**Heaven Can’t Wait**

A novel by

Jai Ellis

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**Chapter 1**

I don’t know why my mama named me Heaven or who my father was. For all I know he could have been my neighbor or the bum on the corner. The only thing she’d ever said about my daddy was “I met yo’ fine ass daddy at the damned Laundromat.”

I don’t have a lot of memories of my mother and the ones I do have seem to fade more and more every day. I wanna to remember her, but sometimes I just can’t.

There are two things about her that I’ll never forget though. The first one is hearing her say “Look at my beautiful angel. Ain’t nobody finer than Heaven.” She’d say that to me every morning and I took that shit straight to the head. I know I’m the baddest bitch walking.

The second thing I’ll never forget is the last time I saw her.

I had just turned 10. I remember cuz it was exactly one week after my 10th birthday.

It was hot, like a hundred degrees outside, and I’d begged her to buy me some ice cream. She’d finally given in and we walked to the corner store.

“Come on girl,” she yelled at me. I guess I was walking too slow. She turned around to grab my arm and accidentally stepped on some boy’s foot. He wasn’t much older than me, only about fourteen years old. I could tell that my mama was about to apologize, but he didn’t give her a chance to.

“Excuse you, bitch!”

“You need to get yo’ lil’ ass in the house and out of these streets sellin’ them drugs,” she said over her shoulder.

I looked back at the boy as he continued to curse at my mama. He was calling her all sorts of names, but she continued to ignore him.

She let me pick out whatever kind of ice cream I wanted and she got a gallon of milk, a half-gallon of bleach, a loaf of Wonder bread and a 2-liter bottle of strawberry pop.

In exchange for my ice cream I had to carry the gallon of milk.

There were a lot of kids playing outside, but I just wanted to get back inside with my chocolate ice cream. It was too hot to be running around.

The boy was still calling my mama names as we headed home. I looked up from the ice cream that I’d been licking and noticed that he had an odd-shaped birthmark on the lower part of his right cheek.

“Stupid ass bitch,” he said once we were right in front of him. I couldn’t believe that he was still talking about it or that he was talking to an adult like that.

“Somebody needs to beat yo’ ass,” my mama said as she turned around to face him. She did something no one expected and slapped him. The echo could be heard down the block.

“Now call me another bitch,” she challenged before she turned to continue the walk back to our building.

I was still looking at the boy because for the first time all day, he was quiet. My eyes almost popped out of my head as I watched him retrieve a gun from his waistband.

“Ma.” I tried to scream, but it came out as a whisper. I shook her arm, but before she could even look down at me blood was trickling down her exposed abdomen. I hadn’t even heard the gunshot. It was like I’d temporarily gone deaf.

My mama gasped as she looked down at her stomach. The boy shot one more time, looked right into my eyes and started to run, knocking younger kids over as he made his getaway.

I looked down at my mama. She was lying on the ground, her blood mixing with the milk that I’d dropped. I wanted to help her but I couldn’t move.

When the police arrived they kept asking me what had happened, but I was speechless. I didn’t talk for months after that.

That’s how I ended up living with Carmen, my mama’s best friend. She didn’t hesitate to take me in, but she couldn’t get through to me. No one could. All I wanted was my mama.

I loved her, but she wasn’t my mama, no matter how hard she tried to be.

She couldn’t talk to me the way my mama had. I realized at an early age that there really ain’t nothing like a mother’s love.

Plus, after my mama got killed Carmen went downhill fast. She’d drink like liquor was going out of style, and when she drank she cried. She’d be pulling out old pictures of my mama and crying like a baby. She knew she’d break down once she started to drink so I couldn’t understand why she drank like she did.

I hated being around her when she started to cry. Snot would run down her face and she’d want to hug on me and tell me how much she missed my mama. That shit pissed me off because she’d say it like she missed her more than I did or something. I missed her more than anyone else ever would, but I dealt with it better by not really thinking about it. I didn’t cry a lot and when I did I had the decency to do it in private. Crying in front of other people is weak to me.

I did break down sometimes, I won’t lie about that. It happened when I’d just sit and think about what it would have been like to still have her around and how senseless her death had been. If I ever saw that boy again I’d kill him with no remorse.

**Chapter 2**

Once I turned fourteen I was never in the house. I went to school, most of the time, and after that I hit the streets hard. I only kicked it with one person and that was Diane. She was Mexican and black. She was pretty in the face with long, thick, dark hair that she’d recently dyed red. It was bright red like a blazing fire, but she worked that shit. She worked everything that she had.

Unfortunately for her she was top heavy. If we could have combined our bodies we’d have had the perfect figure with my thick thighs and fat ass and her big breasts.

Diane always wore shirts that exposed her cleavage and skintight jeans. I guess she was trying to make her ass look plumper, but the tight jeans only made her ass look flatter.

I loved to go to her house though ’cause her mama was always cooking something good. Steak, tacos, burritos, rice and beans. Carmen never had a lot of money for food and I was always hungry when I was at home.

Plus, Diane’s mama could never pay attention to what me and Diane were doing because she was always too busy trying to keep up with the younger kids. Diane had four younger siblings and they were always running around, fighting and breaking stuff.

Me and Diane were getting ready for a party like we did on most weekends.

“You want it all flat ironed?” I asked, hoping she’d say no.

“Yeah.”

“You got too much damn hair,” I complained as I parted another section of her thick hair.

“Shut up and hurry up. The party gon’ be over by the time yo’ slow ass get done.”

“Anyway, what you wearin’?” I asked, burning her scalp on purpose. She knew better than to talk to me like that.

“Ahhh!” She jumped a little and I snickered under my breath.

“My bad,” I said like I hadn’t realized that I’d burned her dumb ass.

“I think Imma wear that white one-piece I got from Rainbow,” Diane said.

“I brought my jumpsuit and my jean skirt with the jacket,” I said.

When I finally finished Diane’s hair we took turns taking showers. As soon as she came out of the bathroom I knew that she wanted me to flat iron her hair again.

“No,” I yelled before she could even ask.

“Please?” she whined. She was plugging the flat irons into the wall already.

“You shoulda left the shower curtain and the door opened.” I had told her that plenty of times before, but she never listened.

Diane poked her bottom lip out like a baby and I gave in, as usual.

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We could barely get into the party ’cause it was so crowded. Everywhere I turned there was some girl with her ass pushed up against some guy’s dick. There were people huddled together here and there passing around blunts and popping pills.

Girls were looking at me and Diane enviously. I knew I was hurting bitches in my jean skirt and black bustier. I’d copped some thigh high boots from the mall and the Egyptians had feathered my hair. Yeah, I was looking like a model.

I had to let the guy that owned the salon suck on my titties to get my hair done, but that didn’t bother me. I had an image to uphold.

Diane was hot too in her all white one-piece. It was a halter at the top and a pleated skirt at the bottom. She wore some gold and white stilettos she’d copped that day and of course I’d done her hair.

We stayed close to each other as we bounced to the music.

“Oh my God, there go Mario!” I damn near screamed into Diane’s ear.

“So? Yo’ scary ass ain’t gon’ say shit to him.”

“Yes I am,” I lied.

I was nervous as hell anytime that boy was around. I could never get up the nerve to talk to him. He was seventeen and fine as fuck. Every time I looked into his hazel eyes, from a distance of course, I’d melt. It was like he’d be looking right through me. Sometimes I wondered if he even knew that I existed.

I’d known him since I was ten. We’d started going to school together when I’d moved in with Carmen.

I pretended not to notice him coming our way. He was probably looking at an older girl that was standing behind me anyway. I was surprised, but I tried not to show it as Mario stopped in front of me.

“What’s up?” he asked, leaning in towards my neck.

The way his breath brushed against my skin sent chills down my spine.

“What’s up?” I replied.

I was trying to act like he didn’t have any effect on me, but he did. He had me feeling like someone had cranked the heat all the way up.

“Come here,” he demanded with a sexy smile as he pulled me into his firm arms.

I don’t know why he was so interested in me all of a sudden, but I wasn’t complaining.

“What?” I said, pretending to have an attitude.

“When you gon’ quit playin’?”

“Ain’t nobody playin’.”

“Yo’ ass stay playin’.”

Mario had never said much to me so I had no idea what he was talking about. I figured he was drunk and trying to get some easy ass, which he wouldn’t be getting from me.

He turned me around and before I knew it I was pushing my ass back against his hard dick just like the rest of these fast ass girls. He was caressing my lil’ titties and my pussy was soaking wet. I thought it was going to run down my leg. I was in a zone as Mario kissed my neck.

“Damn girl.” He moaned in my ear before he sucked it into his warm, wet mouth. I wanted to fuck him so bad, but I was still a virgin and I was scared. Mario wasn’t my boyfriend anyway and I wasn’t nobody’s hoe.

“These niggas trippin’,” K.G. hollered as he pulled on Mario’s arm, fucking up our groove.

“I’m gon’ get at you,” Mario called out to me before he disappeared into the crowd.

Some niggas had started fighting and the party got shut down. My panties were wet and I wanted to get out of them anyway, so I didn’t much mind.

“Damn, you was all up on Mario,” Diane said as we walked back towards her house.

“Naw, he was all up on me,” I corrected her.

I don’t sweat niggas.

“Either way, ya’ll looked like ya’ll was finna fuck right there.”

I ignored Diane’s dramatic ass remark. I wasn’t about to fuck nobody.

“Yo’ Heaven!” I heard a voice call out from behind us.

“Who is that?” I asked Diane as we both squinted, trying to make out the dark figure under the orange street light.

“Wait up,” he hollered as he jogged toward us.

I had to hide my smile when I realized that it was Mario.

“What’s up?” I asked once he was standing next to us.

“Where ya’ll goin’?”

“Home.”

“Ya’ll got the damn party shut down,” Diane said as she rolled her eyes and sucked her teeth.

“Ya’ll can come to my house. We havin’ an after party,” he said.

I looked over at Diane to see what she was thinking.

“Ya’ll got somethin’ to drink?” she asked.

“We can get some,” he assured her.

*Damn*, I thought to myself. Mario was really trying to get at me all of a sudden. I wondered if he was just trying to fuck, but I really wanted to kick it with him.

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No one was at Mario’s place but K.G. I could tell Diane was mad but oh well.

“Where everybody at?” she asked, her face all scrunched up.

“I don’t know. They said they was comin’,” Mario replied nonchalantly.

I knew his ass was lying, but we’d walked seven blocks in the opposite direction of Diane’s house so we were going to be staying put for a while.

I sat on the couch and made myself comfortable.

“Ya’ll want somethin’ to drink?” Mario asked.

K.G. was playing the video game like we weren’t even there.

“Some Patron,” Diane quickly replied.

He poured her a glass of Tequila before he sat down next to me.

“Let’s go in my room,” he whispered into my ear.

His hand was resting on my thigh.

“For what?” I asked, knowing exactly what he was up to.

“Just come on.”

Diane gave me a suspicious look as I followed Mario into his bedroom. It was junky as hell in there. Shoes and clothes were everywhere and his bed was all discombobulated. The mattress was lopsided and hanging off of the box spring.

“Sit down,” he instructed once he’s straightened out the mattress.

“You need to clean up in here,” I said as I sat down.

“Be quiet.”

He turned off the light and joined me on the bed. My heart was beating a mile a minute. I had never been alone with a dude in his bedroom.

“Come here,” he whispered.

I moved closer to him and he moved close to me. I tried to control my breathing as he leaned in and started to kiss my neck. He was resting most of his weight on one hand and the other one was between my thighs.

I didn’t know what to do so I just sat there. A few minutes later I was leaning backwards so that he could unbutton then unzip my skirt.

“Lift up,” he instructed.

He was having a hard time getting my skirt off. When he finally did he tossed it on the floor.

He slipped his hand into my panties and started to massage my clit. I guess I was moaning too loud ‘cause he shushed me, then covered my mouth with his.

I don’t know when it happened or even how, but Mario’s jeans were off and he was on top of me. He was kissing me while grinding his dick into my throbbing clit. He kissed my jawbone, my neck, the top of my breasts, my stomach then my thighs.

I tried to squeeze my knees together but he forced them apart.

He pulled my panties over to one side and started to play with my clit again. I flinched a little as he slipped his finger inside of me. He moved it in and out slowly while using his thumb to play with my clit.

He suddenly ripped my panties off and shoved his face between my legs. His mouth was so warm and wet. I couldn’t believe what he was doing to me. I couldn’t tell him to stop since I didn’t want him to.

“Ahhhh.” I moaned as my body exploded. “Stop,” I begged as I pushed him away. My clit was numb now.

“Damn girl.”

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. “You loved that shit, didn’t you?”

“Yeah.” I ain’t see no reason to lie about it.

He laid down next to me and grabbed my hand. He placed it on his dick. It was big and I could barely fit it in my hand. He guided my hand up and down his shaft until I caught on. He didn’t say anything and I didn’t know if I was doing it right, but I wasn’t about to ask.

“Kiss it,” he whispered.

“What?”

I dropped his dick like a hot potato.

“Just kiss it,” he repeated as he put it back in my hand.

I didn’t like the sound of that shit. He sighed impatiently, sensing my resistance. He climbed on top of me again. I heard packaging rattling, then he reached down and did something to his dick.

“Ouch,” I cried out as he tried to force his dick inside of me.

“My bad,” he replied, still trying to ease inside.

We both jumped as the door flew opened.

“I’m ready to do,” Diane announced.

“Hold on. Give us a few minutes,” Mario told her.

“I’m ready now.”

“Shit.” He sighed as he rolled off of me.

I put my clothes on once Diane had closed the door.

“You ready?” Mario asked a few minutes later.

“Yeah.”

I followed him into the living room where Diane was waiting at the door.

“Bye Diane,” K.G. said with a smile as the three of us left the apartment.

“Damn, it’s cold,” Mario complained as we headed towards Diane’s. I was shivering as we walked.

There wasn’t really anyone outside besides drug dealers and crack heads.

“You want my jacket?” Mario asked as my teeth chattered.

“Yeah.”

It was freezing and my ass didn’t have on a jacket.

He gave me his hoody and I quickly put it on. It was already warm from his body heat and I got even warmer once I’d zipped it up. I felt bad for Diane because she wasn’t wearing a jacket either. Mario tugged at my wrist and we allowed Diane to walk ahead of us.

“You gon’ come back over tomorrow?” he asked.

“I don’t know.” I shrugged.

“You know you want to.”

I did wanna see him again.

“I gotta see.”

“Give me yo’ number.”

“I don’t be in the house. Give me yo’ number,” I told him.

He rummaged through his pockets looking for a piece of paper and a pen.

“Look in that jacket,” he instructed after his search had come up unsuccessful. I found a receipt but no pen.

“Aiight, look,” he said as he shoved the receipt into his pocket. “Just memorize it.”

“Okay.”

“5-8-7-7-7-7-3-1.”

“5-8-7-7-7...” I couldn’t remember the last two digits.

“3-1.”

“Okay. 5-8-7-7-7-3-1,” I repeated.

“Call me tomorrow,” he said as we stood in front of Diane’s house.

“Okay.” I unzipped the hoody and started to take it off.

“Keep it.”

“Naw, it’s cold out here.”

He took the jacket and put it back on, and I was freezing again.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” he said with a smile.

“I’ll *call* you.”

I shook my head as he turned to leave.

“I can’t believe you left me out there with K.G.,” Diane complained.

“Ain’t nothin’ wrong wit’ K.G,” I lied. The nigga was ugly as hell.

“So, you’d fuck wit’ him?”

“I’m tryin’ to fuck wit’ Mario, so no. That’s nasty. Plus, he ain’t my type.”

“Yeah, aiight.”

“Sometimes you gotta take one for the team,” I told her.

“Yo’ turn.” Diane smirked as she slowly opened the front door.

“Where you sluts been?! I’ve been looking all over for you!” her mother Maria was yelling at us before I could even get the door closed.

“We sorry,” I said sweetly. “I ran into my aunt and we went to her house out in the suburbs.”

“It’s two in the morning and you both know better.”

“I know. We won’t do it again.”

Maria was still yelling at us, now in Spanish, but we weren’t listening anymore as we headed towards Diane’s bedroom.

“What was ya’ll doin’?” Diane wanted to know as we both started to get undressed.

“Nothin’,” I lied as a huge smile spread across my face.

“You a lyin’ lil’ hoe. Tell me everything.”

I told Diane everything that had happened, especially the part about Mario eating my pussy.

I couldn’t even sleep that night for thinking about him. I couldn’t believe I’d let him eat me out and had almost lost my virginity to him the first night we’d ever really spent any time together. He wasn’t anything like I thought he’d be, though.

Whenever he was outside he always came off as mean and standoffish. He’d never really say anything to me and he always had bitches all over him. I never thought he’d be interested in me. I hadn’t reached my peak yet and I didn’t realize how sexy I was.

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The next morning all I could do was think about Mario. I wanted to call him, but I wasn’t sure if I should. *Maybe I should make him wait a few days*, I thought.

“Call him,” Diane said. “If he ain’t want you to call he wouldn’t have gave you his number,” she added.

She was right. I hadn’t asked for his phone number.

“Here it goes,” I said as I reached for the cordless phone. I dialed the number, 5-8-7-7-7-3-9.

“The subscriber you are trying to reach is not accepting calls at this time.”

I hung up the phone and groaned inwardly. This nigga had given me a fake number.

I rattled the number off in my head. 5-8-7-7-7-3-9. No, that wasn’t it. Damn, I couldn’t remember the number.

5-8-7-7-7-3…1. That was the number. I called the correct number, or at least the one he had given me. It rang three times and I was about to hang up when he answered.

“Hello. Hello?” he repeated, sounding agitated.

“Uhhh, hey. Can I speak to Mario?” I was so nervous.

“Who this?” he asked. I could hear people talking in the background.

“Heaven,” I said, hoping he wouldn’t act like he didn’t know who I was.

“Oh, what’s up?” he asked, sounding friendlier.

“Nothin’. What’s up wit’ you?”

“Shit. But look, this my cell phone. You ain’t gotta ask to speak to me.”

His surroundings seemed to be quieter, so I figured he’d walked away from his friends.

“All right.”

“You tryin’ to fuck wit’ a nigga?”

“I wanna see you,” I replied. I didn’t wanna give him the wrong idea ‘cause I wasn’t ready to fuck him. He laughed at my naïveness.

“Cool. Let me get back to this money. I’m gon’ get up wit’ you later. Matter of fact, call me back at eight.”

I agreed before I hung up and let out a sigh of relief.

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I walked over to my apartment to check on Carmen around four in the afternoon. She was drunk, as usual.

“I’m stayin’ at Diane’s again,” I informed her.

“Stay wit’ me,” she begged.

“Maria want us to watch the kids,” I quickly lied.

“Where she goin’?”

“I don’t know.”

“Make sure you call me,” she said before I left.

I wanted to walk down 79th street to see if Mario was still over there hustling, but I was too nervous. I didn’t want him to think I was stalking him. Plus, it was already five when I’d left the apartment. I went right back to Diane’s house to get dressed.

Diane was acting like she had an attitude but I didn’t care. She could have kicked it with K.G. since he was Mario’s friend but she didn’t want to, so that was on her.

“How this look?” I asked as I modeled a dress. It was sleeveless and came down right past my butt. I had on silver leggings underneath.

“It look okay,” she said dryly.

I tried on a couple more outfits before I decided on the dress and leggings. I put on a pair of metallic silver ballet slippers, four silver bangles, and a pair of hoop earrings.

I called Mario at eight on the dot and I thought I’d die when he didn’t answer. I didn’t bother leaving a message. He knew what time he’d told me to call so I knew he was ignoring my call.

“What he say?” Diane asked. I hadn’t noticed that she was in the kitchen.

“He was busy so Imma call him back in a minute,” I partially lied. He might have been busy.

I couldn’t believe this nigga. He was acting funny ’cause I wasn’t trying to give him no pussy? I was glad I hadn’t fucked him. I was embarrassed, but I wasn’t going to tell Diane that. At least not right now.

I headed into the bathroom to pull myself together. I could hear the phone ringing as I closed the bathroom door.

“Mario on the phone,” Diane announced a few seconds later.

She was standing right outside the bathroom door and she sounded like she still had an attitude.

I took a deep breath before I opened the bathroom door. I went back into the kitchen and picked the phone up from the counter.

“Hello,” I said calmly.

“What’s up?”

“Shit.”

“Where you at?”

“Diane’s.”

“Aiight. I’ll be over there in ten minutes,” he told me before he hung up.

He was ringing the doorbell fifteen minutes later.

“I thought I told you to call me at eight,” he said as we walked towards his apartment.

“I did.”

“I ain’t got no missed calls from you,” he said as he checked his phone.

“Then you need to fix yo’ phone.”

“Imma fuck yo’ ass up next time,” he threatened.

“I ain’t scared of you.”

“Don’t be ’cuz being scared ain’t gon’ stop no ass whopping’.”

“Whatever.”

We were quiet for a few minutes as we walked.

“I’m hungry,” he announced, breaking the silence.

“Then get somethin’ to eat.”

“I’ll order somethin’ when I get in the house, smart ass.”

He took my hand into his as we approached a large group of guys. I thought that was cute.

“That’s you, Rio?” one of them asked.

“Yeah,” Mario answered.

I didn’t say anything, I just smiled to myself.

I could feel his eyes on my ass as I walked up the stairs that led to his apartment.

“What you wanna eat?” he asked once we were in his bedroom.

“I don’t know.”

“I think I want some pizza.”

“I don’t want no pizza.”

“I thought you ain’t know what you wanted,” he said as he took his shoes off.

“I don’t, but I know what I don’t want.”

“Aiight, what about Chinese?”

“Yeah. I can do that.”

He ordered the food then sat down on the bed.

“I’m tired as hell,” he said as he laid down.

“From doin’ what?” I teased.

“Come here, lil’ smart ass.”

He turned onto his side so that he was facing me.

“What you want?” I asked.

I laid down on my side so that we were now face to face.

“To get to Heaven.”

I burst into laughter after that shit.

“That was weak,” I managed to tell him.

“And?”

He pushed me onto my back and kissed me. I closed my eyes and he separated my lips with his tongue. My legs slowly parted as he eased in-between them. He kissed my neck while grinding between my legs. My panties were soaked again.

I pulled Mario’s shirt over his head and threw it on the floor. I caressed his toned arms as he slipped his tongue back into my mouth.

He pushed my dress up past my hips and tried to pull my tight leggings off.

“Damn, why you always got on somethin’ tight?” he asked as he used both hands to pull them off.

He then took my panties off. I watched as he opened a Magnum condom and rolled it down over his hard dick. I was silent as he laid over me and tried to guide himself into me.

“Ouch.” I squirmed in pain.

“Hold on,” he whispered as he continued to try and enter me.

I gripped his arms and squeezed my eyes shut. I bit down on my bottom lip as he eased into me. I gasped as he started to slowly move in and out. I was in so much pain, but he seemed to be enjoying it.

“Shit.” He moaned as he started to move faster and faster.

I moaned as the pain finally started to subside and I started to enjoy it. He pulled his wife beater off as sweat started to trickle down his chest.

“Ahh… Ahh!” I screamed as he placed his hand on my hip and pulled me in closer.

“Aw shit.” He moaned just before he made a face so ugly I couldn’t believe Mario had made it.

A few seconds later he collapsed next to me and tried to catch his breath. I put my clothes back on and sat down at the foot of the bed.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

“Nothin’,” I lied. I wanted to explode like I had the night before. He had put me through all of that pain for nothing.

“I know you ain’t cum, but Imma make you cum before you leave,” he assured me.

I was about to lie and tell him that I was cool when his cell phone started to vibrate. I figured it was the delivery man ‘cause Mario said he’d be there in a minute, then put his boxers and wife beater back on. I stayed in the room while he went to get the food.

As soon as I smelled the orange chicken my stomach started to growl. We ate, talked a little and Mario made me cum just as he’d promised.

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“Yo’ ass better start wearing a jacket,” he told me as we were walking back to Diane’s house. It was the middle of September and I’d left my jacket at home again like a fool.

“I know,” I replied, shivering.

“Here.” he took his jacket off and gave it to me. Luckily he was wearing a sweater tonight 'cause I took that jacket with the quickness.

“You gon’ be over here tomorrow?” he asked.

“I don’t know. Maybe.”

“You my girl now.”

I didn’t have a problem with being Mario’s girlfriend, but it had all happened so fast.

“Why?”

“What you mean ‘why’?”

“Why me? Why now, all of a sudden?”

“Cuz I want you. You wanna be my girl or not?”

“I don’t know. I mean yeah, I do, but I don’t even know you.”

“You’ve known me most of your life,” he corrected me.

“I’ve known you, but you never paid me no attention before last night.”

“I always paid attention to you. I know everything about you, Heaven.”

“Like?”

“Your favorite color is white.”

“And?”

“And you’re allergic to peanuts.”

“And?”

“And you love music and even write songs and poems sometimes.”

“Okay, and how do you know all of this?” I asked, blushing. I had no idea that Mario knew so much about me.

“I pay attention.”

“Okay, so I’m your girl.”

“Nah, that offer is off the table,” he joked.

“All right. Your loss.” I told him as we stopped in front of Diane’s.

“Give me a kiss,” he ordered as I started to climb the stairs.

“Nope. I only kiss my boyfriend.”

He joined me on the stairs and pulled me into his arms. He kissed me and I wanted him to hold me all night.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” he told me as I knocked on the door. He waited until I was inside before he headed back home.

**Chapter 3**

Me and Mario’s thing was cool for a few months. We walked to and from school together every day and kicked it on the weekends. Then he went off to college in New York.

We talked on the phone sometimes and I emailed him from the school’s library, but it just wasn’t the same. I missed him and I really cared about him, but distance is a bitch.

I knew in my heart that he was getting college pussy even though he swore he wasn’t. I decided that I’d do me and we’d see what happened when he came home in four years.

Doing me didn’t consist of much lately. It was Saturday night and there were plenty of parties jumpin’ off, but I’d decided to stay in with Carmen for a change.

“Quit drinkin’ or I’m goin’ outside,” I threatened as she poured herself another glass of Hennessy. I knew that if she kept drinking she’d start crying soon.

“Okay, okay.”

“Come and talk to me,” I told her.

I hadn’t talked to Carmen in a while. I had been so busy ripping and running the streets that I’d barely even been home.

“What you wanna talk about?” she asked as she joined me on the couch.

“I don’t know. Let’s watch TV.”

I didn’t really feel like talking. I didn’t feel like doing much of anything at the moment. I turned on the TV and started to channel surf. I went past ESPN then turned back.

“Is that Mario?” Carmen asked.

“I think so.”

I didn’t know that Mario was big enough to be getting TV coverage, but there he was.

“You’re a force to be reckoned with on the court,” the show’s host said.

“It’s a team effort,” Mario replied modestly.

“Well, whatever it is, it’s working. Speaking of the team, how are you all getting along?”

“Great. We’re all just enjoyin’ college life and playin’ ball.”

“I know all of the ladies want to know, are you single?”

“I don’t think so,” Mario replied with a nervous chuckle.

“You don’t think so? Sounds like you’re keeping your options open.”

“Nah. I got a girl back home, but she swear I’m doin’ somethin’ besides playin’ ball, but Heaven knows I ain’t.”

Mario was so corny, but I loved the fact that he’d said my name.

“You think you’ll get drafted?”

“I think everybody hopes to get drafted, but I ain’t bankin’ on it.”

“I think there’s a good chance that you’ll be in the NBA someday.”

“We’ll just have to see.”

NBA? Drafted? I knew Mario could hoop, but a lot of niggas in our neighborhood could ball. If Mario got drafted I could be on Basketball Wives or something.

I wondered if the interview was live. I didn’t think it was so I called him.

“Hello.”

“Hey.”

I hadn’t talked to him in a long time and I suddenly felt stupid. What if he hadn’t been talking about me? What if the interview was old?

“What’s up?” he asked dryly.

“Ummm, I was just thinkin’ about you.”

“I been thinkin’ about you, too.”

“You coming home for Thanksgiving?”

“Yeah, and I wanna see you.”

I hadn’t called him in weeks and I was never home when he called. I didn’t have a cell phone because Carmen couldn’t afford the bill, so we hardly ever talked. I don’t know why he loved me, but he did and I did miss him.

“You will,” I assured him.

“I got practice early in the morning, but uhh, I love you. You know that, don’t you?”

“Yeah. I love you, too.”

I didn’t know if I loved Mario, but it was the right thing to say, right? Thanksgiving was only a couple of weeks away and I was suddenly really excited about it. I couldn’t wait to see Mario again. He was on his way to doing big things and I wanted to be right by his side.

**Chapter 4**

It was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and school had just let out. I was glad that I didn’t have to go back to school until Monday. Mario would be home the following day and I couldn’t wait. He had been on my mind constantly lately.

“Who is that?” Diane asked as we walked towards her house.

“I don’t know.”

Someone in a yellow Chevy Camaro was creeping along beside us. I tried to peer inside, but the tint on the windows was too dark. We both rolled our eyes as the driver blew the horn.

“Niggas can’t even get out the car to holla at you,” I told Diane.

I was talking shit, but I was starting to get nervous as the car continued to follow us. Some dudes don’t take rejection too well.

“Come on,” I said as I nodded towards the corner store.

We went inside and took our time picking out juice and chips. I was hoping that the Camaro would be gone but it was still there when we came back out of the store. I boldly marched over to the car and tapped on the passenger side window.

I leaned over so that I could look inside as the window was lowered.

“Get in.”

My face lit up as soon as I realized who was driving the car.

“I was about to curse yo’ ass out,” I told Mario as I opened the door.

“Get yo’ ass in here,” he repeated.

“Come on,” I told Diane. “It’s Mario.”

We joined Mario in the car and he leaned over and kissed me. He smelled so damned good and he looked even better. He had a fresh haircut with deep, sexy waves and a neat goatee. He looked so mature and handsome. All I could do was stare at him. He had changed so much in just a few months.

“You happy to see me or what?” he inquired.

“Yeah.”

We rode in silence until he’d dropped Diane off.

“Why you so quiet?” he asked as he placed his hand on my thigh.

“I don’t know. You just surprised the hell out of me. Where’d you get this?” I asked, admiring the car.

“From the school when they was tryin’ to recruit me.”

“Ain’t that illegal?”

“Yeah, but I wasn’t turning it down.”

“I wouldn’t have either. I really missed you though,” I said softly.

“You wasn’t actin’ like it.”

I looked down at my hands because I knew I hadn’t been acting like it.

“I ain’t never been in no long distance relationship and I ain’t got no cell phone,” I explained.

“Don’t worry about it,” he said as he parked in front of his apartment building.

We climbed out, he turned on the alarm and I followed him into the building.

For some reason I was nervous as we went into his bedroom, like I’d never been in there before.

“Give me a hug,” he finally said after looking me over.

I did as I’d been told and almost melted in his arms.

“When you leavin’?” I asked, holding him tight and inhaling his cologne.

“Next Sunday.”

I was still holding him and I didn’t want to let go. I hadn’t realized how much I’d missed him until that moment.

“You aiight?” he asked.

“Yeah.”

“You gon’ hug me all day?”

“No.” I laughed nervously as I let him go.

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I spent every moment of Mario’s break with him and I really didn’t want him to leave when Sunday came.

“Why’d you pick me?” I asked as he zipped his suitcase.

“I told you,” he said with a frown.

“I mean why you still wanna be wit’ me? You can have yo’ pick of groupies now.”

“I don’t want no groupie. I want you cuz you loved me before I had a chance at the NBA.”

That was mostly true. I’d definitely liked him before I knew he had a real shot.

“You comin’ back for Christmas?” I asked hopefully. We hadn’t done anything special but I’d enjoyed my time with him.

“Yeah. I gotta get to the airport, though,” he said, looking at his watch.

“Okay.” I sighed heavily.

“Drop me off,” he suggested.

“And keep the car?”

“Yeah. I got you a phone, too.”

I dropped him off at O’Hare and went straight home. I loved having his car, but I didn’t want anything to happen to it so I didn’t drive it much.

**Chapter 5**

After Thanksgiving I was calling and texting Mario all the time. I’d leave a sweet voicemail message anytime he didn’t answer. I wanted him to know that I cared about him as much as he cared about me. I couldn’t get enough of him and I couldn’t wait for him to come home for good, even though I knew it would be a while. I’d wait though.

I didn’t even wanna look at another nigga. I didn’t wanna do anything to jeopardize the way he was feeling about me.

I was nervous about driving his car, but he’d assured me time and time again that it was insured. I only drove to school and back home since I didn’t have a driver’s license. I knew bitches at school were jealous, even Diane. I don’t know what she was mad about though. I picked her up and dropped her off every day. Plus, she had plenty of niggas trickin’ off on her.

“When you get that?” she asked one day, talking about my IPhone 5.

“Mario gave it to me.”

She just rolled her eyes. She was really hating on me. She’d had a Samsung Galaxy phone for almost a year now so I guess she was mad ‘cause my shit was newer than hers. She was my girl, but sometimes I wondered why we were friends when I knew she was jealous of me.

I wasn’t really thinking about her though. It was December 15th and Mario would be home in exactly two weeks. This time he’d stay for two months before heading back to New York.

I wondered what he did when he wasn’t in class or playing ball. He was one of Long Island University’s star players, so I knew bitches were throwing pussy at him left and right. He said he wasn’t fucking anyone though and I had to believe him.

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I met Mario at the airport and he put his suitcase in the backseat.

“You lookin’ good,” he said before he leaned over and kissed me.

“I missed you,” I told him.

“We’ll see.”

I carefully pulled into traffic.

“You goin’ straight home?” I asked, keeping my eyes on the road.

“Nah, I don’t wanna go over there.”

“Why not?”

“She smokin’ that shit again.”

“Oh.”

Mario’s mom Cassie was a known crack head. She’d gotten clean for a couple of months, but I guess she’d relapsed.

“Just go to the Hilton Downtown,” he instructed.

I drove to the hotel and we left the car with the valet.

“I wanna talk to you when I get outta the shower,” he said once we were in the room.

I mindlessly flipped through channels on the 42 inch TV while he took a shower. I wondered what he wanted to talk about.

Maybe he just wanted to vent about his mother. I turned the TV off when Mario came out of the bathroom. His body glistened as he rambled through his suitcase wearing nothing but a towel around his waist. He’d been putting in a lot of hours at the gym.

“You hungry?” he asked as he stepped into a pair of boxers.

“A little.”

He called room service and ordered some grilled chicken, scrimp, and rice.

“Baby, what you wanna talk about?” I asked. Wondering what was on his mind was killing me inside.

He didn’t say anything for a few minutes. He just started going through his suitcase again. I frowned as he placed three white envelopes in my lap.

“What’s this?”

“I want you to hold it for me until I get home.”

I opened one of the unsealed envelopes and peeked inside. It was full of crisp one hundred dollar bills.

“Where’d you get all of this?”

“That ain’t important,” he said sternly.

“Okay.”

“Just put it up and don’t tell nobody about it.”

“Okay.”

“Not even Diane.”

“All right. Nobody.”

I put the money in my purse and went to use the bathroom. There had to be at least ten thousand dollars all together. I was young and that was a lot of money to me.

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I woke up on Mario’s chest and tried not to move too much as I tried to check the time on my cell phone. It was only six but it looked much later since it was so dark outside. I laid there and listened to his heart beat against his chest until I dozed off again.

We stayed in the hotel room for the few days leading up to Christmas Eve. We stopped by to see his mother, Mario left her a few hundred dollar bills. After that we spent a couple of hours with Carmen. She couldn’t get me much, but she’d gone out of her way to give me some money. She knew I loved cash.

I got her the same thing I got her every year; a card and a gift card to Burlington Coat Factory. I knew that if I gave her cash she’d spend it all on liquor.

Me and Mario didn’t exchange gifts until we were back in the hotel room. Spending time with him was honestly gift enough for me.

Our two months seemed to fly by and I almost cried when I dropped him off at the airport. I wanted to go to New York with him but I knew I couldn’t. He promised to come back as soon as he could.

He came back sooner than either of us thought he would and for a reason I never saw coming.

**Chapter 6**

I had just fallen asleep when my phone started to ring. I checked the caller ID and wondered why Diane was calling me so late.

“What’s up?” I answered.

“Heaven… Ummm.”

“Come on Dye, I’m tired.” I wasn’t in the mood to be playing on the phone with her.

“Cassie got shot.”

“What? She okay?”

“They say she dead.”

I dropped the phone and fell back against the wall. I could hear Diane calling my name, but I didn’t bother to pick the phone back up. I felt sick. I wondered if Mario knew yet.

I jumped out of bed and slipped into a pair of jeans and grabbed my jacket.

“Where you goin’?” Carmen asked as I put my shoes on. I didn’t answer as I walked out of the apartment.

It seemed to take me hours to get to Mario’s apartment building even though I had driven and it was only a few blocks away.

“She really dead?” I asked K.G.

“Yeah.”

“Oh God. Anybody call Mario?”

“Nah, not yet.”

My hands were shaking as I retrieved my phone from my pocket. I climbed back into the car and called Mario. I didn’t figure he’d be awake, but I called until he finally picked up.

“Heaven?” he asked groggily.

“Can you come home?” I asked, fighting back tears.

“What’s wrong?”

“Just come home. Please.”

“You know what time it is?” he asked impatiently.

“Mario, please just get on a plane and come home. I really need to see you. I gotta tell you somethin’ important.”

“What baby? Just tell me.”

“No. Come home first.”

I didn’t want to tell him over the phone. Hell, I didn’t want to tell him at all.

“Hold on. K.G. on the other line,” he said.

“No! Don’t answer. Just come home.”

Why would K.G. call him? I knew he knew that I was going to call Mario.

“I can’t just leave,” Mario said.

“Fuck!” I screamed. “Mario, yo’ mama got shot,” I finally told him.

“What? By who? She okay? What hospital she at?”

I couldn’t say anything else. I didn’t want to answer any of those questions.

“Heaven! Heaven!”

“I don’t know,” I lied. “Just come home, baby. I’ll meet you at the airport.

**Chapter 7**

I went straight to the airport and went inside. I had no idea when Mario would arrive, but I knew he’d be on the next flight coming this way. After a couple of hours I got back in the car and fell asleep in the parking lot. The sound of my ringing cell phone woke me up.

“You here?” I asked.

“Yeah.”

I headed over to the pick-up area and immediately spotted Mario. He looked tired and his eyes were puffy.

“Take me to the hospital,” he instructed.

I didn’t pull away from the curb, though. I just sat there. What hospital was I supposed to take him to?

“Go!” he demanded.

“She ain’t at the hospital,” I told him.

“Where she…” he trailed off. “My mama… My mama dead?”

“I’m sorry. I—”

“My mama dead and you ain’t say shit?!”

I didn’t say anything, I just cried. What was I supposed to say? I knew from experience that there were no words that would comfort him.

He put his head in his hands and started to sob. I didn’t know what to do or where he wanted to go so I just sat there until a security guard tapped on the window.

“There’s a five minute sitting limit,” he informed me.

“Okay.”

Mario dropped me off at home. I told him that I wanted to stay with him, but he wasn’t having it. I was so scared as I watched him drive away.

People were saying that his mama got killed over $500 she owed a dealer. If I had known I would have paid the debt with some of the money that I was holding for Mario.

Mario had been doing so good in school. I didn’t wanna see him get into a bad situation. I called his phone but he wouldn’t answer. I was up all night wondering where he was and what he was doing.

I finally called K.G. the following night. I knew he was still awake and in the streets.

“You seen Mario?” I asked.

“Yeah, he came by earlier.”

“Where he at now?”

“I don’t know. Prolly lookin’ for Don ass.”

I really hoped Mario didn’t find Don. If he did, all hell would break loose.

“If you see him again, call me. Please?”

“I got you.”

I didn’t hear from Mario for two days. He showed up at my door late one night. He looked so tired and defeated that my heart broke the moment I laid eyes on him. I led him into my bedroom and he broke down as soon as I’d closed the door. I just watched him for a few minutes, unsure of what to do or say.

I finally wrapped my arms around him and told him that everything would be all right. I knew that it wouldn’t be anytime soon, but he’d be okay one day.

**Chapter 8**

Three months later Mario was still a wreck. His school had been calling nonstop but he refused to answer for them. I tried to talk him into going back to school but he wouldn’t. I was scared that he would lose his scholarship.

I could understand that he was hurting and that he didn’t think he’d ever want to go back to school, but one day he would and he’d regret giving up his scholarship.

One day when he was in the bathroom I answered one of the calls.

“Hello.”

“Hi. Is this DeMario Henderson’s phone?”

“Yeah.”

I don’t know why I’d answered ‘cause I didn’t know what to say.

“Is he available?”

“Well, he ummm… Mario’s mom got killed and—”

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah. Why would I play or lie about something like that?”

“I’m sorry, but who am I speaking with?”

“Heaven.”

“Oh, Mario told me about you. How are you?”

I smiled when he said that Mario had been talking about me.

“I’m okay, but Mario is…” I don’t know what happened but I suddenly got really emotional. I had found a way to deal with my mother’s death but I had no idea how to help Mario through it. I tried not to cry but I couldn’t help it and I guess he could hear me.

“Heaven? You okay?”

“Yeah. I’m okay, but Mario is so sad and I don’t know what to do or say to him.”

“We have grief counselors for that. I really wish he would have come to me.”

I didn’t say anything.

“Tell him to take his time and that I’ll do what I can to hold his spot.”

“Okay. Thank you.”

“Uh, could I call you?” he asked. “To check on Mario?”

“Yeah.” I gave the coach my cell phone number as Mario flushed the toilet. I sat his phone back down and hoped he wouldn’t know that I’d answered it.

The coach called me almost every day to check on Mario and I could tell that he really cared. He even came to Chicago to see Mario. The minute Mario laid eyes on him, I knew he was pissed with me.

“Hey son,” the coach said as he came into the apartment.

“Hey.”

“I’m sorry about your mother.”

I decided to go home and check on Carmen while they talked. By the time I got back the coach was gone and Mario was drunk.

“Baby, what happened?” I asked him.

“You called him?” he demanded.

“No. He called your phone and—”

“And who the fuck told you to answer my phone? Who told you to tell him my business?”

“Nobody. I ain’t want you to lose your scholarship so I—”

“I look like I give a fuck about a fuckin’ scholarship? You think I care about goin’ back to that school? If I had stayed here my mama wouldn’t be dead!”

That wasn’t true but I knew I wasn’t going to be able to convince him of that so I just shut my mouth. He could be mad at me now, but he’d thank me later.

**Chapter 9**

It took six months, but Mario finally went back to school. We had talked about so much in the time that he’d been home that I felt like we knew each other inside and out. We had so much in common that I hadn’t even realized. Both of us losing our mothers only made us closer.

“Heaven?!”

“What?”

Diane’s mouth was running a mile a minute but all I could think about was Mario.

“You ain’t gotta fuck wit’ him,” she said.

“I don’t know. I ain’t really tryin’ to kick it wit’ nobody. Especially not in Mario’s car.”

Diane had been trying to talk me into a double date situation all week and I wasn’t feeling it. Me and Mario had made so many plans for our future and I honestly wasn’t interested in nobody else.

“I already told him I’d bring my friend.”

“You shouldn’t have.”

“Byron is cool so I know his friend cool too. Please?”

I sighed and gave in. I still wasn’t feeling the situation, but hopefully it would be over before it even began.

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I didn’t really want to drive Mario’s car, but I wanted to be able to leave whenever I was ready to. I put my hair in a ponytail and I was wearing a pair of jeans and a t-shirt. I was hoping that Byron’s friend wouldn’t be interested in me at all.

“It’s right up here,” Diane said as I turned onto a residential street. I pulled into the motel’s parking lot and parked next to Byron’s Hummer.

“Why the fuck we at a hotel?” I wanted to know.

“We just gon’ kick it.”

I wasn’t feeling this shit at all but I followed her into the room anyway.

“What it do baby girl?” one of the men asked. *Baby girl?* I thought. His old ass needed to act his age.

“My name is Heaven, not baby girl,” I corrected him.

“My bad, baby. I’m Chico,” he said, flashing a smile full of gold teeth. That nasty looking shit repulsed me.

“Ya’ll have fun,” Byron said before he and Diane left.

I figured they were going to another room to be alone.

“You need a drink to get loosened up?” Chico asked.

“Nah, I’m good.”

He smiled as he walked towards me.

“I like that,” he said as he placed his hand on my hip. “I love a bitch that can fuck sober.”

“What?” I pulled away from him and looked at him like he’d lost his mind.

“How much you want?” he asked as he pulled a thick wad of cash out of his pocket.

“What you mean?”

“You look like a high priced broad,” he replied.

“You think I’m havin’ sex wit’ you?” I asked.

“I ain’t payin’ to look at yo’ ass.”

“Oh hell naw.”

I grabbed my purse and walked right out the door.

“Come on shorty. You ain’t gotta be like that,” Chico said as he followed me to the parking lot.

“I don’t know what Diane told you, but I don’t get down like that.”

“Just name yo’ price. You a fine, feisty lil’ thang. I like that.”

I got to the car and ran right into K.G.

“I thought that was you,” he said. He was talking to me but he was looking in Chico’s direction.

“Hey,” I replied dryly.

“Tell Rio I said ‘what’s up’,” K.G. said before he headed into one of the rooms.

That’s just what I didn’t need. Him telling Mario that I drove his car to a raggedy ass motel to meet another nigga.

Mario was coming home to visit the next day and I knew K.G. couldn’t wait to tell him.

**Chapter 10**

I was so damned nervous as I pulled into the airport. I took a deep breath as Mario approached the car.

“Hey baby,” I said with a big smile as he climbed inside.

He didn’t say anything; he just put on his seatbelt.

“Where you wanna go?” I asked. I had a huge knot in the pit of my stomach.

“What nigga you was at the hotel with?”

“What?”

“Don’t fuckin’ lie, Heaven.”

“I wasn’t at no hotel wit’ nobody.”

Mario turned in his seat so that he was facing me.

“Imma ask you one mo’ time. Who the fuck you was at the hotel with?”

Damn, I hadn’t really expected K.G. to tell him. That was a straight bitch move.

“I wasn’t—”

Mario slapped the shit out of me and my head hit the driver’s side window.

“All the shit I do for you and you can’t keep yo’ fuckin’ legs closed?”

“I wasn’t wit’ nobody.”

“You’ll make a nigga really hurt yo’ dumb ass. Move!”

We switched seats and he sped out into traffic.

“So you gon’ keep lyin’?” he asked.

I didn’t say anything. I was tired of lying and I wasn’t about to tell the truth. He wouldn’t believe me anyway.

“Go and get my money,” he demanded as he parked in front of my apartment building.

“Just listen. K.G. lyin’. I was over there but—”

“I don’t give a fuck. Just go and get my fuckin’ money.”

I knew that if I gave him his money back I wouldn’t have any leverage so I wasn’t going to give it to him.

“Baby, I was—”

He slapped the shit out of me again. This time I felt my lip split instantly.

“Get my money,” he said through clenched teeth as he placed his hand around my throat.

“Okay,” I whispered.

I got out of the car and went upstairs. I locked the door and went into the bathroom to look at my face. My left eye was starting to swell and lip was already fat and bloody.

“I ain’t givin’ you shit,” I mumbled as I started to clean my face.

He had the nerve to put his fucking hands on me then expect me to put twenty g’s in his hand? Fuck no. I was gon’ spend that shit and he could kiss my ass.

I had just finished wrapping some ice in a towel to put on my eye when Mario started to bang on the front door.

“Get my fuckin’ money!” he yelled as he continued to beat on the door.

“I ain’t givin’ you shit, bitch! You don’t put yo’ damned hands on me!”

“I ain’t playin’ wit’ yo’ ass! Open this door!”

I looked out of the peephole and laughed. He looked like he was pissed off. My eyes bulged out of my head as he stepped back and lifted his foot. I got out of the way just before he kicked it off of the hinges.

Before I could do anything he was on top of my with his hand around my throat again.

“Get my fuckin’ money.”

“What money?”

I guess he was tired of playing with me cuz he let me go and went into my bedroom.

“Get the fuck out!” I screamed. He was throwing my shit all over the place. I grabbed his arm trying to stop him and he threw me against the wall.

“Police! Don’t move!”

I looked up at the two police officers that were now standing in my bedroom. They both had their guns pointed at Mario. I guess one of the neighbors had called them.

“Where’s the gun?” one of the officers asked.

“What gun?” Mario asked.

“Put your hands up and get down on your knees.”

I watched as Mario did as he’d been told, then was forced onto his stomach. One of the officers placed his knee between Mario’s shoulder blades as he handcuffed him. They searched Mario and asked me if I’d seen him with a gun.

“No.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.”

One of the neighbors had said that they’d seen a gun in Mario’s hand. They’d probably said that so that the police would come quicker.

“You okay?” one of officers asked me.

“Yeah.”

They asked me if I wanted to press charges and I said no. I didn’t want to hurt Mario; I just wanted him out of my apartment. He looked at me like he hated me as they led him out of the apartment and down the stairs.

I called the landlord so he could fix the door, then I went to find K.G.

**Chapter 11**

K.G. walked out of the corner store and right into my fist.

“What the fuck’s wrong wit’ you?” he asked.

“Why you go runnin’ yo’ mouth to Mario like a lil’ bitch?”

He laughed at me while shaking his head.

“I ain’t tell that nigga shit. That’s ya’ll business.”

“I know yo’ bitch ass told him!”

“This him right here,” K.G. said as his phone started to ring. He answered and put Mario on speaker phone.

“You saw Heaven wit’ some nigga at the hotel?” Mario asked. He didn’t sound mad anymore, just hurt.

“I see Heaven a lot,” K.G. replied, avoiding the question.

“That ain’t what the fuck I asked you.”

“That’s ya’ll business, man.”

Mario hung up and I felt bad for hitting K.G. If he hadn’t told Mario that only left Diane’s phony ass. I knew she was jealous of me but to do some shit like that was beyond fucked up.

I walked over to her house ready to beat her ass, but she wasn’t home. I called her cell phone but she didn’t answer. I guess she was avoiding me. It was cool. I knocked on her door again and told her little brother that I had to get something out of her room. He let me in and I quickly found what I was looking for.

**Chapter 12**

When Diane walked into school Monday morning her face immediately turned red. I had plastered naked pictures of her all over the school. She’d taken them a while ago for this dude she used to fuck with. I knew where she’d been keeping them in her bedroom. I took ‘em, made copies and passed them out.

Everybody in our neighborhood now knew how her ass, titties and pussy looked. Even her mama. I ain’t give a fuck either. That bitch was trifling and I was done fucking with her.

As soon as she saw the pictures I knew she’d know who had posted them. She ran up on me and grabbed my hair. I slammed her big ass into a locker. She was still holding my hair so I grabbed hers. I slammed her head into the locked over and over again but she wouldn’t let my hair go for shit.

We didn’t let each other go until the security guards came to break us up. I hadn’t been able to whoop her ass like I wanted to but I’d catch her ass slipping.

We both got suspended for a week. I didn’t care though. I had twenty thousand dollars to blow and that’s what I did. I bought a used Buick Century for $5,000 and spent the rest on shoes, clothes and hotel rooms.

Mario was still trying to get his money so I couldn’t risk going home just yet. He’d let it go sooner or later. Until then I’d be chilling in nice ass hotel rooms. I was ordering room service and shit like I was rich. I would sleep at the hotel and spend the days shopping.

I was walking past the perfume counter at Macy’s when a tall guy stopped me.

“What you think about this?” he asked, waving a fragrance sample card in my face. I took the card from him and sniffed it.

“It’s okay,” I said before I gave it back to him.

“What about this one?” he asked, giving me another card.

“Try this.”

I spritzed some Euphoria by Calvin Klein onto a card. He sniffed it and smiled.

“Yeah, I like that.”

“Glad I could help.”

“Hold on. What’s yo’ name?” he asked as I started to walk away.

“Heaven.”

He paused for a second and I could tell that he was trying to figure out if I was serious or not.

“I’m Omar. Can I get your number?” he finally asked.

“No, but I’ll take yours.”

I stored his number in my phone and continued towards the door.

“Call me,” he hollered as we left the store.

I called Omar a few days later. He said he wanted to have dinner with me and I agreed. I didn’t have anything better to do and he seemed nice. Even though he was a lot older than me.

I was surprised when he pulled up in front of the hotel.

“Hey Miss Lady,” he said with a smile.

“Hey.” I opened the door of the Maserati and climbed inside. The shit was nice as hell. Leather seats, wood grain dashboard, satellite radio, DVD player, and three T.V.s. I was loving this car and I wished Diane had been there to see it. I didn’t need her or Mario. I’d always land on my feet.

“Where you wanna go?” he asked.

“Wherever.”

We ended up at a place called The Capital. It was nice and I could tell it was expensive the moment we stepped inside. The tablecloths were white and the centerpieces were gorgeous.

When I looked at the menu I wasn’t surprised at how expensive everything was. Omar assured me that I could order whatever I wanted and that’s what I did. I got a chicken Caesar salad, filet mignon, shrimp, a twice baked potato and chocolate cake for dessert. He ordered lobster, shrimp and asparagus.

“You fine as hell,” he said once the waitress had left us alone.

“Thank you.”

“I gotta keep it real wit’ you though,” he started.

*Damn, I should have known he had a wife,* I thought. I’d fuck with just about any nigga wit’ money, but not a married man. There was just something about that shit that rubbed me the wrong way.

“About what?” I asked, trying to remain cool.

“I ain’t lookin’ fa’ a girl. I’m lookin’ fa’ a business partner.”

“What kind of business?”

“You got a bad ass body and I know you can get a lot of money.

“Doin’ what?” I asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Dancing.”

“Stripping?”

“Yeah.”

“I don’t think so.” Stripping was for cheap hoes.

“You can make at least two g’s a night.”

“No bullshit?”

“Real rap.”

“And what’s yo’ cut?”

“Half.”

“Hell naw. For what?”

“I have connections with the best clubs all over. You can’t just walk in off the street, but I can get you in. Plus, I’ll only take you to upscale establishments where the men are ready and willing to spend real money for your time. I also provide transportation and protection. All you have to do is show up and dance.”

I thought about it for a minute but I knew I wouldn’t do it. Then again, he was pushing a Maserati. The way he was talking, I’d only have to strip a few nights a week. I wasn’t no stripper though. I ain’t know nothing about it but what I’d seen in *The Player’s Club.*

“Naw, I’m good,” I finally told him.

“Just think about it. You got my number if you change your mind.”

We ate and Omar took me back to the hotel.

**Chapter 13**

I ran out of money after a few weeks so I took my ass home. The offer Omar had made stayed on my mind. If I did dance for him I wouldn’t have to worry about anything. I’d be graduating soon and I really didn’t have anything planned for the future. I wasn’t looking forward to going to college, taking out a million dollars’ worth of loans and having to pay that shit back later.

If I decided to strip I could get my own place and a better car. I’d have to think about it some more before I dismissed the idea all together. I wasn’t gon’ be staying in the ‘hood with Carmen forever, I knew that.

She was all over me the minute I stepped in the door.

“Where you been? Who you been with? Why Mario looking for you?”

I told her I’d been at Diane’s and that me and Mario had gotten into an argument. I went into my bedroom and closed the door as she let her boyfriend Blue in. I couldn’t stand him. He was a nothing ass nigga that got just as drunk as she did on a regular basis. They’d drink like fish then start arguing and shit.

I turned on the radio and went to sleep.

The next morning I woke up to the sound of the cordless phone ringing. I looked at Carmen sleeping on the couch and rolled my eyes. I knew that whoever was calling was calling for her since no one called me on that phone.

“Hello. Hello?” The person on the other end didn’t say anything so I hung up. I looked at Carmen again as I headed to the bathroom and she looked funny. It was almost like she wasn’t breathing and she looked pale.

“Carmen,” I said as I touched her arm. She was cold and stiff. “Wake up,” I told her, even though I knew she’d never wake up again.

Once the police arrived I couldn’t even speak. Why was I losing people left and right? I didn’t have anyone left.

Without Carmen I didn’t know what I was gon’ do, but I knew I had to hurry up and figure it out. I was seventeen and they were talking about placing me in a group home until I turned eighteen. Fuck that.

I went into my room and packed an overnight bag. I told the police officers that my grandmother was waiting for me downstairs, gave them a random phone number and got my ass up out of there.

I took a cab to the Holiday Inn and got a room for the night. I had to weigh my options, not that I had many. Tears were streaming down my face as I sat on the bed. I felt so alone. Damn, I missed Mario. I wished he could hold me and tell me what I should do.

I took a shower then called him, but he must have had a new number because the one I had was disconnected.

I was now wishing I hadn’t blown through that money like I had.

I thought about calling Diane but called Omar instead.

“Who is this?” he asked.

“Heaven.”

“Aw, what’s up?”

“You still think I could dance for you?”

“Hell yeah.”

I didn’t tell him my business cuz it was just that; my business. I told him I’d meet him at a restaurant the following afternoon.

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“I’m glad you called,” he said as he slid into the seat across from me.

I’d thought about whether or not I wanted to strip. I didn’t really have a choice though.

“What’s wrong?” Omar inquired as I stared down at my hands.

“Everything right now.”

“Talk to me. I’m gon’ keep everything one hundred with you and I expect you to do the same.”

“I just got a lot on my plate right now.”

“Well, I don’t want you strippin’ ‘cause you feel like you have to. If you need to hold some money I’ll get you what you need.”

“No, I’m ready to do what I gotta do.”

I couldn’t depend on him forever so I might as well get ready to hold myself down. Plus, ain’t nobody giving up something for nothing, and I didn’t wanna owe him.

Omar really wanted to know what was going on so I finally told him about what had happened with Mario, then with Carmen.

“You can’t stay in no hotel. Come and stay with me.”

I wasn’t sure about that. I didn’t know him and I needed some time to myself. I declined his offer but he pressed until I eventually gave in.

His condo was small but it was immaculately decorated. He had two bedrooms and two bathrooms.

“This is nice,” I complimented.

“Thanks. It was furnished when I moved in.”

I walked around the living room and kitchen, getting a better look at everything. He showed me to the guestroom and told me that I could eat anything I wanted.

I tossed and turned that whole night. The queen-sized bed was comfortable but I wasn’t. How had I slept through Carmen’s murder? I was so dumb. Blue had choked her to death and I hadn’t heard a thing?

Then there was this stripping business. I didn’t even know if I’d have the guts to do it. I didn’t want strange men touching on me and I knew some would wanna fuck. I definitely wasn’t doing that shit. What choice did I really have though?

I couldn’t depend on anyone but me. I had to make a way for myself, so stripping it was.

**Chapter 14**

A few days later I had to attend Carmen’s funeral. I hadn’t asked him to, but Omar came with me. He held my hand and tried his best to comfort me. I looked at Diane like she was shit on my shoe as she tried to console me.

After the funeral I decided to jump right into my new life. I figured that stripping would keep my mom, Carmen and Mario off of my mind. I thought I’d just put on a skimpy outfit and shake my ass but Omar had bigger plans.

He took me to get my hair done first. I didn’t need any weave, but he wanted me to get long, wavy black tracks, so I did.

“I don’t want none of them hoes looking like you,” he told me as he passed me some green contact lenses. “Niggas like exotic, different shit. All these other hoes doin’ the blonde hair and gettin’ fake asses like Nicki Minaj, but your ass is natural. That’s a plus. Niggas can tell when that shit fake.”

I just went along with whatever he said. I figured he knew more about the clubs and the girls that worked in them than I did.

I got a French manicure and pedicure before getting my teeth whitened. I got my under arms, legs, pussy and even my ass crack waxed. I could have killed Omar’s ass after that waxing bullshit.

I was worn out by the time we got back to his condo. He had outfits laid out that he wanted me to try on so I did. He told me that I’d need to practice walking in the four inch heels and I would, but not tonight. Tonight I just wanted to go to bed.

I slept like a dream that night. I didn’t have the strength to think about anything or anyone.

I checked my voicemail messages the next day, hoping Mario had called, but he hadn’t. The only person that had called was Diane. “Heaven I miss you and I hope you’re okay. Call me.” She said that on each message like she’d rehearsed it or some shit. I’d call her back one day.

“You a good dancer?” Omar asked over breakfast.

“I don’t know.”

“Well you gon’ learn all the moves you need to know before this weekend. I told my guy about you and he said you can start at his spot Friday night.”

“Okay.”

What else could I say?

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When I got to Kandy Kisses Gentlemen’s Club I was nervous as hell. I followed Omar into a small office where an older man was waiting for us.

“How you doin’?” he asked Omar as they exchanged handshakes.

“Good, Ray. You know how I do it.”

Ray pushed Omar aside and focused on me. The way his beady eyes roamed all over my body made me feel violated. I was having second thoughts again.

“She’s nice,” he said, as if I was a car instead of a person.

“Of course,” Omar replied with a smile.

“She gon’ be a money maker. She gotta do the weekends.”

“Yes sir. She’s a stallion.”

“And young.”

Something about Ray wasn’t rubbing me the right way but Omar seemed to like him. I wanted to leave but I knew I needed the money.

“Gone take her in the back and get her changed.”

Ray slapped my ass as I followed Omar out of his office. I wanted to curse him out but I didn’t.

The back room of Kandy Kisses was full of naked bitches getting changed and gossiping like there was no tomorrow.

“Look at this bitch,” one of them said as soon as I walked in.

“That’s one of Omar’s girls. I can tell,” another one replied. “I ain’t payin’ no nigga shit for showing my ass.”

“You say something about me?” I asked.

“I ain’t got time to talk about yo’ ass,” the second girl quickly replied.

“Good, ‘cuz ain’t no need for you to be concerned about me, what I’m doin’ or who I’m doin’ it with. Understand?”

I walked away before she could say anything else. All of these bitches were older than me and I was scared as hell, but I wasn’t going to let them know that.

“Young and dumb,” the first girl mumbled before she left.

I changed into a blue skirt that exposed most of my ass and a matching bikini top. Working the floor wasn’t hard. I’d walk around and guys would ask me to dance for them. Some of them would tell me things about themselves, even though I didn’t care. All I cared about was how much money they were giving me.

“What’s yo’ name?” one of them asked as I danced in front of him.

“Paradise.”

I had gotten used to the lap dances but when it was time for me to get on the stage I wanted to turn and leave. Omar had a pole in his bedroom that I’d practiced on, but I still didn’t feel ready. It was like the females were more anxious to see me dance than the men were. I knew they wanted to see what the ’new girl’ had so I knew I couldn’t fuck up.

I walked onto the stage as “I’m In Love With A Stripper” started to play. I took a deep breath and grabbed the pole. The men were throwing dollars on the stage before I even did anything. I climbed up the pole then slowly slid down into a split. I wasn’t feeling too confident about my pole tricks so I crawled over towards the edge of the stage.

I pretended like I was going to take top off but suddenly stopped.

“Come on! Let me get a peek!” one of the men yelled.

I smiled at him and walked over to him. I turned my back to him and slowly bent over, my ass right in his face.

“Gaddamn!” he hollered as he threw a fifty dollar bill on the stage.

After he got a peek everybody wanted one, but not even a peek was free. I walked over to them one by one but I wouldn’t bend over until they’d given me at least fifty dollars.

With renewed confidence, I did a couple of tricks on the pole before I started to untie the string around my neck. I didn’t take my top off right away though. I knew them trick ass niggas had some more money and I wanted it.

I spotted a dude holding two crisp, one-hundred dollar bills and made my way over to him. I got down onto all fours and leaned in closer to him.

“One fa’ each of them pretty titties,” he said as I took the money between my teeth. I smiled as I took off my top, causing them niggas to go crazy. They were excited until they realized that my nipples were covered with heart-shaped pasties. I collected my money and walked off of the stage.

“Excuse me,” I said as I accidentally bumped into the girl that was going on next.

“Watch where the fuck you goin’ bitch,” she spat.

Ever since that boy had called my mama a bitch before he killed her I couldn’t stand that word. I’d already let one bitch slide that night. I turned around and wrapped my hand around her throat. I was squeezing her neck so tight that I was surprised that she was still breathing.

“Don’t ever in yo’ funky, worthless ass life call me another bitch,” I warned before I shoved her so hard that she flew across the floor.

I had so much money in my hands and wrist bag when I got back into the changing room that I was shocked. I’d been nervous but I’d worked my shit. My ass had been shaking, bouncing, and everything else. I stashed a wad of big bills, fifties and hundreds, in my panties and then slipped into my jeans right before Ray joined me.

“Where my cut?” he asked with a smile. I was neatly stacking the rest of the money.

“What?” My eyebrows shot up as I looked at him like he’d lost his mind. Omar said he’d handle Ray’s cut.

“My cut,” he repeated, his smile disappearing.

“I was born at three seventeen in the morning, but it wasn’t this morning,” I told his snake ass.

“I was just fuckin’ wit’ yo’ pretty ass,” he said as he chuckled like something was funny.

I just rolled my eyes at his lying ass. If I had given him some money he would have taken it.

“You did good,” he said before he left.

“Damn, I ain’t know you was gon’ be that good on yo’ first night,” Omar said excitedly as he walked in.

I laid the money on one of the vanities and he counted it.

“Twelve hundred,” he announced when he was finished.

“That’s good. Right?”

“Yeah. And then what you made from lap dances,” he replied.

I broke him off with half of the money I’d made earlier, which had been one thousand dollars.

“Home we go,” he said as he added the money to his thick wad of cash.

The money that I’d stuffed into my panties was starting to make my pussy itch as Omar drove back towards his place. I hadn’t had time to flatten the bills out and I was now wishing I had.

“You wanna stop and get somethin’ to eat?” he asked.

“No. I’m good.”

I needed to get home, get this money out of my panties and take a shower.

As soon as we got to his place I rushed into the bathroom. I counted the money and smiled. I’d stashed eight hundred dollars, bringing my total for the night up to $1900. Not bad for my first night. Omar was making a killing by just sitting around, but that shit would end soon. As soon as I’d stacked enough money I was leaving like a thief in the night.

**Chapter 15**

The next night I was at Kandy Kisses again. I could tell that I had been the topic of plenty of conversations by the sudden silence and dirty looks I received when I walked into the changing room. I paid them bitches no mind. I wasn’t there to make friends anyway. I was there to make money.

I had one of my costumes on underneath my street clothes so it didn’t take me long to change. I slipped out of my clothes, put my stuff in my locker and went to work the floor.

As soon as my heels touched the carpeted floor I had dudes flagging me down. I told a few of them to wait before I walked over to a guy in his mid-thirties. He seemed laid back and he looked like money to me. He had bright, yellow diamonds in both ears and a matching pinky ring.

“Hey Paradise,” he said as I started to dance in front of him.

“Hey handsome.”

“I get the first dance, huh?” he asked, revealing a mouthful of diamonds.

“I couldn’t resist.”

I danced in front of him for a few minutes before he pulled me into his lap.

“Show Daddy what you got,” he said as he showered me with big faces.

After about ten minutes Omar was motioning for me to move along. As long as dude was shelling out cash I planned to stay on his lap. He was laid back, paid and I was comfortable with him.

“I got other guys waiting,” I finally told him.

Omar was coming towards us and I didn’t want him to make a scene.

“Save the last dance for me.” The guy winked as he gave me another fifty dollar bill.

“I’ll see what I can do.” I blew him a kiss as I walked away.

I followed Omar over to the bar and sat down.

“You can’t stay with one nigga all night,” he told me.

“Why not? I just made three hundred dollars off of him,” I lied. I’d really made five.

“Niggas get attached and start thinking they own you and shit. If I wasn’t here that nigga would be followin’ you out to your car at the end of the night.”

I nodded my understanding and went to make some more money.

“Can I get a private dance?” an ugly ass dude asked as I gave him a lap dance.

“No one’s over here but us,” I replied nervously.

“I know, but I want a better look at you.”

I looked around trying to spot Omar but he was nowhere to be found. How long was a private dance supposed to last and how much was it supposed to cost? What would I be expected to do?

“Ummm.” I was trying to think of an excuse to turn him down.

“I’ll pay, baby. Three hundred dollars,” he added as he held three one-hundred dollar bills up.

“Okay.” I took the money from him and took his hand.

He paid another forty dollars for thirty minutes in one of the private rooms. He smiled as he sat back on the leather chaise with his legs opened. His dick was as hard as a brick and I didn’t really know what he wanted me to do. I pressed play on the CD player and started to dance for him.

“Come here.”

I moved closer to him and stood there nervously.

“Why you actin’ shy?” he asked.

“I don’t know.”

He pulled me onto his lap and kissed my neck.

“Damn, you sexy,” he said as he untied my top and released my breasts.

“Ummmm.” He moaned as he admired my erect nipples.

I just sat there as he caressed my breasts in his rough hands. I jumped off of his lap as he suddenly took one of my nipples into his mouth.

“Calm down.” He laughed before he took my other nipple into his mouth. I sat back down and let him suck on my breasts for the next few minutes.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” I said as he slipped his hand in-between my thighs.

“I just wanna play with it,” he said, slowly easing his hand up higher.

I wondered how much time we had left as he unzipped his jeans. My eyes damn near popped out of my head as he revealed his dick. I had never seen a dick so thick and long.

“Here.” He placed my hand on that monster he called a dick. I stroked it while he played with my wet pussy. He wasn’t attractive to me, but I was loving the way his dick felt in my hand.

“Shit,” he suddenly said before I felt his warm wetness on my hand.

I held back a smile as we left the private room. This nigga could have fucked for what he’d just paid for me to beat his dick. That was cool with me though.

I still didn’t see Omar when I got back onto the floor. It was almost time for me to do my thing on stage and I would want to leave after that, so I was wondering where he had gone. I asked the bartender if he had seen Omar but he said he hadn’t seen him in over an hour.

I did my thing on stage, stashed away my side cut of the money then called Omar’s cell phone. He said he was on his way back to the club and I didn’t ask where he‘d gone. I could make and stash more money when he wasn’t around anyway.

After I’d packed everything into my overnight bag I went to the bar to wait for Omar.

**Chapter 16**

I was at Kandy Kisses every weekend bringing in about two g’s a night, sometimes more. I had a few regulars that I knew would be waiting for me when I got there.

As soon as I got used to Kandy Kisses Omar said that he wanted me to start at another club. He explained that Kisses was cool, but it wasn’t the big leagues. He said that if I wanted to make some real money I’d have to go to bigger and better clubs.

I was happy with the money I was making at Kisses, but I knew Omar was used to making way more than that. I would have fought to stay at Kisses a while longer, just so that I could polish my pole techniques, but what happened one night changed my mind.

I’d already done my thing on stage, which was usually when I left, but Omar was missing in action again. He’d told me that he had other girls working other clubs and that he bounced from one to another to check on them. I didn’t like that shit. When I was ready to go I was ready to go.

I sat at the bar for twenty minutes waiting for Omar to return when I realized that I’d left my diamond stud earrings in my locker. They’d been a gift from one of my regulars.

I hurried back into the changing room and opened my locker. I let out a sigh of relief when I spotted my earrings.

“Hey,” Ray said, startling me as he slammed the door.

“Hey.” I put my earrings in my bag and headed for the door.

“When you gon’ give the boss a private dance?” he asked with that ugly ass smile of his.

“I don’t know.” I tried to walk past him but he stopped me.

“What about now?” he asked.

“I gotta go.” I had an uneasy feeling in my stomach and I really wanted to get away from his slimy ass.

“You think you God’s gift? You ain’t,” he said as he forced me against the lockers.

“Let me go.” My head hurt from him slamming it into the locker.

“Shut up!” he demanded before he picked me up and threw me down on one of the wooden benches.

“Stop! No!” I screamed as he ripped the button from my jeans. “Help!”

“Can’t nobody hear you, you dumb hoe.” He laughed before he slapped me with the back of his hand. I could feel one of the rings on his hand as it hit my lip, causing it to split open. That’s all I remember until I woke up and saw a group of people gathered around me.

*“That’s what she get.”*

*“Stupid ass hoe.”*

*“Young, dumb bitch.”*

I could hear the other strippers talking but I couldn’t really make out their faces.

“Move!” a small, female voice ordered. “Oh my goodness. You okay?” she asked as she placed a jacket over my exposed upper body.

“Ahhh, what happened?” I asked as I grabbed the side of my face.

“Get up,” she said as she reached for my hand. I sat up but my back hurt so bad I thought I’d die. “Come on,” she said softly.

I followed her out towards the bar then to the parking lot.

“What happened to her?” Omar asked as he jumped out of his car.

“We found her like this in the dressing room.”

“You okay?” he asked me.

“Naw she ain’t okay,” the girl answered for me.

“Who did this?” he asked as they helped me into the car.

“I don’t know,” I lied.

“Thanks Roxie,” he told the short, thin girl.

“No problem.” She waved at me as Omar slammed the door closed.

“You wanna go to the hospital or somethin’?”

I shook my head and closed my eyes. I’d catch Ray’s ass slipping one day.

I didn’t go out until my face was healed from where Ray had hit me with that big ass ring and I refused to set foot in Kandy Kisses. Omar understood, but he wanted me to go to another club called Dynasty. I told him I’d think about it but I really wasn’t sure about stripping anymore. He was supposed to be there offering me protection, that’s what I was giving him half of my money for, yet he hadn’t been there when I’d needed him. He had other girls and apparently they were more important than I was.

“The other girls work at Dynasty. I had to make sure you were ready before you started there,” he told me.

“I’ll think about it,” I replied before he left.

I went into my bedroom to count my money once I’d locked the door behind him. Damn, I only had $12,000. I was making good money but I was spending it just as fast. I’d have to put myself on a real budget if I planned to get Omar out of my pocket and to get out of his house. What I really needed was for one of them ballin’ ass niggas at the club to wife me up.

I quickly put my money back in my hiding spot as I heard someone knocking on the front door. I looked out of the peephole before I opened the door to let Roxie in.

“How you doin’?”

“Okay.”

“Girl, I was so worried about you. You aiight now, huh?”

“Yeah.”

“Where Omar?” she asked quietly.

“I don’t know. Out somewhere.”

“You still can’t remember what happened that night?” she asked.

I thought about telling her that I knew Ray had raped me, but I didn’t know her like that. What if she was gathering information for Ray? Maybe he just wanted to know if I really did know that his ass had raped me.

“Naw,” I lied.

“Ray.”

“What about him?”

“He raped you. Everybody know it was him. That’s his M.O. Most of the girls down there fuck him so he can’t take rejection too well.”

“Well, thanks for tellin’ me, but let’s just keep it between us. Imma keep my ass away from him and his club.”

“I can understand that. I just thought you should know.”

Roxie seemed cool, but I was starting to feel like I couldn’t trust anybody. I thought about calling Diane. At least she was the devil I knew. I didn’t call her though. I wasn’t really trying to deal with her fake ass right then.

**Chapter 17**

Even though I really wasn’t feeling Omar anymore I agreed to check out Dynasty. I hadn’t agreed to work there yet, I just wanted to take a look around. From the location alone I could tell that it was a lot different than Kandy Kisses. It was in a nice part of town and all of the cars parked in the lot cost $100,000 or better.

The atmosphere was grown and sexy. It looked like every man in there was getting major money. Not hood riches, but Bill Gates type money. All of them were sitting at their tables or booths just chilling like naked women weren’t walking around just for their enjoyment. If a guy wanted a girl to dance for him he’d send word through one of the waitresses. That shit was so hot and classy to me.

The girls weren’t being hassled and pulled and tugged on. They were requested. I could definitely work with this. I wanted to meet the owner though and to see the rest of the club. The owner was busy so Omar led me to the changing room, which blew my mind.

It was huge and filled with plush, neon colored chaises and ottomans. Three of the four walls were completely covered in seamless mirrors. There were also three-way mirrors set up randomly throughout the room. There were two fifty-five inch TVs and two Blu-Ray players. I laughed as I spotted a sign that read *Child Care*.

Now that was taking it too far. I guess some strippers were mothers and would need a sitter on some nights. Then I wondered if any of the kids ever crept up the stairs and got more than an eyeful. There was surely ass and titties everywhere.

I knew my ass was nice and plump, but some of these hoes looked like they had three or four asses. That kind of ass came with cellulite and stretch marks, neither of which I had, so I wasn’t jealous.

The changing lounge was pretty empty, but I soon discovered that it was because there were private dressing rooms that could be rented by the night, week or month. Omar had already rented one for me. It had my name on the door and everything.

“I said I’d *think* about it,” I reminded him.

“Just in case.” He shrugged.

I went to meet the owner and I liked him as soon as I laid eyes on him. He wasn’t too old, in his early thirties, and he just seemed cool.

“I’m Scott, and you must be Heaven,” he said as he extended his hand to me.

“Yes. Nice to meet you.”

He kissed my hand and I blushed. No one had ever kissed my hand before.

“Did you get to take a look around?” he asked.

“Yeah. It’s really nice.”

“And safe,” Scott said with a smile. “There is plenty of security and cameras as well.”

“What about the girls?” I asked.

“They’re girls,” he said with a shrug. “They all respect each other even though they might not all like each other.”

“Okay. It sounds nice.”

“Get a booth, have a bottle, on me, and just think about it.”

I liked the sound of that. I liked Scott and gladly took him up on his offer.

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I liked everything about Dynasty and I knew I’d be making way more there than I’d made at Kandy Kisses. I had a one year plan. I’d save $5,000 a month, which would leave me with $60,000 at the end of the year. That would be enough to get a nice car, put a down payment on a condo and to furnish it. From there I’d be set. I’d strip every other weekend and spend the rest of the time doing what I wanted.

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As soon as I hit the floor at Dynasty I made my way over to a lonely looking guy.

“Hey handsome,” I said with a smile.

“Hi. I’ve never seen you in here. What’s your name?”

“Paradise.”

“Take me there,” he said as he leaned back in his seat.

I danced for a while, but then he started talking too much. He wanted to know every little thing about me and I was forgetting which lies I’d told him. I wasn’t feeling all the Q&A so I moved on.

“Can I get a dance?” a high yellow guy asked.

“Of course.” I smiled as I started to roll my hips in front of him.

“What about a private dance?”

This was my first night in a new club and I wasn’t sure about being alone with anyone yet.

“How much?” I asked.

“Five.”

I told Omar where I was going and not to go anywhere until I was back on the floor. The guy led me up the stairs to the V.I.P area like he’d been there a few times before. He paid the guy that was standing outside the door and went inside. I was about to follow him in when the security guard stopped me.

“I’ll be right here the whole time. If you need anything press one of the red buttons.”

I smiled and thanked him even though I didn’t know what red buttons he was referring to. As soon as I walked into the room I spotted the red buttons. There was one on each wall and one on the table next to the chaise lounge. This place was really nice.

I joined the guy in the private room and closed the door. He was standing next to the chaise waiting patiently.

“Lay down,” he instructed.

I laid down and he told me to open my legs.

“I wanna see that pretty pussy.”

It wasn’t a dance, but for what he was paying I figured I could do just about whatever he asked. I took my panties off and he unzipped his jeans. He used his fingers to massage my clit until I was wet. He licked his lips and pulled his dick out. I didn’t mean to but I gasped out loud.

“What?” he asked defensively.

“I uhh… I didn’t know you was gon’ pull it out,” I lied.

That thing was only the size of my damned pinky finger. I’d heard people say shit like that, but I never really thought a grown man could have such a small dick. He let out a sigh of relief as he sat down next to me.

He played with my pussy with one hand while stroking his dick with the other. I kept my eyes on his dick, wondering how he could even hold it. I guess he thought I was turned on because he started to smile when he noticed that I was watching him.

I sat and managed to moan a few times until he came.

“Maybe next time you’ll let me taste it,” he said as I put my panties back on.

“Maybe.”