost a year now. He knows that I’m married and he doesn’t care,” Cat answered.

“Your professor though Cat. I couldn’t see myself messing with an old ass man like that,” Jersi frowned.

“He’s only four years older than I am. He’s actually a high school teacher but he teaches part time at the university too,” Cat noted.

“Girl, BJ would die if he ever found out. You know how that goes. Them niggas can do their thing but they go crazy when the shoe is on the other foot,” Jersi said.

“As if I give a fuck. He’s really gonna go crazy when I hit his ass with some divorce papers. And I don’t give a fuck about that prenup that I signed,” Cat replied.

“Divorce! Damn Cat. I didn’t know it was that bad. And I can’t believe that he made you sign a prenup,” Jersi gasped.

“He sure did and my young, dumb ass did it with no questions asked. See, Blake wouldn’t have even come at you on no dumb shit like that. Your family got way more money than them, so there would have been no need. But for bitches like me and Mariah, who came from nothing, they want us to

walk away with what we came in with.”

“Do you think she signed a prenup too?” Jersi asked.

“I don’t think, I know she did. It’s all good though. I’m way smarter than they gave me credit for. I got enough saved to make sure I’m straight for a while. I been stacking my chips on his ass. He owes me for seven years of mediocre sex and misery,” Cat said.

“Girl, shut up,” Jersi laughed.

“My mama told me not to marry him just because I was pregnant but I didn’t listen. People have babies out of wedlock all the time. Hell, my mama and daddy didn’t get married until I was eight. I was the flower girl at their damn wedding,” Cat acknowledged.

“That be Eva with all that. That’s why I popped my pills faithfully honey. I wasn’t letting nobody force me down the aisle before I was ready,” Jersi said.

“And I don’t blame you. BJ and I were not ready to get married and that’s why we’re both unhappy. We weren’t in love then and we’re not in love now. And that bitch Mariah can play it off all she wants to, but I know she’s miserable too. She be acting like her life with Blake is so perfect but I don’t buy it. Eva can’t stand her ass and she doesn’t even try to hide it. You know they wanted you and Blake to be together,” Cat replied.

“I’m so happy that I didn’t make that mistake. If it was that easy for him to cheat on me with her then he wasn’t the man for me anyway,” Jersi shrugged.

“That nigga still loves you too. He’s always talking to BJ about you,” Cat admitted.

“Fuck Blake! Getting over him was the best thing that ever happened to me,” Jersi fumed.

“His wife be trying to be my friend but I ain’t got nothing for her. I don’t need nobody going back and repeating the shit that I say,” Cat replied.

“So, about your boo. Are you planning to be with him once you and BJ split up?” Jersi asked.

“Girl, he wants to but I don’t know about all that. I might need some time to figure shit out before I jump right into something else. He’s easy to talk to and that’s what I really like about him. Maybe we’ll just take it slow and see what happens,” Cat shrugged right as Jersi’s mother walked into the kitchen.

“Thanks for helping me out. I really appreciate it,” Dena smiled.

“Go sit down ma, we got it. I know you’re tired from baking and making sure that everything was done right,” Jersi replied.

“You have no idea how right you are. I’m just coming to bring the desserts out,” Dena said.

“We got it Mrs. B. Go relax,” Cat said.

“Honey, you don’t have to tell me twice. I’ll send Dray back here to help. That’s if he can pull himself away from that lil girl,” Dena said as she walked away shaking her head.

It was as if Dray pulled names out of a hat during holiday time. He would show up with a woman on Thanksgiving and be on the arm of a man for Christmas or vice versa. He was like a skilled actor and he played his parts very well.

“I just love your brother. He’s always the same every time I see him. He’s true to himself and doesn’t give a fuck about how nobody else feels about it,” Cat commented.

“That’s how we were taught to be. My parents never cared about what anybody had to say about them either and they still don’t,” Jersi

acknowledged.

“Maybe they need to rub some of that off on their best friends,” Cat said speaking of her husband’s parents.

“That’s not a trait that can be taught. Either you got it or you don’t,” Jersi said right as the swinging doors to the kitchen flew open.

“Do y’all need some help?” Mariah asked when she walked in and looked at them.

“We got it, but thanks,” Cat replied quickly.

“Oh, well, Mrs. B told me to come in and help y’all bring out all the desserts,” Mariah countered.

“Here you go,” Jersi said as she handed her one of the cakes that her mother baked.

She knew that her mother would never have asked Mariah to help her with anything. More than likely she volunteered her services but they weren’t needed.

“You can bring it out since you’re already holding it. I’ll just grab another one,” Mariah replied. Jersi had her fucked up if she thought she was about to take orders from her. She didn’t give a fuck if she was in their house.

“What’s the difference?” Jersi asked with a confused frown.

“I got it friend. I’ll bring it out for you,” Cat said as she grabbed the cake from Jersi and walked away.

“Do you have a problem with me Jersi?” Mariah asked, shocking Jersi with her question.

“Excuse me?” Jersi countered, taken aback by what she was saying.

“Look, we’re not cool and we never will be. That’s already been established. But lets face it, our families are good friends and have been for many years. I’m sure being around me bothers you and the feeling is mutual. But for the sake of everyone involved, we need to be women about this and at least try to get along. Blake is not my boyfriend. He’s my husband and that will never change. You and Cat ignoring me all the time won’t make me go away,” Mariah rambled.

“Is this a joke?” Jersi laughed as she looked around like she was waiting for someone to jump out with cameras pointed at them.

“Do you see the slightest hint of humor on my face?” Mariah countered, making Jersi’s smile drop.

“No, but my fist will be if you don’t get the fuck on. The nerve of you to come at me on some bullshit just because I don’t fuck with you. Why would I after what you did? You need to be happy that I let you make it at all,” Jersi fumed.

“I can’t believe that you’re still bitter after all these years,” Mariah chuckled.

“Bitter for what sweetie? Your husband be checking for me. You should be thankful that the feelings are one sided. I would have had you losing sleep a long time ago if they weren’t.”

“I get it, I live the life that you thought would be yours. But things happen and people fall out of love every day,” Mariah noted.

“Maybe you should be having this talk with your husband. I fell out of love with him a long time ago. Can he honestly say the same?” Jersi asked.

“Don’t flatter yourself sweetheart. Blake is very happy at home. And it couldn’t have been all that deep with y’all anyway. One blowjob was all it took to make him forget about you,” Mariah noted.

“I’m sure it’ll take even less to make him remember me though. Make



no mistake about it boo, you're happy with Blake because I let you be. We can take it there if you really want to though. And stop talking like you're a big dog. You don't even possess the skills to get out there and find your own man," Jersi argued.

"Why should I when you and your sister do such a great job of picking them out for me?" Mariah winked as she grabbed a cake from the counter and walked away.

Jersi was livid for more reasons than one. She did what her mother told her to do and she didn't interfere in Blake's marriage. She tried to be mature about it even though she wanted to lay hands on them both. She was cordial with him and his wife but that wasn't enough for Mariah. She obviously didn't know Jersi but she was about to get schooled real quick.

"What's up Jersi? You good?" Cat asked when she walked back into the kitchen and saw Jersi standing there staring at nothing.

"Yeah but why did that bitch Mariah just come for me. In my mama's kitchen at that," Jersi said like she was still baffled by it all.

"I knew that bitch was back here too long. Your mama had me out there cutting cake and I missed it. What happened?" Cat asked.

"She really tried me," Jersi chuckled sarcastically right before she ran the entire story down to her.

Cat stood there and listened with her mouth hung open in shock. The nerve of Mariah to be in her feelings after she went after somebody else's man. Blake told her husband all about how Mariah had approached him. He should have turned her down so he was just as guilty as she was.

"Her stupid ass better be happy that you don't want him," Cat replied angrily once Jersi finished talking.

"I didn't want him before but I do now," Jersi smirked.

“Bitch, no you don’t. If I don’t know nothing else, I know that you don’t want no parts of Blake anymore,” Cat replied.

“We know that but they don’t have to. You know the old saying. One is lonely, two is company and three is a crowd. I’m about to show that bitch just how crowded her marriage can be,” Jersi swore.

“Alright now bitch and I’m here for it all,” Cat replied as she and Jersi carried the rest of the desserts out to the front.

Mariah was all smiles as they talked and enjoyed the cakes that Dena had baked. Jersi’s mind took her back to the time when she had first learned about her and Blake’s affair. All the sleepless nights and tears she shed could no longer go unpunished. Getting Blake to fall in love with her again would be nothing, especially since he never stopped loving her at all. Mariah started something and Jersi was ready to finish it.



Mariah.

“I hate that bitch!” Talena fumed when Jersi finished telling her and Ariel about her altercation with

They were at the hookah bar vaping and enjoying their drinks. Talena was pissed when she learned about some of the things that Mariah said to her sister. That bitch was bold and she just kept proving just how much she really didn't give a fuck.

“I just couldn't believe how the bitch came at me. Like, I haven't tried to interfere in her and Blake's marriage once. He's always telling people that he still loves me but I never even entertained that shit,” Jersi replied.

“He sure is because he's always saying it to me,” Talena acknowledged.

“Forget her and Blake. That's just her guilty conscience getting to her. She know she was wrong for what she did,” Ariel spoke up.

“Yeah, but I got something for that hoe. I was unbothered and she should have left me that way. Now, all bets are off. Christmas can't get here fast enough. I'm about to be the best gift that her husband ever unwrapped,” Jersi replied.

“Who’s doing Christmas this year?” Talena asked.

“It’s his parents’ turn to host it and I’m happy. My mama goes overboard when she does Christmas at her house. Halloween had barely passed and she started putting her stuff up,” Jersi replied.

Dena was so extra for Christmas. She had spent thousands of dollars over the years buying decorations for the inside of her house. Even their bathrooms were transformed into a winter wonderland. She had about eight trees in their huge house and they were all decorated differently.

“So, you have to go by his people?” Talena asked.

“Yep and I can’t wait,” Jersi replied as she sipped her drink.

“I don’t know Jersi. Playing with people’s feelings is serious. I would rather you beat Mariah’s ass than to insert yourself into her marriage,” Ariel spoke up.

“Fuck that! She inserted herself into their relationship first. That’s the whole problem now. That hoe gets too many passes,” Talena fumed.

“We all know how you feel about Mariah, so I don’t expect you to agree with me. That’s not even you though Jersi. Mariah is a bitch and I know she makes you want to go there with her. I just don’t have a good feeling about it,” Ariel tried to reason.

“Fuck your feelings Ariel! You’re not the one who was wronged by her. Do you sis. Make that hoe feel the same pain that she’s always inflicting on others,” Talena fumed.

“Okay, I did my part as your best friend and cousin. I won’t say anything else about it,” Ariel said.

“Thanks. We appreciate you for shutting the fuck up,” Talena snapped.

Ariel got on her nerves with all that peaceful shit. Her man was a boring nerd and so was she. She had never encountered a bitch like Mariah before, so she needed to stay out of it. Talena knew firsthand how Jersi felt but she was sure that her sister felt even worse. After all, Blake had married the bitch and had kids with her. Mariah hit the jackpot with Blake and it would kill her if she lost him.

“I understand what you’re saying Ariel but I’m really not trying to hear it right now. That bitch decided to check me in my mama’s house and that was just unacceptable to me,” Jersi said.

“Exactly. Hoes can’t deal when you start treating them the same way they treat you. That bitch needs a taste of her own medicine, period,” Talena replied.

“I agree but I just can’t see myself fucking Blake again. I’m not even attracted to him like that no more,” Jersi frowned.

“That’s the only way this is going to work Jersi. It’s not an affair if sex ain’t involved,” Talena pointed out.

“I’m good as long as he doesn’t expect me to suck his dick. I have to really be feeling a nigga to go down on him and I’m not feeling Blake at all. I’ll abort the whole mission before I do that,” Jersi said as she scrunched up her face in disgust.

“Maybe you should just abort the mission anyway,” Ariel replied.

“And maybe you should just shut the fuck up!” Talena snapped.

“Fuck you Talena. You’re just as selfish as Mariah is. You only want Jersi to get her back for taking Damien from you. This ain’t even about Blake,” Ariel said calling her cousin out.

“Y’all chill out. We’re supposed to be relaxing, not arguing,” Jersi said before her sister could even reply.

She wasn't dumb and she knew exactly why Talena wanted her to mess around with Blake so badly. Truthfully, it didn't matter what anybody wanted because her mind was already made up.

After spending another hour in the bar, the three of them left to go grab a bite to eat. They couldn't decide on what they wanted, so Jersi chose to go to Acme Oyster House since she was driving. They were seated as soon as they got there and their orders were placed a short time later.

"They must have a party or something over there," Talena said as she looked to an area where a lot of men were seated.

They all had on matching shirts and they were loud as hell. Talena's eyes were glued to their area, probably trying to see who she was going to flirt with. After Damien, she never did get into another serious relationship. It wasn't that she didn't try. She just had major trust issues and she ran everybody off.

"I'm going to the bathroom," Jersi said as she got up and walked away.

She had three drinks at the hookah bar and her bladder was feeling the effects of them all. Once she was done, she washed her hands and fluffed out her hair. As soon as she was leaving the bathroom, Carter sent her a text asking if he could come over. Jersi had her head down texting when she ran right into someone. Her phone fell from her hands and she cringed just thinking about it hitting the hard concrete floor. Her iPhone screen was always cracking and she was tired of getting it repaired. Thankfully, the collision never happened and it was caught in midair.

"Looks like I've come to your rescue once again," someone said as they handed her the phone.

Jersi looked up into the smiling face of the same man who had saved her from killing herself in Whole Foods right before Thanksgiving. He had on one of the same shirts as the noisy men who were in the section next to

theirs. That body was sick and it was fucked up that his face didn't match. Granted, he wasn't unbearably bad to look at but she would have to pass.

"Thank you so much. You're a real life saver," Jersi smiled in gratitude.

"No thanks needed. Just being a gentleman," he replied.

"Can I buy you a drink or something? I feel like I owe you for always helping me," Jersi offered.

"Thanks for offering but I'm good. I'm here with my frat brothers and we've all had enough to drink," he replied.

"Okay, well thanks again," Jersi smiled as she walked away.

As soon as she got back to the table, the waitress came out with their food. She had light conversation with her sister and cousin as they ate. Thankfully, Talena and Ariel were done arguing for a while. Lately, that seemed to be all that they did. Talena was so used to telling Ariel anything and she was fed up with it. Ariel started clapping back and it had been that way for a while.

"I'm stuffed. Let me call for the bill," Ariel said as she raised her hand and signaled the waitress.

"I got it Ariel," Jersi said as she grabbed her purse to get her debit card.

"No Jersi, you paid the last two times. We got it this time," Ariel noted.

"Bitch, who is we?" Talena asked while rolling her eyes.

The three of them got together at least once a week and Talena never even offered to pay. She was always saying that she was broke but Jersi didn't mind. She was good financially but Ariel didn't appreciate her girl

being used.

“You don’t even pretend like you’re gonna pay. And be the main one ordering appetizers and all that other shit,” Ariel snapped in anger.

“Please don’t start y’all. I said I got it,” Jersi spoke up right as the waitress walked over.

“Actually, somebody else got it. Your tab has already been paid,” the waitress replied with a smile.

“Paid by who?” Talena asked as she sat up straight and fixed herself up.

She was sure that it was a man who paid their bill. She had to be together just in case it was her that he was interested in.

“The gentleman right over there paid it. He even gave me a tip,” the waitress replied as she pointed to one of the men in the noisy section.

When Jersi’s mystery man smiled and lifted his glass, she waved and smiled back.

“Ugh. His ugly ass is not what’s up,” Talena frowned while slumping down in her seat.

“That’s ole boy from Whole Foods,” Ariel said as she waved at him.

“Yeah, I just ran into him when I went to the bathroom. That’s his fraternity,” Jersi said as she stood up and grabbed her purse.

She waved at the man again before leaving and mouthed her appreciation for him covering their bill.

“Where to now?” Ariel asked.

“I don’t know about y’all but I’m going home. Carter is coming



over,” Jersi replied.

“Is he spending the night?” Ariel asked.

“Does he ever? You know we’re not on it like that. We have an understanding and we never cross the line,” Jersi replied.

“That’s the kind of nigga that I need. Come through, break my back and bring your ass back home,” Talena said as they piled into Jersi’s car and pulled off.

“That kind of relationship will never work for you. You fall in love too fast,” Jersi replied.

“That’s my whole damn problem. I’m always falling for the wrong ones,” Talena admitted as Jersi drove towards her house.

Ariel’s car was parked out front, so they both got out and went their separate ways once Jersi dropped them off. Ariel had never seen the inside of Talena’s house and that was fine with them both. Talena only started hanging with them when Mariah and Blake got together. She barely even acknowledged Jersi before then.

“You can be on your way,” Jersi said when she called Carter.

“I’m already here but I can’t get in the gate,” Carter replied.

“Damn. What’s going on like that?” Jersi asked him.

“I had a stressful day and I need to relieve some tension,” Carter sighed.

“Is everything okay?” Jersi asked.

“It will be. I’ll tell you about it when you get here,” Carter replied.

“Okay. I should be pulling up in about ten minutes,” Jersi assured him

before she disconnected the call.

She didn't know what was going on with him but she was sure that it had something to do with his ex-wife. She was a bitch who used their kids to get her way. What she did know was that she was in for some bomb ass sex. Whenever Carter was stressed, he was like a wild animal in the bedroom but she never complained.

As soon as Jersi pulled into her gate, Carter drove in right behind her. He got out of his car without uttering a word. As soon as they walked into the house, he started pulling her clothes off and his came off next. He came prepared with a brand new box of condoms and Jersi knew that she was in for a long night.



“Merry Christmas everybody,” Jersi smiled when she and Dray walked into the Harding’s home.

Dray had his friend Donovan with him again and Jersi was surprised that he'd been around that long. After one year, Dray usually got bored. He was obviously feeling Donovan for him to still be around after so many years. They all went around greeting everyone before they took their seats. Of course, Jersi bypassed Mariah and Blake, but that was nothing new. She felt Blake's eyes on her but she ignored him just like always. After having a serious talk with Ariel, Jersi abandoned her plans to mess around with him. She was angry at Mariah at the time and it seemed like a good idea. Once she thought it over, it wasn't even that deep. Once again, Mariah's behavior got a pass. After she greeted everyone, Jersi was ready to relax. As usual, she sat

next to Cat and they started talking soon after.

“You look so cute Jersi. That red got that chocolate skin popping,” Cat complimented.

“Thanks girl. Dray styled me today. I’m just happy that I didn’t walk in here looking like a tree ornament,” Jersi replied as they both laughed.

“Don’t do him that. I need to let him help me. I’m so tired of always dressing like a first lady. My husband ain’t even a pastor,” Cat said making Jersi laugh even louder.

“Okay, it’s time to eat. Let’s say grace and dig in,” Eva said as she instructed everyone to bow their heads.

Once she was done, everyone started eating and talking. They usually opened the gifts up after dinner and the kids were anxious. Not even ten minutes after they ate, they were begging their grandparents to open their presents. As much as Jersi hated Blake and Mariah, she had to admit that their twins were adorable. The way they squealed in delight had everyone in the room smiling. They all watched as the kids opened their gifts and got excited about everything that they had.

“I didn’t buy shit for nobody but my son and I hope nobody got nothing for me,” Cat mumbled to Jersi.

“Not even your husband?” Jersi asked.

“Nope. Fuck him too,” Cat replied in a hushed tone.

“I gave everybody their gifts this morning,” Jersi whispered back.

She and Cat exchanged gifts every year but they always did it the day before. It had been their own little tradition for years and they never stopped even when Jersi and Blake broke up. Mariah looked over at them and frowned. She was over the whispering and side bar conversations. Cat still acted like Jersi was her sister-in-law and that didn’t sit too well with her. She

got up and decided to break up their little private party.

“Here you got Catina. From one Mrs. Harding to another,” Mariah said as she over pronounced the Mrs. in her name.

She smiled as she handed Cat a red envelope that she stuck in her purse. Mariah was looking like she was waiting for something but Cat didn’t have nothing for her.

“Thank you. I appreciate it,” Cat said with a phony smile.

“You’re welcome. We need to start hanging out more. I mean, it makes sense since we’re married to two brothers,” Mariah replied.

“Okay, let’s clean up our mess, so we can have dessert,” Eva said, unknowingly coming to Cat’s rescue. She was about to let Mariah down once again, but she was happy that she didn’t have to.

“Come on Jersi. Let’s clear the table,” Cat said as she stood up. That had become their unassigned job and a way for them to talk amongst themselves.

Once they had the table cleared, Eva and Dena put the desserts out while the kids played with their toys.

“Am I reading too much into things Cat? For some reason, I feel like Mariah has been throwing a lot of shade at me lately,” Jersi said as they packed the food away.

“No, I’m starting to notice that too. I think she was intimidated in the beginning because she knew that you and had Blake history. The bitch got a ring and she’s too comfortable now. She just don’t know. That nigga eyes be on you hard as fuck,” Cat replied.

“I was about to entertain him but it’s not even worth it. Fuck her and Blake,” Jersi spat angrily.

“Bitch, I can’t even lie, I was here for the drama. The petty side of me wanted you to fuck some shit up,” Cat admitted right as one of Blake’s daughter’s came running into the kitchen.

“Can you give me a towel auntie Cat?” Bleu asked as she walked up to her.

Her face and hands were full of cake icing and so was her dress. Cat was busy putting vegetables in a container, so Jersi jumped in and offered her assistance.

“Come on pretty girl. Let me help you get cleaned up,” Jersi said as she picked her up and walked her over to the sink.

After washing Bleu’s hands, she grabbed a few paper towels and started cleaning off her face and dress. When she was almost done, Mariah came rushing into the kitchen in search of her baby girl.

“Didn’t I tell you about running off like that? I told you to go into the bathroom, not the kitchen,” Mariah scolded the three year old.

“It’s okay mommy. I’m all cleaned up now,” Bleu smiled while holding up her freshly washed hands.

“Did you say thank you?” Mariah asked her.

“Thank you Jersi,” Bleu said as she looked up at her and smiled.

“You’re welcome beautiful,” Jersi said as she helped her down from the counter and watched her skip away.

“I didn’t know that you were so good with kids. I’ll make sure I keep that in mind for the next time Blake and I need a babysitter. Don’t worry, we pay very well,” Mariah smirked as she turned and walked away.

“Wait a minute,” Jersi said as her face twisted in confusion. “Did that

bitch just call me the babysitter?”

“Yes bitch, you’re the help,” Cat replied as she held on to the counter and laughed.

“Okay and I’m about to help myself right to her husband,” Jersi fumed.

Truthfully, Mariah saying anything to her was something that she never had to worry about before. They only saw each other at family gatherings and Mariah made it a point to avoid her for years. Jersi just didn’t understand why she had been coming for her so hard lately and she really didn’t care. Mariah was basically saying fuck her feelings and Jersi felt the same way about her.

“I’m ready to go home now. We ate and the kids have already opened their gifts. There’s nothing else left for us to do,” Cat said when she and Jersi went back into the room with everyone else.

Jersi heard her but her mind was elsewhere. She was really in her feelings about how Mariah had tried to play her. That bitch was a project hood rat but she quickly forgot where she came from. Mariah was a stay at home mother and everything that she had came from Blake. Without his riches, she would be back in the low income housing that she used to live in before. Having his kids was probably the only thing that saved her. She looked down on everybody now because she was on top. Jersi was lost in her thoughts for a while until she saw that people were starting to leave. A few of Eva’s nieces and nephews were telling her goodbye and that’s the only thing that pulled her away from her daydream.

“We’re leaving sis. I’ve had enough of this boring ass house to last me a lifetime. Besides, Sassy is doing a show tonight and I need to get ready,” Dray said, referring to the name that Evan went by when he did drag.

“Okay, let me walk you out. I’m about to be leaving too,” Jersi replied as she got up and followed them outside.

Blake was outside moving his car to let one of his cousins out. His parents' driveway wasn't nearly as big as theirs, so they had to keep making room to let people in and out. Jersi hugged her brother and Donovan and saw them off. She saw Blake lingering around and she knew that he was trying to get her alone. That was cool because she wanted to do the same.

"Hey," Blake spoke when Jersi walked back to the house.

"Hi," Jersi spoke back.

"How have you been?" Blake asked, shifting uncomfortably.

"Fine and you?" Jersi countered.

"I've been okay I guess," Blake shrugged.

"You guess? Either you have or you haven't," Jersi said.

"I could be better but I miss you," Blake admitted.

"I miss you too," Jersi replied, shocking him.

Besides speaking to him occasionally, Jersi pretended as if he didn't exist. A few times she caught him staring at her but she turned her head without even acknowledging him. Now, hearing her say that she missed him was like the best Christmas present that Blake could have ever received. He'd never stopped loving her and he wasn't sure that he ever would.

"Can we go somewhere and talk Jersi? I just feel like there's so much that we never got a chance to say," Blake said.

"I don't know about that Blake," Jersi replied, trying not to sound too eager. Blake was playing right into her hands and she had to stop herself from laughing.

"Please Jersi. I won't take up too much of your time, I promise," Blake pleaded.

“How is that going to be possible Blake? Your wife is right inside,” Jersi replied as if she gave a fuck.

“We can meet up somewhere,” Blake said.

Jersi was hoping that he wasn't trying to come to her house because that wasn't happening. That was her comfort zone and she didn't want Blake nowhere near where she laid her head.

“Where?” Jersi questioned.

“How about the lake?” Blake suggested. “We used to park there and talk all the time.”

They used to park and do more than talk but Jersi wasn't trying to relive old memories.

“I guess so,” Jersi sighed like she really didn't want to.

She didn't give a fuck about what Blake had to say. More than likely it was going to be a bunch of lame ass excuses and weak ass apologies. All of which Jersi had already heard.

“Okay. Give me about an hour and I'll be there,” Blake swore right as the front door swung open, revealing his brother, sister-in-law and his wife.

Mariah was all smiles until she spotted Jersi and her husband standing there. Her face fell as she witnessed the awkwardness between them. It was obvious that she was interrupting something but she didn't know what. Blake had a guilty look on his face while Jersi only smirked. Cat was giggling but Mariah didn't know what was so funny.

“Are you leaving Cat?” Jersi asked her friend.

“Yes girl. I'm ready to shower and get in my bed,” Cat yawned.



“I’m about to get going too,” Jersi said as she walked with her friend to her car.

“Are you ready to go baby?” Blake asked as he looked at his wife.

“Yeah, just let me get the girls and grab my purse,” Mariah replied while looking from him to Jersi again.

Once Cat and her family left, Jersi went back inside to talk to her parents. She was trying to kill time before she had to meet Blake and they were usually the last ones to leave. Before Blake and his family left, he gave a head nod to Jersi, silently confirming their plans. As soon as they got into the car, Mariah started up with the questions.

“What was that all about?” she asked while looking over at her husband.

“What was what about?” Blake inquired, playing dumb.

“You and Jersi. It looked like I was interrupting something,” Mariah said.

“No, you weren’t. She walked her brother outside while I went to move my car. That was all that there was to it,” Blake replied.

“Are you sure about that?” Mariah asked.

“Can we not do this today please? We had a great day with our family and friends. Don’t ruin it with your insecurities because I’m sick of it.”

“I’m not feeling this way for nothing Blake. Let’s not forget that I walked down on you asking your brother and his wife questions about her recently. You can try to downplay it all you want to but there must still be feelings involved,” Mariah argued.

“We were friends Mariah. Before the relationship or anything else, she was my friend. I can’t lie, sometimes I miss the friendship but that’s it. I

love you and our girls too much to even entertain the idea of another woman,” Blake swore.

“I love you too baby,” Mariah smiled, satisfied with his answer.

She was crushed when she heard her husband asking his brother about Jersi. He knew that she was cool with Cat and she sometimes went to their house to visit. He swore that it was innocent but Mariah was in her feelings about it. She tried hard but she couldn't keep her emotions in check. That's why she had started taking cheap shots at Jersi whenever she saw her. Her feelings were hurt and she was taking it out on her husband's ex.

“We have a million toys to get out of the car. My parents always go overboard,” Blake chuckled.

“I feel bad about not going to see my father. He had the girls a few gifts too and I didn't even bring them over there. I don't understand why we can't alternate holidays between my family and yours,” Mariah said.

“That will never happen. Now, if you want to spend a holiday with your father, that's fine. Me and the girls will continue to do what we've always done,” Blake replied.

“What has my father ever done to you? Why don't you like him?” Mariah questioned.

“Just let it go Mariah. I'm not in the mood to argue,” Blake sighed in aggravation.

Mariah would die if she knew the real reason why he hated her father. Blake had never gotten over the way Marvin treated Jersi and he never would. He didn't care that he was married to his daughter now. He didn't want no parts of Marvin or Tabby.

“I don't want to argue with you either,” Mariah noted.

Arguing was something that she and Blake rarely did and she didn't

want to start. They had a great marriage and an even better sex life. If she weren't taking her birth control pills regularly, she was sure that she would have been pregnant again.

"I'm gonna help you put them to bed and go make a run," Blake said when they pulled up to their house.

"Make a run where?" Mariah asked.

"I told Josh that I was gonna come have a drink with him. I won't be too long," Blake said, lying effortlessly.

"Why didn't you tell me? I could have left the girls with your mother and came with you," Mariah replied.

"It's not a couples thing like we usually do. Just a few friends having a drink for Christmas," Blake shrugged like it was nothing.

It was the first time since they'd been married that Mariah doubted her husband. He had never once mentioned having a drink with Josh and she was finding his story hard to believe. It was almost ten o'clock and he had never gone to his friend's house that late.

Once the girls had their baths and went to sleep, Blake left and promised to be back soon. Mariah's first mind told her to do some investigating and she wasted no time listening.

"Merry Christmas boo," Mariah sang when Karma answered the phone on the third ring.

"Same to you and yours," Karma replied with a yawn.

"Sorry for calling so late. I wanted to call you earlier but we were with my in-laws," Mariah said.

"That's okay girl. We had a house full today too and I'm drained. My mother-in-law just left and took the kids with her. Josh took a shower and

crashed and I'm about to do the same," Karma replied.

"Josh is asleep already?" Mariah asked, just to be sure.

"Girl yes. I'm surprised you don't hear his ass snoring. They wore my poor hubby out. I'm happy that he doesn't have to be back at the hospital until tomorrow night. He needs to rest," Karma said.

"Oh, well I won't hold you boo. Get some rest and we'll talk later. Have a good night," Mariah replied.

"You do the same and tell Blake that I said hello," Karma said before she hung up.

Mariah sat there deep in thought as she held the phone in her hand. She stared off into space for a while as she replayed the conversation that she and her husband had before he left. Blake lied to her and she was pissed. He had to be out there doing something wrong or he wouldn't have felt the need to be dishonest. As far as she knew, Blake had never been unfaithful to her. Her intuition never even led her to believe that he was ever doing something wrong. Seeing him outside talking to Jersi had all kinds of crazy thoughts running through her head though. She was about to drive herself crazy, so she decided to give her husband a call. If he wasn't doing anything wrong, he shouldn't have had a problem answering his phone. When the voicemail came on, Mariah's heart skipped a beat. She dialed his number two more times and got the same results. In all time that she and Blake had been together, that had never happened before.

"Just relax and trust your man Mariah. Blake would never cheat on you," she said out loud trying to give herself a mental pep talk.

She had to think positive thoughts and not let her mind start playing tricks on her. She and Blake lived a great life with a great marriage. There was no doubt in her mind that Blake loved her unconditionally. He would never break her heart by cheating on her. She trusted her husband and she had no reason to start doubting him now.



legs.

“Yesss! Blake! Shit!” Jersi screamed as she pushed his face deeper in between her

They were parked on the lake in Blake’s silver Mercedes truck and she was wetting up his leather seats. He claimed he wanted to talk but his mouth was moving in other ways not too long after they got there. Mariah had been blowing his phone up because her picture kept popping up on the screen of his dashboard. Blake had a mouthful so he couldn’t answer her anyway. He had the front passenger seat reclined all the way to the back feasting on Jersi like he she was Christmas cookies. When he flipped her over, Jersi stuck her ass out right before he started eating her from the back. Blake was even more of a freak than she remembered. He used his tongue like a finger and he alternated between sticking it in both holes. Jersi lost count of how many times she came but she felt another one building up.

“Shit!” I’m cumming again!” She yelled as gripped the seat for leverage.

When she saw that Blake still wasn’t done, she started pushing him away. He was trying to kill her and that wasn’t the way that Jersi wanted to go.

“What’s wrong?” he asked when she shoved him away.

“I can’t take no more,” Jersi panted as she moved to the back seat.

“You never could,” Blake smiled cockily.

He put the front seat back how it was while Jersi put on her underwear. Mariah kept wipes in his glove box for the girls, so he pulled out a few to clean his face. He grabbed the small bottle of mouth wash that he kept in there and gargled with a little of it before spitting it out. He didn’t need Mariah to smell another woman on him. She would die, especially if she knew who the other woman was. Blake was excited to be spending time with Jersi again. It had been years since they had any kind of intimacy and he didn’t realize how much he missed her.

“I guess I need to get going,” Jersi said when she got out of the car.

“Wait. I thought we were supposed to be talking,” Blake replied as he walked around the car and stood in front of her.

“What is there to discuss Blake? You’re married. You got me fucked up if you think you’re gonna be fucking me in your car on the lake,” Jersi replied.

“I would never try to play you like that. You have your own house, right?” Blake asked as if he didn’t already know.

“Yeah and so do you. What’s your point?” Jersi questioned.

“I can come see you at your house,” he replied.

“No, you can’t. If I can’t step foot in your house then you can’t step foot in mine,” Jersi snapped.

“You coming to my house is not possible but you live alone,” Blake pointed out.

“What’s your point? You’re the one who wants to see me, so you need to make a way.”

“Okay baby, I will, I promise,” he replied sounding as weak as she remembered.

Just like before, Blake was putty in Jersi’s hands. He was the man and called all the shots with Mariah, but he did whatever Jersi told him to. He knew that Mariah needed him but that wasn’t the case with Jersi. She had her own and always have.

“You better keep your bitch in line too. You’re married to her, not me. I’m not the one who owes her respect,” Jersi replied.

“Don’t worry about Mariah. I can handle her. It took me too long to get you back in my life. I’m not letting nobody come in between this,” he said as he pointed between the two of them.

“She already did,” Jersi replied.

“Jersi, I swear, it wasn’t even that deep. Yeah, I messed around with her but it was just sex. I never thought that she would get pregnant. You already know how my parents feel about that. As soon as they found out that she was pregnant, marriage was the next step. I never stopped loving you and I doubt if I ever will. Just give me a chance to prove it to you,” Blake begged.

“Okay. I’ll see how serious you are about us. The minute I start to feel neglected, it’s a wrap. I’m never coming second, not even to your wife,” Jersi replied.

“I promise that you never will,” Blake swore as he walked up on her.

Jersi cringed when he pressed his lips up to hers. She dug her nails into her legs as hard as she could to keep from pushing him away when he stuck his tongue in her mouth. Jersi couldn’t believe that she was actually in love with him at one time. Blake disgusted her now but she was on a mission. His bitch of a wife needed a reality check and she was about to get one.

“I gotta go,” Jersi said when they finally pulled away. She wanted to throw up but she tried her best to play it off.

“When am I gonna see you again?” Blake asked.

“Whenever you find a place to see me other than your car,” Jersi replied.

“I’ll need a few weeks for that Jersi,” Blake replied.

“Okay, well hit me up in a few weeks,” Jersi replied as she walked back to her car.

“How? I don’t even have your number,” he noted sounding desperate.

Jersi despised a weak man and it took her a while to figure out just how weak he was. Blake had no backbone and she basically wore the pants when they were together. Making him do whatever she said would be easy, especially since he wanted her back. If she were being honest with herself, he always did follow her lead.

“You know how to find me. And next time, leave the wedding ring at home. I don’t ever want to see it again,” Jersi said right before she got into her car and pulled off.

“Damn,” Blake hissed as he got back into his car.

Mariah had called him multiple times but his focus wasn’t on her at the moment. Blake had Jersi back in his clutches and he wasn’t letting her slip through his fingers again. He assumed that they would be able to spend time at her place but she wasn’t having it. She was going to make him work to get her back but she was worth it. Aside from a few flings with nurses at the hospital, Blake had never cheated on Mariah. It was just sex with the other women but he was still in love with Jersi. Although it was late, Blake dialed his brother’s number and waited for him to pick up.



“What’s wrong Blake? It better important for you to be calling me so late,” BJ snapped.

“It might not be important to you but it is to me. I need a favor,” Blake replied.

“What’s up?” BJ yawned.

“Does your friend Mark still own that real estate downtown?” Blake asked.

“Yeah, he got like two penthouses left for rent,” BJ replied.

“I need to talk to him about renting one as soon as possible,” Blake noted.

“For what?” BJ asked.

“Me and Jersi,” Blake replied with a smile evident in his voice.

“Damn lil brother. You got Jersi back on your team?” BJ chuckled.

“She’s not just on the team, she’s the star player,” Blake bragged.

“That’s what’s up. But that nigga out of town right now. I’ll get at him as soon as he gets back,” BJ promised.

“Let me know something as soon as you hear from him. This is important bruh. Don’t leave me hanging,” Blake said.

“I got you lil brother,” BJ assured him before he hung up.

Blake drove away with a huge smile on his face once he talked to his brother. He didn’t care how much it cost to rent one of the penthouses. He would gladly pay it if it meant that he could spend some time with Jersi. He knew that he would hear Mariah’s mouth when he got home but he didn’t care. Nothing or no one was going to ruin the good mood that Jersi had him

in.



“Y’all make me sick. I hate making plans with you hoes,” Jersi snapped over the phone at Ariel.

“Damn bitch, we said after the new year but not the day after,” Ariel complained.

“What’s the difference if we waited the day or the week after?” Jersi questioned.

“I’m sorry cousin, but Mike is off today. We haven’t been off at the same time in weeks. I promise I’ll start working out with you tomorrow,” Ariel replied.

“Girl, fuck you and Cat. I’ll be back to my old size if I keep waiting for y’all. I paid for this membership a week ago and I’m about to use it,” Jersi fussed as she hung up the phone in her face.

Nola Fitness was a gym that had been the talk of New Orleans since it opened up a year ago. There were three locations with top of the line equipment, steam rooms and personal trainers. The membership was expensive but Jersi heard that it was worth it. She missed her old workout crew from college because Ariel and Cat played too many games. They were both claiming to want to lose weight but they weren’t doing anything about it. Jersi didn’t want to go back to a size sixteen, so she had to do what she could to maintain her current weight.

After sitting in her car for a while, she grabbed her gym bag and walked into the facility. Whoever owned it was a genius because they had NOLA juice bar and smoothies right next to it. She was sure that it was owned by the same person and that was a smart decision.

“Can I help you?” a lady asked when Jersi walked inside.

“I have a membership but this is my first time here,” Jersi replied.

“Okay. My name is Erin and I’ll show you a few things,” she said with a smile.

Erin showed Jersi how to swipe in and out of the facility and she also gave her a map of where everything was located. The place was huge and it looked even bigger once you were inside. Her membership swipe card also gave her a percentage off at the juice bar next door and Erin had confirmed her suspicions. The same person owned both places.

“Will there be someone around just in case I need help with the machines?” Jersi asked her.

“Since this is your first time, I can get one of the trainers to get you started,” Erin offered.

“Yes, that would be great. Thanks for your help Erin. You really made this easy for me,” Jersi replied.

“That’s my job. Let me see who’s available to come out and assist,” Erin said as she called out to someone over the radio in her hand.

Jersi continued to look around in admiration while she waited on the next available trainer. It only took about five minutes before Erin informed her that someone was coming out. Jersi did a double take when she saw her fine mystery man walking from the back. He looked like a walking orgasm as he smiled and headed in her direction.

“Looks like we meet again,” he smiled as he walked up to Jersi.

“I guess so. Let me find out that I’m being followed,” Jersi joked.

“That would probably make more sense if I wasn’t already here,” he smirked.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Jersi laughed.

“Come on. I’ll show you around before we get started,” he said as he turned and walked away.

“Okay, but before we do anything, I need to know your name. This is my third time seeing you and we’ve never introduced ourselves,” Jersi replied as she followed behind him.

“I’m sorry about that. I’m usually not this rude. I’m Memphis and you are?” he asked while extending his hand.

“You’re joking right,” Jersi asked as she looked at him skeptically.

“Nope. Memphis Young and yes, that’s my real name. And before you start, I’ve already heard every joke that you could possibly tell,” he chuckled.

“Trust me, I’m the last person to make fun of somebody’s name. Believe me, I’ve heard them all too,” she assured him.

“Why? What’s your name?” he asked.

“Jersi with an I,” she replied sheepishly.

“I like that,” Memphis smiled as they continued to walk around the building.

Jersi was in awe as she followed him around the building. Everything was nice and clean, including the bathrooms and showers. Once the tour was

complete, Memphis got right to work. He asked Jersi which areas of her body she wanted to target before they started their warm ups. Once they started working out, Jersi no longer had to wonder how he got his perfectly sculpted body. Memphis worked her out something serious and Jersi felt it once they were done.

“God, I can’t feel my legs,” Jersi panted as she dropped down to the floor. Her entire body was covered in sweat as she tried hard to catch her breath.

“It’ll get better. The more you do it, the easier it gets. Three times a week is enough to maintain your weight depending on how you eat,” Memphis noted.

“What kind of diet do you recommend?” Jersi asked.

“Honestly love, I’m probably the wrong person to ask. I eat what I want and I don’t count calories. You only live once and I enjoy life,” he replied.

“I guess you can do that since you work here. You probably burn more calories than you eat anyway. I’m not that lucky. I see a cake and gain five pounds,” Jersi said making him laugh.

“Your size is perfect for your height though,” he noted.

“Yeah, but I haven’t always been this size. I don’t want to gain back all the weight I lost. Even if I come after work, I have to make the gym a part of my daily routine. I can use your help though. What’s your schedule like most days?” Jersi asked him.

“I don’t really have a set schedule. I work at all three locations, so it varies. But, if you let me take you to dinner tonight, we can discuss it,” he replied making her blush.

“Seriously Memphis? I just finished working out and you’re trying to feed me,” Jersi laughed.

“Well, maybe we can catch a movie instead,” he offered.

“I’m just joking. Dinner is fine. Just let me know a time and place and we can meet up,” Jersi said.

“I need your number first,” he replied.

“Okay, let me go freshen up and I’ll come find you,” she said as she grabbed her bag and walked away.

Jersi went to one of the private showers and washed all the sweat and dirt from her body. Once she was done, she threw on some legging and a t-shirt before putting her hair in a ponytail. After leaving the bathroom, she found Memphis showing another female how to work one of the machines. Jersi waited patiently as the woman flirted shamelessly.

“Sorry about that. Here, put your number in my phone. Does seven tonight work for you?” he asked her.

“That’s perfect,” Jersi replied as she put her number in his phone and handed it back to him. She saved his number too and was on her way soon after.

A few minutes after she got into the car, Memphis sent her a text showing her that he’d made reservations for them at Drago’s restaurant. Jersi smiled as she drove home and thought about what she wanted to wear. Memphis wasn’t really her type but she didn’t mind giving him a chance. Maybe the old saying was true and opposites really did attract.



“I feel like I’m dying,” Ariel huffed as she fell to the floor on her mat. True to her word, she started working out with Jersi the very next day. Cat was a lost cause and Jersi didn’t even bother calling her anymore. Three weeks had passed and she was still coming up with excuses.

“You’re doing good though. I’m sure you’re seeing results,” Memphis replied.

“Yes, I am and my boyfriend noticed it too. I’m tired as hell but I’m not giving up,” Ariel assured him.

“What about you beautiful? You ready to give up on me?” Memphis asked as he looked over at Jersi.

“Not at all. I’m all in,” she replied with a smile.

It had been three weeks since their first date and they had gone on many more since then. They were getting to know each other and she was learning a lot about him. Jersi loved being with him because he knew how to have fun. He was a New Orleans Saints fanatic and she had accompanied him to a few games. He was also on the flag football team with some of his frat brothers and Jersi went to see him play a few times. She and Memphis went

to comedy shows, movies and anywhere else that he could think to take her. Their relationship was strictly platonic but she would be lying if she said she didn't like him. That was what was starting to scare her. She hadn't had those kind of feelings for anyone since she broke up with Blake and she was unsure of how to handle them.

Thanks to Talena, Blake now had her number and he used it too often for her liking. He had been begging Jersi to see her but she was firm on her decision. She had a plan and she was sticking to it. If he wanted to see her, he would make it happen.

"Let's hit the showers cousin," Ariel said once she caught her breath.

"Okay, I'm coming," Jersi replied as she stood there talking to Memphis.

"What are you getting into for the rest of the day?" Memphis asked her.

"Since you'll be too busy for me, I guess I'll hang out with Ariel for a while," Jersi pouted.

"Don't do me like that. Trust me, I would much rather be with you then out with them niggas," Memphis replied.

One of his frat brothers had purchased a home and they were all going to help him move and get settled in. Since they were all going to be drinking, he knew that they would probably be there for the entire night.

"I'm just joking with you. But seriously, you need to just stay the night. Don't try to drive once you start drinking. I saw how y'all get down," Jersi said.

"Look at you all worried about a nigga and shit," Memphis smirked.

It was crazy how Jersi didn't find him attractive but she was attracted to him. The way he talked and dressed had her crossing her legs at the ankles



when they were together most times. He had sex appeal that had lots of women intrigued. It wasn't even about looks anymore and she was really feeling him.

"I'm always concerned about my friends," Jersi replied.

"Friends huh? I guess that's why I never got a kiss after three weeks of dating," Memphis said.

"Maybe you never got one because you never asked," Jersi smirked.

"Well, shit, I'm asking now. What's up with it?" Memphis asked as he licked his thick, juicy lips.

"Ask and you shall receive," Jersi said as she walked up to him and gave him a peck on the lips.

"I'm not your uncle or your grandfather Jersi. I'm a grown ass man and I want a real kiss," Memphis said as he pulled her into him and bent his massive frame down closer to her.

Jersi gasped when his soft lips collided with hers and his tongue found its way into her mouth. He was aggressive but gentle if that was even possible. His tongue felt like silk and she closed her eyes and enjoyed the feeling. When he finally pulled away, she looked up and noticed that they were being watched.

"Really Memphis? How unprofessional is that?" A woman scowled while looking at Jersi.

"As if I give a fuck," Memphis replied as he pecked Jersi's lips one more time.

"Are you training me today or not?" the woman asked impatiently.

"Go handle your business and I'll talk to you later. Call me the minute you leave out of here," Jersi said as she walked away with his eyes following

her until she was out of sight.

“Yes indeed bitch. Y’all all in the gym with it,” Ariel laughed when Jersi walked into the ladies locker room.

“It was just a kiss Ariel. Stop overexaggerating,” Jersi replied.

“Bitch please. That was more than just a kiss. It looked like that nigga was about to rip your thongs off. And who is that rude bitch who interrupted?” Ariel asked.

“I don’t know but I had to walk away before I catch a case. That hoe must be crushing on him or something,” Jersi replied.

“And it sounds like you’re jealous,” Ariel smirked.

“I have no reason to be jealous. Memphis is cool but he’s not my man,” Jersi pointed out.

“No but I think he really wants to be. I like him. He’s down to earth and cool to be around. And despite what you think, he’s not ugly to me,” Ariel pointed out.

“I’m good on that right now. Let’s freshen up so we can go get some ice cream. We deserve a treat after that workout,” Jersi replied.

“Say no more cousin. I can use a banana split,” Ariel said as she grabbed her bag and walked away.

Jersi put on a front for Ariel but she was curious as to who the other woman was. She watched discreetly as Memphis did with the other woman what he’d done to her when she first got there. He was a trainer, so that was his job. Still Jersi was a little salty about how the woman couldn’t seem to keep her hands to herself.

“Snap out of it girl. That nigga ain’t even all that,” Jersi said, checking herself mentally.

She finally pulled herself away from watching and met Ariel in the shower area. Once they'd both freshened up and got dressed, Jersi grabbed her gym bag and followed Ariel out of the locker room to her car. When she was pulled from behind, her heart accelerated until Memphis whispered in her ear.

"You smell good enough to eat," he mumbled while nipping her earlobe with his teeth.

"You better move before ole girl starts acting a fool again," Jersi said, trying to fish for information.

"That's Lila. I told you about her already," he replied.

"No, you didn't," Jersi noted.

"Remember I told you about my mama's best friend who died and she took her kids in to live with us? She's like a sister to me for more reasons than one," Memphis replied.

Memphis was the middle child of his mother's three sons. They didn't have sisters but Jersi remembered him telling her that his mother had raised her best friend's two daughter like they were her own. Still, Lila seemed to want more than just a brother/sister type of relationship. Jersi knew the look of lust when she saw it.

"I hear you. She was acting like you were her man a few minutes ago," Jersi said trying not to let her jealousy show.

"Your jealousy is cute as fuck," Memphis said as he pinned her to the car with his body.

"I'm observant, not jealous," Jersi corrected.

"You don't have a reason to be though. I told you that I'm ready to take this to the next level whenever you are," he noted.

“Call me later and have fun,” Jersi said as she pecked his lips and got into her car.

“Aww, y’all are so cute together,” Ariel cooed when Jersi pulled off.

“Hush Ariel. You do too much,” Jersi said as she drove them to the ice cream parlor.

“What are you afraid of Jersi? You’re pretty and have a lot going for yourself. Any man that you meet will want to be more than friends. You can’t keep up your arrangement with Carter forever. Y’all will both find somebody else eventually,” Ariel pointed out.

“I don’t expect it to last forever. Memphis is cool but we haven’t been knowing each other that long,” Jersi said.

“Is it because he works at a gym? I know it’s kind of hard when the woman makes more than the man. A lot of relationships have failed because of that,” Ariel noted.

“You know that’s not even how I operate Ariel. I don’t care how much money he has or what he does for a living. I like him. I just don’t want to rush into anything. We talk and we know the basics about each other. I’m not ready to bring him around the family or nothing. It’s not even that deep,” Jersi replied.

When her phone rang, she looked on her dashboard and frowned when she saw Blake’s number pop up. He still had the same number from when they were together but it was no longer saved. She declined his call without even thinking twice.

“That nigga is disgusting. Talena was wrong for giving him your number,” Ariel frowned.

“That’s exactly why I cursed her stupid ass out,” Jersi replied as she pulled up to Baskin Robbins.

She was happy that the place was fairly empty with the exception of a woman and two small boys. They got out of the car and Ariel placed her order first since she knew what she wanted. Jersi was always undecided, so she went around the entire cooler trying to figure it out. The door chimed twice but she didn't care about being skipped. She didn't want to rush and get something that she didn't want.

“Are you ready to order yet?” One of the girls behind the counter asked her.

“Not really. I see so much that I want. You can help somebody else and I should have decided by then,” Jersi replied.

“Fat free yogurt is always an option. You wouldn't want to gain all that weight back,” Mariah sneered as she looked over at Jersi with an amused smirk.

Jersi never looked up when someone entered the establishment but Mariah was nobody to her. Her slick ass mouth was the reason why Jersi was about to drive her crazy.

“My Blake...I mean, my boo doesn't have a problem with my size. He loves me, big or small,” Jersi replied.

“Your words don't move me honey. I don't sleep alone at night,” Mariah countered.

“Not yet,” Jersi winked.

“Not ever. The same man that you're in love with warms me and my bed up regularly. We're very happy over here,” Mariah said.

“Genuinely happy people don't need to broadcast it boo. I was happy on Christmas night but you don't hear me talking about it all the time,” Jersi smiled as she finally placed her order.

Mariah wanted to knock her on her ass but it wasn't even worth it. She would be a damn fool to argue with another bitch about her husband. Jersi was jealous and it showed. Still, she had Mariah's interest piqued when she mentioned Christmas night. Blake had lied about where he was going and she wondered if Jersi was the reason.

"Yet, I'm the one with the ring. I'm sure you've seen his too," Mariah smirked.

"Girl bye. He barely wears that bullshit. See, my ring is permanent. He'll die with it on his finger," Jersi said speaking of his tattoo of her name on his finger.

"Can I help you ma'am?" a worker asked Mariah before she could reply to Jersi.

Mariah ordered her girls a scoop of vanilla ice cream and a pint for herself. When the worker asked her if she needed anything else, she nodded as she pulled her phone from her pocket.

"Yes, let me pull up this text from my husband," Mariah said putting emphasis on the last part of her statement.

"No need, I can tell you. Give her a pint of chocolate and banana mixed. Put the banana at the bottom and the chocolate on top. In two separate containers, put some chopped peanuts and chocolate sauce," Jersi rambled as Mariah turned red in the face with anger.

She looked down at her husband's text and it was exactly as Jersi had ordered it. It killed her to know that another woman knew her husband better than she did. She and Blake had never really dated before they got married so they were learning a little more about each other every day. When Jersi left, the worker looked at Mariah like she was waiting for her to say something different.

"What the hell are you looking at? Fix the damn ice cream!" Mariah snapped angrily.

“Bitch you are crazy,” Ariel laughed as she and Jersi drove away.

“Fuck her. That bitch be coming for me like I did her wrong. Where the fuck they do that at?” Jersi fumed.

“I can’t even lie, she make you wanna do her dirty with the way her mouth is set up. And you should see how she be acting when she comes to Tabby’s house with her kids. Bitch be acting like she’s too good to sit down and shit,” Ariel said.

“She most definitely forgot where she came from,” Jersi replied as she pulled up to Ariel’s apartment complex.

Once she dropped her cousin off, she talked on the phone with Memphis for a while before she headed home. As soon as she parked, her phone rang with a call from Blake. Jersi started not to answer but since his wife pissed her off, she was with the bullshit.

“Yes Blake,” Jersi sighed when she picked up.

“Damn. You’re a hard woman to catch up with,” Blake said.

“Maybe I didn’t want to be found,” Jersi replied.

“I want to see you. We need to discuss a few things,” Blake said.

“I already told you what it is Blake. I’m not a hoe and I’m not about to let you treat me like one. Consider what happened on Christmas a present from me to you because it’ll never happen again,” Jersi argued.

“Are you done or can I say something now?” Blake asked.

“Speak your mind,” Jersi replied.

“I got us a spot,” Blake blurted out happily.

“A spot where?” Jersi asked.

“Can I see you tonight?” Blake asked sounding almost desperate.

“I need to know where before I agree to anything,” Jersi replied.

“I’ll send you the address. I have a key for you too,” he noted.

“Send me the location and I’ll be there in a little while,” Jersi replied.

“Okay. I’ll be on my way too,” Blake said excitedly.

Jersi smiled as she got out of her car and went inside. She took a quick shower and threw on a sundress, bypassing the bra and underwear. She already knew what was about to happen and there was no need for it. Knowing that she was about to put the wheel in Mariah’s back and drive her insane was all the motivation that she needed.

“Game on bitch,” Jersi mumbled as she grabbed her purse and walked out of her house.





back at him.

“**S**hit Jersi. Just like that baby,” Blake moaned as she clenched her vaginal muscles and threw it

He was screaming like a bitch and getting on her nerves at the same time. Maybe she was young at the time but sex with Blake was straight trash now. He didn't even fill her up like Carter did and she still hadn't cum once since he entered her. She was happy that he ate her out first because that was the only satisfaction that she got. His movements were uncoordinated like a teenaged boy and his stroke game was whack. Jersi threw out a moan every now and then to appease him and that seemed to make him go harder. Having sex with him was not something that she wanted to do but she had to make their affair seem believable. She hated for him to even touch her but that was a small price to pay for a victory in the end.

“I'm bout to cum again,” Blake yelled out right before he stilled his movements. Jersi felt his body shiver as he released into the condom and fell over in the bed.

“About fucking time,” she mumbled as she tried to sit up.

“What you say baby?” Blake asked as he pulled her back into him.

“I said that was right on time,” Jersi replied as she rolled her eyes up to the sky.

She had to keep reminding herself that she had a method to her madness. She had to seem convincing if she wanted her plan to work.

“I missed you so much Jersi. I hate that I accomplished so much and you weren’t right there by my side. We had plans for our future and I fucked everything up,” Blake said as he hugged her tighter.

“Things happen for a reason Blake. I don’t hate you for how things turned out,” Jersi lied.

She hated him and his bitch of a wife. They had her fucked up if they thought they were going to ride off into the sunset and live happily ever after. She probably would have let them if his wife wasn’t always coming for her. She was bitter about their betrayal and she wasn’t ashamed to admit it.

“I love you baby and I always have. I know my actions didn’t show it but it’s true,” Blake confessed.

“We’re good Blake. I don’t want to keep reliving the past,” Jersi said.

“Do you like the house? I know you have a certain kind of taste and I couldn’t half step,” Blake said as she looked around the spacious area.

When he told her that he had a spot, she was thinking that he’d rent a condo or a nice townhouse. She never imagined that he would go all out and get a furnished penthouse. The key that he had for her was for the elevator because the place didn’t even have a door. As soon as you stepped off the elevator you were walking right into the living room. Blake had all of her favorite foods there as well as all of the feminine products that she used. He no longer knew her size since she’d lost so much weight but he promised to take her shopping.

“It’s beautiful,” Jersi replied after a while.

“Are you hungry? There’s plenty of food and drinks in the kitchen,” he said.

“No, I’m good,” Jersi replied as he got up.

She frowned when she saw that he still had on the used condom. He went to the bathroom and stayed in there for a while. When he came back out a few minutes later, he was fully dressed and looking like he was about to go. He was fucking up Jersi’s plan and she was pissed.

“You can stay the night if you don’t feel like driving. The lease is paid up for six months, so you can stay as long as you want to,” Blake said as he waked over and stroked her face lovingly.

“So, you’re not staying the night with me?” Jersi asked.

“You know I can’t do that Jersi,” Blake replied.

“Okay, cool,” Jersi replied as she got up and slipped on her dress.

She grabbed the elevator key that Blake had given her and handed it back to him.

“Why did you give this back?” He asked in confusion.

“Because this is a wrap. It was good while it lasted,” Jersi shrugged as she grabbed her purse.

“Baby, please don’t do this. I would love to stay the night with you Jersi but I can’t. You know my situation,” Blake said as he stopped her from leaving.

“Yeah and I also told you that I didn’t give a fuck. I’m never coming in second to another bitch and I don’t care if it is your wife. I told you that the minute I start to feel neglected, it’s a wrap,” Jersi replied.

“I’m not trying to neglect you Jersi but I don’t know what you want

me to do. I'm a married man. I can't stay out all night with no explanation. I can't even blame it on work because I'm off today," Blake tried to reason.

"It's cool Blake. We've been apart for over four years, so we should be used to it by now," Jersi shrugged.

"Jersi please. I'll arrange to stay with you another night. I just can't do it tonight. We've already made plans," Blake said.

"You should have thought about that before you begged me to come here. I'll see you around," Jersi said as she headed for the door.

"Don't leave Jersi, please. I'll stay," Blake said as he came up and hugged her from behind.

Jersi had her back to him so he couldn't see the smile on her face. He was still the same spineless ass nigga that he'd always been and he played right into her hands. She already knew that he was going to give in and that's exactly what he did. Still, Jersi didn't want to seem too eager about it, so she continued to struggle against his hold.

"No, it's cool Blake. You don't have to do me no favors," Jersi replied.

"I know baby but I want to stay. I'll figure everything out later. I can't lose you again Jersi. It took me too long to get you back. Let's go in the kitchen and get something to eat," Blake said as he grabbed her hand.

After not finding anything that they wanted, he ended up having food delivered. Being there with him was the last place that Jersi wanted to be but she made it work. Mariah wouldn't be able to brag about never sleeping alone again and Jersi made sure of it.



“Have you heard from him yet?” Eva asked as soon as Mariah opened the door for her and the girls.

The twins stayed the night with her because Blake and Mariah were supposed to have their monthly date night. When Mariah called her after midnight saying that Blake never made it home or called, she was barely able to get any sleep. His phone was ringing at first but it was going straight to voicemail now.

“No and I’m going crazy. Maybe I need to file a police report,” Mariah said as she paced the floor with her phone in her hand.

“What happened? Did you upset him or something?” Eva had the nerve to ask.

Mariah stopped pacing momentarily to glare at the woman who she knew was never too fond of her. It was no secret that Eva never wanted her and Blake together but that was too damn bad. She was his wife and the mother of his kids and that was never going to change.

“I didn’t do anything. We were fine before he rushed out of here all of a sudden. I went to get us some ice cream and he met me at the door saying that he had to make an important run. He swore that he would be back in time for our date night but I haven’t heard from him since then,” Mariah said as she wiped a few tears from her eyes.

Blake was home with the girls but he seemed to be in a hurry to go somewhere when she got home from getting ice cream. He told her to put his ice cream in the freezer and drop the girls off to his mother. Mariah had called him all night and he had yet to answer. She was worried sick and she hadn't gotten a wink of sleep the night before. It was after one in the afternoon and she didn't have a clue as to where her husband was. Blake had never done anything like that before and she had a feeling that something was wrong.

"Where did he say that he was going?" Eva asked.

"He didn't say and I didn't ask," Mariah replied.

"This is crazy. Blake would never do something so irresponsible. Did y'all have some kind of argument?" Eva questioned.

"No!" Mariah yelled. "We were fine."

"Are you insane? Lower your voice in my son's home and in my presence," Eva snapped, putting her in place like always.

She had no problem reminding Mariah about who the home that she lived in belonged to. She also had no problem letting her know that without Blake, she was broke and had nothing. Being broke again was not something that she even wanted to think about and she hated being reminded of her past. Mariah knew not go too far with her mother-in-law because Blake would have a fit. He looked forward to the million dollars that was deposited into his account every year and he wasn't going to let her stop it.

"No Eva, we didn't have an argument and nothing was wrong. Maybe I need to call a few of our friends to see if they've heard from him," Mariah said.

"I don't think that's a good idea. You don't want people to think there are problems in your marriage," Eva replied.

Mariah wanted to snap but she kept her thoughts to herself. Clearly

there was a problem in her marriage if her husband didn't come home last night.

"I have to do something. I'm going crazy in here," Mariah replied as she stared pacing and crying again.

"Look, I'll take the girls out for a little while and maybe you can drive around to see if you can spot his car. They don't need to see you in here crying and carrying on," Eva hissed as she walked away.

Once they left, Mariah took a quick shower and threw on some clothes. They only had three friends that they hung out with but she couldn't see Blake staying the night by any of them. They were all married and had kids of their own. After checking her appearance in the mirror, Mariah grabbed her purse and prepared to leave. It was almost three o'clock now and Blake still hadn't shown up. When she walked into the living room, she paused when she heard a key being inserted into the locked door. When Blake walked in, Mariah was overcome with emotion. She was happy that he was home safely but also pissed that he'd stayed out all night.

"Blake! Are you okay baby? You had me worried sick," Mariah yelled as she rushed over and hugged him.

She immediately jumped back when the strong smell of perfume permeated her nostrils. She knew every fragrance that Blake wore and that wasn't one of them. Marc Jacobs Decadence was one of her favorites and she could smell it from a mile away.

"I'm fine," Blake replied nonchalantly.

He was sure that Mariah had lots of questions but he didn't have the answers. Although he stayed out all night with Jersi, he planned to return home early that morning. Instead, he spent most of the morning with his face buried between her legs. He took her shopping to get some things to keep at the penthouse and they went to lunch right after. He didn't want to leave but Jersi had plans. If it were up to him, he would have left their love nest and went straight to work from there. He went from not wanting to sleep out to

not wanting to go home.

“Is your phone broke or something? I’ve been calling you since yesterday. You missed our date night and I thought that something was wrong,” Mariah noted.

“I just told you that everything is fine. There will be other date nights,” Blake said flatly.

“Are you serious right now? You had me up all night worried sick. I thought you were dead or somewhere injured and couldn’t call for help. Then you have the audacity to show up reeking of another woman and acting as if everything is all good. Who were you with last night Blake?” Mariah asked.

“Move out of my way Mariah. I’m tired and I only have a few hours before I have to be back at the hospital,” Blake countered as he walked past her.

“Was it Jersi? I already know that’s who you were with when you lied about going to have a drink on Christmas night. Josh was already asleep so I know you didn’t go over there,” Mariah accused.

She didn’t really know that for sure but the look of guilt that covered his face confirmed it. Mariah felt sick to her stomach but she hadn’t eaten anything for her to throw up. She was praying that whatever happened was a one-time thing because she couldn’t deal. Blake dealing with Jersi again would certainly be the demise of their marriage.

“You checking up on me now Mariah?” Blake asked angrily.

“What is going on with you Blake? Lying and staying out all night. You’ve never disrespected me like this before. Why now? Is it Jersi or is there someone else?” Mariah asked him as tears fell from her eyes.

“When you start paying some bills around here, then you can question me,” Blake snapped before he walked away.



Admittedly, he felt like shit for how he was treating his wife. He and Mariah never argued and he had never done or said anything to start one. Having Jersi back in his life was already starting to cloud his judgement but he couldn't help it. Jersi was his first love and that was a feeling that he just couldn't shake. They didn't really have closure in their relationship and Mariah had herself to blame for that. She knew he had a girl but she still put the moves on him. He always told her how much he loved Jersi and she always said that she didn't care. Now, the same woman who held his heart in her hands was back in his life and he was risking it all to make sure she stayed there.

When he heard the front door slam, Blake flopped down on the bed and sighed. Hurting Mariah was not something that he wanted to do and he had to make it up to her. As soon as he was sure that he was alone, Blake grabbed his phone and called Jersi. It rang one time and went straight to voicemail so he decided to leave her a message.

“Hey baby. I just wanted you to know that I enjoyed our time together and I can't wait until we can do it again. I'll send you a copy of my work schedule so we can make plans. Call me if you need anything,” Blake said before he hung up the phone with a broad smile on his face.

He took off the shirt that he had on and inhaled the fragrance that was still on it. Jersi's taste was still in his mouth and he didn't want it to go away. She had him gone again just like he was before and he wasn't sure how things were going to play out. His life was more complicated now since he had a wife and kids. Sadly, not even that was going to stop him from being with the woman who he often dreamed about at night.



“What’s up Talena?” Jersi asked when she answered her phone.

“Bitch! Why Tabby said Mariah came over there crying about Blake the other day?” Talena yelled excitedly.

“As if I give a fuck,” Jersi replied.

It had been three days since she stayed at the penthouse with Blake and she ignored all his calls and messages since then. He sent her a copy of his work schedule and that was perfect. That way, she would know when she had to dodge his ass. She had gone to the movies with Memphis the night before and Blake was the furthest thing from her mind. She would deal with him on her terms and that wasn’t going to be too often.

“She told her daddy that he stayed out all night and didn’t tell her where he was. Tabby be eavesdropping and telling me everything,” Talena snickered.

“I hope you ain’t telling Tabby my business. Your mama is too damn messy,” Jersi frowned.

“My mama?” Talena questioned, “Bitch, she’s your mama too.”

“Correction, I’m on my way to pick my mama up now,” Jersi replied, speaking of Dena.

“Whatever Jersi. But anyway, what you got going on today?” Talena asked.

“Nothing much. I’m picking my mama up to bring her to the store and I might go chill with Memphis for a while,” Jersi answered.

“Ugh bitch. As pretty as you are, I can’t believe that you’re really entertaining him. He’s a damn personal trainer. They don’t make no money doing that shit,” Talena pointed out.

“He makes more than your nigga. Oops, I forgot, you don’t have one,” Jersi replied as she hung up the phone in her face and called her mother.

Unlike Talena, Jersi didn’t need a man to take care of her. She had her own income and she saved wisely. If she and Memphis were to get together, she had no problem sharing the financial responsibility. Even now, she always offered to pay whenever they went somewhere but he always declined. Memphis had a nice car but she was sure that he didn’t make much working at the gym. Still, she would never look down on him for that. She was taught better.

“Are you outside baby?” Dena asked when she answered the phone for Jersi.

“I’m coming through the gate now,” Jersi replied.

“Okay, I’m coming out now,” Dena assured her.

Jersi pulled up to the house right as her mother was walking out. She smiled when she noticed that Dena was wearing the PINK leggings with the matching shirt that she got her for Christmas. At forty-eight years old, Dena was fit and looked great for her age. They had a gym in their home and she

used it several times a week. Her caramel skin was smooth and free of blemishes and wrinkles. Her eyes always seemed to be smiling which was one of the things that made her likeable by so many.

“Look at you looking all sexy and stuff,” Jersi said when her mother got into the car and kissed her cheek.

“I love this outfit that you got for me. It’s so comfortable,” Dena replied as they pulled off.

“Yeah, I like them too. Where do you want to go first?” Jersi asked her.

“Let’s go to the mall first. I wanna get a few more of these outfits in different colors. Your father owes me for cancelling our dinner plans last night. We’re about to shop on his dime,” Dena laughed.

“It’s not like he’ll care anyway but I’ll never turn down a free shopping spree,” Jersi replied.

She and Dena hit up three different malls and made two trips to both their houses to drop bags off. After getting something to eat, Dena wanted to go to Whole Foods to get something to cook for her husband later that night. Jersi needed a few things too so that was perfect. After spending the entire day with her mother, she was too tired to do anything else but crash.

“This Salmon is so fresh Jersi. I’m gonna get some for you and Dray and put it in the vacuum sealed bags,” Dena said as she pushed her cart down the aisle.

“Okay,” Jersi said as she posted some of the selfies that she took of them earlier on Instagram.

“What else do you need? I know Dray doesn’t have a damn thing in his house,” Dena fussed while shaking her head.

She was only supposed to be getting a few things for herself but

mostly everything in the basket was for her kids. Dray never went to the store because he knew that his mother always did it for him.

“I got everything I need but Dray doesn’t need anything else. He’s barely home. Him and Sassy went to Atlanta and left me,” Jersi argued.

“You had to work baby. You can’t be running all over the place with those two characters,” Dena said as she walked to the front of the store to check out.

Once they were done, they walked to the parking lot and started unloading the bags into the trunk.

“Y’all need help?” A familiar voice walked up and asked.

Jersi locked eyes with Memphis but she quickly turned away. She wasn’t ready for him to meet her mother. That would make things seem more serious than they actually were. She was sure that he was waiting on an introduction but that wasn’t happening. He looked offended when Jersi got back into the car without even speaking.

“Thank you, sweetheart. I appreciate your assistance,” Dena smiled once he was done.

“You’re welcome ma’am. Have a good day,” Memphis said as he walked off shaking his head.

Jersi wanted to call him back and apologize but the heated look on his face stopped her. She didn’t know what the hell was wrong with her. She liked Memphis more than she’d liked anyone in a long time and she’d just pushed him away.

“Damn,” Jersi mumbled to herself.

“Damn what?” her mother asked.

“Nothing, just thinking about something,” Jersi replied.

She rode to her mother's house deep in thought as Dena talked her head off. An occasional yes or no was all Jersi said to let her know that she wasn't completely ignoring her. Once she dropped her mother off home, Jersi dialed Memphis's number and hoped he picked up. After calling three times back to back she knew that her calls were never going to get answered. It was late in the evening but she knew that he was probably at the gym. He had on his workout clothes when she saw him but that didn't mean anything. He could have been stopping at the store once he was off for the day. Deciding to take a chance, Jersi went to the gym and was happy when she saw his metallic silver Chevy Tahoe parked out front. She was nervous about seeing him but she had to face the music. She was wrong and she had no problem admitting that.

Jersi checked her appearance in the mirror before she got out of her car and headed into the gym. She spotted Memphis standing there talking to that Lila bitch who couldn't keep her hands to herself. Jersi wanted to snatch her nasty ass when she saw her laugh and grab on to Memphis' arm. The front desk clerk, Erin, smiled as soon as she saw her.

"Hey girl. You look too cute to be coming to work out," Erin said when Jersi walked up.

"No, I didn't come to work out. Can I talk to you for a minute Memphis?" Jersi asked nervously.

"You need to stretch before we get started," Memphis said to Lila while completely ignoring Jersi.

"I won't take up too much of your time. I know you're busy," Jersi said, attempting to talk to Memphis again.

"You see me standing here Erin?" Memphis asked his longtime friend.

"What kind of crazy question is that? Of course I see you standing there," Erin replied in confusion.

“Oh okay. I was beginning to think that I was invisible. I guess that’s only to certain people though,” Memphis replied as he walked away without a second thought. Lila had a smile on her face and she followed right behind him.

“What the hell just happened here?” Erin questioned out loud.

She knew that whatever it was had to do with Jersi. She and Memphis had been friends since high school, so they talked a lot. She knew that he was feeling Jersi and he told her so himself. She didn’t know what happened and it wasn’t her business to ask.

“It’s cool Erin. Have a good one,” Jersi replied as she walked to her car trying to hide the tears that were forming in her eyes.

As soon as she got to her car, she let them fall freely while kicking herself for always doing something stupid. She couldn’t even be mad about the way that Memphis had played her. She did the exact same thing to him and karma came back too fast for her liking.



“I wish I could come see you tonight. I’m stressed the fuck out,” Carter hissed as he and Jersi got on the elevator at the end of the work day.

“Why can’t you?” Jersi asked.

“I’m getting the kids this weekend. I have to pick them up tonight,”

Carter sighed.

“That’s good Carter. That’s what you’ve been wanting,” Jersi said excitedly.

Carter and his ex-wife had a horrible divorce and she often used the kids as leverage. They had been going back and forth to court for months and it seemed as if things were working out in his favor. His ex-wife did whatever her mother told her to do and that was the reason why Carter left her. She was having a hard time letting go and she made his life pure hell.

“Yeah, that is what I wanted but I don’t have time for Miracle’s drama. I know she’s gonna be calling every five minutes since I’ll have the kids and she’ll show up to my house if I don’t answer. It’s all good though. I’m documenting everything for the judge. I hope you’re free Sunday when I drop them off home. I’ll definitely need to come see you,” Carter replied as they got off the elevator and walked towards the exit.

“I should be. But listen, I need your advice about something,” Jersi said.

“Okay. What’s up?” Carter asked.

“So, I met someone about a month ago and shit went left already,” Jersi admitted.

“Damn Jersi. The hell happened that fast?” Carter asked.

“I happened. I fucked up but I tried to make it right,” Jersi said as she ran everything down to him.

“I can’t even lie, I wouldn’t be fucking with you right now if I was him either. That shit was foul. Why you play that man like that?” Carter questioned.

“I just wasn’t ready for him to meet my mama,” Jersi replied.



“That’s all fine and good but you could have handled it better than that. You could have at least spoke to the man Jersi,” Carter said.

“I know I was wrong and I feel bad as fuck about what I did. I don’t know Carter. I like him, but he’s really not my type. He’s not attractive but I’m attracted to him if that makes sense.”

“Nah, that don’t make sense at all. You’re too mature to even let some childish shit like that come out of your mouth. I never took you as the type to let a person’s physical appearance determine how you feel about them. That ain’t even you Jersi,” Carter scolded as they exited the building.

“I know and truthfully, his appearance didn’t stop me from falling for him. He’s cool and we have a lot of fun together,” Jersi admitted.

“You need to tell him that Jersi,” Carter advised.

“I tried but he won’t talk to me. I’ve called a million times and he ignores me when I go to his job. I don’t know what else to do. It’s been a three days now,” Jersi sighed.

“Keep trying until that nigga get his mind right. Let me know if I need to fall back. I don’t want what we’re doing to affect what you’re trying to build with him. I can’t even lie, it’ll be hard as hell to replace you. Not many females can handle the kind of arrangement that we have. These hoes be catching feelings and falling in love and shit,” Carter laughed as they stood in front of their cars that were right next to each other.

“Yeah, I already know. But thanks Carter. I can always count on you to give it to me straight,” Jersi said as she hugged him.

“And you really need to think about taking that senior accountant test. You can pass that shit with your eyes closed. I still have all my notes and the book that I used to study for the test. It’s all yours if you want it,” Carter offered as he hugged her back

“Really Carter? You got me fucked up if you think my kids are about

to be around another bitch,” his ex-wife Miracle yelled as she seemed to have appeared out of nowhere.

“Why are you here Miracle? I told you that I was coming to get them when I got off,” Carter said as calmly as he could.

“Fuck that! We’re here right now. Is this the reason why you can’t answer your phone? You all booted up with the next bitch,” Miracle fumed.

“Out of respect for your kids, I’ll give her a pass and be on my way,” Jersi said as she unlocked her car and put her purse inside.

Carter’s kids were in the back seat and an older woman was sitting in the front. Jersi assumed that it was Miracle’s mother because the two women looked so much alike.

“That bitch better run,” Miracle said when Jersi got into her car.

She shook her head as she drove away and watched Carter arguing with his ex. She was dead ass wrong for bringing the drama to his job. Jersi tried her luck and called Memphis again as she drove. Just like she assumed, he sent her straight to voicemail. She wasn’t ready to go inside, so she hit Dray up to make sure he was home.

It took her about ten minutes to get to her brother’s house but he was already outside when she got there. His friend Donovan was there too and they appeared to be arguing.

“Hey. Is everything okay?” Jersi asked as she walked up to them.

“It will be once he gets the fuck on,” Dray ranted.

“Why are you putting your sister in our business like that?” Donovan fumed.

“I’m sorry y’all. I didn’t mean to interrupt,” Jersi said as she attempted to walk away.

“You don’t have to go nowhere sis. Kick rocks Donovan. This conversation is over and so are we,” Dray yelled.

“Just like that Draymond. We can’t even sit down and discuss this like adults,” Donovan said sounding like he was hurt.

“There’s nothing to discuss. Come on Jersi. He’ll get tired of standing out here eventually,” Dray said as he grabbed her hand and pulled her inside.

Jersi stopped in the living room when she saw the mess that had been made. One of Dray’s crystal lamps was shattered and a few of his pictures had fallen off the wall and broke. His table was turned over and the tv and the stand that it was on was destroyed. He had holes in the wall and the entire living room was a mess.

“What the hell happened in here?” Jersi questioned.

“That bastard popped up over here when I had company. He was knocking like the damn police. I opened the door and he just forced his way in,” Dray replied as they both cleaned up the mess that was made.

“Did y’all have a fight?” Jersi asked.

“No, he fought with my boo. Crazy muthafucker tore my shit all the way up. He’s gonna pay for all this. Don’t even worry about cleaning it up sis. I’m about send his ass some pictures and a price quote,” Dray fussed.

“Fuck him Dray. You got enough money to replace this shit ten times. He seems kind of nutty to me. I’m surprised his ass lasted this long with you anyway. Why would you even want to continue dealing with his unstable ass?” Jersi asked.

“Because he spoils me and a bitch likes to be spoiled sometimes,” Dray replied as his fingers moved at the speed of lightning texting on his phone.

“You’re spoiled enough Draya,” Jersi noted.

“I’m so pissed right now. A bitch didn’t even get no dick,” Dray ranted.

“Maybe you don’t need no dick. Mama told you to stop bringing all those random women and men to your house but you just don’t listen,” Jersi fussed.

“Donovan is not random. He’s been around for years. He’s trying to be on some exclusive shit and that’s not happening. He knew what it was from day one. It’s not my fault that he caught feelings and I didn’t.”

“Let him be Dray. I’ll replace whatever was damaged,” Jersi offered as she continued to clean up.

“Bitch, stop trying to play me like I’m broke. I got money just like you but I’m not spending my shit to replace what another nigga destroyed. He’s gonna pay for my shit and that’s all there is to it. And what’s this I hear about you fucking with Blake again. I hope like hell that’s a lie,” Dray said.

“Who told you that?” Jersi asked.

“Sassy saw his bitch in the mall and she was crying to him about it. She said the nigga be sleeping out and shit. Sassy called Blake and he told him that y’all were back together,” Dray said repeating what Blake’s brother had told him.

“Fuck him and her,” Jersi replied.

“Okay, but that’s not my telling me what I want to know though,” Dray noted.

“The nigga went down on me a few times and I fucked him once. The oral was bomb but the sex was trash. We are not back together and we never will be. I haven’t talked to him since we stayed the night at the penthouse that he rented,” Jersi rambled.

“Bitch what? That nigga rented a penthouse?” Dray asked.

“Yep, for six whole months. It’s in the heart of downtown,” Jersi noted.

“It is nice? Me and Sassy can probably throw a party in there,” Dray said thinking only of himself.

“Yeah, it’s nice,” Jersi admitted.

“I don’t agree with you dealing with him Jersi. I don’t want you to get your feelings hurt again,” Dray said.

“I have to have feelings before they can get hurt. I’m just showing that hoe Mariah how it feels when the shoe is on the other foot. I won’t be satisfied until she hurts the same way that she hurt me. That goes for her husband too,” Jersi frowned.

“You know I’m not the one to lecture you. I just want you to be careful. I would hate to body one of these hoes for playing with my heart and that’s exactly what you are to me,” Dray said right before someone rang his doorbell.

“I hope that’s not Donovan,” Jersi said as she looked at the door.

“Nope, that’s his replacement,” Dray said as he sashayed to the door and opened it.

“Damn,” Jersi said as her mouth dropped to the floor.

Dray’s friend was fine as hell with a cute boyish face. He didn’t even look like he would entertain another man but looks were so deceiving. The way he pulled Dray close and kissed him was proof of that. He didn’t even care that Jersi was standing right there as he tongued wrestled with her brother.

“Excuse the mess babe. My sister and her boyfriend just had a fight.

Are you sure you're okay sis?" Dray asked while giving Jersi a knowing look.

"Uh...I'm...Yeah, I'm okay now," Jersi stuttered while keeping up the charade.

"Okay. Call me if you need me. Love you boo," Dray said as he walked her to the door.

"I love you too and you owe me lunch bitch," Jersi whispered as she walked out of the house and to her car.

She was sexually frustrated and Carter was on daddy duty. She would rather watch porn and dust off her vibrator before she called Blake's lame ass. As much as she didn't want to admit it, she had to accept the fact that Memphis was really done with her. She didn't like it but it was her own fault. As if she'd talked him up, Blake called her phone and she reluctantly answered.

"Hey, I've been calling you like crazy. I'm off tonight and I want to see you," Blake said when she picked up.

Jersi pulled up the schedule that he sent her and frowned. His name was clearly on it to work, so she didn't know how he pulled that off. She loved the fact that Blake worked a lot. That meant less time that she had to be around him.

"The schedule that you sent me said that you had to work," Jersi pointed out.

"One of my colleagues needed to switch with me, so I have the night off to spend with you," Blake replied.

"I wish I could Blake but I'm on my period right now," Jersi lied. Her cycle had come and gone but he didn't need to know that.

"I don't care about that Jersi. It's not just about sex with us. I love

being with you. I'll be satisfied with just waking up next to you," he replied making Jersi roll her eyes.

"Maybe another time Blake. I really don't feel good," Jersi sighed.

"Please baby. I really want to see you. I'll take good care of you. Besides, I have something for you," Blake said, peaking her interest.

"Okay. Let me go home and shower first. And I'm starving so have something good for me to eat," Jersi replied before she hung up the phone.

Spending her Friday night with Blake had her almost as depressed as her situation with Memphis. Still, she was curious as to what he had for her. The thought of Mariah sleeping alone again was always an added bonus too.



“Just answer for the damn girl. She’s obviously sorry about what she did,” Erin said as she watched Memphis ignore another one of Jersi’s calls.

“Man, fuck that. She played me like I was a straight up fuck boy. I can’t lie and say that I don’t miss her pretty ass but I’ll get over it,” Memphis replied.

“Men are so stubborn. I’ll admit that she was wrong but you’re taking shit too far,” Erin fussed.

It was after midnight and the gym was closed. She and Memphis were wiping down the equipment and they were the only ones there. Erin’s husband hadn’t come to pick her up yet, so she helped her friend out a little before he showed up.

“Why do women think that their feelings are the only ones that matter? Niggas got feelings and our shit get hurt too,” Memphis replied.

“I know that but you take holding a grudge to a whole new level. You don’t know what it is to forgive. I’ve been your friend since tenth grade and no one knows that better than I do,” Erin noted.



“I don’t have a problem forgiving people,” Memphis said.

“Tell that to your father,” Erin replied.

“Man, fuck that nigga. He’s the one who left us to go be with a younger woman. That’s just why she drained his ass and left him for a younger nigga,” Memphis spat angrily.

When his mother, Valerie, made the decision to raise her best friends two kids when she died, his father, Jonah, was against it. Paula and his mother had been best friends since elementary school and nothing changed when they became adults. Paula didn’t really have family, so she spent a lot of time with their family for holidays and other special occasions. Her girls were in their early teens when she died and Valerie didn’t want them to go into the system. Paula’s death was sudden and not something that anyone had time to prepare for. She was a diabetic but the hospital’s negligence is what caused her untimely demise. Jonah was already out there cheating, so he used that as an excuse to move out and be with his younger side chick. He claimed that he was having a hard enough time caring for their three boys and his wife wanted to force him to feed two more. Since Valerie never worked, she depended solely on her husband. Jonah kept the mortgage paid but he didn’t do much else. Thankfully, Paula had a little insurance policy but it wasn’t enough to live on forever. Her daughters got a social security check but Valerie still struggled while her husband flaunted his much younger woman around. It wasn’t until all the kids got old enough to get jobs did things start to get better. Memphis turned to selling drugs but he was discreet with what he did. He wasn’t trying to get rich. He just needed to take some of the pressure off of his mother. He was in college, so he only sold weed and pills to students and teachers on campus. He stacked his money all four years that he was there getting his business degree.

“See, you still feel some kind of way about it,” Erin said, pulling him away from his thoughts of the past.

“I’ll always feel some kind of way about it. The nerve of that clown ass nigga to even fix his lips to ask us for anything. Me and my brothers got it

out the mud with no help from his bitch ass,” Memphis fumed.

His oldest brother, Jonah Jr. or JJ, was thirty years old, with Memphis being second oldest at twenty-eight. Vance was the youngest and more level headed one and he was twenty-five. Crazy as it sounded, Vance was the one who gave them advice and kept their heads on straight. Memphis was hot tempered at times and JJ was a man whore. Vance had been married for two years but he and his wife didn’t have any kids. His wife’s father was a pastor and they lived their life like the bible taught them to. He believed in forgiveness and was always preaching that to his brothers. Vance was more sympathetic to their father but Memphis and JJ just didn’t give a fuck.

“Forget all that. I really like Jersi and you do too. I think you need to tell her how what she did affected you and move on. Stop being so difficult all the time. It’s okay to give second chances Memphis,” Erin said as her phone rang.

“Man,” Memphis sighed as he ran his hand down his waves.

“Man nothing. Just talk to her Memphis. My hubby is here, so I’ll see you tomorrow,” Erin said as she walked away.

Once she was gone, Memphis finished cleaning up and left to go home. He knew that Erin was right but he wasn’t trying to hear it. Jersi played him like he was a hoe ass nigga and he didn’t appreciate that. When he pulled up to his house, Memphis damn near ran up to his front door. He had a busy day and he wasn’t in the mood to do nothing but sleep. As soon as he got in, he stripped out of his gym clothes and took a shower. He never slept with clothes on, so he dried off and went straight to the sofa that had become his bed. His house was freezing so he covered up with two big comforters and drifted off to sleep soon after.

The following morning, Memphis woke up to the smell of food. He had plans to sleep in late since he was off. He rarely took off on Saturdays but he wanted the entire weekend off to chill. He was off every Sunday and he usually watched sports or hung out with friends or family. Occasionally,

he entertained a few females but he always went to them. No one ever stepped foot in his house.

“Morning sleepy head,” Lila greeted when she walked into the living room.

“What time is it?” Memphis mumbled in his sexy, raspy voice. Everybody said he sounded like DMX and he hated the comparison.

“Almost ten. Get up, breakfast is ready and you know how mama is about eating while the food is hot,” Lila chuckled. He hated when she called Valerie mama but she had been doing it for years. Her sister called her Mrs. Val but Lila was always so extra.

“The fuck are y’all doing here so early,” Memphis barked.

“Watch your filthy mouth boy. I always come here to clean up this nasty mess you call a house,” Valerie fussed when she walked into the room.

“I gave you that key for emergencies only. That’s not for you to come and go as you please,” Memphis reminded her like always.

“Look around you Memphis. This is an emergency. This place looks like a pig pen. This house is too nice for you to keep it like this. You need to put some more furniture in here. It’s too damn empty,” Valerie fussed as Lila giggled.

It was one thing for his mother to visit but she always had Lila with her. It was annoying as fuck and Memphis was tired of telling her about it. He slept in the nude and the covers didn’t always stay on at night. He didn’t need them seeing something that they weren’t supposed to see. Lila was like a fiend and she had been begging for some dick for years. Memphis would die and spend eternity in hell before he ever went there with her though. She was too comfortable and his mother made her that way. She sometimes showed up at his house with food even when his mother wasn’t with her. That was unacceptable on so many levels.

“I need y’all to step out while I get up,” Memphis said as he sat up and stretched.

“Come on Lila. Let’s start in this bedroom,” Valerie said as she walked towards the master bedroom.

“Leave it. Nothing in that room or the one next to it needs to be cleaned or touched,” Memphis noted.

“Memphis, baby, it’s been three years. Let me dust and freshen up the bed clothes at least,” Valerie begged.

“Just leave it ma. We go through this all the time and I tell you the same thing. I don’t care how long it’s been. Don’t even open those two doors,” Memphis ordered.

“Okay baby. We’ll start in one of these other rooms,” Valerie said as she and Lila walked away somberly.

Memphis waited for a few minutes before he walked into the bedroom where he kept his clothes. He threw on some boxers and some sweats before going to the kitchen to eat. Once he said his grace, he dug into the omelet and grits that his mother had prepared. When he was done, he sat the plate in the sink and grabbed a carton of orange juice from the fridge. Memphis turned it up to his mouth and drank straight from the carton just like always.

“What did I tell you about that boy? That is so unsanitary,” Valerie fussed when she walked into the kitchen.

“This is my house, my kitchen and my juice. I’m a bachelor and nobody has to drink this but me,” Memphis replied.

“You’re a bachelor because you want to be. Lila has all but begged to be with you and you act like she’s invisible,” Valerie said.

“She is invisible to me. I would never even entertain the idea of being with her and I can’t believe that you’re okay with that nasty shit,” Memphis

fumed.

“There is nothing nasty about it. People do it all the time, especially back in the day. I honestly don’t see nothing wrong with it,” Valerie countered.

“It’s never happening ma. Besides, she’s in a relationship with my first cousin,” Memphis pointed out.

“Her and Juan are not together,” Valerie corrected.

It didn’t matter to him one way or another. Memphis could never see himself dealing with Lila on a romantic level. He felt disrespected every time someone even mentioned it. She had dated his cousin Juan off and on for years but that was only a small part of why he would never go there with her.

“I got some moves to make. Lock up when you leave,” Memphis said while ignoring his mother’s last statement.

He took another quick shower before he got dressed for the day. He wanted to go see what his brothers were up to and hit the mall.

His first stop was to Vance’s job but he didn’t stay very long. Vance was too busy and he couldn’t really stop to talk. Unlike most managers, Vance was hands on at the car wash where he worked. He didn’t mind getting his hands dirty but JJ was the total opposite. When Memphis pulled up on him, he was outside on the phone arguing with someone. More than likely it was his girlfriend because that was all that they seemed to do. JJ couldn’t stay faithful for longer than a month and that was why they always had problems. His girl was always putting him out which was why he got a sofa for his office. He had on his car wash uniform with his name etched on the front. Memphis didn’t know why he wore the damn thing because he never helped out. Although they had a drive thru car wash area, most customers preferred to get a hand wash instead. They had a nice waiting area, so they didn’t mind.

“What’s up boy?” Memphis asked as he pounded his brother’s fist.

“Same ole shit with this damn girl. She always think a nigga out here doing her dirty,” JJ frowned in response.

“Are you?” Memphis smirked.

“I mean, I fucked around with a chick that I met in the club last night but she don’t know that. I hate when people just be assuming shit. I had to sleep in my office last night,” JJ argued.

“Man, you full of shit,” Memphis laughed as his phone rang. When he saw Jersi’s number pop up, he started not to answer. He had been missing her too much for him to continue ignoring her though.

“Damn lil brother. Who is that?” JJ asked when he saw Jersi’s picture pop up on his brother’s phone screen. It was a picture that Jersi sent to him that he fell in love with.

“What’s good Jersi?” Memphis asked when he answered the phone and ignored his brother’s question.

“Hello?” Jersi said, shocked that he picked up.

“Yeah. What’s up?” Memphis questioned.

“Um...nothing,” Jersi said before the line got quiet again.

“I know you didn’t call me to just hold the phone,” Memphis noted.

“No, I’m just surprised that you picked up,” Jersi replied.

“That makes two of us. I don’t do too well with second chances,” Memphis admitted.

“I know Memphis and I apologize,” Jersi said.

“I don’t want no over the phone apology. Come see me,” he requested.

“Where are you?” Jersi asked.

“I’ll send you my location,” Memphis said.

“Okay, I’m coming now,” Jersi replied before she hung up.

Memphis hung around and talked to his brother and a few other employees for a while. About thirty minutes later, he saw Jersi car’s pull up and he waved her over to park next to his car.

“Damn boy. Who the fuck is that?” JJ asked when he saw Jersi get out of the car and walk towards them.

She had on a yellow dress that looked great against her chocolate skin. Her hair was wild with curls and she looked like a model without even trying. When she got closer, Memphis pulled her in for a hug as his brother and a few other employees watched.

“The fuck is y’all looking at? Nosey ass niggas,” Memphis laughed.

“Damn bro, you not gon’ introduce me?” JJ asked.

“Nope but I need to use your office for a minute,” Memphis replied as he grabbed Jersi’s hand and walked away.

He was being petty but he didn’t give a damn. He wasn’t about to introduce Jersi to his people if she didn’t feel the need to introduce him to hers. Maybe once they talked, he would feel differently. When they walked into the office, Memphis pulled out a chair for her to sit down. He then sat down next to her and put his feet up on the desk. Jersi was nervous about how he was looking at her but she already knew why.

“I owe you an apology and I’m woman enough to admit when I’m wrong. We’re still in the beginning of our friendship and I wasn’t ready to introduce you to my mother yet,” Jersi admitted.

“You just said a mouthful without even realizing it. We’re only friends Jersi. I’m not pressed to meet your family and I would never rush something like that. I don’t run around introducing everybody to my family either. But damn, you could have gave a nigga a head nod, a wave or something. That was foul as fuck,” Memphis replied angrily.

“I agree and I’m sorry. I should have introduced you as a friend,” Jersi acknowledged.

“I was ready to be done with you but I just couldn’t do it. I can’t even front like I don’t care because I do. It’s been a minute since I’ve been genuinely interested in somebody,” Memphis said making her blush.

“I like you a lot too,” Jersi confessed.

“Yeah, I know. I can tell by how many times you called me,” Memphis said cockily.

He pulled Jersi up from her chair and sat her on his lap. She smelled good but she looked even better. Memphis didn’t realize how much he missed her but he was happy that they were able to work things out.

“Are you off today?” Jersi asked him.

“Yep, I’m off the entire weekend. You trying to hang with me today?” Memphis asked.

“Where do you wanna go?” Jersi asked.

“I’ll think of something. You can leave your car here and ride with me,” Memphis replied as he pulled her close and devoured her lips with a kiss.

Jersi had gloss on her lips that tasted like strawberries. He didn’t care that he was taking it off and neither did she.

“Shit, my fault bro,” JJ said when he walked into his office and



caught them in a heated lip lock.

“Nah, it’s cool. We’re about to head out. Her car is staying here but we’ll be back to get it later,” Memphis replied.

“I’m sorry that my brother is so rude. We were raised better than that. I’m Memphis’ oldest brother, Jonah, but you can call me JJ,” he said as he extended his hand out to Jersi.

“It’s nice to meet you. I’m Jersi,” she replied as she shook his hand.

“Don’t introduce yourself to her. She’s the one that’s rude. She didn’t introduce me to her people either,” Memphis joked as he stood up and wrapped his arm around her waist.

“I said that I was sorry,” Jersi replied.

“I’m just fucking with you,” Memphis smirked.

“Hold up bro. I need you to sign off on payroll before you go,” JJ said as he pulled out some papers that Memphis quickly signed before walking out of the office. When they got into the hall, Jersi had a few questions.

“Why do you have to sign off on payroll for his business?” Jersi questioned.

“He’s the manager, but I’m the owner. My youngest brother manages the other one,” Memphis winked.

“Seriously?” Jersi quizzed.

“Yeah seriously. My Car Wash. It’s actually my initials,” Memphis revealed while reciting the name of his business.

“Wow,” Jersi said as a light bulb went off in her head. She would have never guessed that My Car Wash actually stood for something. The My was for Memphis Young. That was catchy and well thought out.

“I know you thought a nigga was broke. That’s why you always wanted to pay for everything,” Memphis laughed.

“I didn’t think you were broke,” Jersi lied.

She did think that his only job was at the gym and she was sure that he didn’t make very much money working there. She was very giving and she didn’t mind if she had to pay when they went out. Jersi had seen the car washes a million times but she had never been there.

“Yeah okay,” Memphis smirked. “I appreciate that though. You’re probably the first female that ever even offered.”

As soon as they walked outside, a man who was standing out front rushed over to them. Memphis frowned when he approached them because he wasn’t in the mood.

“Let me rap with you for a minute Memphis,” the man said as he stood right next to him.

“I’m busy,” Memphis countered without even looking his way.

“Let me hold a few dollars. I need to get my medicine. I haven’t had it in a few weeks and I need it,” the man begged.

“The fuck that got to do with me?” Memphis asked.

“I just need about fifty dollars,” the man said desperately.

He got excited when he saw Jersi reaching into her purse but that feeling didn’t last too long. Memphis grabbed her hand to stop her as he shook his head. Jersi didn’t know why he didn’t want her to help the man but she didn’t question it. The man didn’t look homeless but he obviously needed help. She was always taught to give to those in need and she didn’t mind helping.

“I ain’t got nothing for you,” Memphis fumed.

“Didn’t I tell you to get the fuck from around here? Don’t make me get your ass arrested for trespassing,” JJ fussed when he walked out of the building.

“It’s all good. Everything that goes up must come down,” the man said as he walked away angrily.

“Nobody knows that better than you,” JJ yelled after him.

“That nigga must be slow or something,” Memphis said while shaking his head.

“Fuck him,” JJ spat as he walked away.

“Are you okay?” Jersi asked once they were inside of the truck.

Memphis seemed to be in a bad mood for some reason. His attitude switched up quick and she didn’t know why.

“Yeah, I’m good. Do you have any plans for tomorrow?” He asked while looking over at her.

“No, why? What’s up?” Jersi asked.

“My auntie is having a little gathering at her house for the Saints game. I want you to come but it’s cool if you’re not feeling it,” he replied.

“Just tell me the time and place,” Jersi smiled.

“Make sure you wear your Saints gear or you’re getting turned around at the door,” he joked right before pulling off.



“Fuck!” Jersi spat as she dropped her arms to her side.

She had put a lot into getting ready to attend the gathering with Memphis but her hair just wouldn't cooperate. She had gotten a Saints scarf the day before and she was trying to wrap it around her head. She did a wash and go on her hair and she wanted her wild curls to flow around the scarf. She'd done the style a million times but never by herself. She needed someone to hold her hair up while she tied the scarf the way she wanted it.

Jersi was on point with her fitted Saints shirt and black and gold leggings. She had on black combat boots with huge gold fleur de lis earrings dangling from her ears. She even had a Saints backpack to go along with it all. Sassy would be proud if he saw the way that she filled in her perfectly arched brows. He taught her how to do it and it took a while for her to master. If only her hair would cooperate, she would be good to go. She had at least two hours to get it done but she didn't have that kind of patience. Still, she had to be on point since she was meeting Memphis' family for the first time.

“Fuck it!” Jersi hissed as her arms fell again. It was tiring holding them up so long and she could no longer do it. She knew that Ariel was at work so she called Dray instead.

“Hey sissy,” Dray said when he answered the phone.

“Are you at home Dray?” Jersi asked.

“I sure am,” he replied.

“I need your help with something. I’m on my way over,” Jersi noted.

“Can it wait Jersi? I’m expecting company soon,” Dray said.

“Really Dray? You’re pushing me aside for one of your women or men?” Jersi asked.

“Bitch, just come on over. You make me sick with the dramatics,” Dray replied before he hung up.

Jersi checked her backpack to make sure she had everything. Once she was sure, she grabbed her keys and rushed out of the house. Tabby was having a gathering at her house as well and she promised to show her face. Thirty minutes was all that she was giving her and that was too long. When Jersi pulled up to Dray’s house, she was happy to see that no other car was parked out front. His company hadn’t made it there yet and that was perfect. Jersi got out of the car and knocked on the door. She and Dray had keys to each other’s houses but that was only for emergencies.

“Hey brother,” Jersi smiled when he opened the door.

“What was so important that you needed to come over here at this exact moment?” Dray questioned as he ushered her inside.

Dray’s entire living room had been done over. He had brand new furniture and an even bigger tv mounted on the wall. It was beautiful and Jersi knew that it had to be expensive. She couldn’t even tell where the holes in the walls once were because that too had been repaired.

“I see Donovan came through,” Jersi commented as she looked around.

“Did you ever doubt that he would? What do you need Jersi? You’re ruining my life right now,” Dray said dramatically.

“I need help with my hair and then I’ll be out of your way,” Jersi replied.

Dray led her to his overly large walk in closet where his vanity was located. Jersi sat down while he held her long curly hair up with both hands. She tied the scarf around her head just like she wanted it and her hair fell perfectly once Dray let it go.

“You look sexy my love. If you weren’t my sister, I’d be trying to hit it,” Dray complimented.

“Boy bye. I can’t spot your gay from a mile away,” Jersi laughed.

“Stop lying bitch. I pull hoes faster than I pull niggas,” Dray replied right as someone rang his doorbell.

“Let me touch up my lipstick and I’m out of here,” Jersi said as she pulled her plum purple lipstick from her purse.

Once she was done, she snapped a few pictures since Dray’s vanity had the perfect lighting. She was cute, but comfortable and that’s what she was going for. She heard Dray talking to someone, so she knew that his company had arrived. Jersi gathered her things and prepared to leave. When she walked into the living room, she stopped in her tracks when she saw Damien standing there with his arms wrapped around her brother’s waist. He pulled Dray close and smiled as he whispered in his ear. Damien was Talena and Mariah’s ex-boyfriend. Jersi would have never assumed that he was into men as well. She wasn’t judging because her brother liked the best of both worlds too. When he looked up and saw Jersi, it was if he had seen a ghost. Damien removed his arms from around Dray and stuffed them into his front pockets like he was embarrassed.

“What’s up Jersi?” Damien spoke as he smiled nervously.

“How do you know my sister?” Dray asked.

“It’s a long boring story but I’ve known Damien for a while. How have you been?” Jersi asked as she gave him a hug.

“I’ve been good. What about you?” Damien asked her.

“I can’t complain,” Jersi replied.

“Hold up!” Dray said while raising his hand. “If y’all messed around or fucked before, you have to leave. I don’t play those kinds of games.”

“Really Dray? You know every man that I’ve ever been with and Damien is not one of them,” Jersi acknowledged.

“Oh okay, I’m just making sure,” Dray said as he walked away.

Jersi laughed as she made her way to the front door. She didn’t know why, but Damien walked out right behind her.

“Look, I’m not gay or nothing if that’s what you think. I didn’t know that Dray was your brother, but we’re just cool. I got a girl at home,” Damien said as if Jersi was dumb.

She clearly saw Damien with his arms around her brother’s waist. Had she walked in a minute later, she probably would have seen more. She didn’t know why he felt the need to lie to her but it wasn’t necessary.

“I’m not judging you Damien. It doesn’t matter to me one way or another,” Jersi shrugged.

“Can you just keep this between the two of us? I don’t need everybody in my business,” Damien requested.

“You got my word,” Jersi assured him.

“I appreciate that. And I heard about what that bitch Mariah did to

you. That hoe did me dirty too. She was supposed to use the money that I left behind to get me a lawyer. Bitch took my money and fixed herself up to meet another nigga to finesse. I stayed in jail for a whole year,” Damien fumed.

“That’s messed up but nothing that she does surprises me,” Jersi replied.

“I was about to kill that hoe but she ended up paying me all my money back. Bitch married a doctor and act like she’s royalty now,” he frowned.

“That nigga ain’t shit. Trust me, no one knows that better than I do. I gotta go, but it was nice seeing you again Damien,” Jersi said as she walked away and went to her car.

Damien went back into the house right before she pulled off. Talena would die if she knew what her ex was up to now. She had seen Damien a few times but he never tried to get back with her. Jersi now knew why but it wasn’t her place to say anything. It took her about twenty minutes but she pulled up to Tabby’s house and parked out front. She saw her auntie Toni’s car and she was happy that she was there.

“Hey pretty black,” Tabby said when she opened the door.

“Hey,” Jersi replied as she followed her into the house.

She looked a hot mess with a Saint’s halter top on with that big ass beer belly. The leggings that she wore were faded and her shoes were too small for her wide feet. Her wig was even worse and it needed to be washed, combed or burned. She didn’t know what the hell her father ever saw in her. She wasn’t ugly and she probably had a better shape back then. Still, Jersi was so thankful for her parents. She didn’t know where she would be if she had to be raised by Tabby.

“Hey, my baby,” Toni smiled as she pulled Jersi in for a hug.

“Hey auntie,” Jersi smiled back as she sat next to her and held her



hand.

Tabby rolled her eyes up to the sky in disgust. She hated that Jersi was closer with her sister but Toni was always around. She used to do things with Jersi and Ariel on the weekends and she was always taking them somewhere. Thanks to Marvin, Jersi barely wanted to come to her house. He never made her feel welcomed or wanted.

“Talena is on her way,” Tabby announced as if Jersi cared.

Tabby got pissed whenever Toni tried to purposely exclude her from their conversations. It was bad enough that Dena took her baby from her. She wasn't letting Toni have her too. She knew that it was childish but Tabby grabbed a chair and inserted herself in between the two women. Jersi didn't think nothing of it but Toni knew exactly what she was doing. When the doorbell rang, Marvin got up to see who it was. A few more people had arrived and Talena came shortly after. When Mariah walked into the house, Jersi was ready to go. Mariah was frowning at her the entire time but she chose to ignore her. She had a few more minutes to spare before it was time for her to leave and meet Memphis.

“Where are the girls?” Marvin asked his daughter.

“At home with my husband,” Mariah said loudly as she looked over at Jersi.

She knew exactly where he was because he was blowing her phone up at that exact moment. He was begging to see her but Jersi wasn't in the mood. She wasn't trying to have sex with him and she'd already used the lie about her cycle being down.

“How has everything been going?” Marvin asked her.

“We couldn't be better. We're happy and in love,” Mariah smirked.

“Where is your boo Jersi? Why didn't you bring him?” Talena instigated as she giggled.

Since Mariah wanted to be petty, Jersi decided to join her. She usually wouldn't even entertain bullshit like that but Mariah made it too easy. She didn't know how to control her emotions and that was never a good thing for the opponent.

"He's at home with his kids," Jersi smiled.

"I didn't know that you were dating anyone. When do we get to meet him?" Toni asked, clueless as to what was going on.

"You've already met him," Jersi winked, confusing her auntie.

"What's his name?" Toni asked.

"I can't tell you that auntie," Jersi laughed.

"I've never known you to date a man with kids. How many does he have?" Toni asked.

"Two girls but he wants a boy. I wasn't ready for kids yet but he's been begging for a son," Jersi smirked.

She was only fucking with Mariah because having a baby was nowhere in her plans. A baby for Blake was never happening at all. Jersi had never had sex without a condom and she was faithful with her pills.

"You call yourself being funny bitch?" Mariah fumed as she walked over to her.

"Excuse you. What the hell is your problem?" Tabby yelled as she stood up.

"Your hoe ass daughter is my problem," Mariah yelled angrily as her father tried to hold her back.

"Don't come in here being disrespectful," Tabby ordered.

“Fuck you!” Mariah spat angrily.

“No bitch, fuck you!” Talena yelled.

Marvin was a sad ass excuse for a man. He stood there while his daughter disrespected his wife and didn't even try to defend her. Talena had her mother's back if nobody else did.

“I think it's time for me to go,” Jersi said as she stood up.

“That's a good idea,” Marvin commented.

“The fuck is that supposed to mean? Your daughter is the one who started the bullshit. You don't have to go nowhere Jersi,” Tabby yelled angrily.

“Let's all just calm down,” Toni said as she tried to diffuse the situation.

The few guests that were there looked shocked at everything that was taking place. To them, Mariah started acting crazy for nothing. Jersi and Talena knew what was up though.

“It's okay auntie. I'm about to get going. I don't know what's wrong with her,” Jersi said while looking at Mariah.

“You're what's wrong with me bitch. You must think I'm stupid. I smell the same perfume on you right now,” Mariah screamed and cried.

“What is she talking about Jersi?” Toni asked.

“I have no idea,” Jersi shrugged.

“Let me go! I hate that bitch!” Mariah yelled as she appeared to have a nervous breakdown.

Toni walked Jersi out to her car and a few other people left behind them. Mariah had dampened the mood and nobody wanted to watch the game at Tabby's house anymore.

"That girl is a real nut case. And her daddy ain't no better. He stood right there and let her talk to his wife like a dog," Toni said while shaking her head.

"That's all on them. I have other plans, so I didn't plan to stay long anyway," Jersi replied.

"I think I'm going home too. I can stop and grab my own food. I don't have time for this," Toni fussed. As soon as her auntie went back inside, Jersi called Blake back.

"Hey baby. I've been missing you," he said as soon as he answered.

"Yeah and your wife is missing a few screws," Jersi replied.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"That crazy bitch just tried to fight me at Tabby's house. She claims that she smells the same perfume on me or some shit," Jersi replied, not bothering to tell him that she really started it.

"I don't know what's wrong with her but I'll deal with it. When can I see you again? I have something for you," Blake said.

"You always have something for me," Jersi replied as she rolled her eyes.

Blake was always buying her expensive shoes, purses, and jewelry but she didn't need any of it. She had given Ariel a brand new pair of red bottoms and a Gucci purse. Jersi was very familiar with labels so that didn't impress her.

"I know, I like to spoil you. When can I see you again?" he asked

again.

“I’ll let you know,” Jersi replied.

“A friend of mine is having a gathering in a few weeks. I want you to come with me,” Blake said.

“Are you trying to get busted Blake. I’m sure this friend knows Mariah too,” Jersi replied as if she cared.

She wanted somebody to tell Mariah about her just like somebody had to tell her about Mariah. She needed to know that her actions had consequences.

“Let me worry about that. I’ll let you know when and where when I find out,” he noted.

“I’ll see, but I have to go. We’ll talk later,” Jersi said.

“Okay baby, I love you,” Blake replied right before Jersi hung up,

She would die a slow death before she lied and told him that she loved him too. He didn’t deserve her love and he would never get it again.

Jersi pulled up the address that Memphis gave her and let her GPS lead the way. She called him when she got there to let him know that she was outside. The house was a nice size and they had lots of parking in the area. There were lots of cars out front already and she was a nervous wreck. She was happy when she saw his truck because he needed to come outside to get her. Besides Blake, Jersi had never met another man’s family before. Blake really didn’t count because they had been around each other their entire life. Meeting Memphis’ family was a big step to her. That was something that would either make or break what they were trying to build.



stairs.

“Stop being so scary girl,” Memphis said as he grabbed Jersi’s hand and led her up the

She called and told him to come outside but that was twenty minutes ago. They stood out front talking but he knew that she was stalling. Jersi looked good as fuck and he was ready to show her off to everybody.

“Don’t leave me Memphis. I don’t care if you have to go to the bathroom. I’m coming with you,” Jersi replied.

“Girl you ain’t ready to see this python,” he joked.

“Boy bye. Shit might be an earth worm,” she laughed.

“Don’t make me pull this big muthafucker out to show you,” he threatened.

“I’ll pass,” Jersi replied as a woman and man walked out the front door.

“This is my youngest brother, Vance, and his wife Zora. Y’all, this is my friend, Jersi,” Memphis said as he introduced everyone.

“It’s nice to meet y’all,” Jersi smiled as she shook their hands.

“Same here,” Vance replied with a sincere smile.

“I know you ain’t leaving lil bro,” Memphis said.

“Nah, we’re going get some more ice,” Vance replied as he and his wife continued down the stairs.

When they walked into the house, Jersi squeezed his hand tighter. There were people everywhere and Memphis said that wasn’t all of them. He took Jersi around and introduced her to everyone. His entire family was nice and they were very welcoming. After a while, Jersi relaxed and was talking to a few of his female cousins. The game was on and the men were all into it. Once Memphis saw that she was okay, he left her alone for a little while. He checked on her occasionally but she was good.

“Where is the bathroom?” Jersi asked one of the older ladies in the kitchen.

“Down the hall, last door on the left,” she replied as she pointed.

“Thank you,” Jersi smiled as she walked away.

She was happy to see that the spacious bathroom was clean and smelled fresh. After relieving herself, she washed her hands and checked herself in the huge circular mirror. Once she was satisfied with her appearance, she opened the door right as some one was about to knock. Jersi jumped when she saw the man and held her chest.

“My fault sweetheart. I didn’t mean to scare you,” he said flashing a beautiful smile.

“That’s okay,” Jersi smiled back as she moved to the side to let him enter.

“I know you’re not related to me. I would have remembered a cousin as beautiful as you,” he flirted using a lame ass pick up line.

“No, I’m not related to anyone here. I came with a friend,” Jersi replied.

“What’s your name beautiful?” he asked.

Jersi didn’t know who he was but he gave off a bad vibe. He had sneaky eyes and she didn’t trust him already. He had to be related to Memphis but she didn’t know how.

“My name is Jersi,” she replied.

“You got a man Jersi?” he asked as he licked his lips lustfully.

“Yep, so back the fuck up,” Memphis replied as he walked up and grabbed her by the waist.

“You don’t listen. I told you not to leave me,” Jersi said as she punched his arm.

“You were talking to my people so I thought you were good,” Memphis replied.

“Damn cousin, that’s you?” the other man asked.

“Stop being so thirsty nigga. This is my cousin Juan, just in case you’re wondering,” Memphis said as he pecked Jersi’s lips and walked away.

He and Jersi didn’t have a title but his cousin didn’t need to know that. Juan watched as his cousin left with one of the most beautiful women that he’d probably ever seen. He didn’t understand how the nigga did it. Memphis was ugly as fuck to him but he always pulled the baddest bitches. Juan wasn’t a slacker in the looks department but his cousin had him beat.



“What is she doing here?” Jersi whispered when they walked into the kitchen and saw Lila standing there talking to some of his cousins.

“I’ll tell you about it later,” Memphis replied.

Lila looked over at them and frowned in disgust. She didn’t know what happened between the two of them not too long ago but she knew that Memphis was done with Jersi. He handled her like she was a nobody when she came to the gym but he was all in her face now. He kept kissing on her before he took a seat and pulled her on his lap. They looked like a couple but Lila wasn’t sure. She had been around their family for years but that was her first time seeing Memphis bring a woman around. He must have really liked Jersi and that made Lila despise her even more.

“Stop acting like you can’t speak Memphis,” Lila said when she walked over to him.

“What’s up?” he spoke, never even looking up at her.

“Where the beer at?” someone yelled when they entered the kitchen.

Jersi looked up and was shocked to see the same man who was outside of the car wash begging for money the day before. He was dressed in Saints gear with a plate of food in his hand.

“Isn’t that the man that was by the car wash yesterday?” Jersi whispered.

“Yeah, that’s that nigga,” Memphis replied bitterly.

“How do you know him?” Jersi questioned.

“That’s my deadbeat ass daddy,” he replied like it was nothing.

“What!” Jersi shrieked in shock.

Although his father did them dirty, they were still close with his side

of the family. His aunties were the ones who helped Valerie pay bills and put food on the table when Jonah left. They didn't really fuck with their brother either but they tolerated him. Some of them even gave him a place to sleep until he pissed them off. Other than that, nobody knew where he actually lived and they didn't seem to care. The way Memphis and his brother handled him made it seem like he was a bum on the streets. Jersi would have never guessed that he was even related to them.

“Yeah, that's something else that we'll talk about later,” he replied.

When Juan walked into the room, he acted as if he couldn't keep his eyes off Jersi. She and Memphis were whispering to each other, having their own private conversation. He was a hater and that was why he decided to interrupt.

“Say cousin, when you gon' put me on? Nigga been trying to get a job with you for the longest,” Juan said.

“Man, get the fuck outta here. I've offered you several jobs but your ass is just lazy,” Memphis replied in disgust.

When Memphis used to talk about opening a business, Juan was all for it. He swore that he was saving his money to invest but when the time came, that proved to be a lie. He was lazy and always looking for a handout. He was a ladies man who felt that everything should be given to him. He wanted Memphis to put up all the money while he reaped the benefits but that wasn't happening. He was pissed when Memphis let his two brothers run the car washes instead of him. He wanted a manager's spot but Memphis was trying to play him. Juan would rather chase pussy instead of a bag and Memphis didn't respect that. He always found women to take care of him and Lila was one of them. Juan wore top of the line clothes and drove a Bentley truck like he was a boss. He had all that but still lived with his mama whenever Lila put him out of her house. Juan hung around the car wash with JJ all day like he was getting paid to do it. The nigga was a scrub who JJ had to feed every time he got food for himself. Juan felt like they were obligated to look out for him because his mother did the same for them when their father left. Juanita could get anything from her nephews but her son had the

game fucked up.

“Man, you wanted a nigga to wash cars. You even put your frat brothers on before me. We’re blood. I deserved something better than that,” Juan replied like he was entitled to something.

“Blood don’t mean nothing to them niggas. Ask me, I can tell you that. Vance is the only one who got a heart,” Memphis’ father chimed in.

“You ready to go beautiful?” Memphis asked as he looked at Jersi.

“Yeah,” Jersi replied as she stood up.

The game was almost over and his team was winning by more than twenty points. It was still early but he wasn’t in the mood to deal with the bullshit. His temper wasn’t the best and everybody knew that. The way his attitude was set up, he would lay Juan and his father out in his auntie’s kitchen. Memphis told everyone that he was leaving and he and Jersi made their exit. He wasn’t ready for their night to end but he wanted to see how she felt about it.

“What you got going on for the rest of the night?” Memphis asked as they stood in front of her car.

“Nothing, I thought I was hanging with you for the day,” she replied.

“That was the plan but I’m not trying to be around them niggas. I’ll fuck around and go to jail,” Memphis replied.

“We can go to my house if you want to,” Jersi offered to his surprise.

“Lead the way and I’ll follow you,” Memphis replied.

Jersi waited until he got into his car before she pulled off. She was a little nervous about having company at her house. Besides Carter, she had never entertained another man there. Still, she led the way and Memphis was right behind her. When they pulled through the gate, Jersi parked in her

assigned spot before directing Memphis to one of the visitor's spots. She waited until he got of his car before they walked up the stairs to her house.

"Damn, this is nice," Memphis complimented when they walked inside.

Jersi's living room was decorated in soft pink and gray. Memphis had never seen a pink leather sofa set but he liked it. It was feminine just like her.

"Thanks. Do you want something to drink?" Jersi asked.

"Nah, I know you probably got some fruity wine that'll fuck my stomach up," Memphis laughed.

"I have Heinekens too. I keep them here for when my brother and father come over," Jersi replied.

"I'll take one of those," Memphis replied as he sat on the sofa.

"Okay, make yourself at home. Here's the remote," Jersi said as she walked away.

She handed Memphis a beer before disappearing down the hall to her bedroom. She stripped out of her clothes and took a quick shower. After throwing on a sun dress, she grabbed bottle of wine and a glass and joined him on the sofa.

"I didn't know you smoked," Memphis said as he gestured to the half smoked blunt that was in the astray on her table.

"Yeah and my mother hates it. I have my brother to thank for such a bad habit," Jersi replied.

"It's not all that bad. Me and my frat brothers do a little puffing every now and then," he shrugged.

"Okay, so tell me about your father," Jersi pried.

“It’s not much to tell. The nigga left my mama for a younger woman knowing that she didn’t have a job. She had been a housewife all her life and that was all that she knew. He used her moving Lila and her sister in with us as an excuse but he had been cheating for years. If it weren’t for my aunties, I don’t know how we would have made it. I had to sell dope to put myself through college and help pay bills. I stacked my money for four years straight and that’s how I was able to get the car washes,” Memphis noted.

“Damn. I’m guessing he’s not with the other woman anymore,” Jersi said.

“That bitch drained his accounts and left his ass for another man. He lost his house, cars and his businesses. That’s how I got the car washes. His shit went into foreclosure and I stepped up and bought it. Stupid ass nigga had the nerve to think I was doing it to help him out. Crazy thing is, my mama was willing to take the nigga back. She probably would have if me and my brother didn’t threaten to cut her off financially,” Memphis rambled before he gulped down the rest of his beer.

“Damn,” Jersi replied for lack of anything better to say.

“What about you? What’s your story?” Memphis asked.

He gave Jersi his undivided attention as she told him her family drama. She told him about her siblings and unfortunately, Tabby too.

“So, the woman that you were with is really your step mother?” he asked just to be clear.

“No, she’s my mother. Her not giving birth to me doesn’t make her anything less. She raised me and gave me the best childhood ever. She’s the only mother I know and the only one I ever want to know,” Jersi replied.

“I understand,” Memphis nodded.

“Now tell me about that thirst bucket Lila. The bitch that wants you to

stick dick to her,” Jersi said.

“Look at you all jealous and shit,” Memphis laugh.

“Stop trying to change the subject. Did y’all mess around before or something?” Jersi asked.

“Fuck no! I wouldn’t even go there with her. She’s been off and on with my cousin Juan for years. Even if she wasn’t, she’s off limits to me,” Memphis said.

“Why, because your mother helped to raise her?” Jersi questioned.

“No, that has nothing to do with it. We’re not related by blood. It’s just a complicated situation. But I think your jealousy is sexy,” he smirked as she pulled Jersi onto his lap.

Jersi initiated the kiss first and Memphis followed her lead. She used her tongue to part his lips and he willingly opened up for her. The kiss started out slow until he started rubbing his hands up and down her body. After a while, the kiss became more intense but no one was complaining. When Jersi pulled at his shirt, Memphis raised his arms so that she could pull it off. Jersi gasped when she saw his bare chest for the first time. He was sexy as fuck and she couldn’t stop herself from kissing it. Her soft lips felt good on his chest and Memphis didn’t want her to stop. Jersi had him ready to do some damage and he hoped she was ready.

“Where’s your bedroom?” Memphis whispered.

“First door to the left,” Jersi replied in a voice filled with lust.

He didn’t wait to be invited. He picked Jersi up and carried her down the hall. He briefly took in the beauty of her room before he laid her down on the huge bed. Jersi lifted her hips and assisted him with removing her underwear. She didn’t have on a bra, so she was completely naked once he removed her dress. Jersi looked like a chocolate goddess laid out in the bed with her wild, curly hair. She looked kind of nervous for some reason and

that gave him pause. He didn't want to proceed if she wasn't feeling it. They needed to be on the same page and he didn't mind waiting.

“Are you sure about this Jersi? We don't have to rush. I'm good either way,” Memphis said as he looked down at her.

In response, Jersi wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him down on top of her. He kissed her for a few minute before he used his mouth to explore the rest of her body. Jersi arched her back upwards as Memphis used his tongue to make a trail down her body. He stopped at her breast and gave them some attention before he planted soft kisses on her stomach. When he stopped at her freshly waxed middle, he licked his lips before he dove in head first. Jersi was expecting him to tease her for a while but Memphis wasn't there to play.

“Oh fuck!” Jersi screamed as she looked down at him like she was confused.

It felt like three different people were between her legs but it was only him. Memphis used his fingers and his mouth simultaneously and she had never felt anything better. He used his tongue like a snake and glided in up and down her wet opening as his fingers explored her walls. When she grabbed the back of his head, that seemed to encourage him to bury his tongue deeper.

“Ummm,” Memphis moaned like he was enjoying it just as much as she was.

The vibration from him humming on her clit added to the pleasure that Jersi was already feeling. The nigga was a professional pussy eater and there was no other way to describe him. He got paid to go down on bitches and Jersi was almost sure of it. He must have had hoes writing checks to get serviced and she was ready to pull out her check book.

“God, Memphis,” Jersi cried out as she felt an orgasm building in the pit of her belly.

She came harder than ever before and her legs shook violently. Her body felt weak but Memphis didn't seem to notice. He gripped her hips tighter and went into savage mode. His head moved rapidly and his fingers moved just as fast. The same lips that Jersi said were too big when they first met were now one of his best assets. It felt like his entire mouth was covering her mound and the sensation was driving her crazy. She had never come some many times before and her body was starting to feel the effects. Besides Blake and Carter, no other man had ever gone down on her before. Now that Memphis had done it, she realized that she had been getting the short end of the stick. He was like a tongue surgeon and Jersi was being operated on.

“Memphis, wait,” Jersi said as she weakly tried to push him away.

“You taste good as fuck,” he mumbled with his mouth still connected to her.

“You have to stop,” Jersi begged.

“I can't stop,” he replied as he flicked his tongue rapidly.

He was sucking her from the inside out and she was too feeble to push him away. Jersi felt like she was no longer in control of her body and she didn't like that feeling. She looked up at her ceiling and saw what appeared to be black polka dots. It felt like the room was spinning and she was scared. Memphis was oblivious to what he was doing and he kept right on going. She felt another orgasm on the horizon and her heart started beating out of control in her chest. She was screaming for him to stop in her head but the words never came out of her mouth. Jersi's belly tightened right before he eyes rolled behind her head and everything faded to black.

A few minutes later, Jersi felt something cold gliding across her forehead. She opened her eyes and saw Memphis standing over her with a worried expression on his face. He was wiping her face with a wet towel but he seemed relieved when she opened her eyes.

“Shit, girl you scared the fuck out of me,” Memphis said as she sat on the bed and pulled her close.



“What the hell happened?” Jersi asked.

“You checked out on me is what happened,” he replied.

“Huh?” She frowned in confusion.

“You passed the fuck out and had me shook up in this bitch,” Memphis noted.

“This is so embarrassing,” Jersi said as she covered her face with both her hands.

“What’s embarrassing about it? Shit happens and I’m that nigga,” Memphis bragged. He laughed when Jersi looked over at him and frowned.

“Nothing like this has ever happened to me before,” she confessed.

“That’s because you never ran across a nigga like me before. See, I gave you the full package instead of easing you into it. You wasn’t ready for all that just yet though,” Memphis continued to joke.

“Oh God. Now I’ll have to listen to you brag about something else,” Jersi groaned.

“You already know. Head game so vicious, I got you blacking out and shit. I’m glad your ass woke up though. Nigga ain’t never been to jail and I wasn’t trying to go. Shit, I don’t even know what they would have charged me with,” he replied making Jersi laugh.

“Killer head,” Jersi said as they both laughed at her joke.

“But seriously, you feel okay?” Memphis asked her.

“Yeah, I’m good,” Jersi replied as she sat up and grabbed her dress.

“Okay, now admit it,” Memphis said once she slipped her dress back on.

“Admit what?” Jersi asked.

“Admit that I’m that nigga. I ain’t never heard of no shit like that happening before. I’m a fucking beast,” Memphis bragged.

“I need to ask my daddy about that,” Jersi said.

“Ask him about what?” Memphis questioned.

“I need to ask him about what just happened,” Jersi replied.

“Girl! Why the hell would you ask your pops about some shit like that?” Memphis asked as he looked at her sideways.

“I don’t hide anything from my parents. Besides, he’s a doctor. Maybe he can tell me something,” Jersi shrugged.

“Oh yeah, you did say that your pops is a doctor. Ask him if he can prescribe me something for being that nigga,” Memphis laughed.

“Why me?” Jersi sighed as she fell back into the bed.

“Get up girl. I’m just fucking with you. What you got to eat up in here?” Memphis asked.

Jersi got up and he followed her into the kitchen. She was happy that her mother went to the store because she had lots to choose from. She ended up fixing burgers and fries while Memphis sat in the kitchen and kept her company. She enjoyed talking to him in a personal setting and she wasn’t ready for him to leave. Since he had to be at the gym for six the following morning, she really didn’t have a choice.



Over a month had passed and Jersi seemed to be feeling Memphis more each day. They still hadn't made things official but she enjoyed their friendship. After the first near death experience, nothing sexual had gone down between them. It bothered her that he was possibly seeing and sleeping with other people but she was only assuming. She couldn't even get mad because she was still stringing Blake along too. Blake was doing just what she wanted him to do and fell head over heels in love with her all over again.

“Did you hear me?” Ariel asked her over the phone.

“Huh?” Jersi replied as she came back to reality.

“I said did you ask him about it?” Ariel said, repeating her earlier question.

“No and I feel weird about asking. I mean, we're only friends so I can't get mad,” Jersi replied.

“But you still deserve to know if there is somebody else. You can try to front all you want to but your ass is catching feelings,” Ariel said, calling her out.

Jersi pressed the massage feature on the pedicure chair and moved her feet around in the warm water. She was telling Ariel about some of her feelings toward Memphis and her friend was giving her some advice.

“I know but I can’t do nothing about that Ariel,” Jersi sighed.

“True, but if he has somebody else you need to know before things go any further. Like seriously Jersi, what kind of man doesn’t want to celebrate Valentine’s Day? Mike be ready to show off and go all out for me,” Ariel noted.

“He got me some stuff but I couldn’t get mad if he didn’t. He’s not my man,” Jersi replied.

Memphis stopped by her house the day before Valentine’s Day and dropped her off a few gifts. Jersi was scared as hell when he showed up with a seven foot tall teddy bear with her name personalized on the t-shirt that it had on. She had to put it in her spare bedroom because she couldn’t sleep with it in hers. He also got her some perfume and had an edible arrangement delivered to the job on the actual day. Although the gifts were thoughtful, she hadn’t seen or heard from him at all that day. Not even a reply to the text message that she sent him until the day after. He acted as if it was normal to go MIA on a day that lovers or would be lovers united. That sent up a bunch of red flags for her.

Blake, on the other hand, went all out. He had a chef come to the penthouse and prepare them dinner and a masseuse gave them a couple’s massage. Mariah blew his phone up all night but he didn’t go home until the following night. He laid Jersi out with gifts while his wife probably cried herself to sleep.

“And why hasn’t he invited you to his house yet? He’s always at yours and he’s even stayed the night before,” Ariel continue to ramble.

The more she talked, the more foolish Jersi felt. She was usually more observant but Memphis knocked her off her square. Him and his bomb ass oral skills were clouding her judgement. She was barely able to work out

with him without lusting. The shit was just pathetic.

“You’re right Ariel. That nigga is living foul as fuck,” Jersi replied.

“As much as I hate you being with Blake, at least the nigga goes all out for you,” Ariel said.

“Girl, fuck Blake. No pussy eating, weak stroke having, fuck boy,” Jersi spay angrily.

Before Memphis, she thought that Blake had the best head game ever. Now, she barely wanted him to touch her. Jersi was always faking sick just so she wouldn’t have to sleep with him. He was okay as long as she let him go down on her but she didn’t want that anymore either.

“Damn bitch, tell me how you really feel,” Ariel laughed.

“I’m so happy that things played out the way they did. I could have been the one in Mariah’s shoes if they hadn’t,” Jersi noted.

“I can’t see him doing you dirty like that. He’s obsessed with you if you ask me,” Ariel said right as Jersi’s phone rang.

“Thanks Ariel. You just talked his bitch ass up,” Jersi frowned when she saw that Blake was calling her.

“I have to go anyway. My lunch break is over,” Ariel replied right before hanging up.

Jersi still didn’t answer Blake’s call but Carter called her right after. She hadn’t see much of him outside of work because she was always with Memphis. She was giving him all of her time and attention and he wasn’t even her man.

“Hey Carter,” Jersi said when she answered the phone.

“Hey, I got the stuff for you for the test. Are you home? I can drop it

off to you right quick,” Carter offered.

“I’m not home yet but I should be in about another hour,” Jersi replied.

“Cool, I’ll meet you there. That’ll give me enough time to get the kids ready,” Carter said.

“Aww, you got your babies again?” Jersi asked.

“Yeah man and this bitch is making my life miserable already. I’m stressed and I miss the fuck out of you. But I’m happy that you and dude got shit straight though,” Carter noted.

That was one of the things that Jersi liked about him. Carter wasn’t a hater. He was real and he gave it to everyone straight. He never tried to pressure Jersi to be with him. He had been kicking it with somebody else, so he would probably be replacing her soon anyway.

“Okay Carter, I’ll see you in a little while,” Jersi said before she hung up.

Once she was done with her pedicure, she got her nail polish changed and her brows shaped. When she left out of the salon, she sent Carter a text telling him to be on his way. It took her about ten minutes to get home and Jersi’s mouth fell open in shock when she did. Not only was Carter’s car parked out front near the security gate, but his wife was there too. She was out of the car screaming for him to open the door. Jersi had never had that kind of drama, especially around her house. She pulled her car next to Carter’s and got out. When he saw her, he got out of his as well.

“This is the bitch Carter? Huh? This is the hoe that you’ve been having my kids around? You fucking your co-worker nigga,” Miracle yelled.

“I’m sorry Jersi. I didn’t even know that she was following me,” Carter apologized as he handed Jersi what he had for her.

“Don’t apologize for me nigga. Give me my kids. They ain’t going to another woman’s house,” Miracle fumed.

“Get away from my car Miracle. This is my weekend and you don’t dictate what I can and can’t do with my kids,” Carter replied calmly.

Jersi thought it was funny as hell when she saw his son in the back seat recording everything. He was probably sick of his crazy ass mama too.

“Open the door and take them out,” an older woman said as she stepped out of Miracle’s car.

Miracle started trying to opened the door but it was locked. She was yelling for her son or daughter to open the door but they ignored her.

“That’s just why you’re alone and miserable now. Keep listening to your mama and you’ll stay that way. Sorry again Jersi. I’ll call you later,” Carter said as he got back into the car and almost ran his ex-wife and her mother over when he pulled off.

“Stay the fuck away from my husband,” Miracle spat as she looked at Jersi.

“Only if you stay the fuck away from my house. And he’s your ex-husband so he’s free game. I would hate to have you and your mama arrested but I will. At this point, it’s called trespassing,” Jersi replied as she got into her car.

She didn’t pull into her gate until she made sure that Miracle and her mother were gone. She was happy that her and Carter’s arrangement had come to an end. She liked him as a friend but she could do without his crazy ass ex-wife and her mother.



Mariah sluggishly walked down the aisles at Target, getting everything that she needed for her house. She had to do laundry and she wanted to whip up a quick meal for when Blake came home from work. Her girls were spending the night with Eva and she was happy for the break. She had been feeling sick to her stomach lately and she already knew why. The tracker on her phone showed her that her cycle was two weeks late and she couldn't be happier. She didn't want to take a test just yet but she had a feeling that she was expecting baby number three.

It happened much sooner than she thought and she knew she couldn't have been that far along. The ovulation kit that she had been using was a Godsend. She'd stop taking her pills and she and Blake had a very active sex life. She wasn't ready for another baby but she felt like she didn't have a choice. There was no way in hell she was going to let that bitch Jersi give her husband a baby. It was bad enough that she suspected that they were fucking around at all. She didn't have any proof but her intuition never led her astray. Blake swore that she was delusional but she wasn't stupid. He had become an entirely different person and she suspected that Jersi was the reason. Their marriage hadn't been the same since Christmas night when he lied to get out of the house. She pushed her basket down the next aisle and rolled her eyes up to the sky when she saw Talena and her ghetto friend, Felicia, standing there. Felicia was Damien's sister and she never did like Mariah.

“Hey step sissy,” Talena smiled.

“Bitch please. I'd die if I had to walk around looking like you and



Tabby,” Mariah spat.

“Why so angry? I only said hello,” Talena giggled.

“What are you doing in here anyway? Family Dollar is usually your store of choice,” Mariah said.

“Let’s not forget that you use to work there hoe,” Felicia reminded her.

“You basic hoes kill me always trying to remind somebody of their past. Y’all hate to see a bitch come up. Step y’all game up and do better. It’s that simple,” Mariah shrugged.

“Bitch you lucked up and trapped the right nigga. Ain’t nothing special about that. And stop acting like shit is so sweet. I already know what it is,” Talena laughed.

“I can’t believe that you’re still bitter after all this time. Damien has been home for years and ain’t tried to get back with you once. He didn’t want you then and he obviously doesn’t want you now. I saved you from becoming a single mother. You should be happy that you lost that baby,” Mariah spat, angering the other woman.

“Bitch!” Talena yelled as she lunged at her. Felicia held her back but she was trying hard to get to Mariah.

“Why so angry?” Mariah asked throwing her words right back at her. “I did you a favor by telling him to end things while you were still in the hospital.”

“Talena calm down. This bitch ain’t worth going to jail over,” Felicia reasoned as she continued to hold her girl back.

“You should be thanking me. I knew you weren’t up to it, so I was the one who packed your shit up and dropped it off by Tabby. Stop being so ungrateful,” Mariah smirked as she walked away.

Talena was still going off but she was unfazed. She got the last of her items and left the store with a clear conscience. If Talena was mad at anyone, it should have been her mother. Tabby was the reason why Mariah was in her life. If her hoe ass mama wouldn't have been fucking a married man, their paths might have never even crossed. She had no remorse for anything that she did or said.

Once she got home, Mariah got right to work on the laundry. As soon as she had the first load in, she got started on Blake's dinner. Her friend, Karma, called her as she cooked and before long, it was time to put another load in the washer. She carried the dry ones to her bedroom, ready to fold them.

"The fuck," Mariah hissed when she went to hang up a pair of Blake's pants.

Something fell out of the pocket and rolled under the bed. She assumed it was a coin but she got down on the floor to get it, just in case it wasn't. Her heart dropped when she saw that it was his wedding ring that was supposed to remain on his finger. She thought back to the conversation that she had with Jersi in the ice cream parlor. Jersi said that he barely wore his ring but Mariah didn't think anything of it. She just assumed that the other woman was trying to get under her skin. After all, she had never seen him without it.

Mariah sat on the bed feeling defeated. She felt like she was losing her husband to his ex and she was losing her mind in the process. She didn't believe in karma and she never did. Some people would say that she was getting back what she dished out but she wasn't trying to hear that. People controlled their own destiny and she had to take better control of hers. She was tired of crying but that didn't stop the tears from falling. When she heard the front door open and close, she was too numb to get up and greet her husband. She was happy that her girls weren't home because she hated to always be down and depressed while in their presence.

"Hey baby," Blake said when he walked into the room and saw her

sitting on the bed. He leaned over and kissed her but she didn't return the greeting or gesture.

“What am I doing wrong Blake?” Mariah asked as she looked up at him with tears pouring from her eyes.

“What's the problem now Mariah?” Blake sighed in disgust.

“This is the problem?” Mariah yelled as she jumped in his face and produced his wedding ring.

“It's my wedding ring. And?” Blake asked nonchalantly.

“What do you mean and? Why is it not on your finger where it belongs? The bitch already knows that your married,” Mariah fumed.

“What bitch?” Blake asked.

“The bitch that you've been fucking when you don't come home at night!” Mariah yelled.

“Go drink some wine and relax Mariah. After doing fourteen hours at the hospital, your bitching is the last thing that I want to come home to,” Blake replied.

“What the hell is happening to us Blake? You've never disrespected me and our marriage like this before. I told you that I made dinner reservations for us on Valentine's Day and you didn't even care enough to come home that night. You think flowers and jewelry made up for that shit. You're treating that bitch Jersi like she's the wife. Oh, I forgot, you do wear her ring permanently,” Mariah ranted angrily.

“I'm tired Mariah. I'm not in the mood for this shit right now. I just want to get some rest before I have to get up and have to do it all over again,” Blake sighed.

“I don't give a fuck! I'm sick of this shit. I feel like I'm losing my

mind,” Mariah yelled as she shoved him and made him stumble a little.

“To keep from putting my hands on you, I’m about to go. I don’t know what your problem is and I’m too tired to find out,” Blake replied. He would go to his and Jersi’s penthouse to get some rest before he stayed there and argued with her crazy ass.

Mariah started panicking when she saw him gathering some clothes, preparing to leave. Losing Blake meant losing it all. It would be nothing for him to get custody of their girls and send her back to the projects. The thought alone was enough to make her start hyperventilating. Besides all that, Mariah loved and was in love with her husband. That was something that she could never say about any other man that she’d ever been with. She thought sure her place in his life was secure but she was doubting that now.

“I’m sorry baby but I need us to get back to how we used to be,” Mariah cried.

Blake’s attitude softened a little when Mariah came and hugged him from behind. He was wrong in so many ways but he couldn’t fix what was broken in his marriage. Doing so meant leaving Jersi alone and that would never happen. Not when he had fallen in love with her deeper than he was before. If it came down to Jersi or Mariah, he would walk away from his marriage before he walked away from his affair.

“Just let me get some rest Mariah. We’ll do something together my next off day, I promise,” Blake replied as he turned around and wiped her tears. It was the least he could do since he was the cause of them.

Once he whispered a few sweet nothings in her ear, Mariah calmed down and seemed to be okay. Blake took a shower while Mariah fixed his food. When he got out, Mariah had everything set up and ready for him to eat.

“Let me take care of you baby,” Mariah said once Blake sat down at the dining room table to eat.

He watched as she dropped down to her knees in front of him. Since he was only wearing his boxers, she didn't have to undress him. She removed his erection from the opening in the front. Blake ate the steak, potatoes and shrimp that was in front of him while Mariah gave him head. He felt like a king and he was being treated like one. Too bad it wasn't his queen who was giving him the royal treatment though.



Jersi was fuming as she tuned out the conversation that was going on at the table around her. She had gone out to eat with Dray and Ariel and she was ready to go as soon as they got there. She wanted to show her ass when they walked into the restaurant and saw Memphis already sitting in there with another woman. Jersi had to keep reminding herself that he wasn't her man. Still, that bit of information didn't help her feel any better. He had the nerve to wave at her when he saw her but she rolled her eyes at his ass.

"I can't believe that. Damien just always acted like a thug to me," Ariel said.

"That don't mean a damn thing. That nigga is a professional ass eater. His stroke game is on point and he's very generous," Dray replied. Damien was always throwing stacks of money at him that he happily accepted. He was undercover with it but that was his business. Dray knew how to play the game very well.

"I'm just in shock," Ariel admitted.

"And bitch, you better keep your big mouth shut. Fuck around and get a bitch shot up from talking so much. Niggas don't play behind shit like that," Dray said as he pointed his fork at Ariel.

Jersi had just told him how she knew Damien and he was baffled. He would have never guessed that Damien was Talena and Mariah's ex because the nigga was super gay now. Dray really didn't know if he was gay or bi and he really didn't care. Damien sucked dick just as much as he did and he was just as good at it. Him trying to convince Jersi that he wasn't gay wasn't even necessary. He had a girlfriend but that didn't mean a thing.

"Does Talena know?" Ariel asked while looking at Jersi.

She had tuned them out a long time ago, so Ariel's question never got answered. Memphis and his female companion were about to leave and Jersi's eyes were glued to their table. They seemed mighty familiar with the way they talked and laughed with each other.

"Bitch, stop watching that nigga before he sees you. The objective is to seem unbothered even if you're not," Dray said while slapping her hand.

"Fuck him and her. Dog ass nigga probably eating her pussy til she pass out too," Jersi spat angrily.

"Bitch what?" Dray inquired with raised brows.

"That hoe ain't even all that cute," Jersi said with envy dripping from her tone.

"No bitch, who got their shit ate up until they passed out? I heard what you said," Dray noted.

"Don't even worry about it. Are y'all done?" Jersi asked them.

She'd barely touched her food and she really didn't want to. Memphis had her in her feelings and it was hard for her to hide it. He had called her earlier but he failed to mention that he had a date. When she saw them getting up, Jersi pretended to be engrossed in her phone. She didn't expect Memphis to stop by their table but that's exactly what he did.

“Here, the food is on me,” Memphis said as he dropped some money on the table.

“We can pay for our own food,” Jersi snapped as she looked up at him.

“I know you can, but I want to,” Memphis replied.

“No, we’re good,” Jersi said as she tried to reach for the money. Dray beat her to it and grabbed the bills before she could.

“Thank you. I’m Jersi’s brother, Dray,” he said while extending his hand.

“Memphis, it’s nice to meet you,” he replied.

“Same here and thanks again for dinner,” Dray smiled.

“Yeah, thanks Memphis,” Ariel smiled.

“No problem,” he said as he continued to stare at Jersi. When she didn’t say anything, he shook his head and walked away. He didn’t know what was up with her attitude but he didn’t have time for it.

“You can be mad all you want, but you better not ever let me see you turn down no money. The fuck is wrong with you,” Dray hissed.

“Fuck him. I got my own money,” Jersi frowned.

Once the bill was paid, they all left and piled into Dray’s Jaguar. Jersi’s car was parked by their parents, so they dropped Ariel off and headed that way.

“What’s up with you Jersi? If you like the nigga just tell him. It’s childish to get mad over something so stupid. He ain’t your nigga, so you have no reason to,” Dray pointed out.



“Fuck him,” Jersi mumbled, repeating what she’d been saying all night.

Dray shook his head as they pulled up to the gate at their parents’ house.

“Okay sis. You know where to find me when you want to talk. I need to get home and get ready for my date. That bitch is too fine for me to keep her waiting,” Dray said.

“See you later Dray,” Jersi replied as she got out of the car.

Instead of getting in her car to leave, she went inside to find her mother. She needed to talk and only her mother could get her mind right when she was feeling down.

“Hey baby. What’s up?” Dena asked when Jersi walked into her bedroom. Her mother was sitting up in the bed on her laptop and her father was in his recliner right next to her.

“I’m sad mommy,” Jersi pouted as she kicked off her shoes and snuggled up under her.

“What’s wrong Jersi?” Dena asked, looking concerned.

“I really like somebody and I don’t know if he likes me. Well, I know that he likes me but it’s complicated,” Jersi replied.

“This sounds like girl talk,” her father said as he got up and walked out of the room.

“I don’t understand Jersi. What’s complicated about it?” Dena asked.

“Everything,” Jersi replied. She took a few minutes and ran everything down to her mother. She told her how she and Memphis met and how they had been unofficially dating for a little while. When she finished talking, her mother didn’t respond right away and she didn’t expect her to.

Jersi knew her mother vey well. Dena was a thinker and she never said anything of importance until she thought it over first.

“First all of, if you like him, his looks shouldn’t matter. Feelings are not visual. They’re meant to be felt and not seen. It’s done with your heart, not your eyes. That’s a shallow way of thinking and I know we raised you better than that. If you like him, tell him. If not, you can’t get upset about him continuing to live his life the way he wants to live it. Hell, I like him already. It’s been a while since you were interested in somebody and he sounds like a nice young man. I’d like to meet him,” Dena said.

“You kind of met him already,” Jersi replied.

“Really? When?” Dena asked in shock.

“You remember a while back when we went shopping and then to the grocery store afterwards?” Jersi asked.

“Yeah,” Dena nodded.

“You remember the guy who put the bags in the trunk for you?” Jersi questioned.

Dena sat there deep in thought as she tried to remember all the events of that day. Her eyes bulged as she recalled the exact moment that her daughter was talking about.

“Jersi no!” Dena gasped as she put her hands up to her mouth. “That was him?”

“Yeah,” Jersi replied as she lowered her head in shame.

“Oh no. I can’t believe you did that. I feel so horrible,” Dena rambled.

“I know but I apologized to him already,” Jersi noted.

“As you should have. I want to meet him. See when he’s available to

come over. I'll cook and we can play games and stuff," Dena offered.

"Okay. I'll ask. That's if he's still speaking to me after the way I behaved at the restaurant," Jersi sighed while standing up.

"Don't push him away before y'all can even get together Jersi. Be honest about how you feel and let everything else fall into place from there," Dena said as she walked her out to her car.

Jersi wanted to call Memphis but she really didn't know what to say. She was always doing something stupid and she was sure that he was getting sick of her. Hell, she was getting sick of her damn self. She battled with herself for a while until she decided to do what she knew was right. She was almost home but she picked up her phone to call him. She was scrolling to find his name when she pulled up to her gate. She paused when she saw that he was already parked out front waiting on her. He couldn't get in without the code but he was parked on the side standing outside of his truck. Once he saw her, he got back inside and followed her in. They were both quiet as they got out of their cars and walked into her house.

"Have you been waiting long?" Jersi asked him.

"Nah, I just got here a few minutes ago. The security guard told me that you weren't home," Memphis replied.

"Do you want something to drink?" Jersi asked.

"Nah, I'm good but what's up with the attitude? I only offered to pay for your food. It wasn't even that deep," Memphis said.

"I didn't have an attitude, but I apologize if that's how it seemed," Jersi replied.

"Stop playing games Jersi. If you wanted to know something about the female that I was with, all you had to do was ask," Memphis pointed out.

"Who is she?" Jersi asked.

“Her name is Monica. She’s a friend, the same as you are. I want you to be more but that’s up to you,” Memphis answered as he walked up closer to her.

“Are you having sex with her?” Jersi asked him.

“Not anymore, but I want to have sex with you. Tell me that you want to,” he hissed as he pinned her body against the wall with his own.

“Tell you that I want to what?” Jersi asked as her breathing became short and labored.

That nigga was wrong as fuck for being so fine. He smelled so good and he had a fresh cut. Jersi tried to rub his chiseled chest but he slapped her hands away.

“No touching. Tell me what I want to hear first,” he said as he nipped at her ear with his teeth.

“Yes,” Jersi gasped.

“Yes what Jersi? Use your words. What are you saying yes to?” he asked.

“I want you to fuck me,” Jersi whispered, making him smile.

She gave the word and that was all that he needed to hear. Memphis pulled her in for a kiss that she didn’t have time to prepare for. He was aggressive and Jersi loved that shit. She moaned as he sucked on her tongue and bit her bottom lip. He backed away from her long enough to remove his shirt but his lips captured hers once again. Jersi tried to touch him again, but he grabbed her wrists and pinned them above her head. Even when he let her go, she kept her arms raised.

When he pulled away, he picked Jersi up and carried her to the sofa. He removed her shoes and jeans and she pulled her shirt over her head. She

shrieked when he ripped her underwear off in one swift motion and threw them to the floor. She reached behind her and unhooked her bra, making herself completely naked. She stilled when Memphis starting kissing down her body. Jersi didn't want it to be a repeat of last time and get embarrassed again. Memphis sensed her hesitation and he had a solution for that. He picked Jersi up and laid on his back.

“Just tap my arm if it gets to be too much,” he said as he sat her down on his face.

“Oooh,” Jersi cried out when she felt the first flick of his tongue.

Memphis had his hands wrapped tightly around her waist as she gyrated on his face. The vibration from his moans and the skillful way he moved his tongue was driving her crazy. Jersi pictured herself bringing him breakfast in bed and running his bath water. She wondered what their kids would look like and how many he wanted. As she straddled his face and had multiple orgasms, she wondered what she had to do to make him happy. When she started to feel a little lightheaded, she tapped his arm and he immediately released the hold that he had on her.

“You good,” Memphis asked as he looked up at her with her juices saturating his face.

“Yeah, I'm good,” Jersi replied lowly. She didn't know what the hell was wrong with her. Blake and Carter had given her oral more times than she could count and she never had that feeling before. And she damn sure never passed out. She would never say it out loud but Memphis really was that nigga.

Jersi watched as he stood up and removed his jeans. She saw the bulge in his pants and she was curious to see exactly what he was working with. She waited for him to removed his boxers but he never did. She was on the sofa with her legs tucked underneath her when he walked over to her.

“Pull it out,” Memphis smirked as he looked down at her. He wanted to see Jersi's reaction to what she was about to see. He was almost sure that

she had never seen it before.

“The fuck is that!” Jersi yelled in shock when she pulled his boxers down.

Memphis was a mystery and the piercings on his dick showed her just how mysterious he was. He was well endowed but the piercings on the underside of his shaft was what had her so baffled.

“It’s called a frenum piercing or Jacob’s ladder. I have six bars,” he explained as she held his dick in her hand and inspected it closely.

“Does it hurt? Jersi asked as she touched it.

“No, I’ve had it for a few years,” he explained.

“Will it hurt me?” She questioned.

“In a good way,” he winked.

Jersi was mesmerized just like he knew she would be. She stroked his piercings and even ran her tongue over it to see how it felt. She kept asking him how it felt when she touched it and Memphis was over the whole show and tell. He lifted Jersi up as she wrapped her arms around his neck. He pressed his lips against hers as he lowered her onto his erection.

“Fuuuuck.” Memphis hissed as soon as he was inside of her.

He just stood there for a while refusing to even move. He knew for a fact that Jersi wasn’t a virgin but it damn sure felt like it with the way her walls was gripping him. Memphis had obviously been fucking the wrong chicks because none of them felt as good as her. Pussy like that had the potential to make him lose focus. That was the kind of shit that made niggas propose and be faithful. He needed to make shit with her official as soon as possible. Sex with Jersi was something that he wanted to come home to every night. When she started moving, it only got better.

“Shit, I can feel it,” Jersi moaned speaking of his piercings.

“Don’t black out on me now girl,” Memphis joked as he started bouncing her up and down.

Jersi closed her eyes in ecstasy as he walked her around her house, drilling into her. Just then, her eyes popped open as she thought of something. She felt him a little more than she should have.

“Memphis wait! We need a condom!” Jersi yelled.

She was seriously trippin’ to have let him even enter her without one. She was very faithful with her birth control pills but that wouldn’t protect her from diseases. Jersi had never been that careless before.

“On God, I’d rather take a bullet to the head than pull out of you right now,” he replied seriously.

“I’ve never had sex without a condom before,” she admitted in a small voice.

“There’s a first time for everything. Are you on birth control?” He asked her.

“Yes,” Jersi answered.

“Cool,” Memphis replied as he increased the pace.

Jersi screamed and creamed as he held her up by her ass cheeks and fucked her aggressively. Jersi wanted to call her mother and tell her that she was ready to shop for her wedding dress. Memphis was her husband and didn’t even know it. They switched to several positions in several different parts of her house until they ended up in her bed. Jersi knew that she would be sore in the morning but it was worth it. Three hours later, they were both exhausted and drifted off to sleep wrapped up in each other’s arms.



The next morning, Jersi woke up to her phone ringing and loud pounding on her front door. She wanted to grab her phone from the night stand but she couldn't move. Memphis had her wrapped up in his arms like she was a baby. She somehow managed to look at the clock and saw that it was almost noon. She didn't know who could be at her house that morning or at all for that matter. Not many people even knew where she lived and they couldn't get pass the guard if they did. When Jersi heard a man yelling outside her door, she got scared.

“Shit,” Jersi cursed as she tried to sit up but she startled Memphis when she did.

“What’s wrong,” he groggily asked her.

“Do you hear that? Somebody is yelling and banging on my door,” Jersi said as she got up.

“You better sit your ass back down girl. I’ll answer it,” Memphis said as he got up and searched for his boxers.

“I need my robe,” Jersi said as she got up and ran to her closet.

“You don’t have no crazy ass boyfriends that I have to worry about,



do you? I left my shit in the car and I usually don't do that," Memphis replied while referring to his gun.

"Do you think you would be here if I had a man?" Jersi questioned as she slipped on her robe.

"I'm not even about to answer that," Memphis replied.

He'd dealt with his share of grimey women and some of them had no morals. He wasn't trying to say that Jersi was one of them but he really didn't know.

"Wait, here, you might need some protection," Jersi said as she grabbed a stainless still bat from her closet.

"The fuck am I supposed to do with a bat if a nigga got a gun. I'd rather let the nigga kill me," Memphis laughed.

"Well, I'm keeping it," Jersi said as she followed him to the door.

"Who is it?" Memphis yelled loudly.

"Help me! Jersi! Let me in! Open up!" Someone yelled.

"Open the door. I think that's my brother," Jersi said panicking.

As soon as Memphis opened the door, Dray ran into the house and jumped in his arms. He only had on his pajama bottoms with no shoes or shirt.

"He's trying to kill me!" Dray yelled dramatically.

Upon hearing him say that, Jersi hurriedly closed and locked the door behind him. Memphis carried him over to the sofa and sat him down. Jersi told him all about her brother so he knew that he was full of drama and theatrics. Dray was clam when he introduced himself the night before but that only because they were at the restaurant.

“What happened Dray?” Jersi asked as she walked over to him.

“Help me sis. It’s Donovan. He’s trying to kill me,” Dray cried as he pulled Jersi down on the sofa and jumped in her lap like a toddler.

“You dumb ass! Why did you run over here? You must want him to kill us too,” Jersi fussed as she pushed him off of her.

“Oh Lord. Help me Jesus. Hail Mary full of grace...” Dray mumbled as he dropped to his knees and prayed.

“Dray shut the fuck up! We’re not even catholic!” Jersi yelled.

“What happened fam?” Memphis asked as he tried to hold back his laughter. Jersi and her brother were funny as hell together.

“He had a gun and he tried to kill me. I barely got away with my life,” Dray sobbed.

“Why did you come here Dray? Now he knows where I live. You should have gone to the police station,” Jersi reasoned.

“Bitch, I did. They thought I was on drugs. I’m filing a complaint. Them muthafuckers tried to lock me up. I’m the victim!” Dray yelled.

“Did Donovan get inside the gate when you drove in?” Jersi asked while Memphis looked out of the window.

“No, I lost his crazy ass before I even got here. Bitch, I saw my life flash before my eyes. That nigga put a loaded gun to my head. I need a blunt. Roll me up something Jersi. My nerves are bad and I’m shaking,” Dray said as he stood up and paced the floor.

“Just relax Dray,” Jersi replied.

“And where the fuck were you? I called your phone a hundred times.

Sassy didn't even answer for me. I feel so alone. I don't have nobody," Dray said as he started crying again.

"Stop it with the Oscar worthy performance Dray. I was asleep. How was I supposed to know that the same nigga, who I told you to leave alone, would try to kill you?" Jersi asked.

"Sleep my ass. Lord have mercy on me," Dray said as he looked over at Memphis still clad in his Ralph Lauren boxers.

"Memphis!" Jersi yelled as she looked over at him.

"Oh shit. My bad," he replied, not even realizing that he was still half naked.

He disappeared into the bedroom and Jersi followed behind him. She kept her weed stash at the top of the closet and she needed to roll something for Dray to calm down. She thought that Memphis was about to get dressed to leave, but he got back in the bed and covered up. He wanted to go another round with her but he understood that her brother came first. One thing was for sure and he wasn't leaving until he got some more.

"I guess you're not ready to go yet," Jersi smirked.

"I didn't even eat breakfast yet. What are you fixing for me?" Memphis asked.

"Whatever you want," Jersi replied.

After last night, that nigga could move in and she would gladly pay all the bills. He had that sit outside your house to make sure another bitch wasn't showing up kind of dick. He never had to leave if he didn't want to.

"I'm not picky," he shrugged.

"My mama wants to meet you," Jersi informed him.

“I guess you finally acknowledged a nigga,” Memphis replied with a frown.

“I said that I was sorry Memphis. Damn. How many times can a bitch apologize?” Jersi asked angrily.

“On all fours with your ass in the air is a good start,” he said while licking his lips.

“Shit, let me get this drama queen straight and I’ll be right back,” she replied before walking out of the room.

She would never put her brother out but she needed him to stay busy for a while. She knew that they would talk about what happened later, but she had more pressing issues to deal with at the moment. Like the fine ass nigga that was laid up in her bed.

“So, how was the dick?” Dray asked when Jersi walked back into the living room.

“Bomb as fuck and I’m trying to get some more of it now. Here, roll up and fix some breakfast. You owe me for not ratting you out when you lied to your boo,” Jersi said as she shoved her box of goodies in his hands and rushed back into her room.

Dray shrugged and got up to go see what she had to cook. He put the under counter radio on and got right to work. He sung and danced all over Jersi’s kitchen, preparing breakfast while she was in the next room getting fucked.



It took three weeks before Jersi was able to bring Memphis to meet her parents. Her father's work schedule had been hectic and he wanted to meet him too. Dena had cooked dinner and she put together a game night. Jersi invited Ariel and her boyfriend and Dray was bringing someone over too. She missed seeing her two oldest brothers but their work schedules kept them busy.

"Why are you so nervous?" Memphis asked as he reached over and touched her trembling thigh.

He picked Jersi up from her house and she seemed a little jumpy. He wasn't big on meeting's anyone's parents but he made an exception for her. He really liked Jersi and he could see himself falling in love with her. It had been a while since he was able to say that about someone. Most times it was all about sex but not with her. Jersi was different and that's what had him falling for her. Not many chicks her age had their shit together and he admired that. She had a little jealous side but so did he. She didn't hide her emotions and that was something else that he loved about her. They never did put a label on what they had and they didn't have to. She was his girl and that was how he acknowledged her.

"I've never introduced anyone to my parents before," Jersi replied after being quiet for a while.

"Never?" he asked as his brows raised in surprise.

“Nope, never,” Jersi replied.

“What about your ex? You said that you were with dude for some years. I know he had to meet your people,” Memphis pointed.

Jersi had told him about Blake being her ex but she left it at that. She didn't go into details about their relationship or breakup.

“That was different. Our families have been friends for generations. I didn't have to introduce him because he was always around,” Jersi replied.

“I hope that nigga ain't here today,” Memphis snapped.

“He has no reason to be. We usually do holidays and birthdays as a family,” Jersi replied.

“Yeah and I'll be sure to be at all of them,” Memphis replied with a frown.

“Jealous much?” Jersi asked with a smirk.

“Very much,” Memphis replied as he pulled up to the gate.

“Roll your window down so the guard can see me,” Jersi requested.

She waved when she saw him and he opened the gate for them to go inside. Memphis had never been in the area before but the homes were nice. He'd seen his share of beautiful homes but he was still impressed. Jersi's father was a doctor so he didn't expect anything less.

“I'm a fool at Monopoly, so I hope your people are ready,” Memphis joked when he pulled up and parked.

“My mama is the game queen. She'll be happy to hear that,” Jersi laughed.

They got out of the car and walked up the stairs. As soon as they got

close, the door opened and Jacob stood there smiling.

“Hey sweetheart,” he smiled while pulling Jersi in for a hug.

“Hey daddy. Memphis, this is my father, Jacob. Daddy, this is Memphis,” Jersi said making the introductions.

“It’s nice to meet you sir,” Memphis smiled as he extended his hand.

“Same here son. Come on in and make yourself at home,” Jacob replied while shaking his hand.

As soon as they walked in, Dena came up and introduced herself. She ushered them into the family room where all the food and drinks were set up. Jersi visibly relaxed when she saw how the conversation between Memphis and her parents flowed. They made him feel comfortable and he seemed to be enjoying himself. When Ariel and her boyfriend came, they all sat down to eat. Dray was always late, so they didn’t bother waiting for him.

“What do y’all want to play first?” Dena asked as she gestured to a bunch of board games that was on the table.

“Monopoly,” Memphis replied like an excited kid.

“He claims he’s the best, but we’ll see,” Jersi laughed.

“Come on Memphis, show me what you’re working with,” Dena said as she set up the board.

Memphis was all smiles as he dominated the game just like he said he would. He was competitive just like her mother and Dena loved it. Jersi wished she could have invited Cat but BJ probably would have wanted to tag along. She talked to Cat all the time and she was counting down the time until she graduated. She was serious about filing for divorce and moving on with her life. Jersi didn’t even blame her and she was happy that she was no longer with Blake. She was sure that she would be going through the exact same thing. Cat told her about overhearing Blake confessing to sleeping with

employees at the hospital where he worked. He was a pathetic excuse for a man and she hated everything about him. He had been calling and texting her like crazy but she ignored him. She dealt with him whenever she felt like it and nothing more.

“That must be Dray. Always fashionably late,” Jacob chuckled when he heard the doorbell ring.

He got up to answer it as everyone else continued playing the game. When Dray walked into the room, Jersi’s face contorted into a frown when she saw Donovan standing by his side. Just a few weeks ago he ran out of the house half naked swearing that the other man was trying to kill him. Now, he was standing there smiling like everything was okay.

“Hello everybody. For those of you who don’t know, this is my boo, Donovan,” Dray said introducing his crazy ass man to everyone.

Memphis looked at Jersi and she nodded her head. He was silently asking her if that was the same man who had Dray scared to death and she confirmed it. Jersi was pissed and she was happy when Donovan sat down and Dray went to the kitchen for ice. Jersi waited a few seconds before she got up and followed right behind him.

“Really Dray?” Jersi whispered when she walked into the kitchen.

“Really what?” he asked, feigning ignorance.

“You just said that the nigga was trying to kill you a few weeks ago. Now you walk in here with him like everything is all good,” Jersi fussed.

“Everything is all good. It was just a misunderstanding,” Dray shrugged like it was nothing.

“You’re a fucking lie! That nigga had you scared to death. Don’t forget that you stayed at my house for two days after that because you didn’t feel comfortable at home. Now you got his crazy ass in mama’s house like it’s all good,” Jersi snapped angrily.



“Just let it go Jersi. I don’t say nothing about you dipping and dabbing with your married ex-boyfriend. I don’t like that shit either but I mind my business,” Dray replied.

“Fuck you and I’m telling mama!” Jersi said as she tried to walk off.

“Bitch! You better not tell her nothing. It’s not even that deep Jersi. He apologized and we’re good now. The damn gun was still on safety. Besides, the nigga apologized with a brand new silver beamer. Look at this shit. Drop top and everything,” Dray said as she showed her pictures of his new car.

“You already have a Jag and a Bentley truck, so that shouldn’t even faze you. Stop acting like you can’t afford to buy shit for yourself,” Jersi fumed.

“I can but I don’t want to,” Dray shrugged.

“That’s all on you. Don’t come crying to me the next time he pulls a gun out on you. Your love for material shit is just ridiculous. You act like we didn’t grow up around all this,” Jersi noted.

“Stop being so mean to me Jersi. I love you and you know I can’t take it when we’re not right. We don’t argue and I don’t want to start. You’re my chocolate baby alive,” Dray pouted while laying his head on her shoulder.

“Stop trying to butter me up. I love you too but you need to be careful with him Dray,” Jersi warned.

“I am sis. I met a bad bitch yesterday and she’s about to get all of my attention for a while. He’s about to be put on the back burner real soon,” Dray replied.

“Lord, help him,” Jersi said as she looked upwards.

“Stop worrying about me so much and go enjoy that fine ass man in

the other room,” Dray said as he filled his cup up with ice.

“Trust me, I’ve been enjoying his sexy ass for the past few weeks,” Jersi replied as she walked away and rejoined the party.



“Don’t give up on me friend. I’m at the end of the line with school and it’s been kicking my ass. The only person who I can make time for is Tre,” Cat said referring to her son.

She was happy when Jersi invited her out to dinner at The Camellia Grill. She put the books to the side for a while to join her. Being a mother and studying was all that she had time to do lately. Jersi was fussing at her about not joining her at the gym but she just couldn’t fit it into her schedule. She only had two more months to go and she couldn’t wait.

“What about your boo? Have you been making time for him?” Jersi asked.

“As much as I can but he’s been complaining too. Bitch, it got so bad that I gave it up in the campus bathroom. You know I’m too grown for that shit but it was the only way for me to shut him up,” Cat replied.

“Bitch, I don’t know why I even asked. That shit is too funny,” Jersi laughed before sipping her margarita.

“What about your boo? Is everything still all good with y’all?” Cat asked.

“Girl yes. He’s staying the night in Baton Rouge. They have a flag football game tomorrow. It took everything in me not to pack a bag and chase after his ass,” Jersi laughed.

“I’m happy for you boo. I can’t wait for these two months to come and go. I already found a divorce lawyer that I want to use,” Cat noted.

“You were really serious. For some reason, I thought you would have changed your mind by now,” Jersi replied.

“Fuck no. I’m not changing nothing but my last name. When these hoes get bold enough to start coming to my house, it’s time for me to go,” Cat countered.

“I know you fucking lying,” Jersi said in shock.

“Nope. Bitch walked up on my porch and knocked on my door,” Cat nodded.

“For what though?” Jersi inquired.

“Apparently, she told my husband that she was pregnant and he’d been ignoring her,” Cat replied.

“Nooooo,” Jersi drawled with her mouth hanging open in shock.

“Yep, sure did,” Cat continued.

“What did you do?” Jersi asked.

“I opened the door and let the bitch in,” Cat shrugged.

“What? Why would you do a thing like that?” Jersi asked in confusion.

“Just in case the bitch tried to get the police involved after I beat her

ass. She would have gone down for trespassing. I let her in, moved my table out of the way and beat the dog shit out of her ass,” Cat answered as Jersi doubled over in laughter.

“Where was BJ? Jersi inquired.

“Standing right there watching like I told him to. I dared his bitch ass to stop me. After I was done, I made them talk right there in front of me. The bitch told me everything and he ended up giving her money for an abortion. How do you think I got that new car that I picked you up in? Nigga thinks money can fix everything. I made him give me ten grand and added it to my freedom money,” Cat rambled.

“The fuck is freedom money?” Jersi asked.

“The money that I’m using to be free of his ass,” Cat replied.

She had Jersi laughing the entire night until it was almost time for them to go. The waitress had just served up their final round of margarita’s when the loud sounds of clapping could be heard at a table to the back of the restaurant. The employees gathered in the area and sang their rendition of the happy birthday song to someone. Jersi and Cat looked along with other patrons until the workers disbursed. When she locked eyes with Blake, Jersi groaned inwardly. She spotted Mariah blowing candles out on a cake with a birthday crown adorning her head.

“I guess the wicked bitch is celebrating another year of destroying lives today,” Jersi said while rolling her eyes.

“Yeah, her birthday is on April 1<sup>st</sup>,” Cat acknowledged.

“That explains a lot. She really is the April fool,” Jersi spat as Cat chuckled.

It only took a few minutes before Blake’s disrespectful ass made his way over to them but Jersi was busy replying to a text from Memphis when he did. He stood there like he expected her to acknowledge him but he had

her fucked up.

“What’s up Cat? I saw that nice ass car you riding around in,” Blake said while smiling at his sister-in-law.

“You know how it goes. Most of my gifts come from your brother’s fuck ups,” Cat shrugged nonchalantly.

“Where you been hiding at Jersi?” Blake asked while looking at her.

“In plain sight. What’s up with your disrespectful ass?” Jersi countered.

“What disrespect? I came to say hello to my sister-in-law,” he replied right as the waitress came over with the bill. Blake didn’t even think twice before he pulled out his wallet and took out some cash to cover it.

“Thanks boo and tell wifey that I said happy birthday. I wish her husband was eating me instead of her birthday cake though,” Jersi flirted.

She didn’t want Blake or his lips nowhere on her but she saw that Mariah was watching and decided to give her a show. There were two other ladies and two men at the table and they were obviously having a couples gathering.

“Shit, you ain’t said nothing that I didn’t want to hear,” Blake said while licking his lips.

Cat was speechless as she watched the entire scene unfold before her very eyes. Mariah was in the same boat as her but Cat wasn’t waiting around for somebody to throw her a life jacket. She was making moves that would be beneficial to her and her son. Sadly, he was suffering just as much as she was when he had to witness the constant arguing between her and his father.

“Nah, we can’t do that. It’s your wife’s birthday,” Jersi said as if she gave a fuck.

“What that mean to me?” Blake questioned.

“If it don’t mean nothing to you, it means even less to me,” Jersi replied right as Mariah came storming up to their table.

“Are you fucking serious right now? You left me and our friends at the table to come talk to this bitch,” Mariah fumed, trying her best to keep her voice down.

“Chill out Mariah,” Blake warned.

“Don’t tell me to chill out. I just saw you pay for her food,” Mariah barked.

“You do see Cat sitting here, right? That’s my fucking family,” Blake argued.

“That’s bullshit. You’re using Cat as an excuse to foot the bill for your side bitch,” Mariah spat as she scowled at Jersi.

“Happy birthday boo. You look cute,” Jersi smiled.

“Keep trying to be funny and see if I don’t dog walk your trick ass in here,” Mariah hissed.

“So, about an hour Blake? That should be enough time, right?” Jersi asked as his face turned red with guilt.

“What is she talking about Blake? An hour for what?” Mariah asked, unable to keep her voice down any longer.

“Stop causing a scene and let’s go,” Blake gritted as he grabbed her arm and pulled her away.

“What is she talking about Blake? Huh? What’s happening in an hour?” Mariah continued to yell.

Blake was embarrassed as he grabbed their items from the table and walked towards the exit. Mariah was screaming and crying like a fool and he was over it.

“Well damn,” Cat said as she hit the table and laughed.

Her night had gone better than she expected. Mariah had shown her ass and even her friends looked embarrassed as they followed them out. Cat wondered what Mariah thought the outcome of her actions would be. She thought it was cute when she bragged about taking other people’s men. Shit got real when the shoe was placed on the other foot though.

“Damn. He must have dropped that bitch off on the bridge and made her walk the rest of the way,” Jersi laughed as she showed Cat the text that Blake had just sent to her.

“That nigga dropped his wife off just to go put his mouth on the next bitch. Pathetic just like his big brother,” Cat replied while shaking her head.

She drove Jersi to her car and watched as she got inside. Cat drove away, counting down the months, weeks and days until she was no longer a married woman.



“Are you and Blake okay boo?” Karma asked Mariah over the phone.

She and her husband had gone to dinner with them the night before to celebrate Mariah’s birthday. The night started out fine but it ended in disaster.



Mariah tried to fight Blake outside of the restaurant and they had to intervene. It got so bad that Karma and her husband had to bring Mariah home. Blake was over it and left her right there in the restaurant parking lot. Karma felt so bad for her friends. She thought that Blake and Mariah's marriage was perfect but she was obviously mistaken.

“Yeah girl, we're good. Just a little lover's quarrel,” Mariah giggled.

“Well, that's good to hear. Y'all had me worried for a minute,” Karma said.

“No need to worry girl. He spent all night and most of the morning making it up to me. I think we both had a little too much to drink,” Mariah laughed. Truthfully, she hadn't had a thing to drink since she missed cycle. It just sounded like a believable lie.

“I definitely understand that. I won't hold you boo. Tell Blake that I said hi,” Karma said before she hung up.

“I would if his bitch ass was here,” Mariah spat as she threw her phone on the sofa next to her.

Blake didn't even bother coming home last night and Mariah was sick. They were supposed to end her birthday wrapped up in each other's arms but she spent the night driving around the city trying to locate her husband instead. She was pissed because she didn't even know where to look. She didn't know where Jersi lived or nothing else about the bitch. She was stressing and ready to pull her hair out from the roots. Mariah didn't even recognize her own reflection in the mirror. Her eyes were red and puffy and she had huge bags underneath them. She was physically exhausted and mentally drained. Here it was after two in the afternoon and she hadn't seen her husband since the night before. He turned his phone off and probably fucked his side bitch until the sun came up.

“I don't deserve this,” Mariah sobbed as she curled up on the sofa in a fetal position.

It was at those times that she wished her mother was still alive. She needed the kind of comforting that only a mother could give. She needed nurturing from the one person who knew her best. She was lost in thought when she heard the front door open and saw Blake walk in. He looked at her in disgust before walking off to their bedroom. He never even acknowledged her or tried to explain where he'd been all night. He was behaving like he didn't even have a wife at home. Mariah jumped up and went after him. She didn't care that he was in the bathroom. She opened the door and laid into his ass.

“What the hell is happening to you Blake? The lying, cheating and disrespect is not you,” Mariah yelled as she looked at him.

“Can I take a piss Mariah? Damn. This is why I stay away some nights. All you do is fuss and cry. I'm sick of that shit,” Blake spat angrily.

He wasn't in the mood to argue with her. He was sexually frustrated and the person who he wanted sex from wasn't giving it up. Besides letting him go down on her, Jersi didn't want to do anything else. He had to beg her just to do that and she was the one receiving the pleasure from it.

“You made me this way Blake. We were happy before you snuck off to be with her for Christmas. I don't understand what happened between us,” Mariah sobbed, pulling him away from his thoughts.

“You're what happened between us!” he yelled making her jump.

“How can you blame your lying, cheating ways on me?” Mariah inquired.

“I told you that I wasn't over her but you just couldn't accept that. I was wrong for cheating on Jersi with you and I tried to break it off. You couldn't take rejection so you did the one thing that you knew would keep me around,” Blake said.

“What the hell are you talking about?” she asked in confusion.

“I’m not stupid Mariah. I know you stopped taking your birth control pills to trap me. I overheard you on the phone one day telling Karma all about how you did it. I did the right thing and married your ass but you forced my hand. I told you that I was still in love with another woman but you didn’t care. You told me that I would get over it eventually but that time never came. So, the next time you wanna blame somebody for the problems in our marriage, look in the fucking mirror,” Blake ranted.

“You couldn’t have loved her that much if you slept with me,” Mariah spat.

“I know that’s what you made yourself believe,” Blake said while shaking his head.

“So, you’re basically telling me to my face that you’re having an affair,” Mariah said while looking at him.

“I don’t need to tell you what you already know,” Blake replied as he looked right back at her.

There was no need for her to assume any longer when her husband had basically just confessed. Her heart was broken and she was scared. She had nothing without Blake and she couldn’t go back to living the way she did before. She wasn’t that girl anymore and she looked down on people who lived like she used to. Her father told her that she didn’t belong in Blake’s world but she was too dumb to listen. After all, she was the mother to his only kids. That had to count for something. Although she hadn’t taken a pregnancy test yet, she was praying for positive results. She needed another lifeline and another baby was just the thing to get her marriage back on track.



“Come on baby. Come see me,” Memphis begged Jersi over the phone.

“No Memphis. I need to concentrate and really work out. Fuck around and be big as a house if I keep messing with you,” Jersi replied.

She had slacked off going to the gym and all she and Memphis did was fuck and eat. It got so bad that they started sneaking off to get it in even when she did go to the gym. Memphis had the keys to open every door in the building and he used them often. Since he was working at one of the other locations, she decided to go in and hit the treadmill for a while. He wasn't there to distract her and she needed to focus. She changed in the bathroom at work and went straight to the gym afterwards.

“Man, stop playing and come over here. I'm not on no bullshit today, I swear. All we'll do is work out and nothing else,” he promised.

“Nah boo, I'm good. Besides, I'm already here,” Jersi said as she pulled up in front of the gym and parked.

“Don't call me later either. I'm blocking your ass since you wanna act bad with it,” Memphis replied.

“Boy bye. Let me go so I can work out in peace,” Jersi said.

“Wait!” Memphis yelled before she hung up. “What time you want me to come over there?”

He had been taking off on the weekends and spending most of his free time with her. He still hung with his boys sometimes but Jersi got most of his attention.

“I thought you were blocking me,” Jersi reminded him.

“Girl you know I’m weak as fuck,” Memphis laughed.

“Okay, well I’m going straight home when I leave here. You know the code to get in the gate,” she replied. Besides her family, he was the only other person that she trusted with it.

“Cool, I’ll see you around nine,” he replied before they disconnected.

Jersi grabbed her water bottle and got out of the car right after she spoke with him. She didn’t have her gym bag because she was going home to shower right after.

“Hey girl. You know your boo is working at a different location today,” Erin said as soon as she saw her.

“Yeah, I just got off the phone with him. I’m happy that he’s not here. I don’t need the distractions,” Jersi replied as she swiped her membership card and walked through the turnstile.

The after work crowd was in there but Jersi was happy to find a treadmill that was free. She usually didn’t work out on Fridays but she had to get back on track. If she kept putting it off, she was bound to gain back everything that she’d previously lost.

After an hour on the treadmill, Jersi was ready to call it quits. When she saw that the stair climber was free, she decided to do another half hour on

that before she left. About fifteen minutes into her workout, Lila walked into the room and got on the machine right next to her. There were two other machines on the opposite end but she chose the one closer to Jersi. They were quiet for a while until Lila decided to speak up.

“I must say, you’ve lasted way longer than some of the others,” Lila said while looking straight ahead.

“Excuse me?” Jersi asked while looking over at her.

“I’m speaking of Memphis. He usually doesn’t keep his women around too long. He gets bored fast,” Lila shrugged.

“Maybe he does but I know how to keep him entertained,” Jersi replied.

“Entertained at your house I’m sure. I know for a fact that you’ve never been to his. It’s kind of hard to entertain company when you have a wife and son,” Lila replied with a knowing grin.

Jersi’s rebuttal was caught in between the lump in her throat. She wanted to tell Lila that he couldn’t have a wife at home because he’d spent just about every weekend of the past month at her house. As much as Jersi wanted to refute her claims, she just couldn’t do it. She had never been to his house so maybe what Lila said was true. Hell, Blake had slept out with her several times and she knew for a fact that he had a wife and kids at home. Memphis never wore a ring but that didn’t mean shit to her either. Blake took his off like it was nothing. Instead of entertaining her, Jersi continued her workout in silence. She never noticed the satisfied smirk that Lila wore on her face as she got off the stair climber and walked away. As soon as Jersi got into the car, she called Memphis to see if what Lila said was true. Her first mind told her to block him but he deserved a chance to tell his side of the story. Jersi’s heart beat erratically in her chest as she listened to the phone ring.

“What’s up baby?” Memphis asked as soon as he answered.

“How about we stay the weekend at your house this time?” Jersi asked. She didn’t want to come right out and tell him what was up. She wanted to see how he would reply to her request first.

“Where did that come from?” Memphis questioned in confusion.

“Why have we never been to your house before Memphis? You never even offered,” Jersi replied.

“What’s up with you Jersi? Why the sudden interest in going to my house?” Memphis asked.

“Can we go to your house or not?” Jersi inquired.

“No,” Memphis replied in a voice that was barely above a whisper.

“I guess not if you have a wife and son there,” Jersi snapped.

“Just let me explain,” Memphis begged.

“Fuck you and lose my number!” Jersi yelled as he hung up the phone.

She immediately blocked his number as she drove home with tears pouring from her eyes. Just when she finally decided to let her guard down and let him in, he once again proved to her why men weren’t shit. Although Blake was married, that was different to her. Dealing with him was more of a revenge thing and she didn’t have any feelings for him. She was falling in love with Memphis and her heart felt like it was shattering to pieces in her chest. Ariel tried to tell her but she didn’t want to listen. Now she knew why he didn’t want to celebrate Valentine’s Day with her. He probably spent it at home with his wife.

Once she got home, Jersi took a long, hot shower. She packed a few clothes and decided to go by her brother for the weekend. She didn’t care if Dray had company or not. She was about to be the depressed third wheel. She didn’t even call him before she showed up at his house and rang the bell. It

took a few minutes but he finally opened the door.

“What’s wrong Jersi?” Dray asked with a concerned look on his face.

His voice sounded deeper than usual and he wasn’t as dramatic as he always seemed to be. He was dressed down in some sweats and a t-shirt but he looked masculine and sexy.

“I need you,” Jersi cried as she fell into her brother’s arms.

Dray pulled her inside and closed the door. It was then that Jersi noticed a pretty caramel colored girl laying on the sofa draped in a fleece blanket. Her dress was on the floor in front of her and Jersi felt bad for interrupting their intimate moment.

“Baby, this is my sister, Jersi. Jersi, this is Jazz,” Dray said as he introduced the two women.

“I’m sorry Dray. I didn’t mean to interrupt. I can go back home,” Jersi said as she wiped her teary eyes.

“No sis, you’re good. Jazz, give me a minute,” Dray said as he pulled her down the hall to his spare bedroom.

“She’s cute,” Jersi said as she flopped down on the bed.

“Is anybody dead, in jail or the hospital?” Dray asked her as soon as he closed the door.

“No. Why do you ask?” Jersi countered with a confused frown.

“Because anything else can wait until tomorrow. That bitch is a freak and I’m trying to see what’s up. Put some music on or something. I can’t promise you that you won’t hear anything,” Dray replied as he rushed out of the room.



Once he left, Jersi turned on the tv and called Ariel. She needed someone to talk to and Dray was too occupied to even care. Had Jersi brushed him off like that he would have been crying about her not loving him. It was cool though. She knew how inconsiderate her brother was but she loved him anyway.



Jersi woke up the next morning with a pounding headache. She had talked to Ariel for a while and she cried herself to sleep after that. Ariel tried to comfort her as much as she could and Jersi appreciated her. Dray was no help at all and Jersi had to turn the radio up to drown out the sounds that were coming from his bedroom. Finally, after tossing and turning all night, she went to sleep but it wasn't peaceful. Memphis had tried calling her from another number but she hung up on his ass soon as she heard his voice.

“Morning sis. How did you sleep?” Dray asked when he walked into the room.

“I didn't” Jersi replied with a yawn.

“Are you hungry? My girl is about to cook breakfast,” Dray said.

“Your girl? Who is she?” Jersi asked.

“My future baby mama,” Dray replied with a wink.

Draya was long gone and so were the theatrics. Jersi always said that her brother missed his calling. He could have easily been an actor with the

many roles that he played.

“No, I’m good,” Jersi replied right as her phone rang.

She blew out a breath of frustration when she saw that Blake was calling. Since she didn’t have anything else to do, she decided to answer for his disgusting ass.

“What’s up Blake?” Jersi said when she answered the phone.

“Can I see you today?” he asked excitedly.

“For?” Jersi countered.

“We can do whatever you want. I know how much you love to shop. We can hit up the mall,” Blake suggested.

Maybe a little retail therapy was just what she needed to take her mind off of Memphis and his drama. Since it was on his dime, she was all for hitting up the mall.

“I need to get dressed. Give me about an hour and I’ll meet you at the spot,” Jersi replied.

“I can come pick you up if you want me to,” Blake said.

“No, I’ll meet you there,” Jersi replied before she hung up.

Blake was always trying to be slick. He had been trying to find out where she lived for months but Jersi wasn’t having it. She didn’t want him at her house because she didn’t plan to be with him much longer. He was serving his purpose and his time was almost up.

After going home to shower and get dressed, Jersi met Blake at the penthouse. He was all smiles as he drove her to the mall and walked around with her. He tried to grab Jersi’s hand but he had her fucked up. It wasn’t that real and she wasn’t about to pretend like it was. He was swiping his card like

crazy and he spared no expense. He had already taken a few bags to the car and Jersi still wasn't done. When they walked into Saks, Blake froze for a second. Jersi didn't know what was up with him but she continued to look at a few pairs of shoes.

"Hey Blake," two women walked up to him and spoke.

Jersi turned around and immediately recognized one of them as Carter's ex-wife, Miracle. The woman scowled at her before turning her attention back to Blake.

"Hey y'all. What's up?" Blake asked as he spoke to Karma and Miracle.

Both women were Mariah's good friends and they often went on spa dates and shopping sprees together. Karma wasn't one to cause confusion but Miracle was miserable. Since her husband had divorced her, she didn't want to see anybody else happy. Blake knew without a doubt that she was going to tell Mariah about seeing him with Jersi. Crazy thing is, her really didn't give a damn.

"Is everything okay with you and Mariah?" Karma whispered as she looked at Jersi.

"It's okay, I guess," Blake shrugged.

"We've been trying to call her but she never answers. Is something wrong with her?" Karma questioned.

"That's something that you'll have to ask her," Blake replied.

"Who is she?" Karma asked while pointing to Jersi.

"A homewrecking whore. She's fucking Carter too," Miracle replied, making Blake's heart drop.

"Carter? Your ex-husband Carter?" Blake asked.

“Yep, they work together,” Miracle replied.

“What’s going on Blake? If you and Mariah are having trouble, there are professionals that can help you get your marriage back on track. Think about your girls,” Karma reasoned.

“My girls are fine. Whatever I do outside of my home doesn’t have anything to do with them,” Blake snapped.

He didn’t mean to bark at Karma like that but he was in his feelings about what Miracle had just told him. He didn’t know that Jersi was seeing someone else and his feelings were hurt. Miracle’s ex-husband was an accountant, so it made sense that he and Jersi worked together. Blake had only seen Carter once or twice. He and Miracle were already having problems and he never really went to the couples event.

“I want these,” Jersi said as she walked over to Blake with a pair of shoes in her hand.

“Okay,” Blake replied while handing her his credit card.

“Wow,” Miracle said as Karma stood with her mouth agape.

She remembered seeing Jersi in the restaurant on Mariah’s birthday. Everything was starting to make sense to her now. Blake was obviously having an affair with the other woman and that’s why Mariah behaved the way she did. Mariah hadn’t been answering anyone’s calls and Karma had a bad feeling about everything. Blake was Mariah’s world. Knowing that he was cheating on her was probably too much for her to handle. She wished that she could comfort her friend but Mariah obviously didn’t want to be bothered.

“Thanks boo,” Jersi smiled as she pecked Blake on his lips.

She’d heard everything that Miracle and the other woman were saying. She didn’t know that Mariah and Miracle were friends but she

recognized the other one from the restaurant. She knew without a doubt that they were going to run back and tell Mariah and that was her goal.

“Oh my God Blake! What the hell are you doing? You’re a married man. Mariah doesn’t deserve this,” Karma chastised as soon as Jersi walked away.

“Look, I appreciate your concern but this is none of your business. Jersi has been a part of my life for a very long time. She was here long before Mariah was and that will never change. I was with Jersi when Mariah decided to stop taking her pills and trap me with a baby. You should know Karma. I overheard her telling you all about it. Don’t get me wrong, I love my girls but they’re the only reason why Mariah and I even got married in the first place. Your friend is not as innocent as she tries to seem. Before you start pointing fingers, make sure you point them in the right direction,” Blake said before he walked off and stood next to Jersi.

“These niggas ain’t shit. His wife is probably sitting at home depressed while he’s out here spending their money on another bitch,” Miracle spat angrily.

As upset as she was, she was also a little relieved. If Jersi was with Blake, that meant that she had left Carter alone. Miracle wanted her husband back but they seemed to be drifting further apart.

“This is unbelievable,” Karma said as she shook her head in shock.

“Let’s go. We need to make sure that Mariah is okay,” Miracle said as she walked away.

“How when she won’t even answer the phone for us? Karma asked as she walked behind her.

“That’s exactly why we’re not calling. We’re going to her house,” Miracle replied angrily.



**M**ariah was over it. She was tired of crying but that seemed to be all that she did lately. Depression was too good a word for how she had been feeling lately. Blake was no longer the man that she had married. He was a familiar stranger who sometimes slept in the same bed. That was when or if he decided to come home. Mariah had been in a foul mood since her birthday and she hadn't been in the mood to do anything. She didn't cook, clean or answer her phone. She stayed in the bed most days, crying and sleeping. Eva had been keeping the girls because she didn't even have the strength to be a mother. Just when she decided that she wanted to get back to her old self, she was hit with some more bullshit the day before.

    Mariah got excited when Karma and Miracle showed up at her house unexpectedly. She thought that they were coming to get her out of the house for a little while and she was looking forward to an outing. When they revealed the reason for their visit, Mariah felt sick to her stomach. It was one thing for her to know that Blake was cheating on her. She was embarrassed that her friends now knew about it too. Blake had the nerve to be parading his side bitch around like it was nothing. He always complained when Mariah wanted to go shopping but he had no problem going with Jersi. Then, if that wasn't bad enough, he didn't even bother coming home. It was as if Mariah was an addict who had relapsed once her friends left. All the strength and confidence that she had before was gone and she was back in her funk. When

her phone rang, she didn't even bother to answer it. The doorbell rang a few minutes later and Mariah pulled herself out of bed to see who it was.

"Who is it?" Mariah mumbled groggily.

"It's Eva. Open up Mariah," she replied sternly.

Mariah groaned as she looked around her house. It was filthy and she knew that Eva was going to say something about it. As soon as she opened the door, Eva walked right in without being invited.

"How can I help you Eva?" Mariah asked impatiently.

"You seem to be the one who needs help. This house is a mess and so are you. There is no way in hell I'm letting my granddaughters come back to this," Eva replied as she looked around in disgust.

"Good, you can have them," Mariah spat angrily.

Having his kids didn't seem to make Blake happy anymore so what was the use. She was pregnant with baby number three and had yet to even tell him. With the way his attitude had been towards her lately, he probably wouldn't have cared anyway. Mariah wasn't even happy when her doctor confirmed it two weeks before. It seemed to depress her more if anything.

"Excuse me! Are you losing your mind Mariah? You haven't seen your kids in almost a week," Eva yelled.

"Neither has your son but I bet you don't have anything to say about that," Mariah retorted.

"Who do you think they're with right now? At least he wants to spend time with them. I don't know what's going on with you," Eva said.

"He better not have my kids around that bitch!" Mariah fumed.

"They had gymnastics class today and you didn't answer your phone

when I tried to call you. And what bitch are you referring to?” Eva questioned.

“That bitch Jersi that’s who. Don’t act like you don’t know that he’s been fucking her,” Mariah barked.

“Watch your mouth and respect me in my son’s house. And what makes you think that Blake is anything but a friend to Jersi. They broke up years ago and you made sure of that,” Eva noted.

“I know because he told me,” Mariah replied as she ran her hand through her matted hair.

“Well, maybe if you fixed yourself up and got this house in order, he wouldn’t have to look elsewhere,” Eva replied.

“Are you serious right now? I did everything that a wife is supposed to do and more and he still strayed. This is not on me. Your kids are not as perfect as you want everybody to believe. This has been going on since he lied to me to be with Jersi on Christmas night and it hasn’t stopped,” Mariah pointed out.

“Well, they have history Mariah. What did you expect? Besides, men cheat all the time. You should know since he cheated on Jersi with you,” Eva said waving her off.

“Why do you insist on blaming your son’s affair on me?” Mariah asked.

“Look, I’m not here to play the blame game. Get up and get yourself together. I’ll help you clean the house and fix something to eat for when your family gets home. No wonder your husband is out there cheating. You’re not giving him a reason to stay home,” Eva replied as tears poured from Mariah’s eyes.

She felt like she was losing herself and she didn’t know what to do.



She remembered her mother telling her to never be weak for a man but Mariah had failed that mission. Mariah had made Blake her world and now, it was crashing down around her. She had no money, education and no place to stay without him. She knew that her girls could get child support but that was about it. She had foolishly signed a prenup, ensuring that she walked away with the same thing that she came in with. Knowing Eva, she would probably see to it that he got the kids too. Mariah was stuck and she was terrified. She would rather die than to see Jersi and Blake get back together. Her heart or her sanity just couldn't take it.



Jersi waved at the guard that was posted outside of the gate before she drove in. After spending a boring, uneventful night with Blake, she was just getting back home. Spending her Saturday night with him wasn't a part of her plan but it was better than spending it at home crying over Memphis. Jersi wasn't surprised that Miracle told him that she was messing with Carter as if she gave a fuck. Miracle was only assuming because she didn't have any solid proof. Still, the fact that Blake had tried to question her about it had her heated. After she cursed him out, she spent her night catching up on some of her favorite shows that she had been missing. Blake was begging her for sex but Jersi wasn't having it. She didn't even want his mouth on her and she made that clear. After spending thousands of dollars at the mall, she was sure that he was expecting something at the end of the day. She had a truck full of stuff and didn't do anything to get it. Blake repulsed her and it was getting harder for her to pretend. Had Memphis not been a lying dog, she would have been spending her weekend with him instead. Knowing that Mariah spent another night alone was satisfaction enough for her.

“The hell,” Jersi mumbled when she pulled up to her house.

Memphis was parked in one of the guest spots that was next to hers. Jersi was sorry that she gave him the code to get in. She wasn't in the mood to hear a bunch of lame ass excuses or apologies. She hated that she fell in love with his ass because the process to get over it was the worst. As soon as Jersi got out of her car, Memphis did the same. He was dressed down in a t-shirt and some sweats but he looked good as fuck. Jersi tried to walk past him but he wasn't having it.

“Stop being childish man,” Memphis fussed as he grabbed her arm.

“Don't touch me. Go home to your wife and son,” Jersi snapped angrily.

“Come take a ride with me,” Memphis requested while pulling her towards his truck. It was his third time going to her house and he was happy that he decided to wait.

“I wish the fuck I would,” Jersi snapped angrily.

“Jersi, please, just do this for me. If you don't want to fuck with a nigga after today then I'll respect your wishes,” Memphis swore even though it was a lie.

It was something about the way he was talking that had Jersi perplexed. He seemed kind of down and she didn't see that same excitement in his eyes that was usually there. She didn't know what was wrong but she had a feeling that wherever he wanted her to go would explain it. Jersi decided to stop fighting him and got into his truck. Memphis didn't say anything before pulling off and driving away. They rode in silence for about five minutes before Jersi decided to speak up.

“Where are we going Memphis?” Jersi asked as she looked over at him.

“To my house,” he replied.

“Nah nigga, you can turn around and bring me back home. You got me fucked up if you think I’m about to be a sister wife to you and your bitch,” Jersi said making him look at her and frown.

“Just shut up before you piss me off Jersi,” Memphis warned sternly.

Jersi wanted to snap on him but she kept her mouth closed. Her right leg bounced nervously as Memphis drove her to an unknown destination. He reached his hand over and stopped her leg from shaking right as he pulled up into a nice subdivision. Jersi was no stranger to the finer things in life but she had to admit that the homes in the area were beautiful. When Memphis pulled into the driveway of a huge one story home, Jersi was impressed. He obviously made a decent income with his car washes to be able to afford a house so nice. It was the biggest house on the block from what she could see. There was a white BMW in the driveway and he pulled his car in right behind it. A baby on board sign hung from the back window and Jersi’s blood was boiling when she saw it. Niggas really weren’t shit and Memphis was proving that. She was no better because she went along for the ride.

“Why are we here Memphis?” Jersi asked.

“Just get out of the car and I’ll explain everything to you,” he replied.

“Lila already did that. She told me all about your wife and son,” Jersi noted.

“Man, fuck Lila. Get out and come inside,” Memphis frowned as he got out of his truck.

Jersi followed him as she looked around the seemingly quiet neighborhood. The lawns were neatly maintained and expensive cars sat in every driveway. Memphis had a huge wrap around porch that Jersi instantly fell in love with. As much as she loved to read, it would have been the perfect spot to do so. When he opened the door, Jersi just stood there until Memphis pulled her inside. She trusted him and that was the only reason why she

followed his lead. Once inside, Jersi immediately began to look around for any signs of a woman living there. There was barely any furniture and the walls were bare. Memphis must have had a sad ass wife to have her husband living like that. The black leather sofa and a tv were the only things that was in the living room. The place smelled great but it was drab looking. Jersi couldn't recall seeing a one story house that was so spacious. Memphis must have had at least six or seven bedrooms but that was just a wild guess. Jersi wanted to open doors and peek inside the rooms but she just stood where she was.

“Go ahead and look around. I know you want to,” Memphis smirked as he seemingly read her mind.

When she didn't move, Memphis grabbed her hand and showed her around. The house was even bigger than it looked from the outside. His living room was huge and they passed by two other empty rooms that could probably be used as dining areas. All the doors were closed but Memphis opened them to show her what was inside. Just like she assumed, there were six bedrooms and a study. He had three full bathrooms and one half. The chef's kitchen looked like something out of a magazine. It was black and granite with skylights and expensive appliances. Most of the bedrooms were empty but Jersi noticed that he bypassed the first two without saying anything or opening the doors. He even showed her the huge back yard with the covered patio and built in grill. It was a great area for entertaining but Memphis didn't look like he had much company. Once the tour was over, Jersi called him out on his bullshit.

“You showed me every part of the house except the first two rooms that we passed. What are you trying to hide?” Jersi asked as she folded her arms across her chest.

“I need you to understand something Jersi. This right here,” he said as he pointed between the two them, “this is new to me.”

“What's new to you? Bringing another woman home to meet your wife?” Jersi asked.

“I don’t bring women to my house...ever,” Memphis noted.

“Why would you when you have a wife?” Jersi countered.

Memphis sighed in frustration. He was tired of the back and forth but he needed to clear the air between them. He’d never cared enough about another woman to even go so far. It was something about Jersi that had him moving differently though. She had him wide open and he didn’t try to deny it. Memphis had only been in love once but Jersi made those old feelings resurface. He didn’t want her to think that he was playing games, so he had to keep it real. Memphis opened the door to the huge master bedroom and pulled her inside. He could see that Jersi wasn’t too happy and the frown on her face showed it. The partially opened closet half full of women’s clothes was probably what did it. The furry PINK slides and matching robe that was on the floor was a dead giveaway too. Even the perfume tray that set on the dresser was all the evidence that Jersi needed to see. Memphis was living foul.

“Wow. You really got me in another woman’s house like it’s cool. Get me the fuck out of here before your wife comes home and kills us both,” Jersi fumed.

“She’s dead Jersi,” Memphis said sadly.

“What?” Jersi whispered as she looked over at him.

“My wife died three years ago on Valentine’s Day,” Memphis replied.

Now it was time for Jersi to feel like shit. There she was dragging his name through the mud with Ariel because he didn’t celebrate the lover’s day. It never occurred to her that he had a valid reason why. Tears welled up in Jersi’s eyes as she looked around the room. The only thing that she could think to do was wrap her arms around Memphis and apologize.

“I’m so sorry Memphis. I didn’t know,” Jersi said as tears fell from her eyes.

“I know you didn’t baby but it’s cool,” Memphis replied.

“What happened to her? I understand if you don’t want to talk about it,” Jersi said.

“No, it’s cool, just not in here,” Memphis replied as he pulled her out of the room and closed the door.

“What about your son?” Jersi asked as she and Memphis took a seat on the sofa.

“Layla was seven months pregnant with my son when she got killed,” Memphis said making her heart drop.

“Oh my God,” Jersi said as he put her hands up to her mouth.

“She planned a quiet evening at home for us on Valentine’s Day. I was at work when she called and told me that she forgot to get me something to drink. I told her not to worry about it but she didn’t listen. She went to a gas station on her way home to get beer and never made it out alive. Three men went in there to rob the place and the manager got into a gun battle with them. She caught a bullet to the head. Her and the manager died at the scene and another customer died on the way to the hospital. It took too long for help to arrive and my son lost too much oxygen. It was too late for them to save him,” Memphis replied.

When he was done telling the story, Jersi’s face was wet with tears. Her heart went out to him and she felt like shit for saying some of the things that she said. Memphis didn’t cry but she could see that he was hurting.

“I left the room the exact same way that it was when she died three years ago. I’ve never slept in our bed again. I don’t even let nobody go into our room or my son’s room. Besides my mama and Lila, you’re the first woman that has ever been in here,” Memphis admitted.

“And that bitch Lila knew what she was doing. I’m sure she knew that your wife was dead,” Jersi argued.

“Of course she did Jersi. Layla was her sister,” Memphis said dropping yet another bomb.

“What!” Jersi screeched.

“Lila and Layla were the kids of my mama’s best friend. I’ve known them all my life. They lived with us for years when their mother died. Me and Layla didn’t really start dating until we graduated high school though.”

“That’s a nasty bitch. I know she likes you and it’s more than just her being the sister of your deceased wife. That hoe is on some fucking shit,” Jersi noted.

“She’s been on some fucking shit since they lived with us. She wanted me and I wanted her sister. When me and Layla got married, she started fucking with my cousin Juan. When her sister died, she was back on her bullshit. I would take my last breath before I even entertain her like that though,” Memphis swore. Now Jersi understood why he always said that.

“I feel so bad about everything that I said,” Jersi sighed.

“You don’t have nothing to feel bad about Jersi. You didn’t know. Truthfully, I probably wouldn’t have told you so soon if you didn’t force my hand. This is not something that’s easy for me to talk about but I’m happy that you know now. I don’t want nothing to stand in the way of us being together. I want to be able to spend time with you at your house and mine. This is a big step for me but I’m ready to take it,” Memphis said.

“I wanna fight Lila,” Jersi said out of the blue.

“What? Where did that even come from?” Memphis laughed.

“That bitch played me and I took the bait like a dummy,” Jersi fumed.

“You’re not the first woman that she did that to. Thing is, I never cared enough about anybody else to explain myself,” Memphis admitted.

“Aww, you care about me Memphis?” Jersi cooed as she pulled him in for a kiss.

“I love you,” he confessed as he looked deep into her eyes.

“I love you too,” Jersi said as she looked back at him.

Blake didn't know it but it was a wrap for him. As much as Jersi wanted to continue her little game with him and Mariah, she was over it. Memphis made her happy and she didn't want to jeopardize what they had just to satisfy her need for revenge. She'd probably done enough damage to get her point across anyway.

“I think it's time for a change,” Memphis said after they were quiet for a while.

“What do you mean?” Jersi asked.

“We had just moved into this house three months before Layla died. After that, I never really did do anything with it. I sleep on the sofa and I'm barely here. I'm ready to fix it up and really enjoy it,” Memphis replied as he stood up.

Jersi stood up too and followed behind him. Her heart broke when Memphis opened the door to the beautifully decorated nursery. His son definitely had everything that a baby would ever need and more.

“I can help you decorate if you want to,” Jersi offered.

“Yeah, I think I'm ready. Maybe I can donate all this stuff to somebody who really needs it. I feel selfish as fuck for holding on to it for so long,” Memphis said.

“Don't feel like that Memphis. You went through something that most people have only heard about. You lost two of the most important people in your life. There was nothing selfish about that,” Jersi replied.



“I guess I have to sell her car too,” Memphis noted, speaking of the car that she saw in the driveway.

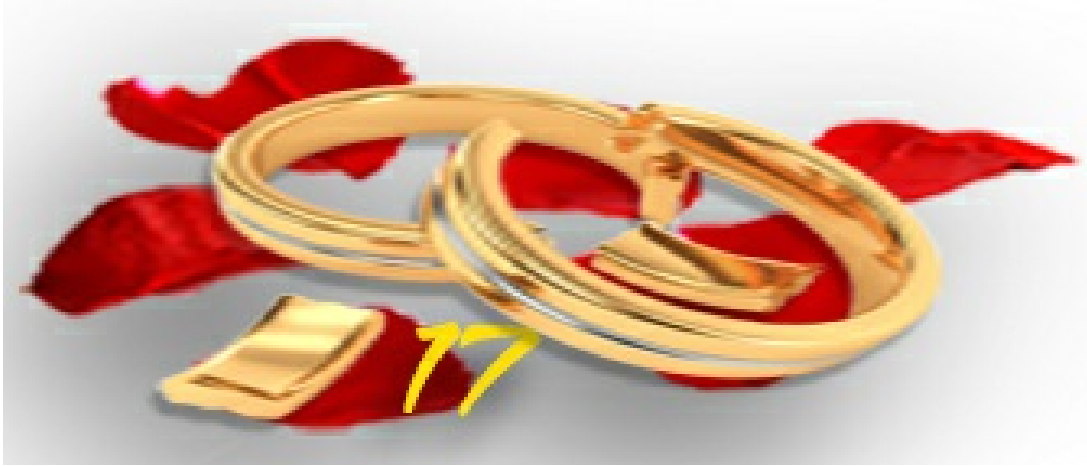
“You don’t have to do anything. Don’t rush it Memphis. Take your time and do what you feel is best. If you want to keep it all, then do it,” Jersi said.

“That’s not helping me though Jersi. I’ll never forget them but I feel like I’m hurting myself more by holding on to it. It’s been three years and I haven’t made a move to get rid of anything yet,” Memphis replied.

“Just let me know whatever it is that you need me to do,” Jersi said.

“For starters, you can come up out of them clothes,” Memphis replied, making her smile.

Having Jersi there just felt right. His wife and son would always hold a special place in his heart but it was time for him to make some new memories. He would forever cherish the ones that he made with Layla but he couldn’t keep holding on to the past. It wasn’t healthy and so many people had been telling him that. He’d thought about telling Jersi about his family a long time ago, but the timing never seemed right. Now that he did, he was ready to move forward with her by his side. He was sure that a few people wouldn’t be happy about it but he really didn’t give a fuck.



“No baby, I can’t see it. That’s too girly for me,” Memphis said as he talked to Jersi via

Facetime.

She was out shopping with her brother and she showed him some things that she wanted to get for his house. Memphis gave her his credit card and she wasn’t afraid to use it. After three weeks, Memphis had finally sold Layla’s old car and donated all of her clothes to the salvation army. Erin had a friend who was pregnant with a boy and he gave her everything out of his son’s room. He hired someone to paint a few of the rooms and he was ready to decorate.

“What’s wrong with it? I think it’ll go perfect in one of your spare bedrooms,” Jersi replied.

“Just get whatever you want but don’t break me,” Memphis joked.

“You’ll never be broke as long as you got me. I’ll see you later boo,” Jersi said as she blew him a kiss before hanging up.

Memphis didn’t even have to look up to know that his mother wasn’t too pleased. Valerie had never met Jersi but she decided that she didn’t like her. He checked Lila about trying to cause confusion in his relationship and

Jersi cursed her out when she saw her. He wasn't even surprised that Lila ran back and told his mother. It also didn't help that Valerie went there to clean one day and saw all the changes that he was making. He stayed the night by Jersi but his mother called him going off. She swore that Jersi was changing him and making him forget about his wife and son. Valerie was always telling him to move on but she had a problem when he finally decided to do it.

"I know my poor daughter-in-law is probably rolling over in her grave," Valerie fussed as she moved around her kitchen.

Memphis had only gone over there to hook up a shelf that she got for her bathroom. He wasn't in the mood for all the extras. JJ was supposed to be doing it but he flaked just like always.

"You be doing too much," Memphis laughed.

"I don't find nothing funny about some random harlot coming around and spending up all of Layla's money," Valerie argued.

"Layla's money?" Memphis questioned incredulously.

"That's what I said. That's who the majority of the money belonged to," Valerie replied.

"Layla was my wife. Whatever was hers was equally mine. Jersi doesn't know anything about the money and trust me, she doesn't need it," Memphis noted.

Layla and Lila's mother had a malpractice lawsuit against the hospital before she died. Paula was a diabetic and one of her legs had to get amputated. No one knew how it happened, but the hospital ended up cutting off the wrong leg. A few days later, she had to go right back under the knife to get the other one cut off but a blood clot had formed by then. Every lawyer, near and far, wanted the case and she chose one of the best to represent her.

Unfortunately, Paula died of a massive heart attack before she could ever see any of the money. The case hadn't even made it court. Her kids were young but they became the sole heirs of whatever she was going to receive. The lawsuit took forever. It was years of back and forth with the courts and the hospital before any of it was paid out. Her daughters ended up settling for four million dollars and it took a while before they got that. Memphis and Layla had been looking for a house and that was the first thing they got when her money came. She also got her car and helped Memphis with a few business ventures. She and Lila paid Valerie's house off and got her a car too.

Lila went crazy with her money and she really didn't have much to show for it. She got her a nice house and a car and Juan got some of it out of her too. She was broke in no time and working as a cashier in a local grocery store. Layla was much smarter with hers though. With the money that Memphis had saved up during his college years, their savings account was sitting pretty. Sadly, she died before she could really enjoy any of it. Memphis always said that the lawsuit money was cursed, so he didn't touch a dime of it after his wife died. Paula and Layla both died before they could spend it and he swore that the same thing would happen to him. He left the money in his savings account and hadn't messed with it since he buried his wife and son.

"She probably ain't nothing but a gold digger," Valerie said, pulling Memphis away from his thoughts.

"Would you like to meet her ma?" Memphis asked.

"Hell no, I don't," Valerie snapped.

"Cool, well keep your opinions to yourself," Memphis replied.

"Why should I? You never kept yours to yourself. Y'all want to pick and choose who I can be with and love but y'all want me to keep quiet," Valerie fumed.

"Besides my deadbeat ass daddy, who else did we have a problem with?" Memphis asked.

Valerie continued to stir her pot without responding. Memphis was happy that he was almost done because he didn't have time for her crazy attitude.

"You and JJ are always trying to run my life," Valerie mumbled, angering her son.

"How are we trying to run your life ma? You in your feelings because we threatened to cut you off if you took our daddy back. I'm not understanding why you were even thinking about being with that nigga again after how he did us. I remember taking showers by candlelight because he refused to help pay the light bill. His bitch was walking around wearing thousand dollar shoes while we used gray tape to hold our shit together. You went to bed hungry some nights because you didn't have enough food for yourself after you fed all of us. I wish the fuck I would have paid a bill to let that nigga live comfortably. He basically said fuck us when he left and the feelings were mutual," Memphis yelled angrily.

He grabbed the shelf that he'd just put together and took it to the bathroom. Memphis held on to the wall in an attempt to calm himself down. He felt bad as fuck for going off on his mama but she was on some other shit. He could never understand why his mother would even entertain the thought of giving his father another chance. Valerie cried herself to sleep some nights behind his bullshit. To him, that was unforgivable. Still, Memphis shouldn't have snapped on her the way he did and he felt bad about it. After a few minutes, he walked back into the kitchen and hugged her from behind.

"I love you ma and I'm sorry. I was upset but I was wrong for disrespecting you. My feelings remain the same but I should have said it better," Memphis said.

"I understand baby and I know how you feel. I just can't help that I still love a no good man. But you're right, he doesn't deserve anything that he didn't give. But my feelings remain the same too. I don't like this new girl that you're with," Valerie replied.

“You can’t dislike somebody that you don’t know,” Memphis noted.

“Yes I can after the way Lila said she talked to her. And you were no better,” Valerie scolded.

“Stop believing everything that Lila tells you. I can guarantee that she didn’t tell you her part in everything though,” Memphis said.

“Her feelings are hurt Memphis. In her mind, she always thought that y’all would get together,” Valerie replied.

“That’s never happening ma. I was married to her sister and she dated my cousin. Besides all that, I’m just not attracted to Lila like that. I’ve never looked at her that way and I never will. I don’t see how you’re even okay with something like that.”

“It happened all the time back in my day,” Valerie pointed out.

“Maybe so, but it’s not happening with me. You were the main one telling me to stop being a hoe and settle down. I took your advice and I’m happy now. After what I went through when Layla died, I thought you would be happy for me too,” Memphis said.

“Maybe I would be if it was somebody else,” Valerie frowned.

“You don’t even know her. I can bring her by so you can meet her though,” Memphis offered.

“Absolutely not!” Valerie yelled.

“Well, she ain’t going nowhere, so that’s your loss,” Memphis replied before he kissed her cheek and left.

He needed to sign some paperwork that Vance had for him and then he was going back home to wait for Jersi. It took about ten minutes for Memphis to get to the car wash, but he went straight to his brother’s office when he did.

“I got everything ready for you,” Vance said as he handed Memphis some paperwork.

Memphis was big on reading anything before he signed it. He took a seat and read over the paperwork before he signed his name at the bottom. Jersi sent him a text and he was all smiles when he read it. He took a minute to reply and Vance stared at him the entire time.

“The fuck you looking at a nigga so hard for?” Memphis asked.

“Of all the words in the English language, you still manage to use the worst ones,” Vance said while shaking his head.

“Stop staring at me then nigga,” Memphis replied.

“No harm bro. It’s just been a while since I’ve seen you like this,” Vance noted.

“Like what?” Memphis asked.

“Happy,” Vance replied.

“What? I’m always happy,” Memphis laughed.

“No, you’re always smiling. There’s a difference,” Vance pointed out.

“Damn,” Memphis mumbled.

His brother was right. He kept a smile on his face but he didn’t always feel like smiling. Some days, he didn’t even feel like leaving out of the house. Lately, his views on a lot of things had changed and he knew that it was because of Jersi. Memphis had never been interested in getting into a serious relationship with anyone before she came along. As long as his sexual needs were met, he was good.

“I guess we have Jersi to thank for that. She got good energy,” Vance

said.

“Here you go with that energy and good vibes shit. I’m out of here,” Memphis laughed as he stood up and prepared to leave.

“My wife saw it too and we haven’t been wrong yet,” Vance yelled after him.

Memphis was laughing but he was praying that Vance was right. He needed all the good vibes he could get and he was praying that Jersi didn’t disappoint.



“A whole month and this is all that we’ve managed to accomplish,” Memphis said as he looked around his spacious living room.

Jersi and her brother had done their thing and had it looking nice. The color scheme was brown and some kind of funny green color but he liked it. They had pictures on the walls and a huge rug on the floor. Memphis had his tv on a cheap stand from Walmart at first but it was now mounted on the wall. He never had tables or anything else but it looked amazing now.

“Who is we? You didn’t do nothing,” Jersi replied as she looked up from her papers.

She was studying to take the senior accountant test but she was nervous. The test was in three weeks and she didn’t think she was prepared.



Memphis quizzed her every day and he was confident that she was.

“You and Dray did good though. I like it,” he smiled as he looked around.

“I knew you would,” Jersi replied as she threw her papers to the side.

“You done studying?” Memphis asked her.

“Yeah, for now at least. I’m just ready to get it over with,” Jersi replied.

“You got that baby; I can feel it,” Memphis encouraged as he pulled her in for a kiss.

“I hope you’re right,” Jersi said as she snuggled up with him in the sofa.

“I know I am. I’m just sorry that the test is on the same day as the wedding. I’m trying to show you off,” Memphis replied.

One of his frat brothers was getting married and they never missed each other’s events. Memphis and his friends always had a good time together and he was looking forward to it. He wanted Jersi to be there but he understood that her priorities came first. Memphis hadn’t been in a relationship in a while and he was ready to introduce her to his crew.

“I might miss the wedding but I can come to the reception,” Jersi noted.

“Yeah, come through there and shut shit down,” Memphis said as he grabbed a hand full of her ass.

“I’ll try my best,” Jersi giggled.

“You don’t have to try too hard. It just comes natural,” Memphis said making her blush.

Jersi leaned down and parted his lips with her tongue. They engaged in a deep kiss before she broke it and started kissing down his body. She pulled his erection out of his boxers and licked her lips. Memphis put his hands behind his head as Jersi grabbed the base of his dick and eased it down her throat. Something about his piercings excited her and she loved the way it felt in her mouth. Memphis hissed as she stroked and sucked him. Jersi was nasty with it as she pulled him out of her mouth and spit on it. Memphis grabbed one of the pillows from the sofa and gripped it tightly. After a while, he grabbed the sides of her face and pounded inside of her mouth.

“Mmmm,” Jersi hummed as she continued to suck, sending him over the edge.

He tapped Jersi’s arm after a while, letting her know that he was about to cum. Jersi didn’t swallow but she didn’t care if he shot it in her face. She joked about it saying that he was helping to keep her skin blemish free. She was on some other shit now and she hadn’t moved yet. Memphis tapped her arm again and again, Jersi didn’t budge. She was looking up at him, almost daring him to release in her mouth.

“Shit Jersi. You must be trying to swallow,” Memphis moaned, making her nod her head in confirmation.

Jersi had never swallowed before but she wasn’t opposed to trying something new. Memphis was all for it, so he let her do her thing.

“Ummm,” Jersi hummed and that was it for him.

Within seconds, Memphis exploded in her mouth and shit went left from there. Jersi started choking and grabbing her throat. Memphis was still cumming and trying to help her at the same time. Jersi had the white sticky substance all over her face and neck as she jumped up and ran to the bathroom. Memphis pulled his boxers up and ran after her.

“Shit! Are you alright baby?” he asked while grabbing some towels from the shelf.

Jersi was leaned over the sink with the water on full blast. She was still coughing and he felt bad as fuck. She knew she didn't know how to swallow and he didn't know why she even tried.

"Hell no I'm not alright. I feel like I'm dying," she said when she finally came up for air.

She looked like she'd been in a fight with her hair all over her head and his babies sliding down her face.

"The fuck you did that for Jersi? You had me scared as fuck," Memphis replied as he cleaned her up.

"Oh God," Jersi said as she splashed some cold water on her face.

"That's what you get for trying to be grown," Memphis laughed.

"I am grown nigga. I didn't know you were gonna shoot out a damn gallon," Jersi fussed, making him laugh harder.

Once she cleaned herself up, she pointed her middle finger at him and walked out of the bathroom. Memphis was weak but she didn't find anything funny. After passing out during oral sex, Jersi was over being embarrassed in front of him. Thankfully, she was used to him now and she didn't get lightheaded when he went down on her anymore.

"Get off me," she pouted as she pushed him away when he tried to hug her.

"Don't be like that baby. I was genuinely concerned. I thought I lost you," Memphis said as he continued to smirk.

"You lucky I didn't bring my car over here. I would leave your ass and go home," Jersi frowned. She and Memphis had gone out to dinner the night before and he picked her up. Since she had clothes at his house, that's where she went once they were done.

“I’m sorry love. Let me make it up to you,” Memphis said.

He snatched Jersi’s boy shorts off and pulled her to the edge of the sofa. She gripped his muscular arms and held on right before he dipped his head in between her legs.

“Shit Memphis!” Jersi squealed as he stiffened his tongue and slid it up and down her wet bottom lips.

He was making smacking noises while wildly moving his head from side to side. The vibrating sensation was like double pleasure for Jersi. She alternated between grabbing the back of his head and holding on to his arms. Her bottom half was hanging off the sofa but Memphis was holding her tight. When his tongue picked up speed, Jersi’s entire body shook and her eyes rolled up to the heavens. She thought she was falling when Memphis picked her up. She held on tight as he stood up with her in his arms, never breaking their connection. He laid down on the sofa and positioned Jersi on his face.

“Ride my face,” he demanded while slapping her hard on her ass.

Jersi positioned her legs on both sides of his head and starting grinding on his face just like he wanted her to. That always turned him on and it was one his favorite sexual positions. Memphis spread her ass cheeks wider and sucked on her middle like it was hard candy. Jersi pulled her shirt off and threw it on the floor. His big hands found her breasts and massaged them gently. They were both moaning, sounding like an offbeat soundtrack. Jersi was ready to feel his piercings inside of her but she never got the chance.

“Memphis! Lord have mercy!” Valerie screeched making Jersi jump up from her spot on his face and fall on the floor. She grabbed a pillow in an attempt to cover her body.

“Shit!” Memphis hissed as he scooped her up with one hand and shielded her naked body behind his. “What the hell are y’all doing here?”

He was beyond angry when he looked up and saw his mother and Lila standing there holding cleaning supplies like they were the hired help. Jersi was naked and he was standing there wearing a pair of boxers with her juices saturating his face. He was too pissed to be embarrassed but he could tell that Jersi wanted to disappear. He grabbed the throw from the back of the sofa and covered her up. Anybody else would have walked away but Lila and his mother stood there like they were invited.

“I come here every week to clean up and cook. I only saw your car in the driveway. I had no idea that she was here,” Valerie sneered as she pointed behind him at Jersi.

“Your key is for emergencies only and I’ve stressed that to you a thousand times. This is exactly why I asked you not to pop up over here unannounced. I can’t even have privacy in my own home,” Memphis fussed.

“I feel lightheaded. I hope I don’t faint after seeing that nasty mess,” Valerie said dramatically.

“What’s nasty about me being intimate with my girlfriend in the privacy of my home? That’s why you should have knocked or called first. And I love you but if you faint, it’ll have to be on the other side of the door. Y’all need to leave,” Memphis replied.

“I always come over here to cook and clean. I’ve never had to knock or call before,” Valerie pointed out.

“I didn’t have a girlfriend before either. She does all the cooking and cleaning now,” Memphis noted as he ushered them out and locked the door.

Jersi hurriedly put her clothes back on and flopped down on the sofa right as Memphis walked back into the room.

“That was so damn embarrassing,” Jersi said as she buried her face in her hands.

“I’m sorry baby. I didn’t know that she was coming over. I’m

changing the locks on her ass,” Memphis replied as he pulled her up and hugged her.

“This was not the way that I wanted our first meeting to go. She probably hates me now,” Jersi whined.

Memphis didn’t want to hurt her feelings by telling her the truth. Valerie hated her long before she walked in on them. It pissed him off that his mother formed an opinion without even getting to know her first. Now, she really had a reason to dislike her.

“I don’t care about how nobody else feels about you. I love you and that’s all that matters,” Memphis said making her smile.

“Aww, I love you too,” Jersi replied right as her phone rang.

“Who the hell is Sassy?” Memphis asked when he read the name that popped up on the screen.

“That’s Dray’s best friend,” Jersi replied as she answered for him. “Hey Sassy.”

“Jersi! You need to get to the hospital right now! Dray got shot!” Sassy yelled, making Jersi drop the phone.



Memphis held Jersi's hand tight as they rushed down the halls of University Hospital. Jersi was a mess and it was worse because she didn't know her brother's condition. Whoever that Sassy person was didn't really have any additional information to give. He was doing more crying than talking and he had Jersi's nerves bad. Her parents weren't answering their phones and that only heightened her fear.

"Excuse me. My girlfriend's brother was shot and we're trying to find out some information on him," Memphis said to a nurse who was sitting behind the desk in the hallway.

"What's his name sir?" The nurse asked.

"Draymond Bradford," Memphis said, remembering the name that Jersi had told him months ago. He watched with bated breath as the nurse typed something on the computer.

"Okay, here are two passes for the trauma unit on the second floor," the nurse said while handing him two badges.

"Trauma!" Jersi shouted.

"Don't be alarmed sweetheart. All gunshot victims, no matter how big

or small, are taken to the trauma unit. The elevator is at the end of the hall to your left,” she said politely.

Memphis thanked her and pulled Jersi down the hall towards the elevators. She seemed to be in a daze and he prayed that her brother was alright. She and Dray were tight and she would probably lose her mind if something happened to him. As soon as they exited the elevator, an overdressed woman was pacing the halls talking loudly on the phone.

“Sassy! Where is he? What are they saying?” Jersi rushed over and asked.

“Let me call you back honey. Dray’s sister just got here,” Sassy said to someone on the phone before hanging up.

Upon closer inspection and after hearing the voice, Memphis realized that the overdressed woman was actually a man. The makeup, clothes and mannerisms would have fooled a lot of people though.

“What happened?” Jersi inquired.

“That crazy bastard Donovan is what happened. I had a show tonight and Dray came through with his boo. It all happened so fast Jersi. That fucker came out of nowhere and started shooting. He was aiming at Dray and his friend but Dray was the only one to get hit twice,” Sassy answered.

“He got shot two times?” Jersi cried.

“Yes, but they were both in and out. He’ll live, thank God. They have him stable but nobody can go see him just yet,” Sassy noted as they all walked away together.

Jersi’s parents were talking to a doctor, so they took a seat and waited until they were done.

“Is this the hospital where your pops work?” Memphis asked as he held Jersi’s hand.



“No, he works at Tulane,” Jersi replied.

They were actually at the hospital where Blake worked and Jersi was hoping that she didn't run into him. She didn't care if he saw her with Memphis. She just wasn't in the mood to be in his presence at the moment.

“Dena! Oh God! We came as soon as we heard. Is Dray okay?” Eva asked as she and her husband rushed down the hall with Blake's twins in tow.

Dena had been telling Jersi that the kids had been staying with them but she didn't know why. Mariah was always so hands on with her kids, so that was a surprise.

“He will be. Thanks for coming,” Dena said as she hugged her friends.

Jersi thought it was fucked up how Eva and Braxton didn't even acknowledge their own son. Sassy sat on one side of the wall and they occupied the chairs along the other.

“Where is Dray's friend?” Jersi turned and asked Sassy.

“He was in the waiting room giving a statement to the police. He's the one who drove Dray here. Thank God he used his head and didn't panic,” Sassy replied.

“Hey y'all. I'm sorry I didn't speak sooner. I was a mess when I got here,” Dena said as she walked over and hugged Jersi and Memphis.

Her eyes were red and swollen just like Jersi's. Her father came over and spoke to them while they waited for the okay to go see Dray. Dena sat next to Sassy and held his hand. She knew that being shunned by his parents hurt and she tried to offer a little comfort.

“Good evening everybody,” Blake said when he walked up.

Jersi discreetly rolled her eyes because she knew that it was too good to be true. Blake went around hugging and shaking hands, but he bypassed her and Memphis. Instead, he frowned at them as they sat there holding hands.

“Hey brother. Any word on when we can see Dray?” Sassy asked.

“The nurse will let y’all go back there in a minute. She was just getting him situated. He’s in a lot of pain but that’s to be expected. He was shot once in the chest and once in his upper arm. Both bullets went straight through and there was no internal damage. He didn’t lose too much blood but he’ll be sore for a little while though,” Blake noted.

“That’s good to hear,” Jacob nodded even though the other doctor had already told them.

He dealt with patients all day, so he knew the routine as a doctor. It was an entirely different scenario now that it was his own son. He wasn’t in doctor mode at the moment. He was nothing more than a concerned father.

“You okay baby?” Memphis asked as he caressed Jersi’s back.

“Yeah, I’m good now that I know he’s okay. I just want to see him and I’ll feel better,” Jersi replied with a smile.

“Are you hungry?” Memphis asked.

“I’m starving but I’ll wait until we leave,” Jersi said.

She wasn’t paying attention but Memphis was peepin’ how Blake was looking at them. The nigga didn’t even try to hide it as he blatantly stared at them.

“The fuck is up with dude? Stupid ass nigga keep looking over here and shit,” Memphis frowned.

“That’s Blake, my ex-boyfriend,” Jersi admitted.

“Oh okay. That’s why he got that boot in his mouth,” Memphis nodded in understanding.

He had no idea that Jersi’s ex was a doctor but that didn’t intimidate him. He was her ex for a reason and she didn’t seem to be interested in him anymore. The nigga looked soft as fuck standing there frowning like a bitch.

“Fuck him and his wife,” Jersi spat right as the nurse came out and told them that they could go visit Dray.

Jersi was the first to jump up and Memphis was right behind her. Blake and his parents stayed behind as everyone else went to the room.

“My chocolate baby alive,” Dray said groggily when he saw Jersi.

“Are you okay boo? You had me scared to death. I’m happy and mad at the same time,” Jersi said as she leaned over the bed and kissed his cheek.

“You know I’m hardheaded sis. Hey Memphis,” Dray said as he waved his hand lazily.

“What’s good?” Memphis nodded.

“You damn sure are hardhead but I’m happy that you’re okay,” their father said as he rubbed Dray’s head.

“Sassy boo, is that you?” Dray asked dramatically.

“Yes darling, it is. You better not ever scare me like that again,” Sassy fussed as he and Dray air kissed each other.

“What about Donovan? Did they catch that bastard yet?” Dena asked angrily.

“Not that I’ve heard. Your boo is talking to the police now,” Sassy informed Dray.

“I hope they put that bastard in a cell with ten niggas who got life and ain’t seen a bitch in twenty years. I want them to rip him a new asshole,” Dray fussed.

“You’re coming to stay with us for a little while until he gets handled. I don’t trust you going back to your house. Too many people know where you live,” Dena noted.

“I want a new house daddy. I don’t feel comfortable being there anymore,” Dray said.

“Let’s just get you out of here first son. We can talk about getting you another house later,” Jacob replied.

They all sat around and talked to Dray for a while. Jersi was happy when her two older brothers showed up and she wasn’t ready to leave. They worked offshore and it took a lot for them to get there. Memphis didn’t rush her though. He sat in the waiting room watching tv and eating snacks from the vending machine. He went down to the lobby for a while and walked in the parking lot too. He was bored as hell but he gave Jersi all the time she needed. He was happy to see that she was in good spirits when she finally came out of Dray’s room. He was being kept for observation but he would probably be home in another day or two. He was alive and that was all that mattered to her.



“Bitch, it was like something straight out of the matrix. I felt like I was moving in slow motion when his crazy ass pulled out that gun,” Dray said as he demonstrated what happened the night he got shot.

Jersi was laughing at how animated her brother was and she knew that Dray was embellishing the story. He had been home for a week and their parents were treating him like an invalid. Dray lived for attention so he was soaking it up. They were both in the family room at their parents’ house drinking wine and listening to music.

“What about your boo? What did he do?” Jersi asked.

“The same thing Superman would have done for Lois Lane, bitch. He tried to save me,” Dray replied.

It just so happened that the same dude who Jersi saw at his house the day Donovan tore his shit up, was the same one who was with him the night he got shot. He was the fine one who Dray was kissing that day. The same one who he lied and told that Jersi and her man were fighting instead of the other way around. He stayed with Dray for a while after they left and he had been coming to their parents’ house to see him every day.

“What’s his name? I’m tired of just saying your boo,” Jersi said.

“His name is Maxwell or Max. Strong and sexy, just like him,” Dray replied.

“Are you thinking about settling down with him?” Jersi asked.

“Only if his girlfriend will join us,” Dray shrugged.

“He has a girlfriend!” Jersi shrieked.

“Stop being so naïve Jersi. Some of these men out here are no better than I am. They want the best of both worlds too but I’m honest enough to admit it. I don’t agree with leading people on. That’s a dangerous game that I never want to play,” Dray noted.

“But, back to Donovan,” Jersi said encouraging him to finish what he was telling her.

“Oh yeah, well anyway, he had been in his feelings for a few weeks because I hadn’t been spending any time with him. Ole girl that you saw over there that day had been getting all of my attention. Bitch made me realize why I love pussy so much. But Donovan started calling and just popping up at my house. He showed up when Max came to get me for Sassy’s show and they had an argument. No licks were thrown and I thought it was all good. Next thing I know, he was busting up in the club shooting like a damn maniac. His crazy ass probably followed us there,” Dray rambled.

“You need to stop letting so many people know where you live Dray. Rent a room or go to them. That’s so dangerous,” Jersi fussed.

“Honey, you don’t have to tell me twice. This shit got my mind right. I can’t move the same way that I did before. But, enough about me. What’s going on with you and Memphis sexy ass?” Dray asked as he sipped his glass of wine.

“Besides me choking on his cum and his mother walking in while I was riding his face, nothing much,” Jersi replied making Dray spit out his drink and cough.

She jumped up and hit his back before grabbing some paper towels from the kitchen. Dray’s eyes watered as he tried to compose himself.

“Bitch! What the fuck!” Dray coughed out.

“Sorry brother,” Jersi giggled.

“Were you for real or just joking?” He asked.

“Unfortunately, I was dead ass serious,” Jersi replied.

She took a few minutes to tell Dray everything that happened. He was

in tears from laughing so hard once Jersi was done. She couldn't even get mad with him. Had it been anybody else, she would have been laughing too.

“Swallowing is nothing but you can't think about it too much. You know it's coming, you just have to relax your throat and let it go down smoothly,” Dray coached.

“Nah, I'm good on that for now. I'll continue getting the facial treatments,” Jersi said.

“That works too,” Dray shrugged right as their mother walked into the room.

“Come on Dray. Eva said that dinner will be ready in twenty minutes,” Dena said while looking at her son.

“Just bring me something back. I hate going to that boring house,” Dray frowned.

“I will not bring you something back because you are going. She put the dinner together for you. The least you can do is go to show your appreciation,” Dena fussed.

“I'm not even dead and she's throwing me a repast,” Dray complained.

“It's not a repast, it's a welcome home dinner. Stop being ungrateful. We all know how Eva is. She's just being nice,” Dena said.

“Yeah, well she needs to show some of that same love to Sassy. He's her son, not me,” Dray replied.

“I agree but that's their business. Now, come on and let's go. You too Jersi. You can leave your car here until we get back,” Dena said.

“I'll pass. I'm about to go home,” Jersi said as she stood up and stretched.

“Excuse me?” Dena huffed while placing her hands on her shapely hips.

“I said I’m ready whenever you are,” Jersi replied humbly.

“That’s what I thought you said. Y’all hurry up. I’ll be in the car,” Dena said while walking away.

“Your scary ass,” Dray frowned as he looked at his sister.

“Boy, I’m not about to argue with that lady. You know she means business when she put her hands on her hips,” Jersi laughed.

“That shit don’t scare me no more. It ain’t like she ever whipped us or nothing. Hell, she never even raised her voice. Why the hell were we scared when she put her hands on her hips? Shit don’t even make sense,” Dray replied.

He and Jersi cleaned up the mess that they’d made in the family room before joining their mother in her car. Jersi was too excited when Cat sent her a message and asked if she was coming over. She and her family were already there and Jersi was happy for that.

When they pulled up to the house, Jersi was happy to see that it wasn’t crowded. Eva was always claiming to be doing something small that turned into a full blown party. Jacob was at work and he got off easy in Jersi’s opinion.

“Welcome guys. How are you feeling Dray?” Eva asked as she opened the door and greeted them with hugs.

“I feel great. Thanks for asking,” Dray replied with a phony smile.

As soon as Jersi walked in, she went right over to where Cat was sitting. Cat’s son was on his tablet and the twins were watching tv. BJ was in another room talking to his father while Eva played the role of hostess.



“Hey boo,” Cat said when Jersi leaned down to hug her.

“What’s been up girl?” Jersi asked.

“Nothing much but I put in for an apartment a few days ago. My lawyer is drawing up the divorce papers and I’m about to be free,” Cat smiled happily.

“I’m so happy for you friend. The good thing is, you’ll have a career and will be making your own money,” Jersi said.

“Exactly. I couldn’t see myself being like Mariah forever,” Cat replied.

“What’s up with her? My mama said that her kids have been staying with Eva and her husband,” Jersi whispered.

“They have because that bitch is losing her mind behind Blake. He told BJ that all she does is cry and talk about you all day. He said the house be a mess and she don’t try to fix herself up no more. She was neglecting the kids and all. Blake told her about y’all having an affair and everything. You know I be eavesdropping,” Cat admitted.

“There is no affair and there never was. I fucked him once and let him go down on me a few times. Everything about Blake repulses me and I’m trying to see what I was so in love with when we were together. I just had to show that bitch Mariah that she’s not the only one who can hurt people. Her husband has turned into a straight up stalker though. He calls me at least twenty times a day. I blocked his ass and now he calls from all kinds of different numbers. I told him that I was in a relationship and that only seemed to make him go harder. She can have the nigga back because I’m done with him,” Jersi said.

“That nigga is in love too honey. He’s always telling BJ how much he loves you and how happy he is when y’all are together,” Cat replied.

“Trust me when I say that the feelings are not mutual. I just had to repay him and his bitch for how dirty they did me. Now, they get to experience the kind of pain that they inflicted on me. Mission accomplished,” Jersi said right as the doorbell rang. She cringed when Eva opened the door and she heard Blake’s voice.

“Mommy!” The twins screamed when they saw Mariah walk in behind him.

She didn’t look anything like what Cat had described but she was not the same Mariah that she was before. She had bags under her eyes and her hair was in a ponytail. She wasn’t draped in labels either. She was dressed down in a pair of leggings with a sweater. Her girls were happy to see her but she didn’t even acknowledge them. No hug, smile or nothing else came from her. She just walked right by them and over to where Jersi and Cat were seated. When she hauled off and punched Jersi in the face, the entire room erupted in chaos.

“No that bitch didn’t just hit my sister!” Dray yelled as he jumped up from the chair that he was sitting in.

Dena held him back as Jersi got up from the floor where she fell when she was hit. It was like she had tunnel vision and Mariah was the only one that she saw.

“Stay the fuck away from my husband!” Mariah screeched right before Jersi delivered a blow to her face that made her stumble a little.

The two women exchanged looks as Mariah’s kids stood there and cried. Jersi was angry and the jabs that she was throwing reflected that. She had Mariah dazed and she fell to the floor in exhaustion.

“Jersi stop! That’s enough!” Dena yelled when Jersi sat on top of Mariah and kept swinging.

“Get her off of me. I’m pregnant,” Mariah cried while shielding her body.

It was as if someone had poured cold water on a flickering flame when she said that. Jersi immediately stopped hitting her and backed away. She was breathing hard and sweat was pouring from her face. She was livid and she wanted to finish what she started. Knowing that Mariah was with child, her conscience wouldn't allow her to. Instead, she grabbed her phone and purse from the table before storming out of Eva's house. Dray went after her and Dena wasn't too far behind. Mariah had her fucked up and Jersi had never been so determined before in her life. Obviously, Mariah hadn't suffered enough but Jersi was about make her feel it in the worst way.



“Why would you start a fight when you knew that you were pregnant? Scratch that! Why the fuck didn’t you tell me that you were pregnant?” Blake bellowed as he paced back and forth in his living room.

He and Mariah had just come back from his parents’ house and he was fuming. His first mind told him to leave Mariah at home but she begged him to get her out of the house for a while. Mariah was a diva, so he should have known that something was wrong when she didn’t dress up or wear any makeup. She was on a mission and she used him to help her accomplish it.

“Do you even care Blake? You’re never home and you act like I’m invisible when you do decide to show up. It’s like I don’t even know you anymore,” Mariah cried.

Truthfully, she and Blake really didn’t know much about each other when they hooked up. Everything happened so fast and they were married in less than a year. They never really dated. She was pregnant so they didn’t have time for a long engagement. It was crazy how they were married and trying to get to know each other after the fact. Blake came from money and that was all that she cared about at the time.

“You didn’t know me when you tricked me into getting you pregnant

either, did you? You're supposed to be on birth control now and once again, you pop up pregnant," Blake ranted.

"You act like I've been fucking myself! You got me pregnant!" Mariah yelled.

"Don't remind me," Blake sighed.

"Wow. I really fooled myself into believing that you loved me," Mariah chuckled sarcastically.

"I do love you Mariah but a lot has changed since we got together. This entire situation is just complicated," Blake said while taking a seat on the sofa.

He was frustrated and taking it out on everybody else. Seeing Jersi at the hospital with her new man had him in a bad mood lately. Blake was wondering why she'd stopped answering his calls and now he knew why. She had moved on and he was sick about it. He hated that he worked so much because he couldn't really pursue Jersi like he wanted to. He was all ready to hand Mariah some divorce papers to be with her but she had moved on. The final nail in the coffin was when she blocked his number. Blake was going crazy and not knowing where she lived didn't help much.

"You called her from my phone Blake. That was the ultimate form of disrespect," Mariah said, interrupting his thoughts.

Mariah was well aware that you found things when you looked hard enough and that's exactly what happened to her. She waited until Blake came home from working a double shift to go through his phone two days ago. He was dog tired and she had lots of time to spy. Mariah was sorry that she did when she read the text messages between him and Jersi. Her husband, the man who she took vows with, was begging his ex to let him go down on her. At first, Jersi messaged him back and even met him at their so called spot. After a while, he seemed to be going crazy because she stopped. Mariah couldn't believe it when she looked on her phone and saw that he had been calling her from there too. She didn't know how much more she could take

before she really lost her mind. The final straw was his message to Jersi, telling her that she should have been his wife and not Mariah. In her mind, Jersi was the cause of her crumbling marriage and she wanted her to pay. Mariah didn't think it through when she hit Jersi. She was acting off of emotions and that was never a good look.

“What? Called who?” Blake questioned with a frown after a while of being silent.

“Jersi, that's who. You called that bitch from my phone over thirty times in a three day period. You might love me but you're in love with her,” Mariah sniffled.

“Did I ever try to deny that fact?” Blake questioned, crushing her even more.

“What does that mean for me Blake? I can't sit around wondering if or when you're gonna leave me for your ex-girlfriend. Did you even stop to think about our kids?” Mariah asked him.

“Did you? It seems that I'm the only one, besides my parents, who's worried about them. You haven't seen them in weeks. You don't even call to see how their doing,” Blake pointed out.

“What good am I to them right now? I can't even find the strength to get out of bed most days. Thanks to your affair, I'm too depressed to even think straight,” Mariah sobbed.

“What does that have to do with our kids Mariah? I work sixteen hours a day sometimes. They barely see me as it is. The least you could do is make sure they see you. What are you gonna do when the new baby gets here? My parents didn't sign up to raise our kids,” Blake noted.

“And I didn't sign up to get cheated on,” Mariah countered.

“You need to stop trying to play the victim. We got together by cheating so miss me with the sympathy ploy,” Blake frowned.

“That is not the same. Jersi was your girlfriend. I’m your wife,” Mariah pointed out.

“Then you need to start acting like it. Get my girls back home where they belong and clean up this damn house. Look at you. You’re not giving me a reason to be faithful,” Blake frowned.

“Did you really just say that shit to me?” Mariah asked in shock.

“I said it and I meant it. Focus less on Jersi and more on what really matters. Get your shit together before you don’t have a husband or kids to come home to. And that’s not a threat,” Blake warned as he walked away.

Mariah was stuck but she didn’t have any other options. She was miserable but she had to put her feelings to the side and do what her husband said. She had to smile through the pain and be a mother to her girls. Either that or find herself back in the same place that she was in when she met Blake. Everything that her mother had told her years ago was so true. A man could either build you up or tear you down. In her mother’s case, she was irreparably torn and Mariah felt like she was headed down the same path. In a time where people were buying products to lighten their skin, Mariah was wishing that hers was darker. Maybe that’s what attracted Blake to Jersi. Her black was indeed beautiful and for the first time in her life, Mariah wished to be someone else.



“That’s good for that stupid bitch!” Talena yelled over the phone.

Jersi was on a three way call with her sister and Ariel, telling them what happened with her and Mariah a few days ago.

“I feel bad as fuck for hitting a pregnant woman but I didn’t know,” Jersi replied.

“I’m sorry cousin but that’s not your fault. She swung on you first and it’s not like she’s showing. You had no way of knowing that she was expecting,” Ariel reasoned.

“Exactly! Fuck that bitch!” Talena snapped.

“Now the bitch is playing on my phone like a lil ass girl. I don’t know how she got my number but I’m tired of blocking her delusional ass. I really wanna lay hands on her again. Since I can’t, her husband is the next best thing,” Jersi said.

“Let that shit go Jersi. You and Memphis are happy together. Fuck Blake and Mariah,” Ariel advised.

“Ariel, shut the fuck up. Memphis ain’t gon’ know shit. Do you Jersi,” Talena said.

Jersi felt like she had satan on one shoulder and an angel on the other. They were both leading her in two different directions but her mind was already made up. No matter what anybody had to say, she was gonna do what she wanted anyway.

“Fuck you Talena. Your miserable ass don’t have a man, so you don’t care if she lose hers,” Ariel snapped, surprising both Jersi and Talena.

“Memphis ain’t going nowhere. That nigga would be a fool to leave my sister. Look at Jersi and look at him,” Talena noted.

“The fuck is that supposed to mean?” Jersi challenged.



“I’m just saying, even you said that he wasn’t too cute when you first met him,” Talena pointed out.

“Bitch, I don’t give a fuck what I said in the past. Don’t try to come for my man. That’s the quickest way to get your feelings hurt,” Jersi barked.

“I know that’s right cousin,” Ariel agreed.

When Jersi’s phone rang, she looked at the screen on her dashboard to see that her mother was calling. She had been avoiding Dena since the incident at Eva’s house, but she couldn’t avoid her forever. Jersi told her girls that she would call them back and answered the phone for her mother.

“Hey ma,” Jersi said.

“Don’t hey ma me. I was about to be on my way to your house if you wouldn’t have answered this damn phone,” Dena fussed.

“I’m not there,” Jersi chuckled.

“It’s not funny Jersi,” Dena chastised.

“Sorry ma,” Jersi replied.

“I need you to tell me what’s up. When did you start messing with Blake again?” Dena questioned.

“It’s nothing ma. I kicked it with him a few times but that was it,” Jersi said, downplaying the situation.

“Why though Jersi? We talked about this already. I know that their actions hurt you but you should have been the bigger person.”

“For years I was the bigger person. I never bothered them and I didn’t have a reason to start. Mariah is the one who started coming for me and I got tired of it. Why does she get to hurt people with no consequences for her

actions?” Jersi wondered.

“I get it Jersi. You wanted her to feel some of the pain that she inflicted on you but it’s not the same. Blake is not her boyfriend, he’s her husband. They have two kids and another on the way. You have a good man and that’s what you need to focus on,” Dena encouraged.

Jersi heard her but she wasn’t listening. Bitches like Mariah made her sick. They did shit without caring or thinking about anybody else. She needed to know that she wasn’t exempt.

“Okay ma,” Jersi replied after a while.

“I mean it Jersi. Let it go and move on,” Dena advised.

“I said okay. I’m done with it,” Jersi replied before they disconnected.

That was perfect because Dena had just arrived at her destination. She parked her car in the driveway and walked up the stairs. After ringing the doorbell, she waited for someone to answer.

“Dena, come on in my dear. I didn’t know that you were stopping by,” Eva smiled as she welcomed her in.

“It wasn’t a planned visit but I hope I’m not interrupting anything,” Dena replied.

“Not at all. The girls are back home with their mother, so I’m here alone,” Eva said while offering her good friend a seat.

“Speaking of their parents; did you know that Blake and Jersi had rekindled their relationship?” Dena asked. She didn’t buy that bullshit that Jersi had told her. In her heart, she knew that it was more than what she tried to make it out to be. Mariah wasn’t going crazy like that for nothing.

“Mariah mentioned it to me once before,” Eva said like it was nothing.

“And you were okay with that?” Dena questioned.

“Let’s just say that I wasn’t surprised,” Eva smirked.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Dena asked.

“Oh come on Dena. Jersi was his first love. That’s not something that can easily be forgotten. Blake loves her and he always has. Mariah is well taken care of so she’ll be fine. It’s not like she can do anything about it anyway,” Eva shrugged.

“That prenup doesn’t hold as much weight as you think it does. Everyone has a breaking point and you saw that the other day when she hit my daughter. You want Mariah to be okay with her husband cheating but she’s obviously not,” Dena pointed out.

“Men cheat all the time. Nobody knows that better than you and me,” Eva said.

“That still doesn’t make it right Eva. Blake is a married man. He chose to cheat on Jersi with Mariah and he has to live with the decision that he made. As much as I love him as a person, I want more than that for my daughter. She deserves better than being some married man’s side chick,” Dena countered.

“Oh please Dena. Stop acting like Jacob wasn’t married to his first wife when you started seeing him. He cheated on his first wife with you and he cheated on you with Tabitha. Jersi was just your karma,” Eva spat.

“No, Jersi was my blessing. No matter how you try to spin it, it’s not right and I don’t agree with it. Unlike you, I’ve never tried to pretend that Jacob and I have an ideal life. We’re flawed and so are our kids. And we’re okay with that because nothing and nobody is perfect. For years you’ve turned a blind eye to your husband’s infidelities and you do the same thing with your kids. I’m almost sure that Cat doesn’t know that BJ has been sleeping with your hairdresser’s daughter. That’s why you refuse to accept

Sassy. There's no room for him in your world because he's not perfect enough. Let's not forget that your husband had an outside child too. You can ignore it all you want to. That won't make her go away," Dena ranted.

Eva was good at pretending and always have been. No one would have ever known that Braxton had a fifteen year old daughter because the child was never around. They paid his daughter's mother a hefty amount every month to make sure that her and the child stayed away. Sassy kept in contact with her and that was another thing that Eva resented him for. He felt like they were both outcast and he knew her pain.

Dena couldn't imagine doing something like that to Jersi. She loved her as if she'd given birth to her herself. Jersi was her baby and that would never change. Jacob and Dena had gone to marriage counseling to fix their issue but Eva would never hear of it. Having someone know that they had problems was like the ultimate sin. She would rather cry herself to sleep at night and put on a smile for everyone in the morning.

"I think you've said enough. Maybe you should go," Eva said as she stood to her feet.

"Yes, maybe I should," Dena agreed.

Eva walked her to the door and slammed it once she walked out of it. Dena didn't give a damn about her feelings and she didn't regret anything that she had said. As soon as she got into her car, she called her husband and waited for him to pick up.

"Hey sweetheart. Your timing is perfect. I was just about to call you," Jacob said.

"I think our friendship with the Harding's has run its course. From now on, we'll be spending our holidays and special events separately," Dena replied.

"What's wrong baby? Did something happen?" Jacob asked.

“A lot has happened and I’m not happy about it. It’s too much to get into over the phone but we definitely need to talk when you get home,” Dena replied.

“Yeah, and I just heard some disturbing news from some of my staff members here,” Jacob sighed.

“What happened baby? Is everything okay?” Dena asked.

“Not really. One of the nurses here is claiming that she’s pregnant by Braxton,” Jacob said.

“What! Is it true?” Dena questioned.

“I’ve been hearing rumors about the two of them for months but I don’t indulge in gossip. Eva is going to lose it if it is true. She’s barely over the first one and that was fifteen years ago,” Jacob answered.

“Men cheat. Her words, not mine,” Dena said while shaking her head.

“I don’t understand what it is that he’s looking for. He’s over fifty years old and he’ll have grandkids that’s older than his youngest child. But I’m beginning to agree with you sweetheart. Maybe we do need to distance ourselves. We’re obviously going in two different directions in life. I don’t care about being the one to break the tradition,” Jacob replied.

“Well, it’s settled. Starting this year, we’re doing our own thing and they can do theirs. I think that’s best before I be serving time in jail,” Dena said.

“Jail? For what?” Jacob chuckled.

“Because if that crazy bitch Mariah puts her hands on my baby again, I’m shooting her between the eyes,” Dena replied as her husband laughed loudly.

Jacob knew all about the fight that Mariah and Jersi had, but he didn’t

know why. He and Dena never really got a chance to discuss it because he had been working so much. She was happy that he had the next two days off because she had a lot to fill him in on.



“**Y**ou look amazing honey,” Sassy complimented once he was done applying Jersi’s makeup.

Jersi’s skin was smooth and flawless, so he didn’t have much work to do. Her curly hair fell perfectly and framed her beautiful face. The backless gold dress that she had on made her chocolate skin glow even more. Her gold strappy red bottoms had her legs looking amazing and made the outfit pop even more.

“Yes sister, you look beautiful,” Dray agreed.

“Let’s take a few selfies before you go. I need these hoes to see what a real life black barbie looks like,” Sassy said as he grabbed his phone.

They took a few pictures of Jersi by herself and she was ready to go soon after. Jersi had taken the test for the senior accountant position and she had to wait for an entire thirty days before she got the results. Carter came through with the study guides that he gave her and she felt confident that she did well. Now, she was on her way to meet Memphis at his friend’s wedding reception. The reception was being held at a hotel ballroom on Canal St. and she knew that she wouldn’t be able to find parking that late in the day. Sassy and Dray agreed to drop her off and she was riding back with Memphis.

“Have fun sister,” Dray said when Jersi got out of the car.

“I will, thanks y’all,” Jersi waved before she walked into the hotel’s lobby.

There was a sign with an arrow that pointed to the ballroom. Jersi tried to call Memphis but he didn’t answer. More than likely, the music was too loud and he couldn’t hear it. She continued to follow the directions of the various signs until she heard the music in a room on the other side of the hotel. When Jersi walked into the ball room, she stopped to look around. The pace was packed and everyone seemed to be having a good time. She saw a few gold and black flags representing the fraternity that Memphis belonged to and most of the men had on the frat colors. Jersi chose to wear gold because she wanted to support her man. She scanned the crowd of people, hoping to find Memphis in the sea of faces.

“My future wife. You must be looking for me,” a man said as he walked over and stood in front of her.

“No, I’m actually looking for my boyfriend,” Jersi smiled.

“That’s me. I’m right here beautiful,” he replied as he continued to flirt with his corny pick up lines.

The first thing that Jersi always noticed about people was their smile. Memphis had a beautiful smile with a set of perfect white teeth. The man who stood before her wasn’t as lucky. He had too many teeth at the top and not enough at the bottom. He looked better with his mouth closed but he obviously didn’t get the memo. He had on all black with a gold tie like most of the other men in attendance, so she knew that he was a part of the fraternity.

“I’m sorry but I’m already taken,” Jersi said politely.

“That’s impossible. What man in his right mind would let you out of his sight?” he flirted while grabbing her hand.



When Jersi smiled, he thought that he was saying something right. He lifted her hand up to his lips for a kiss but he never got the chance to make the connection.

“Don’t even try it nigga,” Memphis said as he pulled Jersi’s hand out of his grasp.

Jersi smiled when she saw him approaching but the other man thought she was smiling at him. Memphis looked good as hell in his all black suit and gold accessories. He was dressed like some of the other men but none of them looked as good.

“Damn Memphis. I didn’t know you had it like that,” the man said as he held his hands up and backed away.

“How you come in here looking better than the bride?” Memphis asked as he kissed her lips.

“It looks like a damn club in here. I didn’t know it was gonna be this packed,” Jersi replied as she looked around.

“Come on so I can show you off,” Memphis smiled as he grabbed her hand.

“Don’t leave me by myself Memphis. I don’t even know anybody here,” Jersi said.

“Stop being so scary girl. These niggas is vultures up in here. Ain’t no way in hell am I leaving you by yourself,” Memphis replied.

He gripped her hand tightly as they maneuvered through the thick crowd. The dance floor was packed and the bride and groom were in the middle of all the action. Memphis introduced her to a few of his friends along the way as they made their way over to the sitting area. Jersi didn’t know he was that popular but they could barely walk without somebody stopping him. Memphis was right when he said that they were vultures. They openly stared at Jersi and complimented her right in his face. Memphis didn’t feel no kind

of way about it though. Jersi clung to him the entire time, so he didn't have a reason to be upset. He was happy that he had the kind of woman on his arm that other men admired.

"Are we finally going to sit down," Jersi asked him.

"Yeah, but I might have to disappear on you for a minute," Memphis replied.

"Why?" She asked while looking around the room.

"Fraternity stuff. My boy Phil saved us a spot at the table with him and his girl. You can sit with her for a few minutes. She looks just as nervous as you," Memphis laughed.

When they got to the table where his friend was, Jersi's eyes lit up when she saw a welcoming face. All her nervousness vanished as he rushed over to her.

"Cat!" Jersi yelled excitedly.

Cat jumped up from the table and embraced her friend like they hadn't seen each other in years. She was so happy to see Jersi and she instantly relaxed. When her boo asked her to accompany him to his frat brother's wedding, she was skeptical at first. She hated going places where she didn't know anyone but she decided to go anyway.

"Bitch, I'm so happy to see you," Cat smiled as she and Jersi took a seat next to each other.

"Shit, I'm happy to see you too. Her ass was ready to go," Phil laughed while referring to Cat.

He was a nice looking heavy set man with a bald head. Jersi knew that he had to be something special because Cat really liked him. She always said that he treated her well and was very attentive to her needs.

“This is my girl, Jersi,” Memphis said as he introduced the two of them. Phil had already introduce him to Cat, so that part was out of the way. He didn’t know how Jersi knew the other woman but he was happy to see her relax a little.

“I’m sorry for being rude. It’s nice to meet you,” Jersi said as she stood up to shake his hand.

“It’s cool. I’m just happy that she’s good now,” Phil replied while smiling at Cat.

“That makes two of us,” Memphis laughed.

When the two men walked away to get them some drinks and food, Cat and Jersi used that as their time to talk.

“Bitch, that’s Memphis? That nigga is fine as fuck,” Cat stated.

“Yeah, that’s him. Is that your professor?” Jersi asked.

“He was. I graduate in two weeks bitch,” Cat yelled excitedly.

“Yes, I’m so proud of you boo,” Jersi smiled.

“Bitch, you look good as hell. I’m about to start going to the gym with you. I need your man to help me out too,” Cat said as she complimented Jersi’s toned frame.

“I started slacking off but I’m back on track now. Memphis is turning his garage into an exercise room. You can come workout with me over there sometimes too,” Jersi replied right as the men came back to the table.

They had waiters passing around appetizers to the guests and they also had a buffet set up in the back. The four of them ate and drank while talking about different things. Jersi had never seen the bride and groom because they were always surrounded by a group of people. After a while, the groom got on the mic and made some kind of weird noise prompting

Memphis and Phil to stand up.

“I’ll be right back,” Memphis said as he kissed Jersi’s lips and walked away.

Jersi and Cat stood up but it was hard for them to see anything. People started clapping and cheering but she didn’t know why. After a while, Jersi stood up in a chair to get a better look. She saw a man seated in a chair in the middle of the floor while the other men surrounded him. They were singing something before they broke out into a step show. The crowd went crazy and someone almost knocked her down.

“What’s going on?” Cat said when Jersi reclaimed her seat.

“Some kind of fraternity shit, I guess,” Jersi shrugged.

Memphis and Phil were gone for a while but they didn’t mind. They sat there and chilled with the champagne and appetizers that the waiters kept passing by with. Once the entertainment was over with, a few people got back on the dance floor.

“Well damn bitch. Now I see why you ain’t checking for Blake ole frail ass no more,” Cat smirked when she saw Memphis headed back to their table.

Most of the men had ditched the jackets and ties and Memphis was one of them. He had on a t-shirt with his fraternity’s logo stamped on the front.

“That’s just a bonus. His personality is the real catch,” Jersi replied.

“You good?” Memphis asked while taking a seat next to her.

“Yeah, I’m straight. Why you undressing and shit? I’m not trying to fight at your friend’s wedding reception,” Jersi replied, making him blush.

“It was hot as fuck but I want to introduce you to a few people before

we go,” he said.

“Okay,” Jersi replied.

About an hour later, Cat and Phil said their goodbyes. Jersi was ready to go too but she didn’t want to rush. When Memphis stood up, she was happy to see that she wasn’t alone. He walked her around to speak to a few more people before they made their way to the newlyweds. The bride was beautiful but she looked exhausted. Memphis waited for the groom to finish talking to someone before he stepped to him. When he turned around, Jersi gasped. The smile that was on his face dropped and Memphis noticed the change in both of them.

“Max, this is my girl, Jersi. You know, the one that y’all niggas are tired of hearing me talk about,” Memphis joked.

Max held his hand out for her to shake but Jersi was stuck. Max was the same man who she’d seen kissing her brother in his living room a few months ago. He was with Dray the night he got shot and even drove him to the hospital. Dray told her that Max had a girlfriend, but it was deeper than that. This nigga actually had a wife now.

“Oh, I’m sorry. It’s nice to meet you,” Jersi said politely while shaking his hand.

“It’s nice to meet you too,” Max replied as he shifted uncomfortably.

“I, uh...I need to run to the bathroom right quick,” Jersi said as he looked up at Memphis.

“Okay,” Memphis replied with a nod.

Jersi quickly walked away as she grabbed her phone from her clutch. As soon as she had it out, she dialed her brother’s number right as she walked inside the bathroom’s vanity area.

“Hey sis,” Dray answered while smacking on something.

“Dray! You will never guess where the hell I am right now,” Jersi whispered.

“At a wedding reception with your man bitch. I’m the one that dropped you off,” Dray reminded her.

“Yeah, but guess who’s the groom?” Jersi countered.

“Who?” Dray inquired.

“Max bitch! The same nigga who was with you when you got shot,” Jersi noted.

“Oh, that was today? I thought he was getting married next month,” Dray replied.

“Wait, so you already knew that he was getting married?” Jersi asked.

“Yes bitch. I told you that he had a girl,” Dray replied.

“You said a girl, not a damn fiancé,” Jersi argued.

“Oh, well it’s the same thing. The nigga invited me but I wasn’t with it. I don’t know why I thought it was next month. I’ll have to congratulate him when I see him next week,” Dray said.

“I can’t even get into this with you right now but I’m calling you as soon as I get home,” Jersi replied right before she hung up.

She checked her reflection in the mirror and made sure that she was still on point. Since she was good she opened the bathroom door and prepared to go back into the room.

“My personal life is just that. I would prefer it if Memphis doesn’t know any of my business,” Max said, startling Jersi as soon as she walked out of the bathroom.

Memphis talked about his new girlfriend all the time but Max would have never guessed that it was Dray's sister. He never remembered if Memphis said her name or not. Jersi wasn't a very common name so it would have rang a bell if he did.

"Whatever you and Dray do is none of my business," Jersi replied as she raised her hands.

This was the second nigga who her brother had been with who confronted her about keeping their secret. Jersi didn't know what was up with men these days. The reason she respected her brother so much was because he was honest about who he really was. He didn't pretend to be one way around certain groups of people. Dray was unapologetically bisexual and very proud of it. These other niggas were trying to lead a double life.

"I'm a loan officer at Regions Bank. That's where you know me from if anybody ask," Max sneered as he turned and walked away.

Jersi wanted to curse his ass out but she just let it go. He wanted to act like he was big and bad now but he was just tonguing her brother down in his living room a few months ago.

"Ready?" Memphis asked when she walked back over to him.

"Yeah," Jersi nodded as she took his outstretched hand and walked away.

Memphis used the hotel's valet service, so they waited out front for them to bring his car around. Jersi was unusually quiet and that wasn't like her. She always had something to say.

"You good baby?" Memphis asked as he squeezed her hand.

She nodded and smiled but still didn't speak. Memphis wanted to pry but he was learning more about Jersi every day. She would tell him what was wrong but only when she was ready. He had no problem being patient, so he

just let it go. When his car came around, he tipped the valet worker and opened the door for Jersi.

“My house or yours?” Memphis asked her.

“I have to tell you something?” Jersi blurted out as she looked over at him.

She knew that Memphis was looking at her sideways, wondering how she knew his friend. Jersi didn’t want him to think she was on no bullshit, so she decided to tell him what was up.

“I’m listening,” Memphis said.

“I’ve met your friend Max before today,” Jersi replied.

“I figured as much. Did y’all mess around before or something?” Memphis asked, hoping that she said no. It wouldn’t change how he felt about her but he still didn’t want it to be true.

“No, but he’s been messing with somebody in my family,” Jersi said.

“Who?” Memphis questioned.

“Dray,” Jersi disclosed.

“Your brother!” Memphis boomed.

“Yes. I know it’s probably hard to believe but I saw it with my own eyes,” Jersi noted as she ran the entire story down to him.

“I believe you,” Memphis noted.

Unknowingly, Jersi had just put the final piece of the puzzle together for him. The day Dray got shot, Memphis was bored out of his mind. He wandered around the hospital trying to pass the time away and he ran into Max. He claimed to be there for one of his people but Memphis never



thought anything of it at the time. That was really nothing to raise suspicion. It was a day or so after when Max showed up to get his car hand washed at his spot that did it. One of the workers told JJ that there was blood on the leather seats but Max didn't appear to be hurt. He was with Dray when he got shot and he was the one who drove him to the hospital. It all made sense now after hearing what Jersi had just said. Max had never gave off the impression that he was bisexual but that was his business. He obviously didn't want anybody to know which is why he wasn't out in the open with it. Memphis wondered if his new bride knew what was up. If not, Max was wrong as fuck for doing her like that.

“Please don't tell anybody Memphis,” Jersi begged.

“That's his business Jersi. That don't have shit to do with me. I saw how y'all looked at each other, so I knew that something was up,” he replied.

“Do you think his wife knows?” Jersi asked.

“I don't know. Hell, I didn't even know and we graduated from high school and college together. I don't look at him no differently though. That's his life and his business,” Memphis shrugged.

“The way Dray was talking made it seem like they were still gonna be together,” Jersi noted.

“Stay out of it baby. They're two grown ass men. Let them figure it out,” Memphis replied as he pulled up to his house.

“Who told you that I wanted to come to your house?” She smirked.

“You never said anything when I asked so I made the decision for you. I need you to come up out of that dress but leave the heels on,” Memphis winked.

“I just hope your mama and her sidekick at least let me cum before they come busting up in here,” Jersi said making him laugh.

Memphis kept saying that he wanted to change the locks but he had been too busy to get it done. Valerie hadn't been back to his house since then. As a matter of fact, she was barely speaking to him. Memphis hadn't done anything wrong, so he was okay with that too.



“Don’t try to drive back if you have too many drinks Memphis. Baton Rouge is not that far. I’ll come get you if I have to,” Jersi said as she kissed him.

“I’m not trying to have you driving that late by yourself,” Memphis replied.

“Well, just stay the night if you have to. That’s better than getting on the road and killing yourself or somebody else,” Jersi reasoned.

“Alright baby. I’ll call you as soon as I get there,” Memphis promised.

He gave Jersi a tight hug and kissed her again before he left. He was going to Baton Rouge with his brothers to one of their cousin’s bachelor party. His cousin was only going to the court house to get married but they all got together to do something for him before then. Jersi didn’t have any plans, so she went back inside when he left and laid on the sofa. Dray went with Sassy to Atlanta to do a show and Ariel was at work. Jersi had gone to Cat’s graduation a few days before and Cat had just moved into her new apartment. She served BJ with divorce papers just like she said and he wasn’t taking the news too well. All the dirt that he’d done to her over the years and he had the nerve to get mad because she wanted out of the marriage. He was threatening

to take their son from her and everything but Cat was unfazed. She had a good lawyer who wasn't going to let that happen. She had saved up a nice amount of money and had paid her rent up for six months. Her place was nicely furnished and she still had more than enough in the bank to keep her head above water. She was Jersi's girl, so she would help her out if ever she needed it. As if on cue, Jersi's phone rang and Cat's picture popped up. She was bored out of her mind and she was happy that she called.

"Hey boo. How's the moving going?" Jersi asked her.

"We finally finished and got everything in place. I need a damn drink," Cat huffed.

"Is BJ still being a stalker?" Jersi asked.

"I just dropped Tre off by Eva and he was already there waiting. I don't understand how a man who cheated for his entire marriage could behave the way he does. All that begging and crying for nothing. You should have put that same energy into being faithful," Cat replied.

"How is Tre handling it?" Jersi questioned.

"He told me that he's happy we moved. My baby was miserable too with all that arguing and shit we were doing. Me leaving BJ was best for us both. He loves his room and he's happy that there is a playground out front. It'll be a while before I let him meet Phil though. It's way too soon for all that. I told him that he can only come over when Tre is with his father."

"I definitely understand boo," Jersi said.

"And the nerve of Blake's bitch ass to try to give me some advice. Talking about we should have fought harder to save our marriage. I looked at him like he was stupid," Cat fussed.

"He better tell his bitch to stop playing on my phone. I lost count of how many numbers I've blocked," Jersi fumed.

“That bitch is crazy. Who still even plays on people’s phone these days?” Cat questioned.

Mariah was really losing it. She sent Jersi pictures every single day without fail. She sent pictures of her and Blake’s wedding day as well as ultrasound pictures of the twins. She sent pictures of Blake when he was sleeping and she even sent one showing him wearing his wedding ring. She sent one every day and sometimes more than once a day. She had to be using some kind of app because the numbers were never the same.

“She’s a nut,” Jersi laughed.

“What you got going on today?” Cat asked her.

“Not a damn thing. Memphis went to Baton Rouge to his cousin’s bachelor party and Dray is in Atlanta,” Jersi replied.

“Let’s go get some drinks, my treat. I feel like I have a lot to celebrate,” Cat said excitedly.

“I’m down for that. Where do you wanna go?” Jersi asked.

“Well, since I’m balling on a budget, let’s go to The Velvet Cactus,” Cat suggested.

“Sounds like a plan to me,” Jersi replied.

“Okay, I need to freshen up but I’ll pick you up in about an hour,” Cat said.

“I’ll be ready,” Jersi replied before she hung up.

She got up and took a shower before looking for something cute and comfortable to wear. Since it was warm outside, she decided to throw on a sundress and some slides. The restaurant was usually cool, so she grabbed her jean jacket and slipped that on over her dress. She washed her hair in the shower, so she decided to let it air dry and curl up on it’s own. Jersi looked at

herself in the mirror and was satisfied with the end result. She sat around, watching tv and waiting for Cat to pick her up. Memphis had finally made it to his destination so she talked to him for a little while too. He gave her the same advice that she'd given him before he left. He told her not to let Cat drive if she'd had too much to drink. When Jersi's phone rang, she saw that it was the front gate calling. She buzzed Cat in and grabbed her purse and keys before leaving the house.

“Hey boo,” Cat said when Jersi got into her car.

“Hey girl. My man said to tell you not to drink too much and try to drive me home,” Jersi joked.

“Tell him that I was born to do this. I'm the best designated drunk driver ever,” Cat replied as they both laughed.

The restaurant was crowded when they got there but they were seated immediately. Their first round of drinks came out soon after and they placed their food order. Cat posted a picture of them on Instagram with their drinks in their hands. She was sorry that she did because thirty minutes later, BJ was walking through the door. Even worse was the fact that Blake had walked in right with him. Jersi had her back to the door so she didn't see anything.

“Fuck! That nigga must have seen my Instagram post. How the fuck did I forget to block his ass?” Cat frowned.

“Who?” Jersi asked as she looked around. She groaned inwardly when she saw Blake and BJ headed their way.

“I'm sorry Jersi. I did not know that they were going to show up here,” Cat apologized.

“It's not your fault Cat. I can handle myself,” Jersi assured her right as they stopped in front of her table.

“Why do I have to look on social media to find out where my wife is at?” BJ asked while looking at Cat.

“Soon to be ex-wife nigga. And no worries, I just unfollowed and blocked you,” Cat replied.

“Cut the bullshit Cat. You don’t want a divorce and you know it. How did we go from having a perfect marriage to you filing for divorce?” BJ asked.

“Nigga, are you delusional? The only perfect thing to come from our marriage was my son. You cheated the entire time and I let you think that you were getting away with it. I was there for convenience and tuition money,” Cat noted.

“Okay, so, I wasn’t the best husband, but I took care of you. All your needs were met and you never wanted for anything. Going through with this divorce means that you’re walking away with nothing,” BJ said as he took a seat right next to her. Blake didn’t wait to be invited. He sat down in the booth next to Jersi, making her slide over to put some space in between them. Cat and his brother were in a heated discussion, so he took that time to talk to her.

“You running from me now Jersi?” he asked while licking his lips.

He hadn’t seen her since the fight that she and Mariah had at his mother’s house. When BJ called and told him that she was at the restaurant with Cat, Blake agreed to meet him over there. He was in so much of a hurry that he took Mariah’s car instead of his own. His car was parked in the garage and he didn’t have time to move it. He wanted to catch Jersi before she left and he was happy that he did.

“If that’s what I need to do to get away,” Jersi shrugged.

“Girl, let’s go,” Cat said in disgust. Her night was ruined and she did not want to be in BJ’s company a minute longer. Her food was half eaten but she was full enough to be satisfied.

“Can we talk Jersi? I’ll bring you back home,” Blake said desperately.

“Nigga please. You know damn well I’m not letting you bring me home,” Jersi frowned.

When Cat got up, Jersi pushed Blake out of her way. Once the bill was paid, they walked out of the restaurant with Blake and BJ following right behind them. Cat got into the car and ignored whatever BJ was saying. She waited while Blake stood there salivating over Jersi.

“Why you been acting bad with me lately? I been missing you,” Blake whispered in Jersi’s ear as he pushed up on her from behind.

“I have a man Blake and you have a wife. And tell that bitch to stop playing on my damn phone. She’s too old for that,” Jersi argued right as his phone rang. When Mariah’s face popped up on the screen, Jersi rolled her eyes and frowned.

“There she is, you tell her,” he challenged with a smirk. Calling her bluff was the wrong think for him to do. BJ laughed when Jersi grabbed his phone and answered it.

“Hey Mariah,” Jersi sang into the phone.

“Who the fuck is this!” Mariah yelled angrily.

“You know exactly who this is. Stop playing on my fucking phone with your childish ass. That baby saved you before but you won’t be pregnant forever,” Jersi ranted.

“Fuck you bitch! Black, ugly ass hoe!” Mariah spat angrily.

“I can’t be too black and ugly. I can’t keep your husband out of my face,” Jersi said.

“You doing all that and the nigga still comes home to me every night,” Mariah raged.



“Only because I let him. Where is he now though?” Jersi asked her.

“Bitch, just put my husband on the phone,” Mariah yelled.

“Nah bitch, he can’t talk right now,” Jersi laughed.

“Put my fucking husband on the phone now!” Mariah yelled, making Jersi move the phone away from her ear.

“You’re cutting into our time but let me see if he wants to talk,” Jersi said.

“Jersi is wild as hell,” BJ laughed like it was really funny.

“Do you wanna talk to your wife Blake?” Jersi asked him.

“Man,” he drawled while rubbing the back of his neck.

“See, he don’t wanna talk right now. I can’t sleep out no more so he’ll be home tonight. I’m sure you’ll be up waiting for him,” Jersi said.

“Enjoy your side chick roll because that’s you’ll ever be. Nigga used to tell you he was studying and be right in the hotel room with me. I stepped on the scene and he forgot all about you. Bitch, it was me who stopped him from coming to visit you on the weekends. It was me who declined your calls to his phone. That nigga was laid up with me while you cried yourself to sleep at night. It was my finger that he put a ring on,” Mariah yelled, making Jersi’s blood boil.

Granted, she was over everything that happened between her and Blake. She was just pissed that Mariah was on the phone bragging about the shit. Jersi went through hell during that time in her life and that bitch was making a joke out of it. Jersi opened the door to Cat’s car and told her that she could leave. Mariah was still on the phone going off while Jersi took a seat in the passenger’s side of her car. Blake didn’t have a known destination in mind, so he drove them straight to the penthouse. He parked in the underground garage as his wife continued to curse and rant on the phone. He

didn't care about what she was saying. He was more focused on Jersi, who had just removed her underwear. She spread her legs wide and pulled his face in between her legs. Blake was like a starved animal the way he dove in and started feasting on her. When she heard Jersi moaning, Mariah started going crazy. She was screaming to the top of her lungs like that was supposed to change something. Jersi pushed Blake's face in deeper and grinded her hips. He sounded like he was being smothered but he loved every minute of it. He tried to put his whole face in it and Jersi encouraged it. He didn't care that she had a man. She was his first love and always would be. When her legs started shaking, Blake braced himself for what was to come. Jersi squealed as the juices flowed from her body into his awaiting mouth. Mariah was on the phone screaming and crying like a damn fool. Jersi almost forgot all about her until she started cursing her out again,

“Are you done bitch because you're messing up my nut,” Jersi said to Mariah.

“I swear to God, you're a dead bitch whenever I see you again,” Mariah threatened.

“Well damn. In that case, I better enjoy myself while I can. You got condoms boo?” Jersi asked while looking over at Blake.

He didn't care that his wife was on the phone going off. He reached into his wallet and grabbed a condom. Blake wasted no time undoing his pants and placing the condom on his erection. He was waiting for Jersi to climb over the seat, but she never did. Instead, she reached her petite hand over and started stroking his latex covered dick. Blake threw his head back and enjoyed the feel of her hands as she stroked him rapidly. He moaned as she squeezed and gripped his dick a little tighter.

“Shit Jersi,” Blake hissed as she quickened her movements.

He didn't know if his wife was still on the phone or not and he really didn't care. Jersi's hands were working over time and he was ready to bust. After a few more minutes of her stroking him and that's exactly what he did. Blake's chest rose and fell like he'd been running a marathon instead of

receiving pleasure. Jersi pulled out her phone and played around on it before she opened the car door.

“I gotta go,” she announced, making him look at her like she was crazy. Although he’d received some kind of pleasure, it wasn’t what he was looking for. He wanted to be inside of her but she obviously wasn’t having it.

“Go where?” Blake asked when she walked over to his side of the car.

“Home,” Jersi replied while removing the condom from his flaccid penis.

“I can take you home,” Blake offered as he fixed himself up.

“I’ve already called an Uber,” Jersi announced.

“I wasn’t ready for you to go,” Blake replied as he pulled her into the car and made her straddle him.

He tried to kiss her but she turned her head and got out of the car. She leaned over as if she were putting her mouth up to his crotch area. Blake got excited until she looked up at him with an amused smirk.

“Nah, I can’t be putting my mouth on another woman’s husband,” Jersi teased before walking away.

“Stop playing Jersi. When am I gonna see you again?” Blake asked as he followed her out of the garage.

“I’ll be in touch,” Jersi replied as she looked to see how far her ride was.

Blake got lucky that night but it would never happen again. Jersi only wanted to piss Mariah off but she loved Memphis too much to ever go there with Blake again. She didn’t have sex with him but she felt bad for dealing with him at all. She was taking that secret to her grave because Memphis would die if he ever found out. She couldn’t risk losing the man she loved for

one who she didn't even like.

“Call me or at least answer when I call you,” Blake said right as Jersi's ride pulled up and she got in.

He watched until she was out of sight before going to get back in the car. As soon as he did, his phone started ringing off the hook. It was stupid of him to let Jersi answer his phone but he did it anyway. Now, he was going to hear Mariah's mouth and he wasn't in the mood for it. She wasn't going to let that go any time soon and he was already dreading it. Just the thought of what awaited him at home gave Blake a headache. After thinking long and hard, he decided not to even go home. He locked up Mariah's car and headed upstairs to his and Jersi's love nest. He was only making matters worse but he really didn't care at the time. He needed another day of solitude before he had to deal with more drama.



Jersi woke up the next morning to the loud ringing of her phone. After catching an Uber from Blake's penthouse, she showered and went straight to sleep. Memphis stayed the night at his cousin's house, so she didn't have to wait up for him. When she looked at her phone, Jersi smiled when she saw his picture pop up.

"Hey baby. Are you back?" Jersi asked when she answered for him.

"No, but I'm on my way," he replied.

"Come straight over here," Jersi requested.

"What did you do last night while I was gone?" Memphis asked her.

"I told you that I went out to have a few drinks with Cat," Jersi yawned.

"That's your story?" Memphis inquired.

"What do you mean? It's not a story. That's what I did," Jersi replied.

"Was your ex there?" Memphis inquired.

“No. I was with Cat. Who told you that?” Jersi asked.

“So, me hearing that you were sitting at the table with your ex is a lie? I guess you didn’t leave with the nigga either,” Memphis said, making Jersi’s heart drop.

“What are you talking about?” Jersi inquired.

“Don’t worry about it Jersi. I see I can’t get the truth out of you,” Memphis noted.

“I told you the truth. I was with Cat last night,” Jersi insisted.

“It’s all good Jersi. This conversation is dead and so is this relationship. I don’t have time for the games,” Memphis replied.

“I’m not playing games. Memphis! Memphis!” Jersi yelled. It was too late because he had already hung up.

She was hyperventilating as she jumped up from the bed and ran to the bathroom. Jersi hurriedly completed her morning hygiene and threw on some clothes. She felt sick to her stomach as she grabbed her keys and purse. As soon as she got into her car, she called Memphis back but he didn’t answer. Memphis said that he was on his way back and she wanted to be waiting for him when he returned. She didn’t have a key to get in his house, but she wasn’t opposed to waiting out front. Jersi cried as she drove, praying that she could make things right. When her phone alerted her of an incoming text, she got excited when she saw that it was from Memphis. Her excitement didn’t last long when she opened the message and saw what it was.

“The fuck,” Jersi cursed when she saw a picture of her and Blake sitting at the table the night before. Another picture showed her and Blake standing outside with him being a little too close up on her. The final pictures were of her getting in the car and leaving soon after. Memphis had her dead right and she wondered how. She lied and he had all the proof he needed.

Jersi couldn’t help the tears as they cascaded down her face. She was

so hell bent on revenge that she didn't even think about the consequences that she would possibly face. She wanted to make Mariah and Blake suffer, but she was suffering too. Although she knew that it was pointless, she tried Memphis' phone a few more times. He didn't bother answering and that hurt even more. Jersi was drowning in her tears and before long, four hours had passed. Memphis still hadn't made it home, so she decided to check the gym. When she saw that his car wasn't there, Jersi decided to give up and go home. She climbed into bed and cried until her eyes ached. It felt like she was dying inside and she didn't know how to fix what she had broken. She didn't remember when it happened but Jersi eventually fell asleep.

When she got up the next morning, it was only a little after six. She checked her phone, praying that one of the missed calls were from Memphis. When she saw that everyone had called but him, Jersi started crying again. She was wrong and she could admit that. Still, she wasn't willing to give up on her relationship. After showering and putting on some comfortable attire, Jersi decided to swing by the gym. She was relieved but nervous when she saw Memphis' car parked out front. Jersi took a deep breath to calm her nerves before she eventually got out of the car. As soon as she walked into the gym, she saw Memphis doing a weigh in for Lila's trifling ass. They were behind the glass petition but Jersi had a clear view. Erin was behind the desk but her head was down. When Jersi swiped her card, she pushed the turnstile, but it didn't move. She swiped her card again but the light never turned green for her to go.

"Hey Erin. Can you let me in? Something must be wrong with my card," Jersi said.

Erin looked uncomfortable and she hated being put in the middle of what was going on. She was hoping that Jersi didn't show up while she was there but she wasn't so lucky.

"I'm sorry Jersi but your membership has been cancelled," Erin pointed out.

"Cancelled!" Jersi yelled. "How? I didn't cancel it and I didn't tell anyone else to do it either."

“I really don’t know what to say,” Erin shrugged sadly.

“Really Memphis? You had them to cancel my membership?” Jersi yelled.

When Memphis looked over at her and turned his head, she was seeing red. Jersi didn’t give a damn about her membership anymore. She hopped over the turnstile and rushed right over to him.

“I know you heard me talking to you,” Jersi fumed as she stood there with her hands on her hips.

“Chill out Jersi. I’m working,” Memphis replied nonchalantly.

“I guess you didn’t see me calling you all day yesterday either,” Jersi said.

“Yeah, I did,” he replied as Lila smirked and snickered.

“You couldn’t answer the phone?” Jersi asked.

“Yeah, I could have. I just didn’t,” he answered.

Lila didn’t even try to be discreet that time. She looked at Jersi and busted out laughing right in her face. With the way Jersi was feeling, that was the wrong thing for her to do. Memphis didn’t even see it coming and neither did Lila. Jersi walked up to her and slammed her fist in Lila’s face. She grabbed her hair and started swinging on her soon after.

“Chill out Jersi!” Memphis yelled as he pulled her away from the other woman.

“Let me go!” Lila screamed since Jersi still had her hair in a death grip.

Memphis had to physically pry Jersi’s hands from her hair before



picking her up and carrying her outside.

“Give me your keys,” Memphis demanded.

Jersi pulled the keys from her pocket and he opened the door for her to sit in the driver’s seat of her car. He wasn’t in the mood to deal with the drama especially since he’d made himself clear the day before.

“Why did you have them cancel my membership? I was a member here before I started dating you. How is that fair Memphis? They didn’t even have the decency to call and tell me that it was cancelled,” Jersi argued and cried.

“Who is they? This is my shit. I own this gym and the other two locations. I cancelled your membership,” Memphis said, surprising her with his revelation.

It all made sense to her now though. Memphis had access to everything in the facility. He had keys to all the offices and he knew things that most of the other employees didn’t. Jersi just assumed he was a trainer. She never knew that he owned the place. That meant that he also owned the juice bar next to it.

“I fucked up okay, but I didn’t have sex with him. You didn’t even give me a chance to explain,” Jersi cried.

“There’s nothing to explain Jersi. I saw all that I needed to see. I’m happy that I did have proof because you would have lied to me anyway,” Memphis noted. Deep down, he was happy to know that she didn’t have sex with her ex but that still didn’t make it right.

“I’m sorry but I can explain,” Jersi sobbed.

“Stop with the tears Jersi. You know I hate that shit,” Memphis said as he ran his hand through his waves.

Seeing a woman cry was his weakness but he couldn't back down. When Juan told him that he and Lila saw Jersi out with another man, his heart couldn't take it. His cousin had a crush on Jersi and Lila was jealous of her. In his mind, they both had a motive for wanting them to break up. When they sent the proof to his phone, Memphis had to walk outside of his cousin's party to get himself together. His entire night was ruined and he was ready to go home. He just knew that Jersi was the one. He hadn't had feelings like the ones he had for her since his wife died. To know that she was playing him for her married ex had Memphis in his feelings. He hadn't cried since Layla died but that all changed that night. He actually shed tears over losing the woman who he had fallen in love with.

"Can we talk Memphis?" Jersi pleaded.

"What is there to talk about Jersi? I love the fuck out of you but I love me too. There is a crowd for me sweetheart. I'm not about to sit back and play the fool while you creep around with your married ex. If you wanted the nigga, you should have just stayed with him," Memphis argued.

"I don't want him! I hate him!" Jersi yelled out as she broke down and cried harder.

Seeing her so broken was tearing him up inside. His heart was breaking with every tear that she shed. Memphis had to stop himself from reaching out to comfort her. He had to snap out of it and remember why he couldn't fold. Jersi had done him wrong and he wasn't about to pacify her ass. He could see that she was hurting but he was hurting too. She broke their bond and that wasn't an easy thing to get back.

"It damn sure didn't seem like you hate the nigga to me," Memphis noted with a frown.

"That's because I never told you why," Jersi sniffled.

Memphis listened as she ran everything down to him. Crazy as it sounded, he saw a lot of himself in Jersi and it wasn't a pretty sight. Her need for retaliation against her ex was almost the same as his need for vengeance

against his father. He knew all too well how she felt but he couldn't forgive her for cheating on him. His heart wanted him to but his mind wouldn't allow it.

"I get it Jersi and I understand. I felt the same way about my father and I still have a hard time being in his presence. But understanding is all that I have to give. I can't do the relationship thing with you no more. You broke my trust and that's not something that I easily give. I love you and the shit hurts bad as fuck. I gotta do what's best for me though. You be safe and enjoy the rest of your day," Memphis said as he walked off and left her sobbing in the car.

Being hurt by Blake felt like a walk in the park compared to how she was feeling now. Jersi recovered from that heartbreak but she wasn't sure if she could bounce back again. She still had about two hours before she had to be at work but there was no way that she was going to make it. She sent her boss a message to let her know that she wouldn't be in to work that day. More than likely, she would need the next one off too. All she wanted to do was lay up in her bed and cry until her eyes were swollen shut.



Blake wasn't in the mood for the drama that awaited him behind the closed doors of his home. Mariah had called him all night and most of the morning. Blake had to turn his phone off just so that he could rest. After stopping to eat breakfast, he finally decided to show his face at almost noon. As soon as he walked into the house, Mariah jumped up from the sofa and ran over to him.

“You fucked that nasty bitch in my car!” She screamed as she started swinging on him.

“Calm the fuck down Mariah! I didn’t fuck nobody in your car,” Blake replied as he tried his best to restrain her.

“Yes you did! I heard you! I heard everything!” She yelled and cried.

“You didn’t hear a damn thing because I didn’t fuck her,” Blake swore.

“I can’t believe that you’re doing this to me. You didn’t even try to come home last night,” Mariah sobbed.

“This is why. I’m sick of this shit. I can’t even go to the fucking bathroom without you bringing up Jersei’s name,” Blake argued.

“You made me this way. You let another bitch answer your phone and disrespect me. She did it right in your face and you didn’t even try to stop her. You fucked the bitch in my car knowing that I was right there on the phone. Where is the respect Blake?” Mariah fumed.

“You need to relax Mariah. You’re pregnant and you’re doing too much,” Blake replied calmly.

“Don’t act like you give a fuck about this baby. You wouldn’t be stressing me out like this if you did,” Mariah ranted.

“Where are my kids?” Blake asked her.

“Fuck your kids! They’re all that you seem to care about. What about me? What about the woman who gave birth to your kids? Where is the love for me?” Mariah yelled. She jumped when Blake rushed over and grabbed her by the front of her shirt.

“Bitch, you must be losing the little mind that you have left. You

better not ever fix your mouth to say something like that about my kids again. I'll put your ass out in the streets and raise them by myself." Blake threatened.

"I don't deserve this," Mariah said as she dropped down to the floor and cried.

She was a few months into her pregnancy and she was sure that stressing and crying all the time wasn't healthy for her baby. She remembered how happy she was when she was pregnant with the twins. Blake catered to her and she never had to lift a finger. If he wasn't at work, he was at home making sure that she was okay. Things had changed and she was sure that they would never be the same again.

"I'm sure other people didn't deserve the things that you did to them either," Blake replied after a while.

"You keep throwing that shit in my face like I did it all by myself. It takes two to cheat Blake. Yeah, I came on to you but you didn't turn me down, did you?" Mariah fumed.

"No but maybe I should have. This shit is draining and I'm sick of it," Blake frowned as he turned and walked away.

"I'm not giving you a divorce Blake. If that's your goal, then you're wasting your time," Mariah noted as she followed behind him.

"I never asked for one. Make no mistake about it, if I wanted this marriage to be over, nothing that you could say or do would change my mind or stop me," Blake pointed out.

"Just tell me what I'm doing wrong. What is she doing that I'm not?" Mariah asked.

"It's nothing like that Mariah. You're not doing anything wrong. Jersei and I have history. I never stopped loving her and you know that. This entire situation is complicated and I don't know how to fix it. I never wanted to

love two women at the same time but that's my life right now. I'm sorry," Blake apologized.

Mariah's heart was broken beyond repair and she was tired of crying. As much as she tried to deny it, she had turned into a younger version of her mother. She lost herself in a man and she didn't know how to come back from that. There was no her without Blake and she had come to realize that. She didn't even know when it happened, but somehow, it did.

"I need to get out of here for a while. The girls are in their room watching tv. I'll be back after I get some fresh air," Mariah said as she grabbed her purse and keys, heading for the door.

Keeping everything to herself was starting to take its toll on her and she needed to vent. Maybe talking to her father or one of her friends would help her to feel better. When Mariah got outside, she stood there for a while just staring at her car. Blake swore that he didn't have sex with Jersi in there but she wasn't convinced. Mariah heard the moaning from both of them and she wasn't crazy. The first thing she needed to do was have her car cleaned out or she wouldn't even feel comfortable driving it. After just standing there for a while, Mariah finally got into her car. She sniffed the air around her, hoping that it didn't smell like sex. When Mariah closed the door, she noticed that her seat was pushed all the way back since Blake was so tall. When she reached underneath to adjust it, her hand stumbled upon something else. When she picked it up, she gasped when she saw that it was a used condom with semen inside of it. Blake swore that he didn't have sex with Jersi but that was just another one of his lies. Mariah felt like she was struggling to breathe as she grabbed a napkin to put his evidence in. She stormed into the house and found Blake in their bedroom playing with their daughters.

"You fucking liar! You fucked her in my car!" Mariah screamed as she started wailing on her husband. Her girls started crying and huddled into the corner as she threw things from the dresser at their father. She was losing it and she didn't care about trying to comfort her kids.

"Mariah stop! What the hell is wrong with you?" Blake asked as he tried to hold her back.

“This is what’s wrong with me. I found this nasty shit in my car,” she yelled while throwing the used condom on the floor near his feet. She didn’t miss the look of guilt that covered his face when he saw it.

“I’m sorry about that but we didn’t have sex in your car,” Blake swore.

He knew that what he said sounded unbelievable but it was true. Aside from a hand job and oral, nothing else took place. He remembered Jersei pulling the condom off of him but he didn’t know where she put it. Had he known that it was still in the car, he would have made sure to dispose of it.

“Stop lying to me! How did your sperm get into the condom if you didn’t fuck her?” Mariah fumed as her daughters continued to cry.

“Stop this Mariah. Look at what you’re doing to the girls. This is not the time or place to discuss this,” Blake pointed out.

“Fuck you! This is the perfect time to discuss you fucking another bitch in my car,” Mariah fumed.

“I didn’t fuck her. I went down on her and she gave me a hand job. Are you satisfied now? You wanted the truth and you got it,” Blake bellowed angrily.

He hated having that kind of conversation in the presence of his kids but she forced his hand. Mariah wouldn’t let up, so he told her the truth.

“You nasty bastard! How could you do this to me? You’re going down on other bitches like you don’t have a wife at home,” Mariah screeched and she started swinging on him again.

When she stopped and dropped down to the floor, Blake got concerned. She was holding her stomach like she was in pain.

“What’s wrong Mariah?” Blake asked as he kneeled down right next

to her.

“It hurts,” she yelled out in pain.

“Shit. Okay baby, just relax. I’m calling an ambulance,” Blake said as he jumped up to grab his phone.

“Please God. Don’t take my baby,” Mariah cried as she curled up into a fetal position.

She was having mixed feelings about being pregnant again but she needed something to possibly save her failing marriage. When she felt something warm in between her legs, she looked down to see that her tan colored leggings were saturated in blood.

“She’s bleeding! Please, send some help right away,” Blake begged as he kneeled down by her again.

Mariah looked at her girls and they looked scared to death. She was sure that her face mirrored theirs but there was nothing that she could do to comfort them. She was stressed out and possibly miscarrying her third child. It was a hard pill to swallow but her husband and his mistress were the reasons why.





**M**emphis felt like a fish out of water as he flopped around in his bed all night. It had been two weeks since he and Jersi broke up and he was sick behind it. Although he felt that it had to be done, he was still fucked up over it. Before Jersi came into his life, he hadn't been in love since his wife died. He'd lost count of how many times he wanted to pick up the phone and call her. Even when he saw that she was calling him, he had to stop himself from answering. The text messages that she sent broke his heart but he never responded. It was crazy because he couldn't even bring himself to block her number. Knowing that she still cared enough to call gave him a little comfort. He was trying to move on and talk to other people but it wasn't working. He went on a date the night before and he couldn't even force himself to have a good time.

“Fuck,” Memphis hissed as he got up from the bed.

He grabbed his blanket and pillow and headed to the front room. The huge bed that was in his room felt too empty without Jersi being in it. She picked the bedroom set out and it reminded him of her too much. It was because of her that he was even sleeping in his room again. Now that she wasn't there, he didn't see the point. After tossing and turning for a little while longer, Memphis finally drifted off to sleep. It felt like he had just got into a deep slumber when he heard his mother's voice. He was happy that he didn't have to work that day because he wouldn't have made it.

“I fixed you some breakfast baby. Get up while it’s still hot,” Valerie said as she gently shook his arm.

“What are you doing here ma?” Memphis groggily asked.

“Stop asking stupid questions. I’m here to clean, just like always,” Valerie replied.

He was kicking himself for not getting the locks changed like he was supposed to. He didn’t care that Jersi wasn’t there anymore. His mother still needed to respect his privacy. He was sure that she’d been informed of his and Jersi’s breakup because she refused to step foot in the house as long as the other woman was there.

“The house is not dirty,” he said while opening his eyes. It was only a little after nine that morning and he had just gone to bed around five.

“I don’t know why you let her come in here changing everything around. I don’t like nothing that she picked out,” Valerie fussed as she moved around the house.

Memphis didn’t have on any clothes, so he wrapped the blanket around himself and stood up. Once he threw on some sweats and a shirt, he completed his morning hygiene before joining his mother in the kitchen. He was happy to see that she was alone and Lila wasn’t with her.

“Listen, I appreciate you wanting to clean and cook for me, but it’s not necessary,” Memphis noted.

“Lila told me about what that lil girl did. It was bad enough that she cheated on you, but she ain’t have no business putting her hands on Lila like she did. I’m happy that you got rid of her. She was nothing but trouble anyway,” Valerie said.

“Lila needs to get a life outside of mine. I bet she didn’t tell you about

the part that she played in everything. Whatever happened between me and Jersi ain't nobody's business," Memphis ranted.

"I see that she left some of her stuff here. I'm gonna pack it up so you can bring it to her," Valerie said, ignoring his comments.

"I don't need you to do that ma. Thanks for the breakfast, but I can clean up my own house. There's really nothing to clean," Memphis pointed out.

Besides the living room and his bedroom, the house was basically empty. Jersi was helping him furnish it before everything went left. With the way he had been feeling lately, he wasn't sure how much longer their breakup would last. He was miserable without her and he was hoping that she felt the same way. He didn't want Valerie to touch anything that belonged to Jersi. As crazy as it might have sounded, he really wanted her to come back.

"I'm just happy that you got rid of her. I knew there was something about her that I didn't like," Valerie fussed once she finished cleaning the kitchen.

"You can't dislike somebody that you've never met," Memphis noted.

"Let's not forget how I met her," Valerie frowned as she thought back to what she'd walked in on a while ago.

"Alright ma. Thanks for breakfast but I got some moves to make," Memphis said as he walked her to the door. He was trying to be respectful but she was making it too hard.

"Have you been sleeping baby? You look worn out," Valerie said while looking at him.

"I'll be okay," Memphis replied as he saw her out.

He hadn't been getting the proper rest but she didn't need to know that. If she knew that Jersi was the reason, she would have been going off

about something else. Once she was gone, Memphis showered and got dressed for the day. It was a little after noon when he left the house and headed over to the car wash that Vance managed. He needed to sign off on a few things then he was going to his friend Phil's house. Phil was grilling and he'd invited a few friends over. He was sure that he wanted to talk to him about Jersi since he knew what was going on. Memphis knew that Cat probably got in his ear but it was all good.

“What's up bro?” Vance asked when Memphis walked into his office.

“Nothing much. Where are the papers that I need to sign?” Memphis asked.

He sat in the chair next to his brother's desk as he read over each document carefully. Once he signed them all, he stood up and prepared to leave.

“You alright bro?” Vance asked him.

“Yeah, I'm good. Why do you ask?” Memphis inquired.

“You just look down. Is something bothering you? You know you can talk to me about anything,” Vance said.

“I'm good man. This breakup with Jersi is just fucking with me. I'll get over the shit eventually though,” Memphis shrugged.

“It's obvious that you still love her. Why deny yourself of being with her? Who are you trying to prove a point to?” Vance questioned.

“I don't have to prove nothing to nobody. She fucked over me and I'm done with her. I do still love her but that don't mean that I have to be with her,” Memphis frowned as he made his way out the door.

He was battling with himself enough. He didn't need his brother trying to give him advice and confusing him even more. He was still hurt but he was also upset. He was upset with Jersi for ruining what they had and he

was upset with himself for wanting her back.

“I’m happy that God doesn’t deal with us the same way that man does. He’s a forgiving God and we should all be thankful for that,” Vance said to his brother’s departing back.

Vance was always coming at him with the bible but Memphis wasn’t in the mood for it. He needed a drink and something good to smoke. His appetite was fucked up and he was losing sleep. His mood hadn’t been the best lately and he didn’t have time for the bullshit. After leaving his brother, Memphis headed straight to Phil’s house. He saw a few cars that belonged to his frat brothers parked out front and he was happy to have a temporary distractions.

“What’s up boy?” Phil greeted when Memphis walked into the yard. He handed Memphis a beer and continued cooking up whatever was on the grill.

“Ain’t shit. What’s up with y’all?” Memphis spoke to his other frat brothers who were gathered around on the deck. Max was amongst the crew and Memphis took a seat right next to him.

“They got some food cooked already. Help yourself to whatever,” Phil offered.

“Nah, I’m good with just this,” Memphis replied while holding up his Heineken.

“Cat told me about you and Jersi breaking up. I’m sorry to hear that. She seems like one of the good ones,” Phil said solemnly.

“I’m good bruh. I really don’t wanna get into all that right now,” Memphis replied.

“Don’t give up on her bruh. She’s really fucked up about whatever happened between y’all. I heard it for myself. This ain’t nothing that nobody else is telling me,” Phil said.

He was at Cat's house one day when she was on the phone with Jersi. Phil's heart went out to the other woman and he could tell that she was really torn up. She loved his boy and he was hoping that they could work it out. Jersi almost had him and Cat in tears as she cried on the phone.

"Later Phil. I'm not trying to discuss that right now," Memphis sighed.

"Fuck all that bruh. You're a young, black, educated man with money. You don't have to put up with nothing from nobody. If ole girl ain't acting right, drop her ass and be on to the next one," Max spoke up.

"Don't listen to this nigga bro. Nobody is perfect and no relationship is flawless. Shit, I hooked up with Cat while she was still married and I didn't give a fuck what nobody had to say about it. Do whatever is best for you," Phil spoke up as a few others nodded in agreement.

"Maybe breaking up was best for him," Max replied.

"I just got here. How did I become the topic of conversation?" Memphis laughed.

"Look, I don't know what happened and I really don't care. What I do know is that Jersi made you happy. I haven't seen you smile so much since you and Layla got married," Phil pointed out.

"She couldn't have made him too happy if they broke up," Max said.

"You got a problem with Jersi or something?" Memphis asked as he looked over at Max.

"Why would I have a problem with her? I don't even know her," Max replied.

"You sure about that?" Memphis asked as Max shifted nervously.

“I’m just saying bruh. I’ve never known you to give second chances. Nobody holds a grudge quite like you do. Shit, you still don’t fuck with your own pops,” Max chuckled.

“The situation with my father has nothing to do with what we’re discussing right now. Whatever I decide to do is my business. What I eat don’t make you shit so you shouldn’t worry so much about it,” Memphis replied.

Max raised his hands in surrender and decided to let it go. Truthfully, he didn’t want Memphis and Jersi to be together. It was too close to home for him. He was still dealing with Dray occasionally and he didn’t want his secret to be revealed. Max worked hard to keep his lifestyle private. He didn’t need one of his frat brothers dating the sister of his fling. Leaving Dray alone would be too hard because of the feelings that he had developed for him.

“Let’s eat so we can get a game of spades going,” Phil said after a few minutes of silence.

The tension was thick and he was trying to slice through it. He and his frat brothers had disagreements all the time but it never went further than that. He didn’t know what was up with Max but Memphis clearly wasn’t feeling him. After a while, they all ate and played cards like they usually did. He was happy to see that things were back to normal and everybody was having a good time. Memphis seemed to be in a better mood and he was enjoying himself. When it started to get dark, Phil got up to put the food and drinks away. When his cousin, Monica, walked into the yard carrying daiquiri’s, he knew that the party was gonna last just a little longer. Monica called him earlier to see what he was doing. He knew that when he told her that Memphis was there, she was going to make her way to his house.

“What’s up with you stranger?” Monica asked as she looked over at Memphis.

“I can’t call it,” he replied as he looked at her through low, hooded eyes.

Memphis had been smoking and drinking for hours and he was feeling nice. When Monica came sat next to him, he welcomed her company. Monica was the same chick who Jersi had seen him at the restaurant with a while ago. She was his fuck buddy for a while until he started kicking it with Jersi exclusively.

“I’m surprised to see you here. You’ve been on lockdown for the past few months,” Monica said.

“Yeah, well I’m free now,” Memphis replied.

“Can you come over tonight?” Monica asked him.

“Just tell me what time,” Memphis replied.

“Shit, we can leave right now,” she said excitedly.

Sex with Memphis was not something that she could even describe. The man was gifted in the bedroom with a body that was as close to perfection as God could make it. He knew her body damn near better than she did. She never had to worry about walking away unfulfilled. She loved the feel of his piercing’s in her mouth and inside of her. She was a little down when he told her that he was in a relationship. They had been kicking it for months and he never seemed to want that with her. Monica was cool with it but she was happy to hear that he was a free agent again.

“Give me a few minutes,” Memphis said as he got up and walked into the house.

He let Phil know that he was leaving right before rejoining Monica outside. Max smiled as he watched the two of them walk out of the yard together. It was over for Jersi and he couldn’t be happier.

“What happened with your relationship?” Monica asked as they walked to their cars.

“Some shit that I really don’t feel like talking about right now,”



Memphis replied.

“Understood and I won’t bring it up again,” Monica said as he opened her door for her to get in.

“I’ll be right behind you,” Memphis said as he jogged over to his truck.

Monica was excited about what was to come. Memphis might not have been much in the looks department but he made up for it with his body and sex appeal. Lots of women wanted him but he was selective about who he chose to entertain. After his wife died, he seemed to not want to get serious with anyone else. That’s why Monica was shocked to know that he had settled down with someone else. She didn’t know nor did she care about why they broke up. It was her loss and Monica was happy to be benefitting from it.

As soon as they parked in front of her house, she hurriedly opened the door. She kept the lamp on in her living room so she was able to see when Memphis walked in. Monica wasn’t in the mood to play games. She knew what she wanted and so did he. As soon as Memphis walked up to her, she dropped to her knees and started undoing his belt and pants. He was hard as a brick when she pulled his erection out and gently stroked him.

“I missed this so much,” Monica said as she used her tongue to tease the head.

The taste of his pre-cum had her ready to get nasty with it. Memphis hissed when she spit on his dick before taking him all the way to the back of her throat. His hand gripped her shoulder length wrap and he thrust his hips forward. Something about the feel of his piercings in her mouth turned Monica on. She was trying to suck the life out of him as her head moved faster. Memphis always smelled so good and that made the experience more pleasurable. He moaned in pleasure and Monica was ready to taste his candy when it spilled out of him.

“Damn Jersi,” Memphis moaned, not realizing his slip up. When

Monica pulled him out of her mouth and stood up, he was wondering what was wrong.

She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and fixed her disheveled hair. It was obvious that she was done, so Memphis pulled up his boxers and jeans.

“Maybe you should try to reignite the old flame before you jump into a new fire,” Monica said.

“What?” Memphis asked in confusion.

“My name is Monica, not Jersi,” she replied angrily.

“Shit, my bad sweetheart. I didn’t realize I called you that,” Memphis replied.

Truthfully, Jersi was who he thought about the entire time she was pleasuring him. He didn’t even realize he’d spoken her name but he obviously did.

“It’s cool Memphis. Your breakup is obviously new, so I understand. I can’t put myself in a position to get my feelings hurt again though,” Monica said.

“I respect that,” Memphis nodded.

“You still love her?” Monica asked.

“Too damn much,” he admitted.

“Well, put your pride to the side and go get her. Sometimes people have to fall apart to realize how much they need to fall back together,” Monica said.

“I appreciate that Monica. I have a lot to think about but I’ll be good,” Memphis replied.

He gave Monica a friendly hug before he walked out of her front door for the last time. He had a lot of respect for her and how she handled the situation. She still had his dick on her breath while encouraging him to be with the woman he loved. It didn't get any more real than that. As bad as Memphis wanted to take her advice, he just didn't know where to start. He was never good at apologizing, especially if he hadn't done anything wrong. Vance had been inviting him to come visit his church again. For the first time in months, Memphis was going to take him up on his offer.



“Yes! Yes! Yes! They got that bastard!” Dray yelled excitedly as he talked to Sassy on the phone.

“They got who sweetie?” Sassy asked.

“Donovan. They arrested his crazy ass in Florida hiding out by one of his relatives. One of the detectives just called me. I’m so excited,” Dray yelled.

“So am I honey. I’ve been so nervous for you knowing that he was still out there somewhere. We have to go celebrate,” Sassy replied.

“Yes bitch, we are going out to celebrate. Food and drinks on me. Maybe I can finally get Jersi out of this damn house,” Dray said.

“Ain’t no maybe about it. She’s getting her ass up today. I’m tired of seeing her looking like death warmed over,” Sassy replied.

“Me too. I’ll do wardrobe and you’re on hair and makeup. Be here in an hour,” Dray ordered.

“You got it boo,” Sassy replied before he hung up.

Dray couldn't contain his excitement until he rushed into Jersi's bedroom to deliver the good news. His condo was empty and back on the market. He had been staying with his parents until he found another one. Since Jersi and Memphis broke up a month ago, he had been staying with her so that she wouldn't be alone. Besides work, Jersi didn't do anything but cry and sleep. Dray hated to see his baby going through it like that but he didn't know how to make her feel better. Her only company had been the seven foot teddy bear that Memphis had purchased her for Valentine's Day. Jersi had aced her senior accounting test and wasn't even happy about it. Fifteen people took the test and her and another lady were the only ones who passed. Besides Carter, Jersi would be the only African American to hold the position. She was the only black woman and Dray thought that was an amazing accomplishment. They were giving them a promotion dinner in two weeks and Jersi didn't want to go. She would be making six figures before she turned thirty and she was acting like it was nothing.

"This is driving me crazy Jersi. You have to get up baby. I hate seeing you like this," Dray said as he laid down in the bed next to her.

"What time is it?" Jersi asked in a whisper.

"It's almost four and you need to get up. Sassy is coming over and we're going to get food and drinks," Dray replied.

"I'm not hungry," Jersi mumbled.

"Yes you are. All you eat is crackers and fruit. You're gonna waste away in here. I got good news and I can't even share it with you," Dray said as he got up and turned on the light.

"What good news?" Jersi asked as she shielded her eyes.

"They caught that bastard Donovan!" Dray yelled excitedly.

"Oh, that's good," Jersi said unenthusiastically.

“Ugh, I hate the new you. You passed your test and you don’t even care. We both have something to celebrate and we’re doing it. You’re getting your ass up out of here today. I’m about to find you something to wear and Sassy is coming to do your hair and makeup,” Dray fussed.

“Dray, no. I don’t want to go anywhere. I just wanna stay inside with Memphis and sleep,” Jersi whined.

“That bear is not a real person. I can’t believe you named the damn thing Memphis. You are really losing your mind girl,” Dray said.

“Good, maybe that’s what I deserve,” she replied.

An entire month had passed since Jersi and Memphis had broken up and she was a mess. She called him every day but he never answered or called her back. When she couldn’t sleep at night, she would send him long messages about how she was feeling. Jersi went to work but that was all that she did besides sulk. Everything that happened was her fault and she took full responsibility for it all. Her need for revenge caused more damage than it was worth. Not only did Memphis leave her, but lots of other things happened as a result. Mariah lost her baby and her parents barely talked to the Harding’s anymore. She regretted not listening to her mother and just walking away from it all. She should have let karma take care of Blake and Mariah but she was too impatient to wait. Now, Blake was blowing her phone up and texting her messages of love. He didn’t know that Jersi had no intentions of ever being with him and that was something else that she regretted. More than likely, Mariah found the used condom that she’d purposely left in the car just like she wanted her to. He was talking about getting a divorce and Jersi wanted to die. She made a lot of stupid mistakes that changed everything. It was too late for regrets but she had lots of them.

“Get up. I’m sick of this shit. You’ve sulked long enough and I’m over it,” Dray argued as he pulled her up from the bed.

He shoved her into the bathroom and started the shower. Jersi just stood there but he wasn’t playing with her ass. When he started trying to

undress her, Jersi finally snapped out of it.

“I can undress myself,” she fussed as she slapped his hand away.

“Okay, well do it. Take a shower and get rid of that foul ass breath. I’ll call Ariel to see if she’s free to come with us,” Dray said before walking out of the bathroom.

He grabbed Jersi a pair of ripped high waisted jeans with a fringed crop top. He found some cute fringed booties to match along with a few accessories. Once Jersi handled her hygiene, she got dressed and tried to get back in the bed.

“No ma’am. Sassy is on his way and you will not be in the bed when he gets here,” Dray said while pulling her up.

Jersi sat in the chair while he made the bed up. He tried to take her bear to the spare bedroom but she wasn’t having it.

“No, leave him here,” Jersi yelled as she snatched the huge keepsake from her brother’s hands.

“Lord help me,” Dray hissed as he continued to clean up the room.

A few minutes later, the doorbell rang and he rushed to go see who it was. He smiled when he saw Sassy and he quickly ushered him in.

“Where’s our patient?” he asked after he and Dray gave each other air kisses. Sassy had his makeup bag in his hand looking like he was really about to perform surgery.

“She’s in the bedroom about to flatline. Seeing her like this is so depressing. I didn’t have to witness it when her and Blake broke up because she was away at college. I just feel like crying for my baby,” Dray sad solemnly.

“My poor baby doll. Don’t worry though honey. We’ll get her back to

her old self in no time. This too shall pass,” Sassy said, trying to be the voice of reason.

He and Dray walked into the room and found Jersi slumped down in the chair. The lighting in her room wasn't the best, so Sassy pulled her into the living room to do her makeup and hair. Jersi's hair was naturally curly, so he put some mousse in it and gave her a cute, curly mohawk. He put some light makeup on her face to cover the dark circles and bags under her eyes. After putting some nude gloss on her lips, Jersi looked like a chocolate goddess.

“Aww, you look beautiful sister,” Dray said as he held the mirror up for Jersi to see her reflection.

“Thanks,” Jersi replied sadly.

Admittedly, she did look beautiful but her insides didn't match her outer appearance. She felt like crawling back in her bed and crying herself to sleep again.

“That must be Ariel,” Dray said when the doorbell rang.

“Hey y'all,” Ariel smiled as soon as the door was opened.

They were all dressed and ready to go, so she didn't even come inside. They all piled into Sassy's G-Wagon and headed to the restaurant for food and drinks. As soon as they were seated, Dray was ready to abort mission and go back home. Had he known that Memphis and Jersi's first date was at Drago's he would have never suggested they go there. She got all sentimental about it and had been crying ever since.

“Jersi please stop with the tears. People are looking at us like we kidnapped you,” Dray fussed.

“It's okay sugar plum. I understand,” Sassy said as he dabbed her eyes with a tissue.



“We can’t go nowhere or do nothing without something reminding her of Memphis. If I drink a Heineken she’s crying because that’s his favorite beer. You can’t mention the gym because Memphis is a personal trainer. It’s bad enough that I have to watch her damn near molest the bear that she named after his ass,” Dray ranted.

“Stop being insensitive Draymond. We’ve all been through heartbreak and we know that it’s not easy,” Sassy reasoned.

“I’m sorry for crying all the time but I can’t help it,” Jersi sniffled.

“It’s okay baby doll. Take your time and cry as much as you want to,” Sassy smiled while rubbing her hand lovingly.

When the waitress came over with their drinks, Dray raised his glass like he was making a toast.

“To Donovan being caught and hopefully getting violated and gang raped in prison,” Dray said, making Jersi laugh.

“That’s what I like to see. Show us that beautiful smile,” Sassy said as he sipped his mango margarita.

“You’re gonna get through this sis. I won’t have it any other way,” Dray said as he smiled at her.

“Well, I have some tea that is probably too hot for us to sip,” Sassy announced.

“Spill it honey. Tea is always best when served hot,” Dray said as he gave his best friend his undivided attention.

“Well, according to my siblings, I’m about to be a big brother again,” Sassy announced.

“I know you better be lying. Eva can’t have any more kids, so I already know what that means,” Dray exclaimed.

“Yes darling, my dear old daddy is still spilling his seeds all over New Orleans. Supposedly a nurse at the hospital is three months pregnant with his baby,” Sassy noted.

“Does your mother know?” Ariel asked.

“She always does. It’s not like she’s gonna leave him anyway. I’m sure they’ll sweep it under the rug and throw some money to his mistress every month. They did the same thing with Brielle, but I wasn’t having it,” Sassy said, referring to his fifteen year old sister.

“Braxton is too damn old for all that. It’s fucked up how he throws money at the women and thinks that’s enough. He don’t even try to have a relationship with the kids,” Dray fussed.

“Eva ain’t having that honey. Outside kids don’t fit into her perfect little life. In her eyes, those kids don’t even exist. I know the feeling because she feels the exact same way about me. It’s all good though. I’ll be in this baby’s life the same way I’m in Brielle’s. It’s not their fault that our father is the way he is. Blake is on track to be just like him. He’s fucking half the nurses at the hospital where he works too. Poor Mariah is really going through it,” Sassy said making Jersi feel guilty.

“Fuck that bitch! I’m sorry but I don’t have a sympathetic bone in my body for her ass. She’s getting back everything that she dished out and more,” Dray argued right as their food came to the table.

“This look delicious,” Sassy said when she sat his plate down in front of him.

Once again, Jersi was overcome with emotion. Sassy had the same lobster dish that Memphis had when they first went there. She didn’t know when or if the pain from their breakup would go away but she was tired of crying.

“Not again Jersi. You’re starting to depress me. Let’s just pack the

food up and get out of here,” Dray said as he signaled for the waitress to bring the bill.

“I got it,” someone said as they walked over to their table.

Jersi lifted her head and almost jumped out of her chair when she saw Memphis standing there. He took some money out of his pocket and threw enough on the table to cover their bill.

“Yay!” Sassy dramatically clapped and cheered.

“Let’s go,” he said as he held his hand out for Jersi to take. Instead of grabbing his hand, she jumped into his arms and wrapped her legs around his waist. People were looking at them like they were crazy but they didn’t care.

“Damn bitch,” Dray said as he watched Memphis carry her out of the restaurant. Once they got to his car, he sat Jersi on the hood and stood in between her legs.

“What’s with all the tears? You know I hate that shit,” Memphis said as he wiped her face with the tail of his shirt. He didn’t care that her makeup got all over his white polo. He just hated to see her cry.

“I miss you and I’m miserable,” Jersi admitted.

“I miss you too baby,” Memphis said as he pulled her into a tight hug.

He didn’t remember the exact moment that Jersi went from being a want to a need. All he did know was that he was miserable without her. Memphis was on a date with a woman he’d met in the mall a few days before when he spotted Jersi and her crew walking into the restaurant. His heart skipped a beat when he saw how beautiful she looked. He watched her sitting at the table crying and he knew that she was just as fucked up as he was. He hid his true emotions from everyone but it was obviously too hard for Jersi to do. Memphis felt bad but he ended his date early and apologized for being rude. As soon as his female companion left, he wasted no time going to Jersi’s table. The love that he had for her was beyond understanding and he

wasn't trying to comprehend it.

"I'm sorry for everything and I swear that it will never happen again," Jersi sniffled.

"Stop apologizing Jersi. I listened to every voicemail and read every message that you sent. Trust me, I know how you feel," Memphis assured her.

"I don't have anything to hide Memphis. I'll tell you everything," Jersi said.

"I don't want to know anything Jersi. I trust you. We wouldn't be here right now if I didn't. From this point on, everything that happened is in the past. I won't bring it up again and neither will you," Memphis replied.

In a way, he and Jersi were a lot alike. Being hurt, whether in a relationship or by a loved one, caused people to do crazy things. Her seeking retaliation against her ex and his wife was no different than what he did with his father. She wanted them to feel her pain and he wanted his father to feel the same. He couldn't cast a stone in her direction because he wasn't without fault himself.

"I love you," Jersi said as she squeezed him tight.

"I love you more baby," Memphis replied.

"I'm starving," Jersi said as he looked up at him.

"Yeah, you feel a lil lighter," Memphis observed.

"Stressing," Jersi admitted.

"Yeah, I know the feeling. We need to stop by your house and then we can grab something to eat," Memphis said as he picked her up and placed her on her feet.

“What do we need to stop by my house for? Dray has been staying with me, so we won’t have any privacy,” Jersi noted.

“We’re not staying. We need to get you enough stuff to last for a while. It’s been a month and you’re not leaving my house no time soon,” Memphis said making her smile.

Jersi was happy that Dray forced her out of the house. If he hadn’t, she probably wouldn’t have run into Memphis again. For the first time in a while she smiled and felt complete. She had her other half back and she would do whatever it took to make sure she kept him.



Blake was excited when Jersi agreed to meet him at the park where they used to hang out. He was all smiles until he got there and saw that Dray and Ariel were with her. He had gone all out and purchased her a few gifts, thinking that they were gonna spend some time together. He was confused about a few things but he needed to know what was up.

“Hey y’all,” Blake spoke as he walked over to them.

Dray and Ariel spoke back and walked off to give him and Jersi some privacy. Blake took a seat right next to Jersi and turned his body to face her.

“Hey, I wanted to talk to you about a few things,” Jersi stated.

After having a long talk with Memphis, he agreed to let her end whatever it was that Blake thought they had. He must have gotten a new number because he’d called or texted Jersi multiple times a day. He was a modern day stalker and it was annoying. Memphis told her not to go anywhere near him alone and that’s why Dray and Ariel were present. Their relationship was back on the right track and they were both determined to keep it that way. She wanted to let Blake down easy in hopes that he would get the point. She didn’t want to be in a situation like the one Dray was in with Donovan.

“Yeah but I thought it was just going to be the two of us. I got something for you,” Blake said as he grabbed her hand. Before he could bring it up to his lips for a kiss, Jersi gently pulled it back.

“Blake, listen, I was wrong for messing with you again and I can’t do it anymore. Honestly, me dealing with you at all was more about Mariah than anything else. I was hurt and I wanted her to feel the same pain. I’m sorry,” Jersi apologized, making Blake’s heart race in his chest.

“I know that what Mariah and I did to you was fucked up and I’m prepared to spend the rest of my life making it up to you. You were my first and I want you to be my last. I’ll do whatever I have to do to make this work,” Blake replied.

“It’ll never work because it’s not what I want. I’m in a relationship and I’m in love and happy. I’m sorry Blake but this will be my last time seeing you,” Jersi said as she handed him the elevator key to the penthouse.

“Don’t do this Jersi, please. What do you want me to do? I’ll call Mariah right now and ask for a divorce. I’ll buy us another house and let her and my girls keep the old one. Just tell me what I have to do to make you happy,” Blake pleaded through teary eyes.

“I’m already happy Blake. Maybe you need to put some of that same energy into making your marriage work so you can be happy too,” Jersi pointed out.

“I don’t want my marriage to work. I only want you,” Blake said.

Jersi felt like shit but she was trying to right her wrongs. She could have easily hurt Blake’s feelings by telling him why she really did what she did. Knowing that it would only make things worse, she decided to take a different approach. She thought that seeing him sad and broken would give her some kind of comfort. Instead, it only made her feel worse. She thought that she would want to rub it in his face but she couldn’t do it. She wasn’t that person that she tried so hard to be. She didn’t enjoy causing someone

else pain even though Mariah seemed to relish it.

“I gotta go Blake. Take care,” Jersi said as she got up and walked away. Dray and Ariel followed her to her car before they got in and pulled away.

“Fuck!” Blake yelled out angrily.

The few people who were in the park looked at him strangely but he didn't care. He was hurt and his heart was broken. There were no words to describe how much he loved Jersi. He loved her when she was a child and he loved her even more now. Blake slowly walked away to his car and sat in the driver's seat. He tried but he couldn't help the tears that fell from his eyes. He was crushed and he couldn't hide it even if he wanted to. Hearing Jersi say that she was in love and happy with someone else was not something that he wanted to hear. He knew that marrying and having kids with Mariah hurt her but he was trying to make it right. He would gladly serve Mariah with divorce papers if that meant having Jersi back in his life. They were perfect for each other and he just had to try harder to make her see it. He didn't know who her new man was but he wasn't letting him have Jersi without a fight. The history that they had with one another could never be erased.

After shedding a few tears and sulking for a while, Blake decided to head home. He had a few gifts for Jersi that Mariah was about to get by default. After how down she'd been about the miscarriage, he knew that she would be happy about it. Mariah had been depressed and all she did was sleep and cry. Thankfully, his mother was always around to help him with their girls because Mariah barely looked at them. Blake was trying to be supportive but he was getting frustrated with her. He was happy that he was able to satisfy his sexual appetite with some of the nurses at his job because he wasn't really interested in sex with Mariah anymore. Since being with Jersi, everything about his wife started to turn him off.

“Mariah! Where are you?” Blake yelled when he walked into the house.

Mariah hadn't been out of the house in weeks so he knew that she



hadn't gone anywhere. She refused to drive her car anymore since she swore that Blake and Jersi had sex in it. Blake hadn't had a home cooked meal in a while unless he went to his mother's house. He hated that his mother had basically assumed the role of raising his kids but she seemed to enjoy it. She was a housewife and caring for the twins gave her something to do.

“Mariah!” Blake yelled out again.

He searched every room in the house and she wasn't in any of them. He paused when he looked in his daughters' room and saw their tablets on their beds. They never left home without their iPad and they had them when he dropped them off by his mother. Pulling his phone from his pocket, Blake dialed his mother's number and waited for her to pick up.

“Hey son,” Eva answered cheerily.

“Are the girls still with you? I see their tablets are here but nobody is home,” Blake said.

“No, I dropped them off about an hour ago. Mariah wanted me to bring them home,” Eva replied.

“She's not even here,” Blake noted as he decided to go see if her car was in the garage.

“I wonder where she is. She told me that she missed them and wanted me to bring them home. She sounded like she was in good spirits and she looked okay when I saw her,” Eva noted.

When Blake entered the garage his heart dropped when he saw Mariah slumped over behind the wheel of the car. She had a towel stuffed in the exhaust pipe and the car windows were rolled up.

“Shit! Ma, send an ambulance to my house now!” Blake yelled frantically.

He hit the garage door opener and ran to open the car doors. They

were all locked and he didn't have time to get his spare key. He grabbed one of the gardening tools that was in the garage and broke the passenger side window and unlocked the car doors.

“Oh God no! Please!” Blake cried when he saw his two girls laying motionless in the back seat.

He forgot all about Mariah as he scooped his girls up and rushed them outside to get some fresh air. One of his neighbors was outside watering his lawn and he ran over to offer his assistance.

“Do you need some help Blake?” the older man asked.

“Yes, my wife is still in the car,” Blake yelled as he tried to perform CPR on his girls.

His neighbor's wife rushed over and helped him get Mariah out of the car. They laid her on the ground and started doing chest compressions on her.

“She has a pulse. What about the girls?” The neighbor asked.

“They have one too,” Blake said excitedly.

He heard the wailing of sirens in the distance a short time later and was happy to know that help was on the way. He couldn't help but to think that if he'd been a few minutes longer, his girls would have been dead and gone. Blake looked over at Mariah's unconscious body on the ground and felt nothing but hate for her. How could a mother try to kill her own kids? If she wanted to die then she should have left them by his mother and killed her damn self. She knew that killing his kids would hurt him and Blake hated her for it.

“They need oxygen,” his neighbor yelled as soon as the firemen and EMT workers approached them.

Blake was distraught and he forgot all about being a doctor. He was a parent first and he was concerned about his kids. They were only four years

old and they didn't understand what was going on. They didn't deserve to be in the middle of the mess that their parents had created. They didn't deserve to lose their life because their mother no longer wanted to live. As far as Blake was concerned his marriage to Mariah was over. He wanted nothing else to do with her and he didn't want his kids anywhere around her unstable ass.



Mariah fully expected to open her eyes in the pits of hell but even death rejected her. Instead, she opened her eyes in a hospital room with her father sitting at her bedside. The entire room was spinning and her head was pounding. She didn't know how long she had been in there but she wasn't ready to be released. She was too afraid to face Blake and his family after what she'd done. She didn't want to see the look in her husband's eyes after she tried to take away two of the most important people in his life.

“Mariah. How do you feel baby?” Marvin asked as he stood next to her bed and grabbed her hand.

“Pissed that I'm alive,” Mariah spat as she tried to clear her dry throat.

“Don't say that sweetheart. You're blessed to be alive and so are the girls,” Marvin noted.

“I guess Blake is happy about that. They're all he seems to care about anyway,” Mariah said as she snatched her hand away.

“What is wrong with you Mariah? You should be thankful that Blake didn’t get the police involved. You would be going to jail for attempted murder if he did. Those are your kids too. You act like you hate them,” her father said.

“It’s not an act. He wouldn’t have cared if I died or not. As long as his precious kids lived he would have been okay,” she cried.

“The doctors here think that you need to talk to a professional and I agree,” Marvin said.

Mariah didn’t know it yet but she wasn’t going straight home when she left the hospital. She was going to a facility for seventy-two hours since she attempted suicide. Child protective services were getting involved as well but Marvin didn’t want to bring all that up to her now. She was going through enough and that would only make things worse. Mariah swore that what happened was an accident but they weren’t crazy. They knew that it was intentional.

“I’m not crazy daddy. I was perfectly fine until Blake started fucking that bitch Jersi again. Maybe I should have killed the two of them instead of trying to kill myself and my kids. All of this is their fault. I was a good wife and mother until she came back into the picture,” Mariah sobbed as her father stroked her back lovingly.

Maybe she was crazy but Blake drove her to it. After losing his child, she thought he was going to stay home and make sure that she was okay. Instead, he put in overtime at work and was barley around. Mariah decided to play detective one day when he came home from working an eighteen hour shift. Blake took a shower and crashed and she used that time to go through his work and personal phones. Mariah was sick when she saw all the messages that he was sending to Jersi. He was telling her that she was his soulmate and he wanted to divorce Mariah to be with her. She even found out that he had a penthouse that he and Jersi used when they wanted to be together. If that wasn’t bad enough, she learned that Blake had been sleeping with some of the women at his job too. Mariah couldn’t win for losing and

she was fed up. When she searched his locked night stand drawer, she found another phone that she didn't even know he had. That one had even more messages to Jersi begging her to see him again. When she saw that Jersi agreed to meet with him at the park, she waited until he left to call Eva to bring the girls home. The plan was for Blake to find their dead bodies in her car but he came home sooner than she thought he would. She wanted him to live with the guilt of their deaths for the rest of his life. After that, he wouldn't be any good to Jersi or anybody else. He would probably grieve himself to death soon after.

“Blake is only one man Mariah. You can't let him have that much power over you,” her father said after a while.

“Why not? You had the same power over my mother. She died with a broken heart that you never even tried to mend. Tabby and her daughters are the devil and it's your fault that I'm living in hell,” Mariah hissed.

“That was a long time ago Mariah. You have to learn to let things go and move on. I'm not proud of what I did but I can't take it back,” Marvin replied.

“Just get out. Fuck you and that bitch of a wife who gave birth to Jersi,” Mariah spat angrily.

“Stop this Mariah. I know you're upset but I'm all that you have right now. You've been in here for a whole day and I haven't seen Blake or his family come to see you once. You better hope you still have a place to stay when you leave out of here,” Marvin replied.

Mariah didn't even have a rebuttal because her father was right. Her name wasn't even on the house that they lived in and Blake had it long before they even got married. She had nothing without him. Even her car was in his name because she didn't have any income to get it on her own. Her father really was all that she had and she couldn't burn a bridge that she would possibly have to cross again later.

“I'm sorry daddy but I just need some time to myself. Can you go get

me something to eat and give me a few minutes alone?” Mariah asked.

“Yeah baby, I’ll go get you something. How about a salad?” Marvin offered.

“A salad is fine,” Mariah said right before her father kissed her forehead and walked out of the room.

As soon as he left she wiped his kiss away and pushed the button to call for the nurse. In her eyes, her father was as much to blame as Blake was. Him meeting Tabby was the beginning of the end.

“Are you okay Mrs. Harding? Do you need anything?” the nurse asked when she walked into the room.

“Yeah, my mouth is dry and my throat is killing me. Can I get some water?” Mariah asked.

“Sure, I’ll be right back,” the nurse smiled.

“If you tell me where it is, I’ll go get it myself. I need to get up out of this bed,” Mariah said as she sat up.

“That’s fine but just take it slow. Don’t try to get up too fast. If you feel dizzy, sit up on the side of the bed until you feel better. I’ll stay here a minute just to see,” the nurse replied.

Mariah had been on oxygen since she’d been there and she felt much better. She slowly sat up on the side of the bed to see if she felt any dizziness. She did feel a little flushed but she didn’t tell the nurse that. Her body was stiff and she needed some fresh air. She wasn’t just going to get water. She wanted to go outside for a little while.

“I feel okay,” Mariah looked at the nurse and smiled.

She grabbed her cup and followed the nurse out of the room. Mariah walked down the hall and bypassed the small area where the ice and water

was. She needed something to drink but she would get it before she went back to her room. She took the elevator to the first floor and went straight outside. She was happy that she had on leggings and a shirt, versus the cheaply made hospital gowns. Mariah inhaled the fresh air into her lungs right before taking a seat on the unoccupied bench. She had a lot to think about but she didn't know where to start. She didn't want her marriage to end but she was sure that it would after the stunt that she pulled. Blake would never even trust her to be alone with their kids again and she couldn't blame him. Mariah loved her kids but she knew that Blake loved them more. They were the only reason why he was still with her. As much as she loved them for bringing her and Blake together, she was starting to resent them just the same.

“What’s good Mariah? What you doing out here?” Someone said to her back.

Mariah turned around and rolled her eyes up to the sky when she saw Damien standing there staring at her. Damien smiled when he saw her walking out of the building but he waited a while before he approached her. He had to make sure that she was alone before he said anything to her. Mariah was still as beautiful as he remembered her but his feelings for her weren't the same. She was a selfish bitch and he hated the day that he ever cheated on Talena to be with her. Mariah basically seduced him but that was no excuse. Damien was visiting his mother after her surgery, but he was happy that he'd run into his conniving ex. He lost a year of his freedom behind her no good ass and she had to pay for that.

“Get out of my face Damien. You got your money a long time ago and we don't have anything else to discuss,” Mariah snapped.

“Damn, I was just coming to say hello. What's with the attitude?” Damien asked.

“I don't have an attitude. I just want you out of my face,” Mariah replied.

“Are you stressed or something Mariah? You know I got you covered

if you are,” Damien said as he held out his hand that was full of pills.

Mariah’s mouth watered as she thought about the way the Xanax and Mollies used to make her feel. She didn’t have a care in the world when she was high and she needed that feeling again. She didn’t want to seem too eager, so she pretended not to care about it.

“Bye Damien. I’m broke and I’m not trying to owe you a dime,” Mariah said as she waved him off.

“Come on now Mariah. You know it’s all love with me. These are on the house,” he said as he offered them to her with a smirk on his face.

“Thanks,” Mariah said as she took the pills and held them tight.

“Here, just call me whenever you need some more,” Damien said while handing her a business card with his number on it. He did car detailing as a front to cover up his drug sales. It was a good way for him to clean up his dirty money and service his customers at the same time.

“Thanks again,” Mariah said as she held on to the card.

Damien walked away from her with a satisfied smile on his face, knowing that she would be calling him very soon. When she did, it would be more than pills that he would have her hooked on. Mariah had forgotten where she came from when she married Blake but he was just the nigga to remind her.





“Can you please not do that Memphis? That is so disgusting,” Jersi fussed as she watched him drink from the carton of juice that was in the refrigerator.

Memphis had the best hygiene of any man that she’d ever met outside of her brother. He took two and sometimes three showers a day since he worked out so much. His oral care was excellent and he loved to look and smell good. Other than that, he had some of the worst habits in the world. Jersi was a neat freak and she had to be when dealing with him. Memphis left his clothes wherever he took them off. He didn’t believe in washing dishes and he never used a cup when he got something to drink. Jersi went as far as sitting plastic cups on top of the refrigerator but it was a waste. He drank straight from the bottle or carton and didn’t see anything wrong with it.

“Stop complaining girl. You don’t even like that kind of juice,” he replied.

“It don’t matter if I like it or not. You need to stop doing that. The cups are right there in your face,” Jersi frowned as she folded their clothes.

“Alright man, damn,” he conceded.

Jersi had OCD and the cleanest things were still dirty to her. Memphis wasn’t the best housekeeper but he had to do better. Jersi didn’t fuss about

cleaning up after him but she hated some of his bad habits. Toothpaste in the sink and not using a cup were two things that she didn't let up on. She was always threatening to go back home but he would never let that happen. She didn't know it but she was never going back to her house again.

“Did you find something to wear?” Jersi asked him.

“Yeah, I got something. I'm about to swing by my cousin's barber shop and let him cut my hair in a few,” Memphis replied.

Jersi's promotion banquet was later that night and Memphis was so proud of her. Since she had never celebrated her accomplishment, he had a huge flower arrangement delivered to her job and took her out to dinner. Their breakup took a lot out of both of them but they were back like they never left. Jersi had resumed the task of fixing up the house and they had lot of furniture scheduled to be delivered in the next few days. Jersi had purchased comforters, pillows and lots of other stuff to go in the bedrooms and bathrooms. Memphis was happy that she was making his house a home, especially since it would be hers too.

“I hope I didn't make a mistake by inviting Tabby. I felt bad for telling my aunt Toni and not her. She better not come there with no bullshit and she better respect my mama,” Jersi argued.

“Don't even stress about that baby. Dena can handle herself,” Memphis assured her.

“I know but it's just the principle,” Jersi said.

“I'm going hop in the shower, so I can make a few moves,” Memphis replied as he walked away.

Jersi continued to fold their clothes until her phone rang, displaying Talena's number. Jersi started not to answer the phone because Talena was always on some other shit. No matter how many times she told her not to tell her anything about Blake and Mariah, she always did it anyway.

“What’s up Talena?” Jersi asked when she answered the phone.

“Girl, why that dumb bitch Mariah tried to kill herself and her kids,” Talena screeched.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Jersi said sympathetically as she rolled her eyes to the ceiling.

She really did hate to hear that the children were involved but Talena just didn’t comprehend. Jersi didn’t want to hear about Blake and nobody in his family. Her parents rarely saw the Harding’s anymore and that was even better.

“Girl yes and Blake asked me about you. He said that you broke his heart but he still loves you. He said he’s divorcing Mariah and everything. He gave her some time to find another place to stay but he wants her out of his house,” Talena said excitedly.

Jersi didn’t enjoy hearing that, especially since she knew that she played a huge part in the demise of his marriage.

“Talena, I really don’t want to hear anything about Blake or anybody related to him. Memphis and I are doing good and we’re happy,” Jersi replied.

“Girl ugh. How can you go from a fine ass doctor with money to a personal trainer who probably can’t even afford to keep his bills paid? Don’t get me wrong, he’s fine as fuck but he’s not the cutest. Y’all look like beauty and the beast,” Talena said as she laughed at her own joke.

That was one time that Jersi was happy that she wasn’t close to her sister. She would have knocked Talena the fuck out if she was.

“Bitch, I let you slide when you said some slick shit before but all of your passes with me have run out. I’m trying to understand why you’re so pressed about me being with Blake anyway. Yes, Mariah did us both wrong but I’m over it now. You doing all that behind Damien and I’m not

understanding why. He's been out of jail for a few years now and he's never tried to get back with you even once. Move the fuck on with your life and stop being so bitter. Obviously it wasn't Mariah who was keeping him away. The nigga just didn't want you," Jersi snapped angrily.

She wanted to tell her that he was too busy sticking dick to other niggas but she would never put his business out there like that. Still, she was tired of Talena coming at her sideways and disrespecting her man.

"Girl Jersi, fuck you," Talena spat.

"Yeah bitch, say that hot shit to my face when you see me," Jersi replied before she hung up on her.

As soon as she did, she heard keys being inserted into the lock followed by the twisting of the door knob. She already knew that it was Memphis' mother and she was not in the mood. Valerie was about to have a whole temper tantrum and she was patiently waiting for it to happen.

"Memphis! Come open this door! Why is my key not working?" Valerie yelled as she knocked and rang the doorbell.

"Because we changed the locks on your disgusting ass," Jersi mumbled as she walked to the front door.

She kept the security chain on the door before she opened it. Valerie had her fucked up if she thought she was about to come up in there running shit. Jersi made Memphis call a locksmith as soon as they got back together. She didn't want to be afraid to be intimate with her man because his mother might walk in on them again. Valerie had no boundaries but Jersi was setting them for her.

"What the hell? What are you doing here and where is my son?" Valerie asked angrily when Jersi partially opened the door.

Lila was standing behind her looking just as upset. Jersi was trying to do better. That's why she ignored that small voice in her head that told her to

pull Lila inside and stomp the fuck out of her. It was her and Juan who had sent Memphis the pictures of her and Blake. Memphis didn't want to tell her but Jersi wouldn't let up. She was pissed but she swore to him that she would leave it alone.

“Bae! Your mama is here!” Jersi yelled as she closed the door in Valerie's face. She was over trying to be nice. She had never done anything to the other woman and she disliked her for no reason. That was something else that Memphis tried to keep from her. He didn't want to tell her that his mother hated her but he eventually came clean.

“No the fuck she didn't! Memphis! Boy you better come open this damn door!” Valerie yelled as she continued to knock.

“What's going on?” Memphis asked as he walked into the living room wearing only a pair of sweatpants.

“That's your mother and that termite out there,” Jersi said.

“What termite?” he asked.

“The same termite who wants to eat your wood,” Jersi said referring to Lila.

Memphis laughed as he went to open the door to see what his mother wanted. He was sure that things were about to get ugly but he was prepared.

“That lil bitch slammed the door in my face!” Valerie fumed as soon as Memphis let her in. She went charging at Jersi, who sat there with an uncaring smirk on her face.

“Whoa. You need to chill out with the disrespect and you know you're not about to fight my girl. It's not even that deep,” Memphis said as he held her back.

“Are you seriously trying to defend her?” Valerie asked angrily.

“That’s my job,” Memphis replied.

“I can’t believe you let her change the locks. Does she live here now?” Valerie questioned.

“Yes, she does, but changing the locks was all on me. I’ve asked you several times not to use your key unless it was an emergency. We need our privacy and you don’t give us any,” Memphis replied.

“What is all this we and us bullshit? I bent over backwards and broke my back for you and this is the thanks I get. You let some random bitch disrespect me and lock me out of the house,” Valerie ranted.

“Chill out with the name calling ma. Jersi didn’t disrespect you once. And I love and appreciate you for everything that you’ve ever done for me but that doesn’t give you the green light to run my life. I show you my appreciation by making sure that you never want or need anything,” Memphis pointed out.

“So you’re throwing it in my face now?” Valerie asked.

“No and I never will. I’ve always had your back and that will never change. I appreciate you wanting to cook and clean for me but I told you that it’s not necessary. Jersi got me and I’m good,” Memphis replied. He was trying to keep the peace and be respectful at the same time.

“She got you now but for how long? When shit gets bad don’t come crying to me,” Valerie warned.

“Do I ever?” Memphis asked.

“Just remember that you chose her over your own mother,” Valerie fumed as she walked away with Lila rushing out right after her.

“Is this gonna be my new life?” Jersi asked as she massaged her temples.

“Nope because I won’t allow it to be,” Memphis replied.

“Why did you tell her that I live here?” Jersi asked as he sat down right next to her.

“Because you do. You’re not going back home. We’ll get the rest of your stuff next weekend,” Memphis said while pulling her onto his lap.

“You do know that I own my condo, right?” Jersi asked.

“Put that bitch back on the market or rent it out. It don’t make no sense for us to have two houses. I went a whole month without seeing you and that shit damn near killed me,” Memphis admitted.

“I know the feeling,” Jersi replied.

“Okay, so it’s settled. We can handle all the legal stuff later,” Memphis said.

“I should have known that it was a catch when you let me have my way with decorating,” Jersi smiled.

“You already know I had a motive,” Memphis said as he kissed her lips and moved her to the side.

He needed to make a few stops before he went to get his hair cut in preparation for her big day.



Memphis was so proud when he and Jersi walked into the room and he saw her picture blown up on stage. They were at her promotion dinner and everybody was stopping to congratulate her. She introduced Memphis, Dray and her parents to her colleagues before they took a seat at the table that was reserved for them.

“This is beautiful. Whoever decorated did a great job,” Dena said as she looked around in admiration.

“Yeah, it is nice,” Jacob said as he too looked around the room.

“Do you want something to drink baby?” Memphis asked as he looked at Jersi.

“Yeah, see if they have any kind of white wine,” Jersi replied.

Dray had a female companion with him, so he followed Memphis to the open bar to grab her some wine too. Dena was fine and she declined their offer.

“I guess Tabby couldn’t make it and I’m not mad,” Jersi said to her parents.

“That makes two of us,” Jacob replied.

“I hope my auntie can make it though,” Jersi said.



A few minutes later, Jersi realized that she had spoken too soon. She spotted her aunt Toni walking through the door with Tabby's bad body ass following behind her. Jersi prayed hard with her whole heart that she wasn't built like Tabby when she got older. She was thankful that her father had strong genes and she didn't look anything like her. Tabby looked like she had a basketball under her dress with her perfectly round beer belly. Her legs were small and muscular and her calves looked like they belonged on a man. She had on a short sequined dress that made her look like a disco ball. Her wig was twisted and her eyebrows looked like thick black caterpillars had crawled onto her face. A hot mess was a compliment compared to how she looked. Toni looked nice in a simple black dress with some black heels. She and Tabby were like night and day and that's why Jersi loved her auntie so much. They came up to the table right as Memphis and Dray came back with the drinks. Jersi stood up to greet them and introduce them to Memphis.

"Hey auntie. This is my boyfriend Memphis. Baby, this is my aunt Toni and Tabby-"

"Her biological mother," Tabby interrupted loudly as she extended her hand.

Jersi frowned as Dena shifted uncomfortably in her seat. Jacob grabbed his wife's hand and kissed it, making her relax and smile. He wanted to curse Tabby out but not more than Jersi did. His daughter was livid and it was hard for her to hide it.

"Hi sweetheart, it's nice to meet you," Toni smiled before giving Memphis a friendly hug. She greeted Jacob and Dena as well as Dray and his date before taking her seat. Jersi's leg bounced in anger once she took her seat again and Memphis put his hand on it to comfort her..

"Relax baby. It's not like I didn't already know," Memphis whispered.

"That's not the point Memphis. She got me fucked up trying to play my mama like that. She gon' see me when this is over with," Jersi fumed.

“Let it go Jersi,” Memphis begged.

“I love you baby but hell no. She got me fucked up for real,” Jersi fumed.

Memphis knew that there was no reasoning with her when she got like that. He decided to leave it alone and let her handle it however she saw fit. About twenty minutes later, the dinner got started and everyone was eating and having a good time. Memphis recorded the entire time that Jersi was given her plaque for becoming a senior accountant and the keys to her new office. She said a few words and made sure to acknowledge him and her family. Once it was over, she stood around talking to some of her co-workers and supervisors.

“Shit, where is the bathroom? That cheap ass champagne is running right through me,” Tabby said as she danced like she was pushed.

“Come on, I’ll show you,” Jersi offered as she handed Memphis the items that were in her hands.

He laughed because he already knew what Jersi was on. She wanted to get Tabby alone and the opportunity presented itself. Jersi walked Tabby to the bathroom and waited outside while she went into one of the stalls. She tapped her foot on the tiled floor, impatiently waiting for her to handle her business.

“I was so proud when they were talking about all of your accomplishments out there. All your good grades in high school and college and stuff,” Tabby said when she exited the stall and went to the sink.

“Thanks,” Jersi replied. “But I think you owe my mother an apology.”

“Excuse me? I am your mother,” Tabby replied in her own defense.

“No, you gave birth to me but Dena is my mother. There’s a big difference,” Jersi corrected.

“Dena is your daddy’s wife and nothing more. Besides, I didn’t even do shit to apologize for,” Tabby said.

“Memphis already knows who you are. There was no point in you yelling out that you’re my biological mother. From the day I came home from the hospital until now, Dena was the one who was there. All those good things that you heard them saying about me just now was a result of how she raised me. Being a mother means more than just pushing a baby out. Your job as my mother stopped the day you had me and hers had just begun. The woman that I am today is because of her and you or nobody else will discredit her for that,” Jersi ranted.

“I wasn’t trying to discredit her but my feelings matter too,” Tabby replied.

“To who?” Jersi asked. Tabby’s feelings damn sure didn’t matter to her and she wasn’t about to pretend like they did.

“You’re always introducing me as Tabby like I’m nobody special,” Tabby sniffled as she tried to produce some sympathy tears.

“I introduce you how I see fit. I only know you as Tabby and you have yourself to thank for that,” Jersi replied as she walked out of the bathroom and rejoined her family in the lobby.

Tabby came out right after her looking sad and pathetic. She rushed out of the building without even looking back or saying goodbye. Jersi didn’t give a damn about her being upset. Tabby was one less person that she had to worry about and she wouldn’t be missed. Jersi hugged her auntie and the rest of her family before she and Memphis left and got into his truck. He didn’t pull off right away but Jersi was in no hurry.

“You good?” he asked while looking over at her.

“Better than ever,” Jersi replied with a smile.

“Are you happy Jersi?” Memphis asked her out of the blue.

“Yes baby. I’m very happy. Are you?” Jersi countered.

“Yeah but you can make me happier,” he replied while reaching into the middle console and producing a black velvet box.

“Seriously!” Jersi screeched as tears formed in her eyes.

She gasped when he opened the box to reveal a huge halo diamond engagement ring. She and Memphis had talked about marriage a few times before but she never dreamed that it would happen so soon. He said that he wanted to start a family with her and he wasn’t lying.

“I’m dead serious and I don’t want to wait. A month without you was long enough. I want to go to sleep with you every night and wake up to you every morning. I want my kids to call you mama and I want to make you happy for the rest of our lives. Will you marry me baby?” Memphis asked.

“Hell yeah I’ll marry you!” Jersi yelled as she jumped into his lap. She kissed Memphis all over his face and neck, letting him know just how happy she really was.

“I’m serious Jersi. I really don’t want to wait. Vance’s father-in-law is a pastor and he can do it next week. I already asked him,” Memphis said.

“Why so soon?” Jersi lifted her head up to ask.

“Why wait? We can do something big later but I want us to be married now. I’m not forcing you though baby. If you’re really not ready then I’ll understand,” Memphis noted.

“I’m ready but I’m sure my mother won’t be,” Jersi said.

“I love and respect your mother but that’s not her decision to make. If we both agree to do it now, then everybody else needs to fall back. I’m sure my mama is gonna fake a heart attack but I’m ready for that too,” Memphis

replied making her laugh.

“Okay boo, next week it is,” Jersi said as she climbed back into her seat.

“Talk to me Jersi. I don’t want you to feel pressured. It’s not just about what I want. We’re in this together baby,” Memphis replied.

“It’s no pressure Memphis. I would have been on board if you wanted to do it today,” Jersi assured him with a kiss on the lips.

“Can you take some time off from work? I know you just got a promotion so it’s cool if you can’t,” Memphis commented.

“That doesn’t matter. I have lots of vacation time to use whenever I want to. What do you have in mind?” Jersi asked as he finally pulled away from her office building.

“A two week honeymoon to wherever you want to go,” he replied.

“Dubai,” Jersi said.

“Dubai it is,” Memphis said making her smile.

He was nervous about proposing to her, especially since they had just gotten back together. After seeing how he felt without her, Memphis knew that he was making the right decision. He talked to his brothers about it and they both agreed that Jersi was the one. Memphis hadn’t been genuinely happy in a long time before she came along. He spoke to Vance’s father-in-law and he agreed to marry them whenever they were ready. Memphis knew that his mother was going to die but that was all on her. Jersi wasn’t going anywhere and she needed to understand that. Memphis was ready for her to stop taking her pills and pump some babies in her. Valerie could continue to be stubborn if she wanted to. It would be her missing out on time with her grandkids because his mind was made up.



“Oh baby, it’s beautiful! I’m so happy!” Dena yelled as she rocked Jersi back and forth.

“Congrats baby girl. Memphis is a great catch,” her father said with a smile.

“He sure is and I can tell that he really loves you. The look in his eyes says a lot,” Dena replied as she continued to stare at the ring on her daughter’s finger.

“I got whatever you need sweetheart. Money is not an issue when it comes to my only daughter getting married,” Jacob said.

“That’s the one part of it all that y’all might not like,” Jersi countered nervously.

She dreaded having to tell her parents that Memphis didn’t want to wait. He was adamant about them getting married now but Jersi didn’t know why. She really didn’t care and she couldn’t wait to become his wife.

“What’s wrong baby?” Dena asked her.

“Memphis wants us to get married next week. We’re going to get the

license Monday. He already has a pastor who agreed to marry us,” Jersi noted.

“Why so soon? That won’t give us any time to plan,” Dena said.

“I know but he said that we could do something bigger at a later date,” Jersi replied.

“Oh baby, no. I want to help you pick out a dress and do cake tastings and stuff. I’ve dreamed about this moment since you were a baby. We need at least two or three months. That’s still short notice but we can make it happen,” Dena maintained.

“What’s the rush Jersi? Are you pregnant?” her father asked.

“No, I’m not pregnant,” Jersi said as she laughed at the horrified expression on her mother’s face.

“You almost scared me half to death,” Dena said as she held her chest.

“We are planning to start a family as soon as we’re married though,” Jersi pointed out.

“You can have as many babies as you want once you’re married. But we need more time Jersi. I’m sure your father wants to walk you down the aisle and stuff,” Dena said.

“Of course I do. She’s my only girl,” Jacob pointed out.

“Maybe we can talk to Memphis and try to reason with him,” Dena said.

“No, I’ll talk to him when I get home,” Jersi replied.

“Speaking of homes, what do you plan to do with your condo?” her

father asked

“I don’t know. Maybe Dray can stay there until he finds him another house,” Jersi replied.

“That’s fine too but I don’t think you should sell it. That can bring in some nice income if you rent it out,” Jacob noted.

“Yeah, that’s what Memphis said too,” Jersi replied.

“Well, go talk to him and let me know what he says. I know the perfect outdoor venue to have the ceremony. They have a glass covering over the pool for the bride and groom to stand on. It’s amazing,” Dena gushed excitedly.

“Okay ma, I’ll call you in a few,” Jersi said as her mother walked her to the door.

She called and told Dray, Ariel, Cat and her aunt Toni the good news about her engagement. She had to tell her parents first but everybody was happy for her. When Jersi pulled up to the house, she saw a furniture truck in the driveway. She had ordered a lot of stuff for the house and she couldn’t wait for it to get done. When she walked up the stairs, Memphis was opening the door to let the two delivery men out. One of them was staring at Jersi and he didn’t even try to hide it.

“The fuck is you looking so hard for,” Memphis snapped, making the man rush down the stairs to his truck.

“Really Memphis?” Jersi laughed as she kissed him and entered the house.

“Yes, really. Nigga see me standing here and didn’t even try to play it off,” he frowned.

Jersi went straight down the hall to see how the bedroom sets looked in the rooms. Memphis already had a brand new set and she had three more



rooms to go. She wasn't going to overwhelm herself though. Once the furniture came for the dining and sitting rooms, she was going to complete that before she started on another project.

"It looks good. Do you like it?" Jersi asked when she saw one of the sets.

"Yeah, it's nice," Memphis said as he hugged her from behind.

He and Jersi talked about all that she wanted to do to the house but he really didn't care. He survived with just a sofa and tv for years and he was good with that. Once they were done talking about decorations, he followed Jersi to the kitchen while she fixed them something to eat.

"I have to tell you something," Jersi blurted out.

"Baby, no. I hate when you start a conversation off like that. The last time you did that I found out that my boy was gay. I can't take nothing else right now," Memphis frowned as she laughed.

"It's nothing like that Memphis. My parents were happy about us getting engaged," Jersi said.

"But?" Memphis asked, encouraging her to go on.

"They want us to wait for at least two or three months. My mother wants to help me pick out a dress and my father is complaining about not walking me down the aisle," Jersi noted.

"Okay baby but how do you feel?" Memphis asked her.

"I was good with doing it next week but I have to consider their feelings too," Jersi noted.

"And that's all fine and good, but, at the end of the day, the decision is ours to make," Memphis said.

“I agree but we need to compromise some kind of way,” Jersi sighed.

“They basically want the wedding ceremony but I want the commitment. We’re living under the same roof and I’m ready to make it right. We can get married next week and you and your mother can still plan a big wedding. I’m good either way,” Memphis shrugged.

“Are you sure baby? I don’t want you to feel like I got with my parents and changed my mind,” Jersi said.

“That’s exactly what you did but it’s cool,” he replied making her feel bad.

“I’m sorry baby. Listen, we’ll do it the way you just said. We can get married next week and do the big ceremony later. Let me call and tell them now,” Jersi said as she grabbed her phone.

Thankfully, her parents were good with their decision. Dena wanted to throw them a dinner at her house afterwards and they agreed to that. They were just happy that they could have the big wedding that they always wanted Jersi to have. She had a wedding planner that she wanted to use and she called her ass soon as she and Jersi hung up. Dena also called her travel agent and got right to work on their honeymoon trip to Dubai. Jersi and Memphis planned to get their license on Monday and get married that Saturday. Memphis called his mother to tell her his good news but she hung up on him. He was cool with that but she wasn’t changing his mind.



Three weeks later, Memphis returned to work as a married man. He and Jersi stuck to their original plan and got married when they planned to. The travel agent couldn't book their trip until a week later, so they spent a few days in Miami until they left for Dubai.

"What are you doing here Mr. newlywed? I thought you were coming back tomorrow," Erin smiled as she came from behind the counter to hug him.

He and Jersi had come back home the night before and went straight to bed. She was at home unpacking and washing the clothes that they traveled with. They were both due back to work the following day and they were supposed to be relaxing.

"Yeah, I was but you know my nerves be bad when I'm not here. I feel like I haven't been here in months," Memphis replied.

"Everything has been fine. Membership is up, so that's always a good thing. Your other two managers have been handling their business," Erin said.

"That's what's up. I'm not staying. I just came to check on things," Memphis said as he walked away.

He was pleased to see that everything was running as smoothly as it was when he was there. Two of his frat brothers managed his other two locations and they agreed to help out in his absence. Memphis walked around for a few minutes before he decided to leave. As soon as he walked outside to his car, Lila was standing there waiting on him. Lila had become a headache so he cancelled her membership and washed his hands with her. She was the reason why his mother hated Jersi and he was tired of giving her passes.

"I need to know when is a good time for me to come get Layla's things from your house. I don't want your new wife to touch anything that belonged to my sister," Lila fumed.

“Man, if you don’t get the fuck on with that lame ass shit. All these years later and you’re just now worrying about your sister’s stuff,” Memphis said while shaking his head.

“I don’t care how long it’s been. I want my sister’s stuff,” Lila yelled.

“Even if I didn’t already get rid of her stuff, I wasn’t giving it to your desperate ass to sell and try to make a come up,” Memphis said.

“Don’t worry about what I do. You got that bitch living up in my sister’s house, spending up all her money,” Lila ranted with tears in her eyes.

“I guess you’re mad because it’s not you. All that money you had and you don’t have nothing but a house and a car to show for it. How the fuck you let Juan’s lazy, freeloading ass sucker you out of so much bank? Y’all are some straight up clowns,” Memphis laughed.

“Fuck you Memphis! That bitch cheated on you once, you better believe that she’ll do it again. You don’t have no room to talk about nobody else. Tell that hoe that she’s living my sister’s dream,” Lila argued.

“I kept the peace with you on the strength of Layla. Since my wife don’t give a fuck about you, it’s whatever with me now. You a sad ass bitch to even be trying to fuck a nigga who was married to your sister. Stay the fuck from around my gym and any other place of business that I own. Now, go run and tell my mama that,” Memphis snapped as he got into his truck and sped away.

Not even ten minutes later, his phone rang and his mother was calling. He already knew that Lila was going to call her and he was prepared. Instead of answering the phone, he decided to go to her house. Memphis had a headache and he was sure that it was only going to get worse. He pulled up to his mother’s house and sat in his truck for a while. After a few minutes, he got out and tried to use his key to enter. When the locks wouldn’t budge, Memphis laughed at just how petty his mother could be. Valerie had obviously changed her locks to get back at Memphis for changing his. It was cool with him though. He didn’t have a problem knocking and waiting to be

let in.

“What are you doing here? I called your phone and didn’t get an answer. Lila told me how bad you just talked to her. All she wanted was her sister’s things. The nerve of that lil girl to get rid of her stuff,” Valerie fussed.

“Stop always assuming stuff. You’ve been telling me to get rid of Layla’s things for years. Now it’s a problem when I finally do it,” Memphis chuckled sarcastically.

“That new wife of yours really got you changing. Layla is probably rolling over in her grave. I don’t blame Lila for being so upset,” Valerie said when she let him in.

“New locks huh?” Memphis smirked while following her to the kitchen. He ignored her comment because he really didn’t care about how his mother or Lila felt.

“You’re not the only one who needs privacy,” Valerie flippantly replied.

As soon as he entered the kitchen, Memphis stopped in his tracks. His eyes had to be deceiving him. There was no way in hell that she had his father sitting up in her kitchen with a big ass plate of food in front of him. The nigga looked like he was chillin’ in his plaid pajamas and house shoes. He had the newspaper up to his face but he put it down when he saw Memphis.

“Hey son. How you been? I heard you got married. Congrats on that,” Jonah said with an amused smirk.

He saw the anger in his son’s eyes but he didn’t give a damn. He and Valerie were back together and he didn’t care how his kids felt about it. He was their father and nothing they said or did would ever change that. Granted, he was wrong for how he left them but he paid the ultimate price for that. He lost everything that he had, including his thriving businesses. In his and Valerie’s eyes, karma had made him suffer enough and his kids needed to get

over it. Vance was the only one who seemed to have some sense. Maybe the other two needed to find the Lord just like he did.

“Man, you can’t be serious right now,” Memphis said as he looked over at his mother.

Valerie had a look of shame and embarrassment on her face. She started washing the dishes that were in the sink, trying hard to avoid her son’s angry glare.

“Me and your mama decided to work things out. It’s been a long time coming and I’m just happy that she never gave up on me,” Jonah said as he looked over at her and smiled.

“So, this is what it is ma? You let this nigga move back in here?” Memphis asked.

“I don’t tell you how to run your life and you can’t tell me how to run mine. You went off and got married, knowing that I don’t like nothing about that girl. Don’t say shit to me for wanting to be happy too,” Valerie said.

“It’s all good. Just make sure that your happiness can pay the bills. You already know what it is with me. I’m done and I’ll make sure that my brothers are too,” Memphis replied.

“How is that fair Memphis? I want companionship just like you,” Valerie yelled.

“And I’m not stopping you from getting it. You’ve had males friends before and I’ve never had a problem with any of them. Hell, I even sent you and one of your boyfriends to Hawaii, so I don’t have a problem with you dating. We take care of you because you took care of us. I wish I would pay the bills in here while this deadbeat ass nigga lay up like a king,” Memphis fumed.

“You and JJ are the only ones who have a problem with it. Vance forgave him a long time ago and he doesn’t have a problem with us being

back together,” Valerie noted.

“Okay, well Vance can foot all the bills then,” Memphis said as he walked away.

He knew that would never happen because Vance couldn't afford it. He had just closed on his house and he and his wife both had new cars. Truthfully, it was Memphis who did the most for his mother financially. His brothers pitched in where they could but they didn't have nearly as much money as he did. Memphis was the one who paid the down payment for his little brother to even get the house. He didn't mind because he wanted to see him happy.

“You know damn well he can't afford to do that on his own,” Valerie sobbed as she walked out after him.

“You wanted your man to come back home. Why can't he pay the bills? He gon' be living here with you, right? Real men take care of their women and their households,” Memphis noted.

“You know that he's not working right now,” Valerie said.

“That's not my problem,” Memphis shrugged uncaringly.

“I can't believe that you would treat your own mother this way. You're only doing this because I don't like your new wife. Okay, if it'll make you feel better, I'll apologize to her and welcome her into the family,” Valerie conceded.

“She's already in the family, whether you welcome her in or not. Jersi is my wife. She don't need to be accepted by nobody but me. And this has nothing to do with Jersi. We've been having this same conversation for years before I even met her,” Memphis pointed out.

“What do you want me to do? He's your father Memphis. You really want me to put him out on the streets?” Valerie cried.

“You can do whatever you want to do with the nigga. I’m done with it,” Memphis replied as he hopped in his truck and sped away.

Just like he assumed, his headache was even worse than it was before. Memphis just wanted to go home and lay up with his wife. Instead, he headed over to his car wash to see what was up with JJ instead. When he pulled up to the car wash, Memphis groaned when he saw Juan’s truck parked out front. He was not in the mood and Juan needed to know that. Saying the wrong thing to him would definitely get him knocked the fuck out.

“What’s up lil brother? How’s married life treating you?” JJ asked.

“I’m good man. Just stressed the fuck out,” Memphis replied.

“Damn nigga, already? You and Vance make me wanna stay single,” JJ laughed.

“Nah man, it’s not my wife. Me and Jersi are good. It’s your mama who got me with a damn migraine,” Memphis frowned.

“Aww shit. You said my mama, so it must really be bad,” JJ assumed.

“Man, tell me why the fuck she got our deadbeat ass daddy living with her again. Shit got me seriously heated right now,” Memphis said.

“Man, I know you better be fucking lying. I seriously hope you got jokes right now,” JJ replied with a heated look on his face.

“I wish I was lying. Nigga was sitting up at the table reading the newspaper with his pajamas on. She had a big ass plate of food sitting in front of him like he’s a king or some shit. I told her that I was done and she started that ole bullshit ass crying. I wasn’t trying to hear it though. I’m not paying another bill up in that bitch as long as he’s there,” Memphis raged.

“That’s what it is then. I don’t do as much as you but I’m done too. That nigga didn’t give a fuck about us and I care even less about his ass. Tell him to go find that young bitch that he left us for,” JJ fussed.



“I feel bad as fuck but I can’t do it bruh. That nigga don’t have no job and no income. He’s trying to lay up in the house all day while we foot the bills. Mama can do that but he got the entire game fucked up,” Memphis said.

“Fuck him. Mama better have a backup plan if she want that nigga to stay there. Vance might be cool with the shit but I ain’t been saved yet. The Lord is still working on me,” JJ replied right as Juan came walking out of the building.

“What’s good cousin? Nigga got married and shit,” Juan said loudly as he walked over to them.

“This nigga here,” Memphis mumbled in aggravation.

“Nigga, you know you got money when you spending two weeks in Dubai and shit. Why you didn’t let a nigga run some shit while you were gone? I could have been the boss for a few weeks,” Juan said as he gave Memphis dap.

“The key to being a successful businessman is not making stupid decisions. Me letting a high school dropout run my business would have been financial suicide. I’m in the business to make money, not lose it,” Memphis replied.

“I can’t believe your ass got married again. Last I heard, y’all were broke up. Next thing I know, you out of the country celebrating your honeymoon. Black beauty must have put some roots on your ass or something,” Juan laughed.

“Shit happens,” Memphis shrugged.

“It couldn’t be me nigga. All it takes is one time for a broad to do me dirty and it’s a wrap,” Juan said while shaking his head.

“Let me stop you before shit gets real. Don’t speak on me, my wife or our marriage and I promise that we’ll be good. Stay out of my business and

I'll give you the same respect," Memphis replied.

"I'm just saying bruh. You've always been a ladies man. I've just never known you to wife these hoes. Especially not a toss-up," Juan said, making Memphis see red.

JJ already knew what it was and he wasn't about to intervene. Memphis was strong as fuck and he couldn't stop him even if he wanted to. Memphis moved with the speed of lightning and hit Juan with a two piece that had him on the ground snoring in no time. JJ knew that it was only a matter of time before it happened. Juan was jealous of his own cousin and he was always throwing shade at Memphis. Everybody had a breaking point and Memphis had reached his.

"Damn boy. Them hands should be registered as lethal weapons," JJ said as he put his hand near Juan's mouth to make sure he was still breathing.

"Get that fuck boy off my property before I have him arrested for trespassing," Memphis snapped as he got into his truck and sped off.

The bullshit came in threes that day and he was over it. He couldn't catch a break and he regretted not staying inside like he'd originally planned to. It was crazy how everybody seemed to be in their feelings about his marriage to Jersi. She had a heart of gold and was one of the sweetest people that he'd ever met. It was absurd how everybody judged her before even getting to know her. She wasn't perfect but neither was he. Memphis knew without a doubt that she loved him and he had no regrets about making her his wife. As soon as they got back together that was the first thing that he thought of. He couldn't see himself being without her and she felt the exact same way.

Memphis pulled up in his driveway and got out of the car. As soon as he walked through the door, the smell of a home cooked meal was the first thing to greet him. The house was spotless as usual and Jersi was standing in the kitchen at the stove.

"You're just in time. The food just got done," Jersi said as she turned

around and smiled at him. She turned the stove off and put the lids on the pots.

Memphis didn't say anything. He picked Jersi up and carried her to their bedroom. Jersi could tell that something was bothering him. The frown that was etched on his face told her so. He undressed her and she watched as he undressed himself.

“What's wrong baby?” Jersi asked when he climbed in between her legs. She rubbed his back and looked deep into his eyes.

“I just need you right now,” Memphis said right before he entered her.

Jersi didn't pressure him to say anything. Her husband needed her and she was going to be there for him. She knew that they would talk eventually. In the meantime, she let him have his way with her body to relieve some stress.



**M**ariah cringed as the pain seared through her entire body. She knew that it would get better after a while but that time hadn't come. She hated anal sex and Damien knew that. She hadn't done it in years and Blake never asked her to. Since Damien had basically become her supplier, it had become a requirement. Mariah had no money to pay him, so sex was the next best thing. Thankfully, he was a five minute man and it never lasted long. Blake had basically written her off and she didn't know what else to do. He told her that he wanted her out of the house but she had nowhere else to go. He hadn't been staying there lately and she knew that he was probably holed up at his love nest with that bitch Jersi. Mariah's life had spiraled out of control and she didn't know how to get a handle on things. Maybe he spared her from going to jail just to make her suffer.

“Shit,” Damien hissed as he pulled out of her and released on her ass. Mariah flopped down in the bed, happy that it was over. Once she caught her breath, she sat up and looked at Damien expectantly.

“What you got for me?” She asked him.

When he got up and went to his closet, Mariah got excited. Being high out of her mind was the only thing that kept her sane these days. Blake had filled for divorce and she hadn't seen her kids since she was in the

hospital. She had to go to some facility for a few days once she was released but it wasn't too bad. People thought she was crazy but Blake was the one who drove her to the point of insanity. Mariah hadn't popped pills in years but she would be lying if she said she didn't miss the way they made her feel. She had nothing else so drugs had become her new best friend.

"Come get your candy," Damien said as he smiled mischievously. He had three lines of coke neatly placed on a mirror. He rolled up a twenty and handed it to Mariah.

"What happened to the pills? You told me that you would have some more today. I don't do coke," Mariah fussed.

"Since when? You've been doing it for the past few weeks," Damien reminded her.

"That's because you didn't have anything else. I don't like how nauseated that makes me feel," Mariah complained.

"Well, this is all I have. Take it or leave," Damien said.

Mariah seemed to be battling with herself but he knew that she wouldn't be able to resist. He smiled when she crawled over to him and grabbed everything that he was offering her. Damien had lots of pills but he wasn't giving her any of them. He liked her better when she was high off coke because she turned into a freak. Damien even let two of his friends get a taste of her and she had no complaints. Although he'd always had a strong attraction to men, Damien really loved Mariah at one time. He saw himself marrying her and starting a family one day. When she played him the way that she did, his heart grew cold towards her and he hated everything about her. Seeing her stoop so low to do anything for dope gave him more pleasure than she would ever know. Damien had a girl but he got Mariah to do everything that she wouldn't do. He had deep feelings for Jersi's brother too but he could never be out in the open with him. Dray got most of his money but he never complained. He was high maintenance and Damien knew that from day one.

“Umm,” Mariah moaned as she laid back in the bed.

She snorted all three lines and she was feeling good. Damien got up and grabbed one of the dingy looking glasses that the run down motel provided for the guests. He filled it halfway with the Hennessy that he bought there and dropped a Molly inside. He mixed a little coke with his creation and walked it over to Mariah.

“Drink up,” he said while handing her the glass.

He smiled when she sat up and grabbed the glass. In one gulp, she drained the glass and didn't even frown as the liquid went down. Damien stood there stroking his erection as he watched all the drugs do what they were known to do. After a few minutes, Mariah started fanning herself like she was burning up. Her eyes looked wild and crazy as she looked around the room. Damien pulled her up from the bed and pushed her down on her knees. He sat on the bed and grabbed her by her hair.

“I'm so hot,” Mariah said as sweat poured from her body.

“You'll be okay. If you make me feel good, I just might find a few pills to give you,” Damien smirked.

“Really?” Mariah asked excitedly. When Damien nodded his head, she rushed over to him and took him into her mouth.

Damien looked at her with hate filled eyes as she sucked and slurped him like he was her favorite lollypop. He started to make another video of her but he had something better in mind. His girl would never do anything so extreme and he would never ask her to. Damien pulled Mariah's hair, signaling her to stop. He lifted his legs in the air and pushed her face in his ass. Most women would have been repulsed but Mariah was high as a kite. He moaned like a bitch as she stuck her tongue out and gave him pleasure like never before. Damien stroked himself while Mariah's tongue darted in and out of his asshole. She was moaning just as much as he was and she seemed to be enjoying it. She spread his legs wider and tried to put her whole face in it. Damien's eyes rolled up to the ceiling as he enjoyed the feeling.

Mariah was a whole ass freak and he wasn't letting her go no time soon. He regretted not recording her because he would have loved to go back and watch it later. Mariah would die if she knew that she was the star in a few of his home made movies. If ever she tried to get out of line, Damien was sure that the videos would get her mind right.

“Fuck! Keep going,” Damien moaned as he stroked himself faster.

Most niggas wouldn't be cause dead with their legs up in the air while a bitch licked them the way Mariah was doing him. Damien was usually the one doing the licking but it felt good to be on the receiving end for once. He didn't care about how he looked because it felt damn good. When he felt himself about to cum, Damien put his legs down and grabbed Mariah by the hair once again. Seeing how wet her face was turned him on even more. He forced himself back into her mouth. She sucked him for a few more seconds before he erupted like a volcano. Mariah swallowed every drop before she fell back on the dirty carpet and closed her eyes. She was too doped up to know what she had just done and Damien planned to keep her that way. She was his new favorite toy and he planned to play with her for as long as he could. Before long, she was snoring and he went and hopped in the shower. Once he was done, he grabbed Mariah's car keys and decided to ride in style. He would be back long before she woke up so she probably wouldn't even know.



Blake walked into his house and turned his nose up in disgust. The place appeared to be clean but it had a foul order coming from somewhere.

When he walked into the kitchen, he saw exactly where it was coming from. The trash was overflowing and hadn't been taken out in a while. Blake put on some gloves and took both bags outside. He sprayed air freshener in the can before he put another garbage bag inside.

“What are you doing here?” Mariah asked as she entered the kitchen looking like a mess. Her hair was all over her head and she looked like she hadn't bathed in days. She had dark rings around her eyes and she had lost a significant amount of weight.

“This is my house. I should be asking you that. Have you found another place to stay yet? I'm being nice but your time is running out,” Blake warned.

“Where am I supposed to go Blake? I don't have any money and you made sure of that,” Mariah cried.

“I didn't put a gun to your head to make you sign the prenup. You did it at your own free will. And wherever you go is of no concern to me,” Blake said.

“Where are my girls? I haven't seen them in weeks. That's not fair Blake,” Mariah sobbed.

“You mean the same girls that you tried to kill? I hope you remember their faces because you'll never see them again,” Blake promised.

“They're my damn kids!” Mariah yelled.

“Take me to court then. Let's see how that works out for you,” Blake taunted.

“I can't believe that you're doing this to me. All behind an affair that you started. Is she that important to you?” Mariah asked.

“I only came here to get the girls some clothes Mariah. I'm not in the mood for anything else,” Blake replied as he walked away.



He had been staying at his penthouse but he hadn't seen Jersi in a minute. She never answered his calls and she blocked just about every number that he called from. Blake had a few females that he entertained from time to time but the penthouse was reserved for Jersi only. All of her stuff was still there and Blake was confident that she'd be back. They had the kind of chemistry that neither of them could just walk away from. At least that's what he was hoping. Their parents seemed to be moving in a different direction but he didn't want that for him and Jersi.

"When can I see them?" Mariah asked, referring to her daughters.

"You can't," Blake replied.

Truthfully, he barely saw his kids and they didn't seem to care. According to his mother, they never even asked about him and Mariah. Even they saw how rocky things got in the end and they were just happy to be with their grandmother. After they got out of the hospital, Eva didn't even let them out of her sight for too long. She was upset with Blake for not getting the police involved but he had his reasons. Divorcing Mariah and leaving her with nothing would hurt more than sending her to prison.

"Blake, please don't do this to me. I'm sorry for what I did but I miss my kids. You can do supervised visits if you want to. I just want to see them," Mariah begged.

"I'll see," Blake replied.

Her father was right about everything that he'd said about him. Blake was in control of the finances and everything else. Her father always told her that he would use that against her one day and he was right. She had to play by his rules and she didn't even have a say in anything. The house was his and so was her car. Mariah was thankful that he hadn't asked for it back yet. The only thing that seemed to make her happy lately was the drugs that Damien provided her with. Sleeping with him was the worst part of it all. Damien had changed a lot since they were together. Some of the things that he liked to do just didn't sit well with her. The drugs had Mariah behaving in

a way that she wasn't proud of. She wouldn't be caught dead putting her mouth anywhere near someone's asshole had she been in her right mind. It wasn't until she came down off her high did the embarrassment start to set in.

"I need a few things Blake. I don't have any food or sanitary items in here," Mariah said as she stood there and watched him look through their daughter's closet.

"Why is any of that my problem Mariah? I filed for divorce and I am no longer obligated to provide for you. Call your father. As a matter of fact, you need to be asking him if you can stay there for a while. My patience is running thin," Blake snapped.

He was having a hard time finding something for his girls. Mariah usually did that but she was useless to him now. Blake decided to go take a shower and hit the mall. He would buy his girls whatever they needed and pick up a few things for himself too. He wasn't good with shopping for them but he would get someone in the store to help him. Mariah sat in the living room in a daze as Blake moved around the house. When she heard the shower water turn on, she got up to go see where he'd left his wallet. Blake took long showers, so she knew that she had lots of time.

"Bastard treating me like I'm a bitch on the streets. Fuck him. I'm taking what I want," Mariah fumed.

Blake had a few hundreds in wallet and Mariah grabbed three of them. She took one of his credit cards and was about to close his wallet until something else got her attention. There was a funny looking key that was sticking out of it and she was curious as to what it was for. Her first mind told her that it was for a safe or a safety deposit box. That was something that would come in handy one day. She quickly snatched it up before putting his wallet back where she found it. She grabbed both of his phones and entered their daughter's birthday in them to see just what her husband had been up to. Mariah wasn't even surprised to see that he was talking to multiple women. She read a few of the messages but there was nothing that interested her. She was looking for something from Jersi but there was nothing. The last message that Jersi sent him wasn't a friendly one. She told him that she was in a

relationship and he needed to stop bothering her.

“That’s good for his ass,” Mariah smiled triumphantly.

Blake treated her like shit for Jersi and she ended up moving on to somebody else. As bad as she felt before, that gave her a little comfort. All the other women were probably just for sex but he genuinely loved Jersi. Mariah still hated her but at least she and Blake were no longer together. Mariah continued to snoop as she came across some more valuable information that she jotted down. She made sure to put all of Blake’s things back exactly how she found them before going back to the living room.

About thirty minutes later, Blake walked out of the room and straight out the front door. He didn’t even give Mariah a second glance and that broke her heart. She and Blake were so happy and in love and she was sad to see it come to an end. She still loved her husband but the feelings were obviously not mutual.

Blake got into his car and pulled away from a house that he no longer considered a home. As much as he loved Mariah before, he had come to despise her now. Honestly, he knew that they could have recovered from his infidelity with Jersi but her trying to kill his kids was the final straw. They were perfect and innocent and she tried to end their lives just to hurt him. Blake couldn’t even trust their own mother around them so he knew that having another woman around wasn’t happening. Truthfully, he didn’t even know if he was cut out to be a single father. His mother wanted to keep them and he was seriously considering it. They would be much better off.

After finding a place to park, Blake got out of his car and entered Lakeside Mall through Macy’s. It was sad that he had to call his mother to see what size his kids wore. He went to the children’s department and stood there in awe. He didn’t even know where to start, so he looked around for a sales rep.

“Blake? What are you doing in here looking lost?” Talena asked as she walked up to him.

She had just started her part time job in Macy's but she usually worked in the stocking department. She still worked from home but she hated being inside all the time. She needed the extra money so that worked out fine. Blake looked lost and she could tell that he needed help.

“Man, you just don't know how happy I am to see you. I need to get a few things for my girls and I don't even know here to start,” Blake replied.

“Well, first of all, this is the big girls section. Come over here and I can help you,” Talena offered as she walked over to the section that carried the clothes for smaller girls.

Blake told her what size they wore in clothes and shoes and Talena got right to work. She picked out underclothes and pajamas too, even though they had lots of that at home already. There was no need for her to ask where Mariah was because she already knew.

“Thanks Talena. You were a real life saver,” Blake smiled as they walked to the register.

“No problem,” Talena replied.

“How is Jersi? I haven't heard from her in while,” Blake said as he waited to be checked out.

“Fuck Jersi! She got in her feelings because I called her man ugly. The bitch is married now though,” Talena noted.

“Married?” Blake repeated as his heart took a swine dive in his chest.

“Yep and she didn't even invite me and Tabby to her dinner. My auntie Toni slipped and said something about it. I really wasn't expecting an invite but she didn't have to do my mama like that. It's all good though. I'm done with her ass,” Talena fumed.

“How long has she been knowing that dude? I didn't even think it was that deep,” Blake said.

“It’s been a minute but I honestly didn’t see them getting married so soon,” Talena replied.

“That makes two of us. We were just together a few months ago. I can’t believe she married somebody else,” Blake huffed angrily.

“She did what she planned to do with you and dipped,” Talena countered.

“What do you mean?” Blake questioned.

“Her goal was to get you to fall in love with her again and come in between you and Mariah. Once that was done, she didn’t have no more use for you. Jersi was never interested in y’all getting back together. The bitch used to fake like she was on her period so she didn’t have to have sex with you. She just wanted to hurt you and Mariah the same way that y’all hurt her,” Talena said, spilling all the tea.

Tears pooled in Blake’s eyes but he refused to let them fall. He gave Jersi his heart only for her to throw it away like it was day old trash. So many emotions were going through his head but hurt was right there at the forefront. He knew that what Talena said had to be true. He and Jersi had sex once in all the months that they had been messing around. He went down on her more than anything because she always had an excuse as to why they couldn’t sleep together. Blake was livid. He wanted to confront her but he didn’t know where she lived. He didn’t even know where she worked but he was going to find out. He wasn’t going to rest until she looked him in the eye and told him the truth. He ruined his marriage for Jersi but it was all a game to her.

“It’s all good. I wish her all the best,” Blake said as he sat his stuff on the counter. He didn’t mean a word he said but he had to save face.

“You can use my discount if you want to,” Talena offered.

“The fuck?” Blake questioned as he looked through his wallet for his

credit card. He could have sworn that he had it earlier but maybe he left it at the penthouse. He was always taking it out to order food and he probably forgot to put it back in. He had a few more to choose from but he had one that he liked to use the most.

“What’s wrong?” Talena asked.

“Nothing, I’m good,” he replied.

Once he paid for his stuff, Blake went back to his car with a heavy heart. He felt like a fool and he probably looked like one to Jersi. He was deeply in love with her and it hurt to know that she belonged to someone else. His mind told him to count his loss and move on. Unfortunately his heart just wasn’t set up like that.



“Give me twenty minutes baby. I’m coming through there and wreck some shit,” Memphis said to Jersi over the phone.

“I don’t want you to get yours hopes up Memphis. I’ve been on birth control faithfully since I was eighteen years old. Just because I’m ovulating doesn’t mean that I’m gonna get pregnant right away,” Jersi pointed out.

Memphis was dead ass serious about starting a family right away. Jersi was down but she didn’t want him to get discouraged if it didn’t happen right away. Before him, she had never even engaged in unprotected sex with anyone. She was serious about not having kids until she was ready. Since they were married, she stopped taking her pills and started using an ovulation kit. He stayed on her about using it and he called to make sure that she did. As soon as Jersi told him the results, he was ready to come home and go half on a baby.

“I’m not getting my hopes up. I know that it’ll happen when it’s the right time. I can’t lie and say that I’m not having fun trying though,” he said.

“Me too,” Jersi laughed.

“I’m just going drop some money off to my auntie and I’ll be home,” Memphis assured her.

“Okay baby,” Jersi replied before she hung up.

Memphis had been at the gym all day assisting the personal trainer that he’d hired. He was about to cut back on working so much and focus on spending more time with his wife. Jersi didn’t work nights or weekends and he wanted his schedule to mimic hers. It was after seven and he was on his way home before his auntie called him. She had some plumbing issues and she was stressing about the amount that she was being charged. Memphis told her to set the appointment and he would drop the money off to her. When he pulled up, he groaned when he saw Juan’s truck parked out front. Memphis still wasn’t fucking with him but Juan’s mother was his favorite auntie. Juanita wasn’t feeling them being at odds with one another. She called Memphis over there and made them squash the beef in front of her. Memphis did it just to appease her but he still didn’t fuck with her son. He was a hoe and Memphis wasn’t feeling him.

Juanita had always been there for her nephews, even when her brother wasn’t. Memphis couldn’t recall her ever asking them for anything even though she knew that she could. He was always giving her money just because and he loved doing it. She stepped in when she didn’t have to and he appreciated her for that. As long as he had, she would never go without.

“Good evening,” Memphis spoke when he walked into the house.

Juan and Jonah looked like two bums sitting on the sofa while Junita flipped through the pages of a magazine. They both had the nerve to have frowns on their faces as if Memphis gave a fuck. His auntie couldn’t even go to them for financial help and they lived with her most of the time.

“Hey my baby. I really appreciate you doing this for me Memphis. I didn’t think the problem was as big as it is. I thought a few hundred dollars would fix it,” Juanita said.

“It’s all good auntie. Keep your money and do whatever you want



with it,” Memphis said as he kissed her on the cheek and handed her a wad of cash.

“This is way too much Memphis,” Juanita said when she thumbed through the money.

“Go shopping or do something nice for yourself. You fed us and made sure that we were straight when nobody else did. It’s never too much,” Memphis said, directing the comment more to his father than her.

Jonah was furious as he got up from the sofa and stormed to the back of the house. Memphis shook his head and laughed at how childish and pathetic he looked. Memphis walked out the door and Juanita walked him outside to his truck.

“Your mama still not speaking to you?” Juanita asked her nephew.

“Nope. She don’t say nothing to me or JJ,” Memphis shrugged.

“Valerie needs to be ashamed of herself. How can she get mad with y’all for not wanting to take care of Jonah’s overgrown ass?” Junita argued.

“She got her mind right real quick when the bills came through. I was dead ass serious about cutting her off as long as he was there,” Memphis replied.

“And I don’t blame you. Him and Juan are pissed with me now because I told them that they can’t stay here tonight or no other night. I’m retired and I’m supposed to be enjoying my grandkids right now. I’ve raised all my kids and I don’t have time to take care of two grown ass men. I got a twelve hundred dollar plumbing bill that they can’t even help me pay. More than likely it was one of their asses who caused it in the first place. I don’t give a damn if they never speak to me again,” Juanita fussed.

“Juan better go kiss Lila’s ass like he usually do,” Memphis said.

“That ain’t gon’ do him no good. I heard that she lost her job for calling off too much. She ain’t paid the taxes on that house in two years and she’s probably gonna lose it,” Juanita noted.

“That’s a damn shame. All that money that girl had. Gone with nothing to show for it,” Memphis said while shaking his head.

“I love my son but you gotta be a special kind of stupid to let Juan sucker you out of your money,” Juanita replied making Memphis laugh.

“I tried to tell her to invest it,” Memphis noted.

“How is your wife? That’s a beautiful lil girl,” Juanita smiled.

“She’s good. I’m on my way home to her now. I’m trying to make some babies auntie,” Memphis replied.

“Aww, I surely hope you do. That’s gonna be my prayer every day and night until it happens,” Juanita replied.

“I appreciate that. Call me if you need anything,” Memphis said as he kissed her cheek and got into his truck.

He thought about what his auntie said about Lila and shook his head again. She was too stupid to have spent up all her money the way that she did. Memphis knew without a doubt that Layla would have been trying to help her sister out had she still been alive. Being that was what his wife would have wanted, he would have been obligated to do so. Since Jersi was the leading lady in his life, Lila could choke on a dick and die as far as he was concerned.



“One more trip and that should be it,” Memphis said as he put the last of Jersi’s shoe boxes in their walk in closet.

Dray agreed to keep the condo until he found another house. Jersi decided to just rent the place out furnished because she didn’t have anywhere to store her furniture. Memphis thought her furniture was too feminine but her house was tastefully decorated. Hopefully she could find a woman to rent to because no man would want to be sitting on a pink leather sofa every day.

“This closet is huge. I had to use the closets in both rooms at my condo. I got all my stuff in here and there’s still a lot more room,” Jersi observed.

“Don’t worry about it baby. You can get the black card and fill this bitch up,” Memphis replied as he kissed her lips.

“Thanks boo, but I’m good. I’m about to fix you something to eat before we go get the last of my stuff,” Jersi said.

“You don’t have to cook baby. Let’s go out to eat,” Memphis replied.

“That’s even better,” Jersi replied right as Cat called her phone.

Memphis told her to invite Cat and Phil out to eat with them and they both agreed to come. Cat had just landed a job working at a private school and she was excited. Even better was her son got half off tuition and she

couldn't wait to transfer him the following school year. She still hadn't introduced her son to Phil but he wasn't rushing her. He and Cat stayed at each other's houses when her son was with his father on the weekends. BJ finally got it through his head that he and Cat were over and he started doing him too. He'd always been a hoe anyway. Now, he didn't have to answer to anybody when he did his thing.

"No baby news yet?" Cat asked once they were seated in the restaurant.

"Girl no. I was cramping bad as fuck this morning," Jersi replied.

"It's gonna happen boo. Y'all haven't really been trying that long," Cat pointed out.

"Yeah, it'll happen when the time is right. We're almost done with the house, so we'll be ready," Jersi replied.

"How's your mama Memphis?" Phil asked him.

"Still stubborn but she's alright," Memphis shrugged.

"She'll come around eventually," Phil assured him.

"It don't matter to me one way or another. It was fucked up that my entire family came to our wedding dinner and she didn't. I would be wrong if I stoop to her level and stop paying her bills and shit. It's not even that serious to me though," Memphis said.

"How can she not like Jersi? This bitch is one of the nicest people I know," Cat said making Jersi punch her arm.

"She never tried to like her. She don't even know my wife good enough to form an opinion of her one way or the other," Memphis frowned.

"I'm not married to your mama so I really don't care. Hell, I don't even like my own biological mother so yours don't stand a chance," Jersi said

as they all fell out laughing.

“I guess that’s why she wasn’t at the dinner either,” Cat said speaking of Tabby.

“She wasn’t there because I didn’t invite her,” Jersi corrected.

She told Memphis about the conversation that she had with Tabby as well as the argument between her and Talena. He was wondering why she didn’t invite them and she told him why. She and Memphis didn’t hide anything from each other and they swore that they never would. That was the only way that their marriage was going to work. As crazy as it sounded, she felt like she had a deeper connection with Memphis than she ever had with Blake.

“Thanks for dinner guys. It’s always good to catch up with y’all,” Cat said as she gave Memphis and Jersi a hug before they all went their separate ways.

“Where to now?” Memphis asked her.

“By Dray and then home. I wanna take a hot bath and pop some more pain meds,” Jersi replied as Memphis rubbed her stomach.

He was kind of down when her cycle appeared but he quickly snapped out of it. He wasn’t trying to rush God’s blessing and he knew it was coming eventually.

When they pulled up to Dray’s house, Memphis parked illegally behind his car. They were only coming to get two more boxes and that wouldn’t take long.

“You don’t have to get out of the car baby. I got it,” Memphis told his wife.

“You already know how Dray is. He’ll say that I’m acting funny if I don’t,” Jersi replied.

They both got out of the car and walked up the steps. Before Jersi had a chance to ring the bell, the door opened and Dray and some man were standing there hugging and kissing. It wasn't until Jersi cleared her throat did they stop. When they broke apart, Memphis was shocked to see that Dray's companion was his friend, Max. Although Jersi already told him about it, it was a different story for him to witness it. The entire scene was uncomfortable and Memphis wished he hadn't seen anything. He knew that Max was embarrassed and the look on his face showed it.

“Uh...hey,” Max spoke up uncomfortably.

He wanted to kick his own ass for insisting that Dray let him come over. He hadn't seen him in a few days and he missed him. Jersi didn't have to say anything because Memphis saw it all for himself. Max wanted to disappear but the cat was out of the bag now. He hated that the man he caught feelings for was now related to one of his close friends. He was so happy when Jersi and Memphis broke up. That didn't last very long and Memphis ended up marrying her. Now, Dray was his brother-in-law. Max had already said that he would have to be extra careful but he obviously wasn't careful enough.

“What's up? My bad Dray. I was just coming to get the last of Jersi's stuff,” Memphis replied.

“No, it's cool,” Dray said as he stepped aside and allowed them to come in.

Jersi stood by the door as Memphis grabbed the two remaining boxes. Dray had walked Max out to his car and he was coming back inside when they were leaving out.

“Call me later sis,” Dray said while kissing Jersi's cheek.

“Okay,” Jersi replied while walking back to the car.

Max was still sitting in his car but he got out and walked over to

them. Jersi got inside the car and let her husband and his friend have what she knew was going to be a difficult conversation.

“I know shit seems mad weird but I can explain,” Max stated.

“No need to bruh. You’re grown and I know how to mind my business. No judgment over this way,” Memphis assured him.

“Thanks bro, I appreciate that. This is not the kind of thing that I need to get out. I mean, I got a wife and shit,” Max replied.

Memphis only nodded his head but he didn’t reply. Max and men like him were the kind that he didn’t respect. Dray kept it all the way real but not everybody was like him. Max was the reason why women snapped and did crazy shit. He was living a lie and his wife didn’t deserve that. If he wanted to identify as bisexual, she should have been the first one to know.

“Told ya. I’m so happy that I’m off the market. I couldn’t imagine running into a nigga like him. I’d be doing hard time,” Jersi said when Memphis got back into the car.

“You damn sure are off the market. And just think, you get to marry me all over again,” Memphis smiled as he leaned over and gave her a kiss.

“Yes, and I can’t wait,” Jersi replied.

They had the colors and the venue picked out already. They didn’t care about the other minor details but Dena was on it. Her baby was going to have the wedding of her dreams and she was making it possible. Jersi really didn’t care what her mother did as long as it made her happy. She already had the man and that was all that she ever wanted.



“I don’t know how much more I can take. Are y’all trying to make sure that I’m unable to show my face in public again? People are already starting to whisper about us. This is just too much,” Eva argued.

“Calm down ma. I don’t even know what you’re talking about,” Blake replied.

“It’s bad enough that both you and BJ are getting a divorce. Now I have even more shit to cover up,” Eva raged.

“What are you talking about ma?” Blake asked in a frustrated tone.

His mother called him going off but she never told him what was wrong. She was talking in circles and getting on his last nerve. After pulling a double at the hospital Blake just wanted to take a shower and get in the bed.

“I’m talking about your wife. People are talking Blake. Some common drug dealing thug has been riding around in the Lexus truck that you paid for,” Eva fumed.

“Who told you that?” Blake questioned.



“It’s been the talk of the hair salon. Your wife is on drugs Blake. She’s already ruined her life. Don’t let her ruin yours too. You should have had her ass arrested when she tried to kill my grandkids. Being sympathetic gets you nowhere with people like Mariah. I have to find somebody else to do my hair now. There’s no way in hell I’m going back to that salon. People are looking at me with pity all because of your wife. I never liked her ass for a reason,” Eva yelled.

Blake stood there and thought about what his mother had just said. He remembered when he was with Jersi years ago and she used to always say how Mariah was a pill popper. He never saw that side of her and she became an entirely different person when they got married. Suddenly, Blake thought of something else that had been bothering him since he last saw her a week ago. He knew for sure that he had about six hundred dollars in his wallet. He remembered because they were all big bills that he got from the bank. When he went to go spend them the day after he saw Mariah, he only had three. Blake had been working like crazy, so he knew that he hadn’t spent any of them. The only other person he’d been around was his wife. What his mother was saying made more sense to him now. Maybe sparing Mariah from jail wasn’t the right thing to do. The guilt from being the one to drive her to the brink of insanity was the only thing that stopped him.

“I’ll take care of it ma,” Blake assured her.

“And exactly how do you plan to do that? I told you from the first day I laid eyes on her that she wasn’t right. Thanks to her, we lost some of our best friends. Eva and Jacob barely answer the phone for us when we call them. All because of the mess that you made of things,” Eva fussed.

“I said that I’ll take care of it and I will,” Blake snapped right as his phone rang.

“I’ve never been so embarrassed in my life. At least Jersi had class and knew how to carry herself. You and BJ just had to scrape the bottom of the barrel,” Eva chided.

She couldn’t believe the nerve of Cat to serve her son with divorce

papers. He was the best thing to ever happen to her unappreciative ass. Unlike Blake, BJ was dumb enough to let Cat put some things in her name. Her car was in her name but the credit cards that she'd spent thousands of dollars on was in his. Eva was so disgusted with her family that she didn't know what to do. Then, on top of all the bullshit from her kids, her husband was still bringing shame to the family name. Braxton had a problem keeping his pants zipped and he had yet another bastard child on the way. Eva dared him to speak of it in their home. Finances were the only thing that would link him to the outside child and that would only be after it was proven to be his.

“No, I didn't try to make a purchase in that amount. I haven't used that card in over a week,” Blake yelled angrily and he flipped through the many credit cards that were in his wallet.

He remembered not being able to find one of his cards when he went to Macy's the week before. Looking for his missing card had slipped his mind because he had been working like crazy. He had about fifteen of them so it wasn't a big deal at the time. Now that he thought about it, the card wasn't missing at all. It was stolen right along with his money. He was happy that he'd had a limit set to where he had to be notified by the company if a certain amount was used.

“What's going on Blake?” Eva asked in concern. Blake held up one finger, telling her to wait a minute.

“No, I don't authorize the purchase. That card was stolen and I want it cancelled. Can you tell who's trying to use it and where,” Blake asked.

Eva waited impatiently while her son talked on the phone with his credit card company. For some reason, the entire situation had Mariah's name written all over it. When Blake finally got off the phone, he was angered beyond words.

“What happened Blake?” Eva asked.

“That bitch stole my credit card. The operator couldn't tell me exactly who was trying to use it but I know it was her. She tried to buy a pair of

twelve hundred dollar shoes,” Blake fumed.

“What!” Eva yelled in horror.

“Apparently, she’s used it a few times but none of the purchases were big enough for them to alert me. I’m over playing games with her ass. I was trying to be nice but I want that bitch out of my house today,” Blake ranted as he dialed a number on his phone.

“Who are you calling?” Eva wondered. Blake ignored her but she got her answer when he started talking.

“Yes, I’d like to report a stolen car. It’s a silver Lexus SUV,” Blake said.

Eva smiled, happy to see that Blake was finally taking action. Mariah had obviously lost what was left of her mind. Eva was happy that she had her granddaughters with her. If she had her way, Mariah would never see them again.



“Ugh,” Mariah groaned when she opened one of her eyes.

Her head was pounding and her mouth felt dry and pasty. It took her a few minutes to remember exactly where she was. The smell of mildew in the run down motel that Damien had rented was a constant reminder. The taste of his nasty ass in her mouth had her ready to vomit. She tried not to move

because she didn't want him to know that she was up. He always seemed to want some kind of sexual favor and she wasn't in the mood.

For the past week, things had been cool. Mariah had the three hundred dollars that she took from Blake, so she was able to pay Damien for the drugs that she wanted and keep food in her stomach. Once that was gone, she started using his credit card to buy whatever Damien wanted in exchange for the drugs. That came to an abrupt end the day before when he asked her to get him a pair of shoes from Saks. Mariah was no slouch when it came to high end fashion. Blake made sure that she was draped in nothing but the best. Even when she went into the store that day, she made sure that she looked like money. Everything was smooth sailing for a while until she saw the sales associates start to whisper and look at her funny. Mariah knew that something was wrong because they were taking too long to complete the purchase. She pretended like she was looking at some shoes and hauled ass out of the store. She was a nervous wreck when she got into her car that Damien was driving and sped away. She was too afraid to go home because she knew that Blake was on to her now. Damien offered to rent a room but Mariah knew that his offer came with a price. She was feigning for drugs and he was happy to supply them. Unfortunately, she had to pay with her face buried in his ass all night. Mariah had stooped to a new low and she hated herself. More than that, she hated her husband too.

“Damn,” Damien hissed as he looked at something on his phone.

Mariah heard a woman moaning but she knew that no one else was in the room. She discreetly looked over at him and frowned in disgust. Damien was on the dirty sofa naked, stroking himself as he watched something on his phone. Judging by the sound of it, Mariah knew that it had to be porn. She had the covers pulled up over her head as she continued to stare. Aside from trying to drive Talena crazy, she didn't see anything about him that she liked. He wasn't a bad looking person but something was off about him. Maybe he hid it from her when they were together but he was a different kind of nasty. Some of the things that he liked were disgusting and had her seriously questioning his manhood. No real man that she knew would be caught dead sitting in a woman's face. Damien was a pervert but she was no better. She did whatever he told her to, just to get high.

“You are gross and disgusting,” Mariah said when she finally got up.

Her bladder was full and she was tired of the one man show that Damien was putting on. Seeing her did nothing to stop him or slow him down.

“Fuck you bitch,” he snapped as he stroked himself faster.

Mariah went to the bathroom and relived herself. Once she washed her hands, she stared into the dirty mirror as tears pooled in her eyes. She barely recognized the face that was staring back at her. Her mother’s words rang loudly in her ears but she was too far gone now. Not only had she lost herself, but she lost her daughters in the process. She barely popped pills anymore because she was now addicted to coke. Mariah hated what she had become and she desperately wanted to get back to the person that she used to be. She was too embarrassed to go to rehab but maybe that’s what she needed. Something had to give because she couldn’t go on doing what she was doing. Her father seemed to be the only one in her corner and she was thankful that he stayed when she tried to push him away.

“Watch out,” Damien barked when he rushed into the bathroom.

He had semen leaking from his hands and Mariah was disgusted. He had no shame as he hopped into the shower to clean up the mess that he had made. Mariah was done with him and she was about to go. She prayed that she was strong enough to never come back. She pulled her hair into a ponytail and slipped on her clothes and shoes. She grabbed her keys and was preparing to exit the room. Damien still had his porn playing on his phone and Mariah was curious. She still heard the shower water running, so she picked up the phone to see what he was looking at.

“The fuck!” Mariah screeched when she saw herself in the poorly made video.

The camera wasn’t very steady but she saw herself clearly when it was. She wanted to vomit and cry when she saw just how low she had

stooped. Tears blurred her vision as she switched to another video. She was horrified when she saw herself in action again. She switched to another one and it was even worse. She wasn't the star of that one but Damien was. He was behind another man with his face buried in his ass, the same as Mariah had done to him. Another video showed a man going down on him and he returned the favor soon after. Mariah was disgusted but that explained a lot. Damien was gay and he seemed to enjoy the company of multiple men. This time when Mariah felt like she wanted to throw up, she actually did. She hadn't eaten since the night before but something was coming out of her. She wanted to delete the videos of herself but she didn't have much time. The water shut off in the bathroom, so she had to get going. Unfortunately for Damien, she was taking his phone with her.

“The fuck you going?” he asked as he walked out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his waist.

“You're gay or bisexual or whatever the fuck you are,” Mariah spat angrily.

“What you say to me bitch?” he asked as he looked at her with fire in his eyes.

Damien noticed that his phone wasn't where he left it. He spotted it in Mariah's hand and he knew that she had seen something that she wasn't supposed to see. Mariah ran for the door with him hot on her heels but she wasn't fast enough. Damien grabbed her ponytail but she still managed to get the door open.

“Get off of me!” Mariah screamed as she tried to push him away.

Damien was having a hard time holding her and trying to keep his towel secured. He didn't give a damn about who saw him naked. He needed to get that phone back from Mariah. They had a few people outside looking as the two of them struggled for the phone. Mariah ended up falling and that gave her the upper hand.

“Ahhh! You bitch!” Damien screeched when she kicked him between

his legs.

He doubled over in pain and fell to the ground right as she stood up. Mariah ran to her car and almost hit a homeless man as she backed out of her parking spot. She had a cup of ice from the day before that had now turned into liquid. She submerged the phone in the cup until the screen went black. Once she was satisfied that it was damaged, she threw the cup and the phone out of the window in a wooded area that she was passing. She didn't know if Damien had showed anybody his phone but she made sure that he never had a chance to do it again. Mariah released the breath that she was holding as she headed over to her father's house. She was serious about getting herself together and Marvin was the only person who really gave a fuck about her. She was two streets over from her father's house when the siren of a police car pulled her away from her thoughts. Mariah switched lanes to let them pass but they switched lanes with her.

"What the hell?" Mariah mumbled as she got back in the lane she was in before.

Once again, the police car switched lanes and got behind her. Unless he saw her throw the cup out of the car, Mariah had done nothing wrong. She pulled over in a residential neighborhood and got her license, registration and insurance out for him to view.

"Step out of the car ma'am," the officer instructed sternly.

"For what? I didn't even do anything wrong," Mariah replied.

"This car has been reported stolen and I need you to step out of it," the officer demanded.

"Stolen! This is my car!" Mariah yelled right as another police car pulled up. A female officer got out of that one and walked over to her car.

"Step out of the car ma'am," the female officer stated.

"This is my damn car!" Mariah yelled.

“Do you have proof of that?” she countered.

“Yes, it’s right here on the paperwork. I’m Mariah Harding and my husband is Blake Harding,” Mariah noted.

“Blake Harding is the one who reported this car stolen. Please, step out of the car ma’am. We want to make this as easy as possible,” the male officer said.

Mariah’s heart plummeted in her chest. There was no need for her to ask the officer to repeat himself because she heard him clearly the first time. Blake reported the car stolen and in the eyes of the law, she was the thief. The car’s registration and insurance were in his name so she didn’t have a leg to stand on. Mariah was just saying that she wanted to get her life right but she wished that she could get high. That was the only thing that would numb the pain that she was feeling.

“Do you have any weapons in the car?” the female officer asked while she frisked her.

“No,” Mariah mumbled as tears fell from her eyes.

She had never gone to jail before in her life. No one could have paid her to believe that the man who she exchanged vows with would have been the one to send her. Blake hated her and his actions were constantly showing it. Mariah now hated him just as much and he was going to feel her wrath.





“Relax bruh. You should be used to the shit by now. Y’all do this at least once a month,”

Memphis said as he talked to JJ on the phone.

“Man fuck all that! I’m done with this shit. I’m not going back and that’s on God,” JJ swore.

“And again, you say the same shit every month,” Memphis reminded him.

“I bet you won’t hear me say it again. I’m getting my own shit and nobody can put me out of it,” JJ replied.

Memphis listened to his brother rant but he was already over it. JJ called him or Vance every month to vent about the same thing. He would cheat, get caught and his girl would put him out for a night or two. After two years of the same bullshit, they should have been tired of it by now.

“You know you’re welcome to stay here as long as you want to bro. We got more than enough room,” Memphis offered.

“Nah man, I’m good. I sleep naked and you might get jealous and shit. I don’t want my sister-in-law to leave you if she get a glimpse of it,” JJ

joked.

“Now you got me fucked up. This is the only dick Jersi gon’ see for the rest of her life,” Memphis laughed.

“Thanks for the offer bruh but I’m good. I might hit the club and then go to the car wash. The sofa in my office is comfortable enough,” JJ replied.

“Alright man, just hit me up if you change your mind,” Memphis said before he hung up.

JJ was tired as hell but going to the club was a must. He passed by one of his favorite spots and had a few drinks. Since nothing was poppin’, he left and went to get him something to eat. Once he was nice and full, he headed straight to his home away from home. As soon as he unlocked the doors, he turned off the alarm and put it right back on. JJ was tipsy but he wasn’t that drunk to forget to do that. He sent Memphis a text letting him know that he was good. After that, he grabbed his blanket and pillow before crashing on the sofa.

A little over an hour into his slumber, JJ woke up to the sound of the alarm beeping. It was after three in the morning and he knew that nobody was supposed to be in there. He grabbed his loaded gun from his desk drawer and got prepared to light somebody up. He breathed a sigh of relief when the system was shut off. That had to be either Memphis or Vance. They were the only two aside from him who had the codes. That still didn’t make sense to him though. His brothers had never come to the car wash that time of morning and they had no reason to. They were both married men. He couldn’t see them leaving their wives at home for that. When JJ heard whispering, he ducked down behind his desk and waited. He couldn’t make out who the voices belonged to but he vaguely heard what they were saying. That was definitely not his brothers. Using his head, he dialed the police from his desk phone so that they could have his location. He knew for a fact that they would come even if he didn’t say anything when they answered the phone. JJ had never been in that kind of predicament before. He was trying to think of everything humanly possible to get himself out of there alive.

“But, his car is out front,” one of the assailants whispered.

“That nigga is probably in his office sleeping. I’m sure he’s drunk as fuck right now. I hate to do it but I have to shoot him. You focus on opening the safe and I’ll take care of him,” someone else whispered.

“You never said anything about shooting somebody,” one voice panicked.

“We can’t have no witnesses,” the other voice replied sternly.

Niggas was straight talking about killing him but JJ wasn’t dying alone. He was going to take at least one of them out with him. JJ was nervous but his survival instincts kicked in. He saw a shadow approach the door and he got ready to fire. He had his gun trained at the door, ready for it to open. JJ was thankful that he was a light sleeper. He would have been killed in his sleep if he wasn’t.

Even better was the fact that he didn’t drink as much as he usually did. As tipsy as he was before, he was completely sober and alert now. When the door slowly opened, JJ waited to see how many of them were going to enter. He didn’t need to start shooting too soon and run the risk of someone getting away. As soon as he saw two figures appear, one of them fired three shots into the sofa where his blanket and pillow was. They probably thought he was sleeping and he was thankful that he wasn’t. Without thinking too much, JJ unloaded his gun and watched as both of his would be attackers dropped down to the floor. His hands were shaking uncontrollably but he refused to let his gun fall. He heard one of them groaning in agony but he didn’t give a damn about their pain. With his gun still trained in their direction, JJ turned on the lights and looked down at the damage that he’d done. Whoever it was were dressed in all black with ski masks covering their faces. One of them was writhing in pain while the other was stiff as a board. As crazy as it was, JJ was praying that he didn’t kill anybody, even though they’d tried to kill him.

“Fuck!” JJ hissed as the reality of the situation finally hit him.

He wasn't a killer and he never even pretended to be. He was praying that he wouldn't be sent to jail because he really hadn't done anything wrong. The police were trained for that kind of stuff and JJ was hoping that they saw the crime scene for what it really was. He needed to call Memphis but he was also curious. He needed to know who was trying to rob them. He had more questions than answers but finding out the identity of the assailants were at the top of his priority list. Curiosity got the best of JJ as he walked over and pulled the mask off of one of them.

“What the fuck!” he gasped when he saw who it was.



Memphis bit his bottom lip as he held on to Jersi's hips. She was on top of him grinding slowly and making his eyes roll up to the ceiling. Jersi kept her eyes on him the entire time and Memphis stared right back at her. His wife was the most beautiful woman in world to him and he was happy that they made things official. He loved her and as he looked into her eyes, he could tell that she loved him too.

“Who keeps calling you like that? It's almost four in the morning,” Jersi frowned while losing her rhythm. His phone had rang four or five times but Memphis didn't seem to care.

“Fuck that phone,” Memphis replied as he thrust his body upwards to meet hers.

Jersi found her rhythm again and increased her pace. She threw her

head back and Memphis knew that she was almost there. He put his hand around her neck and squeezed lightly. When he started bouncing her faster, Jersi gasped and matched his intensity.

“Shit baby. Just like that,” Jersi moaned as she rode Memphis like a stallion.

She came hard and Memphis wasn’t too far behind her. Jersi collapsed on top of him and laid her head on his chest. They were both panting and trying to catch their breath.

“Get your second wind. I’m ready for round two,” Memphis said as he slapped her ass.

“This was round two,” Jersi laughed.

“It’s too good for me to even keep count,” Memphis replied.

“Who the hell was that calling your phone? We’re still newlyweds and I would hate to cut you,” Jersi threatened.

“Stop playing girl. Another woman don’t even stand a chance,” he assured her.

“I still want to know who it was,” Jersi insisted.

“Look and see. Raise up, I need to use the bathroom,” Memphis said as he tapped her thigh.

Jersi really didn’t care who was calling because she trusted her husband. She got up and followed him to the bathroom. She started the shower while Memphis relieved his bladder. Once he was done, he hopped in the shower with her. When they got out, Jersi changed the sheets so that they could go to bed. When his phone rang again, Memphis rushed to answer it. He was shocked to see that JJ was calling him. He sent Memphis a text a while ago letting him know that he had made it to the car wash in one piece.

“What’s good JJ?” Memphis asked when he answered for his brother.

“Man, you need to get to the shop now,” JJ sobbed into the phone.

“What happened bruh?” Memphis asked as he rushed around the room to get dressed.

Jersi didn’t even know what was going on but she started getting dressed too. The look on her husband’s face let her know that it had to be something serious. Memphis was trying to calm his brother down, so she grabbed her keys and offered to drive. She kept hearing him say something about the car wash, so she assumed that’s where he wanted to go. They rushed out of the house and Jersi locked up. As soon as they got into her car, Memphis ended his call.

“We’re going to the car wash, right?” Jersi asked.

“Yeah,” Memphis sighed as he ran his hand down in his face. Stress lines formed on his forehead and Jersi was concerned.

“What happened baby?” Jersi asked as she drove to their destination.

“JJ said that he killed somebody,” Memphis revealed. Hearing that bit of info was bad enough. Knowing who it was that his brother killed was the worst part.

“Oh my God! He killed somebody at the car wash?” Jersi inquired.

“Yeah, somebody tried to break in there on him,” Memphis replied in a low voice.

Jersi could tell that he really didn’t want to talk about it so she didn’t push the issue. She grabbed his hand in comfort as she drove to his place of business. When they pulled up, the entire area was pure chaos. Crime scene technicians, police officers and everybody else had the entire street blocked off. Memphis and Jersi got out of the car and hurried to see about JJ. Vance pulled up right after them and rushed to catch up with them.

“He’s over there baby,” Jersi said when she spotted JJ sitting on the curb with his head hung low. Two police officers were talking to him but he was a mess.

“We’re here JJ,” Vance said as he sat down next to his brother and put his hand on his shoulder. Memphis explained to the officers who he was and they allowed them to stay.

“Man, I didn’t know who they were. I swear I didn’t,” JJ cried. His eyes were red and puffy and Jersi’s heart went out to him.

“I know you didn’t bruh,” Memphis said as he pulled him up into a comforting, brotherly hug.

“Are they still in there?” Vance asked.

“Yeah, the police just got here a little while before y’all did,” JJ replied.

“Who does that car belong to?” Memphis asked. JJ only shrugged because he didn’t know anything. The car had yellow tape around it like it was a part of the crime scene.

They all turned their heads towards the entrance of the building when they saw the paramedics rushing someone out on a stretcher. They all walked closer to get a better look at who it was. Memphis had a murderous look on his face when he saw his cousin Juan being wheeled out and loaded into an ambulance. Jonah was cuffed and sitting in the back of a police car. Unfortunately, Lila was the third perpetrator but she didn’t make it out alive. Memphis wasn’t even surprised that the three people who hated him the most had tried to rob him. They all had motive and they all needed the money. What pissed him off was that they were willing to kill his brother to get it. JJ was fucked up over killing Lila but at least he was alive. Their own father was trying to do them dirty. That was a new low even for him.

The sun rose and they were still processing the crime scene. Jonah

had gone to jail, while Juan was taken to the hospital with gunshot wounds to his side and chest. Sadly, Lila was taken to the morgue. JJ had to go to the police station to give his statement and Vance and Valerie went with him. He wasn't being charged with anything because he was defending himself. Memphis had to hang around the car wash until they finished processing the crime scene. Jersi already had a cleaning company on standby to clean up the mess that had been made.

“You okay baby?” Jersi asked Memphis.

“Yeah, I just hate that JJ had to go through that shit. He gon' be fucked up for a while. I might have to let somebody else manage this place and let him do something else,” Memphis replied.

“I can help out on the weekends when I'm off,” Jersi offered.

“You can't help out ever. I took off every weekend for a reason. That's our time together,” Memphis noted.

“I just can't believe that your father was in on it. It's not even that serious,” Jersi frowned.

“It is for him. Me and JJ are his least favorite people right now. Doing us dirty probably gave him pleasure. That's the nigga that my mama tried to get back with though. She hate him now but she was pissed with me for wanting him out of her house. The nigga never gave a fuck about nobody but himself. I guarantee he's gonna get in that interrogation room and sing like a canary with his bitch ass,” Memphis said.

A week later Memphis found out just how right he was. He and JJ had a meeting with the detectives and they laid everything out for them. Apparently, Jonah was the mastermind behind it all. Vance was too damn nice and he made it too easy for him. JJ never let their father inside the building but Vance was too trusting. Jonah ended up getting the spare key and the code to the alarm right from his youngest son's desk drawer. Vance was always buying him food and letting him sit in his office alone to eat it. Memphis wasn't blaming his brother because he didn't make their father do



it. Jonah thought of it all on his own. Once he told Juan of his plans, he was on board and he recruited Lila to help. Jonah's stupid ass was still sitting in the getaway car out front when the police rolled up. He never even thought to leave when Juan and Lila took too long to come out. Being a dumb criminal got him and Juan some jail time while Lila was six feet deep. It was sad that she didn't even have insurance to be buried. Valerie was her next of kin and she wanted no parts of her. They tried to kill her child and that was unforgivable, even in death.

Juanita was so heartbroken by what her son and brother had done. She washed her hands with both of them and refused to even take their calls. She went to see Juan when he was in the hospital just to let him know how disappointed she was. Memphis kept the car wash closed for a week but JJ wanted to keep managing it. Nothing like that had ever happened before but he wasn't afraid to go back. He knew that it wasn't a random act and that gave him a little comfort. He swore that he was never staying the night in there again and Memphis make sure of that. He helped his brother to get an apartment and even paid the rent up for three months. JJ got himself a bedroom set and that was all that he needed. He was sorry about what happened to Lila but it was either her or him.



After spending a week in jail, Marvin was finally able to bail Mariah out. He wasn't rich and it took him a while to get the money together. Not only was she charged with possession of a stolen vehicle, but she was also charged with credit card theft. Marvin tried reaching out to Blake to get the charges dropped but he refused. He packed up everything that Mariah had at his house and dropped it off to Marvin. He and Tabby only lived in a small two bedroom apartment and Mariah's things took up most of their free space. Tabby wasn't too happy about her coming there but she didn't have a choice. Marvin paid the bills and there was no way that he was letting his only daughter live on the streets.

"Stop crying Mariah. We'll get through this," Marvin said as he grabbed her hands in comfort.

"Who is we? At least you have a roof over your head. I have no money, no job and thanks to Blake, I no longer have a car. He cheated on me and I end up getting the short end of the stick. He took everything from me including my kids," Mariah sobbed.

"I know it's hard baby but I'll do whatever I can to help you," Marvin assured her.

“How, by inviting me to live in a house with Tabby? I hate that bitch even more than I hate her hoe ass daughter,” Mariah snapped.

“Listen, I’m trying to be understanding but your ungrateful attitude is starting to piss me off,” Marvin said, taking Mariah by surprise.

For as long as she could remember, her father had never so much as raised his voice to her. Mariah was a spoiled brat and he was the one who started it. She was his only child and he’d always put her on a pedestal. Even when she was wrong, Marvin always had her back.

“Wow, even you’re turning your back on me. I guess I’m officially in this world alone,” Mariah replied as she wiped a few tears from her eyes.

“You’ll never be alone as long as you got me. This is hard on me too Mariah. You think I want to see you going through so much? I’m a father and I hurt when you hurt,” Marvin said.

Mariah only rolled her eyes at his comment. He was just like everybody else and didn’t give a fuck about her. Her mother was the only person who genuinely loved her. She thought Blake did at one time but he proved her wrong. She could see him not bailing her out of jail but if he would have dropped the charges, everything would have gone away. A small part of Mariah hoped that he still loved her just a little. When he left her to rot in jail, she knew that he didn’t.

When they pulled up to Tabby’s house, Mariah wanted to cry all over again. The one place that she dreaded and even hated to visit would now be her home. It was sad that she literally had nowhere else to go. She was too embarrassed to call her friends and let them know what was going on. They already knew that Blake was cheating on her and that’s all that she wanted them to know.

“Are you hungry sweetheart? I can fix you something to eat,” Marvin offered.

“No,” Mariah said with a disgusted frown. She didn’t eat from their

house when she used to visit and nothing had changed.

“I tried to put your things as neat as I could but you have a lot of stuff. We can probably get some storage bins to put everything in,” Marvin said when they walked into the house.

The entire place smelled like fried chicken and Mariah knew that the smell was probably going to be in all her clothes. Her shoe boxes and clothes almost covered every inch of the living room. Tabby was standing at the stove cooking with a frown covering her face.

“Trust me, I don’t want to be here any more than you want me to be,” Mariah snapped angrily. She didn’t give a damn that she didn’t have anywhere else to go. Tabby and her nasty ass attitude had her fucked up.

“You know where the door is. Your broke ass ain’t doing me no favors by staying,” Tabby replied.

She loved having the upper hand on Mariah. When she married Blake, she felt like she was too good to come around. She barely let her kids come over to see their grandfather. Mariah turned up her nose at them when she moved up in the world. She didn’t count on being knocked off of her high horse so soon. Mariah always said that she didn’t believe in karma but Tabby did. Her stepdaughter was getting a good taste of it now.

“Let’s not do this ladies. This is a temporary situation and we need to make the best of it,” Marvin said.

“Fuck her,” Mariah snapped as she walked away.

“Oh hell no! That bitch gotta go! Ain’t no way in hell is she staying in my house disrespecting me,” Tabby fussed.

Mariah went into the small spare bedroom and slammed the door. Tabby was still going off but she didn’t give a damn about what she was saying. Tears burned Mariah’s eyes as she saw even more of her clothes and shoes scattered around the room. She felt like she was back in a prison cell

with how tiny the room was. Mariah's bathroom at the home she shared with Blake was bigger than that. Just thinking of her husband had Mariah in her feelings. All the years she was with him meant nothing.

She gave him his first and only two kids and that seemed to mean even less. She had nothing to show from her marriage but a bunch of designer clothes, shoes and jewelry. She looked in her jewelry bag, trying to find something that she could possibly sell to get some quick cash. She had a nice Rolex and a few bracelets that she knew would get her a decent amount. Mariah grabbed the envelope that they'd given her when she was released from jail. Her license was in there and she needed them if she wanted to pawn something. When she dumped the contents out onto the bed, the key that she'd taken from Blake's wallet was in there. The piece of paper that she'd written some information on was in there as well. The wheels in Mariah's head were turning as she thought about her next plan of action. The first thing she needed was a ride to the pawn shop. As soon as her father stopped kissing his wife's ass, she would get him to bring her.



“Don't make me be petty and track your phone. You get with Dray and don't know how to come back home,” Memphis fussed while talking on the phone with Jersi.

“I'm not with Dray anymore. I'm at the store getting something to cook for your dramatic ass,” Jersi laughed.

“What store?” Memphis questioned.

“I’m at Whole Foods getting a few things. I’m about to get in the line in a minute,” Jersi answered.

“Okay, let me know when you’re on your way so I can be looking out for you,” Memphis said.

“Okay baby, I’ll be there soon,” Jersi replied before hanging up.

She went to the meat section and picked up a few things to cook during the week. Memphis didn’t mind eating out but he preferred a home cooked meal. Dena taught Jersi a few things in the kitchen and he liked everything that she prepared. When Jersi’s phone vibrated again, she answered for her cousin, Ariel.

“Hey cousin. Me and Mike are at the daiquiri shop and Damien is in here. He asked me for your number but you know I don’t play that. He said he got a new phone and he lost all of his contacts,” Ariel said.

“I don’t want him with my number. Are you near him? Give him your phone,” Jersi replied.

“Okay, let me go back over there,” Ariel said.

It sounded like she was walking and Jersi waited patiently. She had everything she needed, so she walked to the front of the store to checkout. A few minutes later, Damien’s deep voice came on the line.

“What’s good Jersi?” Damien asked.

“Nothing much. Just getting some stuff to cook for my husband,” Jersi replied.

“Yeah, I heard you got married. Congrats on that,” Damien said.

“Thanks Damien. What’s up?” Jersi asked, wanting him to cut the small talk.

“I lost my phone and I lost all my contact info. I was trying to get at your brother,” Damien said just above a whisper. Jersi already knew what was up so there was no need for him to be discreet. Maybe he didn’t want Ariel and Mike to hear him.

“Um, hold on for a second,” Jersi said as she clicked over and called her brother. She needed to make sure that Dray was okay with Damien having his number. Her brother had some crazy ways and he probably didn’t want to be bothered any more.

“Hey sis, you made it home?” Dray asked when he answered.

“No, not yet. I have Damien on the other line. He said he lost all his contacts and he’s asking for your number. I just want to make sure it’s cool,” Jersi replied.

“Bitch, hell yeah it’s cool. That nigga is about to take me shopping. Tell him to call me right now,” Dray said before he hung up.

“Hey Damien. You got something to write with?” Jersi asked when she got back to him.

“Yeah, I’m ready,” he replied. Jersi called out the number to him and hung up the phone right after.

She checked out her items and headed to the parking lot. She and Dray had been out shopping all day and she had a trunk full of bags for her and Memphis. It was dark but it was only a little after six. She wanted to cook her husband a good meal and relax for the rest of the night. Jersi put her bags in the car and was preparing to get in. When she went to the driver’s side, she jumped when she saw Blake standing there. Jersi was preoccupied, so she didn’t even see when he walked up.

“You scared the hell out of me,” Jersi said as she held her chest.

“We need to talk,” Blake said as he looked at her.

“I can’t Blake. I have to get home,” Jersi replied.

“I wasn’t asking,” Blake said as he showed her the gun that he was holding.

He tried but he couldn’t let it go. Knowing that he loved Jersi with his whole heart and she didn’t feel the same way did something to him. He was happy with his family until Jersi came along and inserted herself into his marriage. Granted, he was just as guilty as she was but his feelings were genuine. Jersi played with his heart and that was unforgivable. He couldn’t eat and he barely got any sleep. He tried to bury himself in work but that didn’t do the trick anymore. Blake used to get mad when Mariah said that Jersi was the cause of all the problems in their marriage. After talking to Talena, he now agreed with her. He would never take his wife back but things probably wouldn’t have gotten so bad if it weren’t for Jersi.

“What are you doing Blake?” Jersi asked as she threw her hands up in the air.

“Put your keys in your purse and leave it in the car,” Blake instructed.

“Blake, please don’t do this. I’m sorry about what happened between us but you don’t have to do this,” Jersi said as tears fell from her eyes.

“I’m not in the mood to repeat myself Jersi,” Blake fumed.

Jersi knew not to resist. She didn’t want to make things worse or anger him more than he already was. She dropped her keys in her purse and opened the car door slowly. She shoved her purse underneath the seat while discreetly putting her phone in her bra.

“I did it, now what?” Jersi asked when she looked up at him.

“Let’s go,” Blake said as he shoved her towards Mariah’s truck.

Jersi’s heart was beating out of her chest. She didn’t know what to think but she tried to remain calm. Blake was weak as fuck but the gun that



he was holding on her made him strong. He wasn't a thug and his actions were surprising her. Jersi hadn't heard from him in a minute so she was wondering why he was coming back around now.

“Why are you doing this Blake? We went our separate ways a while ago. Why now?” Jersi asked as he drove. Just from the direction he was driving, she knew that he was taking her to his penthouse. She had never went back to retrieve whatever she left there and she didn't feel the need to.

“Why didn't you just let me be Jersi? Why did you have to get me in my feelings again knowing that's not what you really wanted?” Blake asked her as tears fell from his eyes.

Jersi couldn't believe that he was actually crying. He went from crying silent tears to actually sobbing like a baby. The shit was pathetic. A grown ass man crying over a failed relationship that should have never even happened. Truthfully, it wasn't a relationship at all. Jersi took the blame for the part she played in everything but Blake wasn't without fault. Mariah wasn't so innocent as she tried to seem either.

“You're married Blake,” Jersi told him.

“And you knew that shit when you agreed to be with me,” he snapped angrily as his gaze landed on the huge rock that was on her finger. “Take that shit off! You didn't want to see mine and I don't want to see yours.”

“I'm sorry but things just didn't work out between us,” Jersi said softly as she slipped off her wedding rings and put them in her pocket.

“Yeah because you never really wanted them to. Now you're happily married and I'm going through a bitter divorce. My life is fucked up because of you. My kids almost died and everything. I fucking loved you so much that I forget about everything and everybody else. I was a damn fool for thinking that you felt the same way. If Talena hadn't told me the truth I would have still believed it,” Blake said making Jersi snap her head around in his direction.

“Talena?” Jersi asked angrily.

“Yep, she told me where you worked and everything. I’ve been following you for days. That’s a nice ass house that you live in too,” Blake noted.

“Blake...” Jersi said before he cut her off and started talking again.

“Imagine my surprise when I saw her in the mall and learned that you were married. You had this shit planned from the very beginning. Your intentions were to break up my marriage and you succeeded. Now, your husband is gonna feel the same pain that I feel,” Blake said as he pulled into the underground parking lot of his penthouse.

Jersi’s anger went from one to one thousand when he said that. That bitch Talena was too quiet for a reason. She’d obviously filled Blake in on everything and she was pissed. Her own sister, although they weren’t very close, had done her dirty. Jersi was too mad to be rational. Blake had her fucked up if he thought she was going into his house to be raped or worse.

“I’m not going in there. You can do whatever you have to do to me right now,” Jersi said defiantly.

She wanted to grab her phone and call Memphis but she was too afraid. She was playing tough but she was scared out of her mind. When Blake reached over and slapped her across the face with the gun, Jersi screamed as blood poured from her lips.

“The days of you calling the shots are over. For once, you’re going to do what the fuck I say do, when I say do it,” Blake snapped angrily.

“I’m bleeding,” Jersi cried as her hand covered her bloody mouth.

“You’ll live. As stupid as it may sound, I’m still as in love with you now as I was before. Dumb huh?” Blake asked as he laugh sarcastically. He went from one extreme to the next. He was just crying, now, he was laughing like a damn fool.

“Blake, please,” Jersi begged.

“I need your husband’s phone number too. When I make the video of us fucking, I need to know where to send it to,” Blake said as he pulled her across the seat and got out of the car. He had the nerve to grab some paper towels and wipe the blood from her mouth.

“How long do you think you can keep me here Blake?” Jersi asked him.

“For as long as I want to. I took some time off from work just to spend with you. I missed you Jersi. I miss the way you smell and the way you taste. I just miss everything about you,” Blake said as he pulled her close and sniffed her hair.

“This is never going to work. I already told my husband that I was on my way home. He’s going to be looking for me,” Jersi noted.

“Not after I send him a few pictures and videos. When he calls your phone, I’ll answer it the same way you answered mine. Once I tell him that you’re with me, he won’t even want your ass no more. We’ll both be divorced,” Blake laughed as Jersi’s heart dropped.

He pulled Jersi towards the elevators and pressed the button to go up. She looked around nervously, praying that someone would walk up. Luck wasn’t on her side that day though. Blake pulled her onto the elevator and inserted the key for his penthouse inside. As the elevator went up, Jersi was thinking of ways to get out of the situation that she was in. She honestly didn’t think that Blake would kill her. Still, he had too much to lose to even be doing what he was doing now. The thought of having sex with him caused bile to rise up in her throat. She would die if Memphis ever had to see something like that. He probably wouldn’t even believe that she was being forced to do it against her will.

When they got to the penthouse floor, Jersi was ready to start begging. Blake had the gun pointed at her side and he seemed ready to use it. As soon as the doors opened and they stepped inside, Jersi’s words got

caught in her throat. Mariah was standing there with a gun aimed at them both. Jersi dropped down to the floor just in time before shots rang out. The gun that Blake was holding fell to the floor and she quickly snatched it up and ran.

“I guess my timing was perfect,” Mariah said as he continued to fire her gun.

Jersi ran into one of the hallway closets, gripping the gun in her hands. It felt like she was in a horror movie where the actors hid and waited for the killer to find them. She counted in her head, trying to get her nerves together. She was hoping that the time that she and Dray spent at the shooting range with their father paid off. Remembering what she'd been taught, Jersi removed the clip from the gun to see how many bullets were inside.

“The fuck,” she whispered when she saw that the gun wasn't even loaded.

Jersi was pissed that Blake's punk ass had the nerve to kidnap her with an empty gun. Had she known that, she would have tried to box it out with his bitch ass in the grocery store parking lot. Now, she was stuck in the house with his crazy ass wife. She knew without a doubt that Mariah would blow her brains out and not think twice about it. Remembering that she had her phone, Jersi frantically sent Memphis a text. Calling the police was probably pointless because she couldn't explain to them exactly where she was. They could have found the property with little effort but getting to the penthouse wasn't as easy. She couldn't run the risk of calling anyone and having Mariah follow the sound of her voice. Hopefully, Memphis would be able to make the call for her. He was always joking saying that he was going to track her phone. Now, Jersi was hoping and praying that he did.



**M**emphis paced the floor as he called Jersi's phone for the fifth time. Over an hour had passed and she still wasn't home. He'd called Ariel and Dray and they both said the same thing. They talked to her earlier but she wasn't answering for them either. Memphis felt like a sitting duck but he couldn't just sit back and do nothing. He threw on some sweats, a tee and some shoes before walking out of his house. When his phone rang, he got excited thinking that it might be Jersi. When he saw that it was Dray instead, he was still happy, hoping that he'd heard something.

"What's good Dray?" Memphis answered as he got into his truck.

"Something is wrong Memphis. I just got my friend to drive me to the Whole Foods where you said Jersi went," Dray said making his heart drop.

Damien had just showed up at Dray's house when he told him what was going on and asked him to bring him to the store. Memphis was kicking himself for not thinking of that first. He wasn't good at using his head when he was under pressure.

"What happened?" Memphis asked his brother-in-law.

"Jersi's car is here but she's not. We searched the store and she's not

in there either,” Dray noted. He was calm and that gave Memphis a little hope. He knew that Dray could be dramatic at times, especially when it came to Jersi. That gave him a little hope.

“Where the hell could she be?” Memphis questioned.

“I don’t know but I’m about to lose the little mind that I have left. Her car was unlocked and her grocery bags are inside. Her purse was under her seat and her keys were still inside. Lord, I’m about to start hyperventilating. Something happened to my sister,” Dray yelled.

It was then that Memphis realized that he’d spoken too soon. Dray was having a full blow panic attack and he didn’t have time for that. He felt sick to his stomach and he didn’t know what to do. The thought of something happening to Jersi had him physically ill. He didn’t even want to entertain the idea of possibly losing another wife. Just the thought of it was too much to bear. Tears filled his eyes but he had to be strong. Finding his wife alive and well was his main concern. Nothing else mattered to him at the moment.

“Calm down bruh. Look, drive her car to our house. I’m about to go ride around and try to find her,” Memphis said, not even knowing where to start.

“Okay, okay,” Dray said nervously.

He was going on and on about what could have possibly happened but he was following Memphis’ instructions. When a text came through on Memphis’ phone, he got excited seeing that it was from Jersi. His excitement didn’t last long when he read what the message said. It was short and to the point but something was definitely wrong. Jersi sent him an address and said to send help in all caps.

“Fuck!” Memphis barked. The address that Jersi sent him was in the downtown area and it was always busy. He didn’t give a damn though. He would leave his truck in traffic and get to his wife on foot if he had to.

“What’s wrong?” Dray asked him.

“Jersi just sent me a text with an address asking for help. I’m on my way to her now,” Memphis replied.

“Oh my God! Maybe we should call the police and let them handle it,” Dray panicked.

“You can call the police if you want to. I’m not waiting on them to go see about my wife,” Memphis replied.

“Send me the address. I’m gonna meet you there and I’ll send the police too,” Dray said before he hung up. He called Damien and told him to follow him as soon as Memphis sent over the address. He didn’t know what was up and they needed all the backup they could get.

“Damn man,” Memphis raged as he pounded the steering wheel.

He didn’t know what was going on and he hated walking into a situation blindly. To make sure that his wife was okay, he was willing to do anything. A thousand thoughts were running through his mind and he didn’t know what to think. He didn’t know of anyone who had a problem with Jersi. She hadn’t heard from her ex or his wife in a while and they were the only ones that she had problems with in the past. Memphis was breaking the speed limit trying to get to his destination. He felt like God was on his side because traffic was light. He almost got into two accidents because he disregarded all lights and stop signs. When he pulled up in front of the building, he got even more confused. It was some lavish apartments with penthouses up top. Still, Memphis didn’t have time to stall. He grabbed the gun from under his seat and ran towards the underground garage that was attached to the building.



“I’m not even about to waste my time looking for your hoe ass. There’s only one way in and one way out of here. Your only way out is a body bag though,” Mariah said as she sniffed the coke that she’d just sprinkled on her hand.

Jersi was still perched in her hiding place in the closet, scared to even breath. There was no need for her to wonder where Blake was because she was sure that he was dead. He hadn’t said a word since they stepped off the elevator and that was all the proof that she needed.

“Crazy thing is, I wasn’t even coming here for you. I thought y’all had stopped fucking around. Imagine my surprise when your black ass stepped off the elevator with him. A two for one special,” Mariah said as she sniffed a little more before reloading the gun.

Jersi didn’t cry. She was too numb to feel anything. She was baffled as to how a simple trip to the grocery store had turned into a kidnaping and murder. As much as she hated Blake, she didn’t want to see him dead. Fucked up maybe but killing him was extreme. Had she known that he was threatening her with an empty gun, she would have made a run for it when he first approached her.

“You know, Blake was so in love with you that I started questioning myself. Bitches out here bleaching their skin and shit and I was thinking of ways to make mine darker. This muthafucker had me thinking that something was wrong with me. I don’t know what the fuck you did to his ass but I couldn’t compete,” Mariah said while pinching her nose.



“Crazy bitch,” Jersi mumbled to herself.

Mariah was cracking up and she didn't know what was funny. She was saying all kinds of crazy shit that made no sense. Jersi knew that Blake was dead but she was even talking to him. It felt like she'd been stuck in that closet for hours but not much time has passed. She was thankful that her phone was on vibrate because she didn't need it to ring. She wanted to run but Mariah was right. There was only one way in and one way out. Jersi didn't even have the elevator key, so she was really stuck. She prayed that Memphis got her message and was sending her some help.

“I don't have no job, no man and no life, so I got time bitch. We can stay here as long as you want to. Just know that you ain't leaving up out of here alive,” Mariah assured her.

She got her father to bring her to the pawn shop to get some money for her jewelry. The first thing Mariah did was catch a cab to the place where Damien used to hang out at to get some coke. She knew that she was taking a chance on running into him by going in his old neighborhood but she didn't care. Once she got back to Tabby's house she laid around for a little while thinking about what her life had become. She got emotional and called Blake on some reminiscing type shit. He went off on her and had the nerve to get pissed because he forgot to have her cell phone disconnected. Mariah didn't think it was that serious but he showed her. When she tried to make a call a few minutes later, she learned that the phone had been turned off.

Mariah was livid. She remembered the key and all the information that she'd retrieved from his phone and became curious. Marvin always kept his gun and ammunition in a shoe box at the top of his closet and Mariah wasted no time going to get it. She caught a cab to the address and figured that it had to be the hideaway that he had for Jersi. It took her a while to figure out that the key was for the elevator but she was pissed when she stepped into the house. That nigga was fucking Jersi in style. The penthouse looked like something straight out of a magazine. Jersi had clothes, shoes and whatever else she needed to be comfortable there. Mariah was hurt. It was as if she'd learned of Blake's infidelity all over again. He was treating his side

bitch like royalty and treated her like the help. She started to leave before he got home but she quickly changed her mind. She wanted his bitch ass to come home and face her like a man. He had a whole other place to live but he made sure that she was homeless. Mariah only intended to talk to him at first. When he showed up with Jersi on his arm, things got kind of ugly.

“I guess his dog ass ain’t for none of us no more. I wish his mammy could see his ass now,” Mariah said as she fell out laughing again.

Jersi was over the psychotic episode. She was ready to bolt from the closet and take her chances. She would probably get shot in the back but playing the waiting game was tiresome. She was snapped out of her thoughts when she heard Mariah running through the house. Jersi got nervous, thinking that she was coming to look for her. When she heard Mariah gagging and throwing up, she knew that she was in the bathroom. She didn’t sound as close as she was before and Jersi knew that she had to make a run for it.

“It’s now or never,” Jersi mumbled before saying a silent prayer.

She wasn’t about to move too slow knowing that she didn’t have much time. She bolted from the closet and ran straight down the hall. She paused briefly when she saw Blake’s body on the floor surrounded by a puddle of blood. His eyes were wide open and he seemed to be staring at her. Jersi had never seen a dead body before and she wanted to throw up. She didn’t want to touch Blake but he was still clutching the elevator key. Jersi’s adrenaline propelled her forward and she quickly pried it from his hand. As soon as she got it, Mariah suddenly reappeared.

“Not today bitch,” she yelled as she lifted the gun unsteadily and aimed it at Jersi.

She was high out of her mind, so the shot that she fired landed into the wall instead of hitting her target. Jersi was still holding the unloaded gun that she got from Blake but it was doing her no good. It was still a weapon though, so she threw it at Mariah, hitting her in the head with the hard tool. Mariah yelped and fell to the floor. She never stopped shooting and Jersi

never stopped running. She put the key into the elevator and prayed that she made it to the bottom level in one piece. Mariah managed to get up just as the door was closing. She fired some more shots and Jersi screamed when one of them hit her in the shoulder as the elevator door closed. Mariah kept pulling the trigger but she was all out of bullets.

A searing hot pain shot through Jersi's arm as blood started to saturate her shirt. As soon as the doors opened on the bottom level, Jersi ran towards the underground garage. She didn't have a car but getting help would be easy. All she had to do was run out onto the main street. She didn't even look back as she made her way out. When she got close to the exit Jersi thought she was going crazy when she saw Memphis running her way.

"Memphis!" She yelled as she ran straight to him. He was relieved yet concerned when he saw his wife's bloody shirt. Jersi was alive and that was good enough for him. He picked her up and she wrapped her legs around his waist and cried.

"Shit, I'm so happy to see you right now. Are you okay baby? What the hell happened?" Memphis asked as he carried her back to his truck. He didn't know if Dray had called the police or not but they hadn't shown up yet.

"It was Mariah. She killed Blake and shot me in the arm," Jersi cried.

"Fuck! Okay baby, I'm getting you to the hospital right now," Memphis assured her. He knew that his wife had to be hurt because he saw the blood. He never imagined that she was shot though. Jersi's adrenaline must have been working overtime because she didn't seem to be in any pain.

"Oh Lord! What happened to my sister?" Dray yelled when he pulled up behind Memphis in Jersi's car. He ran over and almost passed out when he saw that Jersi's shirt was covered in blood.

"Follow us to the hospital," Memphis instructed as he put Jersi in his truck.

Dray nodded and ran back to the car, preparing to follow behind them. He didn't know if Damien was still behind him and he really didn't care. When Memphis pulled off, Dray sped off right behind him.

"The fuck is he going now?" Damien questioned as he watched Dray speed off once again. He didn't know what was going on but he wasn't in the mood to be riding all over New Orleans. He only wanted to chill with Dray before going back home to his girl but he would have to take a raincheck. Damien was about to abort mission when he saw what looked to be Mariah's truck speeding out of the garage. He sped up to the car to see if it was really her. Thanks to that bitch, he had to get a whole new phone. He lost all of his contacts, videos and pictures and he was pissed. Not to mention she had his groin area swollen for three days after he kicked him so hard.

When Damien pulled up next to the truck, he smiled triumphantly. It was definitely Mariah's truck and her hoe ass was behind the wheel. Damien blew his horn and waved at her. Mariah looked as if she'd seen a ghost and that was just the reaction that he was looking for.

"Shit. This is the last thing I need right now. This nasty fucker," Mariah said as she pressed hard on the gas and sped off.

Damien took off right behind her and she knew that he wasn't going to give up. Mariah was already in enough trouble and she didn't need problems with Damien right now. She had left her dead husband in his penthouse while she took the car that once belonged to her. Mariah took the car keys as well as all the money that Blake had in his pocket. It wasn't like he could do anything with it so she didn't feel bad.

"Leave me the fuck alone!" Mariah yelled as if Damien could hear her.

She was driving recklessly in a busy area and it was only a matter of time before the police stopped her. She'd already been arrested for stealing the car once. She couldn't go back to jail for the same thing again. That should have been the least of her worries seeing as how she'd killed a man. Mariah was weaving in between cars and switching lanes like crazy. No

matter how fast she thought she was driving, Damien managed to keep up with her.

“You ain’t getting away this time bitch,” Damien hissed as he stayed behind her.

Mariah had seen some things in his phone that he wanted to take to his grave. Damien tried not to be ashamed of who he was but it was hard. He enjoyed the company of men but the people around him wouldn’t understand that. He was a dope boy and he was supposed to behave a certain way. His friends wouldn’t understand and he wasn’t trying to make them. Besides Dray, he hadn’t been with a man in a while. He tried to suppress what he felt but it was too hard. He didn’t know what Mariah had done with his phone but he needed it back. He had recent videos of Mariah as well as older ones of some of the men that he’d been with in the past. Dray didn’t mind if he recorded what they did because he knew that Damien would never show them to anyone. He was too ashamed to let anyone know what he did. He only kept them for his private viewing.

“Just pull over bitch,” Damien fumed as he continued to drive.

He was tired of the cat and mouse game and he needed Mariah to stop. He didn’t care if he had to hit her car, she wasn’t getting away. Mariah turned the corner like a race car driver and Damien almost lost her. When she turned another corner, he made up in his mind to just let her go. It wasn’t even worth it and he wasn’t trying to kill himself or anyone else. He turned the corner behind her and slowed down a little. Mariah was so busy looking back to see where he was that she never did she the dump truck that she was behind. Damien cringed when she slammed into the back of the truck and flew halfway out of her front window. Mariah’s car started smoking as the men who were inside of the truck got out to assist her.

“Oh shit,” Damien said when he pulled up and saw it closely.

It looked like Mariah’s neck was broken because her head was turned at an awkward angle. Her eyes were wide open and her face was full of glass and blood. There was no need for them to call for help because she was gone.

Damien felt bad because he was the one who she was trying to get away from. He only wanted his phone back. He didn't want her dead. Mariah did him dirty but getting her hooked on coke was payback enough for him. A small crowd formed around the accident and several people called the police. The men who were in the truck seemed distraught but they didn't do anything wrong. Mariah wasn't paying attention and ran into them while speeding.

“Damn man,” Damien said as he pulled out his phone. He was about to call Dray to let him know that one of Jersi's problems had been solved. It wasn't a happy ending but it was definitely the end.



“Know that we’re here for whatever you need,” Dray said while rubbing Sassy’s hand.

Blake’s funeral was earlier that morning and Sassy took his brother’s death hard. It was sad that he couldn’t even grieve with the rest of his family. They would never allow his husband in their presence and Sassy was okay with that. He rode in the limo and even sat with them at the service. Once his brother was lowered into the ground, they all went their separate ways. He wasn’t even invited to the repast and his feelings were hurt. His husband was angry about how he was being treated but Sassy was used to it. Dray and some of their friends from the club came over with food, drinks and comfort. He needed to be surrounded by love so he appreciated that.

“I’m good my love. One day at a time. I know it’ll get better,” Sassy replied with a faint smile.

“Fuck their repast. We’re having our own shit,” Dray said angrily as he raised his glass.

“You damn right we are,” Sassy’s husband, Dorian, said while tapping Dray’s glass with his.

“How’s my baby doll?” Sassy asked referring to Jersi.

“She’s good. The bullet went straight through and there was no permanent damage. Memphis is scared to let her out of his sight now. He drops her off to work and everything. Jersi hates it but I understand. He already lost one wife to gun violence and his second wife got shot. He has a right to be paranoid,” Dray pointed out.

“What the hell was Blake and Mariah thinking? He kidnapped her and his wife shot her. Now my nieces don’t have a mother or father,” Sassy said while shaking his head.

“I can’t speak for Blake but Mariah was high out of her mind. That bitch basically killed herself with all that dope that they found in her system. It’s fucked up that she couldn’t even have a proper burial,” Dray replied.

“Wasn’t she an only child?” Dorian asked.

“Yeah and her mother is deceased. I feel so bad for her father. He had to cremate his only child,” Sassy said sadly.

His mother would die if she knew that he donated five hundred dollars towards Mariah’s cremation. Sassy saw that someone had set up a funding campaign and he gave a helping hand. Mariah did a lot of things that he didn’t like, including killing his brother, but she was the mother of his nieces. They had never had any problems and she respected him. Blake dogged her out in the end but that wasn’t his business. He hated that his nieces would never really know their mother and he was sure that Eva would keep it that way. She would keep Blake’s memory alive but Mariah would be forgotten.

“I don’t want to sound insensitive but better her than my sister. If Jersi didn’t have the sense to hide we would be saying our final farewell to her too. The thought of that alone just makes me sick to my stomach,” Dray replied.

When Jersi told them how everything went down it sounded like something straight out of a movie. Blake wasn’t that kind of person but he



had everybody fooled. The police were having a hard time trying to figure out what happened but Jersi connected all the dots. The camera footage that they got from the store and the penthouse corroborated everything that she told them. Jersi was a nervous wreck and she had trouble sleeping for the first few days. She had come too close to losing her life and it was keeping her awake at night. Their parents went to Blake's funeral but Jersi and Dray refused. Dray only wanted to be there for his best friend and nothing more. Sassy was his one and only concern in regards to Blake's death.

"I don't think you're being insensitive at all. Mariah and I got along great but she was no saint. She went after Blake knowing that he was with Jersi and he took the bait. Blake never was street smart and he's always been easily swayed. Everything just backfired on everybody and karma did what karma normally does," Sassy noted.

"Your mama's karma is coming next," Dray predicted.

"Honey, it's already happening. My daddy got the wrong young bitch pregnant and she is making their lives a living hell. BJ said that she showed up to the house one day when he was there demanding money. He said that my mama was livid because my dumb ass daddy went outside and gave it to her," Sassy said.

"He must still be dealing with that hoe," Dray assumed.

"More than likely, he is. Her pregnancy is the talk and my mama be scared to show her face in public now," Sassy laughed for the first time in a while.

He knew that Eva was losing her mind and he had no sympathy for her. She pushed him away because, in her eyes, he was different. Sassy was thankful for the relationship that he still had with his siblings but their parents were a mess. She tried to hide her gay son from the world but her husband's pregnant mistress was putting herself on display. If that wasn't karma he didn't know what was.

"God doesn't like ugly and I'm sure He doesn't like Eva either,"

Dorian said making them laugh.

“Enough of this pity party. Turn the music up and let’s do what we do best,” Sassy said as he got up and started walking like he was on a runway.

“Alright bitch! Let’s get it,” Dray said as he and Sassy’s husband jumped up and joined him.

They went to the outside deck where the rest of their friends were and really got the party started. Sassy and Dray were always the life of the party and that day was no different. They had a blast and partied until the next morning. Dray wanted to put a smile on Sassy’s face and his mission was accomplished.



“You good baby?” Memphis asked while on the phone with Jersi.

“Why wouldn’t I be Memphis? You just left home less than an hour ago,” Jersi replied as she rolled her eyes up to the ceiling.

“I’m just making sure. You should have just come with me,” Memphis said.

“I wish the fuck I would have. I’m not ever going nowhere that I’m not wanted. You can visit Miserable Mable by your damn self,” Jersi argued.

“Why you gotta talk about my mama like that?” Memphis laughed.

“I don’t know why you’re even wasting your time when you know she’s not coming,” Jersi noted.

“I’m just extending the invitation Jersi. As long as you show up I don’t give a fuck about nobody else,” Memphis said.

“I wouldn’t miss it for the world,” Jersi replied happily.

An entire month had passed since Blake and Mariah died and things finally seemed normal for her again. Memphis still had her under surveillance like she was a target but she had gotten used to it now. She understood his fears and she tried to ease his mind as often as she could. Her arm had completely healed and thankfully, there was no damage. She had a faint scar that she was trying to fade away with aloe and cocoa butter.

“Alright baby. I need to stop at one of the gyms and both of the car washes. I’ll call you when I’m on my way,” Memphis said before he hung up.

He got out of the car and jogged up the stairs to his mother’s house. She’d given him another house key but he still didn’t use it. He gave Valerie the same respect that he demanded from her. She no longer had a key to his house and she was never getting another one. Valerie ended up apologizing to Memphis and he was man enough to forgive her. She knew that she was wrong but he respected her for admitting it. Jersi, on the other hand, wanted nothing to do with her. Valerie apologized to her through Memphis but that wasn’t good enough. She felt that Valerie should have given her an apology to her face, the same as she’d done with her son. Memphis agreed with his wife, so he didn’t push the issue.

“Hey baby. Why didn’t you use your key?” Valerie asked as he kissed her cheek.

“What are you in here cooking?” Memphis countered while avoiding her question.

“I got a little bit of everything in here. Sit down and let me fix you something,” Valerie offered.

“Nah, I’m good. My wife made me a big breakfast and I’m still full,” Memphis said while rubbing his rock hard stomach.

“Can she cook?” Valerie asked.

“Very well. What kind of question is that?” he laughed.

“I was just asking. A lot of these young girls don’t know their way around the kitchen,” Valerie noted.

“Yeah, well my wife ain’t one of them,” Memphis replied as he handed her an envelope.

“What’s this?” Valerie asked as she wiped her hands on her apron.

“Open it and see,” Memphis replied as he opened her fridge and grabbed a bottle of water.

“This is beautiful. Who did it?” Valerie asked while reading over Memphis and Jersi’s wedding invitation. It included a picture of them that they’d had professionally taken not too long ago.

“I don’t know. My mother-in-law did everything. All we have to do is show up,” Memphis replied.

Since they were already married, Dena took her time and planned the perfect wedding. She and Jacob spared no expense and she was happy to do it.

“Did your wife invite me or did you?” Valerie asked him.

“Does it matter? Either you’re coming or you’re not. She don’t care one way or another as long as I’m happy,” Memphis noted.

“She’s a beautiful girl and I can tell that you’re happy. That’s all that I’ve ever wanted for all my kids,” Valerie said with a smile.

“I’m very happy so you don’t ever have to worry about that,” Memphis said while giving her a tight hug.

He talked to his mother for a few more minutes before he left to go check on his businesses. About two hours later, he was calling Jersi to let her know that he was on his way home. After two tries with no answer, Memphis started to panic. He didn’t want to be that person who thought that something was wrong every time he had a call that went unanswered. He tried Dray’s phone and he didn’t answer either. Memphis sped all the way home and was pissed when he saw that Jersi wasn’t there. She left her phone on the kitchen counter and her car was still in the driveway. For some reason, he didn’t think that anything was wrong. He was pissed that she left her phone but he knew why she didn’t take it.



“Bitch! Your husband has been blowing my phone up like crazy. You gon’ have me getting fussed at too,” Dray said as he looked over at Jersi. He and Sassy had picked her up from her house and they were now on a mission.

“He’ll be okay. That’s why I left my phone inside. His paranoid ass would have been trying to track a bitch,” Jersi replied.

“Just remember what I said baby doll. Outside is fair game but going inside is a no go. And you know we’ll be right there to have your back,”

Sassy noted.

“Thanks boo but I’m good on the backup. This is light work. I might have to break a lil sweat but it’s nothing that I can’t handle,” Jersi replied right as they pulled up to their destination.

“The three of them got out of the car and followed Jersi up to the correct apartment door. Jersi knocked on the door and waited for someone to answer.

“Who is it?” A woman asked a few minutes later.

Instead of replying, Jersi knocked on the door again, but harder the second time. She heard the locks being undone a short time later and her adrenaline was pumping. As soon as Talena opened the door, Jersi snatched her outside and started wailing on her.

“Ahhh!” Talena screamed, caught off guard by the attack.

Jersi was dealing with her and she never did have a chance to get right. Talena had just got her hair braided the day before and her head was still sore. She had a pounding headache but Jersi was showing her no mercy. There was no need for Talena to wonder why she was attacking her because she already knew. Her mouth was always getting her in trouble just like Tabby said. That was exactly why she didn’t have any friends other than Jersi and Ariel. Since they stopped fucking with her, Talena worked and went home to a lonely, boring house. The fact that Jersi came with backup let her know that she was prepared for whatever. She didn’t have to worry about nobody helping Talena because nobody but Tabby ever visited.

“Mind your muthafucking business bitch!” Jersi yelled as she continued to slam her fist into Talena’s face.

She didn’t give a damn about them being sisters. Hell, she didn’t even give a fuck about Tabby being her mother. As far as she was concerned they could both pucker up and kiss her ass. She couldn’t miss what she never had so she wouldn’t care if she never heard from them again.

“Damn Jersi. Don’t kill the bitch,” Dray said as he looked at his sister doing Talena dirty.

Talena’s face was a bloody mess and some of it got on Jersi’s shirt. She was barely fighting back and it was just pathetic to see.

“Come on baby doll. That’s enough. I think you’ve made your point. I don’t think you’ll have any more trouble out of this one,” Sassy said as he pulled Jersi away.

He made sure to tell Jersi to stay outside because bitches were dirty. Talena could have killed Jersi if she went into her house and it would have been justified. She could have done it outside too but they had a better chance if they got her out of the house.

“Bitch, make that your last time putting my name in your mouth. Now, run tell Tabby that,” Jersi fumed as Talena disappeared into her house.

“No wonder Damien prefers the company of men. That bitch looks like her daddy’s son,” Dray frowned.

“Fuck her and her mammy,” Jersi snapped as they all piled into the car and left.

“Now it’s time for you to face the music,” Dray laughed as he drove Jersi back home.

“Don’t even remind me,” Jersi sighed.

It seemed as if Dray was driving faster than she wanted him to. He got her back home in record time but Jersi wasn’t ready to face her husband. It felt like she was walking the green mile when she got out of the car and slowly walked towards the house. She wanted to invite Dray and Sassy inside but they pulled off before she had a chance to. When she opened the door, Memphis was laid out on the sofa watching tv. She expected him to jump up and go off on her but he didn’t budge. She exhaled a little when he didn’t

look at her or make a move. She knew that it was too good to be true and she was right.

“Do you want a divorce Jersi?” he asked calmly without even raising his voice.

“What? No I don’t want a divorce,” Jersi replied, shocked that he would ask such a stupid question.

“Well I suggest you start acting like a married woman. Why would you even have me worried like that? Where were you? You obviously didn’t want me to know since you left your phone here,” he noted.

“I went to Talena’s house,” Jersi admitted lowly.

“Why, when I specifically told you not to?” Memphis yelled as he jumped up from the sofa.

“I’m sorry baby but I couldn’t do what you were asking. I just couldn’t let it go,” Jersi admitted.

“What does fighting her solve though Jersi? You can’t take back nothing that already happened,” Memphis pointed out.

“Maybe not but I feel better since I beat her ass,” Jersi shrugged.

She didn’t even look like she’d been in a fight. Her slightly disheveled hair and the blood on her shirt let him know that she had though. It pissed him off that Jersi completely disregarded his feelings and did whatever she wanted to do anyway. Memphis was heated and he didn’t even want to look at her anymore.

“Don’t say shit to me right now Jersi. With the way I’m feeling I can’t even be responsible for what might come out of my mouth,” Memphis fumed as he walked away to their bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

Jersi sighed as she sat down on the sofa. She had made yet another



stupid decision that pissed Memphis off. Things were different now though. Memphis wasn't her boyfriend. He was her husband and she had to do better. He told her to let the situation with Talena go and she honestly tried to. Then, the thought of her almost losing her life because her sister talked to damn much, had Jersi out for blood. Telling Blake where she worked and all that other stuff was just foul. Jersi already wanted to deal with her and that just sealed the deal. Talena and Tabby were two toxic people who she could do without. Still, she hated that her need for revenge was strong enough to have her and Memphis at odds with each other. After sitting there deep in thought, Jersi got up to go find her husband. She walked into their bedroom and found Memphis relaxing in their bed watching tv. Jersi took off the shirt that she had on and changed into another one. Memphis was on his back with his hands behind his head. Jersi straddled him and he didn't flinch or move.

"I'm sorry," Jersi apologized as she placed a soft kiss on his lips.

"You should be tired of saying that because I'm tired of hearing it. Saying that you're sorry doesn't change anything that's already happened," Memphis replied, never taking his eyes off the tv.

"I know it doesn't Memphis but there is nothing else that I can say. I was wrong but I don't regret it. She was foul for what she did and I couldn't just forgive that. I could have been killed right along with Blake because she ran her mouth. I'm thankful that all I walked away with was a shoulder wound because it could have been worse. Even though we never had a bond like sisters, I would have never done her like that," Jersi said.

Memphis thought about what she said and he had to admit that she did have a few good points. Still, he wanted Jersi to do better. She couldn't go out there playing catch back on everybody who did her wrong. Her need for revenge was even stronger than his and that was saying a lot.

"I understand what you're saying baby and I agree to a certain extent. But, at some point, you have to learn to let shit go Jersi. Look at how everything turned out with your ex and his wife. I'm thankful that you made it out of that situation alive but things don't always have a happy ending," Memphis replied as he finally made eye contact with her.

“You’re right and it won’t happen again. The best thing for me to do is stay away from Tabby and Talena altogether. I’m not interested in fixing a relationship that we never really had. Besides Ariel and my aunt Toni, I’m through with them. I’m good with you, Cat and my family,” Jersi replied.

“Zora said that she wants y’all to hang out sometimes too,” Memphis said, referring to his sister-in-law.

Vance’s wife, Zora, had invited Jersi out to lunch and she took her up on the offer. Although she was nice, Jersi couldn’t see them hanging out very often. Zora’s father was a pastor and she and Jersi really didn’t have anything in common. The conversation was forced and she was too reserved.

“Maybe,” Jersi shrugged as Memphis laughed. He already knew what that meant and he understood. Zora was boring as fuck and Jersi wasn’t with it.

“When’s the last time you took the test and what did it say?” Memphis asked, speaking of the ovulation test.

“I haven’t taken it and I really don’t know if I want to,” Jersi said as she climbed off of him and sat down on the bed.

“Why not?” he sat up and asked.

“Because Memphis,” Jersi sighed, “You be saying that you don’t care what happens but I know that you do. I see the disappointment in your eyes every time. I say we forget the test and let things happen when it happens.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m good with that,” Memphis shrugged.

“Good, now come sit in the kitchen and keep me company while I cook,” Jersi said as she got up and went to the kitchen.

Memphis followed behind her and sat at one of the stools in the kitchen. He couldn’t even dispute what his wife had said because she was

right. Every time Jersi got a period he got discouraged about them having a baby. He knew that everything took time and he just had to be patient. He and Jersi were already married and they had a lifetime to start a family.



**5 Months Later**

“**Y**ou may now kiss your bride,” the pastor said right before Memphis pulled Jersi into him and connected his lips with hers.

Everybody clapped and cheered as they kissed like they were the only two in the room. Once they came up for air, Memphis palmed her round belly and smiled. Jersi was absolutely right and he was happy that he took her advice. As soon as he stopped stressing himself about getting her pregnant, it finally happened. Jersi was now four months pregnant with their daughter, Montana. She hated the name that he chose but she let him have his way with their first born. Memphis was so excited and he couldn't wait to meet their new addition.

True to her word, Dena put together a wedding fit for royalty. Jacob got to walk his only daughter down the aisle and both her parents were happy. Now, Dena was on to another project. She was planning Jersi's baby shower and she wanted that to be just as elaborate.

“I'm so not in the mood to take a million more pictures,” Jersi groaned as she and Memphis walked away to get in the awaiting car that was taking them to their reception.

It was weird for them to be having such a large gathering knowing that they were already married. Since they already had a honeymoon, they didn't want to take another one. Instead, they decided to spend a few days in Miami to relax. They enjoyed their time there when they went before and she wanted to go back. Jersi's doctor gave her the okay to fly and she was ready to go.

"Me either but it has to be done. Your mama will kill us both if we mess up her day," Memphis replied.

"Her day?" Jersi questioned.

"It damn sure ain't ours. Her and your pops were the ones who wanted this," Memphis reminded her.

"Yeah, I guess you're right. Still, I just want to go home and get in my bed," Jersi yawned.

The baby had Jersi sleeping more often than usual but she tried her best to remain active. She and Memphis did date night every weekend and they were in the process of decorating the baby's room. Their house now felt like a home since it was fully furnished and decorated. Once the baby came, things would only get better.

"Me too baby," Memphis replied as soon as they pulled up to the venue. Dena was already out front, ready to bark orders and instructions.

"Make sure y'all are always smiling. I have three different photographers here," Dena instructed as soon as Memphis and Jersi were out of the car.

"How long do we have to do this ma? It's aggravating," Jersi pouted.

"This pregnancy really got you being mean. I sure hope my granddaughter don't have this same stank attitude," Dena said as she fixed Jersi's dress. She pulled a lint roller from her purse and ran it over Memphis'

jacket before she walked away.

“I feel like a child,” Memphis laughed right before he and Jersi posed for a picture.

Dena was walking around giving out orders like she was the bride. She made sure the photographers got every shot right and she wanted one from every angle. Jersi was so happy when that part of it was over and she was able to sit down and eat.

“Girl, Dena is acting like mother of the bridezilla. She did the damn thing with this wedding though, so she gets a pass,” Cat said when she and Phil walked over to Memphis and Jersi.

“She’s so damn extra,” Jersi frowned as she put the last of her food in her mouth.

“You want some more?” Memphis asked once he saw that she was done.

“Yeah but you better not let my mama see you. She’ll go crazy if she sees one of us lifting a finger,” Jersi replied. Once Memphis and Phil walked away, Cat sat down so that she and Jersi could gossip a little before they came back.

“I’m surprised she came,” Cat said as she nodded her head towards Eva.

“Girl, she looks stressed out. My daddy said that Braxton be all out in the open with his other woman and their son. He don’t even try to hide the shit,” Jersi whispered.

“It was fucked up for her to name her baby Blake though. That was a slap in Eva’s face. I don’t want to hear that bullshit about keeping his memory alive. That was low to name the outside child after your deceased son,” Cat replied.

“Yeah, she was dead ass wrong for that and Braxton was wrong for letting it happen. The woman is still grieving over her son. That was just disrespectful,” Jersi noted.

Her parents were still cordial with the Harding’s but Dena was a woman of her word. They didn’t do holidays or any other special occasions with them anymore. Eva had basically started all over again with raising kids since she had Blake and Mariah’s twins. It was fucked up that she didn’t even let Marvin see them and they were the only thing that he had left of his daughter. They barely knew him and Eva was determined to keep it that way. He didn’t have any money to take her to court and that was what she was counting on. Marvin was being punished for the sins of his daughter.

Karma was kicking Eva’s ass too because her husband was putting gray hairs on her head. Braxton had taken his affair to a whole new level. Not only was he still messing with the woman who gave birth to his last son, but he was dividing his time up between her and Eva. He got her and his son a house and he stayed there some night with them too. Jersi’s parents felt like he was too old to be on the same bullshit but that didn’t stop him. Eva couldn’t hide that scandal like she did with everything else. Her husband was too out in the open for it to be a secret. He would never leave his wife, for financial reasons, but he was still having a damn good time while being married to her. Unlike his son’s wives, Eva didn’t have a prenup in place. She would take him for half of everything that he was worth. Eva did a lot of dirt to a lot of people and she was getting it all back.

“I’m so happy to be out of that family. BJ will never change,” Cat said.

“Like father, like son,” Jersi shrugged.

Cat had finally introduced Phil to her son and she was happy that they hit it off. BJ now had a live in girlfriend that he was doing dirty. He was still a cheater and probably always would be. He was a great father and that was all that Cat could ask for. She really didn’t care about anything else.

“Did your mother-in-law come?” Cat asked as she looked around.

“Hell no and I’m not mad. Old miserable bitch claimed she was sick. She was fine when he talked to her yesterday though. I guess she got mad because I wouldn’t let her come to the hospital last week when we found out the gender of the baby. My own mama didn’t even come. It was only me and my husband. We told everybody once we found out though. I don’t know what made her think that she was special. They must think it’s a game. I keep telling them that I gives no fucks about nobody else’s mama, especially when I don’t even fuck with my own. If it ain’t Dena, they can kiss my smooth chocolate ass,” Jersi ranted, making Cat laugh at how serious she looked.

“When’s the last time you heard from Tabby and your sister?” Cat asked.

“I haven’t. Tabby called herself calling to check me about beating Talena’s ass and we got into it. That was the last I’ve heard from her. Me and Memphis saw her in Walmart a few weeks ago and I pretended like she was invisible. She looked a hot ass mess with Mariah’s clothes on,” Jersi said.

“Bitch! How do you know that the clothes belonged to Mariah?” Cat questioned.

“Come on now Cat. Tabby don’t know a damn thing about Fendi. She had on the shirt with the matching leggings. Mariah wore the same outfit when me and Ariel saw her in the ice cream parlor a while ago. Besides, Mariah was smaller than Tabby and the shit was too tight,” Jersi said as she and Cat laughed.

“She out here flexing with too tight clothes that belonged to a dead woman,” Cat snickered.

“Yep but I’m not surprised by anything that she does. What’s up with you and your boo?” Jersi asked.

“Everything is going good. He’s such a sweetheart. He’s been staying over some nights since he’s met Tre. My baby loves him and that’s all the validation I need,” Cat replied.



“Look at you blushing and shit,” Jersi smiled right as she spotted the men walking back over.

Memphis handed Jersi her food as he and Phil walked away again. Jersi smiled when she saw his friends pull out a chair and sit him down in the middle of the dance floor. They serenaded him with their frat song right before they broke out into a step show. People were recording on their phones and Dena had the photographers working overtime. Jersi had seen them do the same thing at Max’s wedding, so she wasn’t surprised. Max was there with his wife but Jersi saw him sneaking peeks of Dray and his date. Once the show was over, people went back to enjoying themselves.

The reception was in full swing and the dance floor was packed. Once she ate again, Jersi and Memphis joined their guests. Dray was there with his female companion but he pulled Jersi onto the floor to dance with him for a little while. Since her two older brothers were there, they got on the floor and joined them. Dena was going crazy making sure the photographers got the special moment between the siblings. She even had her cell phone out recording as they danced together. When Sassy joined them, the party really got live. Sassy had moves like Beyoncé and he did it all wearing six inch heels. Eva looked disgusted by her son’s behavior but he didn’t give a damn. He had learned to ignore her just like she always did him. When the reception was nearing the end. Jersi stood on the spiraled staircase to throw the bouquet.

“Right here cousin. Make sure you throw it to me,” Ariel yelled.

“No friend, throw it to me,” Cat yelled as he stuck her tongue out at Ariel.

“On the count of three!” Jersi yelled as she turned her back.

Everyone counted with her right before Jersi threw the flowers behind her. She turned around as soon as she did so she could see who was going to catch it. Dray’s date had both her hands in the air as the bouquet came right at her. Suddenly, the two women who were closest to her almost fell and she

lost her balance too. It was like a domino effect but thankfully, no one fell. As a result, a lady who was right next to her caught the bouquet instead. Jersi narrowed her eyes at Dray when she saw that he was the one who was behind the incident. The entire room erupted in laughter after that. Dray swore that it was an accident but Jersi knew better. He pretended that he was trying to tie his shoe but she wasn't buying it.

“Why did you do that Dray?” Jersi asked as she walked over and punched her brother on the arm.

“I was trying to tie my shoe and almost fell. It really was an accident,” he shrugged.

“Yeah, I bet it was,” Sassy laughed.

“Fuck that. I don't need these hoes to be getting no ideas. Unless she's okay with her husband having a boyfriend, she can't be my wife,” Dray replied seriously.

“When are you gonna settle down Dray? Don't you want kids one day?” Jersi asked.

“Yes and in five more months you and Memphis are giving me a daughter. I'll be happy with spoiling my nieces and nephews. My world is too complicated to bring kids into it. I'm not stable enough for that right now. I get to choose whether or not I want to entertain a man or a woman. I can't wake up one morning and decide that I don't want to be a father,” Dray pointed out.

“That's so true,” Sassy agreed with a nod of his head.

“Well, we don't mind sharing Montana with you,” Jersi smiled as she looped her arm in his.

She was so happy that her oldest brothers were there because they worked so much. They never got a chance to unwind but they were having a good time. They invited her and Dray out to dinner the following day and

they happily agreed. It had been a while since they'd all been together and that made Jersi's day even more special. Now, as her reception came to an end, she was happy that she had two days to relax before she and Memphis went to Miami for a few days.

"Ready?" Memphis asked her once he saw the last of his family members off.

"Yes, I'm so happy that this is over with," Jersi replied.

Her parents were the only ones there and they were talking to the lady who owned the venue. Jersi let them know that she and Memphis were leaving and they were on their way soon after. JJ had parked Memphis' truck there earlier so they wouldn't have to find a ride home.

"Five more months?" Memphis smiled as he rubbed Jersi's stomach.

"I can't wait to meet her," Jersi smiled.

"Me too," Memphis agreed. "I've never been more ready for anything in my life."

"Are you ready for the long nights, early mornings and diaper changes? Things are going to be very different now since it won't just be the two of us," Jersi noted.

"I'm prepared for it all. Three will never be a crowd when it comes to her," Memphis replied, making her smile.



### **1 Year Later**

“Are you ready to eat baby?” Jersi asked when she opened the door to the sitting room and looked at Memphis.

He was relaxing on the sofa and seven month old Montana was comfortable on his chest. She had her pacifier in her mouth and she looked like she was falling asleep. As spoiled as she was, Montana was one of the best babies ever. She rarely woke them up at night and they sometimes got up before she did. She was a cute chocolate colored replica of Jersi with a head full of the same curly black hair. Memphis' eyes lit up every time he saw her, the same as it did when he saw his wife. He didn't think it was possible but he fell in love with Jersi more and more each day. Even though he was pissed with her at the moment, she was still his heart.

“Get out of our face. Me and my baby ain't fucking with you right now,” Memphis frowned, not even bothering to look up at her.

“You can miss me with the attitude, Either you're ready to eat or you're not. If I go lay down, I'm not getting back up until I'm good and ready,” Jersi replied as she wobbled away.

When Montana was only three months old, Jersi found out that she was pregnant again. Memphis was ecstatic when they found out two days ago

that they were having a boy. His family was coming along nicely but he still wanted more. He and Jersi agreed to have four but she sometimes changed her mind. She had a rough labor with Montana and she wasn't looking forward to that pain again.

"You seriously got the nerve to get mad? That was real fucked up with you did Jersi. And you're standing here acting like you don't care," Memphis argued as he walked into the kitchen carrying their daughter.

"I'm not acting," Jersi said as she took Montana from him and put her in her high chair.

She had a small bowl of mashed potatoes to feed her and then she would put her down for a nap. She wasn't worried nor did she care about what Memphis was saying.

"That's real fucked up," Memphis said as he opened the fridge and pulled out some juice.

"You better not," Jersi warned when she saw him turn the bottle up to his mouth.

"Disgusting ass," he mumbled as he grabbed a plastic cup.

"I don't know what you're mad about. Today is a beautiful day. It's not hot or cold and there is a nice breeze blowing," Jersi pointed out.

"I don't give a damn Jersi. That's still no reason for you to leave my mama out on the porch like you did," Memphis replied.

He was pissed when him and his daughter pulled up and he saw Valerie sitting on the porch. She told him that she had been out there for about twenty minutes because Jersi told her that he wasn't home. He had to pick up a few things from the store and he took Montana along for the ride. Jersi had finally rented out her condo since Dray moved and he had to deposit the rent check into their account as well. Valerie only wanted to see the baby and Jersi had her waiting on the porch like she was a stranger. Since his wife

and mother didn't have the best relationship, he used to bring Montana to Valerie's house every Sunday for her to spend time with her only grandchild. Jersi put a stop to that quick and he had to respect his wife's wishes.

Jersi had never said that Valerie wasn't welcome in their home. His mother was just stubborn and his wife refused to give in to her childish ways. Jersi didn't feel like they had to go out of their way to bring their baby to see Valerie. In her opinion, Valerie should have been the one coming to their house to see her. Memphis was doing exactly what she wanted him to do but she had Jersi fucked up. She wasn't about to kiss her ass or bend over backward for her. Dena and Jacob came to see Montana just about every day and Valerie wasn't exempt.

"You and Montana weren't here anyway. She don't like me so I was sure that she wouldn't have wanted to be in here with me alone," Jersi shrugged.

"That's a lame ass excuse if I've ever heard one," Memphis fussed.

"It's not an excuse and I'm tired of talking about it. I've never done anything to your mother and I'm not about to pacify her ass," Jersi snapped.

"I never asked you to. It wouldn't have killed you to let her in until we came back though. She apologized to you a long time ago and I though the shit was over with. You have a problem with forgiving people," Memphis said.

"No, I forgive easily but I never forget. That fake ass apology was only to appease you. It was cool with me though because I accepted it for the exact same reason. Being in her company when you or Montana are not around ain't happening though. She should have called before she just popped up and she wouldn't have been sitting on the porch. That's her problem now. She still don't listen," Jersi said as she got up from her chair. Montana had fallen asleep in the middle of her meal and she wanted to put her in the bed.

"It sounds like you're the one with the problem to me," Memphis

said, making her upset.

“The only problem I have right now is my husband defending his mother like he’s fucking her every night instead of me. Your mother will not be a problem in our marriage because I won’t allow her to be. I’ll pack me and my daughter up and let you be with her before I let that happen,” Jersi fumed as she grabbed Montana and walked away.

“The fuck!” Memphis yelled as he followed behind her ready to go off. Jersi pissed him off when she said shit like that and she knew it.

“Be quiet before you wake her up,” Jersi ordered as she laid their daughter down in her crib. She grabbed the baby monitor and walked away.

“You better stop saying that stupid shit every time you get mad,” Memphis fumed as he followed her to the front room. Jersi sat on the sofa but he was too upset to sit still.

“Then you better remember who the fuck your wife is!” She snapped, making him regret his earlier words.

Memphis knew how his wife was and he knew that he had to choose his words carefully. He didn’t want Jersi to feel like she was in competition with Valerie because there was nothing to compare. Nobody, not even his mother, came before Jersi and his daughter and she knew that. He didn’t expect his wife and mother to be best friends but he at least wanted them to be cordial. Valerie even tucked her tail and apologized but Jersi still kept her at arm’s length. She accepted the apology but she still didn’t fuck with her like that. Memphis wasn’t worried about being pulled in two different directions. He had his wife’s back no matter what. He just hated that things had to be that way. There were kids involved and he wanted them to know both side of their family.

Sadly, his kids would never know his father since he was serving a twenty-five year sentence in jail. Juan was given forty years and they were both charged with Lila’s murder since it happened when they were trying to commit a crime. Jonah never got out of the car and that kind of helped with

his sentence. Still, he would probably die in prison because he was already over fifty years old when he went.

“Listen,” Memphis sighed as he pulled Jersi up and sat down in her spot. He sat her on his lap and stroked her belly.

“I’m listening,” Jersi said as she folded her arms defiantly.

“Stop being so mean,” Memphis said as he kissed her neck.

“I’m not being mean but I’m not for the bullshit either,” Jersi replied.

“You’re right baby and I apologize. She should always call before she comes and I’ll be sure to tell her that. I don’t expect you and my mama to be best friends because that’s unrealistic. I just want all of us to be in the same room without all the tension. We should be able to spend holidays together without wanting to kill one another,” Memphis said.

“You’re right. It shouldn’t be that way. I’m not even trying to keep bringing up who started what and why. Our kids should know your family and mine. And all holidays don’t have to be spent with my parents either. We can alternate or you can invite your mama to spend the day with us. My mama won’t mind,” Jersi noted.

“That’s all I want. But, more than anything, I want you to be happy,” Memphis said as he pulled her in for a hug.

“I am happy,” Jersi replied with a smile.

“That’s all that matters to me,” he noted.

“But don’t let my mama fool you. One wrong move and Valerie will catch her hands. You know my mama don’t play behind me,” Jersi said seriously.

“I already know and neither do I,” Memphis laughed as he kissed her lips.



It was crazy how one quick trip to the grocery store ended with him meeting the love of his life. He never gave up on falling in love again after his wife died but he didn't go out there looking for it. It turned out that he didn't even have to look at all. Jersi fell into his arms that day at the grocery store and he never let go since then. He was the happiest that he'd ever been and he was grateful. In just five more months, their family of three would be four and it didn't get any more perfect than that.