MUKAYA RILEY

Present

THE NURSES
OF
MONROE HOSPITAL

EMERGENCY ENTRANCE

AMBULANCE

911 EMT
"This book is dedicated to my mother, and all the beautiful black women. And I mean YOU ALL."

From The New Author, MYKAYA RILEY

THE NURSES OF MONROE HOSPITAL
THE NURSES OF MONROE HOSPITAL

"To Cure Trust, Betrayal, and Love
Take Two Asprins, and Call
Me In The Morning"

Monroe hospital is a long term facility on the southwest side of Houston. A story about seven women with different past, but looking for the same future.

Sherry Johnson is from Denver Colorado, who's trying to escape her abusive past. Raine Robinson, is a physical therapist with her own practice, and is contracted with the hospital. She struggle to find love, after catching her husband cheating. Lekesha Fisher is a exotic beauty, who works part time, and is a full time stripper. Cecilia Bassey, is a Nigerian immigrant who's struggling to take care of her two young kids, after her husband is killed.

Connie Jensen, a privilege white woman who can't help falling in love with street thugs. Kathrine Mills is the supervisor, who tries to maintain order at the hospital, and at her own home.

Nicole Nickleson is a single mother, that is waiting for the father of her son, a former football player, to leave his wife and kids, and be with her.
In Houston the temperature in April reached the mid eighties before the noon hour. Sherry, Raine, and Gary stood out back by the emergency entrance of Francis Monroe long term hospital. Sherry Johnson, 41, been an employee of the hospital for three years, as a certified nurse assistance. At five seven, flawless caramel color skin, her friendly smile, and strong spirit made Sherry one of the most likeable person at work. Smoking on a Newport, she choke on the smoke, laughing at Gary.

Gary Brand, 29, a slim and tall homossexual, is the backbiter of the hospital. Inheritance of a bad grade of hair, Gary used chemicals, to make his hair shiny, wavey, and think. Dark as midnight, for some reason, he thought the green contacts, matched his skin color. Drinking on his third Dr. Pepper of the morning, he loved the smell of the Black and Mild cigar, Raine been smoking.

Raine Robinson, 32, a thick light skinned beauty, with silky wavy hair, that she kept most of the time in a ponytail. A physical therapist, who is contracted with the hospital, also has her own small clinic.

Gossipping, Gary talked about the third patient that had arrived this morning. "That old white man, don't look like he's gonna make it to next week. The cracker arms was folded in the air, like rigor-mortis had already set in. Moaning and groaning, like he was in agony."

"When the EMT'S pulled him out the ambulance, they were all masked up. Like he had something contagious." Raine spoked.

"Naw, he shitted on himself."

"How do you know?" Gary asked.

"I could smell it from here. I clean up behind enough shitty patients." Sherry informed. "But I'm glad in someways, that we are getting patients. You know how the summertime can be. Slow around here, and cut back on hours. Lord knows, I need every dollar I can get. Dam, I'll be glad when I graduate, my shitty days will be over with."
"How long you have left until you graduate?" Raine asked.
"Nine months." she answered, taking a long drag of her New Port.

Talking about the current events in the world, the ladies been interrupted by the vibration of Beyonce and Jay Z, new song (Drunken Love). Gary pulled down his imitation Fendi big face shades, to get a clear look at the hot pink H3 Hummer, parking in the parking lot.

The person inside knew the bitches at her job hated her, because of her beauty, and she's get money. She didn't need the job at the hospital. Only for insurance purpose. She made a fortune, dancing at Gentlemen Club. Where the rich white, blacks, athletes, and high rollers, come six nights a week. Six hundred dollars was consider a slow night for her.

Putting out the blunt in the ashtray, she leaned over to open her glove department, to grab the vaseline eyedrop, to clear her red eyes. Reaching inside her Dooney purse, that cost fifteen hundred dollars, the exotic beauty, squirted herself twice with a small bottle of perfume, that she couldn't pronounce. It was a present from one of her white gentleman, that comes to see her strip.

Applying another layer of lipstick, she popped two sticks of gum in her mouth, to freshen her breath. High as a soaring eagle, she smiled at herself, in the rearview mirror. "Beyonce, watch your back bitch. If your man is ever in my present, you'll be drunk in sorrow."

Shutting off her engine, the five ten beauty stepped out the pink machine, and brushed the wrinkles out of her baby blue scrub. Placing her DKNY shades over her grey eyes, she made her way towards the hospital, to clock in. Stopping to acknowledge her co-workers, Gary stared between her legs, before pushing his shades completely on his face. "Bitch, you know your camel toe showing."
Gary's comment made Sherry's mouth fall open, and Raine choked, inhaling her cigar. "Got your dick hid between your ass cheeks?" she retorted back. "Gary, I think you want some of this pussy, but instead of wanting some pussy, you rather be a pussy."

"FUCK YOU LEKESHA! Nasty Mixs Bitch!"

Lekesha Fisher, is mixs with a Bolivian mother, and African American father, in which together created a master piece in Lekesha. Lekesha's father Charles, met her mother in the military, at a coffee shop, he visit everyday. Returning to the United States, and discharging from the army, her father sent for her to be marry. Making a comfortable living as an electrician, two years later, Roxanne gave birth to Lekesha.

Lekesha was crazy about her father. She waited for him every workday, at five thirty to come home. Especially on Wednesday, and Friday, when he would surprise her with a gift. At ten years old, Lekesha came home from school, and found her mother in the kitchen crying at the table. Asking her mother the reason for the tears, with eyes as red as blood, her mother almost fainted, when she told her that her father had been killed in a auto accident.

Roxanne took the death of her husband hard, and tried to drown her pain in alcohol. Years later, things began to spiral down for Lekesha and her mother. Finding a new man that hooked her on crack, he took every last dime that came in the house.

Lekesha hasn't spoken to her mother in seven years, when she left home at fifteen. The two had falling out, when Lekesha tried to tell her mother, that her crackhead boyfriend, Rufus, tried to rape her.

"Nasty! Who In The Fuck You Calling Nasty! You suck dicks and swallow cum. I'm sure your daddy isn't bragging about you to his friends."

Lekesha responded.

"Bitch you suck dicks!"

"Bitch! I suppose to suck dicks. That's what women do."
"I'm just trying to find some dick.' Raine cutting in, causing Sherry to laugh.

"Gary everyone knows you trying to save enough money for some titties, and a sex change. You'll be a old fag, before your ass raise enough money to try to make your UGLY ASS, look like a woman."
Sherry and Raine waited for gary to respond back, but the truth had kept gary silent. Black as a tar road, and a frame like a light-pole, Gary was never to good in anything or sports, like his brothers. Fragile like glass, he hated sports, because he would always get injured. Women also rejected him, calling him Shaka Zulu. Agreeing to go to the club with his gay room mate Troy. Gary would burst into laughter, when Troy would come out of his room, dressed in one of his drag outfit. "Tracy is in the house bitch." Troy would call himself.
In the club, and feeling out of place, Gary couldn't believe how the drags, and men flocked to him. For the first time he found a place that he felt accepted. And he loved it.

"Nigga if you raised a billion dollars, you'll never look as good as me. Don't hate me bitch. Hate God."

Suddenly Gary and Lekeasha feud been broken up, when Sherry name was being called by the supervisor, on the intercom. "I wonder what Kathrine wants with you?" Raine asked.

"To clean somebody shit." she scrowled, taking her last drag of her New Port.

"How do you know?"

"I can smell it." dropping the cigarette on the ground, and stepping on it. Sherry enter the nurses station, to find Kathrine Mills standing behind Nicole, who been loading information in the hospital computer. Kathrine, a Register Nurses in her mis fifties, has been working at the hospital for over twenty years. A light chocolate woman, that wore an Anita Baker eighties haircut, very well. A frame like Michelle Obama, Kathrine manage her professional life, and friendships, with her staffs, under her,differently.

(4)
When things went wrong on her shift, behind negligent staff members, she hesitated not to chew their asses out. Not in any way, she was gonna allow any of the nurses, to lose her eighty thousand a year position, that she work hard for years to earn.

"You called me Kathrine."
"Yes Sherry," turning to face her. "Mr. Churchbell had an accident."

Kathrine noticed the grimace expression in Sherry face. "It's not what you think. He wasted coffee on himself, and needs to be clean and change."

Turning her attention to Lekeshia, who just enter the station, and placed her things under the counter, Kathrine looked up at the clock on the wall, and frowned. Lekeshia again was thirty minutes late.

"Your late again Lekeshia."

After putting her things away, Lekeshia glanced at her nine hundred dollars Kenneth Cole watch. Another gift, from a client. Tapping the face with her manicure nails. "My watch must have stop during the night." she responded non-chalant.

Kathrine squinted her eyes at her, placing her hands on her hips, shifting her weight to the left. She didn't have time for Lekeshia shit this morning. "Assist Sherry in cleaning up Mr. Churchbell."

"That's not my patient!"
"Today he is." Kathrine answered back.

"Bitch!" Lekeshia said in her head, and followed Sherry out the nurses station. When the ladies enter Mr. Churchbell room, he was sitting up watching Fox's news, enjoying the conservatives, bashing President Obama. A millionaire himself, he felt like Obama, was trying to take his money he work hard for, and give to the poor, and lazy. He looked passed Sherry, and smiled at Lekeshia, who stood behind her.

"Mr. Churchbell, how did you spill coffee all over yourself."
Sherry stood by his bedside, removing his sheets.

"You know I have bad muscles spasm condition. I was holding a cup of coffee in my hand, and one came on. Causing me to waste the hot drink, all over me. Sorry."

"Dam, what you were holding, a big gulp? You coffee all over you."

Standing on the other side of the bed, Lekesha began to feel uncomfortable, with his stares. Getting hit on all the time by old rich white men, who wanted mistress. Lekesha assist Sherry, in taking off Mr. Churchbell gown. "And who might this young lady be? I never seen you around here before." he inquired.

"I'm Lekesha. I normally work in another section of the hospital. Mainly ICU."

"It must be your beauty, that keeps them alive and breathing." Lekesha giggled at his comment. "No, I don't think so. God haven't called on them yet."

"What are you?" he asked.

"Come again." Lekesha confused by his question.

"Your ethnic, nationality? Wait! let me guess." Examining her feature, and asking her to do a three sixty for him. She frowned for a moment, turning her attention from him to Sherry. Who been smiling about the whole situation. "Let me see." he insisted. Lekesha hesitated at first, before she did what she been asked.

"Yes, yes, definitely african American." focusing on her butt. Re-examining her face again. "Bolivian."

Guessing correctly, Lekesha mouth fell open. "How the hell you know?"

"Darling a rich man like me, been around the world, and laid with every flavor. But never with an exotic mixer like you. I'm looking for a wife." he grinned at her.

"A wife or a mistress?" Lekesha question.

"Which one you rather be?"
"How old are you, Mr. churchbell?"
"Seventy three."
"Where's your wife?"
"My wife Elaine for fifty years, passed two years ago, from breast cancer."
"Sorry." Lekesha giving her condolence. Silence passed between them all, before Lekesha asked her next question. "How much you worth?"
"Fourty million."
"Sorry again, Mr. Churchbell, I can't be your wife. Your a dollar to short."

Turning over to Sherry, Mr. Churchbell asked her could he borrow a dollar. "No problem." Sherry digging in her pockets, retrieving a dollar, and handing it to him. "Now I pronounce you two, man and wife."

"Okay Sherry." Lekesha scowled, removing Mr. Churchbell, Fruit of the Loom. Flinching at the sight of his hard penis. Mr. Churchbell flashed his perfect set of dentures. "Muscles spasm."

Nicole still sat in front of the computer, reloading patients information, that was somehow lost during a power surge outing on the southwest side. With folders stacked ten feet high, Nicole believed she would never finish, by the end of the week. She was also holding on to her last nerve, listening to Connie standing behind her, popping her gum. "GodDam Connie! can you chew your gum like a up-pity white girl, you grew up with. You're not a bitch from the project."

Connie Jensen 28, a white nurse, that grew up in Sugarland. A suburb outside of Houston. Her father, a big time criminal lawyer, and mother, a high school principle.
A huge fan of hip hop, and gangter rap, she fell in love with the urban lifestyle, watching urban movies. Everyday after school ended,
Connie would cruised the streets of the urban southside, in her three series BMW. Her car along with her Gwen Steffani looks, attracted the black men that cruised the boulevard in their foreign, and candy painted cars.

Falling head over heels for a small time hustler named Carl Thomas. One holiday, Connies brought him home for Thanksgiving, to meet her parents. Finding out Carl's occupation, quickly Connie parents disapprove of them being together. They tried everything in their power to destroy their relationship. But that only deepen Connie love for Carl. Shortly right after graduation, she moved out her parents home, and in with Carl.

A year later, they produce a daughter named Carla. Living comfortable in a luxury apartment in Stafford, Connie got into a heated arguement with Carl, about staying out all night with his boys. Not in the mood to listen to Connie rants, Carl picked up his keys, and left. Connie didn't know that would be the last time, she'll ever see Carl alive.

Devastated behind the death of her daughter father, at the funeral, Connie notices a woman sitting in the front row, with his family, crying, cradling a new born. Curious, she found out that Carl had father a son by the woman. Falling into depression, she moved back in with her parents. "How could Carl father another child, behind my back." she asked herself in the mirror. Connie would ask God everyday to bring back Carl, to ask him why? Then kill him herself. Pulling herself back together, Connie worked part time as a secretary, for her father, while attending nursing school, to attain her LVN diploma. It wasn't long before she fell back in love with a big time hustler, whom her father represented in a murder trial.

Connie blew a bubble, then popped it with her nail, and continued smacking her gum louder on purpose. She scratched the braided corn rows, while she spoke. "You not calling me a bitch, hunh Nikki?"
Nicole spun around in her swivel chair to face Connie. "Not yet, but you acting like one." Nicole replied.

"You got something against me Nikki?" Connie folded her arms. "Yeah, I'm tired of you walking around here acting like you black, and from the hood. Be yourself."

"And what's being myself? "Acting white?"

"Yeah."

"And show me how a white woman act Nikki?"

Nicole stood up being animated in displaying on how Connie should behave. "Well Becky, what are you wearing to the opera tonight? I hear the mayor and some of the Houston elites will be there."

Fire filled Connie eyes from Nicole action. "So you think I'm a spoiled little white girl?"

"Yeap. Got a taste of that black dick, and lost your mind."

"Fuck you Nikki. I know you sisters hate when you see your fine black successful men, chasing this vanilla, like trophies." she smiled.

"That nigga you got ain't successful! He's a fucking drug dealer."

Before Nicole begin to say anything more, she took a deep breath, and gathered her composer. "What do you want Connie?" she finnally asked.

"I'm looking for Kathrine. I need Wendsday off."

"Well, she's not in the building at the moment. She's at lunch."

"Why do you need Wendsday off?"

Connie jilted alittle before telling Nicole. "Dam you're nosey!" before turning to exit the station. Stopping in her tracks, Connie looked over her shoulder. "And if you really want to know. I need a day off to look for a dress for the opera." she told Nicole, sounding white.
CHAPTER 2 NICOLE

Nicole Nickelson 30, sat in the stands cheering, watching her son Nicholas, run a fourty yard touchdown, for the Mustang, that won the game. While coach Malik Shakur gave the team a after game prep talk, Nicole waited patiently to gave her son a loving and winning hug. Coach Shukar placed his arm around Nicholas, expressing how gifted of an athlete he is. Coach Shakur been told by many how he resembled LL Cool J, with his looks, built, but not his height. Standing only at five ten, and with a receding hairline, Malik decided to keep his head bald, and sport a trim beard.

"Son you run the ball like Lacy King, when he was in college." Nicholas twisted his face confused, not knowing who was Lacy King.
"I never heard of him. He played runningback?"
"Yes."
"Was he good?"
"One of the most electrify runningback in college history."
"Well, I want to be good as him."
Malik chuckled for a moment. "From what I see, you might be better." he rubbed the natural curls in his head, encouraging Nicholas. When he reached his mother, Nicole kissed and hugged her son tight, praising him on his skills. "Can't wait for the day when I'll be seating in NFL stadium, or watching you on Sunday, screaming like crazy."

"You do that now." he giggled. "I could hear you screaming when I was running the touchdown."

Coach Shakur grinned as he watched Nicholas mother hugged him once more, before sticking out his hand to introduce himself. "Hi there. I'm coach Shakur. You must be Nicholas mother." Nicole stared at the strange man hand for a second, then at him. Hesitant, she reach for it to shake. Malik felt goose bumps on his arms. Her hand felt soft and warm. He glanced down at her hand that

(10)
wasn't manicure, but trimmed and clean. "Sorry Mrs." Shakur paused, trying to get her to reveal her name.

"Ms." she stressed not being married. "Nickleson. Where's coach Walker?" she asked.

"I guess you haven't heard, that Coach Walker had an car accident."

"I hope he's alright."

"He broke both of his legs and hip. So he ask me if I could volunteer, and coach the team for the rest of the season."

Shakur been attractive to the beauty that stood before him. With no make-up, her brown skin had no blemish. Nicole shoulder length dreadlocks, enhance her strong facial feature. Her maroon scrubs, gripped her body nicely. "She must workout." he thought to himself.

"And another thing, she got a job." Shakur dislike women who always has her hands stuck out.

"Well I hope he makes a full recovery, and be back next season. Nicholas is fond of the old man."

"I like coach Shakur momma. He taught me how to stiff arm tacklers, that allow me to score the winning touchdown." Nicholas interrupted, smiling up at her.

"Shakur smiled down at him. "Same here little man."

Silence fell between them for a second, before Shakur explained to Nicole, that practice would remain at the same time. "Six o'clock. And the next game would be played saturday at Jefferson park, off EdgeBrook, and forty five freeway. If you believe that you might have a hard time finding the park, you can meet me and the other parents here at one o'clock."

"Thank you Mr. Shakur, I know the area very well." giving him a half smile.

Shakur gazed in Nicole ebony eyes, and simper. He reached down to shake Nicholas hand, before parting ways. He watched mother and son
walk away. Shakur tilted his head, gazing at Nicole perfectly shape
ass. "Dam! he said to himself. "Allah greatest present to mankind.
A woman with a nice ass."

Nicole took a shower after putting her son to bed. Drying her
dreadlocks, she stop to evaluate herself in the mirror. At thirty
years old, and giving birth to her only only child, Nicole been
pleased with her body. How it continue to stay in excellent shape,
with just alittle exercise. Her thick coke bottle shape made her
many dollars in her younger years, as a stripper. Nicole took her
hand, caressing her flat stomach, down to the sculpture pubic hairs.
She turned to look at her ass. On it was a tattoo of a biten cup-
cake. She could feel the heat of coach Shakur eyes stareing at it,
which brought a smile to her face. Nicole thought the coach was a
bit handsome. A little short for her, but fine and handsome.
For years trying to rid herself of the man she love. Everytime he
would show up at her front door, she tries desperately to drive
him away. But somehow, he finds the right words, that finds the two
of them in her bed.

Brushing her teeth, Nicole heard the doorbell ring. Leaning back
to check the clock on her nightstand, she cursed under her breath,
wondering who in the hell could be at her door at eleven thirty at
night. Rising her mouth, Nicole slipped on her terrycloth robe, be,
fore sneaking to the door. Looking through the peephole, her emo-
tion became entwined, observing the unexpected man, displaying a
devilish grin. Nicole placed her back against the door, contemplat-
ing, weather she should let him inside.

"Come on Nikki, open up. I can hear the beat of your heart."
"I can't deal with you tonight Milo. Go home to your wife."
"I didn't come to see you. I came to see my son."
Milo response stung Nicole alittle. Informing him that Nicholas

(12)
is sound asleep.

"That's fine. I won't wake him. I just want to kiss him goodnight."
Nicole hadn't budged, still debating about letting Milo inside.
"You gonna deny me from seeing my son?" he questioned her, playing
with her guilt.
Nicole hated when Milo use their son as leverage to get her to submit. Taking a deep breath, she turned around to unlock the door. Re-
moving his hand behind his back, Milo exhibited a half dozen of
red roses. "For you." showing his charming smile. Not wrapped in
paper, Nicole knew he didn't buy them from a flourish.

"Who yard you stole them from?"
"Your neighbor down the street."

Nicole took the roses from him, never smelling them. Dressed nicely
in his Tommy Hilfiger attire, in between Nicole legs became moist,
when she caught a whiff of his cologne, when he passed her at the
door. "Dam! stay strong Nikki." she said to herself.

Milo Manning was a former pro football player for the Houston Tex-
ans. Nicole met him when she use to dance at one of Houston hottest
strip club, UnderGarment. Watching her dance on stage, Milo became
infatuated with her body, and how she moved it to the rythum of
R. Kelly(Seem Like You Ready).
Married with two kids, Milo been to a few strip clubs, with his
fellow teammates. And seen better looking dancer the Nicole. But
none that move so sexy. Somehow their eyes lock, making him feel
like he was the only man in the room. Setting up a private show,
Nicole walked in the room, with a short patten leather coat, and
stood in front od Milo, who sat in a chair. "It's thirty dollars
for a private showing. Two song." she told him.
Milo remained silent, and pointed. Following his direction, Nicole
jolted when she saw the hundreds of dollar bills spreaded out.

(13)
Quickly she counted a thousand dollars. "If you looking for more than a private dance, sorry I don't fuck costumers."

"Did I ask for sex." he said firmly.
"No." she still confused from all the money.
"I just want to see you dance for the rest of the night." Milo letting her know his attention, then check his Ulysse Nardin watch.
"And the club close in twenty minutes."
Nicole looked at the money again, then back at Milo. "You must be a baller?"
"Technically yes." he chuckled. "I guess you don't know who I am." Nicole shook her head no. "Why? should I?" putting her hands on her hips.
"You watch football?"
"No, not really. I like basketball. What you're a football player?"
"Linebacker for the Texans."
Glancing over at the hundreds on the table. "I guess you're a starter?"
"Seven time pro bowler." he answered with pride. examining the time on his watch, Milo reached over to the table, and removed a hundred, sticking it in his pocket. Frowning, Nicole asked why he did that. "I paid a thousand dollars for twenty minutes. You wasted five of it with question. Can we get started. I want my money worth."

Nicole didn't ask any more question, loosing the belt to the jacket, and exposing her perfect breasts. Prince, Insatiable, played in the background, and Nicole moved to the rythum and lyrics, like she produce the song.

During the football season, Milo saw Nicole twice a month, paying a thousand dollars for a private dance. When the season ended, Milo beggined seeing more of Nicole, beyond the UnderGarment.
Twelve years and two kids, Milo never cheated on his college sweetheart, Melissa. Until one night, Nicole asked Milo not to leave, after a night at the movies.

A year later of wild sexcapade, Nicole became pregnant with Nicholas. Wondering if Milo would be upset, knowing this could ruin his marriage, he been estatic about the news. In love with Nicole, Milo promise many times, that he would leave his wife, to be with her. Nine years later, Nicole is still waiting.

Nicole stood by her son door, arms folded, watching Milo kiss his son goodnight. "You should been at his game tonight. He scored a fourty yard winning touchdown."

"That's my boy." he smiled down at him. Turning towards Nicole, he asked how she been doing.

"I'm fine. Still waiting on my son father to fulfill his promise." "don't start this shit with me tonight Nikki." he scrowled.

"You and that white wife of yours must be fighting." she suspected. "Wrong. I was on my way home from a friend poker game, and for rea-son you and Nick cross my mind."

"WOW! that's wonderful. Its been weeks since you seen your son." "Sorry. The team has me traveling around the U.S of A, scouting college players."

"You watch everyone play football, when are you gonna have time and see your son play? Never!" she answered for him. "Between your job and your family, you surely place before us." she replied angrily.

Milo stepped closer to her, to not wake up Nicholas. "Listen here Nikki, I'm doing the best I can in this situtation."

"Are you?"

"Yeah!. Look here, I'm not just some deadbeat sperm donor. I bought you a home. Paid for your schooling to be a nurse. A brand new SUV in the garage. I made sure I put you in a position that you and
Nicholas don't want for nothing. What else you want from a nigga?"
"You here." she answered.

Milo had no reply to Nicole answer, as he exhaled heavily. "I didn't come here to fight with you Nicole." turning to leave.
"Where you going Milo. Home to your wife and kids?" Nicole asked, giving chase.
"Yes!"

Speeding passed him, she blocked the door with her body. Milo demanded for Nicole to move. She grabbed his hand when he reach for the doorknob. "Don't go. Stay with me tonight. And your son. Is that to much to ask?" she whispered, then followed it with soft kisses.

In the bedroom, Nicole straddled on top of Milo, moaning in passion, as he had a mouthful of her breast. Pulling away from him, she whispered that she still loved him, and ensued her tongue down his throat. Moments of exchanging saliva, Nicole flashed him a seductive grin. "You want alittle reminder of the old days?" she asked.

"And what is that?" Milo puzzled. Nicole reached for the remote control on the nightstand, and turned the stereo on. Adina Howard (T-shirt and Panty) played from the speakers. Getting to her feet, on the bed, Nicole still glided flawless to the rythum, like she did ten years ago. Milo placed his hands behind his head, biting his bottom lip. Turning to let him see her stage name. "You want some of this Cupcake?" she glanced back at him, seeing all thirty two of his teeth, and his rock hard penis.

"Fuck yeah."
Standing over his penis, Nicole slowly back down on it, taking herself for a ride.

Nicole sat straight up in panic, from the screaming noise of her alarm clock. Six o'clock, hitting the off button. Rotating back to
her right of the bed, she discovered Milo had left in the middle of the night. Leaving a rose, he had stolen from the neighbor yard. Angry, she reached for her cellphone to call him. On the fifth ring, a sleepy woman voice answered his cell. Nicole knew the voice very well. Milo wife, Melissa. Full of rage, Nicole wanted to scream out their big secret, that and her has a son together. But decided against it. Nicole pondered if she ever told his wife, would she pack up and leave him. And if so, does that promise that Milo would be with her and their son. Without a word, she pressed the end button on her cell, then threw it across the room.
Chase Daniel sat in the parking lot of the hospital, separating his money in twenties and tens. Blasting some oldschool Underground Kings (One Day You Here), he wasn't too crazy about the genre of hip hop music. Chase perfer the nineties rap, when Houston and the South was on their grind. He removed the Glock forty from the center console of his 2002 Cadillac DTS. No guns were allowed on the premise of the hospital grounds. The reason he still had it, Chase just left the block from hustling all night. The first of the month, was always good. Fiends, the handicap, and the mentally challange, collected their government check and spend it with him.

Chase hated his janitor job at the hospital, but that what kept his PO off his ass, and sending him back to prison. Chase snatched the center console up, that he had installed by a custom shop, and placed his weapon inside. Tired from hustling all night, he turned up a bottle of Five Hour Energy, he bought on his way to work. Suddenly his music been interrupted, by the ringing of his cell, coming through the car sound system. Grieving, Chase sighed heavily, recognizing the number. "Dam girl, what the hell you want early this morning." he mumbled.

It was a woman Chase had gotten pregnant. Janet. His first thought had been not to answer, then he thought against it. Knowing that Janet would be blowing up his cell all day, if he didn't respond. Chase knew he didn't need Mr. Washington, the hospital supervisor of maintance, and janitorial of the small hospital, lecturing him.

"Chase." he answered.

"Dam baby, where you been all night? I thought you were coming by and drop me off some money."

"I'm broke.' he lied.

"Don't bullshit me Chase. I know it's the first of the month, and you holding a knot."

"Tha's all you want from a nigga is money?" sounding frustrated.

(18)
"no, and some dick too." she giggled. "You know you love this preg-
nant pussy."

Chase shooked his head in silent, smiling to himself in the side
view mirror. "Plus baby, I need to get my brakes fixs on my car.
They starting to grind."
"I can't right now, I'm at work. Come up here on my break at ten
thirty."
"Thank you baby." she giggled. "I'll be up there."
"I have no doubt about that." he said sarcastic hanging up.
Retrieving his smoke grey uniform from the back seat, Chase turned
off the engine, to go clock inn. Dressed in a white 99 JJ. Watts
jersey, with matching shorts, and Jordans. The six foot one chocolate
well built young man, was a head turner to the women working the
nightshift, and stood in the parking lot, chatting. Many of the wo-
men say chase resembled Morris Chestnut, and whisper that's he also
a sperm donor, with two baby mommas.
A former track star at Texas Southern University, Chase life change
when he tore his hamstring, in the 200 meters, ending his dreams
to compete in the 2008 Olympic. Attending college only to pursue
his dreams, Chase dropped out to sell drugs, in which landing him a
two year bid in the pen. Changing into his work uniform before clock-
ing inn, he heard his name called by Mr. Washington, who needed his
assistance in the boiler room.

The nurses abandoned their post, and gathered in the nurses station
drooling over the middle age Dr. Clayton Matthews. A tall handsome
yellow skinned, and former runway model in his college days. In
which helped him pay for his schooling.
Divorce from his wife Tamela, who bored him two boys, all the nurses
hounded him for his attention, except Nicole, whom Dr. Matthews leaned
behind, watching her research patients on the computer.
Still struggling with the computer problem since the power outrage

(19)
two days ago. Dr. Matthews praised Nicole on the cutting style of her dreadlocks. "Perfectly fits the structure of your face feature." She smiled at him, thanking Dr. Matthews for the compliment.

Standing in the background, being envious of the attention Nicole been getting, Lekesha removed her hospital coat, and rubbed between her legs, causing a wet stain. Pulling the matching baby blue bow from her ponytail, she shook her head to let her long silky hair fall to the middle of her back.

Lekesha walked over to them, and sat on the counter, crossing her legs, where Nicole worked on the computer. Nicole gave Lekesha a absence stare, indicating for her to move around. Lekesha countered it with a odious expression of her own.

"Say Dr. Matthews, you been single since you divorce your wife, seven months ago. And I'm truely sorry things didn't work out for you and the ex's. UUmm, what's her name?" Lekesha placing a finger on her chin, playing dumb.

Dr. Matthews turned to her with a loathsome expression, Hesitant to reveal her name. "Tamela," he finally replied.

"Yeah Tamela. She can't be that smart to let a fine man like you go."

"She's a lawyer." he responded.

"Oh, a con-artist."

Standing to his full height of six three, and exhibiting a harden look."Excuse me, What did you say?"

Lekesha giggled keeping her composer. "Nothing." waving off what had slipped out her mouth. "Anyway, what I wanted to know is when you putting your fine self, back on the market?" uncrossing her legs to parade the wetness between her legs.

Dr. Matthews glanced down between Lekesha legs, then shoked his head in disgust. The links a woman would do, to try and snatch a
Man who they think gots money. "I'm on lay-a-way for now."
"LAY-A-WAY!" Lekesha befuddled. "What, you have a girlfriend al-
ready?"
"I guess you can say that."
"Dam Doc, you got over Tamela fast."
"And if your new love can't get you out of lay-a-way, tell her to
give me the receipt. I'll pay to get you out." Gary blurted, caus-
ing everyone to erupt in laughter.
Kathrine came in the station from a meeting, and wondered why all
the nurses were gather, until she saw Dr. Matthews, and then knew
the reason why.

Cecilia, Raine and Connie heckled at Chase when he exited from the
building. Stopping in his tracks, he asked the women what's up with
all the giggling. "Baby mommas drama." Connie answered, pointing at
Chase two baby mommas, standing next to his car.

"Shit!" he cursed, slowly heading to his car. "These bitches is
gonna get me fire." he mumbled. Chase two and half years old son
Chance, spotted his father, and ran to him. Always happy to see his
little man, Chase lifted him off his feet, kissing and hugging him
tight. Making small talk with his son, he promise to take him to
the circus this weekend. Now in the present of his son's mother,
and future baby momma, he turned his attention to Tabitha, asking
why she's at his job.

"The same reason this backstabbing tramp." she scowled, eyeing
Janet.
"Bitch don't start. I'll whoop your ass in this parking lot, with
stomach and all." Janet responded, dropping her purse on the ground.
"HEY!" Chase stepping between the two. "Cut that shit out. Y'all
gonna get me fire. You know a nigga needs this job to keep parole
off my ass. CHILL!" Chase ordered Janet to wait in the car. "I'll be
with you in a minute."
Tabitha didn't like Janet because she is having Chase child. She hated Janet guts, because they use to be best friends, since elementary school.

Tabitha came to Janet aid when she used to get bully by the most popular girl Erica, and her goons. After graduation the two rented a apartment together. One night Chase came over to spens some time with Tabitha, his girlfriend at the time. Normally clocking out at nine thirty, Tabitha demanded for Chase to stay at her apartment, until she finished inventory at work, then she'll be on her way home. Knowing if Chase had left, the possibility of him returning would be slim. "Look in the refrig, its some left over spaghetti. Isn't it the playoff? aren't the Lakers on tonight?"

"Yeah."
"Then watch the game until I come home." she requested. "Where's Janet?"
"In her room."
"She'll keep you company, until I get there."
"I'm fine." he said, retrieving the spaghetti from the refrig. "Just hurry home."

Warming up the spaghetti in the microwave, Chase grabbed the remote, to find the game on tv. Janet just finished taking a shower, and heard Chase scream. Running into the livingroom, she asked Him what the hell he was screaming about. In shock, Chase stared at Janet wrapped only in a towel. He fumbled with his words, explaining the monster dunk by Kobe Bryant.

Chase studied Janet for a second. Her light brown micro braids, was pulled back in a ponytail, that matched her wet skin. The tan towel struggled to cover her breasts. Janet ebony eyes sparkled, from the multicolors of the fifty inch flatscreen. Seeing her smooth athletic legs, Chase felt a pulse at the head between his legs.

"Dam Boy, the way you screamed I thought you saw a rat running across the room, or something." she said.
"Y'all got rats?" Chase scanned the apartment.

"Naw boy." she answered, looking at Chase eating the leftover spaghetti. Janet went to the refrig to prepare her a plate. Find-all the spaghetti gone, she cursed at Chase. "Dam Chase, you had to eat all the spaghetti?"

"It wasn't that much of it left." he answered, feeling alittle uncomfortable with Janet strolling around in front of him, in only towel, wrapped around her sexy body. He offer to go and get her something to eat.

"No, that won't be neccessary. I'm not that hungry." grabbing a fork out the kitchen drawer. "I'll have just alittle of yours." Janet walked over to the couch, and flopped beside Chase. She begin digging her fork in his plate. Janet cursed, when some spaghetti fell off her fork, and onto her chest. Removing it and placing it in her mouth, Janet wiped the sauce off her chest with her index finger, and suck it.

Chase peeped the play, and couldn't believe this girl wanted to have sex with her bestfriend man. Always accepting hand me down, and hand out, Chase never passed up nothing that was for free. Smelling the perfume soap off her wet soft skin, Chase thought especially, fresh free pussy.

After a year, Chase still dated Tabitha, and she gave birth to his son Chance. He still remained having sex with Janet, when the opportunity presented itself. Tabitha cried many nights to Janet, about Chase unfaithfulness. But Tabitha continued her relationship with him for another year, never knowing the her roomamte was fucking her man, until she came up pregnant.

"What's wrong with your car?" he asked, examining Tabitha 2010 Jetta. "I need my oil change, and something wrong with the AC. its not blowing cold air. And I can't be riding around in a hot car."

"Why?"

(23)
"Yeah, why bitch." Janet interrupted.
Tabitha started towards Janet to kick her ass into early labor, but Cahse stood bewteen them again. "Janet shut the fuck up‼️" he commanded. Pissed, she question Chase why he's cursing her to shut up. "Because noone is asking you any question at the moment." Chase turned completely to her. Chase ordered her to go sit in her car,"Or you be stopping your shit like the Flintstones."
Before she could get another word out, Chase told her to shut up, and pointed towards her car. Fuming like the morning heat, he watch-ed Janet do what she been told.

"OOOH I hate that bitch." Tabitha said,drawing Chase attention. "Tab, don't you have a man that suppose to handle your maintance work?"

"Yeah, but he take cares of other things." she grinned, to make him jealous. "Second its not his son riding around in the heat. Its YOURS!" she emphasized.
For the first time, Chase realize he's being played for a sucker, in still taking care Tabitha,because of his son, while another man tapped that ass. Now fuming like Janet, he duged in his pockets, and counted out two hundred and fifty dollars. "This should be enough. Your car probaly need some freon."
Tabitha stared at the bank roll in his hand. She suggested that he might as well give her some money to pay for Chance daycare. "A real certified sucker." he thought to himself again. "How much is daycare again?"

"A hundred dollars."
Chase gave her a fifty dollar bill. Tabitha stared crazy at him.
"I said a hundred dollars." she repeated sternly, shifting her weight.
"He's your son too. You pay the other half." putting his money back in his pocket. "And you need to get that nigga of yours to
help you with your needs, along with your wants. Or stop giving that nigga some free pussy, because that's what it look like to me."

Walking over to her car, to give his son a goodbye kiss, and hug. Chase reminded his little man that he would pick him up to go to the circus. Waving at him, as they drove away, Chase looked up at the blazing sun, and sighed lightly, knowing now that he had to deal with the insane mother of his unborn child.

Sitting in the Ac, Chase knocked on her window, for her to let it down. Handing her three hundred dollars. "This should be enough to get your brakes fix. I have to conversate with you later. I got to get back to work."

"You coming by the apartment tonight? I'll cook for you."

"What?"

"Spaghetti." she giggled.

"That's the food that got us in this situation." he commented, digging in his pockets, retrieving another fifty dollars. "Get something to drink for me, so I can dive in that pregnant pussy."

Janet giggled from excitement, then asked for a kiss. "See you tonight baby." she said, driving off.

On his way back inside the hospital, Connie gotten his attention.

"HEY, BANK OF AMERICA! We heard you giving away money. We need some money for lunch." They all laughed.
Sherry Johnson, thank Jesus that her ten year old Ford Escape, made it through another day. The check engine light been on all week. She wasn't a mechanic, and surely didn't have the money to get whatever might be wrong fix. The past four years been a struggle for her and her children. A set of twins girls, Taylor, and Tasha. Her oldest child Steven, is serving time in prison for aggravated assault, trying to help his mother support the family.

Over ten years ago, Sherry was living the high life in California. Driving foreign cars, and living in a seven thousands square foot home. Head of the PTA, at her twins private school, and in charge of the bookclub in her neighborhood. Sherry studied the scene in her rundown apartment complex. The young gang members, standing around selling drugs, and shooting dice. Amazed how the little girls walked around dressed in halters top, showing half of their breasts. Shorts, exposing their ass cheeks. She be damned, if she ever allow her girls to leave the house like that. No matter how hard things had looked, its a lot better than what she been going through for the past five years. Maybe God was punishing her for what she done, Sherry often thought.

Young and inpatience to build with the one that she been with, Sherry was born and raised in Denver Colorado. Shortly after graduation, Sherry moved in with her high school boyfriend Terrance Mitchell, of three years. Terrance worked at a warehouse, and she as a waitress. Money been scarce, but that never bother the two, being young and in love. Then things quickly changed with the birth of their son, Steven. No insurance, and the little money they had, became no money, when Terrance gotten laid off. No daipers and milk for the baby, and including the bills piling up. The fighting began. Trying to find work at the labor pool, Sherry tried to work extra hours at the resturant. The force of poverty turned their love into dissapare and hate.
One day at work, the son of the family chain of restaurant came to Denver to evaluate the success of the new restaurant. Zachary Jones followed the manager around the Five Star restaurant, called the Rose Garden. Listening to the success of the place, and new ideas to improve and expand. Suddenly Zachary became deaf of the manager words, when he laid eyes on Sherry, coming into the kitchen, to pick up an order.

Her shoulder length hair been cut perfect for her soft feature. Her full lips, glossed with red lipstick, somehow blended with her brown skin. Sherry long eyelashes, brought out her beautiful brown eyes. Zachary thought her uniform, that consist of black trouser, and a white button down long sleeve shirt, fit her body like a runway model. He decided to have dinner at his restaurant, and requested the manager that Sherry should serve him.

Waiting for her to take his order in the private dining room, Sherry thought Zachary was kind of handsome. Dressed in a Bill Blass suit, twenty six, and already a little grey appeared in his wavy hair, and goat teeth, Sherry greeted him with the customary way. "Hi, welcome to the Rose Garden. Denver finest restaurant. My name is Renee, and I'm your hostess for this evening. The lobster and the flounder, is the fresh taste for today."

"I'm allergic to seafood." he interrupted her.

Renee smiled at him, and suggested the T-bone steak.

"I don't eat meat."

"Well, how would you like to try one of our meatless pasta dishes?"

"I hate noodles."

Renee dropped her ordering pad, placing her hands on her hips. "Do you want some water?" she asked irritated.

"I'm not thirsty." he answered calmly, never looking up from his menu.

"Then what would you like sir?"
Folding the menu, and placing it on the table, he turned towards Renee viewing her once more from head to toe. "I would like to know if you would sit down and have dinner with me?" he smiled.
Caught off guard by the question, Renee wasn't annoyed by the handsome gentleman invitation. "I would like to, but I think my boss wouldn't approve me sitting down eating with the costumer on the clock."
"Something tells me he wouldn't mind."
"If I could sir."
"Call me Zach." he interrupted.
"Well, Mr. Zach sir."
"Just Zach please."
"Well Zach if I could sit down with you and dine, the question is, what the hell are you gonna eat!? You rejected everything on the menu." Zachary chuckled hard from her comment, standing up and pulling out a chair for Renee to sit.
"Sir."
"Zach."
"Zach, I don't think my manager would approve of this." she pleaded. "Don't worry about it. Look, if your manager tries to fire you, I'll fired him."
"What! and how you gonna do that." Renee bewildered.
"Because I'm the owner." he smiled.

During dinner Renee spilled all the details about her life, and struggles, wishing that things would one day get better for her, Terrance, and their son. Leaving the next morning for California for business, Zach returned to Denver every week to see Renee. The twice a week. From the unseen, Renee got trapped, falling in love affair with Zach. He showered her with gifts, that Terrance couldn't afford.
One day Terrance came home to discovered a letter from Renee, that
she had left him, and taking their son with her, for some one else. Who could provide the life the two deserve.

Quickly Zach and Renee were married, and the first few years were perfect. Zach accepted Steven as his own, and they traveled the world. Then came the blessing of the twins. Five years later something unexplainable began to happen in their marriage. Zach became abusive. Punching Renee dead in the face, after she accused him of cheating, when he stay gone all night. The assaults began to intensify, behind the littlest matters. A shirt not ironing to his liking. Food not prepared correctly, or his closet out of order. Scared and embarrassed, Renee took the kids, and went back to Denver, to stay with her mother. Zach tracked her down there, and pleaded for her to come back home. Promising to never lay another hand on her. Without her mother’s approval, Renee flew back to California with Zach and the kids. The next couple of years, the Jones were mirror image of the Huxtable. Zach again showered his wife with gifts, trips, and love.

Abruptly Zach again change, staying out all night. Women calling in the middle of the night, and finding inappropriate text on his cell. Soon followed, drinking and gambling. Renee found out that Zach been losing thousands of dollars in private poker games. Then the abuse started again. One night Steven had to pull out a pistol and save his mother. At sixteen, Zach put Steven out of the house, who then went to stay with a friend. Zach shouted at Renee that she could join him, but she couldn’t take the twins.

Tired of the abuse, Renee waited for Zach to leave town on business, and gather up everything she could into her SUV, and escaped along with her kids, the horror of her husband.

Moving to Houston, Renee traded in her BMW, and hid for almost a year, in an abusive center for women and children. Changing her name,
Sherry Johnson. Sherry found a job working at Denny's, before earning a certified nurse assistance diploma.

Sherry grabbed her books from the passenger seat, and headed to her apartment. One of the young members whistled at Sherry, expression how fine she is. She smiled when she witnessed another member whopped the young boy across his heads. She over heard him say, "That's Steven mom man."

Her son Steven wasn't in a gang, but was well respected by them. Sherry made her way up the flight of stairs, to he third floor. She knock on the door three time, then paused for a second, and knocked three more times. It was a code to the twins, letting them know, it was her at the door. Safety has always been Sherry main concern for the twins.

Seeing Taylor smiled lifted her spirits abit, as she kissed her mother on the cheek. Taylor went into the kitchen to grab some chips. Sherry followed her, placing her books on the kitchen table. Taking a seat, she exhaled, and ask about the whereabout of her other half.

"In her room on the phone, like always." she answered, crunching on her chips.

"Tasha! you bet not be on the phone with a boy." Sherry shouted. Sherry thought the twins were to young to have a boyfriend, and only needed to focus on their schooling. Deep inside she didn't want the girls to ever experience the horror she went through.

"I'm not. I'm on the phone with Keke." Tasha yelled, coming out of her room, and kissing her mother.

"But I bet they talking about boys." Taylor snitched.

"Shut up Taylor." Tasha twisted her face at her. Sherry been very proud of the girls, who were responsible, and straight A's students. But as much she tries to elude her past, she be reminded everytime she looks into her daughters faces, who were a splitting image of their father.
Taylor prepared her mother a plate of hamburger helper, she cooked earlier. Tasha ended her call, and brought her mother something to drink. Eating, Sherry asked how they had been at school.

"Tasha answered for the both of them. "The same like everyday. Homework."

"But thirty minutes before you came home, we heard shots fired." Taylor informed her mother.

"Where were you two?" Sherry paused with a fork full of food.

"In the apartment." Taylor answered.

"You know I don't like you two outside, while I'm not here. I don't mind you having y'all little girlfriends in the apartment."

"What about boys?" Tasha joked.

"Tasha don't play." Sherry frowned.

The girls laughed at their mother reaction, until Taylor informed her that Steven called her cell tonight. "How did he do that?"

"He had a cell phone."

"What! How did he get a cell phone?"

"I don't know."

"Is he okay?"

"Yeah, he's fine. He just wanted to know if we were okay. He hasn't heard from any of us in three weeks. I apologize, and told him that you been busy with school and work."

"Can we go see him this weekend momma?" Tasha asked.

"Sure baby. Sure."
Cecilia Bassey placed her bag of grocery on the ground, when she saw her kids running towards her in excitement, at the daycare. Kobe 4, and Khadijah 2, were the only blood she had in America. Cecilia and her husband Kossy left the chaos of Nigeria, for a new and peaceful life in America. Kossy who been raised muslim, his family didn't approve the relationship of Cecilia because she was christian.

When they arrived in America, Kossy didn't allow Cecilia to work until they were familiar with the country. Driving a cab, Kossy supported the two for a year. When Kobe was born, Cecilia worked part time at a Family Dollar. Later she started taking online courses to attain a LVN license. Cecilia felt life would get better for them, after she recieve her degree. Ten months later, tragedy struck. Getting a knock at her door in the middle of the night, she found two policemen standing at her door. That came to deliver the terrible news that her husband Kossy had been shot in the head, during a robbery. Devastated, and a long way from home and family. Cecilia didn't know what to do, or turn, without the leadership of her husband. She didn't have the money to bury him.

With little money, and the bills piling up, along with a toddler to raise alone, Cecilia found full time work at a daycare center. In which it allow her to be closer to her son, and save money. Six week later after Kossy death, Cecilia began having morning sickness. Wiping her mouth after vomitting, she look in the mirror, hoping to God that she couldn't be. Sitting on the toilet waiting for the result of her pregnancy test, Cecilia placed her face in the palms of her hands, when she saw the blue line appear. Sobbing, she felt the tender hands of her son. Looking up at him, she saw the reflection of Kossy, whom she wish was still alive. Now, then ever before. Asking why his mother had been crying, Cecilia,
wiped away her tears, and smiled at him. "I miss your father." she answered him.

"I miss him too momma." giving her a hug.

Cecilia didn't have a car. Even when Kossy was alive, they didn't own a car. They always traveled around in Kossy cab, that he kept twenty four seven. Kossy thought, why add another bill if they didn't have to.

Walking home from the daycare center, two blocks from her apartment, Cecilia froze in panic, when she notices the door to her apartment been slightly ajarred. Scanning her surrounding for anything that might seem out of place, she sat her bag of grocery on the sidewalk. Cecilia reached in her purse to retrieve her knife, and ordered her children to stay put, while she check out the apartment. Creeping to the door, it creaked when she pushed it open. Searching the living room, she saw the sleeping sofa turned over, and tv missing. She asked if anyone were still inside the apartment. No response, she slowly step inside, checking the only two rooms. The bathroom and hers. Cecilia cursed in her native tongue, finding her room wreck like a hurricane had come through.

Cleaning up the destruction in her room, it been more than an hour, since she called the police to report the buglary. Furious, Cecilia cursed again in her native language, hearing a knock at the door. Opening the door, she found a white officer standing on the other side. "What took so long? I called over an hour ago." she questioned him angrily, before he had a chance to say a word.

"Sorry mam, for the slow response. The whole southwest department was at the scene of a hostage situation, during a robbery.

"Oh, I'm sorry." putting her head down in embarrassment. "I guess that is more important then a buglary. I probaly would have known what was happening if the thieves haven't taken my tv."

Hypnotized by Cecilia foreign accent, the officer smiled, and accepted
her apology. Cecilia turned to walk in the middle of her living room. Automatic, she thought the officer would follow her inside, but he was mesmerized by her beauty.

Out of her uniform, Cecilia had changed into some capri shorts, that displayed her nice little butt, and slim long legs. Her breast nicely visible, in a Oklahoma basketball Kevin Durant jersey. She use to tease Kossy, that he was the only man that she would leave him for.

The officer wondered if she was only fond of African men. Cecilia had turned around and notices that the officer hadn't follow her inside. He didn't hear a word she said, when she invited him to come inside. Infatuated with her beauty, Cecilia dark smooth skin shine like silk. No other hairstyle could compliment her feature, than the short afro she wore. Her ebony eyes shined like the moon. With no make-up, Cecilia had a touch of lipstick on her full lips. Tilting her head, and realizing the officer been in some kind of trance, she waved her hand to get his attention. "Hello officer. Are you okay?"

Snapping out of his trance, he ensure her everything is fine. That he was thinking back to the robbery, and kidnapping earlier.

"Oh, it must been an intense situation?"
" Fatal for the robbers." he revealed.

Silence fell between them, until Cecilia asked him if he was coming inside. "Officer." she strained to read his name tag.

"Fletcher." he told her, taking out a pen and pad.

For the first time Officer Fletcher notices Cecilia kids sitting quietly, eating at the table. Both kids process the same bold skin as their mother, and feature. Kobe hair was cut in a mohawk, and wearing his Iron man pajamas. Khadijah, in her long shirt, that had the Princess Tatianna on the front, stared at him suspiciously.

He flashed them a smile to ease their fears, and doubt, that he was
there to help. Khadijah returned one back, but not Kobe. Officer Fletcher didn't force the issue, and continue with the matter in why he was there. To find out what was stolen from the apartment. Informing him that her computer, tv, dvd, and her children movies were stolen, Officer Fletcher commented that it sounded like her apartment was burglarize by people on drugs.

"Why would they steal my children videos?"
"They sell it to other mother who has younger kids, for less than half the price."

"Dirty hyenas." she called the thieves. Officer Fletcher laughed on the inside, behind Cecilia comment. He never heard a saying like that. "I have heard people called many dirty names, but never a dirty hyena. do you have the reciepts for the dvd, tv, and the computer?" he asked.

"Yeah, I think so. Why?"
"If they can't sell it in the street to some one, its a possibility that they may pawn it. And the pawn shops has to report all electronics and guns they buy from their costumers. So it's a chance you might get your property back."

"I pray I do. I can't afford to buy another tv, for my kids to watch. And now I have to go to the library, to finish my on-line course."

"I understand. Times are hard this days."

With all the information he needed, Officer Fletcher prepare to leave. Stopping, he expected the door frame. He asked if she had a hammer and some nails. "Yes I think so." she turned to check under the kitchen sink. Returning with the hammer and small nails, Officer Fletcher removed his hat, exchanging for the hammer and nails. Patching the hinges temporary in place, he suggested that Cecilia to place her sleepersofa in front of her door, until maintance are able to replace the fixture. Cecilai displayed her pearly whites, gracious for what he done.
He promise that the department would do all that they can to re-
trieve her property. Stealing one hard look at her exotic beauty,
Officer Fletcher turned to leave.

CHAPTER 6

Sherry worked in the Intensive Care Unit, in the absence of Cecilia.
She had to take the day off, in which she couldn't afford to wait
on maintenance to fix her door. After checking the EKG monitors, of
the four patients in the room, Sherry sat down to rest her mind and
body, from staying up half the night studying. Closing her eyes for
a moment, five minutes later, Sherry awoken to the beeping sounds
of one of her patient. Nicole who also monitor the ICU patients
from the nurses station, called Sherry on the intercom, wanting to
know what was going on. "Hell I don't know! I think she having a
cardiac arrest!"
Sherry held down Ms. Conners, as she went into convulsion. In no
time, Kathrine and Nicole raced through the doors. The early April
morning at Monroe hospital had been in chaos, as Connie was holding
down another patient, having seizure, and another staff member was
chasing an old man running around in the hospital naked.
Working in the medical field for thirty years, Kathrine understood
that death is part of the job. Still it always sorrow her deeply
when someone dies on her watch. It reminded her of her younger bro-
ther, Reginald. When she was thirteen, and baby sitting him, who
then was eight years old. Up late watching a horror movies together,
and eating on some hard candy. It gotten enlodged into Reginald
throat, when he jolted from fright, of a murder scene. Hitting his
sister on the shoulder to alert her, that he was choking. Kathrine
panic, not knowing what to do, and watched her brother die. Since
her brother death, Kathrine wanted to be a doctor. But her plans
of being a doctor got derail, when she met her husband Russell in

(36)
college, and gotten pregnant. In her brother memory, Kathrine named her first son.

Waling the hospital hall as though she was in a trance, Kathrine never heard Mr. Washington calling her name. "Mrs Mills! Mrs. Mills!" Snapping out of her daze, she stopped, and stared at Mr. Washington, who stood still dressed always in his uniform, holding his tool box. He pointed to the wet floor sign on the floor. "You won't get paid mom, if you fall." he told her. Flushed with embarrassment, Kathrine stepped out the boundary of the caution signs, apologizing to him.

Gary, Connie, Nicole, and Sherry all gathered in their regular spot, at the back of the hospital emergency entrance, for break. Gary teased Sherry how she panicked when Mrs. Conners went into cardiac arrest, and convulsion, then died.

"I didn't panic. I was sort of lost how quickly it happen. I just check on her a minute before she went into caediac arrest." she lied.

"Bitch you were scared." Gary retorted back, making everyone laugh. "You know Mrs. Conners is worth two million dollars." Nicole informed.

"She was! Gary exclaimed.

"How do you know that?" Connie asked.

"Her and her husband had a construction company. Some lawyers came up here to visit, wondering what she wanted to do with her money. Her husband is dead, and they didn't have any kids."

"I wonder what she did with her wealth." Connie thought out loud.

"Gave it to her fucking cat!" Nicole answered.

"WHAT!" Gary stunned.

"Yep."

"Its not shocking to me." Sherry commented. "I read it in the paper all the time. Old white women with no offspring, leaving their money to their pets."
"Not me. If I die and had that kind of money, even though I have a daughter. I would leave that money to charity, or set up some kind of scholarship program," Connie expressed.

"They should bury that old bitch in a pet cemetary, if she loves animals like that." Gary said earnestly, making the ladies laugh again.

Changing the conversation, Sherry ask everyone did they know that Cecilia apartment gotten broken into yesterday. "Is that the reason she's not here today?" Connie inquired.

"Yeah. She had to stay home and wait on maintance to come and fix her door. Cecilia said they stole her tv, and computer. And now she's has to go to the library, to do her on-line courses."

"Dam, I hate that. People work to hard, for somebody to come and steal your ahit." Gary remarked.

With break almost over, Gary finished his second Dr. Pepper, and tossed the can on the ground. walking back to the maintance shop, Mr. Washington heard the clanking sound of the can hitting the parking lot. Nicole saw Mr. Washington stop in his footsteps, and give Gary a impetuous stare. She tapped Gary on the shoulder, who hadn't realize that Mr. Washington saw what he had done. "I think you better pick up that can Gary." Nicole advised him. "he looks like he want to kill you."

Gary turned around to see Mr. Washington put down his tool box, and remove his hammer from his tool belt. He started towards them, and quickly Gary jumped to his feet to retrieved the can he tossed. Mr. Washington stopped next to some pallets, to repair them.

"Now who's scare bitch?" Sherry laughed.

After the women finished laughing at Gary, they all watched Mr. Washington swing his hammer, fixing the pallets. "Mr. Washington is a strange person. He hardly interact with anyone." Gary said.

"You think he lives in the maintance shop. The five years I been
working here, that old Ford truck never seems to leave that parking space." Nicole noted.
"I don't know if he lives there, but when a person keep to himself like he do, they have some issues. Or." Gary pointed his finger to no one in particular. "Think about it."
"Think a bout what Gary?" Connie inquired.
"No one seen him with a woman, but I know he not gay. I would have detected that."
"Okay." Sherry waited for his hypothesis.
"So it has to be one thing."
"What's that?" Connie asked.
"He's a pedophilia." he revealed.
"A What?" Nicole blurted.
"A pedophile." he repeated.
"Gary shut up." Connie told him, laughing.
"You laughing bitch. But hell yeah, Mr. Washington has the perfect place to bring a kid, and dispose the body in the furnace."
"You been watching too many episodes of Law and Order SUV." Nicole told him.
"Okay. But the next time a funny smell comes from the furnace, smelling like burritos. He done snatched one of these little mexican girls around here."
"Gary you need your head check." Nicole commented.
"What a little black girl would smell like." Sherry giggled.
"Neckbones."
Kathrine pulled into the driveway of the home that she lived in for twenty years, raising her three children. Reginald 32, and who is an accountant, at a major Fortune 500 company. Pamela 29, who is a Register nurse, and stay in Austin with her husband, who is a politician, along with their five years old son. Derrick 25, turned out to be the black sheep of the family. In and out of jail for drug possession. "Illegal firearms. He's now trying to live a straight life, and pursue a rap career. Kathrine and her husband Russell have had many falling out behind their son Derrick, whenever he gotten into trouble. Russell wasn't okay when Derrick gotten into trouble for the first time. But he believe everyone makes mistakes. Sometime black young men trying to fit in with their peers. But Derrick behavior continued, and the first one he always calls, is his mother. "Let him call one of his little buddies." Russell would tell Kathrine, who would run down to the police station, and bail him out.

Kathrine sat in her Audi 7, with her eyes closed, listening to the enchanting sounds of Earth, Wind and Fire. Her favorite band in the world. Even though Earni, and Phillip try to hold the band together, to Kathrine the musical genius band will never be the same without Mareese White. After the song finished, she made her way inside her home, and was ambushed by the aroma of dinner already cooked. Finding her husband in his lazyboy, eating and watching a baseball game, she kissed him on the cheek, then snatched one of his fries, off his plate. "Chili dogs and french fries for dinner." she spoked.

"And baseball. Nothing more American then those three." he replied, looking up at her.
"You couldn't wait for to eat,so we can watch the game together?" "Sorry baby, the game came on early. Eastern time."
"Yankees?"
Russell cheered when Derik Jeter hit a double. Telling Kathrine that he also made a salad, using the leftover chicken. "But try a spoon full of my chili. Its good, grandma recipe."

"What's in it?"
"If I tell you, then I have to kill you." he answered looking back. Amazed at the delicious taste of the chili, Kathrine made her a bowl, and grabbed some crackers. She sat in the lap of her husband, feeding them both.

They met thirty three years ago, when Russell was working part time at a Frenchy chicken shack in Third Ward. Frying chicken in the back when Kathrine walked in, Russell thought she been the most beautiful girl he ever seen. Dressed in a white tennis outfit, her shapely athletic legs were visible to the middle of her thighs. Her long eyelashes complimented her brown eyes. Wearing a matching visor, her afro been the perfect length. A touch of lipstick on her full lips, Russell watched them move, while she ordered her food. The popping of the hot grease that burn his hand, brought him out of his fantasy. Leaving with her order, Russell ran out the backdoor to catch up with her. Shouting for her attention, he displayed a bag in his hand. "Ms. you forgot your apple pie."

"I didn't order a apple pie." Kathrine looking at him confused.
"Oh, the cashier didn't tell you that your order comes with a apple pie."
"No"
"She's not doing her job." handing her the bag. Kathrine looked inside and found two.
"There's two inside."
"I know. Apology for the error."
Looking at his hand wrapped in a bandage, she ask what happen.
"Nothing really. just a little grease burn." Russell hunching his shoulders.
"Well thank you." she smiled. "I love apple pie."

"I made them myself this morning." Russell smiling back. A awkward moment of silence fell between them, until Russell asked a question that he knew the answer too. But knew nothing about the sport. "So you play tennis?"

"Yes, for the school."

"TSU?"

"No. University of Houston."

Explains why she drove a convertible Fiat. "Her parents must have some money." he thought to himself, observing her car. Being animated, swinging like he had a tennis racket. "I also play little tennis."

"You do. Where?" Kathrine surprised.

"McGregor park. Maybe we can play sometime. And I can give you a few pointers."

"Oh, you can."

"I taught Author Ashe." Russell faking a serve.

"Really." she giggled. "Well, meet me at McGregor park saturday morning so you can give me some tips. If you taught Author Ashe, then you can make me the next Athisa Gibson."

Russell mouth ajar by Kathrine accepting his invitation. Thinking fast trying to find an excuse to back out. He found none. "See you saturday." she said her goodbye.

Dressed in some black khaki shorts, and yellow IZOD shirt, Russell wore sweat bands everywhere on his body, except around his neck. Kathrine wasn't surprise that Russell tennis game was worst than his attire. But she was still impressed by his effort. After, the two started dating. Two years of dating, Kathrine gotten pregnant, and dropped her dreams of becoming a doctor, to take care of their son. Russell quit his job at the chicken shack, and found employment at the fire department.

Enjoying the baseball game, Kathrine jumped out of his lap, when she heard the phone ring. "let the answering machine get it." he
screamed at her. When she spoke into the phone. "Hello." a automatic service came on. A recording she been all to familiar with. "You have a collect call, from Derrick, in the Harris county jail."
Accepting the collect call, she ask Derrick why he's calling from jail, before he could say a word. "Hey momma." Derrick said, avoiding the question.

"DON'T HEY MOMMA ME DERRICK! WHAT THE HELL YOU DOING IN JAIL!"
Silence for a long second, Kathrine repeated the question again.
"Aggravated robbery." he murmured.
"What! What the hell did you rob?"
"A convient store."
"Why?"
Derrick didn't answer the question, because he thought it been a stupid one, and tried avoid answering it. "I called the house an hour ago, but my call wasn't accepted. Probaly was dad, who denied my call."
No stranger to the jail process, she ask how much is his bail.
"Seventy five thousand."
"What! That's seventy five hundred dollars Derrick. I don't have seventy five hundred dollars to throw away on stupid shit!"
"I know momma. I got to get out of jail. And when I do, I'll pay you back."
"What! that the dumbest shit you said Derrick. Pay me back how? With what? Isn't that the reason your dumb ass is in jail now?"
Derrick listen to his mother rampage, willing to do what ever to get her to make his bail. "I'm gonna have to talk this over with your father. I just can't take seventy five hundred dollars out of our bank account."
"Momma you know he is gonna say no."
"Well."

(43)
Pleading with his mother to not him rot in jail, stressing all the bad things that goes on in there. Kathrine sorted fell into his guilt game. Making no guarantees, she'll do what she can. Hanging up the phone, she went into the livingroom and ask Russell did he know anything about their son being in jail. "Yep." he answered nonchalant, reaching for his Budwieser. "Why didn't you tell me?" sounding angry. 

"Not our problem." burping from the acid of the beer. 

"Did you know he has a armed robbery charge?" Kathrine reveal-
ing, now standing in front of flat screen. 

"Sound like prison time." he responded, trying to see around his wife. "So what did he want? To make his bond?"

"Yes, you know that. Its seventy five thousand." 

"What! Seventy Five Thousand! You better tell Derrick not to drop the soap. You not taking seventy five hundred, out of this house. I help Derrick when he got into trouble the first time. And told him the first one is on me. The next time, its on him. But you keep bailing him out. Not this time Kathrine. His ass is staying in jail."

"We can't let our son go to prison Russell." she cried.

"Kathrine, Derrick is on probation. Making his bond is worthless. He's going to prison regardless." he informed her

Kathrine turned off the bathroom lights, after taking a shower. Russell eyes went back and forth, watching her in some satin burgundy pajamas, and the late night news. He gotten a little upset, when she jumped under the covers without a kiss, only saying goodnight. With her back to him, Russell turned off the tv, and tried to cuddled next to her. The satin material felt smooth against her skin. Often time his touch would arouse her, making her love nest pulse. Sticking his hand inside her pajama pants, Kathrine grabbed his hand, to stop him. "Not tonight Russell."
I'm not in the mood."
"Why baby? I thought you like my chili." he chuckled.
"RUSSELL." turning around. "How can you think about sex, when our son might be going to prison."
"If Derrick was thinking about sex, instead of robbing convien stores, he wouldn't be in jail. And I'll be getting some tonight." he retorted.
"I'm sorry. I can't help thinking about our son going to prison. for maybe a long time."
"Hell, maybe that's what he needs, to get his shit together." Kathrine thought about what Russell said. "Was it something we did wrong?" she sat up on her elbows.
"Like what?"
"I don't know."
"We raised him the same like Reginald and Pamela. And they don't have a traffic ticket. Derrick ass wants to be a thug, than a responsible man. He got to accept the shit that comes with being a thug. And that includes prison."
Katherine sighed heavily and turned her back towards Russell, thinking about what he said. She knew he had said the truth. But being a mother, she couldn't help to think, if she could have done more for Derrick. Kathrine fret, thinking about her son getting hurt, kill or raped, bringing a tear to her eye.
Raine Robinson assisted Mr. Churchbell in stretching exercises in his hospital bed, to relieve his spasms. Bending his right leg, inwards and outwards, she massaged his hamstring, during the process. Mr. Churchbell face grimaced though as he was in pain, informing Raine he's having spasms in his groin area. Massaging his left groin, and feeling any spasms, Raine saw a movement in his pelvis area, then watched in disgust, Mr. Churchbell penis raised under his gown. Mr. Churchbell flashed her a simper grin.

"You are a freaky old man." she told him. "Muscles spasms." still smiling.

Contracted with Monroe hospital, Raine had her own clinic a few miles from the hospital. Unlocking the door, and going inside, she check her schedule to see how many clients were coming in this afternoon. Three-she counted. Mr. Sanders, who fell off a roof on his job, breaking a leg, ankle, and injuring a disk in his back. Mrs. Front, a woman who claimed to falling in a supermarket, on a wet surface, that posted no caution sign. Raine knew the woman been faking, but didn't give a shit, as long the insurance company pays her. A single mother with four kids, and deadbeat fathers. Raine knew that the woman was doing what she got to do, to keep food on the table.

Marcus Bennet, a eighteen year old, who been in a terrible car accident. Broke his arm, hip, and pelvis. A top three recruit coming out of high school, struggled hard for the past six months to get his six three chisel body back in football condition, and play football at Michigan.

After her clients left, Raine picked up the equipments, and store them back to their proper place. Done with her paperwork, she headed out the door, then paused, examining herself in the large mirror. Thick for her profession, but well proportion, she rubbed her hand over her long silky hair, that she kept in a ponytail.
Her radiant brown skin, have men asking if she form the Dominican Republic. Most of the time, Raine would smile at them, then tell the lied she used when growing up. "I have Cherokee in my blood."

Checking the time, Raine been running fifteen minutes late. She needed to stop by her mother house, to pick up her nine years old Lamont, and take him to hockey practice. It was Friday, and the weekend Lamont visit his father, who planed to pick him up at practice. The whole weekend to herself, Raine didn't have any special plans. Maybe I should go see a movie," she thought to her self.

Standing outside the ice ring, Raine cringed when she witness her son get smashed against the wall. She wondered how in the hell her son took the liking to hockey. It wasn't a sport inated in black men. Screaming for her son to get up, minutes later she shouted in enthusiasm, when Lamont score a goal.

"What happen that you got you all excited," a voice asked her. Raine didn't need to turn around to see who. She recognize the voice from anywhere.

"Lamont just score a goal," she answered him.

"That's my boy," he now stood next to her. "he must be getting really at this."

Married to him for seven years, Raine gave her ex a glower expression. Two years ago, she was in love with his dirty underwear, until she caught him coming out of an expensive hotel, with one of his employees. Javis Spencer, the father of her son. Raine observed him from head to toe, dressed in all Paisley. His bob haircut, fresh, along with his goatee. At 38, Javis begin to show a little bulge around his mid-section. Standing only at five eight, Raine prayed that Lamont don't inherit his father height. Removing his Gucci frame prescribe glasses, Javis exhibited the smile that captured her heart. Javis rescued Raine one night on the freeway, when she caught a flat, and had no spare. Fortunate, his

(47)
dummy from his Maximum, aligned with her Altima. The two exchange
card numbers, for her to return his spare tire. Meeting at a neutral de-
station, Raine expressed over again how grateful he had help her.
Javis been impressed how much Raine had look in the daylight. Notic-
ing a Starbucks across the street, he offer to buy her a cappucino,
and one of the coffee shop delicious dessert.

"How you been doing lately?" he asked.
"Making it."
"Business is slow?"
"No, business is fine."

Javis did his own expection of Raine, who was wearing a fitted
flower dress. "You look nice."
"And I see that you trying to bring paisley back." she commented.
"Trying to be the first to say I brought it back. Trendsetter, you
know me." he smiled.

Raine about to counter what Javis said, she no longer felt the chill
from the ice rink, as her blood rosed over a hundred degres. "Javis,
they didn't have any Spite, so I got you a Coke." she told him.

Raine hated the bitch that stood in her present. "THIS WHITE BITCH!"
Kelly Tillman, now Kelly Spencer, the employee Javis was sleeping
with during their marriage. Kelly was ten years younger than Javis.
A red head, with hazel eyes. Her runway model body, wearing purple
capri pants, and white tank top. "What this bitch have that I don't?"
A question, that ran through Raine's mind. Kelly don't have an ass,
and Javis need to go get that bitch something to eat, before she
falls out.

Getting information from the clock at the front desk, Raine sat in
the hotel lobby, for two hours, waiting for Javis and his cheating
bitch. Making a chaotic scene, Raine still love her husband. She
gave him an ultimatum, to fire Kelly, and come home with her, or their
marriage is over.
Screaming at him while he packed his bags. "That White Bitch Pussy Can't Be That Good!"
Javis restrained every muscles in his body, from striking Raine, as she kick and punched him on his way out the door.
Raine didn't think Kelly she was a black man trophy bitch, finishing her observation, as Kelly greeted her non-chlam.
Lost, confused, and little self esteem, Raine continued to have sex with Javis, for a year, until he had cut her off, when he married Kelly. "See you Sunday?" she asked.
"Sunday." Javis confirmed.
Calling Lamont over to give him a hug and his goodbye. Raine knew she had to leave when she heard the excitement in her son voice, when he saw his father and Kelly.
Sherry and the twins waited in the visiting room, at the Darrington unit, in Richmond Texas. A small town outside of Houston. It depressed sherry deeply, when she walks through the razors wire fence. Everyone comes through the razor wires, not in grey uniform, is search like a criminal. Sherry bit her tongue when the lesbian looking guard searched her. Making her take off her shoes, and feeling around her breasts. She scanned the visitation room, and noticed how it been filled with blacks and hispanics inmates. She heard about the system, and how its unjust in serving justice to people of colors. Sherry remembered the group of teenage white girls from a well off suburban neighborhood, that made the local news. Charged with five counts of aggravated robbery, and only recieving seven years. The black community were in outrage, when a seventeen years old African American, received thirty years for one count. Sherry being in the position on both sides, understood. As the saying goes, Money talk, and bullshit walk.

The twins returned from the snack machine with junk for Steven to eat. Taylor slapped her mother on the thigh, when she saw her big brother strolling through the steel doors. At six foot one, and two hundred pounds, his starch white prison uniform, fitted his chisel frame. Sherry noticed he had on a brand new pair Jordans on his feet. Steven was freshly cut and shaved. Sherry been delighted that the razor hadn't destroyed his handsome face. Astonished, how Steven grown up to look like his father, she fought back tears, watching his sisters. "You smell good." Sherry said to him, embracing him.

"Enternity." he told her.
"Where you get some colonge?"
"I can get my hands on a lot of things now."
"Steven, don't be getting into any trouble, keeping you from coming home. The girls said you called them from a cell phone. How did you get a cell phone?"

(50)
"Will talk about that later. I love you and miss you ladies."
"We miss you too." Sherry answered, wiping her tears.
"Don't start crying momma, then you gonna make me cry. And I can't let these fools in here see me cry."
"I can't help it. I miss you and want you home."
"I will be soon."

Steven conversed with the twins about school, boys, and what's been happening in the neighborhood. Finishing his bag of chips, Steven searched the visitation room, to locate the guards. When he thought things were clear, he reached between his legs, and retrieved what he had stashed there, and place it in the empty bag. He slid it over to his mother. "Look inside momma, that's for you."
Sherry been shocked, what's inside the chip bag. Steven avised her to be caution, because the guards were looking now. "Steven where did you get cash money from? What, the states paying y'all now?"

"TEXAS! HELL NAW. The state is so broke, that they cut down on dessert, from twice a week, to just once. Like that's saving them millions of dollars. I hear some units are feeding twice a day on the weekends."
"Really!" Sherry surprised. "You think it might happen on this unit?"

"I don't think so. Inmates might riot. And they can't afford to have the unit shutdown. These crackers have to have their cotton pick, and livestocks attended too. But these Texas inmates might accept anything, letting the states charge us a hundred dollars for medical, and they not paying us."

Sherry peeped in the bag again. "How much money is it?" still be-fuddled.

"Six hundred. Hope to send more soon soon."
"You never explained to me where you getting this money from?"
Steven smiled. "I have someone on my team, helping me do alittle
hustling."
"You have a cell phone too?"
"No, not yet. I paid someone to use theirs. I should have my own next week. It's a lot of money to be made in the penitentiary. And I know you are struggling out there, and need some help. I'm gonna continue to make this money while I can, to help my family, until you graduate."
"Steven." Sherry started to plea, but Steven raised his hand to silence her.
"This is not negotiable."

They were interrupted by a pretty guard, wearing a nicely short hairstyle. She been beaming brightly at Steven. She ask who were the beautiful women visiting him. Steven introduced his mother and twins sisters to her. "Momma this is Ms. Bell. My team." he smiled. Sherry observed the young guard and thought she was pretty. But she wasn't to happy that she been involving her son in things that could prolong his stay in prison. "It's counttime, and I just have to verify that you still live in M-24."
"Still there." he answered.

Happy to meet Steven family, Ms. Bell winked her eye. "I'll talk to you later." she told him, before turning to leave.
Sherry studied her again in her tight fitting uniform walking away. Ms. davis glanced back once more to Steven observing her. "So that's whose on your team?" Sherry commented.
"My all-star."
Raine exited the line from the concession stand, with a large Sprite, popcorn, and a box of gummy bears. Scanning the fourty theater complex, to find the movies she paid to see, Raine turned around skeptical, hearing someone call her whole name. Surprised to see the young sexy man heading her way. She admit he looked handsome, outside his UnderAmour bodysuit, and shorts. Raine wasn't blind how fine the eighteen years old was. dressed in a blue and red stripe pullover Polo, and white khaki shorts, she didn't understand the reason why he was smiling like a school boy.

"Marcus, what are you doing at the movies?" He chuckled while looking around at the posters on the high walls. "To come see a movie." he answered, trying not to be sarcastic. "Excuse me,' she giggled, at the foolish question of hers. "What movie you come to see? That new scary movie, Purge?"

"No, Tyler Perry, I Can Do Bad All By Myself." "You must like laughing at Madea?"

"Yeah, but that isn't the reason I paid to see his movie. Normally, I would wait for it to come out on video. I can't wait a few months to see my girlfriend."

"GIRLFRIEND!" Raine jolted. Raine remembered Marcus telling her that he didn't have time for a girlfriend, trying to be the greatest football player ever. "Yeah, Taraji." he grinned.

Raine giggled behind the name. "Taraji P Henson?" she repeated her whole name. Marcus still grinning nodding his head. "Don't you think she's alittle to old for you? I would have imagine Nikki Minja on your wall."

"No, she sexy, but alittle to wild for me. For some unknown reason, I'm attractive to older women. I might have an old soul. My father was fifty six when I was born."

Surprise by the revelation. "Your old soul had no effect on your
physical feature." she thought to herself.

"No one would ever guess you were a physical therapist." he said, noticing all the junk in her hands. "Large drink, popcorn, and a box of gummy bears. Well, your excuse with the box of gummy bears. I love them too." showing Raine his box. Marcus started to think.

"You pregnant Mrs. Robinson?" raising an eyebrow.

"NO!" shocked by the question.

"A fight with your boyfriend or husband?"

"Have to have one to fight with." she replied, shifting her weight.

"What?" Marcus examining Raine wearing a Tweety bird shirt, and black Genie jeans.

"Divorced." informing him.

"Sorry." Marcus recognized the pain in her voice. Trying to change the subject, He ask what movie she came to see.

"The same movie."

"Come to see any one in particular?"

"No. I just like Tyler Perry films. I think his movies speaks for African American people." Marcus agreed, looking at his Timex watch, realizing the movie starts in five minutes. he asked Raine if she mine if he join her. "Of course not."

"Well we need to get in there. The movie starts in five minutes. And I don't want to miss Taraji sporting that afro."

Inside, Marcus became abit aroused, gazing at Taraji standing in the kitchen in a pair fleece warmups, with her camel toe showing.

"MMMM." he grunted.

Raine looked over at Marcus with a combination expression of a frown and smile. Wondering what he was gesturing about. "Nothing." he replied, holding his chuckle.

Exiting the theater, Raine and Marcus stood outside discussing how much they enjoyed the movie. Discussing almost every detail, a sudden silence fell between them. Becoming uncomfortable, Marcus check his watch, and realize it's still early in the night.
M. RILEY

"If I didn't have to go pick up my mother from work, I would suggest to go get something to eat."

"I would accept, if I didn't feel a little nauseous, with all the junk I eaten."

"Yeah, I can't believe you didn't offer me any." Marcus chuckled. "Sorry, how rude of me." Raine embarrassed.

"Are you sure you're not pregnant? Marcus eyeing her. "I'm just kidding. I have to watch my calories, to stay in shape, if I want to get back in football."

"MmMm." Raine commented.

Shaking hands and saying goodbyes, both parked on the opposite sides of the complex. Parting ways, Raine walked a good distance, then looked over her shoulder, to see if Marcus been watching her. Which to her disappointment, he wasn't.
Nicole screamed from the top of her lungs for Nicholas, as he ranned for another touchdown. His third of the game. Celebrating their victory, Coach Shukar took the team to Chunky Cheese, for pizzas. Giving a victory speech before they eat, proud of everyone on how they played. "Next week victory will make us the best little league football team in Houston. MUSTANG! CITY CHAMPION!" he shouted, as the rest of the team repeated out loud, cheering.

Coach Shukar enjoyed his time talking with the parents, but he kept a eye on Nicole. Nicole and her son, sat at the end of the table. Nicole laughed, watching Nicholas being animated with all the moves he used on the feild. Shakur took another bite of his pizza, and made his way down to them. Placing his hand on Nicholas shoulder, he praised him on his game today. "One day your mother is gonna be watching you on Sunday's. I see improvement in every game. But we have to work on you holding on to the ball. And being more patience on waiting on your blocks to develope. Your speed is working for you now. when you get older, and start playing for schools, you will play against better players. fast, or faster. Having the combination of patience and speed, will maneuver you pass your opponents."

"You gonna help me work on that coach?" Nicholas asked.
"Sure. We can work on your patience thing next year. As for the fumbling issue, you and your mother can work on that all week."
"How is that?" Nicole looking at him confused.
"Easy. make Nicholas hold the ball like a running back around the house, or where ever you two go. when you think he's not looking, or paying attention, sneak up behind, and try to knock the ball out of his hand. That will keep him concious of always holding on tight to the ball."
"That's odd." Nicole replied.
"That's what college coach make their running back do. Try living in the dorms with your teamamtes. If the ball gets knock out, that's a hundred push-ups."
"If one is successful of holding the ball all week?" Nicole inquired. "He get to play on saturday." Coach smiled.

Coach Shakur had other commitment, and didn't stay see every player leave. hopping in his Range Rover sports, and exiting the parking lot, he noticed the hood up on Nicole Cherokee. Backing up, Shakur pulled up behind them, hoping he could assist. "Everything Okay Ms. Nickleson."

"It want start coach. And we need to leave, so I can go spend the night at my best friend Travis house. We have a grudge match in Madden and Call of Duty. He been bragging all week that he's gonna beat me." Nicholas spoked.

"Its making a clicking sound, when I turn the ignition." she explained. Looking under the hood, visualizing if he could see anything that looks out of place. Shakur asked Nicole to turn the ignition. Hearing the clicking noise, he check the battery cables. "That's the first thing I check. They seem to be tight." she shouted behind the wheel.

Checking all the wires to see if any were loose, Shakur crawled under the Jeep, and noticed the loose bolt to the starter, that connect to the battery. "I think I found the problem." getting from under the SUV, to retrieve his tool box from his vehicle. After tighten the bolt, he ask Nicole to fire it up. She smiled at him, blest that he been able to fixes the minor problem. Shutting the hood, Shakur wiped off his hands smudge on the hood. Nicole came from behind the wheel to thank him.

"No problem. Everything now should be fine." Before she's about to say another word, Nicholas shouted from the passenger window to his mother, that they were late going over to Travis house. "Okay! Okay! will you wait a minute. Can't you see
that I'm talking." she shouted back. Afterward, turning her attention to Shakur, displaying a half smile. "Excuse my son ungratefulness."

"Patience." he lightly chuckled. Shakur picked up his small socket set, then ask Nicole if she had any plans tonight, after she drop off her son. "No. Not really. Just relax, and find a movie on the We channel."

"You like jazz, and poetry?"

"I love it." she answered with joy.

"Well, if you up to it, I invite you to this little jazz club in the Galleria area. Just tell the doorman your name. Come have a drink. Relax, and listen to some new local jazz band and spoken words."

"You play in a band, or write poetry?"

"You have to come and find out." he smiled.

"I maybe will." extending her hand.

Nicole easily found the jazz spot called Al Nur. She wondered what it mean. Stepping out of her her Jeep in a Micheal choo peach satin dress shirt, and matching strap high heels, she gave her name to the bouncer dress in a crisp pinstripe suit, and bow tie. He signaled for waitress to escort Nicole to her reserve table. She saw that the club attracted some of Houston famous and elites.

The ambiance felt soothing. Candles were lit at every table, with a long stem rose, place in a glass vase. Moving her head to the rythum sweet sounding band, playing Anita Baker, Same Old Love. Moments later, the waitress presented her with a bottle of Moet.

"This is from Mr. Shakur. He told me to tell you that he will be with you in a moment."

When the band completed their session, a woman took the stage to introduce the poet to the stage. Astounded to see Shakur take the mic, Nicole placed her flute glass on the table, sat back, crossing her legs, eagerly waiting to hear his spoken words.
Beautiful, like the day God created the Heavens and earth.
Beautiful, like the morning sun rising off the ocean shores
Beautiful, the way her skin looks, feels, and smells. Like a field
of love, coming in a variety of colors to choose from
Brown, yellow, caramel, gold, black, and jet
In a fro, dreads, braids, long, short, straight, or even nappy. You
are still beautiful.
Curves like the city streets, now Hollywood had to recognize your
beauty. Spending millions to have their lips full, ass round, and
darken their skin. What they call a tan. Right
Fitra you are. In Arabic, means God created natural
I apologize for these niggas that call your beauty a bitch
These niggas forgotten or never understood, who birth them. Who
nature them. Who was the first to tell their black ass, I love You
The beautiful love you give when things are up or down. Weather
you're glad or mad
This beauty that remains behind her Khalefa, when he was chained
down and treated less than a man
Holding the lineage together, never discourage, but always encouraging
to take back his position, as the first ruler of the earth
We black men hadn't forgotten. We understand. And we black men place
nothing or no one above you, except The Creator that brought us
together
When I restore myself to my rightful place as King. Beautiful, I
will have no other as my Queen
I got you. You got me. We got Us
And when I open my eyes in the morning, you're the first thing I want
to see before the sunrise, and the last after the moonlight......
M. RILEY

Appease, the audience clapped when Shakur finished his spoken words. Nicole watched as Shakur stopped a few times, shaking hands with some of the famous and elites. She stood up to greet him, with a hand shake. She wasn't comfortable with giving him a hug. Nicole still only knew Shakur as her son coach. She expressed how much she enjoyed the spoken words, and the atmosphere of the club. He loved the style of her dreadlocks, which collaborate with the structure of her face. "Al-Ham-Du-Allah." he said, amazed how sexy she look in her dress.

"Excuse me." Nicole confused as to what he just said.

"Nothing. Just something in arabic, when something is pleasing."

"It isn't something nasty?" she frowned.

Shakur chuckled at her face expression. "I assure you not Ms. Nickleson." he gestured for her to have a seat. Assisting her, Shakur took one across from her. "I'm glad you can make it tonight. You look lovely." his words bringing a smile on her face.

"So do you. I almost didn't recognize you outside your coaching clothes."

"Shorts and T-shirt."

"Yeah, and that whistle you wear around your neck.

Dressed in a Tom Ford shell white pants and jacket. Shakur chuckled alittle. "I can get sharp when I have too. But I prefer to be comfortable in shorts, sweats, and jeans. Everyone isn't able to look good in anything they wear. Even scrubs."

Nicole tilted her head, flashing a bashful smile. "Who said one didn't look physical fit in shorts and T-shirt."

"Are you saying I'm fine?" he leaned forward.

"I'm not saying anything." Nicole still smiling, reaching for her glass of wine.

"I hope the wine is okay?"

"It's fine." taking another sip eyeing Shakur. "your not drinking?"
"Only on special occasion."
"I'm here."
Shakur laughed at her response, loving Nicole's confident attitude. He waved for a waitress to come over, asking her to bring another glass. Nicole began to precieved how everyone reacted to Shakur.
"You must come here alot?"
"Almost everynight."
This a nice establishment. Hard to believe I never knew of this jazz club. The band that was playing earlier sounded great. I love contemporary jazz."
"I'm glad you like it. I'll make sure your name stays on the VIP list."
"You must know the owner."
"Very well,' he smiled.
The young waitress returned with a glass, and pour Shakur a drink. Asking if she could assist him in anything else. "I'm find Tanya. Thank you."
"So your the owner." Nicole surprised. Shakur reached for his drink. "Yes.' taking a sip.
"What does the name mean Al Nur?' she slowly pronounce the name, if not sure she was saying it correctly.
"It's a arabic word that mean The Light."
"Why did you chose that name."
"Simple. Light provide vision to seek knowledge, and understanding, for one to succeed. That's what our people lacks. Light. We accept things as hearsay. Without researching. Left in the dark. away from the truth."
"I see.' she reponded, reaching for the bottle, to pour herself another glass. Shakur intercepted, who politely poured for her.
"So coach, shed some light about you. I don't even know your first name."
"Malik."

(61)
"Nicole." giving hers.
"So I assume your a muslim?"
"Correct."
"Your not on of those jihadist, or believe the white man is the devil kind?"
Malik bursted into laughter, behind the words and expression on Nicole's face. "I'm neither. I'm orthodox."
"And what is that?"
"I'm what the media calls moderate. Which there's no such thing. I just follow the book, and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad."

"Well, I don't know too much about the muslim religion. But I do know I'm not okay walking around covered up like a ghost." Nicole emphasized, sipping her champaigne.
"Why would I cover up one of God beautiful creation." he smiled.
Without no tv, Kobe and Khadijah laid on the floor coloring in their coloring books, while their mother prepare dinner. Hopefully with her next check, Cecilia would be able to buy another tv. Being a week without a television, Cecilia could tell how it was effecting the kids, not seeing their favorite programs. Things were also rough and time consuming going to the locate coffee shop, and library to continue her on-line courses.

In the kitchen daydreaming that Kossy was still alive, to make the situation better, her memory of him disturbed by a knock at the door. Checking the clock on the microwave, after nine it read. Rarely having company, other than her co-workers, Cecilia hesitated for a moment, wondering. Retrieving a knife from the kitchen drawer, she placed a finger over her mouth, signaling for the kids to be quiet. Creeping to the door, she looked through the peephole. Odd, to see a white man standing outside the door. Observing the stranger, she couldn't figure out why he sort of look familiar.

"Who is it?" she tried to sound firm, in her native accent.

"Officer Fletcher."

"I didn't call the police." confused.

"I know. I have good news. I found your property." Officer Fletcher holding up her keyboard.

Unlocking the two deadbolts, she open the door to a smiling Officer Fletcher, cradling the nineteen inch monitor, and hard drive in his arms. Dressed in civilian clothes, had been the reason why Cecilia couldn't recognize him. Her smiled widen, eyes brighten, clapping ecstatically to have her possession back. "Come in, Come in." she invited, stepping to the side.

"The rest of your stuff is in the back of my truck." When Officer Fletcher brought in the last of her property, she wondered why he wasn't in uniform, then asked. "I'm off today."

"I'm so grateful, that you took the time out to bring my stolen
property.

"No problem. I'm just doing my job. I'm sure you read the motto on the doors of a police unit. To Protect and Serve."

"How did you find it so fast?"

"I figure whoever burglarize your apartment, were drug addicts living around here. And if they couldn't see your things on the street quickly, to get their fixes. They would pawn it by a nearby pawnshop. I remember how upset you were, having have to go to the library to finish your on-line courses. So I begin checking local pawnshops in the area to see if your property was there."

Without asking, Cecilia watched while the officer begin hooking up all her electronics. She been flurry, weather to allow him to stay, and somehow, ask him politely to leave. That she could handle the matter from here. Cecilia didn't feel comfortable with a male in the apartment, around her children. Even if he was a policeman.

With her mouth ajared, ready to ask Officer Fletcher to leave, Kobe tugged on his mother scrubs, to inform her that the food is burning. Cecilia cursed in her native tongue, turning to save dinner.

She added more cheese to hamburger helper, trying to disguise the burnt taste in the ground beef. Setting their plates on the country pine wooden table, she ordered her kids to come eat. Officer Fletcher finished connecting all the electronics. Appreciating all that he done, she was abit lost for words to prolong his stay. Officer Fletcher sensed the vibe, that the African beauty was becoming uncomfortable. Picking up his tool box. "I pray that you don't have to relive this ordeal again." he said, heading towards the door.

"God, I hope not. I can't afford it at the moment. Just before you knocked on my door, I was debating to pay my light bill, or buy another tv."

"Hard to watch television in the dark." he replied, facing her at the door.

(64)
"True." feeling foolish.

Another awkward moment found its way between them, as Officer Fletcher relished the beauty of this foreign woman. He couldn't comprehend himself, why he been so attractive to this Nigerian woman. Snapping out of his thoughts, to see Cecilia extend her hand, to shake. He couldn't believe how smooth her hand felt. "Oh yes." he remembered. Opening up his tool box, he retrieve a dvd. The Muppets movie, and Madagascar 2. "I remember you said the thieves also stole your kids movies. I bought them two, to help you start back your collection."

Witnessing the gratified expression in her face, Cecilia been humble by the gifts. It's the first time that anyone ever done anything for her children. "Have a goodnight Ms. Bassey." he nodded, turning to leave.
Connie pulled in the driveway of the five thousand square foot gray brick home. She parked behind the matching color 750 BMW. She studied the home that held a lot of memories for her growing up. Now lately, every time she's comes to visit, seem like an interrogation, by the F.B.I. Connie gathered the presents in the passenger seat, and sighed heavily, hopping out her Cadillac ATX. Knocking on the double door stain glass doors, she scanned the manicure lawn, she could tell that it just been cut today. Hearing a young voice on the inside, Connie could see the silhouette of a child coming to the door. Without asking who it was, the child open the door, with the biggest smile her face could muster.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY BABY!!" Connie shouted.
Dressed still in her white pullover shirt, and dark green, and black flannel skirt, that she's required to wear, at her private school, she attends. "MOMMA!" she screamed, excited, throwing her arms around Connie waist. With all her mistakes, troubles, and decision, Connie always felt like Carla, now seven, is the best thing that ever happen to her.
Connie stared at her only child, who is a split image of her father Carl. Her dark brown eyes, and paper brown skin, blended in naturally. She rubbed back her thick long hair, that were in two ponytail. Connie remembered the first time she tried to put a perm on her head, that almost burned her Carla scalp. Carl heard his daughter crying in the bathroom, and demanded for Connie to stop. Calling his sister Michelle, to show her how. Kissing her on the lips. "I see that your grandma is getting good at doing your hair."
"Yes." Carla giggled.
"How was school today?"
"Fine. I'm on the honor roll."
"HEEYEY! That's my baby. The genius." Connie rolled her body.
Carla laughed at her mother dancing. "I'm far from a genius." she replied.

"Sure you are. Watch." Extending her arms with the presents. Connie asked. "What I'm holding in my hands?"

"My Birthday Present!" she shouted.

"See, I told you were a genius."

"Momma you crazy.' she giggled.

"Little girl you are so right again." Connie agreed, stepping through the door. "Where's your grandma?"

"In the kitchen preparing sandwiches." Carla answered, taking her mother by the hand, and leading her to the kitchen. Passing by the living room, Connie glanced at the family portrait, that hung over the fireplace. Of her parents, she and Carla.

Her parents never approved of her dating black men, especially street thugs. It wasn't that her parents were racist, but they believed that ever color should be with their own kind. Since the birth of their granddaughter, Connie never seen her parents display any dislike or felt any embarrassment of having a bi-racial grandchild. Connie remember her father breaking out his carpenter skills, to build Carla a live doll house in the backyard, with electricity and running water, before she could walk. Every children event that came to town, her mother Doris was knocking on her door, begging to take her.

After Carl was murdered, Connie became distraught, and moved back in with her parents. Only with a high school diploma, Connie went to work for her father, as a secretary. Her parents took custody of Carla, when she fell in love with Monte Hill, who her father represented in a murder trial.

Connie found her mother standing next to the island, with every ingredients, in making a club sandwich. Dressed in a chocolate knee skirt, and white blouse, her mother had removed her high heels shoes
and moved about in the kitchen in her pantyhose. Connie loved the way she cut her shoulder length dirty blonde hair. Ten pounds heavier than a runway model, Connie inherited her mother's hazel eyes.

"Hi mom. And what is all this?" she gestured at all the things laid out. Sitting Carla's presents on the breakfast table, Connie kissed her mother on the cheek.

"What it looks like?" sounding irritated. "Looks like you trying to compete with Subway." Connie standing on the opposite side of the island. Ginger, Carla's cocker spaniel, came running around the corner, barking and jumping on Connie's legs.

"I was wondering where you were." kneeling down to let her lick her face. "You been waiting on some meat." she spoke to the dog.

"Carla wanted a foot long sandwich, and didn't want it from Subway. She wanted us to make our own." her mother finally explained.

"What kind of sandwich she wanted?" Connie recognizing four types of meats.

"A roast beef, turkey, pastrami, and ham sandwich."

"All On One Sandwich!"

"Yeah momma, that's why we bought twelve inch bread. Every three inches is like eating a different kind of sandwich."

"Wow, that's creative." still examining the food on the table.

Connie and Doris sat at the breakfast table full from eating Carla new four in one club sandwich. Drinking some red Chardonnay, they watched Carla open up her presents. A new iPhone 6 and table. A gold bracelet with her name engraved. Praising her mother for the gifts, Carla told her mother that grandma and dad are taking her and three of her best friends to Fiesta Texas, in San Antonio this weekend.

"Are you able to come with us momma?"

Connie exhibited a morose face. "Sorry baby, I have to work this weekend."

"What about my concert next Wednesday?"
"I wouldn't miss it for the world." she smiled.

Doris glanced at her Rolex, and realize it's getting late. She bid Carla to go up stairs to shower, and prepare for school. Carla pouted a moment, wanting to stay downstairs with her mother. Doris raised an eyebrow at her. "Do what your grandma ask, and I'll be upstairs when you finish." Connie told her.

Satisfied, she kissed her her mother, and ran upstairs. Doris grabbed her glass of wine and finished it. Connie glass was already empty. Doris ask if she wanted some more. "No thanks. I have to drive home."

Connie watched her mother pour herself another glass of wine, and down it like an alcoholic. Sensing something might be wrong, she ask. "Everything alright with you momma?"

"Yes. Why?"

"The way you down that glass of wine. You and dad alright?" Connie leaned forward.

"We're fine. This high profile rape case is taking alot of his time."

"Why he took the case anyway. Defending that monster."

"Your father believes the man is innocense. You know he don't talk about his cases to me. But he say the woman was trying to extort him. And you know your father motto. Innocense Until Proven Guilty."

"Guilty I say."

"Did you feel that way about Monte? Doris inquired, watching her reaction. Connie didn't answer her mother, sighing alittle. Knowing now where the conversation is heading. "I take a no answer, as a yes." Connie frowned tilting her head. "Where is Monte?"

"Out of town."

"Making a drug run." Doris reaching for the bottle and emptying it. "Mom don't start."

"Doris lifted her wine glass, swishing the alcohol around, with her
index finger, pointed at Connie. "I want start on Monte, you know how I feel about him."
"You hate him." Connie responded to her mother feeling.
"My gut tells me he's got a dirty secret. What? I don't know."
"You'll come to like him, like you like Carl."
"I didn't like Carl either. But I respect him, for his sincerity to you and Carla.
Connie thought back to the time with Carl, and how well he treated her. Never once another female call, or approach her with some bull-shit. If there was an argument, or he happen to screw up, Carl never raised his voice, as he listen to Connie rant. Then would ask, how can I fix it. Connie parents didn't have any clue that Carl had father a son with another woman.
Thinking back on the memories of Carl, Connie didn't know that she been smiling unconsciously, until her trip back to memory lane been disturbed by her mother. "You know Randy Staton still ask about you. I saw him the other day, when he visit his mother."
Randy Staton was Connie boyfriend, her sophomore and junior year in high school. A All-Star on the lacrosse team. Connie ended their relationship when she met Carl.
"Martha say, he's climbing the ladder at Shell oil company."
"That's nice." she gave her mother a fake grin, knowing what she was trying to do.
"Still handsome."
"Is he. Can't image why he is still single. Probaly don't have time for a relationship, because he won't take time to come down from that ladder." Connie said sarcastic.

(70)
Kathrine sat in the lobby of the Harris county jail, waiting on her son Derrick to be released. Two weeks in jail, Kathrine heart felt dispirited. In which it begin to cause friction between her and Russell. Knowing that Russell would kill her, if she withdrew the money from their banking account, Kathrine took the money from her 401K. Even though its her hard earn money, she knew Russell would still be upset. He believed that it was time for derrick to take responsibilty for his stupid decision, and stop calling on mom­ma to bail him out.

Kathrine stood when she saw the doors open that released prisoners. In the middle of the pack, she spotted the six two headache, making his way towards her. The look of shame on his face, came from seeing the stress on his mother face, in which he knew his mother tried to masquerade behind a smile. He knew she was truely pissed, and disappointed by his actions. But Derrick was her child, and Kathrine was doing what been inated in her to do. And that’s to protect, love, and go to hell and back for them, no matter what they done. Hugginf Derrick tight, she ask if he was okay. "I’m fine momma. Thank you for bailing me out. Do daddy know?"

"No. He thought you should stay in jail."

"That’s fuck up."

"Derrick watched your mouth around me!" Kathrine pointed her finger at him.

"Sorry momma."

"When he finds out that I bail you out, he’s gonna be pissed," she told him, visualizing the Russell wrath. "But I can take care of him."

"He don’t have to know that you bail me out." Derrick suggested. "Then who in the hell put up seventy five hundred dollars to get your crazy ass out?" she scrowled.

"Did you take the money out of yall banking account?"
"No. Out of my 401K."

"Well, I can tell him that the people from the record label post- ed my bond."

"You think your father gonna believe that shit!" Kathrine stared furious at him, with her hands on her hips. "You just stay away from the house, and your father, and make him think you still in jail."

"Okay." Derrick understood. He scratched his head, trying to figure a way to ask his mother, after she just posted his seventy five hundred bail. Kathrine recognize her son moving like his pants had ants in them.

"Boy what's wrong with you now?"

"UUuuhh, I know you just bail me out, but can I borrow some money?" he asked looking pitiful.

"Are you serious Derrick!" staring at him in amazed. "What about you paying back?"

"I am momma. As soon as I can." he promised.

"Stop lying Derrick. You couldn't pay for attention." she told him, digging in her purse. "How much do you need?"

"Two hundred."

Kathrine ceased searching in her purse, and again stared at him in disbelief. "Derrick you must think I'm made of money. "Here." giving him the money.

Derrick cheered from ear to ear. "Thank you momma." he kissed her on the cheek. "I'm gonna pay you back."

"Mmmhmm." she looked at him shaking her head. "You hungry?"

"Yeah, they feed like crap in here."

Two weeks later, Russell been off for the last three days, in rotating shifts, at the fire department. Taking his pitbull, Chico for a walk in the neighborhood, he stopped to check the mailbox. Bills like always, he said to himself. "Dam, why we can't be lucky
and someone mistakenly place a million dollars check in our mailbox. The post officer never fucks up loading our box with bills."

Searching, he lifted an eyebrow when he saw a letter from Kathrine 401k company. Russell first impulse was to open it, but he never been the one to go through his wife things. Their relationship was build on love and trust. His eyes narrowed, thinking. Slapping the mail in the palm of his hand. "Did she?" he prayed not.

Hearing the barking sounds of Chico, he snapped out of his trance, and looked down at his best friend. Claiming to understand why he been barking. "I'm not sure Chico, but I'll find out soon."

Kathrine shouted Russell's name, to alert him that she was home. Like normal, she found him in his recliner, in front of the tv, watching a ballgame. She kissed him on the cheek, and ask how was his day, heading into the kitchen. "Fine. Did some yard work, and change the oil in my truck."

"I think mines need to be change too baby."
"Take the truck tommorrow and I'll change it."

Hungry, Kathrine took the leftover roast, Bush beans, mac and cheese. Waiting for it to warm up in the microwave, she saw the mail on the kitchen counter. Going throught it, Kathrine jolted alittle, seeing the one from her 401K plan. Russell turned around, witnessing her staring at the letter. Instead of being straight forward, and asking her if she taking the money out of her 401K, to bail Derrick out." Derrick called."

Goose bumps covered her body, as she didn't know how to respond.

"He did? When?" her voiced cracked.

"Not long before you walked in the door. He thought you made it home by now."

Kathrine heard the beeping noise on the microwave, indicating that her food is done, but annoyed it, as she picked up the cordless
phone and scrolled the caller ID. no calls from the Harris county jail appeared. "He said he'll call back later, if possible. But he wanted to know if you could put some money on his books."

"Okay." she answered confuse. Her appetite vanished, while she sat at the table, and open her letter. Informing her the penalties, and account balance, Kathrine shook her head, feeling uncomfortable, keeping secrets from her husband.

Russell got up from his recliner during a commercial, heading to the kitchen. recognizing that Kathrine been reading the letter from her 401K provider, he ask a question, while going to the refrig. "I saw that you a letter from the 401K people. Your increasing or decreasing your plan?"

She turned to Russell who was getting another beer, in a state of confusion. Russell popped the top on his Heineken, and leaned against the kitchen counter. Russell noticed the disarray on her face, and called Kathrine name. Blinking her eyes, regaining conscious, she gazed at him for a moment. "Did you say something?" she asked.

"Yeah. I asked why did your 401K provider write you a letter? Did you change something?"

"Ohh yeah. I decided to increase my percentage."

"That's good. How much?" he inquired, sipping on his beer.

"Another hundred."

"Wow. What you trying to retire before you sixty five?" he chuckled. "I wish. But when I do, we can have that money to build that nice log cabin home, to put on our property." she forced a smile.

"I would love that. Bye, Bye, to the noisy, polluted, and congested city. And hello to peace, quiet, and the fresh air of the country."

"And fishing." she reminded him.

"Especially the fishing." he pointed at her.

Russell been sitting up in the bed, watching the late night news. He was praying for his firefighter brothers, who been battling a three alarm fire at a warehouse, on the northwest side of town.
His attention been drawn to his wife, who just cut off the bathroom lights. Wearing a long T-shirt, with a picture of a Koala bear. Russell shook his head in disappointment, as Kathrine had her head wrapped in a pink bandana, looking like Aunti Momma on the syrup bottle. Standing in front of the dresser, removing her ear rings, Russell decided to tossed another question at her, and see if his speculation about taking money out of her 401K, to bail out Derrick.

"While you were in the shower, the news said it's a virus going around in the county jail. Twenty inmates came into the infirmary with stomach pains, dehydration, and diarrhea. I think tomorrow, I'll go with you and visit Derrick." he said looking in the mirror. Kathrine eyes became frozen, meeting Russell. "HunH."

Retrieving the remote from the nightstand, Russell turned down the television, and repeated himself. "I'm going with tomorrow to see Derrick. I want to make sure that he's okay."

"Did he say that he was feeling sick?" she turned around.

"No."

"I'm surprised you want to go up to the jail and see him. I thought you were mad at him." Creeping her way to the bed.

"I am, but I'm concern about the health and safety of our son." Kathrine sat on her side of the bed, placing her face in the palms of her hands. Russell wasn't no fool. She realize that he knew she used her 401K money to bail Derrick out. He been only testing her to see if she would confess to the truth. "You know don't you?"

"Know what?" his eyes narrowed.

"Stop playing games Russell. You know that I bail Derrick out, using my 401K money."

"I know now. I wasn't for sure at first. I thought it was strange that you gotten a letter from them, while we were in disagreement about bailing him out. Why in the fuck you wasted seventy five hundred dolloars, when he's going to prison regardless?" he scrowled.
"Because that's my baby boy!" she turned completely to him.
"Derrick ain't no dam baby! he's a grown ass muthafucking man, who continue making bad decision, with his hoodlum ass friends. Then calls his momma to bail him out."
Kathrine sat there listening to Russell rant about the truth. He hopped out of bed, and headed out the room. Kathrine called his name, then followed pursuit. Flipping on the kitchen lights, Russell went to the refrigerator, and grabbed a bottle of water. Kathrine stood a few feet behind him. "I know you ask me not to bail out Derrick, Our son out." trying to play the guilt game.
Russell frowned at her. "Don't fuck with my intelligent Kathrine!" he roared.
Kathrine stared down at the floor, lost for words on how to calm her husband anger. Russell took a huge swallow of his water, then tighten the top back. He gazed at Kathrine, who still had her head down.
"I guess that goes my log cabin home." he said sarcastic.
Kathrine raised her head and looked at him with an expression of defeat. Russell step around her, making his way back to the bedroom. Kathrine didn't follow, but took a seat at the kitchen table, feeling dejected. Hopeing he would come around and understand a mother love for her child, deep in thought, Kathrine been disturbed by the sounds of rattling keys. Looking up, she saw Russell fully clothed, wearing jeans and a dark green Ralph Lauren button down shirt.
"Where you going?" she asked muddled.
"OUT!" he answered, heading towards the door.
"Out where?" standing to her feet.
"For a drink."
"When you coming back?"
"When the sun rise." slamming the door.
Russell entered 59 freeway heading north towards the area he was raised, Third Ward. He pulled up to the corner of Sampson and Dowling, to buy some marijuana. He wasn't much of a smoker, but all the alcohol stores were closed, and the bootleg man had just gotten busted.

Pulling hard on his blunt, within mintues, he begin to feel the effects on the weed. He look at the burning end of the joint. "Dam, this some good shit." he commented.

Franky Beverly and Maze played in the CD, and he bobbed his head to the music, jumping back on 610 freeway, to ride the loop around Houston. His anger subside alittle, about Kathrine bonding Derrick out. He loved his son, and wanted nothing but the best for him, but making his bond was a waste of money. SEVENTY FIVE HUNDRED OF IT!

Russell pulled hard on the blunt again, still contemplating about everythong. He came to a conclusion on Derrick behavior. "Kathrine spoiled his ass!" he spoke to the blunt. Realized that he was, he chuckled to himself. "Dam! this shit is good."

Changing CD, Russell listening to a commercial, advertisizing to come see the best looking women in Houston, take it off, at the Gentlemen Club. At Main and Mudworth. "We don't close until the last man goes home." the annoncer said.

Surprisingly close to Main, Russell hopped off the freeway at the next exit. He had heard about the strip club from co-worker. In no mood to go home, he decided to check it out.

Driving up into the parking lot, Russell noticed this was a place for the rich, and high rollers. The parking lot been filled with Limos, Benz, BMW, and all the candy cars. He parked his truck alittle distant from the club. Twenty five dollars to get in, Tela song, Table Dance, blasted through the speakers, when he enter.

The array of color lights, amalgamated perfect on the center stage. Where the dancers were topless, hanging upside down, with their legs
M.RILEY

split wide open, on a pole. Russell paused in his tracks, amazed by the scene. A few men stood by the stage, throwing money. Having been to a few strip joints in his time, Gentlemen Club was by far the best. One club he went too, Russell remembered one woman dancing at the club, looked like she just came from the back room fighting, with knife wounds all across her arms and shins. Another one looked like she just delivered a baby. Stretch marks all on her stomach.

To the far right, Russell noticed another small stage, with another dancer, fully nude, rolling on all fours. "Shit!" he said to himself. The place been filled with men of all colors, and sprinkled also with women. Heading to the bar to buy a drink, pasted a table loaded with strippers, sitting on the laps of two men. After getting a better view, he recognized former basketball players, Steve Francis, and Catino Mobely. Russell chuckled to himself, knowing why now, those fools couldn't win a playoff game.

Ordering a Crown Royal and coke, he found himself a seat near the main stage. A beautiful dark skinned woman had just finished her set. He watched her pick up all the money on the stage, and thought this women made a fortune, if they were gorgeous, and had a body like a godness. Exchanging a hundred dollars for ones, Russell knew he didn't have money to throw away, to make it rain. But he can make it drizzle. Sipping on his drink, the combination of the weed and alcohol had him mellow. Interrupted by the vibration in his pocket, he pulled out his cell phone, and saw it was a text from his wife. "Where are you? Come home." it read. Russell anger returned alittle, but he subside it with another swallow of the Crown. Turning the phone off, he placed it back in his pocket. His attention turned to the announcer, introducing the next dancer to the stage. Juvenile, Rodeo, played through the speakers, and Russell focus on the foreign belle, who begun to move her body gracefully to the

(78)
the rythum of the music. Dressed in red leather chaps, G-string, vest, and matching cowgirl boots and hat. Her long wavy hair flowed to her back. And her bronze skin, change like a chameleon under the lights. Russell continued to watch her move, with his mouth ajarred. He noticed all the men that surrounded the stage, throwing money. Buy the second song the beauty was only in a G-string. Russel reached in his wallet, and removed another hundred dollar bill. He could not insult the godness, with singles. Making his way slowly to the stage, Russell made eye contact with her. He couldn't identify the color of her eyes, only that they were hypnotizing. Russell couldn't hear the music anymore, as somehow she drawn him into her utopia. She made him feel like he was the only man in the room, as she stood in front of him, rolling her body. Falling now to her knees, and onto her back, in one smooth motion, she removed her G-string, exhibiting her love tunnel. Russell never cheated on his wife, in the thirty three years of their marriage. He believe what's the purpose, all pussy was the same. But what he saw in front of him tonight, he was having doubts.

Watching her stand back to her feet, she been very in control of her muscles, shaking her left, then right ass cheeks, one at a time. Squatting down and looking back at Russell, she blew him a kiss, and whispered something that he couldn't comprehend. Laying the Benjamin on the stage, Russell smiled, and returned to his seat. Pulling out his cell phone to see if Kathrine had called again, he was interrupted by a female voice. "Checking to see if your wife called? Telling you it's time to come home." she smiled.

Dressed back in her costume, Russell been amazed that she was standing before him. "I'm grown, and pay the bills in the house. I don't have specific time to be home." he retorted, trying to be cool.

"Your married?"

"Thirty three years."
"Then you do have a curfew. No way you could be married for thirty three years and not have a curfew."
Her wisdom made Russell chuckled. "How do you know all this? Surely your not married."
"WHY! because I'm a stripper?" she shifted her weight.
"No." he chuckled, sensing that he might have insulted her. "What fool would share with the world such beauty."
She blushed. "I'll take that as a compliment."
"Maybe, the most beautiful woman I ever seen." he added.
"MAYBE!" placing her hands on her hips. "Let me guess, your wife is the only beautiful woman you place before me?"
Russell only answered her with a smile, and gesture with his hands. "I can accept that. But I don't like second to none."
Silence fell between them, as Russell review her body again. He was trying to picture the two people who created this lovely creature. "So you heading home to your wife now?" she tilted her head.
"No."
"May I join you?"
"Please do." he gestured to the empty seat. Russell stopped a waitress and ordered another Crown Royal and coke. Vodka and cranberry juice for her. "It's funny that you blees me with your present." wondering why.
"I can tell it's your first time at the Gentlemen Club. And its us ladies job who work here, to make you feel welcome. Plus, I think you are handsome, for an older man. "she complimented him, placing her elbows on the table. "Your very fit. You workout?"
"At the firestation."
"Ohh, so you are a fireman." intriqued.
"Twenty nine years."
The waitress returned with their drink, Russell tipped her with a five, and taste his drink. Satisfied, he turned his focus back to her.
"I never got your name?"
"Pleasure," she smiled, tasting her drink
Russell smiled. "Yes you are." he commented.
Pleasure blushed, batting her long eyelashes, then taking another
sip of her drink. Sitting her glass on the table, she sat back in
her chair, and asked Russell why, him and his wife are fighting. Shocked, he wondered how she knew this.

"What makes you think I been fighting with my wife?" trying to
give her the impression that he wasn't.
Pleasure laughed and pulled closer to the table, leaning forward
with her breasts on the table. "I recognize the signs. You new here.
Handsome. Tipping with a hundred bill, checking the cell, and alone.
That's a dead giveaway." she giggled.
Russell gazed at his wedding ring, thinking about Kathrine.
"You know what's the other occupation of a stripper?" she asked.
"No. And that is?"
"Being a therapist. Men and sometime women come in here for all
kind of reason. To have fun, to be entertained. Fulfill fantasy. Re-
lieve stress and anger. Also talk," reaching for her glass. "So what
you wanna talk about?" sipping on her Vodka
The rain crashed hard like small pebbles, against the bus stop shed. Cecilia stood on top of the bench, waiting for the bus to take her to work. She wanted to call inn, and take the day off, but remembered she only had three sick days left. She spented most of her vacation days when Kobe, and Khadijah took sick with the chickenpots. She cursed in her native tongue, when a passing car almost splashed her. Next income tax, she promise to buy a car. Any kind of car. Checking her Fossil watch, that her husband Kossy had given her for a birthday present. "I love you Cecilia. And my love for you will last much longer, then hours, minutes, and seconds of this gift."

The bus was running fifteen mintues late, and Cecilia never saw the silver four door Ford truck, u-turn, then pulled up in front of the bus stop. Now knowing anyone that drive a truck, with the heavy rain and tinted windows, she couldn't recognize, who been sitting behind the wheel. Living in a high crime area, Cecilia began to fear for her safety, reaching in her purse for her knife. Slowly the passenger window came down, and a white gentleman with wire rim glasses, and a friendly smile ask. "You need a ride?" Squinting her eyes, and stretching her neck to get a better vision, she recognized it been Officer Fletcher. "You gonna get sick, working in wet clothes all day."

Cecilia stood on the bench silent, thinking. Wondering why this white man seems to appear in her time of distress. Is he stalking me, and for what reason. Could he be looking for some compensation for finding and returning her property. She thought it been strange, when he volunteer himself to assemble her electronics. Cecilia look-ed at him again, still wearing the friendly smile, then removed her hand from her purse. She jumped from the frightening sounds of the thunder. Examining the heavy rain, as it continued to come down. The Metro bus was already running late, and she still had to catch another bus on Chimney Rock, and then cross the busy beliare boule-
ward, in the rain, to catch another bus. She decided to take a chance, and trust the officer. "I'm going to Belliare and Stella Link." she informed him.

"Going that way." still smiling. Cecilia covered her short fro with her pusre, and dashed to his truck. Officer Fletcher quickly rolled up the window, while Cecilia adjusted herself in the warm leather seat. Reaching in the backseat, Officer Fletcher pulled out a bathtowel, for her to dry off.

"Thank you. How did you know I was on my way to work?"
"The scrubs, sort of gave it away." he grinned at her, then turned to focus back on the wet road.


"Your children, where are they?"
Protective of her children, Cecilia been hesitant, to discuss their whereabouts. But remembered the two videos he bought for them. She extended her trust. "They are already at the daycare."

"You had to take them in the rain?"
"No, Thank God. The daycare been nice enough to come and pick them up."
Wiping her face with the towel, Fletcher notice Cecilia had smeared her make-up she wore. "If you pulled down the visor, there's a mirror. You maybe like to remake yourself before arriving at work."
Cecilai pulled down the visor, and saw her eyeliner was across her cheeks. commenting in her native language, she reached in her purse for some wiopes and wiped away the smudged make-up on her face. Rearranging her face to perfection, Officer Fletcher ask what tongue she just spoken.

"Urdu."
"Sounds beautiful."
"If you knew what I said, you wouldn't think so." she lightly giggled.
"Was it something bad about me?"

"Of course not!"

"Then it sounded beautiful." he smiled at her.

Cecilia could feel the stares, while she been finishing her make-up and adding a little lipstick. She closed the visor, sat back and fired a few question. "So what is the reason you were in this area. You couldn't be getting off work, because your not in uniform. You're not stalking me?" she simpered.

Officer Fletcher chuckled. "No, I'm not stalking you. And I did just get off from work. I'm also on the SWAT team. We did a very early bust, at some apartment, a few blocks from yours. I changed at the station. The uniform is in the backseat." he pointed with his thumb.

Cecilia turned to look. "How long you been a police officer?"

"Eighteen years."

"I know its frightful for your wife, to sit at home, praying that you will make it home safely everynight."

"She did at one time." he replied, gazing out the window. Displaying a look of confusion. "I don't understand. what do you mean, she did at one time. Is she deceased?"

"You can say my love for hr is." he laughed lightly. Officer Fletcher glanced over at her, eyebrows raised. "I'm divorced."

"Oh, sorry." she stared forward.

"No need for sympathy. The sorry part is I caught her cheating with my brother."

Cecilia mouth felled open. "Really?"

"In my house."

"What did you do when you caught them?" turning in her seat to him. "First impulse was to shoot them. Then I said, at least you could have found somebody better looking."

Cecilia giggled. "That's all you said, and did?"

Fletcher turned and locked eyes with her. "Only if you knew what"
he look likes."

Officer Fletcher pulled to the back entrance of Cecilia job, and put the gear shift in park. She read the time on the dashboard, showing that she's twenty minutes early. "Monroe Hospital." he read the sign.

"We treat long term patients. Mostly elders."

"I see." shaking his head. "How are your on-line courses coming along?"

"Easier, since you found my computer. Going to the coffe shop and library had been strain. I'll be graduating in a few months. Obtaining my LVN license. Making more money. Then I'll be able to move my childern and myself to somewhere safer."

"That's great." he replied, studying her beauty. Momentarily lost for words, both had cringed from the thunder and lighting, that shooked his truck. "The weather man said it supposed to rain all day. Do you need a ride home? I'm off today, and I can come and pick you up."

"Thank you, but I'll have one of my co-workers take me home."

"it's no problem." he assisted.

"I appreciated. that won't be necessary." extending her hand, for him to shake. Fletcher felt the electricity touch again. Thanking him for the ride, Cecilia felt his resistance, when she tried to pulled back her hand. In a trance by the dark creature, he never heard, Cecilia ask for her hand back. "Hello." snapping her fingers with her free hand.

Coming too, Fletcher apologize, finally releasing her hand. "Would it offend you, if I told you that you are a beautiful woman." Cecilia became flushed, replying, "I would have, if you had called me ugly."

"You're far from that." he chuckled.

"Thank you Officer Fletcher." she grabbed the door handle to exit.
"Call me Kyle." giving her his first name.
"Okay Kyle." she smiled. "Thank you again for the ride." opening the door.
"Ms. Bassey!" he stopped her.
"You can call me Cecilia." giving him a half smile.
Her name been lovely like her feature. "Cecilia." he paused, saying her first name. "What if you had a stalker?"
Turning to him with a expression of concern. "Do I need to call the police?"
"NO, NO." waving his hands. "I'm positive this stalker has no intention of causing you any harm."
"Good. Then I don't have to call my friend with a gun, to shoot him." she smiled. "Have a nice day Kyle." she exited the truck.
Kyle watched her dashed throught the rain, smiling unconsciously.
"You have a nice day too, Cecilia."
Raine been assisting one of her patients with lifting dumbbells, at her clinic. She often glanced over at Mrs. Aggas, who been strapped, walking on the treadmill. Marcus laid upside down on the roledex incline, pulling himself up with his legs, to strengthen his hips. Raine though about the surprising nice time she had with Marcus at the movies. Raine was struggling abit to keep their relationship professional, as she been finding herself becoming attractive to him, after working with Marcus for six months.

When he first rolled up in his wheelchair, thin and fragile. She been sadden by his story, losing his scholarship, because of the terrible car accident. Raine listen to him vow, to stage a comeback in football, and beat the school, who turned its back on him. Winning a national chapiansonship. Working hard, Raine watched him progress quickly, gaining weight, mobiliity, and confident. The once hopeless soul, had begin to look radiant.

Raine never been interested in younger men, well maybe Chris Brown. She thought he was handsome and could sing. Raine thought today young male were to immature. But not Marcus. Playing football has always been his dream. And after football, he wanted to become a physical education teacher. To help coach young kids, because Marcus believe sports teach discipline, teamwork, and how to handle winning and losing in life.

Raine instructed Mr. Wilson to continue the routine for another ten minutes, and try the exercise bike. Stopping to check on Mrs. Aggas, she asked Raine to speed up the treadmill. "Are you sure?" Raine questioned.

"Yes. There's this nice looking gentleman, that looks like Morgan Freeman. He walks by by apartment every morning at 7:30, with his lab. They seem to be walking in a faster pace then you have me on this treadmill. If I plan to get his attention, I'm gonna need to able to keep up with him."
Raine expressed a laughter of shock. "Mrs. Aggas, let me find out that you still getting your freak on."

"Well yeah, I thought I told you. I fell off stage drunk, stuffing money in a male stripper G-string. That black man had the biggest dick I ever seen."

"Oh no Mrs Aggas."

"Oh yeah. Now I know the myth is true. When I saw that, I had to add it to my bucketlist."

"To have sex with a black man?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Aggas, you to much." Raine laughed at her. Raine adjust the pace on the treadmill for her. "You be able to keep up with Usain Bolt now."

When Raine made her way over to Marcus, who been lying on his back, with a thigh resistor between his legs. Working to strenghen his pelvis, Raine stood over him watching sweat run down his straining face. She observed his UnderAmour bodysuit, traveling further down south, down his body, she saw the imprint of his manhood. "MMM. He's a teenager, with a grown man tool." she thought to herself.

Watching him finish his reps, she squatted beside Marcus, advising him to lighten the resistance, before he get a hernia, from straining.

"Don't push to hard Marcus, you way ahead of schedule."

Before he could get a word out, Marcus been distracted by Raine camel toe, peeking through her kneehigh tights. Regaining focus, he directed his eyes to her feature. "I have too. Next month I been invited to Michigan for tryouts."

"Really! That's great news."

"Yeah, I wrote them a month ago, and told the coach I fully recovered from my injuries. Do you think I'm ready? he asked, sitting up.

"I think you will in a month. Have you been working with a strength and mobility coach?"
"No. Don't have the money for one. But I go to my old high school and work on conditioning drills."

"Well I think I can help you. I have a friend who works with pro players, that suffers bad injuries, and gets them back on the playing field."

"I told you I don't have the money for a trainer." he reminded Raine. "Don't worry about that. Fred owes me a favor. He can pay me back by helping you. And when you make it to the pros, you can pay me back." she simpered.

Marcus returned the same mien, extending his hand. "Deal."

Standing to her feet, she commented. "Make sure you pay me back, before you trick off all your money on Taraji." she laughed. Marcus laughed along with her, getting to his feet. "I might have a shot at her."

"And what do you mean by that?"

"I read an interview in Ebony, and they asked her what she dreamed about last night. And she said a young man, as young as her son, having sex."

"Yeah." Raine surprised. Having that same dream. Marcus answered with a nod and smile. "That indicate she likes young men. And my chances improves, if I'm young and rich." he fluttered his eyebrows.
Gary awoke in bed, finding himself alone. He sat up wondering where his lover for over a year, Nelson had gone. Surely he thought they would be waking up late together this morning, after the way he put it on Nelson last night. Or let's say, the way they put it on each other.

Gary noticed the bathroom door close, and heard the shower running. Getting out of bed naked, he thought Nelson would enjoy his company, and continue the fun from late night under the water. Turning the knob, he found it lock. Cogitating, why would Nelson have the door lock. There wasn't anything they haven't done in front of one another.

Upset, Gary first reaction was to bang on the door, but instead paced his ear against it. He could barely hear talking above the shower water. Wanting to catch him in the act, Gary hurried to the kitchen, to retrieved a butterknife, to unlock the door. Returning, Gary placed his ear against the door again, to see if Nelson was still talking on the phone. Hearing nothing, Gary stucked the knife between the door and frame, and sliding the latch out. Slowly and quietly, he opend the door, to find Nelson behind the mauve curtain, singing.

Ready to snatch the curtain back, to question who the fuck, who he was talking to on the phone, Nelson cell vibrated. Gary saw that it been a text. Grabbing his cell, he open it. "Meet me at Razu for lunch. 12 noon. Lov Debra."

"You muthafucker!" Gary muddered.

At five eleven, heavyset, and a receding hairline, Nelson River had a wife at the time he met Gary, at a party of a mutual friend. A former clarinet player in the high school band, Nelson begun to find himself being attractive to boys, in his early teens. Walking into the lockerroom, while the football team been showering, Nelson wasn't conscious that he was staring at the quarterback penis.
until he was almost gutted in the stomach by him. To prove he wasn’t gay, and dick watcher, Nelson had to prove himself to the team, by having sex with the school whore. Who in returned, gave him the claps.

After, Nelson found him a girlfriend named Natalie. Natalie was old fashion, and saving herself for marriage. And that been perfectly fine with Nelson.

Miserable, not being able to express himself, and his feeling, Nelson was ready to come out of the closet, and tell his parents. Unfortunately, the timing had been wrong, as he enter the family room where his father was watching Jerry Springer. Nelson father, a tall, huge, and bald man, shouted to his mother, who been in the kitchen

"Honey, Come in Here And Look At This Faggit Muthafucker! He Need His Ass Whooped, Acting Like A Bitch. That Shit is Sick! If one of my boys behave like that, I’ll disown them. God didn’t crate man to act like a women."

"It's the world we live in today honey." she replied.

"Well it’s fucked up."

Hearing his father feeling about homosexual, and knowing that he would disown him, destroyed his spirits. Turning around, Nelson went back to his room and cried.

Not wanting to bring shame, and being shun by his father, Nelson kept his feeling in the closet. Attending community college, Nelson met Storm, who later became his wife, and the mother of their four year old daughter, Nancy. Named after his grandmother he loved dearly.

Even though Storm love Nelson, she felt that he was too much in tune with his feminine side. With the sex okay, and no evidence of Nelson acting bi-sexual, Storm wasn't gonna played Columbo.

Doing the landry, Storm was folding Nelson underwear, and placing them in his draw. She found two pair of women panties. One lace the
other G-string. Storm blood pressure rosed, causing her eyes to turn, and see red. "I know that nigga don't have the nerves to be cheating on me!" she unfolded the panties, and examined them.

"And with a fat bitch too!"

After, Storm staked out Nelson work place for a week, hoping to catch him in the act. Following Nelson to a Taco Cabana, a few blocks from his job, she parked across the street. Pulling out a pair of binoculars, trying to spot Nelson inside with his missess, Storm watch him head straight out to the patio. She didn't know how to react, witnessing her husband being kissed and hugged by this ugly black skinny man. There wasn't no more speculation, to whom the panties belong too, in his dresser draw.

Nelson been still singing off tune in the shower, as Gary placed his cellphone back on the counter, and nodded his head in dismay.

"We'll be there for lunch, Ms. Debra." he said to himself, backing out the bathroom, and closing the door.

Gary left work early, to catch Nelson in the act of betrayal. His blood started to boil, when he spotted Nelson SUV in the parking lot. Entering the establishment, Gary ignored the hostess, scanning the resturant, in finding Nelson. Gary eyes matched the color of his boiling blood, spotting him engaging, what seem like a intimate conversation. The hostess ask if he could help him again.

"Yeah, call the police, because its about to be a killing in this bitch." he scrowled, never looking at him.

Making his to their table, Nelson and Debra were sipping on some Hurricane slush drinks. Nelson looked up from his glass, and dam near choke. "Oh Shit!" putting down his drink.

Befuddled Debra ask if something was wrong. "Yes, it's about to be chaos."

"I like muthafucking Hurricane too, Nelson!" Gary shouted, standing in front of their table. With his hands reversed on his hips,
drawing the attention of the whole restaurant. "Who The Fuck Is This Bitch Nelson!?" Gary rolling his neck like an Egyptian. Before Nelson could answer him, Gary continued. "Fuck It! I already know. Debra Right?" The slut that left the text on your cell this morning."

"You going through my cellphone now Gary?" Nelson upset.
"Hell Yes! I Did. When you start locking bathroom doors?"
Debra began to giggled behind Gary behavior, causing Gary to shift his weight, and fold his arms. He stared at Debra if though she was crazy.

"So this is Gary?" she asked Nelson, still giggling.
"The one." Nelson answered, massaging his temples.
Debra stood up and extended her hand, smiling. "As you already know, I'm Debra. Nelson first cousin."
Gary look at her extended hand, then back to her silly smile. "Bitch don't play me, with that cousin shit."
"She's my cousin Gary." Nelson retorted.
"Our fathers are brothers." Debra tried to explain.
"What's his father name?"
"Ronald."
"His brothers, and his two sisters in order?"
"Ronald jr., Tina, Cassey, Nelson, and Tammy." she answered.
Gary stood still contemplating, tapping his feet, searching the faces of Nelson and Debra for any false reaction. Debra reached for her purse, and produce her driver license. "Here look. my last name is Rivers also. Until I get marry this weekend."
Scratching his perm, and embarrassed, he apologize to them both, giving Debra a hug. "That alright. I'm glad we gotten things straighten out. Because if you would have called me a bitch one more time, I would had to kick your ass."
Gary pulled back from shock, for a second, then displayed a grin.
"I like you already."
Chase sat waiting in Herman Park, to see his older daughter Dedra. Her mother Letta Davis, called informing him that she be in Houston this weekend to visit her mother. It's been a few months, since Chase seen her. He examining himself in the rearview mirror. He was upset that his regular barber wasn't in town. The replacement one had gotten his edge up crooked. Chase believed the edge up, what makes the haircut.

He slightly sighed, thinking about the situation, surrounding Dedra, and her mother, who was a professor at Texas Southern University. Struggling in his economic class, Professor Davis, had no intention of failing Chase. She understood, how hard it been for black men. But she wasn't gonna just give him a passing grade, to keep him on the track team. Chase would have to make an effort. So she decided to tutor him.

For over a month, three days a week, she work with Chase in her classroom. Solving some problems at his desk, Professor Davis stood behind Chase, as he read out loud some equations. Leaning closer, Mrs. Davis took a whiff of his cologne, and became intoxicated, kissing him on the neck. What seemed like an blink of an eye, Chase had Mrs. Davis legs spreaded opened on top of her desk.

Both continued their sexapade, until one day Mrs. Davis told him that she's pregnant. "How do you know it's mines?"

"My husband and I been trying to have a baby for years. And now, all of a sudden, I'm pregnant."

Chase tried to comprehend what Mrs. Davis just said. "So you never cheated on your husband before?"

"Never in eighteen years."

Mrs. Davis walked towards her desk, and Chase got up from his desk to follow her. Sitting in her chair, she stared at Chase looking daunt. "So what are you gonna do?"

Mrs. Davis looked down at her stomach, placing a hand there. She
massage in circulared motion. "Have it." she answered, gazing at Chase.

Chase jumped from the sound of a horn being blown, that been park next to him. Looking over to the Denali Yukon, a beautiful older woman displayed a warm smile. Chase returned the same gesture, happy to see her. He couldn't see the real reason why he was here, through the heavy tinted back windows. Chase got out of his car and leaned against it. He was never in love with Mrs. Davis, only her experience in life.

Rounding the front of her SUV, Mrs. Davis dressed in a fitted sundress, and sandals. Her light brown hair, with just a touch of grey, been combed back, under her sunvisor. Chase thought Mrs. Davis could pass as a double for Victoria Rollins.

Now standing in front of Chase still displaying her lovely smile, Chase went to kiss her on the cheek, then took her hand. "You look nice." he compliment her. Again observing her head to toe,

"That all!" Looking disappointed.

"What do you mean?" Chase confused.

"You haven't seen me months, and all I get is a you look nice. And kiss on the cheek."

"What else were you expecting?"

"This!" kissing him passionately. Chase been quickly reminded of a great kisser she was. Tying her tongue with his, Chase almost got caught up in the moment. Pulling away, Mrs. Davis been befuddled by his action, asking again if he was happy to see her.

"Of course. But you never acted like this before."

"Meaning the kiss?"

"Yes! Its been nothing but business between us, since you found out that you were pregnant. Plus, Dedra is in the car watching her mother kissing another man." he said, straining to see his daughter through the tint.

(95)
"I'm kissing her father?" she smiled.
Chase gave her a frowning look. "Letta."
She giggled. "Don't worry, Dedra is sleep." she told him easing his mind.
"Is every thing alright at home?" Chase inquired, tighten his grasp on her hand.
Letta stared at him for a moment. She rubbed his face with the back of her hand, giving him a half smile. "Yeah. Everything is fine now."
Chase tilted his head, studying her ebony eyes. He could feel the shivering in her hands. Chase check her for any signs of bruises, and found none. He didn't know his baby mother well, but well enough the she wasn't ready to discuss whatever been bothering her.
Thinking about Dedra, he ask if anything was wrong with ther. "NOOO, she's fine. Just spoiled and bad as hell."

"Probaly your fault."
"Not really. She has Marvin wrapped around her little finger. Dedra can't do nothing wrong. He just bought her a go-kart, and had it painted pink."
Chase never gotten upset by the things Marvin did for Dedra. He been favorable, that he loved and spoiled her. "She can't even drive yet." he laughed.
Letta turned to her SUV, and Chase followed. Standing behind her, when she opened the backdoor. "Wake up Dee Dee." her mother requested, loosing her carseat. The little brown princess rubbed her eyes, gathering her vision, and bearing. Letta grunted lifting her out of her carseat, and onto her feet. She smiled up at the six one chocolate man, she seen many times.

"Hello Mr. Daniel." she spoked. Dressed in a University of Texas cheerleader outfit, with matching tennis, Chase fought back emotion, seeing his little princess.
Never taking a D.N.A, Dedra had his eyes and skin color. Chase Squatt-
ed to the four year old level. "What I told you about calling me Mr. Daniel?"

"Sorry, my mom and dad, always told me to greet adults with yes sir and no sir. Yes mam, and no mam. Mr. Mrs., it's a form of courteous and respect." she told.

Chase been impressed how smart Dedra is. Already reading at the age of three, and learning spanish as a second language. The smarts diffently came from her mother genes. "How true. But it makes me feel old, and like a stranger. Call me Chase." taking her little hand.

Dedra looked back at her mother for some kind of approval. "If that what he request to call him." Letta grinned, hunching her shoulders.

"I like your outfit. You want to be a cheerleader?"
Dedra shooked her head smiling. "Yeah."
"I think you'll be a good one too."
"You coming to the zoo and playground with us Chase?"
"Well, if I can get a kiss on the cheek and a hug."

Chase and Letta sat on the bench, watching Dedra screamed and hollering with the other kids, getting soaked under the park foutain. He been amazed how tall she get, everytime he see's her. Dedra rann-ed over to them, to give her mother a hug. "Ilove you momma." kissing her on the lips.

"Ditto." she replied, making her laugh.
"I love you too Chase." squeezing him tight. "Thank you for the presents." kissing him on the lips.

Chase was caught by surprise by her words. He turned to Letta, who had a huge grin on her face. It was the first time he had ever heard his daughter tell him that. He look at Letta for advise, she gestured with eyes to tell her the something. "Ditto." repeating what Letta told her.
Dedra giggled as she ran off, to continue playing. Chase turned back to Letta. "She said she love me."

"Why not. Your easy to love."

"Does she tell anybody that she loves them?"

"No. Just me and Marvin. And grandparents. Kids have this sense like animals. They recognize danger, and sincerity."

Chase turned his focus back to Dedra, sitting on the playground, playing with a hispanic girl. He looked up at the sun, that had blinded him momentarily. Regaining his vision, he gazed at Letta light beauty. Her brown hair blew in the light breeze, and he begin to count her freckles in her face. "Stop." she told him. "You gonna cause more to appear."

"The freckles are the secret to your beauty."

"Yeah right." she retorted, putting on her Fendi shades.

Thinking back to her early kiss, he repeated the question he asked, after their passionate kiss. "Is everything alright at home?"

"Why do you ask?" she raised her shades.

"The kiss in the parking lot. "You haven't kiss me that intimate, since finding out that you were pregnant."

Letta sat back on the bench, then sigh lightly. Runnning her fingers throught her hair, she cracked a half smile, hearing Dedra scream for her mother to watch her slide down the slide. "Marvin been distant lately. Working all day. Almost seven days a week. When he finally makes it home, he's to tired to do anything. To tired to eat, what I cook. To tired for me. Dedra asleep, when he comes home. The only time he spends with her is during breakfast, until he starts checking his watch, and dashing out the front door. Sometimes he rushes out, without kissing me."

"So you two not having sex?"

Letta stared down at her hand, pretending to remove dirt under her fresh manicure nails. "In almost two months." she replied, never
looking up at him.

"Wow." Chase sighed, leaning back on the bench. "You think he's seeing another woman?"

"I don't know. I checked his cell. Searched his office, briefcase, car, but found no signs of cheating."

Chase rubbed his chin, surprisingly trying to find excuses for Letta's husband, non-sexual behavior of lately. "Maybe it's the election that coming up soon. Trying to find donors. Planning fundraiser, in all hopes to keep his seat in the House. Maybe the political pressure is getting to him. I don't really keep up with politics, but I hear the Republicans are in the position to take control of the House and Senate."

Letta thought about what Chase had said. She never made eye contact with him, as she stared out into the distant, looking for nothing in particular. Marvin action had been causing Letta to lose her self-esteem. Now in her mid-forties, and ten pounds heavier, she wondered if she were still attractive to her husband. A tear fell from under her shades. She asked Chase if he thought she's still attractive.

"What! What kind of crazy question is that?" he exclaimed, finally noticing the tears rolling down her cheek. "If Jaheem saw you, your name would be included in the song, along with Nia, Vivian, and Stacy. You defying aging."

Letta cracked a little smile, form his compliment. "I gain a little weight." she continued her pity, without informing him how much.

"How you look in that sundress, it had to be all in the right places. I was having flashback of us four years ago."

"MMMM." Letta responded, thinking back to their love session. Chase removed Letta shades, ensuring her that she's still attractive, as the day he first laid eyes on her, entering her classroom. Exhibiting her commercial smile, she kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you."
"For what? For telling the truth."

"For the encouragement. For Dedra. And how you handling this situation so maturely. A lot of men would have made demands or destroyed my marriage."

"I was only nineteen at the time. Far too irresponsible of taking care of a baby. Plus, it's reassuring to know that she's in excellent hands." Chase said, wiping away the last tear from her cheek. The two sat in silence looking into one another eyes, until Chase began again counting the freckles in her face.

Chase walked up to the door, of his two bedroom townhouse. It been some hours since he parted ways with Letta, and their secret child. Letta felt like she put Chase in a uncompromises situaction, in which he begged the different. With Letta, there were baby momma drama, like he cause with Tabitha and Janet.

He was fine with Dedra believing that Marvin Davis is her father. From all accounts from her, he love Dedra very much, and vice versa. Never would Dedra hear it from him, that he was her real father.

"I'm just a sperm donor." he joked to himself.

Sticking the key in the doorknob, he been interrupted with the beeping sounds of a text message. "I need your help taking off my sundress. Love Nest, room 202."

Chase smiled, removing the key from the doorknob, and headed back to his car. Once inside, he received another text. "Bring strawberry, and wine."
Raine expressed to one of her client, how well she been coming along, since the hip operation, as she she assisted her in her car. Reminding Mrs. Evans to do the exercise at home, in which she demonstrated. Raine reaffirmed their thursday session.

Back inside, Marcus had been the only person left. She leaned against the door, watching in silence, Marcus running on the treadmill. In some gray fleece shorts, and a blue T-shirt, that read Michigan football, Marcus body was drenched in sweat. Raine studies his coordination, and didn't notice any limp in his form. Mr. Steele the strenght and conditioning coach she gotten him, believed Marcus will be ready for tryouts in two weeks.

Raine ended her observation of Marcus form, gazing at his ass.

"MMMM" she commented. Again, she thought Marcus was a fine young man, and began having sexual thoughts about him. Feeling a little embarrassed, she rubbed her face with her hands, getting her hormones in check. She glanced at her sports watch, its closed for his therapy session to be over, and time for her to pick up her son.

"Ten more minutes Marcus." she shouted to him.

Marcus waved at her, indicating he had heard, and understood, never looking back. Raine went back to her office, to file some paper work, and prepare to walk out the door along with Marcus.

While sitting in her office, filling out insurance forms, she heard a crashing sound in the exercise room, and jumped up. Hurrying to investigate, Raine found Marcus lying on the floor, clinching his inner right thigh, his face displaying agony. "Oh my God, What Happen Marcus!?" falling to her knees next to him.

"Caught a cramp on the inside of my thigh." he answered, trying to rub it out.

Raine removed his hand, raising his shorts, to massage his cramp. With the naked eye, Raine could see his thigh muscles pulsing, Asking him to lay back, as she begin to treat him.
"Did you hurt yourself anywhere else?" she feared.
"No. I'm fine."
"You Sure?"
"Yes. I just sped up the pace on the treadmill, and caught this cramp. Dam! I didn't know you could catch a cramp in the inside of your thigh. It hurt worst, than the hamstring. The pain shot right to my pelvis."

"Spasms can occur anywhere you have muscles." Raine informed him, continueing massaging his thigh. "You been sweating hard today, drained all the fluids and electrolytes from your body."
"For now on, I'll remember to drink more Gatorade." he looked up at her.
Raine reminded doing therapy on his thigh, until the spasms subsided. Marcus moaned, as a sign of relief. "My leg feel alot better."

"Good. On your way home buy some energy drinks." she advised, still working on his leg.
Marcus raised his left legs, causing his baggy shorts to almost expose his testicles. "You should add a massage parlor to your business."
"Why's that?"
"You have strong, but gentle hands." he replied, raising up on his elbows, and locking eyes.
Raine continued therapy, while the two conversed with their eyes, until Raine been distracted by movement in Marcus shorts. Unconsciously, her hand found it way inside his shorts. Marcus grunted in pleasure, when Raine begun to stroke his penis. The blood flowed to his manhood, making Raine hand expand. She hid her expression of amazement, on the size of his pole.
Marcus enjoyed the hand job Raine been giving him, moving in rythum with her strokes. Catching his breath from excitement, he leaned forward to kiss her.
After a few soft kisses, their tongue intertwined. Marcus rose to his knees, removing Raine shirt and capri tights. Marcus took her breast in his mouth, as Raine held on to his skull. Raine cursed, begging for Marcus to continue sucking her breasts. Coming up to kiss her some more. He commanded Raine to turn around and get on all fours. Doing what she been told, Marcus removed his shorts, shoving his hard rock, already in her wet soul. Raine eyes widen, her mouth ajar, sucking in all the air, trying to adjust to Marcus abnormal pro-creation. He grabbed a fist full of Raine long wavy hair, and the gym echoed from the clashing of their body, as Raine cursed in ecstacy. What seem like a lifetime of rapture, Raine heard Marcus make a awkward sound, and felt the expanse of his mushroom. She encourage Marcus to come inside her. Raine pounded back with his strokes, as Marcus tighten the grasp on her hair. He called out God's name, as he poured his soul in her. Goose bumps covered his body from the sensation. Pulling out of her, Marcus saw that his manhood been covered with white foam. Drained, he laid on the mat beside Raine, who was lying already on her stomach, recooperating. Exhaling heavily, he turned to Raine who been smiling. "OHH shit! I can't believe we just had sex. Do you regret it?"

Marcus gave her a look of confusion, turning on his side towards her. "Do you?"

"I don'y know. Depending what happen from today on."
"What do you what to happen?"
"Certain not a relationship. Your my patient. And your young. I'm thirty two, and you just eighteen."
"Nineteen, next month." he informed her.
Raine grinned, "Okay, nineteen. Plus you're going off to college in two months. Ways north to Michigan, with young beautiful blonde
white girls."
Marcus chuckled at Raine statement. "Correct girls. I told you I have a old soul. And Plus, I'm not attractive to white women." he revealed.

"Not yet. I known males who played college football, and they tell me how they sic those white girls on y'all, to help recruit."
Marcus again laughed. "That won't be me."
"That what you say now. All men falls victim to pussy. It's your nature. That's what just happen ten minutes ago."
"Not true. I fell victim to you."
Raine been impressed by his response, that drew a smile. She scanned his chocolate body, then reached for his limp dick, and massaging the head with her thumb. "Ready to go again." she asked, putting Marcus shaft in her mouth, before he could answer.

"Yes."
Sherry stared back and forth to the streets, and the gauges in her Ford Escape. Two blocks from the next gas station, her car been running hot, and making a little knocking noise. Sherry knew her luck had finally ran out, as she barely made it into the parking lot of a Exxon station. She cursed at the same time, pounding on the dashboard.

Sherry got out and raised the hood, and been ambushed by the smoke, that escape from under the hood. Blinded, she fanned away the white smoke, that came from the engine. Locking the latch, to hold up the hood, she looked over the engine, having no idea what to look for. Screaming from the pain, after touching the radiator cap, Sherry screams were heard by a gentlemen, who been putting air in his Chevy truck. He cracked a half smile, watching the woman pace back and forth in front of her SUV, shaking her head. Checking the gauges to see if he added the right amount of air, the man jumped in his truck, and decided to assist the woman in any manner he could.

When he pulled up in front of the SUV, Sherry had her head under the hood, inspecting other parts. Walking up, he ask Sherry could he be of any help. Turning around to accept any assistance, one could almost hear the skidding sounds from the man Red Wing boots.

His heart stop beating for a moment, then beginned pounding hard in his chest. He didn't believe eyes. He thought he would never see her again. Was the woman standing before him real. He wasn't for sure to be happy, or jump back in his truck and leave.

Sherry covered her mouth, in shock. Nothing much change on him in twenty years. A little weight gain, and some salt in his hair. She read the name tag on his uniform, to verify that it been really him. The last time she visit Denver, to find him, she was told that he moved to Texas, in search for work. "Terrance." she said his name, as tears filled her eyes.

"Renee." he responed, feeling the same shock. Slowly moving towards
her, Sherry dropped her hands from her mouth. Face to face, Terrance stared in the eyes of his first love. His emotion were no longer in a state of confusion, wiping away the tears of Sherry, then kissing her passionately on the lips. Sherry melted, making no attempts to stop him. After the long kiss, Terrance step back to examining her. He thought that Sherry was still as beautiful, when they first met in high school.

"O' God, I thought I never see you again." he told Sherry.

"I'm sorry Terrance for the way I." Terrance placed a finger over her lips.

"It's okay. That's a long time ago." he said.

"I came back to Denver looking for you, but your family said you had move to Texas. looking for work."

"I know, they told me. But you didn't leave a number or address to contact you."

Sherry stared in the eyes of Terrance, carressing his face, before she burst into tears. Terrance comfort her in his arms, rocking her like baby. Barely understandable, Sherry tried to reveal how it been a struggle for her and the kids, in the last few years. Releasing his embrace, he lifted her head with a finger. Wiping away her tears. "I'm here now. I can help you." trying to ensure her. Sherry cracked a half smile. "How is my son Steven doing? Is he not helping you around the house?" he asked looking earnestly. Sherry sighed heavily, putting her head back down. Terrance mind went into panic mode, ready to ask a million question. "Is Steven alright?"

With her head still down, Sherry took a moment before answering him. Gesturing no with her head. Goosebumps covered Terrance body, as his blood pressure risen, thinking the worst might have happen to his only son. "Is he dead?" he asked in fear.

"No." she replied, looking up at him. Sherry confessed that he's in jail.
Terrance got up and walked over to the shelves. Looking intently at the eight by ten photograph of Sherry, the twin, and a young man. Terrance grabbed the picture, studying the young male, that stood behind his mother. He smiled, noticing how much Steven resembled him. "He's just like you. Inherit your traits. Stubborn, and hardheaded." Sherry giggled.

Terrance chuckled along with her. Picking up a recent picture of Steven wearing braids, in a Rockets outfit, with his arms around sisters. "He was nineteen. Just before he gotten in trouble."

"He must had a growth spurt?"
"Yeah, grew four inches in two years. From five nine to six two."
"Did he play any sports?" Terrance asked, putting down the photo, and turning to Sherry, who handed him his soda in a glass.
"He like playing basketball." Taylor answered.
"Sometime we go and watch him dunk all over the boys at the park." Tasha finished.

"He never played for the school?" he asked, drinking his soda.
"No. He kept saying that the team was terrible, and didn't like the coach." Sherry answered, sitting down. Terrance took a seat next to her. Sherry asked the twins to leave the room, so they could talk in private.

"You have two beautiful girls."
"Thank you. They are a handful, especially Tasha. Starting to chase boys. Another reason I need and miss Steven so much. He protected and kept them in check.

While Terrance was working on Sherry car, she explained everything that happen, since she made the mistake of leaving him. "Well I told you everything that happen in past in my life. I'm assuming your not marry?" Sherry hesitant for a second, looking down at her glass. "By the way you kiss me earlier." she said shyly.

Terrance flashed back to the kiss, and cracked a smile. "Sorry for
that. My emotion of seeing you took over."

"No need to apologies." she begged him, reaching for his hand. Terrance gazed down at them, then up to Sherry eyes. She wasn't sure about the expression in them, and begin to remove her hand. Terrance grasped them softly. "Don't." He sat there for a moment soaking up the energy, from her touch. He sigh lightly, before he spoke to answer her question. "I was married for eleven years to a woman name Maxine. But she passed away, a years and a half ago from breasts cancer."

"I'm sorry." tighten her grip.

"Beautiful person inside and out. Smart, a high school math teacher. Full of life and energy. Ran every year in the Houston marathon."

"How did you two: meet?"

Terrance chuckled, visualizing how Maxine and he met. "In the fruit department of a grocery store. Fighting over the last batch of strawberries. They were on sale. I grabbed them first, and gave her a sarcastic smile."

"That's real gentleman of you." she told me.

"I did beat you to them, fair and square."

"I need them to make my pudding." she pleaded.

"Sorry, I love them too." Terrance chuckled again, remembering how Maxine tried to burn a hole through him with her stare. "Let's make a deal." I told her.

“What kind of deal?" she folded her arms.

"Give me your phone number, and you can have the strawberries."

"WHAT! are you serious?" she scowled at me. "Go To Hell!"

"Okay." I told her, and opened the package of strawberries, and began eating them, one by one. Teasing her how good they were, she asked me if she could have my number, for the exchange of the strawberries.

"Are you serious?" Sherry couldn't believe.
"Yeah. The only reason that she called me, because she won a contest for teachers, at her school."

"Wow, that's crazy." Sherry laughed. "So you two never had any kids?"

"Yes. One. I have a ten year old daughter named, Carmen."

"Wow, a daughter." Sherry masking her jealousy. "Where is she now?"

"Gone cross country with Maxine parents. Maxine parents has a R.V, and they traveling across America. The called me from Yellowstone park yesterday. They gonna stop in Denver, to visit my mother, on their way back. Maxine was their only child, and Carmen is the only thing that keep their daughter spirit alive."

"I would like to meet her."

"I would love for her to meet you, the twins, and her big brother."
At the Darrington Unit, Steven been banging away from the rear Ms. Davis in the landry room. She had been supplying him with drugs, to sell to inmates. She been loving the way Steven been giving it to her. She wish they didn't have to be in a rush, as she encourage Steven to cum, so they wouldn't get caught. He clutched her shoulders and grunted, thrusting with all his might, while Ms. Davis strained to hold in her cries.

Slapping her on the ass, when they finished, Ms. Bell took a wet towel, to clean herself and Steven. Kissing her, Steven grabbed the two ounces of marijuana, and stuffed it under his testicles. Steven was hoping to almost twelve hundred dollars out of the deal. He planned to sent his mother eight hundred, and use the rest to reup. Entering his cell, Steven found his celly, lying in the bed with his headphones on. His eyes were closed, as he screamed along with the Rock and Roll music he been listening too. Steven tapped him on the shoulder, and ordered him to leave the cell, for an hour.

"Why?" he asked angrily, sitting up.
"Because I got to take care of some fucking business." he scowled. The skinny white boy sat on his bed for a moment, giving Steven a ireful look. Steven squints his eyes, giving his cell the same expression. "Don't make me ask you again."

John, his cellmate, smacked his lips like a girl, putting on his shoes. "I'll be back in a hour." he told Steven, before leaving the cell.

Steven been assigned to cell 2-33. Second row, second to the last cell on the end. He check the runway for any traffic, before closing his cell door. Walking over to the small desk at the end of his bunk, Steven removed the two ounces of weed. When he opened the compress package of marijuana, the aroma of the weed filled the cell. "Dam!" he mumbled.

Going into his locker to retrieve some cologne, he had stashed in
a eyedrop bottle. He smeared some oil base on the blades of his fan. Pointing it up to the ceiling, in seconds the cell begin to smell like Eternity.

John spotted his protector, Bones. A speaker for the Blood gang. Bones was playing dominoes. John stood behind toe of his Dawgs, that been watching Bones back. Calling his name, Bones never look up, recognizing John voice. "What do you want bitch!?!" he scrowled.

"I need to talk to you." stepping between the two Bloods.
"About what. Can't you see I’m playing dominoes."
"Yeah, and you know I wouldn't disturb you if it wasn't important."
"FIFTEEN AND GAME NIGGA!" Bones slamming down his dominoe. "You owe me ten dollars now. I'll be by to collect it later." Bones told his competitor, then turned his attention to John. "Now what you got to tell me?"
"You told me to come tell you when my celly get a package inn."
"Yeah. How do you know he got something inn? You seen it?" Bones stood up to his muscular five nine height.
"No, but I could smell it. He just kick me out the cell, claiming he had to take care of some business."

Bones gazed at his boys for a second. Bones had been upset that Steven had been short stopping him in business. Selling his product a quarter less. He verbally warned Steven once, but he steady defy him. Bones ordered one of his Dawgs to holler at the S.S.I working theh wing, and check on Steven.

Getting the word that Steven been sacking some dope, no day could be better than today. The guard who been working the block was in Bones pockets. Bones told his Dawgs to wait for a minute, while he converse with the heavyset white guard. He spoked some sweet words to make her smile, then revealed his intention.

Hesitant about the situation, Bones promise that no one would get hurt, and she finally gave inn. Bones signaled for his boys, and
quietly creeped to Steven cell.
Steven flinched alittle, when he heard Bones voice. "What you got there Stevey?"
"What it look like," he retorted.
"I thought I asked you not to hustles on my block. This is Blood block!"
"Newtron have to eat too."
"Sure they do, but not without giving me a cut," Bones said earnestly.
"It ain't happening Dawg!" Steven stressing the last word.
Bones chuckled. "Have it your way nigga." Bones look down the run, and waved his hand. Steven heard the cell door popped open. Bones, and his two goons rushed to attack him. With one good blow, Steven knocked out one of his Dawgs, but still been out matched by Bones muscles and number.
Steven covered himself on the floor in a ball, while they laid vicious blows and kicks. Bones grabbed the dope as his boys continued their assault. The attack seem like an eternity to Steven, until he felt the piercing of the shank in his side, making him grunt out loud.
Kyle watched Cecilia keep her head down while she played with her salad. He loved her dark shiny skin, which reflected off her bright blue, high neck Naven tank dress. Her small manicure toes, strapped in some Zigi sandals. Kyle smiled when she tried to steal a glance up at him. "Do you like your salad," he asked.

"It's good." she forced a smile.
"That strange."
Cecilia sat straight up, abit baffled at Kyle reply. "What's strange." Kyle took his fork and eat some of his salad. "That you say the salad is good, when you haven't taken a bite," he answered her with a mouthful. He continued chewing, his wandering, contemplating on how the salad tasted. "I think the lettuce is a little stale."
Giving his opinion, he washed it down with some tea. "Is something bothering you?"

"Nervous that all."

"No more nervous than me. I haven't been on a date in years. Abit shocked still, when you said yes, to my invitation to dinner. I kept praying that I wouldn't say anything stupid, and wore the thinnest set of clothes, so I wouldn't perspire to much."
Cecilia face soften to what Kyle said. Taking a taste of her salad, she asked why Kyle haven't been on a date in years. "I guess wrapped up in my job. Or just haven't found the woman that caught my eye."
A moment of silence passed between them, as he watched Cecilia chew softly. "Did I tell you how lovely you look tonight?" he grinned. Kyle had been amazed to see such pretty dark skin blush.

"Thank you. And you look handsome too. I see you keep yourself in great physical shape."

"Thank you. I have too, if I plan to chase down the bad guys."

"How long have you been a police officer?"

"Twenty years."

"Wow, that a long time. Houston is a large city. Many women, single,
attractive, and not one has capture your eye. That's strange."
"Of course I seen many attractive women to the eye, but ugly in person-
ality. I want to be with a woman, who process all traits."
"Which is?"
"Humble, loyal, smart, funny, family orientated, and beautiful."
"And you think I process all those traits?"
"I sense you do."
Flattered, she smile, leaning forward. "My associates thinks I'm not funny. They tell me all the time at work, that I need to lighten up, and be not so serious."
"Well, want you take their advise. If I could, I would arrest you for holding hostage, that contagious smile you have."
Cecilia displayed her perfectly set of whites teeth, behind her full red painted lips. She jabbed her fork into her salad, taking another mouthful. "Don't mean to sound racist, but I never dated anyone outside my race."
"So haven't I. My family would forbid it."
"The people in my village would shun me."
"Like your people, my parents, well maybe not my father. Now my mother that's a different story. She's Jewish." he informed, drinking his tea.
"Why?"
Kyle sighed lightly, placing his drink back on the table. "Well my father was killed on duty."
"Let me guess, by a black person."
"Yes, during a traffic stop. My father didn't know that the man he pulled over, was wanted for a homicide, of a convenience store robbery."
"Sorry for your lost." Cecilia giving her condolence.
"It's okay. It happen when I was fifteen. I long gotten over the lost of my father."
"So that the reason you choosen to become a police officer, to catch the killer of your father?"

"Oh no." he gestured with his hands. "To continue my father passion for helping people. And protect those who can't protect themselves. My father use to tell me, you can be the smartest, richest person in the world. Its means nothing, if you withhold it from those who are less fortunate."

"I guess your father was a wise man."

"I guess so."

"Did the death of your father make you hate black people?" Cecilia wanted to know.

"No. I hated God."

Cecilia sat back in their booth, clearly understanding how Kyle had felt. "It was if God had fail to answer your request to protect those who you love much." Cecilia read the befuddled face on Kyle. She let a moment of reticent, leaning forward. "I use to asked God to watch over my husband, when he drove cabs. He could never know who rode in his taxi, and their intention."

"That how your husband was killed?"

"Yes. Shot in the back of the head."

Kyle leaned forward to grasp Cecilia hands, that laid on the table. He felt her sadness, transfer to him. Cecilia made no effort to remove them from his grasp. She welcome his comfort, something she hadn't had in two years.

"It's been very hard for me and my children. We can't understand God's plan, and reason. But with my strong Christianity belief, I still turn to him, because I have no one else."

"That's not true." he interceded. Cecilia stared in the blue eyes behind the wired rim glasses. "You have me now."

"It's odd, that you found something in me that's attractive. I'm just a poor girl, from a small village in Nigeria."

"Like you said, one would never understand God's plan, and reason."
Kyle tighten his grasp.

"I guess I just have to see what God has plan. Don't I." she smiled.
Kyle had been pleased with Cecilia, giving whatever it is between them a chance. He kissed the back of her hand, then released them. Cecilia studied Kyle looks and likable demeanor. Still bewilded that God answered her plea, with a caucasian. She decided not to ask why, and just thank him for sending a handsome one.
Taking another bite of her salad. "You know, the tomatoes taste like it's a day old also." she smiled, making Kyle chuckled.
Sherry went hysterical, when the guard Ms. Bell called her, telling her that Steven been stabbed. After calming down, she called Terrance, who quickly drove to her apartment. Finding Steven whereabouts, both jumped in his truck, and sped to John Sealy hospital in Galveston. Entering the hospital, Sherry eyes were bloodshot red, from crying. She been still distraught, as Terrance talked to the people in charge, wanting to see their son. Thirty minutes of red tape, Sherry and Terrance were escorted to a room to wait for their son. Terrance comfort Sherry, reminding her that the doctor said that Steven wounds were minor. About to respond, a guard rolled Steven in, in a wheelchair. With a blackeye, and busted lip, Sherry covered her mouth, astounded by her son feature. Steven hated to worry his mother into tears, when she had enough worries, just trying to keep a roof over his sisters, and her head. Steven repeatedly assured her that he was fine. "There were no internal damage done. Just a little puncher wound."

"WHAT HAPPEN? Who Did This? Why?" Sherry again becoming frantic. "Don't worry about it momma. I'm fine. Just some hater."

Sherry kissed and hugged her son. "Thank God you're okay."

Terrance stood there watching Sherry console his son, he haven't seen in over twenty years. He stood frozen, observing his seed. Amazed how he 's a splitting image of him. He no longer could control his emotion. Steven had turned his attention to the man who been wiping away his tears. He wasn't sure who been looking at. Is he really standing there, in the same room. Had the tylenols three, have him hallucinating. Steven stared at the face many time on his dresser mirror. A young brown skinned teenager, smiling holding a baby. Wearing a Denver Broncos jersey. Steven thought he haven't change much from the picture, taken twenty years ago. Just alittle gray. 

His mother confessed that she been the reason for their seperation, from his biological father. That she wanted a better life her and
her child. Angry for a while, thinking that Zach was his father, Steven later understood and forgave her.
Standing to his feet, tears rolled down Steven cheeks, as father and son spoke with their eyes, moving towards one another, and embraced, what seemed like an eternity. "You found me man.' Steven cried.

"I thought I'll never see you again." he replied. Sherry broke down in tears, witnessing their reunion. She felt shamed for what she had done. Keeping apart Steven from his father. Terrance pulled away, examining his son again. Touching every parts of his body. He stopped at his arms, and squeezed his eighteen inch biceps. "Been lifting weights?"

"A little." he smiled.
"Are you sure you're okay?" reexamining his son, thanking God, that he's alive.

"How did you fine mom?"
"By the grace of God." he answered, still wiping away tears.
"The Escape ran hot, and the gas station I pulled up into, your father happen to be there."
Terrance chuckled thinking back on the evening. "I was putting air in my tires, and heard her scream, when she touch the radiator cap. At that time I didn't know that it was your mother, when I went to help her."
Both, Steven and Terrance dumfounded by this day. They both wondered if they were still dreaming. "Do you know how long you gonna be in the hospital?" he asked.
"I'll probaly be on the bus tommorrow."
"Back to the prison where you got stabbed?" Sherry cried.
"I think so. But they probaly put put me in protective custody, until they ship me, to another unit."
"WHERE?" she inquired.
"Anywhere. I could remain close to home, or move to the other side of San Antonio, El Paso or all the way north to Amarillo. Texas got units all over this state."

"El Paso!" she shouted.

Steven nodded his head yes, in a depressed state.

"Don't worry Renee." Terrance putting his hand on her shoulder. 

"I'll make sure Steven stay close. I have associates I can contact. I'm sure they can help."

"You think so?" Sherry questioned desperately.

"I promise to do everything in my powers." he replied, as the correction officer informed them that their special visitation is over. Sherry was about to cause an uproar, until Terrance advised her to stay calm. "We will visit him this weekend. I wish you could meet your other little sister."

"You have a daughter?" Steven surprised.

"Yes, a ten year old, named Carmen. She knows about you. She out of town with her grandparents."

"Man, I have another sister to look after." he smiled.

"You just stay out of trouble. I'm here now, and I got you."

"Thanks."

"When do you come up for parole?"

"In seven months."

"I'm gonna get you a parole lawyer, to get you out this hellhole."

"Yes sir."

"Did you say yes sir?" Terrance retorted. Steven jolted a little in confusion. Surely he thought saying yes sir to his dad, showed him respect. Steven stared down at his father, who displayed a stone expression. Then suddenly curled into a half smile. Steven responded with a smile, then chuckled. "Yes dad."

"I been waiting for over twenty years to hear you say that word," son." Terrance embraced his son.
Nicole pulled up in the driveway of the forty-two hundred square foot maroon brick home. She had confounded how well Malik been doing for himself. They talked a few times, since he invited her to his club. The two haven't seen much of each other after Nicholas team won the city championship. Nicole still didn't know much about Malik, only that he claimed to be self-employed.

Malik had invited Nicole to his home for dinner, that he would prepare. He bragged on the phone, how marvelous of a cook he is. Nicole checked her appearance in the visor mirror, and reapplied her lipstick. She shook her head, making her shoulder length dreadlocks fall in place.

Knocking on the double oak doors, Nicole heard the barking of big dogs. She stepped back and started to retreat back to her vehicle, until she heard Malik voice, commanding the dogs to stop barking, and sit. When Malik opened the door. He found Nicole standing ten feet away from his door. He had a silly grin on his face, knowing the reason why Nicole been standing at a distant, but asked anyway.

"Why are you standing out in the middle of my entry way?"
"I heard them dam dogs barking and growling." she answered, clutching her Judith Leiber purse, in a position to run.

Malik laughed lightly. "I'm sorry if they frighten you. My dogs are friendly, and well trained." he opened the door all the way, for Nicole to get a view of his two Rotiwellers, who were sitting quietly looking back and forth at Malik and Nicole.

Nicole jumped back at the sight of them. "GODDAM! You keep those dogs inside your house?" she asked, taking two more steps back.

"Most of the time. Their my kids."
"Why you couldn't have a small dog. Like a chihuahua?"
"Now what black man owns a chihuahua, other than a gay one?" he responded. "Solomon, and Sheba, this is my new friend I been telling you about. Nicole. Say hello." he commanded.

Both barked twice in unison. Malik viewed Nicole in her P2i tight

(120)
navy jeans, white Charlotte Ronson blouse, and white Rene Coavila pumps. "Dam!" he said, under his breath. Speaking down to Solomon, he asked do you think she looks nice tonight?"

Solomon answered with two more barks. Nicole giggled. "Solomon think you look nice."

"What do you think?" shifting her hips to the right.

"More beautiful than the last time I saw you."

Nicole showed a smile, being wooo by his reply. "Come in baby. I got to check on the food, before it burn." Malik invited.

Nicole sighed heavily, taking tiny steps towards the door. The dogs tilted their head side to side, watching Nicole. Nicole paused in her tracks, when she seen Sheba licked around her mouth. "It's okay, she just wiping the saliva around her mouth."

Finally inside, Malik commanded Sheba to shake Nicole hand. Stick- ing out her paw, Nicole slowly shooked it. As well as Solomon. Malik ordering them to go out back and play, the two beasts ran a-way. Nicole observed Malik looking shape in a Cesare Attolini gray slacks, and black shirt, with a white collar, and cuffs. She smiled at his shoes. "White crocodiles loafers?" she said.

"I thought it goes with the collar and cuffs." he replied, acting like he was straighten out his shirt.

"Bold."

"I like to be different." kissing her on the cheek. "I'm glad you made it."

"I never turned down free food." she giggled.

Malik gestured towards the livingroom. He stared at the rear end of Nicole, in those fitted jeans. He barked twice, and Nicole turned around smiling. She survey his lovely home. It was hard to believe Malik furnished it himself, as though it look like it had a hand of an interior decorator. She love the three piece chocoal leather living room set. Instead of a love seat and chair, it been replaced by two lounge chairs with chrome feet. A color abstract of Picasso

(121)
hung over the fireplace, and a beautiful baby grand piano set in front of three twenty foot windows. A light green and mauve, changing colors blinds, covered the windows.

Malik had the middle blinds green, which gave a view to his pool in the backyard. "Have a seat. Anywhere you please, while I go check on our dinner."

Heading to the kitchen, Malik shouted if she wanted some wine to drink. "Yes please." Nicole answered, walking over to the 500 gallon baby shark tank, installed in the wall. "Did you decorate your home yourself?"

"No, it was a show home, and I bought most of the furniture I like. I just added the fish tank. Did my room, and convert one room to a gym."

"You have a exquisite home."

Malik enter the living room, with two glasses of red Cornerstone wine. He spoke, while handing hers. "I never heard anyone call my home exquisite. Always beautiful, nice, or when I invite my friends from the hood, they say You Got A Bad MuthaFucker." he laughed.

"Well lets say exquisite means all that. Especially that last meaning." they both laughed.

"Thank you." toasting their drinks. "I will give you a tour of the rest of it later, if you like. But right now, dinner is ready."

Malik took her hand, and lead her to the kitchen, with a wicked white table. All six chairs had high backs, with peanut butter cushions. A crystal vase, sat in the middle, with a white rose inside. Malik pulled out one of the chairs, for her to sit.

"It smells good, what are we having?"


After fumbling with his, he waited for Nicole to take a bite first. He watched Nicole closed her eyes, and chew slowly on the meat. She made a sweet humming sound. "You like it?" he grinned.

(122)
"It's delicious. What's in it to give it that tang taste?"

"The cardoon. It's a vegetable, that has like a bitter taste. It's part of the artichoke family. You can find them in Italian markets."

"Wow, you have to give me the recipe."

"Sure." he said, and then recommended her to try the sweet potatoes, leaning over and sticking his fork in her plate, feeding her. Nicole eyes widen with acceptance, making another sweet humming sound. "It's hot, but not to hot. What's that other taste, beside the sweet potatoes?"

"Cranberry."

"Wow, this is good. You should open a resturant." she suggested.

"I like cooking only for my lady and family." he replied, sitting back in his chair. Nicole pondered on his statement, wondering what that mean, since he had cook a lavish meal for her.

"It's strange, a man like you, that have this exquisite home. Drives a Range Rover, handsome, and can cook! Doesn't have a woman. It have me wondering, what's wrong with you." Nicole wiped her mouth with her napkin, and sat back. "I tried to pulled your name up on Goggle, but came up with nothing."

"And what kind of thoughts wonder through your mind?" Malik curious to know.

"Well, are you a woman beater. A control freak. Or." Nicole grabbed her wine glass, and sipped, staring at him.

"Or." he wanted her to finished. Nicole put her wine glass down, tilting her head. "Maybe, you're lacking in something."

Malik face expressed a look of confusion, searching for the understanding of Nicole riddle. Looking in her eyes, he followed them down between his pants. He bursted into laughter, as Nicole giggled herself. Reaching for his wine, he spoke. "I assure you I'm not lacking in that area."

"In the future, we might see." she simpered.
"Maybe."

"Maybe." he returned the same gestured.

Jabbing her fork into her food, she ask Malik to tell her more about himself. "What would you like to know first? he inquired.

"The truth." Nicole replied sternly, placing some food in her mouth.

Malik placed his fork down on his plate, and sat back in his chair, exhaling lightly, before answering her.

"Well my birth name is Lacy King. Born and raised in Fifth Ward.

Never knew my father, and my mother was a crackhead. So I had to hustle all my life. I was pretty smart in school, and a good foot-

ball player. Enough to earn a scholarship to Penn State. But I got injured, and turned to the streetlife. That landed me in prison for ten years, for murder."

Malik recognized the unpleasant reaction from Nicole. "It was a drug deal that went sour. When two dudes from out of town, pulled out their guns, and tried to robb me." he clarified what had happen.

"During my stint in prison I was acting a fool. Joined a gang, fighting, and extortion. Whatever, until this old man named Omar, pulled me to the side, and invited me to a muslims meeting. He spok-
ked that evening and said things that change my life around. "Malik paused reminising.

"And what was that?"

"The truth! That we were the reason we were failing as a race."

"Give me a reason, why we failing as a people?"

"Will be all night for that. But." Malik raised a hand. "I'll give you two simple reason. Jealousy and trust. The old crab in the buc-

ket metaphor. Blacks hate to see other balcks do good. We cut each other throats or backbite. Second, trust. We don't trust our own.

We'll trust a white man with our money, before we trust our selves. Ans those son of a--bitches do nothing but steal. America for example. When the last time you saw a Native American family out for dinner? And Native American we call them."

(124)
"I can't disagree." Nicole commented, reaching for her wine. "Like I said, I could go all night on that issue." he finished, eating some of his meal.

"So how did you end up owning this nice home, and driving a Range Rover?" Swallowing his food, Malik chuckled behind his success.

"One day I was watching the news, and been sadden by a pregnant woman losing her unborn child in a car crash." he paused before his next sentence, when Nicole dropped her fork and her mouth ajarred. Frightened that she might been choking, "Are you okay?" rising to his feet.

"You're responsible for the inventing the Pregnant Brace" she pointed.

"Yeah. I did some research on light and strong plastic materials, and had one made by someone I knew who work with plastic. Got the rights to the invention first, before I sold the idea to a invention company."

"Oh My God! I bought one of those brace, when I was carrying Nick." "Thank you, for buying my invention." he smiled.

"The company gave me million for the rights, and promise me fifteen percent of the profits sells." Nicole glanced around around the house. "Business must be good." she hinted.

He chuckled. "It pays the bills."

After enjoying their meal, Malik asked if she wanted some more wine. Watching him pour her another glass. "Why did you accept Islam?"

"It's hard to deny the truth." he answered sternly. "And Islam gives me structure, that I badly needed."

"You saying Christianity isn't the truth?"

"Sure it is, it just practice incorrectly."

"How's that?"

Malik laughed a second. "We don't have enough life time to break that down."
"So you don't believe in Jesus?"
"Can't believe in Islam, if you don't believe in Jesus."
Nicole been relieve to know that Malik believe in Jesus. She felt any one that didn't have Jesus in their lives, were evil.
"Why, change your name?"
"To reinvent myself. To become a better man. A better human being. Spiritual, mentally, and physically. Sometime you have to lose everything. Family, old friends, stomping ground, and even your name, to build a new you."
"And what do Malik Shakur mean?"
"Shakur means Ready. And Malik means King."
"Ready to be King." she smiled, recieving the same reaction from him.

Malik gave Nicole a tour of his home. Four bedrooms, three full baths. A small theater room, gym, and a dinning room, that sat ten people. She adore his bedroom, that been decorated in a acient Roman style. The high bed, almost needed steps to climb upon. Held up by hand crafted marble stone posts, and netted satin screen, covering the bed. Nicole couldn't help but wondered how many women Malik had sex with in that bed. Would she be the next and the last. After the small tour, they stepped out back, next to the pool, that been connected to a jacuzzi. Nicole searched for the dogs, asking where they were. "On the other side of the fence, roaming the field. I have a door, built in the backgate. You want me to call them?" he laughed.

Nicole stepped back waving her hand. "NO, NO, NO! let them roam."
"Are you still scared of them?" still laughing.
"Frighten, of those big ass dogs."
"I'm sure Nicholas would like them." he commented, trying to read the expression in Nicole feature and demeanor. Her eyes soften, and she exhibited a huge smile.
"He would love them."
Malik watched Nicole walk over to the pool and take off her shoes, sticking her foot in the water. "Do you know how to swim?"
"No."
"One day I have to teach you."
"So you never told me, why you don't have a girlfriend or wife?"
"Simple. I haven't found the right one."
"You think its because of your standards?"
"No. Theirs. Many women I met have no ambition. Have nothing to contribute. trying to use what's between their legs and not what's between their skulls, to land a gold mine."
"What make you think I'm different?"
Malik walked over to the pool, he squatted, stirring the water with his hand. Glancing at Nicole perfect manicure feet, he answered.
"I seen you in my dreams."
"He revealed, rising back to his full height, gazing in her brown eyes.
Nicole laughed. She thought his response been corny. "Really! You saw my face in your dreams? pointing to herself.
"Yes. I saw a beautiful, smart, ambition woman. A devoted wife. Another who loves her family. Is that not you?" he asked, reaching to touch her dreadlocks.
Nicole been cast in a spell, by describing her in his dreams. Her eyes never left his, as he rubbed his hand across her cheek. Malik touch been soft and electrifying, causing her to become aroused. Nicole dropped her head to break the spell, but Malik lifted it up with his finger, and kissed her. "Dam!" his lips is just as soft as his touch." she said in her mind.
When he finished, flashing his perfect pearls, Malik looked up into the warm summer night. The stars were visible and shining bright in the city. "It's a fine night for a cruise, and dancing under the stars."
"What, you want to go to a club?"
"No, not really. I have something else in mind."
"Like what?"

Malik grinned, then pecked her on the lips. "Come with me." taking her hand, and heading to his three car garage. Pressing the garage door opener, the lights came on, displaying Malik's luxury cars, and bikes.

A glacier white and beluga interior convertible Bently Continental. One custom gold and black stretched streetbike, and chopper. On the other side of the bikes, a silver over black sport car. Long and sitting low. Nicole walked over to it, and massaged her hand over the exotic vehicle.

"I seen and rode in nice sports cars, but never seen anything like this. What is it?"
"A Saleen S7. One of four factory competition cars." he answered, walking over to her. "I wanted a Ferrari, but had to have this machine when I saw it on the internet."
"Its beautiful."
"Oh, you mean exquisite?" he smiled.
"No! I mean it's a bad muthafucker." she reinstated, causing Malik to burst in laughter. "It must cost a fortune?"
"Yeah. A lot more than the Ferrari I wanted. But hell, you only live once."

"Once is enough, if you driving something like this." she replied, opening up the door, and sitting behind the wheel.
Malik though Nicole looked sexy behind the wheel, observing her through the passenger window. "Would you like to drive it?"
"Please!" sounding like a schoolgirl.

Driving to their destination, Nicole asked Malik does he do anything else, then coach little league football, workout, and collect royalties check from his invention. She been astounded to find out that Malik been a published author. "What kind of books you write; Street-Novels?"
"No, I wanted to go outside the box, and wrote a vampire series. A sort of love story."

The more Nicole learned about Malik, the more amazed she been by him. Turning around his rough upbringing, and misfortunes. Spended ten years in prison. Accepting and understanding the reality, that he is in control of his own destiny. That nothing is owed to you.

"After you accomplished your goal, I learned you can't become content. You have to set new ones."

"So now that you sold your invention, and became rich."
"WHOA!" looking over at her, waving a finger. "I'm not rich. Oprah, Bill gates, Warren Buffet, Zach Meganberge, their rich. Me, I just live comfortable."

Nicole took her eyes off the road for second, to give him, if you say so look. "So now that you accomplished two of your goals you set for yourself, what's next?"

Malik turned in his seat. "Have you been listening to anything I said tonight? I'm looking for a wife. Marriage is fifty percent of my faith."

Nicole gazed over at Malik, who been smiling at her. He tried to interpret the expression in her face. Nicole been trying to comprehend Malik's words. Could God now favor her, and finally bless her with a man, that could provide security, shelter, trust, and also love her son. She been waiting years to have all this Milo.

Nicole was brought back from her cogitation, when Malik told her.

"I know I'm handsome to look at, but if you don't pay attention to the road, we might crash."

"OOPS." she giggled.

Nicole revealed to Malik, EVERYTHING, about her past. Being an ex-stripper. Her present situation, occupation, and her future. And that she wanted to start her own home health care, and nursing agency. One thing she knew, as long mankind exist, that there would always
be old and sick people.
Malik had been blown away, by the revelation that Nicholas father
is former football player, Milo Manning. And that Nicholas doesn't
know. Nicole held nothing back, giving full details, about falling
in love, with the married man, and believing the lies by Milo. Pro-
mising to leave his wife for her.
Nicole couldn't get a grasp on how Malik felt about her past, as
they rode the rest of the way to their destination in silence. Ni-
cole drove down the seawall ramp, onto the beach. Parking, Malik
removed his shoes, and got out of the car. Nicole watched him in-
side the car, stand in the shadow of the Gulf waters, staring out
into the darkness.
Malik loved the sound of the ocean waves, and the smell of the salt
water. He glanced up at the seagulls, gliding above. Being close
to the water, was like paradise to him. He was able to think, medi-
tate, and feel closer to God.

Nicole removed her shoes, to join him. She said nothing for a moment,
as she stood beside him, staring out into the dark water. Suddenly
Nicole felt the heat of Malik stares. "You having second thoughts
about me now?" she asked, never looking him.

"Why would I? Because you were an exotic dancer. I use to be a drug
dealer. A cancer to the community. A convicted murderer. Who am I
to judge your past. We were survivors!" Malik emphasized. He turned
completely to her. "You held nothing back from me. With that you
have earned my trust. Now I know where you come from. Who you are,
and where you're going. And it seem like we going in the same direc-
tion."
Nicole lost herself in his ebony eyes, captivated by the man that
stood before her. "No man exist like you." she told him.
Malik been flattered by the praise. "Ditto." he replied, then kissed
her passionately. When they finally came up for air, Malik took her
hand, and headed back to the car.

(130)
"Where we going?" Nicole curious.

"No where. Remember I told you at the house, it's a nice night to dance under the stars." Malik Hopped in his car, searching through CD's. "It's things I want to express to you, on how I feel about you. And there's only one group in the world, that can express it in a song."

Nicole frowning wondering. "What group is that?"

Malik stepped out, taking her hand. "Listen." wrapping his arm around her waist. Nicole exhibited all thirty two teeth, when she heard the music. "Yeah beautiful. The baddest band in the land. God's elements. Earth, Wind and Fire! Love has found away, in my heart tonight."
Raine was trying to stay professional, in a therapy session with Mr. Churchbell, who was having no control over his muscles. But Lusted was somehow controlling his penis. Lekesha been happy to be back assigned to the ICU unit, of the hospital. She was exhausted from dancing all night. Right now she did not have the energy, or patience to be lifting or cleaning any patients. Especially cleaning their shit. Lekesha check the EKG monitors, of the four patients that she's watching. All heartbeats were stable, which allow her to sit down, and shut her eyes for a few minutes. She figured five minutes of rest, would give her thirty minutes of energy. After second of her eyes closing, Lekesha head dropped in her chest, deep in a state of unconsciousness.

Nicole sat at the nurses station updating the hospital residency, when the red light flashed, drawing her attention to the monitor numbered three. She pushed away from the desk counter, rolling over to the monitors. Pressing the intercom, to ask Lekesha what's the problem, Lekesha jumped to her feet, when she heard her name shouted for the third time. When she became conscious what's happening, she rushed over to the frail old white woman, checking for a pulse. She ran over to the intercom, to informed Nicole of the situation. Lekesha leaped off her feet, when Kathrine and Dr. Matthews, crashed through the door. Dr. Matthews felt for a pulse, and found none. He ordered Kathrine to bring over the fibrillator, to try and get Mrs. Conrad heart beating again.

Dr. Matthews set the dial on the machine, and rubbed the two pads together, before placing it on her chest. "Clear!" he said, before pressing the button. The electric shock, jerked Mrs. Conrad from her bed, scaring Lekesha. Dr. Matthews place his ear to her chest, while at the sametime watching the monitor. No response, Dr. Matthews rubbed the two pads together, once more, giving the lifeless woman
another shock. "No response." he said again. Repeating the process. 
Finding no hope in reviving the patient, Dr. Matthews sighed heavi- 
ly, saddened by the present of death. No matter how many times he had 
seen it, he understood two things. That no matter how hard he tries 
to keep his patients alive, it nothing he could do to keep them a-
live, if they didn't have the will to live, or when God calls them 
home. Mrs. Conrad wasn't his patients, so he didn't know what categ-
gory Mrs. Conrad fell under.
Checking the time on the wall, to record her time of death. Dr. Mat-
thews turned to the gloomy face of Kathrine. "We tried." he spoke.
Placing his hand on her shoulder, before he started to leave. Kath-
rine forced a half smile at him, then stepped closer to Mrs. Conrad 
bed. She removed the grey strand of hair from her face, cause by 
the shocks. Kathrine recited a little prayer, like always, then 
turned to Lekesha, to abstract information on what happen, until 
both been startled by the deep inhale of Mrs. Conrad.
Quickly Kathrine turned around, clutching her hand. She ordered Lek-
esha to call back Dr. Matthews, as she massaged her hand. Catching 
sight of Dr. Matthews, before turned the the hall corner, Lekesha 
shouted out his name, informing that Mrs. Conrad is breathing again. 
He stopped in his tracks, turning around smiling at Lekesha. Knowing 
now Mrs. Conrad had chosen the will to live.
Sherry, Gary and Cecilia stood outback on their break. Gary had the women in a uproar, how he and Nelson gotten into a fight at the club, with another gay couple. Gary was overheard playing RedCarpet Drag queen, insulting the couple matching outfit. Gary stopped running his mouth and pointed out into the parking lot. The ladies followed his direction, and watched the honey brown Panamera Porshel, pulled up in the parking lot. "There's Connie's drugking man." he said. "Watched me fuck with him."

"I wouldn't do that. Connie say Monte hates gay people." Cecilia informed.

"Fuck That Nigga! When the Feds catches his ass, and give him a life sentences, he gonna have to find a man to cuddle up with." Gary stood to his feet, turning around, sticking out his skinny ass towards Monte. Gary looked back and waved. Monte let down his tinted window, sticking out his arm, creating his hand in a gesture of a gun. He pulled back on his wrist, signifying the recoil, after squeezing the trigger.

"If he could get away with it, he would kill you." Sherry told Gary. "Maybe." he sat down on the bench. "I wouldn't be surprise if he just playing the role."

"What role?" Cecilia confused.

"Being on the Down Low."

"I don't think so, with that gesture he just made at you." Cecilia commented.

"Girl, you be shock to find those niggas you think is hard, rough, claiming to be gangters, come knock on my friends doors."

The ladies attention turned when Connie stepped outside. Pausing for a moment to find Monte car. "He's parked behind your car Connie." Gary pointed.

Connie spotted the Porsh, smiling and thanking Gary. Walking to the car, Gary yelled. "Tell Monte to hook me up with one of his friends.

(134)
I know he gots some homeboys on the D.L"
Connie laughed, while she got into Monte car. Both leaned over to
kiss each other passionately. Monte ranned his hand down Connie
cheek. Connie placed her hand on Monte thight, and slowly moved it
upwards to squeeze his penis. Monte moaned, before they broke away.
Connie never release her grip on Monte penis, as she giggled feeling
the pulse of his mushroom.
Monte could almost pass for Fifty Cent twin, except he was a bit
more muscular. Wearing some Sean John jeans shorts, and North Caro-
lina throwback Jordan jersey, Connie thought his smile made his eyes
sparkle.
"Look like someone missed me."

He chuckled. "Very much."
Connie leaned close to his penis. "And I miss you too." she said,
making Monte laugh.
"I wasn't excepting you back from Mississippi until Thursday. I was
happy when I recieve your texts, telling me you were out in the
parking lot. Everything went okay?"
"Everything is gravy. Those Mississippi boys is a little country,
but I respect their hustling game."
Knowing Monte occupation, Connie never ask to many question. She
just wants to know if everything went smooth. If Monte every hinted
that things could go wrong, she would plea with him to stop the
transaction.
Connie had already let Monte know that she taken her lunch break,
and just ran out to give him a kiss. Disappointed, he promise to
take her out to a nice dinner tonight. "Let's pass on going out to
dinner tonight, and just have dessert." she raised her eyebrows.

"You nasty." he chuckled, leaning over to give her a kiss. Glancing
over at Gary, Monte been interested what he had shouted to her.
"Wanted to know if you could hook him up with one of your friends."
"IS THAT SKINNY MUTHAFUCKING FAG SERIOUS!"
"Baby, don't pay any attention to Gary, he just a walking entertainment. Gossiping all the time."
"Connie, this homosexual shit is getting out of hand. Somebody needs to put all their asses on a island, so they can die off."
"Even women?"
"Women too. Except, Robin Roberts, Ellen Degenerous, and Queen Latifa. I like those lesbians."

Kathrine headed out back behind the hospital with some heavy boxes to burn in the incinerator. She been alittle upset, that she could not find Chase to do it. Dropping the boxes on the ground, she begin to reach for the incinerator door handle, until she been startled by a deep voice. "I wouldn't touch that handle with your bare hand."

Kathrine stared back at the salt and pepper headed man. His thick beard matched his head. His overalls was unhook, and for the first time, she noticed how well fit he been. His face displayed a look of seriousness. But his soft eyes, told her he's harmless like a teddy bear. "Mr. Washington, I didn't know you were in the maintance shop."

"Where else would I be. Fixing the hospital is part of my job." he said, walking towards her. He hooked the straps to his overalls, and pulled out some gloves from his back pockets. He opened the furnace door, causing Kathrine to step back from the heat that rushed out. Mr. Washington grabbed one of the boxes, and tossed it inside.

"These boxes are pretty heavy. why you didn't get Chase to carry them for you?"he asked, tossing the second box inside.
"They wasn't that heavy." she lied, not wanting to get Chase in trouble. Kathrine watched Mr. Washington closed the furnace door. Taking off his gloves, he placed them back in his back pocket. Kathrine studied Mr. Washington features, coming to a conclusion, that he would be a nice catch for any woman, if he just trim his beard,
and wear something else, other than those same overalls.
Mr. Washington broke her trance, asking if she needed any more help
 carrying more boxes.

"No. No, thank you, those were the only two boxes."
"Okay, call me if you need my help." he said, heading back to the
 maintance shop.

Kathrine stood still watching, Mr. Washington disappear through the
 open door. Instead of going back inside the hospital, she creeped
closer to the maintance shop door. Once at the door, she peeped in-
side, and been abit at awe. At how clean and organized the shop was.
Not a tool laid on the table. All hung on the wall, Kathrine figured
in alphabetical order, and size.
In the far left corner of the shop, Kathrine saw a fruiton couch.
A table made with two by fours, and a twenty seven inch tv. She
 scanned the shop again in search of Mr. Washington. Kathrine spotted
two other door, with signs, which read restroom, and exit. She
slowly walked farther inside, checking behind the long wooden counter.
Not finding him, she wondered where in the hell he had gone so fast.
Turning on her heels to check the back door, Kathrine again been
startled by Mr. Washington, who was leaning against the entry door,
holding a saw. "Can I assist you with anything?"

Kathrine panic at the sight of the saw. She began to think the
hospital rumors about Mr. Washington were true. She fumbled with
her words. "UUUMM, I was just imagining what is stored in the main-
tance shop. I never seen the inside, in the many years I worked
here."

"What did you expect to see, or find, other than tools?" he stood
straight.
Kathrine shrugged her shoulders, in confusion, throwing her hands in
the air. "Tools." she let out a frighten giggled.

"Yes that's what one would find in a maintance shop. Tools and
spare parts."
Kathrine surveyed the shop again. "Again you have a lot of tools in here. More than my husband has in our garage."

"I'm sure this shop had more tools than any average home garage." he replied walking towards her.
Kathrine didn't know if she should scream, or take off running, when Mr. Washington became within two steps of her. Gossybumps covered her body, as she took a step back. Mr. Washington walked passed her, to hang up the saw, in it proper place. "Or did you come inside to see if you could find a dead body." he asked turning around, staring at her, with a raised eyebrow.

"Chase tells me about the silly stories those nurses say about me. Especially that confused, I don't know what he is character, Gary. That I snatched little kids off the street, and chop them up, then burn them in the furnace. I'm sort of disappointed in you. A woman with your intelligent, and age would believe such foolishness."
Kathrine began to apologize, until something Mr. Washington said dawned on her. "What do You Mean A Woman My Age!" she scowled.
"You saying I'm old? she folded her arms.

"Of course not. I meant mature, to believe foolishness." he clarified.

"Ooh. Okay." unfolding her arms.
Silence parted them for a second, as Kathrine searched for something else to say. Glancing over at the fruiton couch, she spoke. "I guess some of the tells are true."

"And what is that?"
"That you live in this shop."
Mr. Washington turned his attention to his housing area of the shop, for the last five years.
"You don't have any family or children?"
"No, it just me."

(138)
"No home, apartment, resident of your own?"
"No. Why? When I can stay here for free. Benefit for being on call twenty four hours."
"No girlfriend?"
Mr. Washington shook his head no. "Always busy patching up this hospital."
"What do you live off of?" Kathrine asked, searching for a place to cook. But only saw a microwave.
Mr. Washington flinched, slightly confused about what Kathrine just asked. "What do you mean?"
"What do you eat to survive?"
"A lot of Subway sandwiches."
"When the last time you had a home cook meal?"
Mr. Washington thought, and was sadder by the memory, of his last cook meal. "he sighed heavily, before answering her. "Too long to remember." he lied.
"Well Mr. Washington, I don't mean to be all in your business, or sound harsh. But if you get out of those overalls, and trim down that mountaineer beard, you will find a woman that would cook you a home cook meal. You're to handsome of a man to be alone."
"What make you think, I don't like being alone." he now folded his arms.
"A woman senses."
"Yes. A gift God given us woman to know something is deeply wrong." He continued laughing at Kathrine assessment, of God gift to woman.
"Oh, you think that's funny?" she frowned.
"No Mrs. Mills. Just not true."
"Why?"
Mr. Washington erased the humor, having a flashed back of the past. He stared at the crack in the concrete floor. "She would have sense
something wrong, when she walked out the door." he said, unconsciously.

"What?" Kathrine didn't understand.
Mr. Washington stared up at Kathrine. She recognized sorrow in his eyes. She knew something in his past had deeply affected him. Her senses told her a woman, very close to his heart. "Nothing, nothing." Mr. Washington replied.
Stepping closer to Kathrine, he ask if he could do anything else for her, because he had a lot of work to do. Kathrine took a moment to answer him. "No. I'll let you get back to your work." she gave a half smile, and turned to leave.
Before she exit the door, she turned. "If you need to talk to somebody. I'll be more than happy to listen." she told him.

"I'm fine. Thank you for your concern. But I will keep that in mind."

(140)
CHAPTER 28  The Dead

After work, Lekesha drove up into the parking lot of a small shopping center. There been a lingerie shop, her fellow dancers at the club told her about, that sold fantasy hot stage wear. Next to the shop, been a small boutique that sold unname designers clothes, purses, ans accessories. A woman inside assisting a costumer caught only a glimpse of Lekesha, getting out of her pink Hummer. She wasn't sure who she thought she might have saw. Forty five minutes later, Lekesha left the store with over five hundred dollars worth of costumes and lingerie. It been hard for her not to buy everything she love in the store. Throwing everything in the backseat, she now had to go grocery shopping, to cook for her date tonight.

The woman in the boutique looked up from the register, and couldn't believe her eyes. She excused herself from the register, asking her co-worker, Shonda, to help the costumer at the register, never taking her eyes off Lekesha. Lekesha about to hop inside her SUV, heard her name called. She turned to see, and though she had seen a ghost from her past. The two women stood still, staring at one another. When Lekesha left home six years ago, she swore that she never wanted to see her again. Lekesha jumped into her truck, and turned the ignition. The woman didn't move or say anything. Lekesha put her hand on the gearshift, but couldn't throw it in reverse. She looked into the eyes of the woman that given her birth. Her beauty. And at one time, all her love. Lekesha placed her head on the steering wheel, and begun sobbing. Her mother Roxanne, walked over to the driver side, placing her hand on the window. Imagining, it been her little girl, she was touching for the first time in years.

"Lekesha." she called her name barely audible, but crystal clear to Lekesha.

(141)
She looked up into the face of the teary eye woman. After the death of her father, mother and daughter were all they had. Lekesha put her hands back on the steering wheel, and shouted to her mother to go away.

"Lekesha, I'm Sorry Baby!" she pleaded.
"Shut Up! Shut Up! You Didn't Believe Me. When That Monster Rufus Tried To Rape Me! I told you that I never wanted to see you again. And I still feel the same way now!" throwing her truck in reverse, and speeding away. Roxanne continued to scream for her to stop, until the pink machine drove away, turning right on the next block.

After the surprised encounter with her mother, it took awhile for Lekesha to pulled herself together. Checking the time, she had forgotten about her date, who will knocking on her door in thirty minutes. After what transpired with her today, she wasn't in no mood for company. Grabbing her cell, and finding the number on the memory list, just before she's about to press dail, she heard a knock on the door. "DAM!" she cursed, running to the nearest mirror, to examining her appearance "Shit! cursing again, her make-up was smeared all over her face, looking like a sad clown. Lekesha jumped, when she heard what were knocks, now sounded like banging. She couldn't call now, and say she wasn't at home, with her Hummer parked out front.

Lekesha sighed heavily, realizing she'll have to cancel dinner, face to face. Opening up the door, the older dressed man, quickly spoke.

"Did someone call the fire department?" he smiled.
His smiled been quickly erased, when he noticed Lekesha face. "Dam! What's wrong? Did somebody in your family die?"
"No. The opposite. Somebody came back from the dead."

(142)
CHAPTER 29 The Congressman

Connie had been surprised when she enter the home that her and Monte rented on the southside of town.
Rose peddles were on the floor, that led a trail to the stairs, up to their bedroom. At the bottom, laid a single rose, and a card. "A single rose, for a one of a kind woman." it read.
Connie smiled, while smelling the scent of the rose. Getting closer to the top of the stairs, she could hear the soft music of Joe, playing. Connie now took two steps at a time, rushing to get Monte. When she opened the door, her mouth fell ajar. Monte had bought a flashing light, that created a slow motion movement. He laid naked in the bed, with a huge smile. "Dessert is ready." he said.

Congressman Davis sat in his expensive burgundy Italian leather chair, behind his solid cherry oak desk. He stared at the picture of his little girl, wearing a pink dress, looking like a princess. He loved her with all his heart, and would give his life to protect her. The congressman rubbed his hand across his face, confused on how to handle, his life changing revelation.
He reached to pick up the vanilla envelope on his desk. He opened it, and read it for the upteen time, hoping his eyes were betraying him. Ninety nine percent, you are not the father. Everytime he read it, his heart felt like it was being twisted. Congressman Davis glanced at the picture of him and Letta in Hawaii. He didn't want to believe his wife of eighteen years had cheated with another man. A kid at that.
As much as he love Dedra, his heart and mind was in sync, as his eyes wasn't blind of the features and characteristic of Dedra.
For years, Letta and Marvin struggled to have a child, trying all kind of frailty drugs, that never produce results. After they had giving up, and begin to think about adopting, Letta suddenly became pregnant.
The congressman tossed the envelope back on his desk, and stood up,
walking over to the window in his office. From the fifth floor he stared down at the Austin morning traffic. Recieving no signs, looking out into the world, the congressman balled his fist tight, causing his knuckles to crack. His thought been disturbed, by the buzzing sound of the intercom on his desk. "Yes Sally." he answered.

"There's a Mr. Savage here to see you."
"Send him in please."

The congressman stood back by the window, trying to find harmony from the beautiful scenery of the city. Hearing the knock on the door, he granted permission to come in.

A caucasian middle age man in a dark blue suit, and matching hat in his hand, enter the office. In his other hand, he held a yellow envelope. "Congressman Davis, I have something for you."

The congressman sighed in disappointment, before turning to face him. "I guess some bad news." he replied. Mr. Savage followed the congressman with his blue eyes to his desk, as he took a seat. The congressman loosen his tie, while asking Mr. Savage to show him what he got.

He walked over to the desk, and laid the envelope down. The congressman stared at it for a moment, then glance back up at Mr. Savage, before opening it. He felt his soul being ripped out from his body, and his flesh folding. He look intently at the photos of his wife, and Dedra at the zoo, accompany by another man.

"The man in the picture is."
"Chase Daniel." The congressman said the name, before he could reveal it. "I know who he is. A student my wife used to tutor at Texas Southern."

The congressman emotion were mixs with anger, and sorrow, seeing the photos of his wife, kissing Chase at the hotel. He came to the conclusion that Chase must be Dedra biological father.
Back tracking to the pictures, where Chase was giving Dedra a car full of presents, the congressman placed the pictures on his desk, and sat back. He closed his eyes, massaging his temples. Turning his vision of the three of them at Disney World, he forced a half smile.

"Is there anything else I can do for you Congressman Davis?" he asked.

The congressman continued gazing at the picture for a long moment, before he responded. "I need you to get rid of my problem."
Roxanne locked the door to the boutique. Every since she seen her only child, Lekesha, her spirits been down. Barely making it through the wordays. She glanced up and down the busy Westhiemer avenue, in front of the shopping center, then up at the full moon. She saw the image of Lekesha teary face, in which it tore her soul. Roxanne sighed, fighting back tears. Sitting at the bus stop, she search through her purse for her bus pass. When she look up, she been shock to see the pink Hummer, parked in front of her. Lekesha sat behind the wheel, staring forward, never looking over at her. Roxanne stood up, confused about Lekesha intention. She tilted her head, when she heard the passenger door unlock. Roxanne exhibit an expression of hope, and gathered her things. Roxanne thank her for the ride home. "Where do you live?" Lekesha asked, still never looking in her direction. "Third Ward. I'm renting a motel with a kitchen, off Scott, and Fourty Five." "That's a long bus ride, back and forth to work." "Barely making above minimum wage. It was the only thing I could afford."

Roxanne glanced around Lekesha SUV. She been at awe with the navigation system, and digital radio. The soft comfortable leather seat. Roxanne smiled, and made herself more comfortable. Roxanne looked over at her daughter, and recognized that she still had on her work clothes. "I guess you some kind of nurse? Must be a R.N or L.V.N, to drive something nice like this?" she smiled. Lekesha didn't respond, as she kept her focus ahead. Realizing Lekesha wasn't still ready to have a conversation, Roxanne clutch her purse, that sat on her lap, and stared forward. They rode in silence for a while, until Lekesha for the first time looked over at her mother. Roxanne could feel the heat of her stares.
Fighting her will to look back at her, she turned her eyes out the passenger window. Lekesha studied her mother, who look a lot better, than the day she decided to leave. It's unbelievable, how drugs could make beautiful human being, look like monsters. Inside and out.

"So how long you been working at the boutique?"
"Nine months."
"Do they have nice clothes?"
"Yes. I think so. Clothes designed by unnamed designers, who trying to get their products out there."
"I might come in there one day, and see what they have."
"That would be great. You can use my employee discount. 40% off on anything."

Lekesha examining her mother attire. A red and white slanted stripe fitted dress, and black ankle strap heels. "What you have on, comes from the boutique?"

"Yes. One of Houston own up and coming, Mimmi France she's an African American designer. But I really doubt that's her real name. Who would name their child Mimmi?" she giggled, hoping to get the same reaction from Lekesha. Lekesha forced a smile, and turned her attention back to the freeway.

Roxanne had hope that she had chipped alittle of the ice, in their cold relationship, but recognized the fakeness in her smile. So she clear her throat, and look back out the passenger window, clutching her purse.

Lekesha observed how her mother clutched her purse, and shaking her legs. A sign she saw many times, when she was strung out on crack.

"You still doing drug?"

Roxanne look intently at her daughter, before answering. "No. I went to rehab. I haven't done any drugs in over a year and a half."

"Then why are you holding on so tight to your purse, and frightening?"
"This morning on my way to work, a crackhead tried to snatch my purse. And I'm also nervous."

"About what?"

"Keeping from saying anything that might upset you."

"What do you think you can say that will upset me momma? There's nothing you can say that can upset me, except that I'm liar." Lekesha said harshly.

Roxanne stared down at the floor of the Hummer. She remembered those words vividly. Like yesterday. When Lekesha waited two days, for her mother to come home, chasing drugs. At the time, her boyfriend Rufus, tried to rape her. At fourteen, crying. "Momma Rufus came here while you were gone, and tried to rape me!"

"Lekesha get away from me with that lying bullshit! I know you hate Rufus, because he isn't your father. Stop Lying Girl!"

"How I can let you know how sorry I am for not believing you. Being hooked on drugs, gives me no excuses, for allowing a man to violate the person I love, and suppose to protect. I just didn't have any control over myself."

"Where's Rufus?"

"Dead."

"How?"

"He went to prison for sexual assault of a child. A family member of the child was in the same prison, and killed him."

Lekesha smiled. "God is Good." she said to herself. "Is there another man in your life?"

"No. I just been trying to get my life back on track. You?"

Lekesha thought for a second before answering. "I do, but he's taking at the moment."

"Oh, he's married. Playing a dangerous game Lekesha."

"You need not worry. I can take care of myself. I been doing it since I was fourteen." she retorted, looking at her mother. Roxanne dropped her eyes, hurt, knowing she couldn't rebutt her comment.

(148)
Lekesha drove up in the parking lot of the motel, she knew her Hummer been out of place, as the dope fiends, and drunks stared at it. She parked in front of room 135. The room her mother rented. Quickly a dopefiend ran up to her SUV, with a bucket, and rag, asking if he could clean her windows.

"Get Away Doug! She Don't Need Her Window Clean!" Roxanne shouted, through the window.

"Well do you have some spare change?" he begged.

"NO! get away from my fucking truck!" Lekesha responded.

"Fuck You Bitch!" he retorted back, turning to leave.

"Sorry." Roxanne apologized.

Lekesha looked around the dump, and couldn't believe her mother was living here. She frowned at the mutt, hopping on three legs, and looking like it had the manes. Across the street in the empty lot, homeless men and shopping karts of junk, gather around a barrel of fire. In her passenger mirror she saw a young man step out of a motel room, dressed in a Phat Farm outfit. Lekesha knew he been the drug peddler of the complex.

"How long you been staying here?"

"A few months."

"You have a gun?"

"No. I place the dresser in front of the door at night."

Lekesha lifted her middle console, and retrieved a chrome twenty five. "You know how to use a gun, right?"

Roxanne stared at the gun, and nodded her head. "Continue putting your dresser in front of the door, and put this under your pillow."

"Okay." Roxanne forced a smile, taking the gun, and putting it in her pruse. "Thank you."

"When is your next off day?"

"I work seven days a week."

"I need to know when you can take a day off, so we can go look for
you another place for you to stay. And maybe an affordable car."
Tears begin to swell in Roxanne eyes. She reached for Lekesha hand, thanking her repeatedly. Lekesha stared down at her hand, but didn't remove it. Deep inside, she misses her mother touch. She wrote on a piece of paper, and handed to her mother.

"Call me, and let me know when you can take a day off."
Roxanne remembered the number, before she put it in her purse. "I will see you tommorrow?"

"I don't think so. I have something to do. Just get a day off, so I can get you out of this dump. Right now, I need to get home, and get ready for work in the morning."
Roxanne understood, it's time to exit. Opening the door, and thanking her again, Lekesha waited until her mother been safely in her motel room, before she back out to leave.
Roxanne wiped her tears, peeping out the window, watching her daughter drive off. She placed the dresser draw in front of the door, and then the gun under her pillow. Sitting on the edge of the bed contemplating about Lekesha, getting her outter here, the attention of headlights crushed her window, and the sound of a horn. Roxanne slowly pulled back the faded curtains, and saw Lekesha Hummer out front. Lekesha flashed her highbeams, indicating for her mother to come out.
Roxanne stepped outside, walking over to the driverside, confused. Lekesha let down her window. "Grab something. Toothbrush and clothes. You staying with me tonight. Daddy be upset, if I allow you to spend another night here."
The Fourth of July day been a even hundred degrees, and the women of Monroe hospital were playing cards, under the tent, while their man were under another tent, slamming dominoes. Russell sweated in front of the barbeque pit, cooking for the whole gang. Its a ritual the ladies at the hospital started six years ago. Sherry and Gary partnered up against, Raine and Nicole, as the others watched waiting for their turn. Gary cut Raine king of heart, with a ten of spade. "Dam! you only had one heart?" Raine said shocked.

"Yep. And cut it with a ten of spade. The same age as that young boy you brought with you." he teased. The ladies all giggled alittle at Gary comment, making Raine feel alittle embarrass.

"He's just my patient, that's all." she responded, cutting Gary queen of club.

"You sure that's all? He is fine and goodlooking." Connie said. Raine looked over at Marcus, slamming down dominoes, and cracked a half smile. She went back to studying her hand. "No, we just friends." she answered, remembering how Marcus had her legs wide open on her desk, just before they came to the barbeque.

"Then what's that silly grin for?" Gary asked.

"What grin?" acting inaned.

"That grin that had you thinking back, when you gave him some that ass!"

"Gary!" Kathrine shouted. "Do you always have to be so blunt?"

"Sorry Kathrine, forgot you were sensitive. Let me rephrase that please. When you gave him some pussy?"

"Gary! Kathrine shouted again, laughing along with the rest of the women.

"Was he good?" Kathrine asked seriously. Raine mouth flew wide open, stunned by her question.

"Ooh no, not you too Kathrine." Raine said. "Boy you women are a mess." Raine shaking her head in amazement.
"Well." Sherry raised an eyebrow.

"Well what?"

"Was the youngster good?" Sherry now raised both eyebrows. Raine hissed at the women, placing her hand of cards on the table, and looking intensely at every person, before she spoke. "Wore me out this morning, at my office. After just running thirty minutes on the treadmill."


"Go cougar.״ Nicole giggled.

Cecilia tried to hide her amusement, acting like she been appalled by her co-workerd conversation. Gary read the expression in Cecilia, asking she's okay.

"I'm dumbfounded by the subject that we are discussing. Raine sex-life with a young man. In my country, we don't discuss topics like this in my village."

"Welcome to America, Miss Thing." Gary interrupted.

"One don't see older women with younger men. Totally opposite."

"What about an African woman from the village, with a white man?" Nicole asked.

"Never in my village. And barely in the city. Its frowned upon by many."

"So you can't take Kyle back to your homeland?"

"OOH NO!" Cecilia shaking her head. "They will disown me."

"What about the myth. Is it true?" Gary asked.

"What myth Gary? I don't comprehend what you talking about."

"Stop playing stupid village girl." Gary laid his cards on the table. "We seen on tv, in books. in the national geographics, those tall slim African village men, walking around with their ding dong, to their knees. What about white men? is the myth true, that their penis is smaller than black men?"
"I don't know. Kyle and I haven't come close about to having sex."

she answered.

"What!" Gary shocked.

"Yes. I only kissed him a few times. We're in no rush."

"You're not in a rush. I bet he anxious to discover why if you go
black, you can't go back. Ain't that right Connie?" Gary turning
the intimate subject on her. Holding in their laughter, all eyes
turned to her, waiting for her response.

"I don't know. I never had sex with a white man."

"Are you serious!" Raine bewildered.

"Carl, my daughter father was the first, and only until he was
killed.

"And Monte, is the only other man?" Sherry questioned.

"Yes."

"What!" Gary shouted.

"Yeah. Why surprised? Everyone isn't a Ho like you." Connie retorted,
making the ladies giggled.

"Ain't that the truth." Sherry blunted.

Gary stared at Sherry with narrow eyes, rolling his neck. "What you
laughing at Sherry. I see that your twart started inching. This the
first time you brought a male friend to our Independent Day gather-
ing. So who is he?"

"Terrance. My son father."

"Your son Steven, that's in prison?" Kathrine inquired.

"Yeah. I knew he had moved to Texas, after we departed twenty years
ago." None of Sherry co-worker knew her past. And she did this for
her safety, and the kids. "I didn't know he moved to Houston. I
ranned into him at a gas station, when my car overheated again.

"Why did you two break up?" Connie asked.

"Chasing greener pasture." Sherry replied.

"What?" Connie been confused with her reply.
"Leaving him for another man with bigger pockets." Kathrine explained. 
"What happen with you and the and the rich guy?" Connie curious. 
"He was abusive." Sherry answered sadly. 
"Sorry."
"You should have burned his ass up in the bed. like that white wo-
man did, decades ago." Gary commented.
"No, you should have cut his muthafucking dick off. So he'll never
hit another woman again." Kathrine intermented. The harshed state-
ment made the ladies stare wide eyes at Kathrine. Kathrine sipped
her wine cooler, glancing back at the ladies. "What!"
"Sound like you been in a abusive relationship before." Sherry
spoked.
"No. I been with Russell almost my whole adult life. But he did
slap me once. So hard, that I can't remember what we were argueing
about. I remember holding a butcher knife, telling him if he every
touch me again, in a unloving way, I gonna cut his muthafucking
hand off."
"And he never hit you again?" Sherry asked.
"When we argue, he keeps his hands in his pockets. "Kathrine giggled
along with the others.
"So what's up with you two, since faith had brought you's back to
each other paths?" Connie questioned.
"I don't know. He's a widower. His wife die two years ago of breast
cancer. He has a daughter, that's ten. which Steven anxious to get
to know. We talk everynight. Sometime about the past, and what we want
in the future. And getting Steven out. We don't discuss the future,
concerning us together." Sherry glanced over at the men raorning in
laughter. "I'm gonna keep praying, wishing and waiting." she finished.
"I see you got tired of waiting Nikki?" Raine commented, throwing
out the Jack of spade.
"Waiting on what?" playing foolish.

(154)
"Waiting on that lying baby daddy of yours. Leaving his wife and kids, for you and Nicholas."

"Why you so secretive about Nicholas father. Like it would make the tabloids."

"He's a Houston public figure."

"He is?"

"GodDam Bitch who?" Gary demanded. "We want to know."

"If I knew if you could hold loose shit with your ass, I might tell you. Gay men can't hold a secret to save their lives."

"Ain' y that the truth!" Sherry laughed.

"So what the deal with him Nikki? he's alittle short, but cute." Connie inquired. Looking over in the parking lot. "Must have a little dough, to be driving a Range Rover."

"He's stable." she simpered. "He's Nick's football coach. We been seeing each other for a few weeks."

"You think its long term?" Kathrine asked.

"He say he's looking for a wife."

"Really! Raine excited.

"Yes. He wants a wife."

"Do you wanna marry him?" Sherry asked.

"Like yesterday."

"Dam, what 's with him? To make you want to jump the broom?" Sherry continued.

"Malik is flawless. He writes books, and poetry. He can cook. And Godfearing. Malik also fond of Nicholas."

"Dam. all that's great. But how is he in bed?" Gary question. Nicole tossed the King of spades on the table, then glanced at every one , who waited on her answer. "Like Heaven." she smiled.

"I guess big things do come in small packages." Gary commented.

Russell pulled the lid up on his barrel barbque pit. He fanned away the smoke, that begin to burn his eyes. The aroma on the pecan
wood, cooking the hamburgers, round steaks, and beef links, were
close to paradise. The sizzling sounds of the pit, caused by the
secret sauce, being spreaded on the meats, that Russell marinated for
two days. It was the reason why the taste is a award winner.
Russell believed everything should be cook on a pit, except ice
cream. He would refer to Adam and Eve, on how they cooked their,
after they were casted out the garden. After Adam tasted that T-bone
steak, he was no longer angry at Eve for getting them kick out.

"They made Cain that night." he said, making the men laugh.
Russell would sometime tossed the idea to Kathrine, to quit the
fire department, and use their saving to open up a resturant. Her
response would always be. "I'll Barbeque Your Ass!"

"TEN AND DOMINOES! young men. We needed fifteen to win. Which one
of you has big six?" Keith asked.
Monte flipped over the big six, and cursed. "You must have ace tray?"
Keith pointed at Marcus, who flipped his.
"I never had a chance to get the big sucker out of my hand." Monte
growled.
"And I was gonna make sure you didn't. Playing behind me." Keith
told him.

Keith Walker is Russell childhood friend. Just under six feet, and
a little on the heavy side. He swore he is a player from the Him-
laya. Still wearing a jerry curl, goatee, and two openface gold
teeth, Keith had a big diamond stud in his ear. Keith always looked
like he was dress, and on his way to Hawaii.
Also a former firefighter, he retired three years ago, when his
parents died in a house fire, Keith used his insurance money, to
open a small conivient store, and landry mats.
Drowning down his Budwieser, he shouted over to Russell, still by
the pit. "When is the barbeque ready. I'm starving like Marvin, for
a Cool J song."

(156)
Keith looked over at Monte and Marcus, who were laughing. "What you two boys laughing at? You think I didn't know about LL Cool J?"

"Who is that?" Marcus asked, making him and Monte burst in laughter again.

"Y'all boys ain't hip. LL Cool J was the baddest rapper in the eighties. I thought y'all listen to rap music."

"Curtis Blow, I wasn't even born in the eighties." Marcus revealed. Keith asked Marcus to lean over. Confused as to the reason why, he did what been ask. Keith took his index finger, and rubbed the back of Marcus ear. "Russell bring me a towel, the young man is wet behind the ears." Keith chuckled.

Keith looked back at Malik and Kyle playing chess. Kyle had taken Malik root, with his knight. Then Malik quickly placed his queen in front of his king, then called. "Checkmate."

Keith jolted in his lounge chair, and inquired. "How?"
Malik smiled, and pointed to the bishop, sitting in the corner. "I knew you would forget about the bishop hiding in the bushes."

"Dam." he smiled.

"I see that you handling up over there Malik." Keith said.

"Yeah, in that game. He's up two to one." he responded, setting back up the chess pieces.

Keith grabbed some dominoes after Monte shuffled them. With big six in his hand, he played first, and Monte called fifteen behind him, making Keith chuckled. "That's the only way you will score." he told Monte.

Keith glanced back at Kyle and complimented him on the fine white woman, he brought to the barbeque. "She looks alittle young for you." Kyle face displayed confusion, not comprehending, what Keith had said.

"Excuse me?"

"The snow bunny is my girl." Monte informed him. "TEN!" playing his dominoes, and smiling.
"Man, how you get something that fine, young whippersnapper?"

"I'm a player like that." Monte said, calling ten more.
Keith chuckled at Monte. "Young man, you know nothing about being
a player. You youngsters today be tricking with the ladies. You
see, I'm a player from waaay back. The last one from the Himalayas.
You youngster don't have any charisma. Style. Walking around with
yall pants hanging off yall asses. Don't know how to sweet talk
these women. You see, conversation rules the nation." Keith reached
in his pocket, and pulled out his wallet. He wanted to show a pic-
ture of one of his girlfriends.
All the men made an expression of horror and fought to hold their
laughter, and opinions, except Monte. Who been blinded by the three
hundred pounded, dark skinned woman, in lingerie, and afro wig.

"She must have a lot of money?"
"Naw, she gets a disability check."
"Is she coming here, for the Fourth of July?"
"No, she over at her sister house. Why? You want me to hook you up
with her sister. They almost look like twins."
"NO. NO. NO!! I'm fine with mine. Plus I don't think I have
enough money to feed three more girlfriends."
"DAM PLAYER! you have two more honeys, beside the snow bunny?"
"Naw, just one lady in my life." Monte chuckled.
"Then Kyle you must have come up here by yourself?" Keith asked,
playing a dominoe.
"No. I came here with my girlfriend." Kyle answered, trading knights
with Malik.

"Who? Where?" Keith leaned back in his chair, looking over at the
ladies tent. "It's only one snow bunny over there."
"Because she black. Cecilia, the one with the short afro, and flaw-
less dark skin."
Keith strained his eyes, taking a good look at Cecilia. "MAN!, that's
an African woman. You got you a jungle girl?"

"No. I goy myself a." Kyle begins being animated with his hand, as he was thinking what to say. "Oh yeah, I got myself was you black men call a Nubian Queen."

Malik laughed, giving Kyle dap. Keith scratched his head, thinking what the hell the world is coming too. "How in the hell you pulled that off?"

"A little wining and dinning. And, what they say, Keeping It Real." Kyle smiled.

Keith continued shaking his head in bewilderment. "I got to step my game up."

"You just realizing that!" Monte commented.

"And you need to have your eyes check." Marcus laughed. "Don't show no one esle that picture of that big ass woman in a thong. Especially if they already eaten."

All the men roared in laughter, which upset Keith a little. "Don't disrespect my baby, Tiny." Keith retorted.

"TINY!" Monte exclaimed. "She must have gotten that name when she was a baby?"

"Naw! that's my pet name for her."

"What The Hell!" Monte astounded.

"Hey Hey Hey, look here, my baby Tiny wasn't always this big. Doctors said she has a disorder, causing her to gain weight."

"Yeah, the disorder is ordering everything on the menu." Marcus joked.

Everyone went into another roar of laughter, except Malik. Who had tears in his eyes, trying to hold his laughter. He truely believe all black women were beautiful in their own way, even if they were over weight. But not in a thong.

Keith looked over at Malik wiping the tears from his eyes. He asked why was he crying. "You laughing at my girl Tiny?"
"Naw Naw Naw Man." gesturing with his hands. "My allegies is mess-ing with me."

"Its a crying shame keith." Russell cuteed inn. "You parading a-round with that huge ass woman. Holding hands like she's Mary J. Blige."

"Hell, she more like Mary J. Blob." Malik said, as he no longer could help himself, and joined in the sarcasms.

"Yall niggas gonna get off my Tiny, before I get on one of yall ass." Keith stuttered, looking at Malik ready to fall out of his chair. "Which of those women is your woman?" he continued stuttering. Malik gathered himself together, and informed Keith. "The one with the dreadlocks."

Keith jolted abit, amazed how fine Nicole looked in some Pzi shorts, and pink halter top. "Dam!" he cursed. "I know you did some trick-ing to get that."

"It isn't tricking if you can afford it. Plus for her. I don't mine tricking."

"What you rich or something?" Keith wondered.

"I'm comfortable."

"Well I hope to be rich in five years, when I sign that NFL con-tract." Marcus spoked.

"What position you play?" Terrance asked.

"Quarterback. Hope to be the next Warren Moon. Just earned a full scholarship to Michigan. I did have one to Wisconsin, until I had an accident."

"So you choosen Michigan to get back at Wisconsin?" Terrance inquired.

"Yeah. Plus they were the only school in the Big Ten, willing to give me a tryout."

"You must be a pretty good football player, for Michigan to recruit you, being from Texas?" Kyle spoked.
"Ranked fifth in the nation."

"I know your mother is proud of you?" Malik said.

"Yeah. Can't wait to get her out of the projects, and hand her the keys to a new house."

"She'll love that." Terrance said.

"Which one is your mother?" Keith asked.

"Neither." Marcus replied, playing a domino.

"Then who are you here with?"

"Raine, my physical therapist. The healthy woman with the long ponytail." Marcus gestured towards her.

"What the hell you two got going on?" Russell curious.

"Nothing. She just my physical therapist, who got me a trainer, to get me back into football condition."

"THAT'S BULLSHIT!" Monte blurted, studying his dominoes, before looking up at Marcus. "You tap that ass, did you?"

"Naw Naw man, she is just my physical therapist." Marcus responded nervously.

"You don't have to lie dude. Look at you, young, goodlooking, fit now, and can last longer than two minutes." Russell commented.

"I'm not lying, we're just friends."

"OHH oh, we're just friends thing. He's lying." Kyle said.

"How do you know?" Marcus wanted to know.

"I'm a policeman. and I'm sort of trained to distinguish when some one is telling the truth or lying."

"Shit Man! Your the police?" Monte screamed.

"Only when I'm in uniform." he smiled. "Right now I'm just trying to play some chess, eat some barbeque, and make new friends. Enjoy tonight fireworks, hoping there will be some fireworks later on tonight. If you know what I mean."

"Dam Monte you turned pale, when you found out Kyle is a policeman. You got warrants?" Russell asked.
"Naw. If I get a ticket, I don't go to court. I put the money order in the mail. I don't need the police knocking on my door."

"Shit! I got warrants." Keith yelled.

Everyone praised Russell on his barbeque. He heard several times, that he should open up a barbeque restaurant. Kathrine stood by him, listening to him boast, how tasty his secret sauce is. Russell placed some burgers and beef links on the grill. He sprinkled a little of his Heineken beer on the burgers, before brushing on his secret sauce. "German drunk burgers. One bite of these bad boys, and he or she will be ready to get their freak on." he simpered at his wife.

Gary spotted the pink Hummer pulling up into the parking lot. Placing his hamburger back on his paper plate, he grabbed his wine cooler, and pointed, to alert the women that Lekesha has arrived. Lekesha drew all the men attention, wearing a pair of seventies shorts, that displayed the United States flag, on her rear. A white shirt, she had tied in a knot, that exhibited her pierce naval. Across her T-shirt it read, True American.

The men eyes went back and forth, from her beauty, and her camel toe, between her legs. Connie frowned when she had to tell Monte, to wipe the drool from his mouth.

"Do you want to play football for Michigan this fall?" Raine told Marcus angrily.

"You can't arrest her for undecently exposure?" Cecilia inquired, before looking over at Kyle, who been chewing slowly, dazed at Leke- sha present.

"MMM mmm. Only if she's exposing her private parts." he answered, never taking his eyes off Lekesha.

"What about reckless eyeballing?" she asked harshly, finally getting Kyle attention.

(162)
Russell still had his back turned, attending to the food on the pit. Kathrine was still by his side, when she spoke to Lekesha, who had a paper plate in her hand.

"I see that you made it." Kathrine at awe in what she's wearing.
"I see you dressed very patriotic, for the Fourth."

"No one is more American than me."
"Ahh, I see." Kathrine shaking her head in dismay.
"They say the barbeque is good. The best in the park."

"No sweetheart, the best in Houston." Russell turned, nearly choking on his beer, to see Lekesha. Russell viewed Lekesha attire, and cursed to himself. His eyes remained lock on Lekesha devilish smile. Kathrine frowned by his action, thinking that Russell had been aroused by what Lekesha was wearing.

"What's wrong with your eyes?" Kathrine scowled.
"Nothing." he replied, looking over at Kathrine with a silly grin.
"The man who gonna need the raw steak for his black eye, is my husband Russell." Kathrine pointed towards him.

Lekesha laughed at Kathrine commented, then extended her hand for Russell to shake. "So what do you have already to eat? I'm hungry."

she asked, still displaying that devilish grin.

"Just some burgers, and beef sausages." he answered, facing the pit. "The roast will be a few moments."

Lekesha stepped to the opposite side of Russell, observing the meats on the grill. "I guess I'll have a sausage for now. I want have no room to taste your roast."

Russell reached for the small sausage with his thong, until Lekesha stop him. "No, not that one. The big one." she pointed. "You said it would be a moment until the roast is done. This should hold me until its done." she smiled up at him.

Russell gave Lekesha a penetrated stare, and ask sarcastic. "Can I get you anything else?"
"No thanks. This will do for now."
Kathrine directed Lekesha to the table that held the condiments. Both
watched her walk away. Russell mind been total chaos, as Lekesha
took a seat by Keith. Russell couldn't believe he cheat for the
first, of over thirty years of marriage, with a woman that works
with his wife. "Goddam! my luck is bad," he said in his head.
Kathrine made a comment about Lekesha wear, then looked up at Rus-
sell, who hadn't heard a word she said.

"Russell don't make me slap the shit out of you."
"What?" he look ar her, still not comprehending a word she spoken.
"I see you can't take your fucking eyes off her ass."
"What? Naw baby," he chuckled. "She made me flash back, when I first
met you. And how you use to be that fine."
"Use To Be!" she scowled, completely turning to him.
"Wait! Wait! baby." Russell continue chuckling, taking her hands
from being slaughter by them. "Those are the same kind of shorts
you were wearing, when I first saw you at Frenchy. Your beauty had
me so dazed, remember I burned myself?"
Kathrine thought back to the first time and laughed. "Yes. I remem-
ber." she reached up to kiss him. "And remember your awful tennis
game too."
Russell laughed along with Kathrine. "Yeah, that was a big lie, when
I told you I could play like Author Ashe."

When Kathrine went back to join her co-workers, Russell called Keith
over to the pit. Keith noticed Russell been sweating heavily. "Dam
man, you need to take a break from the pit. You dripping with sweat."

"Shit, I wish it was the pit, causing me to sweat like this," he
replied, wiping his face with a towel.
"What you talking about man?"
"Remember I told I been seeing another woman?"
"Man!, you still seeing that bitch! I told you don't mess up every
thing you and Kathrine built together."

"I know, I know. Well I know I have to end this shit today! Because Lekesha is the other woman."

"WHAT!" Keith shouted. Russell told Keith to calm down. Keith glanced back at Lekesha, who been watching them. Lekesha took the link sausage, sliding it slowly half way into her mouth, before biting it. "OOOH WEEE, GODDAM! Did you see that? I can't believe you fucking that. Shit I see why its hard to let go."

"Well I got to let her ass go now. To close to home."

"Not without a price my friend."

Russell turned to his friend in confusion. "What are you taking about?"

"She knew that you were married?"

"Yeah."

"Have she asked or you ever shown her a picture of Kathrine?"

Russell thought back to the night, after they had made mad sex on the kitchen counter, before going to the movies. Lekesha handed him his pants, after stealing his wallet out of his pocket. While he been in the bathroom, taking a shower, Lekesha scanned through his wallet.

Russell wallet fell to the floor, and Lekesha mouth flew wide open, staring at a picture of Kathrine. "Shit! I can't believe I'm fucking my supervisor husband." she giggled.

Lekesha made her way into the bathroom, to find Russell still in the shower. Pulling back the curtain, she exhibited all thirty two pearls. Her smiled been contagious, as Russell returned his.

"What are you so cheesy about?"

"Your wife."

"What about her?"

"She looks." Lekesha paused, searching for a word to describe Kathrine, with a hint. "She looks bossy."

"How do you know how she looks?"
"I went through your wallet."
"Ohh, you going through my stuff now?"
"You mad?"
"My money still in it?"
Lekesha frowned at him. "YES. I don’t need your money. I have my own."
"Then I'm not mad." he kissed her on the forehead.
"You two looked happy in that picture."
"It was happier times." Russell thinking back to them.
"We have happy times." Lekesha smiled, reaching for his penis. She begin stroke it.
"Everytime I see your pretty face." he moaned.
Slowly and passionately, Lekesha started kissing and sucking the nipples on Russell chest, while continuing stroking his penis. Barely speaking bewteen his moans. "Lekesha, Lekesha, we're gonna be late for the movies."
Lekesha squatted eye level to his shaft, and kissed the mushroom of his penis, before sticking it in her mouth. "Oh God, the creator of the heavens and earth." he praised, trying to grip the shower floor.
"Lets skip the movies, and make our own." she suggested, before deep throating him.

"So you think she gonna try to extrot me?" Russell asked.
"Maybe."
"Then why haven't she said nothing yet?" Russell wondered.
"I don't know. You still taking those Viagra pills?"
Russell shot Keith a glower expression. "Yesh. And what's that got to do with it?"
"Everything player. She's in love with that dick." Keith grabbed his crouch.
"Nigga you crazy."
"Maybe, but I haven't gotten myself in a crazy situation."

Russell rubbed his hand across his face, recognizing that Keith had spoken the truth. Russell brain begining to over heat, and shutdown like a computer. Trying to figure out the game Lekesha is trying to play. He needed to let her know, that he wanted to no part of it. Russell finished his bottle of Heineken, hoping it would calm his nerves. "What the fuck she's up too?" he said.

"I don't know my friend, but you about to find out. Here's she come." Keith tapped his leg. "Listen here, I'm going back to my seat, so you two can talk alone, and see what's going on."

Keith spoke to Lekesha on his way back to his seat. "You coming back to sit with big Papa?"

"Yeah daddy, soon as I get some of this good barbeque." she kissed him on the cheek.

Russell pretend to be flipping burgers, when Lekesha stood next to him. "Dam baby, I didn't know you could grill like this. The food is almost good as your loving."

Russell eyes narrowed with anger. "Oh your wife looks bossy. Lekesha why in the fuck you didn't tell me you work with my wife?" he grunted through his teeth.

"You didn't ask baby." she simpered.

"Lekesha stop playing fucking games. What do you want? Money?"

"Baby, I told you I don't need your money. I make plenty myself."

"Then what's up with these games?"

"I'm not playing any games, Russell. I'm fighting."

"Fighting for what Lekesha?"

"Your heart." she revealed, then turned to leave.

(167)
Three days after the fireworks, Russell and Kathrine rose to their feet, when the judge enter the court room. Waiting on their son Derrick, the docket was called fifteen minutes ago. Kathrine begin to worry that Derrick had jumped bail. His lawyer had made an excuse that his client is having car trouble, and promise that he would be here.

Russell made efforts to calm Kathrine nerves. "I talked to him last night, and he promise that he wouldn't upset you by fleeing."

"I don't know Russell." she fought back tears. "Maybe he ought to run. The attorney said the plea deal is for ten years. That's a long time for my baby."

"Honey did you hear what the lawyer said? He won't do ten years, he'll be up for parole in five. And have a great chance of being release if he stay out of trouble."

"What if they refuse to let him out on parole?" sounding stressed. "Listen." Russell turned to her, and gently squeezed her hand. "I hear that you can go to school, or take up some kind of trade in prison. If Derrick goes inn and gets his act together. Get some education, or a trade, I will get him the best parole attorney, when he comes up for parole."

Kathrine smiled. "You'll do that?"

"Baby, I don't want to see our son go to prison. But right now, he's out of control. And maybe this is what he needs. To stop and think, of what kind of life he wants."

Derrick lawyer came over to them, after getting another client five years probation, for possession of cocaine. Dressed in a dark gray suit, the attorney, removed his glasses, revealing his grieving hazel eyes. "Have you heard from Derrick?"

"Yes, he said he'll be here in ten mintues." Russell lied. "Good. I can let the D.A know. We we're next. Excuse me, and let me go inform her."
Russell patted his wife on the thigh. "Sit here baby, I'm gonna call Derrick, and see where's his at."

Stepping out of the court room, Russell cell phone vibrated. Retrieving it from his inside suit pocket, he hoped it been a text from Derrick, telling him he's on his way up. Recognizing the number, he hesitated for a second, before pressing the text button on his screen.

"Hey Baby, I woke up thinking about you. I know the day will dreadful. That your son Derrick will start his ten years sentences. If I can do anything to help and make your day better, let me know. I haven't seen you since the fourth. I miss you. Call me as soon as you can. Love Kesha."

Every since the Fourth of July, Russell been avoiding her calls and texts, hoping she would come to the understanding, that their little escapade is over. He knew continueing seeing Lekesha would be suicide. This whole infidelity situation is to GODDAM close to home. Right now, this up coming weeks and days, Kathrine is gonna need his full attention, while trying to get over their youngest child being in prison.

"We need to talk. I will see you tommorrow night, Russell." returned her message.

Dailing Derrick number, just before he's about to press send, he heard his name being called, and looked up and saw Derrick, stepping out of the elevator.

"I guess you were about to call me?" Derrick said, looking weary. "Why in the hell you late son? Your mother is having a fit." placing his cell back in his pocket.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you I couldn't find my keys."

"No. But forget that. You her now. Come on."

As the two enter the court room, his lawyer and the D.A. just called his name for the third and final time., before a warrant would
be issue for his arrest.

"Present." Derrick shouted, from the back of the court room. Kath- 

rine turned to see her son dressed nicely, in some tan Khaki pants, 

and a dark green long sleeve shirt, and black tie. Derrick located 

his mother in the court room, recognizing the sorrow in her eyes. 

Derrick forced a smile, trying to ensure her that everything will 

be okay. 

Standing in front of the judge, next to his attorney, the D.A ex- 

plained to the judge his charged of aggravated robbery. "The court 

agree to a plea deal of ten years, in the Texas Department of Cor- 

rection."

The judge informed Derrick that he didn't have to agree to the plea 

bargain, and could sentences him as he please.

"Yes you Honor." he replied.

"Do you have any family present in the court room?"

"Yes you Honor. My parents are here." Derrick turned, pointing to 

them. Russell and Kathrine raised their hands, The judge ask them 

to stand up, and ask about their occupation.

"I'm a Register Nurse, at Francis Monroe hospital."

"And I'm a Fire Chief, at station 12."

"How long you been working for the fire department sir?"

"Twenty nine years, your Honor."

"And you mam?"

"Twenty one, your Honor."

The judge nodded his head for a second, digesting the situation. 

"You may have a seat, thank you." the judge turned his attention 

back to Derrick, who's legs were shaking like he been standing in 

the Antarctic ocean. "Explain to me young man the reason you commit- 

ed this crime? Because it appears to me that you're a very privi- 

ledge up bringing."

"I have no exact answer your Honor. I just chose the wrong crowd
to call my friends."

"And what made you come to that conclusion?" the judge leaning forward.

Derrick scanned the court room, then back at the judge. "Because there's none of my so-called friends here to support me,"

The judge stared at him for a second, then smiled. "I see that you learned something already young man."

The judge read over the papers on his bench, and begin scribbling something, never looking up, as he spoke. "Mr. Mills, the court reject the ten years plea deal, that been offer to you."

Kathrine hands flew to her mouth, to hold in her scream. Russell placed his hand on her thigh, and called God to help. Derrick looked at his lawyer, hoping he would say something. He grabbed his wrist, and made a gesture for him to stay calm.

Looking up at Derrick now, to give him his sentences. "Mr. Mills, I sentences you to seven years to the Texas Department of Correctional. If you ever come back in front of me, I promise I will start at twenty five years." he grabbed his gravel, and slammed it. "Court ajourned. Good luck Mr. Mills."

The bailiff walked over to cuff Derrick. Kathrine jumped to her feet, and hurried over to her son, before the bailiff could take him to the back. She pleaded with the bailiff if she could hug her son, before he halls him off to jail. He look around and answer her with a nod.

Kathrine hugged her son tight. "Everything is gonna be alright momma. I promise I will get my act together."

"I'll come visit you tonight."

Russell stood and watched. Both men stared at each other. "Handle your business. We got you. You be home before you know it."
Malik held Nicole tight from behind, as they slept. Abruptly Malik been awaken, when he heard some hard knocking at the door. He tickled Nicole chin to wake her, informing her that their was someone at the door. Nicole turned over and laid her head on his chest. "Let's whoever keep knocking. They will go away." she mumbled, never opening her eyes. She moaned as she rubbed her hand across Malik six pack. Malik begun to twirl with her dreadlocks. He took a strong sniff of her hair. Malik love how her dreads smell like flowers. Nicole slowly moved her hand down south, to his creation, and squeezed it. "You ready to go again baby?" she whispered.

Before Malik could answer, the knocks turned into banging. "Whoever at your door isn't going away."

Nicole sighed heavily, then opened her eyes, cursing under her breath. She knew it could be only one person, banging on her door at one o'clock in the morning. Jumping out of her bed, she put on her pajamas pantsm T-shirt, and robe.

"Is that Milo at the door?"
"Can't be anyone else." she answered, leaving the bedroom. "Who is it?" she screamed through the door.

"Open the fucking door Nikki. You know who it is." Milo retorted angrily.

Nicole looked through the peephole, into Milo angry face. "Go home Milo to your wife. I have company."

"What! You not fucking another nigga in the house I bought you!?"
"Go home Milo." she pleaded.

"Where's my fucking son, bitch! I want to see my son. You bet not have a nigga spending the night around my son!"

"Nicholas isn't here, so just go home."

"I'm not going nowhere until you open up this muthafucking door!"

"No Milo, come back next week. Nicholas will be back from summer camp."
"You never told me Nick was going to some summer camp."

"I tried too, but you never answer your cell."

Milo stood quietly, looking at the heavy thick wooden door. His anger had been growing by the second, knowing that Nicole had another man inside the home he bought. He felt disrespected. "Open the fucking door Nicole, for I kick the muthafucker down!"

"Go home before I call the police Milo." she warned.

"Call them. This my fucking house!"

Nicole never heard Malik creep up behind, and tapped her on the shoulder. Nicole turned around looking at him with a grieved expression. "Its Milo. He want leave."

"Is that his Range Rover parked in my driveway. I'm gonna have the muthafucker tow!" he threaten.

Suddenly Milo heard the chain removed and the lock unlock. Thinking that he would see Nicole opening the door, to his surprise, Malik appeared. He was wearing some gym short, and a tank top. With a stern look on his face, Malik ask. "What seems to be the problem? Nicole told you that your son isn't here."

Nicole stood behind Malik frighten, because Milo was much larger than Malik. Who stood at six two, and two hundred and forty pounds.

"Who the fuck is you?" Milo examining Malik.

"I'm Malik. Nicole future husband to be."

Nicole observed Malik from behind, and smiled.

"Future Husband!" Milo laughed. "Nicole what this little nigga talking about? You belong to me. Tell him."

"Not anymore Milo. I'm tired waiting on your ass. Tired of your lies. I moved on, and so should you. Back to your wife."

"WHAT!" he continued laughing. "You can never love him like you love me."

"You right Milo, I love him more." she replied, standing beside Malik.
Nicole reply stunned Milo severely, causing him to lose all senses. Now into a jealous rage. "Bitch I want you and this nigga out of my house." he demanded.

"No problem man. She'll be out by the end of the week. She welcome to move in my home. Her and Nicholas." Malik emphasizes Nicholas name, which sent Milo over the edge, charging at Malik. Milo never saw Malik lighting front kick, that pounded his chest, sending him flying on his back. Nicole eyes widen, covering her mouth as she inhaled heavily, holding her breath. She heard Milo grunting, as he slowly stood to his feet.

Milo had fury in his eyes, when he told Malik that he's gonna kill him. Milo started towards him, then abruptly halted in his tracks, when he saw Malik branished a gun from behind his back.

"I told you she'll be out of your home by the end of the week." he repeated non-chalant.

Milo stood there for a moment, looking at the barrel of Malik gun. He then turned his eyes to Malik, who face shown no expression. He looked at Nicole, who stood still behind Malik, in awe of what transpired. "So this is how it's gonna be Nikki?"

"Yeah, its over. Go home to your wife and kids."

Milo looked intently at Nicole, then at Malik. He straighten up his Tom Ford attire, and clear his throat. "Be out by the end of the week. And leave the key under the mat, bitch." he told her, heading to his car.

Both watched Milo leave in his Maserati. Nicole turned to witness Malik place his gun, behind his back. "Where did you get that gun from?" she asked, as Malik grabbed his keys off the counter.

"Out of my night bag. I always take it with me, if I spend a night at someone house."

"What Malik, other woman houses?" she folded her arms, frowning. "Malik chuckled lightly. "Is that a trick question?"
"No"

"No Nikki." Malik stepping close to her. "I knew it could be a possibility that Milo would come by. So I didn't want to be caught slipping." he kissed her on the lips, and headed for the garage.

"Hell, the way you kick the shit out of him, it seems like you didn't need a gun."

"I didn't. But he would been better off if I shot him." he replied, stopping at the garage door.

"What are you doing now?"

"Parking my car in your garage."

"Wait!" she commanded, and walked over to him.

"What's up?"

"What you told Milo, did you mean what you said?" looking him in his eyes, as if she could read them. If Malik was telling the truth or not.

"What? about you and your son staying with me?" Malik acting confused.

"NO. When you told him I'm gonna be your future wife?"

"What, you know someone esle looking for a fine, handsome, and smart husband?" he replied, looking serious.

"And rich." she smiled.

"No, not rich. Comfortable." he smiled.
Russell called Lekesha earlier that day to let her know that he would be stopping by to see her. He wanted to break up their secret affair face to face. Russell also wanted to find some answer to a few questions.

When Lekesha opened the door, she blindsided Russell, wearing a rose colored long sleeves, half belly shirt. She had unbuttoned enough to exposes alot of cleavages. Matching panty with suspenders hooked to her kneehigh rose colored pantyholes. The five inch heels, enhanced the tone of her legs and ass. Surprisingly Russell held his composer, and ask Lekesha could she put on a robe.

"Why? You don't like what I put on for you? I bought it today."
"Lekesha you know dam well, I didn't come over here for that." he retorted. Stepping inside, Russell walked passed Lekesha. He stood in front of her sofa, but didn't sit down. Lekesha shut the door, and leaned against it, crossing her legs.

"Baby, if you didn't come over here to be satisfied, because I need to be. It's been over a week, since we made love."

"And we will never have sex again." Russell told her austered.

"Why? she pleaded, walking over to him.

"Stop playing fucking games Lekesha!" he yelled, halting her in her tracks. Lekesha face shown a expression of disbeleif. She never thought Russell would used such harshed tones at her. "Where's your mother?"

"Gone to a drug meeting."

Russell stared at Lekesha with narrowed eyes, for a long second, before he ask. "Why you never told me you knew and worked with my wife?"

"Because at first, I wanted to get back at her, for how she treats me at work. Making me sometime clean up shit and piss, of those half dead ass old folks."

"So when were you gonna tell my wife, about our affair?"

"I don't know. Maybe, when I quit." Lekesha sounding regretful.
"You know we can't continue this relationship, or this fling we have going on." he informed.

"Why?" Lekesha questioned softly, moving closer to him.
"Why!" Russell couldn't believe she was acting like she didn't know.

Lekesha took his hands, and gazed intently at him, trying to hypnotize him with her exotic eyes. She rubbed her smooth palm, across his cheek. "Please, don't break up with me Russell. I need you." she said, and paused, placing the other hand on the other cheek. "I falling in love with you baby." she revealed her feeling.

Lekesha tried to reach up and kiss him, but Russell turned his head, and walked away from her. Russell walked around her italian leather sofa, to put a divider between them. "You don't love me Russell?"

"LOVE YOU!" Russell astounded. He rubbed his hands across his face, thinking how he's gonna get out of this situation. The worst thing to be in outside your marriage. dealing with a woman who's in love with a married man. Russell sighed heavily. "Listen here Lekesha, I like you. I like you alot." Russell did a lookover of her knockout body, before continuing. "Your fun. Smart. Young. And very beautiful. You can have any man you want, but I'm in love with my wife."

"I know you are. And in time you will begin to fall in love with me." "That won't happen Lekesha, because I only have enough love for my wife for over thirty years, and bored me three children."

"NO,NO,NO Russell." she pleaded, coming around the sofa, and creeping closer to him. "I can give you children."

Russell ridicule Lekesha with a loud burst guffaw. "I'm too old to be raising any more kids. In another seven years, I'll be ready to retire."

"Okay. Then who's gonna make love to you like I do? Who's gonna rubb your back and feet. Who's gonna make you smile, when your upset?"

As she was asking Russell twenty one question, Lekesha had crepped close to him. She locked eyes with Russell. "Who's gonna kiss you like I do? Who's gonna make you call out to God? you told me your-
self, that Kathrine can't make you feel good like I can. Who's gonna take care of my needs? Who's gonna give me good advise? Your the one said that I needed to reconcile with my mother."

"GODDAM LEKESHA IT'S OVER! don't you understand? I love my wife, not you." pushing her away.

"Baby why we can be together and build a future?" she cried.

Russell shook his head. "Because I don't have thirty three years left." he answered, looking in her sorrow eyes. "I'm sorry, but its over." he finished, heading to the door.

"DON'T LEAVE ME RUSSELL!" she begged, But he continued turning the knob, to open the door.

"If you walk out that fucking door Russell, I'm calling Kathrine, and tell her about us." she threatened.

Russell paused, staring back at Lekesha. "Go ahead. That still want make me come back to you." he told her, before walking out the door. Lekesha rannned to the door, shouting. "DON'T CALL MY FUCKING BLUFF RUSSELL! I WILL CALL KATHRINE AND TELL HER WE BEEN FUCKING AND HOW YOU ATE MY PUSSY!" hoping Russell would turn around and come back. But she saw him jumped in his truck and leave.

Slamming the door, she ran to her cell phone and located Russell home number, and press send. four rings later, a woman answered the phone. Lekesha recognized Kathrine voice. "Hello." she spoked. Lekesha said nothing, losing the courage to tell Kathrine about her sexapade with her husband. She pushed the end button on her cell, and tossed it across the living room. She screamed "FUCK YOU RUSSELL!" and fell to the floor crying.

Kathrine stared strangely at the phone, then hunged up. She check the caller I.D, and it read anonymous.
Chapter 35

Sherry could barely keep her eyes open, when she pulled up into her apartment. After work, she had to take a test, for her night school classes. The eighty multiple choices question drained all her cells in her brain. Turning the engine off, Sherry had no doubts that she passed the test, which she studied hard for. Getting out, Sherry left her books in the passenger seat, for the night. She had no intention in looking at them, nor the energy to carry them to the apartment. All she wanted to do is sleep.

Being so weary, Sherry paid no attention to the mysterious man, who gotten out of his rental car, and walked over to her car, and glanced inside.

Stooping at the mailbox, Sherry cursed under her breath, while flipping through her mail. It seem that the only thing that comes in the mail is bills. "They should call it the Bills Box." she mumbled. A letter from Steven, made her express a half grin. She opened it and began to reading it, on her way to the apartment.

With her head down, she accidently bumped into the mysterious man. When Sherry look up to say excuse me, she dropped the mail in her hand, and stop breathing. Her eyes widen with fright, and mouth fell ed ajar, as she clutched her chest. Sherry felt though if she was about to have a heart attack.

The mystery man exhibited a devilish grin, before he spoked. "What's wrong Renee, you not happy to see me?"

Slowly backing away. "How did you find me?" she asked.

"It was hard at first, but you know I have the money and resources. For the first two years, I was waiting for you to slip up on social media. When Tasha and Taylor never showed up at your mother house for the holidays, I knew you change your name. So I waited until I could find Steven on google. I knew if I find him, I'll find you. It cost alittle to get your address off his visitation list."

"What do you want Zach?" Sherry voice cracked.
"I want you and the twins to come home." he answered sincerely, taking one step closer.

"No I can't. Me and the kids are already at home." she replied, taking another step back. Zach exhaled lightly observing Sherry. He been pleased how well she's taking care of herself. Zach glanced around the poor condition of her apartment complex. He squatted down to pick up her mail, then handed to her. "Renee look at this place. You don't belong here, and neither do my daughters. They deserve better then this. They deserve a nice big home, that is safe."

"We are safe." she responded sternly. Zach understood Sherry response, and remained calm, sticking his hands in his pockets. "There's no words on how I treated you in the past."

"You used to beat me like man!" Sherry interrupted. Zach placed a hand on his forehead, and slowly rubbed it down his face. He couldn't erase the flashes in his mind, of the abuse he committed. "I'm not that kind of man anymore. I gotten help. I attend counseling, and taking medication to control my anger." he revealed, now himself inches from Sherry. "Renee."

"My name isn't Renee anymore, it's Sherry." she informed Zach. "Okay, if that's what you want to be called." Zach hunched his shoulders, before continuing. "I want to tell you how sorry I am for the pain I cause you, and our family. And I need you to believe I'm not that same man in the past anymore."

"That good to know Zach." she forced a smile. "Please give me another chance to be a real husband to you." Zach gesture to her impoverished surrounding. "And let me shower you with real love, and the material things you deserve." slowly taking her hand, and kissing it. Sherry glanced at her hand, and then at Zach, who face displayed an
expression of mercy, forgiveness, and sorrow.

Sherry didn't like the idea of keeping the twins away from their father. They loved him still, and Zach been the best father, any man could. But could never see leaving Zach without the her kids. When they turn eighteen, and chose to have a relationship with their father, she wouldn't fault them for that. Through her rehab, Sherry been told men like Zach, with money, and abusive behavior, rarely change. She didn't want to answer his question, frighten of the painful reaction that might come.

"I see that you are taking some medical classes." Zach tried to change the subject, easing the tension. He seen the shock reaction from Sherry, wondering how he knew. "I saw the books, in your SUV." he informed her. "So what you taking?"

"Trying to get my LVN license."

"OOh, that's great. Pay decent money I hear."

"Enough to get a better place for me and the girls."

"Renee."

"Sherry." she reminded sternly.

"Right." he smiled. "Sherry. You never answer me, to come back home. Listen, we can throw away all the furniture in the house, and let you redecorate. Everything new, like us. I remember how you love to decorate everything. If that's not enough, I'll buy you a bigger house. Business been great. We opened up five more resturants. I can buy you that Aston Martin you like."

Sherry forced a smiled, listening to Zach incentives, if she agree to go back to California with him. But she knew its' no way on God's green earth, that she would ever go back to Zach. "I can't go back with you Zach." she finally told him.

"Why?"

"Because in time, things would go back being the same. You'll be nice for awhile, and then slowly get angry, and slap me. After the slaps,
comes the punch, which will escalate to punches. And I would never take myself through that torture again, just to have a big house, and drive nice cars. It's not worth it."

"But I told you, that I'm not that kind of man anymore. I got help. I'm taking medication to suppress my anger, Renee." he petition for himself.

"Sherry." she reminded him, for the second time.

"Sorry. I have to get use to that name."

"I'm sorry too Zach, we can't have a loving or marriage relationship again. I moved on, and so should you."

"I tried Renee."

"Sherry."

"Dam, right, Sherry. I tried, but I can't."

"Why? because of the guilt? If so, don't worry, I forgive you Zach, and very happy that you sought help. Keep searching, there's plenty of women that will sacrifice for your fortune."

"And what that suppose to mean?" he glowered.

"Nothing." Sherry waved her hand, thinking she shouldn't have made such a comment like that. If Zach is really trying to rebuild his character. "Listen Zach I have to be going. It's been a long fifteen hour day, and I have to be at work seven in the morning. So I need to get some sleep. Goodbye." she finished, and tried to walk around him.

Zach blocked her path, and grabbed her upper arm. Sherry jumped back and demanded for Zach not to touch her. "Sorry." he apologized, dropping his hands by his sides. "I just wanted to know when can I see the twins? It's been almost five years."

"Let me ask them, and see how they feel, and I'll get back with you."

"How are you gonna do that?" he wondered.

"Don't worry. I can get in touch with you. Always could." she gazed
at him. "Now goodnight." she ended, trying for the second time, to pass by him.

Zach jerked Sherry by the wrist, and pulled her closer to him.

"Listen here woman, I'm tired playing games with you. It took too much of my time and money, to hunt your sweet ass down. You going to go inside that raggly ass aptment and pack yours and the twins shit. And come back to California with me. You understand?" he scowled.

Sherry couldn't believe this was happening to her again. She nearly pee in her scrubs, cringing in pain, as he clutched her wrist.

"Zach, you hurting my wrist." she cried to him.
"You gonna do what I told you?" he asked harshly.
"Please, let me go Zach." she pleaded, fighting back tears.
Zach turned her wrist, in a awkward position, applying more pressure, making Sherry yep in pain. "I'll break this muthafucker, if you don't do what I tell you."

"Please Zach, don't hurt me anymore. "Sherry continued her pleas.
"Are you coming? Zach only said, before he been interrupted by a voice, that was approaching them fast.

"Let Her Go! You Son Of A Bitch!" Terrance commanded, in which Zach did. Sherry ranned to Terrance, holding him tight. "Are you okay?" he examining her.

"Now I am, Thank God." she answered, wiping away her tears.

Zach smoothed away the wrinkles in his Eddie Bauer attire. Angry that another man had gotten into their business. Focusing on the two, Zach snickered alittle, when he recognized who the so-called hero been. "Terrance Mitchell. So you came to Houston to find your son father." Zach been animated, gesturing to their surrounding. "I can see he's doing no better then when you left his ass, twenty years ago."

"NO! I came to Texas, to get far away from you. I didn't know Ter-
rance lived in Houston, until a few months ago."

"Be quiet Renee. let me handle this." placing Sherry behind him.
"I see he can call you Renee." Zach said jealous.
"Don't move!" Terrance told her, as he walked over to Zach. Standing a inch taller than Zach, Terrance looked down into his eyes, with raged. he begin to speak sternly and calmly to Zach. "Check this out nigga, over twenty years ago, you ranned off with my son and girl. Taking them to La La Land, to abuse her. She left you, and change her name, wanting to be not found by you. But by the Grace of God, I found her first. So listen here, if I see, feel, or even think you're in eye sight of Renee. Nigga I'm gonna kill you."

"What about my twins?"
Terrance smiled at him. "Don't worry, I'll take care of them."
Zach blood begin to boil. He couldn't believe he was reaping what he sow, to Terrance, when he stole Renee. Giving her an ultimatum to keep steven from his father. "You can't keep my daughters away from me."

"Well take us to court, and let's see if the judge will grant you custody, or even visitation rights."
Zach remained silent for a moment. He knew that Terrance had just spoken the truth. He would have to find another avenue to see his girls. "This isn't over man." he told Terrance.
"Yes it is." he replied.
Terrance hit the garage door opener, attached to the visor, and pulled his truck inside, next to the silver Kia K900. Sherry parked behind him. This been her first time, she seen Terrance three thousand, two story brick home.

He helped Sherry and the twins with their bag they brought for the night. Until she'll be able to put the rest of her things in storage. Inside Terrance home been decorated very modernly. Sherry could tell that Mxine had alot to do with it. Even though it was much smaller than her ex-home in California, Terrance home had a comfortable feel. Terrance showed Sherry and the twins their rooms. Sherry had one to herself, and the twins shared one, with a queen size bed.

Terrance told the ladies to make themselves at home, while he find something to eat. Tasha and Taylor acknowledge that they had just eaten an hour ago. They wanted to know if they could take a shower. Terrance verbally directed them on where to find everything they needed. Later, Terrance stood in the doorway of Sherry room. Watching her unpack, for a moment. He could see that her hands were still trembling, from what happen tonight. "Are you okay?"

"Yes I'm fine." she answered, as she continued unpacking her things, never looking up at him.

"Are you hungry?"

"No. Just tired." she stopped to glance up. "I can't thank you enough for letting me and the girls stay with you, until we find another place."

"You and the girls can stay here as long as you want or need."

Sherry satred at Terrance, trying to comprehend the meaning of his invitation. With Sherry going to school five nights a week, the two would barely see each other, outside of visiting their son on the weekend. The two haven't beenn intimate or kissed passionately, since they first met at the gas station.

"After all that happen tonight, I never ask you why you were at my apartment complex?"
"I don't know. I was thinking about you. I remembered you telling me on the phone, that you had some important medical tests to night. I wanted to know how well you think you done."

"That's very considable of you." she smiled. "I believe I did well on the test."

"That's great to hear." he commented, watching Sherry turned her attention back to her suitcase. Terrance posed a half smile, when Sherry removed a matching pair of purple lace panty and bra, tossing them on the bed. "You sure you don't want nothing to eat?"

"No, I just want to shower, and get some sleep."

"How about a hot bubble bath. I can run the water for you, while you do what women do." Terrance being animated with his hands.

"OOh that sounds nice, but I don't want you to go out of your way. You have done enough for me and the girls tonight, having a safe haven."

"It's no problem, I'm off tommorrow. I have all day to rest."

Sherry been awaken by a knock on the bathroom door. The warm bubble bath was what she needed to relax her mind, body, and spirit. The jets from the tub, created more bubbles, that almost covered her in the tub. Brushing some bubbles to the side, Sherry smoothed her thick shoulders length hair to the back, before allowing Terrance to enter.

He carried in a plate, on it a turkey and white cheese sandwich. On a round onion bun. "It's been a long day of testing, and also a surprising night too. And one has to be hungry after all that." he grinned.

"Thank you.' Sherry pleased, taking the plate and a glass of soda. Terrance watch her close her eyes, and bite into the sandwich. Sherry made a humming sound of satisfaction. "I'm hungry as hell, or this the best sandwich I ever had."
"That's the Grey poupon. It make any kind of sandwich taste like the best sandwich in the world." he chuckled.

Washing it down with the soft drink, Sherry smile wide at him. "You remember, Huh?"

"What! that you couldn't go a day without having a Mountain Dew. Demanding me, to go to the corner store, to buy you one in the blizzard."

Sherry laughed, remembering the incident. "And you came back witout one, because the store was closed."

"Then you asked me to walk eight blocks, to the next mom and pop store, when you could have drunk the Pepsi that was in the refrig."

"Thank you." Sherry continued laughing.

"I almost gotten frost bites. Took me three hours to defrost in front of the oven." he finished, watching Sherry laugh. Who after caught her laughing bug.

Turning to leave, Sherry called his name, before he closed the door.

"Yes."

"I'm truely sorry, for what I did." she said sincerely.

"Its okay, everything worked out fine."
Janet laid against Chase, while she forced him to watch a love story with her. He massaged her swollen belly, enjoying the movie, but wasn't gonna let her know. Chase heard Janet sniffling, when the two main characters, said their vows. He look at Janet, to confirm what he thought. Janet wiped the tears from her eyes, and Chase chuckled alittle. "Baby are you crying?"

"Yeah." she giggled.
"How many times have you saw this movie?"
"Probaly ten times."
"TEN TIMES!" he exclaimed.
"I can't help it. They endured so much to be together. And his vows to her, is what a woman dream of hearing."
"They were unoriginal. Your the first thing I want to see when I open my eyes. And the last, when I close them." Chase quoted, imitating the actor voice. "You how many times that been said in a song?"
"So. What are you gonna say when we get marry?" she turned to him sounding serious.
Chase stuttered with his words, "Marry, Married, Marriage! I didn't know we were getting marry. Or that you want to get marry."
"I been thinking," she paused. "And I don't want to be another baby momma. I want our child. Our little girl to have a family. A mother and father."
"She's gonna have a mother and father. How did you think she was created."
Janet looked at Chase crazy. "You know what I mean. A stay at home mother and father. Not just staying here for a week, and seeing you on the weekend. I don't want that for our child."
"I don't think its right to get marry, because we having a baby." Janet sat up on the sofa, and gazed at Chase with a expression of grief. "Why?"
"Then we'll be getting marry for all the wrong reason." he answered.
rising to his feet.

"Do you love me. Or do you just be lying to me. What I thought to believe, when we be making love?"

Chase sighed, and stared at Janet for a long time. Her expression told him if he say no, she would be crush. Chase had experience, how things would workout, trying to see his child. Tabitha did it to him, when she first found out that he was sleeping with Janet. Thinking, Chase never cheated on Janet, ever since he found out that she's pregnant. Except when Letta came to town. And that wouldn't happen again. He started pointing out the good things about Janet. She's smart. In six months, she'll have her Business degree. Okay cook. Her macaroni and cheese is not as good as his mother. But she's beautiful and fine. Plus, Janet never harrass him with question, when I don't answer, or return her call in a appropriated time. Chase smiled to himself. And the sex. Janet sex is the shit.. He began to weigh the reason not to marry Janet. The best reason he could come up with, is that Janet snores loudly sometime. "I need to buy some ear plugs." he thought to himself.

"And what are you smiling for?" Janet disturbed his thoughts. "About how much I love you." he replied, still smiling. "Really!" Janet wobbled to her feet, displaying all her pearls. "Of course I do."

"So we're getting marry?"

"How about we get engage." he suggested. Slightly disappointing Janet a little.

"For how long?"

"After the baby is born. I don't want a shotgun looking wedding. You can move in with me, and see how that work. See if we can stay under the same roof, without killing each other."

"You know we gonna argue sometime."

"I know. I'm not saying call it quit, on our first fight. The baby
M. RILEY

will be here in three months. And we can gage our relationship, and see if we're fit for marriage."

Janet contemplated on Chase proposition, twisting her lips. "Alright, I'm fine being engage. Walking down the isle all pregnant, do seem alittle ghetto."
"Yes." Chase shooked his head.
"But what about my ring?" Janet holding up her hand.
"Ring!" sounding stunned.
"Yeah, a ring. Couples engage wear rings. I can't tell everyone I'm engage, without a ring."
"Then I'll get you a engagement ring."
"Then we can go get one tororomrow?" Janet jumping for joy.
"How about I surprise you?" Chase suggested.
Janet frowned at the idea. "Its tradition for the man to shop for the engagement ring. A proposal is suppose to be a surprise, right?"
"I guess." putting her hands on her hips. "Don't buy me no cheap ring Chase!"
Chase laughed, stepping closer to her. "Have I ever bought you anything cheap?" he questioned, wrapping his arms around her, and kissed her.
Janet jolted over in pain. "What's wrong baby?!" he panicked.
"This little girl just kick the hell out of me."
"You okay?"
"Yeah." Janet taking a deep breath.
"She probaly letting us know that she's happy that we getting marry." he smiled.

(190)
Raine tasted the falling sweat from Marcus forehead, as he held himself over her, pounding into her pleasure hole. Raine wanted to know from Marcus, how much he is gonna miss her and her pussy.

"The minute the plane takes off. Every beautiful female I see. Every time the bell ring. Every time I throw a touchdown. Especially, every night I lay alone." he told her, still pounding away.

Reversing position, Raine rode him, grunting every time his penis touch her pelvis bone. She saw Marcus face begin to twist, and demanded for him to cum, and that she would cum with him. Screaming together in ecstasy, Raine felled on top of Marcus, sweating and exhausted herself. Both laid in silence, trying to catch their breath. But in the back of their mind, been the separation of hundred of miles, that would come between them today.

Today Marcus had to leave for Michigan for football practice. Raine and Marcus, said with words that their relationship is nothing more than friends, with benefits. She kissed him passionately, then stared in his eyes. Marcus ranned his finger over her full lips. Her eyes watered, expressed the same words his heart is feeling. "I don't think I can leave you." he whispered.

"But you have too."

"No, I can stay here. And try out for the University of Houston."

"Now, I know it's a long shot to make it in the NFL, playing in Conference USA." she replied, putting her hand on her hips. "Plus, how you gonna pay me back. I need my money."

Marcus laughed. "Didn't know you knew college football like that."

"I told you I had a cousin who played for the Dolphins. The trainer you work with, helped my cousin George, who he torn his ACL."

Marcus watched Raine finger traveled down his chest. He grasped it, and kissed the back of her hand. "How are we gonna handle this?" he questioned.

"Handle what?" she responded, acting like she didn't know.
Raine rolled off Marcus. He sat up on his elbow, and gazed down at Raine, who stared up at the ceiling.

"Our feeling for each other?"
"How do you feel?" she glanced over at him.
"I don't know what love feel like. I love my mother and I love football." Marcus paused, gathering his thoughts. "This feeling for you is not the same, as I feel for the other two things in my life."
"Tell me what you feel?"
"Trapped. Lost. Weak. Lifeless, when I'm away from you to long. My spirits are down, until I hear you voice. Or I know I'm mintues of seeing your admirable smile. I feel like I hit the lottery." Marcus described his feeling, smiling as he examined Raine body. "And it sure looks like I did. Do you feel the same?"
Raine sighed heavily, before she sat up, then stood to her feet. Marcus stared at her tribal tattoo above her perfect ass, as she walked over to the bedroom window. She pulled back the curtain slightly, letting the morning sun glow on her face. "I had this feeling before, when I married Lamont father. But never as strong as what my heart is feeling at this moment. I'm frighten, when I watch the plane take flight with you on it, that my heart will stop beating. I'll feel hopeless, and the elements in me will be in a state of chaos. Like everything is out of order. Having no structure."

"Just say it, and I want go." he requested sincerely.
"That would be selfish of me, if I ask you to stay. I never want to be the reason, that you didn't fullfil your dream. Plus, your mother will kill you." she giggled.
Marcus chuckled along with her."Isn't that the truth." getting out of bed, and walking over to her. "I will call you everynight."
"Sure you will." Raine retorted sacastic. "You gonna have all those little college girls chasing you. Thinking you're their meal ticket." Marcus chuckled at her jealous feeling. "I'm not into white women. My mother always told me, if they can't use your comb, don't bring
them home."

Marcus animadvert by his mother made Raine laugh. "You have a smart mother."

"I love you Raine." he told her, lifting her head up with a finger. "We're gonna make it work."

Raine remained silent, gazing up in his handsome face. She wanted to reframe from using the three emotional words. Her feeling for Marcus was too much to confine. She would explode, if she didn't tell him. "Marcus, if I give you my heart."

"You already loan it to me." he interrupted her. "I wanna know if it's mine to have."

Raine searched Marcus face and eyes, for any treachery. But she found nothing but devotion in his ingenuous eyes. She placed her hand on his chest, and felt his heart beat. Raine took the same hand, and placed it on her chest. "Now I have your heart. I love you." she finally revealed, kissing him.
Kyle demonstrated to Kossy a few times, on how to tie his shoes, while they waited on the bench in Walmart, for Cecilia and Khadijah to return from the restroom. After Kossy finished, he looked up at Kyle, hoping he tied his shoes correctly. When he saw the glowing smile on Kyle face, Kossy displayed his. Kyle gave him a high five. "Your mother will happy to know that you can tie your own shoes now."

Kossy nodded his head, grinning. "And I can teach my sister how to tie her's."

"Yes you can." Kyle stilling smiling.

Arm wrestling with Kossy, thier match been interrupted, when he heard his name called. Kyle looked up and recognized the full figure, shoulder lenght redhead woman, and along beside her, a teenage replica. Kyle stood up and hugged the teenager warmly, giving her a kiss on the forehead. "Hi baby." he smiled down at her.

"Hey daddy. Surprised to run into you at Walmart."
"Why, you know this my everything I need store. Why are you two here?"
"For school suplies, and I need another tablet."
"Did I just buy you one, eight months ago?" he frowned.
"Yeah. But daddy you know how technology change every week."
"Yeah I know. What, Apple has a IPhone 7 now." pulling out his cell phone. "And I still have my IPhone 4, that I swore I bought last year. A person can broke, trying to keep up with all this technology."

Kyle turned his focus on the redhead, who stood behind the shopping cart. She been observing the small black boy, clamping tight to his leg. "And how are you Bernice?" he asked.

Bernice didn't answer his question, but ask one of her own. "Whose the little black kid, attached to your leg?" never making eye contact with him.

"This is Kossy." looking down at him. "My girlfriend son. Say hi Kossy to my youngest daughter Stacy, and her mother Bernice." he di-
rected. Kossy didn't speak, but waved shyly at the two. Bernice stared at him bewildered.

"You have a black girlfriend?"

"A Nigerian." he said proudly, rubbing it in.

"I didn't know you were attractive to women outside your race."

"What race? The human race." being sarcastic.

"Stop it Kyle!" Bernice irritated. "You know what I mean."

"I'm attractive to any woman that's faithful."

Bernice facial feature express shame. Kyle could never forgive the ultimate betrayal by her, and the other person who he loved and trusted. He couldn't believe his brother crossed all codes, morals and religious bounds.

Kyle look behind him, when he heard Cecilia voice, talking to Khadijah, Cecilia slowed down her stride, when she spotted the two ladies standing near Kyle. Kyle grinned, extending his hand to take hers.

"Did everything go alright in there? You two were in there for a long time."

"Yes, everythings fine. Just had trouble pulling Khadijah away from that air dryer. She love that thing." Cecilia answered, looking at Kossy, clutching to Kyle leg. She turned her attention back at the women. "I see that you been fortuned to run into your daughter Stacy, and her mother."

"Yeah. There here also for school supplies, and among other thing." Grasping Cecilia hand more firmly, Kyle gestured. "This is my girlfriend, I was telling you about. Cecilia, and her daughter Khadijah." Stacy extended her hand for Cecilia to shake, but not Bernice.

"I didn't think you still have pictures of me Kyle." Bernice exhibit a devilish smile.

"He don't. He has pictures of the children, and it's clear to see that you are Stacy mother." Cecilia responded, before Kyle could. Kyle squeezed her hand, to let her know, that he loved her response.
"So I guess you eating fried chicken and collard greens now? Bernice said sarcastic.

"No, just me." Cecilia smiled, moving closer to him. Kyle tried to cover his laugh, with a cough. He been surprised to see other side of Cecilia, who always seem too passive.

All heads turned to the call of Bernice name. Strolling up in a Hawaiian shirt, and khaki shorts, a man the same height, weight, and hair color, but in a different style. Cecilia noticed the same color eyes, behind different frames. "Momma there's two Kyles." Kossy pointed.

Cecilia stared back and forth at Kyle and his twin brother, Myles.

"You never told me you had a twin brother."

"No I didn't. But I did tell you that she could have cheat with some one better looking than me." Kyle replied, glaring at his brother.

"Hey bro." he simpered. "Who do you have there with you?"

"It's his new family. The Willis from upstairs." Bernice remarked. Myles introduce himself to Cecilia , with a wave, in which she returned the same gesture. "I see that you moved on up to the darkside of the mountain." he chuckled.

"No Myles, just the right and beautiful side." putting his arm around Cecilia.

"Yes she is my brother." Myles nodded. "Have you talk to mom? She was disappointed, that you didn't show up at the family Fourth of July gathering this year."

"I spoken to her and told her I had made other plans."

"Momma knows?" Myles showing all his teeth.

"I'm sure she will tonight." Kyle retorted, looking over at Bernice. Kissing his daughter on the forehead, and hugging her tight. Kyle stepped back, and ask Stavy when do basketball season start.

"Practice starts in December."
"Okay. Call me and let me know when your first game is play. Alright?"
But don't wait to call me then. Understand?" he smiled. "I know you
like being with your friends."

"Yes daddy. I'll call you more often."
"I love you." he kissed her once more.

Saying his goodbyes to his brother and exs, Kyle reached for Kossy
hand and by passed them. Cecilia turned her head to look back at
them. Her face shown a expression of disbelief, when Myles winked
his eye at her.
Connie stood in the bathroom mirror in her Victoria Secret, lace panty and bra, applying her make-up. Monte walked in and slapped her on the ass, and screamed from the sting. "OOh Baby, that hurt." she whined.
Monte apologized and kissed her on the cheek. "You like it when I slap that ass, when I'm hitting it from behind." he massaged her rear.

"Yeah, but that's when we having sex. For some unknown reason it feels good." she smiled at him, through the mirror.
"Because you're a freak." he chuckled.
"Only for you baby." Connie replied, blowing him a kiss.
"Well" kissing her on the neck. "Let me hit it from the back right now, so I can smack that ass." Fighting the desire, Connie told Monte she would love for him to pleasure her, but she's already running late, and needed to get dress, and pick up Carla, for their girls day out." I thought Yamaha and Tank were coming over."

"Dam. you right. I forgot. That's what your fine ass do to me sometime. Make me forget." Monte slapped Connie on her ass again.
"OUCH MONTE!" Connie cried.
"Shit, sorry babby." kissing her on the ass.

Heading to her car, Connie became upset when she heard the loud rap music coming down the street. With her hands on her hips, frowning, she watched Yamaha pulled his Navigator behind Monte Porsh. Connie could smell the marijuana that escape from inside, when the two exit.

"Yamaha, how many times I have to tell you, turn that music down, when you enter this neighborhood. These white people is gonna call the police on your ass. Then tell the owner of the house, and get us evicted."

"Sorry Connie. I forgot." he simpered.
"Smoking all that shit, have fried yall brains." she commented, be-
fore getting into her car. After turning the ignition, Connie let down her window to speak. "Tell Monte, please don't have the house smelling like weed. I'm bringing Carla home with me."

"We want," he laughed.
The two watched Connie back out, and speed away. "Man that's a fine white bitch." Tank remarked.
"Hell yeah," Yamaha agreed. "Everytime I see her, I can't believe the crazy shit. And now she's Monte girl."
"Yeah, like that nigga said in Training Day. That's some trippy ass shit man."
Monte answered the door, and signaled for his homeboys to come inn. Thay sat on the suede sectional, while Monte finished an important call. Tank rolled up another blunt, and Monte been all smiles after his phone call. Clapping his hands together, he informed his homies that his connection is fronting him another fifteen keys.

"And five is ours."
"That's cool. When do we pick it up?" Yamaha inquired.
"Tommorrow. They gonna call me back at noon, and let me know where."
"Cool. I'm ready to make some more money." Yamaha pleased.
"They want eighteen thousand a brick. But we know they sell for twenty one. We can under cut these niggas out here, and sell it for nineteen. Make an extra twenty thousands, off the ten keys."
"I'm down with that. I got niggas texting me, asking when I'm gonna get some more of that good dope. They say the shit is pure. They can cut it ninety nine times," tank spoke,
"Well they said they like how fast we get rid of it, and having their money with no delays."
Tank lit the blunt, inhaling it hard,causing him to choke. Monte and Yamaha laughed, watching Tank trying to catch his breath. Yamaha snatched the blunt from him, and puffed on it a few times, then passed it to Monte.

(199)
"DAM! this some good weed." Monte delighted, examining the well rolled fat blunt.

"That's that good shit there. HydroPop." Tank revealed, finally catching his breath.

"Hydro who?" Monte confused.

"HYDROPOP NIGGA! That's hydro, and popcorn weed, mixes together."

"Y'all niggas crazy." Monte told them, hitting the blunt again, before passing it back to Tank.

"Oh yeah, we saw Connie when we drove up. She told us to tell you, not to have the house smelling like weed. She's bringing Carla back with her."

"I'll get up in a minute, and open the back door, so some fresh air can come inn."

Yamaha received the half finish blunt from Tank. After a few puffs, he mention to Monte how Tank and he was discussing how crazy that you're with Connie."

"You jack and killed Carl, for those three keys."

"I had to get that nigger, so I could come up. I hadn't plan on kill- ing him, but the fool tried to go for his gun. And I had to smoke him, before he smoke me. When I met Connie, I didn't know she was Carl baby momma."

Yamaha began fanning the smoke in front of his face. He dropped the blunt in his lap, when he saw Connie standing in the front door entrance. Monte started to curse at Yamaha about almost burning his couch, until quickly he saw his spooked eyes, that told him something wasn't right. Monte turned around to the crying eyes of Connie.

"YOU FUCKIN MURDERING SON OF A BITCH!" she yelled. "YOU KILLED CARL!"

Monte jumped from the couch, trying to explain to Connie, but she wouldn't hear of it, storming out the door. Making it to her car, and locking the doors, Monte knocked on the window, pleaing for Connie to let him explain.
"WHAT THE FUCK! EXPLAIN TO ME MONTE! YOU KILLED THE FATHER OF MY DAUGHTER! THE LOVE OF OUR LIVES!" she screamed, turning the ignition, and peeling out of the driveway.

Carla opened the door for her mother, The smile on her face vanished, after seeing her mother make-up, running down her cheek.

"What's wrong momma?" taking her hand.

Shaking her head, Connie struggled to produce a smile. "I'm sorry baby." she cried, kneeling down to hug her daughter tight.
CHAPTER 40

Everyday Russell would make it home before Kathrine. Grabbing a Heineken out of the refrig, he retrieved the remote control, and sat in his recliner. Watching the last fifteen minutes of the six o'clock news. "The same old shit." he said, to himself. Murder, wars, and inflation. Not always in that order, but always in the news. His attention been distracted from the news, when he saw his cell phone light up on the coffee table. Grabbin it, he cursed, identifying the number. "Lekesha."

Ever since Russell part ways with Lekesha, things with her had became a living hell. Four day after he ended their secret relationship, he haven't recieved less twenty calls, and not including another fifty texts from her, Lekesha texts in the beginning of the day would be nice, and sweet. By mid-day, Russell would be called every name under the sun, never returning her texts and calls.

When the sun goes down, Lekesha would apologize, and send pictures of her in lingerie. Or naked in all kind of position.

Two days ago, Lekesha came to the firestation in a bodysuit made by Cat. Exposing her clevages, flat stomach, and camel toe, she brought a picnic basket, hopeing to have lunch together.

Telling her no, the scene at his job became embarrassment as all his firefighters brothers watched Lekesha act a fool.

Russell cursed again, but not in anger, but from the naked shot from Lekesha from the rear, on all fours. "How did she take that picture by herself." he thought.

Under the texts it read. "You Know You Miss This Pussy." Russell shooked his head in disbelief, and erased the texts. Tired of hearing bad news, he turned to his favorite channel, ESPN, remembering that the Astros, play the Yankees tonight.

Checking his watch, he knew that Kathrine wouldn't be home for another hour. Thirty minutes before the ballgame starts, he decided to order his favorite Pineapple hamburger pizza, and a Pepperoni, with black olive for Kathrine.
After ordering the pizza, he went to take a shower. Unexpected, while he was in the shower Kathrine came home to the blasting of the surround sounds of the television. Laying her purse on the kitchen counter, she grabbed the remote, and pushed mute. Shouting Russell name, she waited for him to respond. Recieving none, she heard the shower running in their bedroom. Kathrine placed the remote back on the table, and headed towards their bedroom, wanting to join Russell in the shower.

Stooping in her footsteps, Kathrine heard Russell cell vibrate. Not one to check or answer Russell cell phone, this time she decided to see who had texts, and inform him when she join him in the shower. Kathrine grabbed his cell, to read his texts. Astonished by what her eyes was seeing. She enlargeed the picture on the screen, to make sure who she thought, she been looking at.

Lekesha, dressed in rain pants, with suspenders, and boots. She was topless, wearing a rain hat. Under the picture it read. "I Need Help To Put Out My Fire."

Heated blood, and anger, rushed to Kathrine eyes and head, almost causing her to faint. With Derrick troubles consuming her life lately, she never gave it a second thought that Russell had been cheating. Creeping home late sometime, claiming that he been out with his co-worker.

If not cheating on her had been bad enough. It had to a bitch on the job.

"OH MY GOD." Kathrine felt like she was losing her breath. "This ho smiles in my face everyday, and laugh behind my back, knowing that she'd fucking my husband. Charging to the batoom. Russell been singing off tune, the O'Jays (She Use To Be My Girl). Russell jumped clean off his feet from fright, when Kathrine tossed his cell phone against the shower glass, cracking it.

"WHAT THE FUCK!" Russell turned to see Kathrine angry face. He glanced down and recognize his cell phone. He needed not to be
Einstein to know the reason why.

"How Long You Been Seeing That Bitch!" she yelled. Russell didn't answer, knowing it would make things worst. Turning off the shower. "Can we sit down baby so I can explain?" he pleaded.

"Did you know that bitch works with me?"

"No. Not until she showed up at the Fourth of July barbeque."

"So again I ask, how long you been fucking her?" she scowled. Russell still refused to answer the question. "What's wrong muthafucker? You Can talk Now? I bet you had alot to say, when you with her. How long you two been fucking Russell?" Kathrine repeated for the third time. "One week? One month? Two months? Six months? A year? Tell me Russell, my pussy got to old for you. You wanted some young pussy Russell. Is that what you want?"

"Baby let me explain."

"Don't call me baby, you cheating son of a bitch!" she retorted.

"Just calm down."

"CALM DOWN!" she repeated angrily. Kathrine began searching through the bathroom drawers. Russell watched nervously, stepping out of the shower.

"What are you looking for Kathrine?"

"What Am I Looking For." she repeated, slamming one draw, and opening another. Finding what she been looking for, Kathrine brandished a pair of sissors. "Something to cut your dick off, and stick in my purse. So I know where it is at all times." Russell ran and lock himself in the toliet area, of the bathroom. Kathrine kicked and banged on the door, demanding for him to come out. "I can share your dick with Lekesha. I'll cut it in two, and give her one half. You like that?"

"Kathrine your not getting a glimpse of my shit, until you calm down."

Kathrine grew frustratated trying to get Russell to come out, and

(204)
face his punishment. She pieced back Russell cell phone, and went to her closet, retrieving a shoe box. After Kathrine snatched all the telephone cords out of the walls, before grabbing both sets of keys, and her purse.

Kathrine sat behind the dark tinted windows of Russell truck, in the parking lot of First Colony mall. She was waiting on a person who she had texts to meet her there. Twenty minutes later Kathrine spotted the vehicle, she was looking for. She could fathom how fast the vehicle had arrived. Kathrine flashed the high beam to alert the person. The vehicle pulled up on the passenger side, to hop in the truck. Opening the door, the person froze in fear, staring at the 38 snug nose. "Get in bitch." Kathrine commanded Lekesha.

"Don't think I won't shoot your ass, if try to run." she warned. Lekesha hesitated, thinking about her option. She remembered her mother telling her that she's playing a dangerous game, messing with a married man. So she came to the conclusion, it would be best to get in the truck.

Slowly getting in, Kathrine told her to shut the door. Lekesha placed her back against it, never taking her eyes off the weapon. Tears began to run down her face, when Kathrine pulled back the hammer. "Don't start crying now ho. I bet you were all smiles. jumping up and down, on my husband dick." Kathrine scowled.

"I'm sorry Kathrine. Please! don't kill me." Lekesha cried.
"Why? Give me one reason!" Kathrine inch the gun closer.
"Russell and I don't see each other anymore."

"Stop lying bitch. I saw the picture you texts him tonight. I should put your fire out." she replied, raising the 38 to her face. Lekesha closed her eyes, and folded up like a ball. Kathrine could her praying to any god that would hear her prayers.

"Please don't shoot me." she pleaded.
"Shut Up!, and answer my question. How long you been seeing Russell?"
"Ever since you bail Derrick out, without his approval."

"How do you know all this?"
"He came to the club where I dance. I spotted him sitting alone, looking like her had a lot on his mind. I told him I was a good listener."

"How long did you know Russell was my husband?"
"A few weeks after."
"Russell knew we work together?"
"No. Not until the Fourth of July."
"How many times you two seen each other since then?"
Lekesha hesitated, staring at Kathrine, before her eyes cast down to Russell Houston Texas floor mats. "Only once. And that's to tell me its over." Lekesha glanced up with teary eyes.
Kathrine been amazed at what she just discovered. "Are you in love with my husband?" she giggled to unbelief. Lekesha didn’t answer verbally, but with her eyes. "Sweet heart, Russell isn't going nowhere. We thirty four years of marriage. Three children. A home, cars, and money in the bank. When Russell breathes his last breath, I'm gonna be the bitch by his side. You understand?"
Lekesha answered with the nodding of her head.
"You know your fired." Kathrine revealed.
"What! you don't have the authority to hire or fire." Lekesha retorted.
"Don't I have a gun?" she pointed at her face.
Lekesha shooked her head frightly. "MMMM MMM."
"If you ever come around my husband again, I will kill you. You hear?"
"Yes." her voice cracked.
"Good. Now get out of my husband truck bitch."
Kathrine didn't drive home after confronting Lekesha. But found herself for unknown reason in the parking lot at her job. She sat there crying, staring at the pictures of her and Russell, last year in Jamaica. It was her most remembrance vacation ever. The night was warm, and the view magnificent, as the full bright moon seemed to set on the ocean water. Walking hand and hand, barefooted on the white sand, Kathrine smiled to herself, remembering how Russell tried to sing Lou Rawls, (You Gonna Miss My Love). Russell stopped and turned to her, to reveal that she's more beautiful, than the day he said I do. "Thank you for giving a young boy, who was working in a chicken shack a chance."

"Thank you for the apple pie." she laughed.

"After I saw you, I never desire another. I knew who I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. to be my wife. The mother of my children. The one I wanted to share a life time of memories. And the last face I see, when God decide to call me home. I said all that to say this. I love you Kathrine."

She'll never forget the night how Russell made passionate love to her, on the beach sand. Now Kathrine sat in his truck, wondering about the few times they had sex. Was Russell thinking of Lekesha. Kathrine needed to know if her husband was emotionally involved with Lekesha.

Deep in her thoughts, Kathrine flinched, dropping her cell in her lap. She been frighten by a knock on her driver window. Reaching for her pistol, Kathrine released it, recognizing it been Mr. Washington. Letting down her window, she wanted to know if there was a problem.

Mr. Washington was about to greet Kathrine, until he noticed her crying eyes. "Are you okay?" he inquired.

"Yeah." wiping her tears.

He saw the picture of her and her husband sitting on her lap. "You
wanna talk?"
"There's nothing to talk about."
"Mr. Washington studied her for a moment. "Can we go for a ride?"
"Where?" gazing at him confused.
"Not far."
Kathrine hesitated, debating. Mr. Washington knew the answer, hearing the doors unlock. When he opened up the passenger door, he paused a second, spotting the 38, that Kathrine slide over. Slowly he got in the truck, eyeing Kathrine, who kept her eyes forward. He clutched Kathrine hand, who still had her hand on the gun. Mr. Washington brought it to his nose, smelling it. Kathrine turned to him, assuring him that she haven't shot anyone. "Yet. Where too?" putting the truck in drive.

"Missouri City. The Lakes of Eden division." he instructed. Twenty minutes later, Kathrine parked in the long driveway, of a 3400 hundred square foot, manicure lawn, brick home. "Who stay here?" she turned off the engine.

"I do. Well I did."
"You sold it?"
"No. I haven't lived in it in ten years."
Kathrine been baffled, trying to figure out the reason why Mr. Washington didn't want to stay in such a beautiful home. She didn't question him, hoping he would tell her the reason why.

"I use to be marry to a gorgeous, smart, funny and wonderful woman. Mr. Washington continued speaking never looking over at Kathrine. He scanned the house, and notices the wood started to rot, at the bottom of the garage door. "I have to get that fixes." he made a mental note. "She blessed me with one seed. A son David. My wife was deeply into her faith. A Christain of course. She wanted to name him Jesus, but figure he would be hecke at alot." he lightly chuckled.
"Where's your son?"

"Seven years ago, his job gave him a big promotion to run their division in Japan. So he stay there, with his wife and two kids."
"You don't have any sibling?"

"No. I'm the only child like David. Mrs. Evans in Human Resource, is my wife sister. That's how I got the job at the hospital."
"Looking at this house, something tells me you wasn't always a maintence man."

"I use to be a veterinarian."
"Wow, that's amazing. Let me guess, you had lab as a pet?"
"No, two pitbull. Very playful, but also protective. They are really misunderstood creatures."

"I know. My husband has a pitbull, named Chico."

"MMM." Mr. Washington nodded his head, as he expected everything again on the property. "You know I have a service that comes by and clean inside, and the yard."

"Explains why it looks so well kept. So what is your wife name?"
"Christine."

"Nice name. Why do you keep referring to her in a past tense?"
Mr. Washington turned to Kathrine with grieving eyes. "Because she's dead. Behind my infidelity."

Kathrine been shocked by the uncomprehending revelation, by Mr. Washington. "I don't understand. How can your infidelity cause your wife death?"

"When I saw your face, and the picture you been looking at. I recognized clearly, the same look I saw ten years ago. When Chirstine found out that I was cheating. Her brown eyes screamed pain. Why? Do you love me anymore?" Mr. Washington sighed heavily, gazing out the passenger window. "Chirstine ran out the house, flurry. Probaly like you did tonight. But she never returned home, to allow me to spend my last breath making it up, for the most ultimate betrayal."
Mr. Washington wiped the falling tears from his eyes. "Still upset and confuse, Christine ran a redlight, and was blindsided by a truck." he confessed to Kathrine, fighting back tears.

"I'm sorry." Kathrine placed her hand on his thigh.

"I'm the only one know why Christine was out driving that night. No one never knew about my infidelity. And after the funeral, I never felt right coming home, not seeing her smile. Hearing her laughter. A month later I stop working, and jumped in my car, driving across the country."

"How did you survive?"

"Doing odd job. I was always good fixing things." Mr. Washington took Kathrine hand, squeezing it lightly. "Don't give up so easily. I know we men do the stupidest things at times. There's no excuse. It's just clock in our DNA. I'm sure you and your husband built a lot together, to tear it down. Because he decided to think with his little head, instead of the one on his shoulders. give him that chance, to spend his life making it up to you." he advised.
Russell saw the headlights of his truck pull up in the driveway. Jumping to his feet, he hurried back into their bedroom and locked the door. He placed his ear against the door, and heard the jingling sounds of Kathrine putting the keys on the kitchen counter. Russell flinched when she knocked on the door. "Russell! Open the door. We need to talk."

"Where's the gun?"
"On the counter."
"How do I know you don't have it in your hand?"
"Because I don't GodDam It! If I wanted to shoot you, I would have shot you through the door."
"So you don't want to cut my penis off, anymore?"
"Yeah, I want to do that, but I'm not. Just come out please." she asked. For a moment, Kathrine didn't hear any response, or sound from Russell. "Russell!" she called his name. Kathrine took a step back, when she saw the doorknob turn. Russell opened the door just a few inches, for him to peirce out. He saw his wife expression of anger, was no longer on her face. But saw pain and sorrow. Slowly he opened the door wide, and gazed at Kathrine, his wife for over thirty years.

"Kathrine, I'm sorry. I didn't have any idea, that Lekesha work with you. I know it isn't an excuse. It was stupid. I let my anger control my judgement. Soon as I found out, I ended it."
"I know." Kathrine informed.
Russell became confused, by his wife discern, tilting his head.
"How do you know that?"
"I saw Lekesha tonight."
"And."
"She told me everything. I know things are over between you two."
"It is baby. I swear it is."
"But I have a question. No two."
"And that is?"

"If you never found out that I was Lekesha supervisor, would you still being seeing her?"

Russell stared at Kathrine for a long moment. He sighed heavily, leaning against the door frame, rubbing the waves in his head. He knew the answer to the question. The answer he didn’t want to reveal. Russell saw the tears flood Kathrine eyes, before she swivel to sit on the sofa. "How are we gonna get through this Russell?" she asked, placing her face in her hands.

"I don't know. I willing to do whatever it takes. Just give me a chance to make it up to you. Somehow. Someway."

"Why do that sounds so familiar to me." she looked over to him. "Russell." Kathrine stood to her feet. "You need to make this right. You better make this right." pointing her finger at him.

"I will baby. I promise I will do whatever, to fix my mistake. Just tell me what I need to do, and I'll do it." he pleaded, walking over to her, and pulling her in his grasp.

"I know what you can do to make me feel alittle better." she said. Russell leaned back to see her face.

"Let me know baby, what I can do?" sounding sincerely. Willing to please his wife by any means.

Katherine gazed up at him for a second. Russell waited to jump to the moon for her. Instead, Kathrine kneed Russell in the testicles. bending over in pain, clutching his balls, she ounched him in the jaw, sending Russell crashing to the floor, in agony. Kathrine kneeled beside him to speak. "If you ever cheat on me again, I will cut your dick off. You understand?"

In so much pain, Russell could only answer her with a nod. Kathrine stood to her feet, and headed to their bedroom. She stop at the door, to look back at Russell, who still laid on the floor. "When you able baby, come to bed." she smiled.

(212)
Chase, thank, and shook hands with the brunette, blue eyes sales lady. He smiled down at the shiny platinum and diamond ring, in the black velvet box. "She'd gonna love it sir." the sales woman grinned.

She better. How much this thing cost." Chase replied.

Chase walked out the jewelry store, pulling out his cell phone. He called Janet. At her apartment watching soap opera, she glanced at the caller ID, and saw it was Chase calling. "Hello baby." she answered.

"What you doing tonight?"

"I have to work." Janet baffled by the question, knowing Chase knew.

"Well call in sick. I feel like taking you dinner tonight. I made reservation to one Houston finest restaurant. Paris."

"What's the occasion?"

"Nothing. I'm just hungry."

Climbing in his DTS, Chase pulled out the ring, to glanced at it once more. "Dam! Chase you must be in love, to spend that much on a ring." he spoke to himself.

Placing the ring back in the bag, and sticking the key in the ignition, Chase heard the horn blow, from a car parked next to him. The middle age white man, wearing a plaid shirt, apple hat, and shades, gestured for Chase to roll his window down. Curious about what the man wanted, Chase let down his window. "Yeah, can I help you?"

"Yes please. I'm from out of town, and I'm trying to find Belliare Boulevard."

"It's just three exits from here. Make a left under the freeway, and stay on the feeder. You'll run right into it." he explained.

"Thank you. Thank you. I was hoping I been close."

"You are. Three blocks." Chase flashed a fake smile.

Before Chase could turn the ignition, the estrange man ask another question. "Is your name Chase Daniel?"

(213)
Chase jerked back in astoundment, wondering how the stranger knew his whole name. "Yeah. Why? Who wants to know?"

"I do." he replied.

Quickly the stranger grabbed a pistol, with a silencer, from the passenger seat, and placed a bullet in Chase head, before he could react. Chase slumped over his console, still holding on to the jewerly bag. The hitman never second guess himself, not getting out of his vehicle, to ensure that Chase was dead, as he put his car in reverse and drove away.
This day the salty air been refreshing to Nicole, as the sun shined off Gulf waters. Walking on the warm beach sand barefooted, in her Oscar Dels Renta, wedding dress. Eric Bennet, and Tamira (Spend My Life) played in the background, as a hundred eyes were on her, making her way to Malik. Nicole thought Malik never looked more handsome as he did today. Dressed in a white tuxedo, and sky blue accessories, she fought back tears, looking down at Malik best man, Nicholas.

Sherry finally earned her LVN diploma, and found another place of employment with a competitive hospital. Terrance and her, slowly eased in to a relationship, and began to share the same bed. Carmen, Terrance daughter loved having the twins staying under the same roof. Steven made his first parole, and moved in with Ms. Bell the prison guard. Terrance gotten him a job at the chemical plant where he works, building scaffles.

Zach hire a lawyer, and tried to get custody of the twins. When Tasha and Taylor told the judge that they perfer to stay with their mother, and the abuse they witnessed. The judge awarded Sherry full custody, and Zach no visitation rights.

Connie went to the police to inform them who murdered the father of her child. Monte was arrested, but set free, after a grand jury fail to indict him. Six months later, in a drug tranaction, Monte was killed in New Orlean.

Raine sat every Saturday in front of the television, watching Marcus throw touchdowns, and winning the Heisman trophy. She whisper, I love you, everytime Marcus would flashed the sign of their love.

Cecilia finished her on-line course, earning her diploma. She remained at Monroe hospital. Cecilia moved in with Kyle, in his two bedroom townhouse. She accepted his marriage proposal, and they now are looking for a house.
Janet Byrd gave birth to Chase daughter Chanel. Retrieving Chase property at the police station, Janet broke out in tears, when she opened the small black velvet box, that held her six thousand dollars, engagement ring. Janet and Tabitha, set aside their difference, for the sake of the kids. They both knew that Chase would love for brother and sister to be close.

Lekesha transfer to another branch of the hospital. Roxanne and her slowly build their relationship. A few months later, Lekesha stop dancing, and enrolled at the University of Houston, to get her degree in Business Administration.

Gary continued to be the gossiper, and comedian of the hospital. He is still saving to have a sex change.

Kathrine forgave Russell, and mending their marriage. Visiting their son Derrick every weekend, they also focus on their retirement, waiting to leave the noisy city life, for the peace and quiet of the country. Until, Kathrine surprised Russell by installing a stripper pole in their bedroom.

Mr. Washington trimmed his beard, and changed out of his overall. Stepping inside his home after ten years, he straighten out the painting of him and Christine, that hunged over the fireplace.
Aisha is the daughter of Hamza, Khalefa. A ruling vampire. Living for over three hundred years, Aisha blood runs boiling hot, to have sex. But according to the Khalefas laws, the daughter of a Khalefa must remain chaste for eternity. Or face death.

The Jinn, who were servants to the Khalefas, revolted for being oppressed. Before her father Hamza begins his two hundred years dormancy, he travels the world in search of the best fighters to protect his family, after running into the Jinn, and the creation they created to hunt and kill them.

When Sampson, Aisha guardian gets ambushed by the Jinn, a new protector is assigned to her. Hearing that Mykaya is the best fighter the Shams has ever seen. Aisha disapproves of him from the start. She does everything to challenge his skills, his patience, and his heart.
Bo had made a left off the highway, into the cemetery. Aisha could barely hear the gravel rocks being crushed underneath the tires of the stretch Escalade. Terry sat on the passenger side giving Bo direction, as they pulled up to a white mausoleum. "This is it." Terry informed Bo.

Both scanned the area before getting out to open the door for Aisha. Aisha exited the SUV, wearing an all leather outfit. Knee high boots, a vest, shorts, and trenchcoat. She removed her big face Chanel shades, and glanced up at the full moon.

Bo her new harasa, a white man that stood six six, and two hundred and eighty pounds. Was bald at the top, and the rest of his dirty blonde hair was in a ponytail, down to the middle of his back. Wearing only a tank top, and jeans, the cold was visible when he spoke. "Do you need us to assist you inside?"

"No. I'll be fine." she answered, never looking at him. Aisha placed her shades in her coat pocket, and check her other pocket to make sure she had what she needed. She glanced over at Terry, who acknowledge her with a nod. Aisha smiled at him, before, heading to the mausoleum.

Unlocking the the two heavy deadbolt locks, Aisha opened the doors, stepping inside, then locking it. Turning around, she stared at the white double doors marble casket, sitting on a dais. Aisha creeped to it, then massaged her hand over the smooth stone, before unlocking the gold latch.

Taking a few steps back, she retrieved a book from her coat pocket, and begin reading from it, in a unmankind language. Harmonizing in a rythum, Aisha tongue move fast and her voice grew louder. She looked up when the casket begin to shake heavily, almost rocking off the dais.

Aisha sped up the pace in her tongue, and raised her voice a notch higher. She been startled when the casket doors flew off the hinges.
Aisha gasped, witnessing the grey ruler, floating to his feet. Opening his red eyes, the Khalefa howled, rattling the tomb. Spreading his wings to their full length, Aisha quickly fell to her knees, bowing her head. The grey ruler glided, landing in front of her. He inhaled Aisha's scent, then growled.

"I give you my love, and my soul, my King." Aisha spoke, never raising her head.

"Aisha, my Queen, Arise."

Aisha stood to her full height of five seven, looking into the handsome face of Mykaya. She displayed her perfect smile, placing her hand on his cheek. Aisha's soft touch made Mykaya close his eyes, as he covered her hand with his.

"Its been a lonely five years. I miss you."

"I miss you too my love. Now our love has no time, as we have an eternity to explore it." Mykaya said.

Aisha observed his nakeness, and the size of his manhood. "Can't wait to begin to explore." she giggled. Mykaya raised an eyebrow.

"Hmm, that's what got us in this position in first place."

COMING THIS SUMMER!!!

(2)