

PAPER-CHASE PUBLICATIONS PRESENTS

SUICIDE

TUESDAY



J. CERRONE

Suicide Tuesday

J. Cerrone

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Intro...

Message:

First, I would like to thank all my readers and supporters.

“Molly” is the street name for the illicit drug “MDMA,” which is the active ingredient in the popular party drug “Ecstasy.” In line with the other literary works I have released thus far, “Suicide Tuesday” is a story which brings to light the harsh realities of everyday life, specifically in the urban community, and shows the realistic consequences of certain actions rather than glorifying them. Although the drugs “Ecstasy” and “Molly” are often glorified and promoted as mostly harmless “party drugs” when obtained from a “trusted” source and taken in moderation, there are hidden dangers associated with them. “Suicide Tuesday” explores some of these hidden dangers and how they affected the main character and those around him.

The last two letters (“M-A”) in the acronym “MDMA,” represent “methamphetamine.” This is the same active ingredient in the notorious street drug often referred to as “crystal meth.” With that being said, please be mindful of who you associate with and cultivate relationships with. Please also be very careful when making decisions about what you allow into your personal space and what you put into your body. Just because something looks or feels good *does not* mean it is good for you.

I hope this story serves its intended purpose of entertaining and enlightening its readers. Enjoy!

J. Cerrone

Please be Advised: This story is a work of fiction. Any likeness to any person, living or deceased, is purely coincidental.

Friday...

September 11, 2015

Chapter 1

“Yo cuz! Long time, no see! What’s good with you?” Raheem asked as he approached another young man while exiting the 69th Street Terminal in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania; a small, bustling city on the outskirts of West Philadelphia. “Where you been, dog?”

“Oh shit! What’s good with you Heem?” Taj excitedly exclaimed as he turned around to greet his older cousin. They shook hands and hugged. “Man, I just got out the County. I was in that bitch for the past six months!”

“Damn, bro. You got locked up again? You were up State Road?”

“Naw man, I was in the nut-ass jawn out here – George Hill,” Taj replied. “I got booked on some nut-ass robbery charge. Some bitch-ass nigga lied and told the law I robbed him. He found out I was knocking his baby-mom off and I guess he was too pussy to confront me about it like a man. I beat that case though. Niggas know my record, man. I hustle – I don’t rob niggas! My mom didn’t tell y’all I was down?”

“Naw, you know how my people are,” Raheem sighed. “They don’t fuck with me like that ever since they converted to Christianity. Even if your mom told them, they never told me.”

“I already know,” Taj admitted, dejected. “They don’t really fuck with none of the family anymore. My mother gets real upset when she talks about how her and Uncle Has used to be so close until y’all changed religions a few years back. She’s always talking about how she misses hanging out as a family and going to the mosque together.”

“I feel you. But don’t say ‘y’all,’ though,” Raheem objected. “That’s my parents’ religion! I can’t get down with their church. You know I can’t pray to a white Jesus! I really just been on some trying to be spiritual in general, ‘at one with the Universe,’ without organized religion-type mentality the last few years. I’ve just been playing my position since they let me and Kim move in before the baby was born. What you doing up this way anyway?”

“I’m out here selling loosies, getting this money! You know how I do,” Taj bragged. “There’s too many niggas doing the same shit out Fifty-Second Street, so I figured I’d slide over here real quick and off these jaws. I’m about to be done though. What you getting into?”

“On my way back to the crib from work. I don’t even really feel like going to the crib right now, though. I’m not trying to deal with the nut shit with my people. I had a rough day.”

“You still working at UPS?” Taj asked his cousin. “You smell like it – all sweaty and stinking!”

“Yeah, man,” Raheem laughed. “They’re still working me like a dog! I’m trying to get a promotion and a raise or some shit, but you know how they do. Working my ass off ain’t enough for them. You gotta be cool with the right people and I’m not about to be all joe, kissing people’s asses. I’m tired of taking SEPTA all the way out Willow Grove for this nut-ass nine dollars an hour too. I’m about to get out on the block with you!”

“Naw, nigga,” Taj objected. “You don’t need to do that. I already have a record and it’s just me I have to worry about. You got a whole wife and newborn at home. You don’t need to get booked or choked out by the law for selling loosies on some Eric Garner shit.”

“I feel you, but I’m tired of dealing with the nut shit,” Raheem complained. “I’m sick of breaking my back for pennies and coming home to get treated like trash by my own family. Kim been acting nutty since the baby was born too!”

“Damn, cousin,” Taj shook his head. “That’s drawing. Why don’t you slide through the crib with me so you can see my mom and we can put one in the air? I’ll drop you back off at your crib when we’re done.”

“That’ll work.”

The two young men walked across the street and down the block to Taj’s vehicle which was parked on a side street near the historic Tower Theatre. Taj started his car, lit a cigarette and turned his sound system all the way up before pulling away from the curb. The young men made the short trip to his West Philadelphia neighborhood while blasting a new Dark Lo

mixtape.

“Is that my nephew?” Taj’s mother smiled and waved from the porch of her Lancaster Avenue rowhome as Taj and Raheem exited the vehicle.

“Hey Aunt Kareemah,” Raheem greeted Taj’s mother as he walked up the steps to her porch and embraced her. “How you been?”

“I’m blessed, thank you,” Kareemah replied. “More importantly, how are your beautiful wife and daughter? I haven’t had the chance to see them since the baby was born. Every time I call my brother to try to figure out when I can stop by he’s always talking about how busy everybody is; like y’all the only people who have things to do! I can never seem to get him to commit to a time for me to come by.”

“I know. I’m sorry Auntie. You know how my father has been acting ever since they stopped going to the mosque. Kim and the baby are good, though. I want to bring them to see you but it’s hard between working and not having a car.”

“I understand baby,” Kareemah replied as she gave her nephew another hug. “Don’t even stress about it. Just do what you need to do and everything will work out eventually – Insha Allah. Maybe your cousin can give y’all a ride over here one of these days so I can see my great-niece.”

“You stay volunteering me to drive somebody somewhere! I’m about to start hacking,” Taj chuckled.

“That would be better than what you’ve been doing for money,” Kareemah exclaimed as she rolled her eyes at her son. “I already know y’all are probably about to go in the basement and get high, so I hope you ain’t complaining about bringing your cousins over here to do something productive!”

“Here we go! Naw, ma, I’m not complaining at all,” Taj replied, defeated. “I’m just saying...”

“And I’m just saying, as long as you live here rent-free, you shouldn’t have nothing negative to say when I suggest you do a favor for your cousin,” Kareemah interjected.

“You right,” Taj acquiesced. “Let’s go in this basement and smoke before my mother decides to beat me upside my head with the Qur’an!”

“I ain’t no hater, but I’ve always been kind of jealous of the relationship you have with your mother,” Raheem confessed to his cousin as they sat in the basement.

“Jealous? Of what?” Taj asked, surprised.

“Y’all just have a really open relationship and she treats you like an adult.”

“Yeah, when she feels like it,” Taj replied coolly. “But you saw that shit, though. I’m twenty-two years old and she’s telling me what to do with my car! She didn’t buy that jawn and she damn-sure doesn’t pay my insurance or put gas in it!”

“I feel you,” Raheem admitted. “But nigga, I’m twenty-five with a whole wife and baby and my parents treat me like I’m a young-boy! At least Aunt Kareemah ain’t on your top about everything you do. She let you turn the basement into a studio, she lets you come and go as you please and can do damn-near whatever you want in this jawn. You just came home and she let you come back and get right back to it. If I ever got locked up my parents would leave me hanging for sure!”

“You ain’t never lied, fam,” Taj admitted as he lit the blunt. “I guess we’re at that age where we can’t really expect to be treated like adults if we still live at home. My mom has always been cool like that, though. I remember your pops was always strict, even when they were still Muslim. What the fuck made them change religions anyway?”

“On some real shit, cuz,” Raheem began, “This shit has been a long-time-coming. My mother was born and raised Baptist. From what I hear, my other grandparents were never happy about her converting to Islam when her and my father started dating seriously. There was always a lot of tension in the family behind that, which is why I was never close with them growing up. My father took it real hard when Grandma died. He was having issues with his faith and really started losing it on the low. Plus, there was some beef with how the mosque handled the Janazah. After the funeral, my mother and

my other grandparents started pressuring him about the religion and I guess they finally broke him. It was really bad at first. My parents almost split up over the shit. That's the *real* reason why they moved out of West Philly."

"Oh snap. I didn't even know all that," Taj exclaimed as he passed the blunt to his cousin. "That makes sense though. Grandma was the truth! I know Grandma and Uncle Has were even closer than her and my mom were. I miss her like crazy. It fucked my head up when my mother told me she passed while I was locked up that first time."

"Yeah, man, the shit was totally unexpected. You should be happy you were booked at the time. There was a lot of drama in the family when Grandma passed. You know how that shit goes. Everything had died down by the time you got out. Now we're back to dealing with the usual bullshit!"

"Ha-ha! You ain't never lied," Taj agreed. "Our family is crazy!"

"Yeah, but whose family isn't these days? I just hope niggas can fix their issues before my daughter is old enough to start picking up on the family's bad habits," Raheem confessed as he exhaled a mouth full of marijuana smoke and passed the cigar back to his cousin.

"I feel you cuz! That's why I'm glad I ain't get none of these jawns pregnant out here," Taj replied. "I got enough of my own problems without having to deal with having a kid and all the bullshit that comes with baby-mothers! What's up with wifey though? Everything good with y'all? You said she's been acting nutty?"

"Pshhhh," Raheem sighed heavily. "She's been on some nut shit for real, dog!"

"What you mean?"

"So, you know how strict and controlling my parents have always been?"

"Do I? Nigga, why you think I never wanted to spend the night over your crib growing up?" Taj laughed. "Your pop was always so strict. No disrespect, but if I didn't know any better I would think Uncle Has was the third coming of the prophet Muhammed! Real rap!"

“Pretty much,” Raheem agreed. “But check it, that’s another reason why it was so wild when my parents converted. Not only did they change religions; my father took all that enthusiasm he raised me with for Islam and transferred it to the new religion. Then he expected me to just fall in line even though I was already grown! We were beefing all crazy about it after Grandma died. I was about to get married anyway, so I just moved out and got a crib with Kim. Him and my mom were mad how I just dipped and kept it moving with wifey. It was all good between me and her until she got pregnant. Then I guess my mother got in her head. Kim started pressuring me to move back in with my people so we could save money. I wasn’t with it at first, but we were kind of struggling financially, so I finally agreed. When we moved in a few months before the baby was born, all of a sudden Kim wanted to start going to church with my parents. She started pressuring me so much that my parents don’t really have to say much directly to me about it. We’ve been beefing about it ever since. I won’t front like I was going to the mosque regularly anyway, but I damn sure ain’t trying to go to church!”

“For real? I didn’t know you were going through all of that, fam.”

“Yeah, that ain’t even the half,” Raheem continued. “The past couple weeks my pop started threatening to kick me out if I don’t start going to church with them. I’ve been wanting to move back out for a minute, but ever since I lost my other job I don’t make enough bread to handle everything I need to handle. I’m broke as fuck between all the expenses for the baby, paying a few hundred dollars in rent to my parents every month and paying for these damn SEPTA passes. Not to mention the way Kim spends money on nut shit like take-out, constantly getting her hair and nails done and buying new clothes every time she loses more of the pregnancy weight!”

“See, that’s why I’m glad I don’t have no baby and no girlfriend,” Taj shook his head. “I don’t know how you do it!”

“I ain’t even gonna hold you, dog. I love Kim and my daughter to death, but I don’t know how I keep dealing with this shit either,” Raheem confided in his cousin. “What makes it even worse is that every time I talk to her about cutting back on spending and saving money so we can get a wheel and move out, Kim takes my parents’ side, talking about, ‘you need to be thankful they let us stay here. I’m not tryna be broke just so we can have our

own place again. Why don't you just do what they tell you to do?' We actually just had a crazy argument last night because she told me if my parents kick me out she's gonna stay at my people's crib with the baby!"

"Stop playing cuz! That's outta pocket!"

"I know right? She's my wife! How the fuck is she gonna take sides with my parents?" Raheem continued venting. "We have our own family and she'd rather be comfortable living with them than to be a grown woman and grind it out with me! She goes to church with them all the time and she is always pressuring me to go. It's like my mother is using her as a puppet to try to control me. I swear some of the shit Kim says to me sounds like my mother wrote it down for her and made her rehearse! I never expected things to be like this between me and Kim. I don't think she was ready to get married. I don't even know how much longer I can take this shit."

"Damn, dog... I'm sorry to hear that. I'm sure everything will be cool sooner or later," Taj reassured his cousin. "But if shit gets too hectic at the crib you can always stay here for a while. You know you're always welcome. You can sleep on this futon. You know we wouldn't mind."

"That's love, my nigga. I appreciate that. But your mother and my father already have enough tension in their relationship. I'm not trying to cause any more drama... I know my pop would be pissed if they kick me out and your mom let me stay here. I'll be cool. I'll figure something out soon. Speaking of which, I should probably get back to the crib. You ready to give me a ride?"

As the young men crossed 63rd Street onto Marshall Road – leaving Philadelphia City limits and entering Upper Darby, Taj decided he wanted to stop and buy some more cigarettes while he was in the suburbs. The City of Philadelphia had implemented a relatively new tax on cigarettes which did not apply to the surrounding counties, so buying packs and cartons in the city cut into Taj's profits when he sold loose cigarettes ("loosies"). They pulled up in front of a beer distributor not far from Raheem's parents' house and both of the young men exited the vehicle and walked into the store.

"Hey Raheem," a shapely young woman greeted Raheem as he walked into the store.

“Oh, hey what’s going on Sarah?” Raheem quickly replied, careful not to maintain eye-contact with the attractive young lady.

“Not much. Just running errands for my nigga, as usual,” Sarah replied as she smiled and rolled her eyes. “He always has me doing wifey shit but he still hasn’t put a ring on it!”

“Ha-ha! I’m sure he will soon,” Raheem replied nervously. “I’m sure he wants to keep you around.”

“Shit.... I know I would,” Taj interjected.

“Y’all silly,” Sarah smiled bashfully. “Well, it was good seeing you Raheem. Tell your family I said hi.”

“You already know,” Raheem replied as Sarah exited the store and Taj stood in line to buy cigarettes.

“Who the fuck was that?” Taj enthusiastically inquired.

“Just some jawn from around here,” Raheem replied nonchalantly.

“*Nigga!* Don’t you mean ‘just some bad jawn’ who is on your top?”

“Don’t even start that shit,” Raheem objected. “She ain’t hardly on my top. Her parents live next door to us and she visits them a few times a week, so I see her around. I think she lives on the other side, though. Her parents go to church with my people. Besides, I’m married. And she fucks with some get-money, hustling-ass nigga.”

“I respect you talking all that, ‘I’m married’ shit... that’s what you’re supposed to say,” Taj laughed. “But I’m your cousin, nigga! I’ve known you my whole life! She bad as hell and thicker than a motherfucking snicker! I know that’s your twist! And she was all in your face, joe as shit! She obviously isn’t too worried about her dude. And you just finished telling me how unhappy you are at home. Bitches can sense that shit. Maybe she wants to be your side jawn. She can be your little escape every now and then when you don’t feel like dealing with the bullshit at the crib.”

“I’m cool, bro,” Raheem objected. “No bullshit – she is bad as fuck! But that wouldn’t be cool. I married Kim and vowed not to fuck with any other women. Besides, I don’t need any more drama in my life. I’m already

having a hard-enough time getting along with Kim and my parents without spending extra time outside the crib creeping with a side jawn. Not to mention, if I got caught it would be a wrap for my marriage and it would probably lead to beef with her nigga. It ain't worth it."

"That's why you gotta do like Jeezy said: 'don't get caught!'" Taj laughed as the pair exited the store and entered his vehicle.

"You're a wild dude, cuz!"

"I'm just speaking facts," Taj stated seriously as he drove away from the store and turned onto his cousin's block.

"Good looking on the smoke and the ride, cuz," Raheem thanked Taj as he shook his hand after they pulled up in front of Raheem's parents' house. "You wanna come in and holla at everybody and see the baby?"

"Maybe next time when I'm sober, man," Taj declined. "I'm high as fuck and based on what you told me, this is probably not the best time. I'm not tryna get preached to and have Uncle Has blow my high!"

"Say less," Raheem agreed. "I'll holla at you."

Chapter 2

“You’re home later than usual Raheem,” Raheem’s mother sternly greeted him the moment he walked through the front door. She had been sitting on the living room sofa and saw him approaching through the front window. “Who dropped you off?”

“Oh, hey Ma,” Raheem softly replied. “I saw Taj when I got off the train at 69th Street and he gave me a ride.”

“So, shouldn’t you have been back sooner if he gave you a ride?” Mrs. Brown asked skeptically.

“We went to his house first so I could see Aunt Kareemah, then he stopped at the store before he dropped me off,” Raheem answered gruffly. He grew agitated upon being questioned by his mother. He had just walked into the house and she was already giving him the third-degree as if he wasn’t a grown man who had just worked all day. She hadn’t even said “hello,” before she started her inquisition.

“Oh, well, you know how we feel about you hanging with that thug,” Mrs. Brown continued. “If Kareemah had been more worried about being his mother instead of being his friend, then maybe that boy would know how to act instead of being in and out of jail all the time!”

“For real, though, ma? You really feel the need to do this right now?” Raheem sighed, frustrated. “I literally *just* walked in the house from work. I’m still dirty and sweaty. Can I at least take a shower before you hit me with all that?”

“I really don’t like your attitude,” Mrs. Brown snapped. “I don’t care how grown you think you are... I’m still your mother! I carried you for nine months and I raised you. I think that gives me the right to correct you when you need correcting. You seem to feel real comfortable getting smart with me considering the circumstances.”

“What circumstances are those, ma?” Raheem asked sarcastically.

“The fact that I’ve been watching *your* baby all afternoon so *your* wife can get some rest and you walk into *my* house later than expected. *Those* circumstances,” Raheem’s mother fired back. “Not to mention the fact that you smell like weed!”

“Well, you just mentioned it,” Raheem muttered under his breath as he walked up the stairs and into the bedroom he shared with his wife.

“Boy, you better watch your mouth!” Mrs. Brown called out to her son. “Walking around this house like you own something. Lord Jesus, give me the strength!”

“Oh my God,” Raheem exclaimed as he closed the bedroom door behind him. “I’m tired of this shit!”

“Damn, baby! Why you gotta be so loud? I was having a good dream,” Kim complained. The commotion Raheem caused as he entered the room had interrupted his wife’s nap.

“My fault baby,” Raheem apologized as he leaned over the bed and kissed his wife on her forehead. “I just walked in the door to my mother’s usual nagging. How was your day?”

“It was okay,” Kim replied as she sat up in the bed. “Chanel wouldn’t take a nap for me though. I didn’t even have a chance to take a shower. I crashed when your mom got home from work and offered to watch her for me.”

“Well, at least you and the baby have a good relationship with my mother,” Raheem replied sullenly. “That must be nice...”

“Well, you already know what your parents’ issue with you is. We’ve been living here for almost a year and you’re still acting surprised?”

“I’m not surprised, but that doesn’t mean I like it,” Raheem answered his wife curtly as he retrieved clean underwear from his dresser. “That’s why we need to move the fuck up outta here. But I’m not even trying to get into all this with you again right now. I need to wash my ass. I’m about to hop in the shower.”

“Oh, but wait,” Kim objected. “I just told you I didn’t get to take a shower yet today. Can I take one real quick first?”

“Baby, you know I just got home from work. I’m sweating and stinking. I need to hop up under this water with a quickness.”

“I know, but I’ve been needing to take a shower all day. I didn’t have a chance because I’ve been taking care of *our* child all day. I crashed as soon as your mom gave me a break,” Kim complained.

“I understand that Kim, but why don’t you just go back to sleep while I’m in the bathroom? Can’t you take a shower when I’m done?” Raheem attempted to negotiate with his wife.

“I *was* taking a nap until you came in here being all loud,” Kim snapped. “Now I’m up because of you and I would like to take a shower before the baby wakes up.”

“I’ll be real quick so you can get in there right after me,” Raheem replied. “Besides, I haven’t seen my baby-girl all day, so I want to spend time with her anyway. I’ll take care of her when she wakes up after I finish in the shower. You can relax for the rest of the evening.”

“Why does everything always have to be on your schedule, Raheem?” Kim whined. “You *always* get your way! What about what *I* want?”

“What? Are you being serious right now Kim?”

“Yes, I’m dead-serious,” Kim continued. “I get up with the baby, I’m here all day with her. I never get to do anything for myself or get to hang out with my friends ever since she was born. All I’m asking is for you to let me take a shower first and you won’t even let me do that! It’s not fair!”

“Wow.” Raheem sighed. “First of all, welcome to parenthood! Our lives don’t revolve around us anymore, they revolve around Chanel. You’re not the only one who doesn’t ever get to have fun. I work all day, then I gotta come home to the bullshit with my parents. I agreed to move here so we didn’t have to stress as much about money since you insisted on it. My parents stress me out enough. I don’t need this shit from you too.”

“You claim you don’t get to have fun but you smell like weed right now, so I guess you found some time to have fun before you came home,” Kim retorted. “You’re so selfish sometimes Raheem!”

“You know what, Kim... just take a shower. Go ahead. It’s not that deep.”

“Thanks love!” Kim’s mood automatically improved. She smiled as she hopped out of bed, grabbed her robe, towel and washcloth before leaving the bedroom. Raheem shook his head in frustration as he watched his young wife exit their small bedroom.

“My family is gonna be the death of me,” Raheem sighed as he sat on the bedroom floor so as not to contaminate his bed with his dirty clothes. He unlocked the screen on his cellular phone and scrolled through his social media accounts to temporarily distract himself from the stressful events of the day. Thirty-five minutes later, Kim finally re-entered the bedroom, bringing with her the fresh scent of the body-wash she used in the shower. “So much for a quick shower,” Raheem thought to himself.

“Damn baby... you’re smelling and looking like a snack,” Raheem greeted his wife as he rose from the floor and groped her behind.

“Boy, if you don’t get your dirty hands off me and take a shower,” Kim scolded her husband.

“They wouldn’t be dirty if you would’ve let me take a shower first,” Raheem laughed, assuming his wife was only half-serious. “I’m on your top when I get out the shower though. You’ve been warned!”

“Yeah, we’ll see,” Kim replied half-heartedly. “Maybe we can *try* to do something if I’m not tired, if the baby is still asleep and if your parents aren’t upstairs by the time you’re done.”

“Girl, please! Miss me with that ‘try’ shit! ‘Trying’ is why we haven’t had sex in so long,” Raheem complained. “I got a whole three weeks’ worth of pent up frustration to bust off!”

“You’re doing all this talking and you could have already been in the shower! You’re wasting time!”

“Yeah, alright,” Raheem shook his head as he made his way to the bathroom. As soon as he had stripped off his clothes and turned on the shower, Raheem’s father, Hassan, hastily entered the front door of the house. He ran up the stairs and began frantically banging on the bathroom door.

“Who’s in the bathroom?” Mr. Brown asked aggressively.

“Pop, it’s me,” Raheem called out. “I just got home from work. I’m about to take a shower.”

“I just got home from work and I need to get in there. Come on out so I can pee!”

“Can you just wait a second please?” Raheem asked respectfully. “I’m not dressed and I’m about to hop in the shower. Give me a second and you can just come in and do your thing.”

“Or, you can just do what I said and come out so I can use *my* bathroom,” Mr. Brown demanded.

“Goddamn. I guess he can’t even ask nicely. Always with the nut shit,” Raheem cursed under his breath. “Okay, let me put my drawers back on!”

Raheem quickly slipped his underwear on and exited the bathroom as his father rushed by him without a word. He patiently waited in the hallway for more than five minutes as his father used the bathroom. When Mr. Brown finally opened the door to exit the restroom, Raheem was blasted in the face by the pungent odor of fresh feces.

“Dag, Pop! I didn’t know you were gonna blow that jawn up like that before I took a shower,” Raheem attempted to joke with his father.

“Yeah, well, I had to cover up that strong marijuana smell you have consuming the bathroom,” Mr. Brown huffed. “I *know* you haven’t been smoking in *my* house! Is that your clothes smelling like that?”

“Yeah, sorry Pop. It’s my clothes,” Raheem replied passively. “I wouldn’t smoke in your house. I’m not gonna disrespect your crib like that after you invited us to live here.”

“Yeah, alright,” Hassan casually replied. “That’s what I thought.”

Raheem walked into the bathroom, shaking his head. He didn't understand why everybody in the house seemed to want to start arguments with him. As he had discussed with Taj and Kim, he understood his parents were upset that he had not converted to Christianity like they had, but it had been years. He thought they would have accepted it by now. In addition to that, they knew before they offered repeatedly for him and Kim to move in that he hadn't changed his views on religion. They hadn't been quite so aggressive with him about their feelings before he had moved back home. He felt like he had been set up to either "get with the program" or be punished on a daily basis. It was like an unspoken ultimatum. He felt he was being treated unfairly and he was growing tired of biting his tongue about the matter.

"Is there a problem, boy?" Mr. Brown asked aggressively as his son walked past him, shaking his head. Raheem chose to ignore his father's comment and closed the door as if he hadn't heard what his father had said. He turned the shower back on, started playing music on his phone and finally began to shower. "Hurry up too! I gotta clean the bathroom!"

"These people are crazy," Raheem said out loud to himself as he let the warm water cascade over his body. "They're doing too much! I can't keep dealing with this. I'm about to snap."

Raheem made his way to his bedroom upon exiting the bathroom, anticipating much needed intercourse with his wife. To his surprise, she was not there. He put basketball shorts and a t-shirt on, then proceeded down the stairs and into the kitchen where he saw his mother and his wife conversing. Their moods shifted when they noticed he had entered the room.

"So, I guess y'all were talking about me based on how y'all switched up when I came in here, huh?"

"You're so paranoid sometimes Raheem! Ain't nobody talking about you," Kim objected. "You act like nobody has anything better to do than to talk about you!"

"Damn, wife! It's like that?" Raheem was unable to hide the hurt in his voice. His wife was unnecessarily abrasive far too often. "Oh, alright... say less. Well, I was tryna see if we were gonna handle what we talked about before I got in the shower."

“I was telling your wife that your sister and her new man are coming over for dinner tonight,” Mrs. Brown interjected. “Your father said she told him they’re getting pretty serious so he wants to get to know him better.”

“Seriously?” Raheem asked incredulously. “The ink on her divorce ain’t even dry yet! How serious can they be? That girl doesn’t learn.”

Raheem’s older sister, Sharika, had been married for less than a year to her child’s father. They had married less than ten months after they met and had a child roughly eight months later. Within six months of the birth of Raheem’s nephew, Sharika and her husband separated and he had not even been around to see his son since they split. They had finalized their divorce about a year later. Now she was already talking about being serious with her new boyfriend of three months.

“Serious enough for her to tell your father that they’re serious,” Mrs. Brown replied pragmatically. “Let he who is without sin be the first to cast a stone.”

“What does that even mean?” Raheem asked his mother as he glanced at his wife.

“Don’t play stupid Raheem. You know *exactly* what it means!”

“Yeah, Ma... I know what it means,” Raheem replied, attempting not to betray his growing frustration. “I’m just asking what that has to do with what we were talking about.”

“You shouldn’t be up here talking about how your sister doesn’t learn when you’re the most hard-headed person I know,” Raheem’s mother chastised him.

“Are you serious? How did this conversation get turned around to talk about what you think I’m doing wrong? I swear to God!”

“You better watch your mouth, boy! Don’t be taking up the Lord’s name in vain in my house,” Mrs. Brown shrieked.

“Wow... you’re really tripping with this whole Christian, holy-roller, Bible-thumper thing,” Raheem complained. “You ain’t quote the Qur’an half as much my whole life as you have quoted the Bible these past

three years! Besides, you don't even mess with Sharika like that! I'm your blood and she's your step-daughter but all of a sudden, you're real quick to defend her! Is that because she converted to Christianity too just to make Pop happy? Or is that only because you can use it as an excuse to come at my neck?"

"Heem," Kim interjected. "Don't disrespect your mother, baby. Let's just go upstairs before this goes all the way south."

"Sounds like a good idea," Raheem agreed as he exited the kitchen and began climbing the stairs, Kim walking behind him.

"Yeah, I agree. Get that boy out my face before I have to remind him where he is," Mrs. Brown jeered. Raheem immediately stopped mid-stride and cut his eyes at his mother. Kim placed her hand on her husband's back and gently pushed Raheem to encourage him to continue to walk up the stairs to their bedroom.

"Don't even entertain it baby," she whispered. "I'll make you feel better when we get upstairs."

They entered their room and Raheem laid on their bed covering his face with his hands. His wife closed the door behind them and laid next to her husband, embracing him.

"What the fuck is wrong with my parents?" Raheem exhaled, fighting back tears of frustration. "They really want beef with me or some shit!"

"I know, I'm sorry baby," Kim attempted to console her husband. "Try not to worry about it, though."

"It's kind of hard not worrying about it when I deal with it damn-near every time I see or speak with them! I told you this was the main reason I didn't wanna move back in here! I knew they were gonna act like this!"

"Yeah, I know... you were right," Kim admitted. "But it's not that bad all the time baby. You gotta look at the positive side of things."

"That's easy for you to say," Raheem retorted. "They're nicer to you than they are to me and they're not even your parents!"

“I’m sorry baby. I don’t know why. I can help you feel better though.”

Kim smiled seductively at her husband as she slipped her hand down his shorts and began to rub his manhood while kissing his neck. Raheem let out a sigh as he relaxed from his wife’s touch. It had been too long since they had been intimate. He knew his unsatisfied sexual urges were partially responsible for his pent-up aggression and his decreased ability to handle the mistreatment from his family. Between Raheem’s work schedule, the baby’s sleep schedule, their limited privacy because of living with his parents and Kim’s lack of energy, it had become difficult for them to be spontaneous. It was almost as if they needed to schedule time to be intimate and it had not been working out recently. They hadn’t had sex in almost a month. He was elated to finally be able to do what they were supposed to be able to do as a young, married couple.

After a minute of enjoying his wife’s touch, Raheem engaged Kim; pulling his shorts down, opening his wife’s robe and pulling her on top of him. He groped her and began to kiss her passionately before pulling her panties down. By the time she had adjusted her position while straddling him in order to fully remove her underwear, a loud shriek was relayed over the baby monitor positioned on their nightstand. Baby Chanel, who had been napping in her grandparents’ room, had awakened from her slumber.

“You gotta be fucking kidding me,” Raheem uttered as he tried to assist his wife up from her position on top of him.

“Real quick Heem,” Kim whispered as she gently nibbled on Raheem’s earlobe and placed all her body weight on her husband to resist being moved. “There’s formula in the fridge. Let your mom handle it until we’re done. She already agreed to watch her.”

“Yeah, I wish,” Raheem sighed. “She said that earlier so you could get some rest; *not* so you could get some dick! You know if neither one of us comes out there, they’re gonna start talking shit! Besides, I haven’t seen my baby-girl awake since late last night!” Raheem picked his wife up and laid her gently on the bed beside him. He put his shorts back on as she crossed her arms, pouted and sighed dramatically. “I’m just as upset as you are, if not

more! Don't worry, I'll blow your back out later after Chanel goes to bed."

"Yeah, I guess so," Kim replied sullenly. "That's if I still have the energy by the time she goes to bed and your sister and her boyfriend leave."

"I'll just have to go to the *papi* store and get you an energy drink then," Raheem said half-jokingly as he rushed out the bedroom to retrieve the crying infant. Raheem's mother had just walked up the stairs and followed behind him as he entered his parents' bedroom.

"I was just about to come grab her," Mrs. Brown informed her son as he picked his daughter up from the playpen in his parents' room and consoled her.

"Thanks Ma, it's all good though. I got her," Raheem softly replied as he walked back out of his parents' room and past the bathroom where his father was cleaning in preparation for Sharika's arrival.

"Yeah, well, I thought maybe you were so busy complaining to your wife about me that you didn't hear your baby crying," Mrs. Brown replied sarcastically as she followed her son downstairs into the kitchen.

"For real, Ma? Why you always got something negative to say to me?" Raheem asked without turning to look at his mother. He was cradling his daughter in one arm while retrieving a bottle of formula from the refrigerator.

"You don't like when people tell you the truth, so you get upset," the older woman fired back. "But I'ma tell you like it is! I know that's what you went upstairs to do!"

"Actually, naw, Ma. You're mistaken," Raheem gently corrected his mother as he warmed up the bottle of formula. "I wasn't even worried about that by the time Chanel started crying."

"Well, if you're saying what I think you're saying, then I'm glad the baby started crying," Raheem's mother stated smugly. "Lord knows y'all definitely don't need to be making any more babies when you can barely take care of the one you have!"

"What did you just say to me?" Raheem said as he jerked his head

around to glare at his mother.

“You heard me!”

“I feel like I heard you wrong,” Raheem repeated. His voice was calm, but his mother observed her son’s intense facial expression and noticed the vein protruding from his forehead. “What did you say to me Mommy?”

“I said you better learn how to be more responsible before you bring any more children into this world,” Mrs. Brown re-worded her hurtful comment, realizing she had finally struck a nerve. She couldn’t remember the last time her son had referred to her as “Mommy,” and it was strange for her to hear him call her that after all the years that had passed since he started referring to her as “Ma.”

Mrs. Brown did, however, remember the last time, more recently, when she had noticed Raheem’s veins protruding from his forehead. Her most recent memory of this occurring was before Raheem’s older sister’s and her ex-husband separated. Sharika had accused her then-husband of physically abusing her. As she relayed the story to the family, Raheem sat quietly, but the veins had begun to swell from his forehead. The next conversation Sharika had with her husband was when he was calling to complain about how Raheem had stopped by the house while she was gone, kicked the front door in and beat him until his mouth and nose were leaking blood. Veins bulging from Raheem’s forehead was a foreboding sign.

“That’s *not* what you said, Mommy. Would you please say it the same way you said it before? Matter-of-fact... Kim!” Raheem called up the steps to his wife as he tested the temperature of the formula on his inner wrist before proceeding to feed his daughter. “Kim, come to the kitchen please!”

“What’s up Heem?” Kim called out as she slowly made her way down the steps. Raheem felt his blood boiling and passed their daughter, along with her bottle to his wife once she entered the kitchen. He then leaned his back against the counter, folded his arms and took a deep breath before proceeding.

“Go ahead Mommy,” he motioned towards his mother with his hand. “Please repeat what you said to me for your daughter-in-law.”

“I said that *you*, Raheem, personally need to learn some responsibility because I feel like you’re not handling certain affairs in the most mature way,” Mrs. Brown stuttered.

“So, you’re gonna sit up here and act like that’s really what you just said to me when we first came into the kitchen?”

“That *is* what I said,” Raheem’s mother replied coolly.

“Let’s be real, Mommy,” the vein in Raheem’s head was pulsating as he attempted to maintain his composure. “Maybe that’s what you meant to say, but that *is not* what you said.”

“Well, not verbatim, but that’s basically what I said,” Mrs. Brown reaffirmed.

“Naw... it’s *not at all* what you said. Tell Kim what you said about us.”

“First of all, this is my house!” Mrs. Brown yelled. “You’re not gonna sit up here and twist my words to make me look bad in front of your wife!”

“Hmmm...” Raheem took another deep breath. He felt himself about to lose control of his temper. “I’m not twisting your words to make you look bad. You are twisting your own words to make yourself sound better. You changed what you said three times already. And I’m also trying to figure out why you’re raising your voice at me.”

“What, boy? Who do you think you’re talking to?” Mrs. Brown shrieked. “You’re not gonna tell me how to talk and what to say in *my* house! I can raise my voice if I want to. I’m the parent – you’re the child! I ain’t got no reason to lie to you!”

“Then why don’t you just repeat what you said the first time instead of misdirecting the conversation?” Raheem asked in an unusually calm manner.

“Baby,” Kim interjected. “What is the whole point of this?”

“Because my mother was talking crazy when I got Chanel out of

their room,” Raheem snapped. “Then she followed me into the kitchen saying how she knew I was talking trash about her upstairs. When I told her I wasn’t worried about it, she said she was glad the baby started crying so we wouldn’t have any more children because we can barely take care of Chanel!”

“I *did not* say that,” Misses Brown objected. Raheem’s mother was a relatively fair-skinned, melanated woman. Her face was getting flushed and her eyes were welling up with tears.

“Stop lying!” Raheem roared, finally losing control of his temper. “She *did* say that disrespectful shit! And you’re cool with living here, dealing with this bullshit? It ain’t even just about me anymore. That’s how she feels about all three of us – me, you *and* the baby!”

“Calm down Raheem,” Kim protested. “You’re gonna upset the baby!”

At that very moment, Raheem’s father, Hassan rushed down the stairs. He had overheard the yelling as he finished cleaning the bathroom. He was already perturbed because his wife had not assisted in cooking, cleaning or preparing for Sharika and her boyfriend’s arrival. He was accustomed to doing the bulk of the cooking and cleaning by himself, especially when they were having company. The only person who consistently helped with household chores over the years had been Raheem.

“Are you down here yelling at your mother?” Mr. Brown asked aggressively, glaring down at his son once he reached the bottom of the stairs and entered the kitchen.

“You didn’t hear what your wife said to me about me, my wife and my baby,” Raheem attempted to explain.

“I didn’t say anything that wasn’t true,” Mrs. Brown protested. “This boy just doesn’t like hearing the truth! He wants to do whatever he wants and expects nobody to say anything about it!”

“What are you even talking about?” Raheem screamed. “Why do you keep lying? I can’t stand that shit!”

“Cuss in my house again, Raheem, and we’re gonna have a major

problem!” Mr. Brown threatened as he stepped into his son’s personal space.

“First of all,” Raheem stood his ground, “I’m not trying to disrespect anybody in this house but y’all seem to be determined to disrespect me every chance y’all get! Why did you insist we move here knowing y’all were planning on treating me like this? That’s real dirty!”

“I’m just saying, you better watch your mouth in my house,” Mr. Brown reiterated menacingly.

“How about you check your wife?” Raheem snapped. “I ain’t never disrespected you or stepped to you a day in my life Pop, but this is about *my* family and *my* child now! Mommy is being totally disrespectful and you’re basically co-signing it by not checking her!”

“Boy, you better watch your mouth,” Mr. Brown threatened as he stepped closer and shoved his son.

At that moment, Raheem momentarily lost every ounce of self-control, threw his fists up and lunged at his father for the first and only time in his twenty-five years on the planet. Immediately, both Kim, who was holding their baby, and Mrs. Brown, simultaneously jumped in between the men. Seeing his wife and daughter in his path of attack quickly brought Raheem back to reality and he stopped in mid-attack.

“I’m not with this bullshit anymore y’all!” Raheem screamed, unsuccessfully attempting to hold back the tears of hurt and frustration which had formed in his eyes. “All the times you put hands on me my whole life and been disrespecting me since we moved back in and I keep taking that shit on the chin out of love and respect for you as my father. I’m done!”

“Get your stuff, and get out of my house! Now!”

“You’re just gonna kick us and your newborn grandchild out after y’all insisted on us moving here so you could ‘help us’ save money?” Raheem asked in disbelief.

“I didn’t say *they* need to leave,” Hassan corrected his son. “I said *you* need to leave!”

“For real?” Raheem’s voice cracked. He looked at Kim who was

standing a few feet from him, holding their daughter. He could tell she was purposely avoiding making direct eye-contact with him. “Y’all really gonna do me like that?”

“You did yourself like that,” Raheem’s mother haughtily replied, devoid of any real empathy for her only biological child.

“It’s whatever, yo,” Raheem snapped as he finally broke down in tears. His already raspy voice was breaking and cracking as he continued to yell while he walked upstairs to the bedroom he shared with his wife and daughter. His wife followed him into the room, their daughter crying in her arms. Kim said nothing, however. Raheem didn’t speak to his wife either. He already knew how she felt about the situation based on their conversation the previous night. He felt betrayed, nonetheless, that she hadn’t come to his defense or even asked his parents to reconsider. Raheem quickly packed a bag and kissed his daughter on her cheek without even acknowledging his wife who was still holding her. As he walked back down the steps, his older sister had just happened to walk in the front door along with her boyfriend.

“I don’t know why y’all didn’t just abort me since y’all obviously didn’t want me,” Raheem roared, still attempting to hold back tears. “I can’t stand y’all! And Pop, I swear to God, if you ever put your hands on me again I’ll put you in the fucking hospital! Fuck y’all!”

Raheem stormed out the front door into the cool fall air. He was alone, emotionally devastated and had no idea where he would go and what he would do. This was not at all how he anticipated he would spend his Friday evening.

Chapter 3

Raheem slammed the door and walked down the front steps onto the sidewalk. He was an emotional wreck. He started breathing deliberately to calm himself down and stop crying. The young man had no idea what he was going to do. Should he get a hotel room? He walked to the mini-market and beer store to buy some Black and Mild cigars to smoke while he calculated his next move.

Raheem had calmed down to the point where he had completely stopped crying by the time he had walked the block and a half to the mini-market. He went in, bought a few cigars, exited the store and lit one. As he inhaled deeply, his inner cheeks, lungs and blood quickly absorbed the tobacco and sent a calming sensation through his veins. He stretched and glanced around, looking for a place to sit so he could search for nearby hotel accommodations on his phone. A familiar car caught his eye in the store's parking lot on Marshall Road, roughly twenty-five feet away. The headlights of the vehicle shone brightly in the night. It appeared to be his neighbor's daughter, Sarah's car. Raheem had just seen her when he was with Taj at the same store earlier that day. Raheem decided to continue to walk in that direction. As he approached the vehicle, he noticed Sarah in the driver's seat, with her head in her hands.

"Yo, Sarah," Raheem called out so she could hear him through her closed car window. Sarah looked up suddenly, obviously startled. Raheem waved to her. "You cool?"

"Just a second," Sarah replied, holding up one finger and frantically searching for more tissue. She wiped her eyes, blew her nose and then rolled down her window. "Hey Raheem," Sarah sniffled. "You caught me at a bad time."

"Yeah, I'm sorry," Raheem replied bashfully. "It seems like that's going around today. I saw you looking like you were going through it so I decided to come check on you. You headed to your parents' crib?"

"Thanks for checking on me Heem! You're so sweet," Sarah replied,

smiling from ear to ear as tears sporadically streamed down her face. “I was about to go over there, but I have to calm down first. I can’t let my father see me like this. I really don’t even want you to see me like this!”

“Oh please, girl! You’re still beautiful.” It was the first time Raheem had complimented Sarah, or any other young woman besides his wife, on her appearance since he had been married. “Are your parents okay?”

“Um, yeah, thank you,” Sarah stuttered. She was taken off guard by the compliment. She never even thought Raheem viewed her as attractive. He had never flirted with her or even complimented her before, and he had lived next door to her parents for almost a year. Sarah knew Raheem was married with a baby girl, so she actually respected the fact that he had never flirted with her. She was surprised when he complimented her for the first time. What had made him change? “Yeah, my parents are okay, thank you for asking.”

“So, what’s wrong, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Um... well,” Sarah hesitated as she looked around and over her shoulders before continuing. “What you about to do?”

“Good question,” Raheem sighed. “Today has been the Friday from Hell!”

“Oh, you too, huh?” Sarah sniffed and wiped her nose. “I need to fix my face and my hair if I’m gonna keep sitting here talking to you. You wanna get in?”

“Say less,” Raheem immediately replied, walked around the car and entered the passenger’s side. He opened the passenger’s side door, placed his duffle bag on the floor, sat down and closed the door. Sarah, who was fixing her hair while looking in the visor mirror, paused and looked down at Raheem’s duffle bag.

“I thought you were a regular, working brother,” Sarah started. “You out here making moves in these streets now, Heem?”

“Um, well, I guess you could say that,” Raheem stuttered. “I’m about to figure out where I’m about to stay. Me and my wife and parents just got into it real crazy, so I left. I’m making moves ‘cause I gotta move out the

crib! Ha-ha!”

“You’re silly,” Sarah giggled as she rubbed hand sanitizer between her palms and fingers after blowing her nose one final time. “That’s messed up. I’m sorry. At least you can joke about it though. Where’s Kim and the baby?”

“Pshhh,” Raheem sighed. “I think it’s a wrap for me and Kim! I gotta figure out where I’m a live and then figure out getting my daughter... but I think my marriage is over.”

“Oh no! I’m so sorry,” Sarah frowned, covering her mouth in shock. She rubbed Raheem’s shoulder compassionately. “Are you okay?”

“Not really, but it is what it is at this point,” Raheem coolly replied. “Me and Kim have been having issues since before we moved over here. It’s just gotten worse since we’ve been living here. Her and my parents are always ganging up on me. They won’t let me live! But never mind all that. What’s going on with you?”

“Boy,” Sarah shrieked. “So, you know how I was in the store earlier buying shit for my nigga? He was busy handling shit so he called and asked me to pick up some liquor, wraps and cigarettes for him. He was supposed to be going to deejay and sell molly at some bachelor party in A.C. So, I get home from the store and he’s already home, taking a shower. I went on the laptop and I guess he forgot to log out of Facebook. This message came through on Facebook Messenger from some bitch. She was sending him hotel confirmation for the room they’re staying in this weekend! I start scrolling... come to find out this nigga been fucking with this bitch for like six months! I just moved in about a year ago! Two years of my life – wasted! I’m pushing thirty Raheem! I’m trying to settle down, you know?”

“Yeah, I feel you,” Raheem sympathized. “You’re tryna settle down and I’m getting unsettled! You’re still young and attractive and got a good personality. A nigga would be lucky to have you on his team!”

“Oh, stop it, Raheem!” Sarah blushed, grinning widely. “You’re gonna give me a big head!” Sarah was now convinced that Raheem was flirting with her. Her interest was piqued. She had been physically attracted to

him since she met him. Seeing that he seemed to be a responsible, consistent, working, young, married Black man attracted her to him as well. The fact that he honored his marriage to Kim and was never inappropriate when he and Sarah spoke was also very intriguing to her. Now Raheem was in her car, flirting with her after she had just discovered her boyfriend was cheating. It seemed like perfect timing, considering the circumstances. “Do you need a ride somewhere? You said you’re gonna stay in a hotel tonight? Which one?”

“I actually didn’t even get a chance to look yet,” Raheem replied. “I literally just came out the crib from the beef, went to the store and saw you. I’m about to search on my phone now.”

“Um... you wanna come over until you figure it out?” Sarah asked timidly.

“What about your dude? I’m not trying to be all up in another man’s crib...”

“That trifling-ass nigga is in A.C. with his other bitch,” Sarah snapped. “Or should I say his *new* bitch, ‘cause I’m done with him! My name is on the lease so it’s just as much my place as it is his! But all his shit will be in the hallway by the time he comes back from Atlantic City!”

“I mean, if you say so,” Raheem agreed. “I definitely want to chill with you, but I don’t need any more drama tonight if he comes back early.”

“Oh, trust me... neither do I,” Sarah insisted. “I got a bottle for myself when I was at the store earlier. Do you drink apple E&J?”

“You already know,” Raheem chuckled. “I got some tree with me. Do you blow?”

“Yeah, every now and then. Usually on special occasions.” Sarah smiled as she gazed into Raheem’s eyes. “I would like to smoke with you. I didn’t even know you smoked. Let me find out!”

“Yeah... I’m full of surprises,” Raheem said slyly as he placed his hand on Sarah’s thigh.

Sarah shifted her car into gear and made the short trip to her apartment complex a couple blocks away from the intersection of Long Lane

and Marshall Road. They walked up the steps and entered the apartment. Sarah turned on the living room light and hung her jacket in the closet.

“Make yourself comfortable,” Sarah warmly instructed. “You want me to put your stuff in the closet until you figure out what you’re doing?”

“Uh, yeah,” Raheem hesitated. “Let me get my tree and wraps out first though.” Raheem sat down on the sofa and placed his duffle bag in his lap. He looked to his right as he unzipped his bag and paused when he noticed a picture of Sarah and her boyfriend on the coffee table next to the sofa.

“Oh, sorry.” Sarah quickly rushed over and turned the picture face down. “I don’t want to see that shit either. Do you know him?”

“Naw, not really,” Raheem confessed. “I’ve seen him in traffic but I don’t really chill with niggas out here. I’m from out West. Since I’ve been living over here I just work, take care of my family and stay out the way.” Raheem quickly retrieved the marijuana and cigars from his duffle bag and handed the bag to Sarah.

“That’s good, though,” Sarah commended Raheem. “Yeah, I sensed that from the times we spoke since we first met. You seem like a good dude.”

“Thanks ma. I’m far from perfect, but I try.”

Raheem and Sarah sat on the sofa, smoked several blunts, drank shots of vodka and talked for over two hours. They had good chemistry and the conversation was natural and fluid. They quickly lost track of time. Sarah excused herself to use the restroom, so Raheem reached for his phone to search for hotel rooms for the night. His stomach growled and he realized he was hungry. He called out to Sarah when he heard her opening the bathroom door.

“Yo, Sarah! You hungry, ma? I’m starving and I was gonna order something.”

“Yeah, I can eat,” Sarah called back out from the rear of the apartment. “What you wanna order?”

“You ever eat from that curry spot on Marshall Road?”

“Yeah, that sounds good, thanks. What are you gonna order,” Sarah asked as she entered the living room and sat down on the sofa, close to Raheem, leaning on him slightly.

“Yeah, I’m not sure. I’m pulling up the menu on my phone right now. Do you know what you want?”

“I want some of this,” Sarah grinned slyly as she held up a bag containing a crystallized, powdery substance. “You ever try this before?”

“Naw,” Raheem replied honestly as he looked up from his phone and quickly examined the bag Sarah held in front of him. “That’s that molly shit your dude sells?”

“My *ex-dude*, but yeah,” Sarah rolled her eyes and smiled. “I have only done it about a dozen times, but it’s dope as fuck. You wanna try it?”

“Isn’t that the same shit that had niggas running around naked in the streets last summer?” Raheem asked warily. “I ain’t tryna go viral on the Gram or WorldStar, snapping out on molly! I already have enough problems!”

“Ha-ha! Boy, you’re crazy,” Sarah giggled. “That was some bullshit molly that had people acting like that. This nigga has the real thing. He sells it at the parties, weddings and clubs he deejays at – especially to the rich white people! That’s why he makes so much money with it. This ain’t no ghetto-ass, ratchet molly! I haven’t done it in almost six months, though. You should do it with me!” Sarah sat up on her knees, leaning into Raheem’s face with her hands clasped in anticipation.

“I don’t know, sexy,” Raheem was hesitant. “I’m not tryna get fucked up off that shit. I usually stick to my weed and liquor.”

“I understand, but this is quality shit,” Sarah reiterated. “I don’t put just anything in my body either! I promise you’ll be fine. “It’ll be fun!”

Sarah leaned in even closer, pursed her lips and quickly pecked Raheem on his lips. She stayed close and stared into his eyes as she rested the palms of her hands in his lap, inches from his manhood. He gazed back into Sarah’s eyes for a moment before replying.

“Alright ma. I’ll do it with you this *one time*,” Raheem agreed. “But how do you do that shit anyway? I’m not snorting that shit!”

“Aw, hell naw!” Sarah protested. “I’m not putting that shit my nose! I’m not a fiend, Raheem! I just swallow it when I do it.”

“Oh, so you swallow it, huh?” Raheem smiled devilishly.

“Boy, you’re so nasty! I’m talking about the molly,” Sarah laughed and gently pinched Raheem’s cheek as she clarified. “You gotta drink *a lot* of water when you are on this shit so you don’t get dehydrated, though. I actually do something called ‘parachuting’ it.”

“I ain’t even gonna hold you ma... that sounds kind of suspect to me!”

“Oh please, Raheem! Stop being so dramatic,” Sarah teased as she jumped up from the sofa and skipped to the rear of the apartment. “I’ll show you. I’ll be right back.”

Sarah scurried to the bathroom and came back carrying a fresh roll of toilet paper. She stopped in the kitchen on her way back into the living room and retrieved a bottle of water from the refrigerator for each of them. The attractive, young woman excitedly skipped back into the living room and plopped down on the sofa next to Raheem. After handing him a bottle of water, she picked up a DVD case, placed it in her lap and intently tore a single sheet of toilet paper from the roll. She then cautiously separated the ply of the toilet paper until she was holding a thin piece, half the thickness of the original square. Sarah meticulously tore the remaining sheet in half, length-wise. She smiled gleefully the entire time.

“I’m so excited,” Sarah continued, crossing her legs in her lap as she smiled up at Raheem. He was gazing up at her adoringly, with his arm resting across the top of the sofa behind her. “Are you ready?”

“Yeah, ma... I’m ready for whatever,” Raheem replied, looking at Sarah longingly. “What are we about to do?”

“We’re about to parachute this molly!”

Sarah carefully took the two small pieces of toilet paper and placed

them flat on the DVD case in her lap. She slowly poured a small amount of the crystalline drug onto the toilet paper and closed the bag containing the molly. Raheem watched intently as his beautiful hostess skillfully took each fragile piece of toilet paper along with the molly and twisted the toilet paper into two small balls with tails on top. They resembled two small tadpoles. Sarah handed one to her new romantic interest and held hers in the air next to Raheem. She picked up her water bottle with her other hand and held it in the air as well.

“Cheers,” Sarah sang as she and Raheem touched bottles and molly “parachutes” in the air before consuming them. Sarah then leaned over and passionately kissed Raheem while rubbing his leg. After approximately thirty seconds, she stopped abruptly and hopped up from the sofa. “I’m about to put on some music. I need to find the remote. You want me to make you a drink while I’m up?”

“Yeah, good looking out, sexy.” Raheem was having an extremely good time with Sarah so far. He was still distressed about what had transpired between him and his family earlier. If it was going to happen on any day, at least it happened at a time when Sarah was ready and willing to spend time with him to take her mind away from her own worries.

“What you wanna listen to?” Sarah asked as she located the remote control and turned on her smart television. She logged into her music streaming account and scrolled through the artists and albums. “Rap? R&B? Neo-Soul?”

“You got any Metallica?” Raheem asked, smiling at the attractive young woman. Sarah whipped her head around from looking at the screen. She paused and looked at Raheem skeptically. “Sike, naw! I’m just fucking with you! I wanted to see what you would say,” Raheem laughed.

“I was about to say... Let me find out you’re an Oreo!” Sarah laughed.

“Me? An Oreo? You’re the one who has me up here taking white people drugs,” Raheem teased. “Naw, but we can listen to whatever, ma. I’m just enjoying chilling with you.”

“Oh, so you got bars, huh, Raheem?” Sarah smiled. “You running game on me now? I never knew you were such a player!”

“Naw, I’m not a player,” Raheem objected. “I’m real loyal, actually. I’ve been noticing you since we met when I first moved out here. I just would never say anything because I’m married. But now, that’s a wrap and me and you happened to link up at the same time when you and your dude are going through something. I feel like the Universe made this happen.”

“Hmmm...” Sarah hesitated as she scrolled through the list in her music account, selected the Kendrick Lamar album entitled “Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City.” and pressed “play.” “I can see that,” she replied, nodding her head. “You want a chaser with this E&J?”

“Naw, I’m good thanks. I’ll take it straight.”

“Okay gangsta!” Sarah giggled as she handed the remote to Raheem and made her way to the kitchen. “I’m gonna grab us more water too. We gotta stay hydrated, especially since we’re about to drink more liquor. We should start rolling soon.”

“Oh, you want to smoke some more? I’ll roll up now.” Raheem walked to the closet and retrieved some more marijuana and another wrap from his duffle bag.

“Oh,” Sarah peeked her head from behind the refrigerator door and called back to Raheem. “We can smoke again if you want to, but when I said, ‘rolling,’ I was talking about the molly. That’s what they call it when you start to get high off it.”

“Ha-ha! Oh, okay! What else you need to school me on?”

“Oh... I’m not sure.” Sarah shrugged as she strutted back into the living room with two bottles of water in each hand. She switched her hips dramatically as she approached Raheem and bent over placing her cleavage within inches of his mouth. As he exhaled, she felt his warm breath on the exposed part of her breast and she gently placed the four cold water bottles in his lap. “I might have to tell you about how good it is to come while you’re rolling,” Sarah said while licking her lips before turning around and walking back into the kitchen.

“Shit! You can *show* me better than you can tell me,” Raheem replied matter-of-factly as he felt blood rush to his manhood. He watched Sarah closely as she glided back into the living room carrying two glasses of liquor and handed him one. “Thanks ma.” Raheem took a gulp of his glass of liquor and quickly swallowed it before leaning over to tongue kiss Sarah.

“Ooh boy,” Sarah exhaled deeply after they had kissed passionately and groped each other again for several minutes. “You’re welcome! You got me dripping down there. Thank you for that!”

“You ain’t seen nothing yet,” Raheem stated confidently as he leaned back in for another kiss.

“Oh, so you bragging now, huh?” Sarah smiled as she gently grabbed Raheem’s chin hairs between her thumb and forefinger and gave him several long pecks on his lips. “Slow down soldier! Let’s not rush. I want to wait until we’re feeling the molly. Are you feeling it already?”

“Naw, I don’t think so,” Raheem confessed. “But I’m definitely feeling you! What is this molly high supposed to feel like?”

“Like ecstasy – *literally*,” Sarah exclaimed. “You’ll know when it hits you. You’ll just feel so happy and all the positive feelings and good sensations are magnified like a thousand percent! It’s basically the same drug as E-pills but it’s the main ingredient in its purest form so it’s even better. Let me look at your eyes.”

“Oh, for real?” Raheem nodded his head as Sarah directed his chin so she could look into his eyes. “That sounds decent. What you looking all up in my eyes for? They’re just regular, brown eyes!”

“Boy, hush,” Sarah playfully scolded Raheem. “I’m looking to see if your pupils are dilated yet or not. They don’t look like it though.”

“What are you, a doctor now?”

“Ooh, you irking! No, cornball! When the molly starts hitting you, your pupils will start dilating. That’s one reason why people wear sunglasses in the club and at night, ‘cause they’re rolling off that ‘E’ or molly. Look at my eyes. Are my pupils dilated? I think I’m starting to feel it a little bit already.”

“Maybe a little. I can’t really tell to be honest,” Raheem confessed as he examined Sarah’s pupils to the best of his ability.

“Aye! This is my shit!” Sarah jumped up, grabbed the remote and turned the volume all the way up when the song entitled “Backseat Freestyle” from the Kendrick Lamar album started to play. “All my life I want money and power...” Sarah sung along as she snapped her fingers, danced and gyrated her hips while standing directly in front of Raheem, who was still seated on the couch. He watched her dance; her waist-length braids flowing back and forth as she bobbed her head to the beat and shook her behind mere inches from his face. His passion grew stronger by the second. He used all the restraint he could muster to refrain from pulling her onto his lap. She had already told him she wanted to wait until they were both feeling the effects of the party drug. Just then, Sarah snapped her head around and took a break from singing. “You’re not feeling it yet? I’m feeling it!”

“Come here, yo.” Raheem took Sarah’s question as an indication that she was ready to be intimate. He grabbed her hips and gently pulled her back until she was sitting on his lap, still facing away from him. He kissed and licked the side and back of her neck as she gyrated her hips, grinding her behind against his pelvis. Raheem slowly placed his left hand up the inside of the front of Sarah’s shirt while simultaneously placing his right hand down the front of her leggings. Sarah moaned as Raheem caressed her nipple, gently rubbed her clitoris and sucked on her neck. As time passed and their passion escalated, she grinded her rear end against his pelvis harder and faster as her vaginal juices began to flow more abundantly. Sarah grabbed Raheem’s hand and pushed his forefinger and his middle finger directly into her soaking wet sexual organ. She let out an intense, primal moan. The young woman’s body jerked as her vagina exploded and overflowed with sexual fluid. She grabbed Raheem’s hand and held it still as she shivered sporadically for another minute. Sarah then lifted Raheem’s hand as she stood up, turned around and sat back down on his lap, straddling him. She looked into his eyes seductively, slowly placed his fingers in her mouth and began sucking on them as she caressed his private area with her other hand. The beautiful temptress slowly removed Raheem’s fingers from her mouth and slid down to her knees, simultaneously pulling Raheem’s pants down and putting his member in her mouth. She used just the appropriate amount of

saliva to lubricate Raheem. He watched in sheer pleasure as the beautiful young woman he had been secretly admiring for almost a year pleased him with her warm, wet mouth. Raheem moaned deeply as her head bobbed up and down until he erupted.

Sarah looked up at Raheem with one hand covering her mouth and the other hand signaling a “thumbs up” once Raheem’s body relaxed and his legs had completely stopped shaking. She quickly got up and ran to the bathroom. A few minutes later, she reentered the living room with a wet rag and sat next to Raheem.

“Sorry it took so long. I had to brush my teeth real quick,” Sarah apologized as she gently wiped the remainder of the bodily fluids from Raheem’s crotch.

“Shit... you ain’t got nothing to apologize for!”

“It’s been a minute, huh?” Sarah asked. “It seemed like your body had a lot it needed to let out!”

“Yeah,” Raheem acknowledged. “I told you me and Kim been going through it.”

“Wow,” Sarah sighed as she looked up at him, her head laying on his chest. “So, you really never cheated on your wife?”

“Well... never before tonight.” Raheem sensed Sarah grow tense when the words left his mouth. “Look, it is what it is. I told you I don’t get down like that, but me and her are over. You don’t even have to worry about that right now.”

“Yeah, Heem,” Sarah replied as cheerfully as she could. “You say that now. In the morning you’ll be probably go right back home to her.”

“Naw, I doubt it. But why you focusing on that bullshit anyway? You’re gonna blow your own high! You wanna do another hit of that molly?”

“Damn, boy,” Sarah exclaimed. “You hooked already? I’m still just starting to really get on.”

“Actually, naw,” Raheem replied coolly. “I might be hooked on you already after that brain you just gave me, but I’m really not feeling the molly

like that yet, to be honest.”

“What? Really? But, wait... we were supposed to wait until we were *both* rolling,” Sarah whined.

“It’s all good, ma. I was feeling it a little bit by the time you started going down,” Raheem confessed. “It was the best nut I ever had from getting head. But you said I would know when I’m really ‘rolling’ and I feel like it hasn’t fully kicked in yet.”

“You really wanna do another hit? For real? I think I’m cool for now. I’m still on my way up. I can make you another parachute if you want me to. We should drink some more water first though.”

“Naw, it’s cool. You don’t have to make me another parachute. I got something else in mind.” Raheem quickly chugged his entire bottle of water and waited for Sarah to finish drinking hers. “You good now, sexy?”

“Yeah, I’m good now,” Sarah smiled as she held her chest and took a deep breath upon drinking half of her water bottle. “So... what do you have in mind with the molly?”

“Let me see it real quick.”

Sarah handed Raheem the bag containing the drug. He took it and leaned into her, backing her down onto the sofa as they entangled tongues and he gripped her exposed breast with his free hand. Raheem pulled away and began licking Sarah’s neck, down to her chest. He worked his way down, caressing her flat stomach with his tongue and slowly pulled her leggings down with his free hand as he kissed around her navel, then the top of her pelvis. He skipped over her private parts, licking her inner thighs as he pulled her leggings down to her feet. Sarah bent one knee at a time to make it easier for Raheem to remove her pants as she shivered in anticipation. Raheem then worked his way back up Sarah’s firm, but shapely legs with his tongue. As his face neared her private parts once again, he took the bag of molly and opened it ever so slightly as he kissed her southernmost lips. Sarah looked down as she heard the plastic.

“What you doing, daddy?” she moaned.

“Don’t worry about it. I’m doing some more molly.”

Raheem sprinkled some of the drug on Sarah's lower pelvis and spread it into an outline around her vagina. He then rubbed it into her vaginal lips with his finger and licked and sucked on her as he simultaneously stimulated her with his fingers. Sarah once again began to move her waist around wildly as she moaned louder and louder. Her eyes rolled back into her head and she arched her back as Raheem devoured her with his mouth. Raheem penetrated Sarah with one hand and reached upward, lightly gripping her neck with his other hand. The pleasure was too much for Sarah to contain. She let out a moan so loud but simultaneously weak that it sounded like she was about to cry. She arched her back sharply, causing Raheem's face to sink deeper into her pelvic area. Sarah grabbed the back of Raheem's head and held it in between her legs as she shook and quivered violently and moaned until her voice cracked and her moans were so faint they became almost inaudible.

"Fuck me Heem!" Sarah suddenly groaned.

Sarah pulled Raheem's head from her crotch and gently, but firmly pulled his face up towards hers. Raheem complied, met Sarah face-to-face and began sucking on her luscious lips as she pulled his mouth to hers. Raheem took his boxers off with rushed assistance from his new lover. He paused momentarily and thought about how it was wrong for him to be with Sarah. Raheem quickly imagined how sex might have been with Kim if they had done molly together for the first time. Maybe it would have rekindled their sex life and perhaps helped preserve their marriage. Oh well, he would never know. Kim had made her decision about their marriage. She had sided with his parents against him and sealed his fate, making it impossible for them to keep their young family united. For now, Raheem decided he was going to make the most of his opportunity with Sarah.

Raheem pushed all thoughts of his wife, his parents and even his daughter out of his mind for the time being. He immediately pushed every inch of his manhood into Sarah's warm, soft, soaking wet vagina. He simultaneously felt a blast of energy and a warm, tingling feeling surging throughout his body. It was unlike any other feeling he had before, even from the best sexual encounters he had in the past. He felt as if he was jumping out of his skin, but in a delightful way. It was as if every atom and molecule in

Raheem's body was dancing and vibrating in sync with every molecule in Sarah's body. It was as if he could smell, taste and feel her sexual energy with his entire being. He felt as if their bodies, genitals and all, had merged to form the perfect hybrid organism built strictly for sexual pleasure.

Both bodies pulsed and generated heat as the young man lay on top of the young woman pumping his waist back and forth as he gripped her bare buttocks while she grinded against him in perfect harmony with his rhythm. Raheem opened his eyes for a moment and looked down at Sarah, who was moaning loudly, her eyes rapidly blinking as they rolled back into her head while she bit her lip. She was lost in the feeling. Raheem was turned on even more by the sights and sounds of his new sexual partner. As he pumped his pelvis into hers, Raheem felt his manhood swell more than he ever had in his entire repertoire of sexual encounters. Sarah's moans grew more sensual as her lower regions spilled natural lubricant all over Raheem's unprotected manhood and onto her sofa. Raheem felt his heart race and his skin heat up as he began to reach his climax along with Sarah. He closed his eyes and saw darkness scattered with flashes of lights that were only visible behind his closed eyelids. He was aware of nothing but the way his skin felt against Sarah's and the noises she made as he repeatedly penetrated her while she sucked and bit his neck and chest and dug her nails into his back. They both sweated, panted and groaned; bodies quivering against each other as their mutual climax seemed to last for hours. They exploded simultaneously and Raheem held himself up on his elbows as Sarah held his waist, holding him inside of her as she panted and kissed his neck. The pair had reached their intended destination – pure ecstasy. They were officially rolling.

Chapter 4

“Damn, Heem,” Sarah panted as she smiled from ear to ear, “You really put your thing down!”

“Oh, you liked that, huh?” Raheem replied smugly as he looked into Sarah’s eyes. He was still laying on top of her, still inside of her. “I already told you I was *that nigga!*”

“I’ll give you that,” Sarah conceded as she rubbed Raheem’s back and kissed his neck and chest. “That was literally *the best* sex I’ve ever had – even on molly!”

“Aw shit... now you’re just tryna gas my head up!”

“No, real shit Raheem,” Sarah reiterated. “That was *so* good. I’m so wet, it’s ridiculous! You feel that?”

“That’s what’s up! I’m glad I wasn’t a waste of your time,” Raheem slyly replied. “That ain’t all you down there, though. Speaking of which... I’m trying to figure out how I’m gonna get up without making too much of a mess.”

“Hold up,” Sarah hesitated. “You didn’t strap up?”

“Um... naw,” Raheem confessed. “I mean, I was kind of caught up. Between the molly, drinking, smoking and your fine ass twerking all up on me! I’m just a man, baby!”

“Don’t start trying to sweet-talk me to get yourself out of trouble,” Sarah laughed. “It was our first time together so I just really wish you would’ve worn a condom.”

“Yeah, I feel you. But let’s be real... I’ve been married almost three years. When is the last time you think I used, or even bought condoms?”

“Ugh! Don’t remind me,” Sarah sighed. “I guess you’re right though. I’m so used to these trifling-ass niggas, like my ex. I assume every nigga is out here sexing multiple women all the time, whether they’re married or not! I guess I’ll just have to get the Plan B in the morning.”

“Yeah, I’ll pay for half of it,” Raheem volunteered. “But after what you just said, I was just thinking. You said your dude has been cheating on you, right?”

“You mean my *ex*-dude?” Sarah rolled her eyes. “What time is it?” Sarah squinted and glanced over at the cable box. “One-thirty? Yeah... that nigga is probably in A.C. getting head in the DJ booth from the bitch right now!”

“Were y’all using protection, though?”

“Not since we moved in together.” Sarah paused and then placed her face in her hands as she lay her head back on the sofa’s armrest. She was still laying on her back and Raheem was still on top of her, supporting himself on his elbows. “Aw shit! *This nigga* probably been dingy-dicking me this whole time after being out fucking his side-hoe! I’m gonna be sick...”

“I’m sure you’re okay ma,” Raheem kissed Sarah on her forehead. He was trying to comfort and reassure her, but he was also attempting to do the same for himself. He imagined that would be the worst possible outcome – for him to catch a sexually transmitted disease at twenty-five years old after having sex with somebody other than Kim for the first time in years. “I’m about to get up though, sexy.”

“Mmm-Hmmmm,” Sarah rolled her eyes as Raheem slowly backed up while cupping his hand under his crotch and standing up from the sofa. “We were chilling all comfortable all this time. Now you all in a rush to get up off me? That was perfect timing, huh?”

“It ain’t even like that, baby,” Raheem protested. “I gotta pee. I’ll be right back.”

“Oh alright. Can you bring me a towel back please? They’re in the bathroom closet.”

“I got you ma,” Raheem quickly made several long strides to the bathroom, his hand still cupped below his manhood in an attempt to prevent leaking any residual emissions onto the apartment floor. He entered the bathroom, closed the door behind him and turned the hot water faucet on in the sink. He then pulled back the shower curtain, retrieved the bar of soap

and began lathering it between his hands under the hot, running water before proceeding to wash his face and genitals in the sink. Upon rinsing, washing his hands and returning the soap to the shower; Raheem grabbed a towel for himself from the narrow linen closet inside the bathroom. After drying his lower body, he paused and looked at himself in the mirror. He was irritated with himself.

“Fuck is wrong with you, nigga? What are you doing?” Raheem cursed at his reflection. “Didn’t Snoop say, ‘ain’t no pussy good enough to burnt while I’m up in it?’ You better hope you didn’t catch nothing from this jaww! Oh well... it is what it is at this point! She *is* bad as shit!” Raheem shrugged at his reflection before searching under the sink to see if there was any mouthwash in the bathroom. Upon locating it, he poured some directly into his mouth without touching his lips to the container, swished and gargled vigorously for a while, then spit into the sink. He leaned in close to the mirror and examined his eyes. His pupils were dramatically dilated. They had grown to resemble large black saucers. It was as if Raheem’s eyeballs had been replaced with two solar eclipses. He laughed out loud at his own reflection before grabbing a towel for Sarah and exiting the bathroom.

“Damn, boy,” Sarah exclaimed, wide-eyed as Raheem handed her the towel. “Boing! Boing!” She simultaneously laughed and licked her lips as she gently tapped his manhood downward twice, making it bounce like a diving board. “You’re still ready to go, huh?”

“You already know! I ain’t even gonna hold you... that molly is the truth! You ready to get it in again?”

“Yeah, I definitely want to have sex again, but give me a minute,” Sarah replied as she finished using the towel to wipe her private parts dry. “I’m still having aftershocks down here!”

“She wasn’t ready!” Raheem joked, impersonating a popular routine from Philadelphia comedian, Kevin Hart. They both laughed.

“See, now you’re feeling yourself,” Sarah joked back, giggling. “It’s all good though! You should be!”

“Why, thank you! Let me know when you’re ready to go again.”

“Okay, I will. I’m gonna go wash up real quick. I didn’t even finish my drink. I should be ready by the time I finish this E&J!” Sarah scurried to the bathroom.

The Kendrick Lamar album finished playing as Raheem put his boxers back on before sitting back down on the sofa. He crushed up some more marijuana and rolled another blunt. Before lighting it, he grabbed the remote and scrolled through the list of music until he found an album he hadn’t listened to in a while. He selected the Young Jeezy album entitled “TM:103” and pressed the “play” button on the remote. The young man lit the marijuana-filled cigar, inhaled deeply and looked around the room as he exhaled the weed smoke. It was a very nice apartment. He could tell Sarah had decorated it, but it wasn’t too feminine. He could picture himself spending a lot of time in the apartment if Sarah was really done with her boyfriend and planned on kicking him out like she claimed.

“We shall see. You know how these women be lying,” Raheem said out loud to no one in particular as he took another drag of the blunt.

“Who you talking to?” Raheem was so deep in thought, so high from the synergy of liquor, marijuana, molly and sexual energy that he had not noticed Sarah reenter the room. “I’m gonna grab us some more water. You want me to make you another drink?”

“Yeah. Good looking ma,” Raheem replied, snapping out of his trance. “I see you’re really on point with drinking all this water!”

“Yeah, well, like I said; it’s really important to stay hydrated when you’re on this shit,” Sarah called out as she diverted her path to the kitchen and retrieved two more bottles of water and the entire bottle of brown liquor. “People really get dehydrated and pass out from this shit if they’re not careful.”

“Oh yeah?”

“I wouldn’t lie to you just to make you drink up all my water,” Sarah laughed as she handed Raheem the bottled water. She picked up Raheem’s empty cup from the coffee table and poured more liquor into it. “So, what were you talking about when I walked in the room? You seemed

like you were saying some heavy shit!”

“Oh, nothing,” Raheem shrugged. “I was just thinking out loud.”

“Oh no! Please don’t tell me you’re gonna start acting crazy as soon as you finish fucking me good enough to make me fall in love! I *knew* it was too good to be true! I knew there *had* to be something wrong with you!”

“That isn’t even funny,” Raheem grimaced, trying to laugh at Sarah’s joke. “Naw, I’m no crazier than the average Black man living in America!”

“Oh, okay... If you say so! You did tell me you’re ‘full of surprises.’ Let me find out! Six months from now you’re gonna be like ‘surprise! I’m shot out!’ Ha-ha!”

“Yeah, whatever,” Raheem chuckled. “I’m worried about *you* being crazy! It’s a scientific fact that *all* the best-looking women are totally throwed off!” He laughed and took a sip of his drink.

“Bye boy! Whatever!” Sarah leaned over to lay on Raheem’s lap as they drank and he smoked. “I do really like you though.”

“I really like you too, Sarah.” Raheem looked down at the beautiful, young woman gazing up at him. He admired her flawless, chocolate-colored skin and full, soft lips. Her large, dark brown eyes were framed by unusually long eyelashes. “Are those fake eyelashes?”

“Boy, bye! Are those fake muscles?”

“Do they feel fake?”

“Do my eyelashes look fake?” Sarah snapped back as she sat up and stared at Raheem, wearing a half-perturbed smile. “Don’t come for me Raheem!”

“Damn, sexy! Chill,” Raheem laughed as he put his hand up defensively. “I’m just saying... you got really, nice, long eyelashes and most of the females I know with eyelashes that long wear fake ones.”

“So now you’re comparing me to ‘most females?’”

“Aw shit... here we go,” Raheem exhaled. “It was supposed to be a

compliment! You sure you're not the crazy one?"

"My bad, you caught me slipping into crazy-chick mode! You can't give me amazing sex the first time and expect me not to act a little crazy!" They both laughed.

"It's all good." Raheem paused before continuing. "You said 'six months from now' though. You think you're still gonna wanna mess with me six months from now?"

"I mean... I dunno," Sarah stuttered. "I was just saying... We'll see though. I do really like you and you always seemed nice. I love me a fine, strong, hard-working, Black man. But you are married with a baby. I guess we gotta wait and see what happens."

"Yeah, that makes sense."

"Is this that old Jeezy jawn?" Sarah abruptly changed the subject. "I haven't listened to this in a while."

"Yeah, me neither. That's why I played it when I saw it in the list." Raheem took another sip from his cup and a long drag of the marijuana before offering it to Sarah.

"I'm high as shit," Sarah declined, raising her hand in objection. "I'ma just drink this E&J and enjoy this molly-high until I'm ready to ride you!"

"Sounds like a plan." Raheem winked at his female companion and rubbed her thigh and behind as she lay on him. He couldn't help but feel like the events of the day had occurred when and how they had for a reason. He felt almost as if it was predestined. He had declined moving in with his parents on several occasions before Kim had finally talked him into it. Before moving there, he had never spent much time in Upper Darby other than occasional shopping or going to the movie theatre on 69th Street. Things had already been strained in his relationship with Kim, even before they found out she was pregnant. He hoped agreeing to move in with his parents would alleviate financial stress and make it easier for he and his wife to get along, but things had not worked out that way. After a relatively short time, things had actually grown worse between the young, married couple. Approximately

a month after moving, Sarah's mother introduced her to Raheem and his wife when they were all outside while Sarah was visiting. Who would have predicted less than a year later he would get kicked out of his parents' house, he and Kim would be separated and he would be in Sarah's apartment drinking, smoking, doing molly, having sex and vibing with arguably the coolest, most attractive woman he had been intimate with in his adult life? Despite his anguish over the rift in his family, Raheem could not help but feel like the whole situation was meant to be. "So, what do you plan on doing when your dude gets home?"

"I really don't want to think about it right now," Sarah confessed. "I think I'm gonna wake up early and put his stuff in the hallway. I gotta go to the hardware store and get new locks and figure out how to change them. I know the landlord won't do it without that cheating-ass, no-good nigga's permission since his name is on the lease too."

"Oh shit," Raheem gasped. "You're not playing?"

"Not at all! Fuck that nigga! He did the wrong bitch dirty!"

"I feel you," Raheem agreed. "His loss, my gain though! Don't worry, I'll help you change the locks if you want me to. I just don't want you to have any unnecessary drama when this nigga comes home to see his shit outside and his key doesn't work!"

"If he was that worried about it he would have taken his shit before he left for A.C. to go be with that bitch!"

"Facts!" Raheem concurred.

"That's actually the part that pisses me off," Sarah explained. "I mean, getting cheated on hurts like a bitch. But on top of that, the nigga is really just gonna leave and do whatever anyway? I understand he has to make money deejaying, but goddamn! Like, this nigga really just said, 'fuck the fact that I just hurt the only girl who is down for me and helps me with my daughter every other weekend, fuck the fact that I just got caught cheating red-handed, fuck this argument!' This nigga really left like he was gonna come back like everything is cool. I mean... what do I look like? He's got the wrong bitch!"

“Yeah, that’s drawing...”

“I’m not usually a vindictive bitch, but he got me wanting to...”
Sarah stopped herself in mid-sentence.

“He got you wanting to do what?” Raheem inquired as he stamped the marijuana roach in the ash tray, his curiosity piqued.

“I mean,” Sarah hesitated before continuing. “I’m talking all this gangster shit about putting his stuff out and changing the locks but I know it’s not going to be so simple. He’s not just going to let it rock if I do that, you know?”

“Yeah, I feel you,” Raheem nodded. “I would be pissed if that happened to me, but I don’t really know anything about your dude, so I can’t really guess how he would react. What do you think will happen?”

“Well, he’s a street-nigga, but he’s a smart dude,” Sarah explained. “I know he’s gonna get real mad and probably want to kick the door down. I mean, I’m not trying to make him seem like he’s abusive because he’s never even threatened to put his hands on me. I’m just saying...”

“What are you saying, ma?”

“I can show you better than I can tell you...” Sara jumped up from the sofa, walked over to the living room closet and opened the door. She stretched on the tips of her toes and reached up to retrieve a sneaker box from the shelf above the hangers. She carefully walked over to the sofa, the box secured between her hands and slowly sat down next to Raheem before opening the box.

“Oh shit!” Raheem was both surprised and impressed by the large, shiny forty-five caliber handgun. He also noticed a zipper-bag half-full of what appeared to be more molly. “I didn’t know your dude was holding like that!”

“That ain’t the half,” Sarah vented. “He has two more guns he keeps on him – another big one like this he keeps in his glove compartment of his truck and a small one he keeps in a holster on his ankle!”

“Oh okay! I see that nigga ain’t playing out here in these streets!”

“Naw, not at all,” Sarah shook her head. “He’s kind of a pretty-boy and real laid-back. Most people know him as a DJ and that he gets at a dollar so they think it’s sweet because he’s so cool and doesn’t walk around trying to act tough. Even the niggas who know he hustles don’t give him the same respect because he sells a ‘rich, white-people drug!’ People try him sometimes. He tries to stay away from beef and drama, but he has a temper and will get it popping if he feels he needs to. I’ve seen it. I just don’t know what he might do if he comes home to all his stuff outside and the locks changed. He’s smart, so he might just try to handle it through the courts and sue me or something. But then again, we were already beefing earlier so he might snap out and do something reckless. I’m not sure and I really don’t want to risk bringing the worst out of him.”

“Damn, ma. That’s wild. So, what you think you’re gonna do?”

“Well, I was thinking,” Sarah started. “I was thinking I could pack my stuff and move back in with my parents until I find a new place. But before I leave I want to make him pay. I want to take some of his shit and sell it to the pawn shop or whatever. You know, his jewelry, electronics – shit that would hurt his pockets since that’s all he seems to care about.” Sarah frowned.

“Yeah, but that nigga will wile out when he comes back and sees you gone and all his shit is missing. He’ll probably come to your parents’ crib on some rowdy shit, looking for you.”

“Naw, he’s smarter than that,” Sarah objected. “If I’m not here he’ll have time to figure out how to handle it to try to get his money back. He’ll probably sue me for the value of the shit, but I’m not worried about it. We live together, both our names are on the lease and he won’t be able to prove he bought the shit.”

“Wow, shorty,” Raheem exclaimed. “Remind me to make sure I *never* hurt your feelings! You came up with that scheme with a quickness!”

“Ha-ha…” Sarah laughed mockingly. “First of all, I didn’t come up with the plan that fast. I was actually thinking about it before you walked up on me in the parking lot! Second of all; why do you need extra motivation *not* to hurt me, Raheem?”

“Aw shit, I put my foot in my mouth again! Naw, sexy,” Raheem protested as he removed the box containing the gun and drugs from Sarah’s lap, placed it on the coffee table and leaned in, stroking her inner thigh. “I would *never* hurt you! Not unless I accidentally hurt you when I beat the pussy up!”

“Oh, yeah? All that talk,” Sarah snickered. “I don’t see you doing nothing though!”

“Say less.”

Raheem quickly lifted the petite but shapely young woman off the sofa and placed her in his lap until she was straddling him. He caressed her breasts with both hands as he passionately licked her neck. Sarah let out an erotic sigh and gently tilted her head into his face as his beard tickled her skin. The sensation of Raheem’s tongue against her neck stimulated her love below. Her nipples quickly hardened at the same time Raheem’s manhood rose to the occasion. They wasted no time as Sarah arched her back and Raheem released her breasts, placed both hands on the small of her back alongside her hips and firmly pulled her pelvis into his. Her juices flowed into his lap and she moaned when Raheem entered her. They gyrated in sync and gradually increased their pace until they were rapidly grinding against each other and beads of sweat formed on both their foreheads. Sarah threw her head back and growled passionately as Raheem gently bit her shoulder and rapidly slapped her rear-end. They continued to increase the pace until their body-heat, moans and various other elements of the sexual soundtrack consumed the living room. After what seemed like hours they both climaxed long and hard. Sarah collapsed, letting out one last provocative moan and laid her head on Raheem’s shoulder.

“It gets better every time,” Sarah smiled and kissed Raheem on his cheek as she grasped a section of his long beard from his chin and swirled it between her fingers. “I think I’m hooked!”

“I know *I* am,” Raheem sincerely agreed, trying to sound cool. He didn’t want to seem like he was too into Sarah during their first time hanging out on the same day they had both experienced relationship crises. “I’m really feeling you Sarah.”

“Awwww... I’m really feeling you too, love,” Sarah wrapped her arms around the back of Raheem’s neck and kissed him on his lips.

“Let me know when you’re ready to go again!”

“Damn baby! I guess you really *are* hooked,” Sarah exclaimed as she turned around to check the time on the cable box. “It’s almost three in the morning, baby! You’re not tired?”

“Naw, not really,” Raheem informed her matter-of-factly.

“I’m starting to get sleepy,” Sarah confessed as she leaned back, stretched her arms wide and then rubbed her eyes with both hands. “I think you sexed me so good that all the molly dripped out of me! You’re still feeling it?”

“Naw, not really. A little bit. I just don’t really need much sleep anyway. Besides, it’s been a long time since I had sex before tonight. You’re so sexy and I’ve been wanting you for so long. I guess I can’t get enough of you!” Raheem smiled as he smacked Sarah’s bare bottom again. “Why don’t you take some more molly?”

“Oh... naw, I’m good,” Sarah declined. “I need to get some rest. It’s been a long day and I need to get up early and figure out exactly what I’m doing before he starts making his way back from A.C. I’m trying to be long gone before he gets here.”

“I feel you.”

“I’ll be right back. I need to use the ladies’ room again. You want me to bring you a water on the way back?”

“Yes, please. Thanks ma.”

Raheem stared at Sarah’s naked body as she slowly got up from his lap and walked down the hallway towards the bathroom. As she disappeared behind the closed door, he thought to himself at how fortunate he was to go from arguing with his parents, separating from his wife and not knowing where he was going to stay that night to being alone with Sarah and having earth-shattering, almost tantric sex with her multiple times a few short hours later. Based on their conversation Raheem was starting to feel like he may

have already found his replacement girl. He once again concluded that the Universe must have aligned events to occur the way they had.

“You’re always in deep thought.” Sarah interrupted Raheem from his contemplation as she handed him a bottle of water.

“Yeah, my fault sexy. I over-think shit sometimes.”

“So... what were you over-thinking about?” Sarah innocently inquired.

“I was just thinking of a way to help you with the situation with dude that may work out for both of us.”

“Oh yeah? You’re so sweet for trying to help me,” Sarah replied softly as she bent over and kissed Raheem on the side of his face. She took a sip of her water before continuing. “Can we talk about it after I sleep? I’m about to pass out all of a sudden. I think I’m crashing from that molly wearing off.”

“Yeah, of course. That’s cool. I’m trying to figure out what I’m about to do.”

“You can make yourself at home since you’re not ready to sleep. You have the remote. You have to change the input to ‘AV1’ if you want to watch cable. When you get tired you can come in the room and get in bed with me.”

“You want me to sleep in the bed with you? In *there*?” Raheem was shocked that Sarah invited him to sleep in the bed she shared with her “ex.”

“Yeah, why not?” Sarah shrugged. “Whichever one of us winds up moving out, we’re through! One thing is for sure – I’m not ever sleeping in that, or any other bed, with *that nigga* again. Don’t worry; I already changed the sheets after he left. Ain’t no telling who else that nigga had up in here!” Sarah shook her head and kissed Raheem on the lips once more before walking away. “Who knows... if we’re up early enough, maybe we can have morning sex!”

“That’s a bet!” Raheem heartily replied. Sarah turned and blew a kiss at him before closing the bedroom door behind her.

Raheem sat in silence for a moment, once again pondering the events of the day and evening. The Young Jeezy album had concluded but he was not in the mood to watch television. Raheem picked up the remote and scrolled through the list of available music. He stopped when he came to the Prodigy “H.N.I.C. 2” album – another solo project released by the front-man of the popular hip-hop duo, Mobb Deep. As the album began to play, Raheem rose from the sofa, walked to the kitchen and poured himself another glass of E&J.

He retrieved some more marijuana from his duffle bag and rolled up the last of his marijuana in his last cigar. As he sat, smoked, drank and zoned out to the music, the events of the day replayed over and over in Raheem’s consciousness. After roughly ten minutes his blunt was almost gone and so were the most potent effects of the molly. He felt himself coming down and his mood regressed to a more negative state. As he continued to dwell on the negative events of the day, he began to think if he should have handled the situation with his wife and parents differently. Raheem began to feel increasingly guilty about the role he played in escalating the situation. Even more damaging was how he was beginning to be consumed with guilt for having sex with Sarah. What if she was right? What if he and Kim eventually reconciled? He hadn’t even spoken to her since he left. As the thought crossed his mind, he picked his pants up from the floor, pulled out his phone and unlocked it. Raheem’s wife had not even called him or sent him a text message to check on him since he left!

“Fuck Kim!” Raheem huffed to himself. “She don’t give a fuck about me! That’s why I’m here in the first place! I don’t have shit to feel guilty about,” he tried to convince himself.

Raheem did, however, feel guilty. Not only that, but he thought about how much more difficult his life was going to become now that he had to find a new place to live, get a divorce and figure out how he was going to be able to spend time with his daughter now that he and Kim were no longer together as a couple. He became overwhelmed with emotion. He and Taj had just spoken of those types of situations – “baby-mama drama” – earlier in the day. Kim wasn’t his “baby-mama,” though. She was his *wife*. He never anticipated things turning out this way for their family. Raheem grew anxious

just thinking about it all. He did not like how he was feeling. He was growing rapidly depressed, which was the polar opposite of how he had been feeling a few short minutes before. Raheem had absolutely zero desire to continue to feel depressed and he wasn't in the least bit tired. He would have to stay awake and suffer if he wasn't able to find a way to get his mind off his family and marital issues. Sarah was sleeping, so he couldn't use sex with her as a distraction until she woke up.

Raheem glanced over at the shoebox containing the gun and molly, still sitting on the coffee table directly next to him. He glared at it for a few minutes, contemplating whether more molly was the answer to his current dilemma. It wasn't his molly, so he didn't want to steal it. He reasoned that Sarah likely would not mind if he had some more; especially since it was her boyfriend's and she planned on robbing him anyway.

Raheem decided to take another dose of molly in an attempt to quickly improve his mood. He reasoned he couldn't possibly be productive and come up with a feasible plan of action while he was feeling so down. Considering the circumstances, he was on a strict timeline to come up with a plan. He figured the chemical boost the molly would give his brain was exactly what he needed at the moment.

Raheem grabbed the roll of toilet paper Sarah had brought into the living room hours beforehand. He followed the same steps he had observed Sarah follow when she made their molly "parachutes" and made two for himself. He walked to the kitchen, grabbed two more bottles of water and consumed the first parachute, chasing it with an entire bottle of water. He then did the same with the second. He plopped back down onto the sofa and sipped his liquor. He laid his head against the back of the sofa, closed his eyes and listened to the Prodigy album as it delved into issues of political corruption, social programming and manipulation, science and environmental disaster; laced with his usual hardcore, violent narrative. After three more songs had played in full, Raheem felt a surge of adrenaline flow throughout his veins into his extremities – from the tips of his toes, to the tips of his fingertips, up to the top of his head and everything in between. He felt as if his skin was jumping. The vibrations throughout his frame were so strong he felt as if his teeth and hair follicles were trembling.

“There you go,” Raheem smiled to himself in satisfaction. He quickly jumped up from the sofa and began pacing back and forth in the living room as he nodded his head to the music and rapped along with the lyrics he had memorized. He murmured to himself out loud as he paced. He began to devise a plan on how to help Sarah out of her difficult predicament while simultaneously helping himself with his own.

“Yeah... that’ll work,” he assured himself out loud as he smiled hard, laughed and clapped his hands together as if he was sharing good news with a friend. “Yeah... that’s right! Everything is going to work out!”

Saturday...

September 12, 2015

Chapter 5

Sarah stirred in her bed as the sweet aroma of cinnamon infiltrated her nostrils, waking her from her slumber. Her eyes half-closed, she reached across her bed to retrieve her cellular phone from the night-stand, as was her daily custom upon waking up. She entered her security code into her phone, unlocking it to check the time and to see if she had received any text messages, phone calls or social media notifications.

“Figures this nigga didn’t even text me,” Sarah huffed under her breath. Her first instinct upon waking was to see if her boyfriend had tried to contact her. “Oh... it’s 7:11,” she said to herself, smiling when she noticed the time. “Maybe it’s a sign.” The beautiful, young woman rose from bed when she heard the noise of two metal surfaces colliding reverberate from the kitchen. She realized that Raheem must have been cooking breakfast. The magnetic perfume of sweet cinnamon emanating from the kitchen had resurrected her from her drug, alcohol and sex-induced coma. She inhaled through her nostrils deeply as she stretched from head-to-toe – her perfectly toned, brown body flexing in the rays of early morning sunlight peeking through the vertical blinds.

“Hey daddy,” Sarah wrapped her arms around Raheem’s waist as she approached him from behind, hugged him and rested her head between his shoulder blades. “Thanks for making breakfast! It smells good!”

“Hey sexy.” Raheem turned slightly, holding the handle of the skillet in his left hand and a spatula in his right. He kissed Sarah on her forehead before turning back around to attend to the stove. “Yeah, I’m just making a little something-something. French toast and scrambled eggs. I would have made meat but you don’t have any beef or even turkey.”

“Yeah sorry... when I do buy bacon, it’s usually pork! I didn’t know you could cook, though. I’m impressed!”

“I told you I’m full of surprises,” Raheem smirked. “But don’t be impressed until you taste it! You might not like it!”

“If it tastes as good as it smells, I know I’ll love it,” Sarah smiled.

“That’s the same way I felt about you last night,” Raheem replied coolly as he turned around to look at Sarah.

“You’re smooth as butter, baby!” Sarah smiled as she sat, facing Raheem, on the chair next to the small kitchen table. She crossed her bare legs. She was wearing only a bra and panties and Raheem gazed at her longingly for a moment before turning back to flip the French toast. “You didn’t come into the bed with me last night? Or was I sleeping so deeply that I didn’t even notice?”

“Naw, I didn’t come in there last night.” Raheem cracked six eggs into a bowl and rapidly whipped them with a fork.

“Why not? What happened? Did you pass out on the sofa?”

“Naw.” Raheem concisely replied as he mixed seasonings, two slices of cheese and a small amount of milk into the eggs and stirred the mixture.

“What’s wrong?” Sarah asked, concerned, as she stood up and approached Raheem. “You didn’t feel comfortable coming into the bedroom?”

“Oh, naw,” Raheem chuckled. “I’m good. I’m just focused on this cooking. But naw, I didn’t come in there because I never went to sleep and I didn’t want to disturb you.”

“What do you mean, you ‘never went to sleep?’” Sarah gasped.

“I mean, I haven’t slept yet,” Raheem shrugged. “I wasn’t tired.”

“That’s not good, Raheem,” Sarah shook her head in disappointment.

“It’s not even that deep. Remember I told you I don’t sleep much anyway. Especially when I’m stressing and going through shit.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Sarah sighed before looking back up at Raheem. She paused. “I guess it’s even harder to sleep when you do molly for the first time. You did a lot of it too! Are you still high? Let me see your eyes.”

“I’m cool Sarah.” Raheem side-stepped the young woman as she

tried to angle her body to look directly into his eyes to see if his pupils were still dilated. “I’m trying to make us breakfast and you’re gonna fuck around and make me burn these eggs!”

“Yeah, alright,” Sarah replied abruptly before turning around to walk back to her chair.

“I’m trying to hurry up and finish this so we can eat and get into that morning sex you promised me last night!” Raheem quickly turned around and smacked the left cheek of Sarah’s perfectly shaped behind. She skipped upon the impact, giggled and quickly sat down.

“You stay on ‘go’ huh, Raheem?” Sarah smiled seductively as she watched him resume cooking. “You’re like, too good to be true! You’re a sexy, hard-working Black man, the sex is amazing *and* you cook! What’s the catch? Oh yeah... you’re married!” Sarah’s smile quickly vanished as the words left her mouth.

“Come on Sarah,” Raheem sighed. “I already told you what’s up. That’s a wrap. You don’t have to worry about that. Anyway, the real ‘catch’ is that I’m crazy, remember? You said that last night!” Raheem forced a laugh, attempting to ease the tension.

“I’m serious Raheem,” Sarah whined. “I don’t want to get too attached to you just for you and your wife to get back together as soon as I catch feelings for you.”

“I keep trying to tell you not to worry about that. I’m not gonna play games with you and I’m not gonna hurt you. Besides, you’re acting like you don’t have a nigga with two straps on him about to come back here in a few hours! Let’s just enjoy our time together. We’ll eat this food and then I’m gonna bust that ass again! We’ll talk about the serious shit later.”

Raheem and Sarah engaged in casual conversation as they sat and ate the breakfast Raheem had prepared. Upon finishing, Sarah washed the dishes and cleaned the kitchen while Raheem took a shower. He felt so uncomfortable showering in another man’s home that he hurried and was finished in the bathroom before Sarah had completed cleaning the kitchen. He walked past Sarah and told her he would wait for her in the living room.

She commented on how quickly he had finished in the bathroom and told him she would join him momentarily.

Raheem glanced around the living room as he waited on the sofa. As his gaze drifted, the zipper-bag containing the euphoria-inducing molly drew his attention. He hesitated only momentarily before grabbing the bag with one hand and the toilet paper with the other. He quickly made two molly “parachutes” – one for himself and one for Sarah.

“Yo, sexy,” Raheem called out to Sarah. “Would you please bring a couple bottles of water with you when you finish?”

“Yes, love. Here I come now. I’m just washing my hands.”

Sarah entered the living room and approached the sofa holding a bottle of water in each hand. Raheem held up the toilet-paper wrapped molly and extended one of the parachutes to Sarah. Her face lit up in surprise and her mouth formed into a half-smile. Sarah leaned in closer and looked directly into Raheem’s eyes.

“You wanna do more molly, Heem? Are you already high?” Sarah asked in shock, giggling.

“Naw, I’m not still high,” Raheem lied. “But I’m trying to do more molly before we get it popping!”

“I don’t know,” Sarah hesitated. “I’m not trying to have either one of us getting addicted to this shit. It’s all good every now and then, but we already did a lot last night. Plus, that nigga is coming back and he’s already going to trip when he sees some is gone. He’s definitely about his money!”

“Fuck that nigga! I thought you said you were gonna take all his valuable shit anyway,” Raheem retorted. “Plus, we don’t know when we’re going to have to another chance to do molly again, so we might as well go out with a bang! You said he’s going to be back this afternoon, so it might help you be in a better mood and be more motivated to do what you have to do without getting too stressed.”

“Uh... Hmmm,” Sarah sighed as she eyed the parachute Raheem was holding near her face. She then shrugged her shoulders before exchanging one bottle of water for a molly parachute. “Fuck it... bottom’s

up!”

Raheem and Sarah both swallowed the drugs, guzzled their bottles of water and immediately began kissing and groping each other passionately. After several minutes Sarah stepped off the sofa, stooped to her knees and aggressively tugged Raheem’s sweatpants and boxer shorts down. Raheem firmly but gently placed the palm of one of his hands on the back of Sarah’s head as he placed the other hand down the front of her bra and caressed her breast. She moaned softly and Raheem let out a loud sigh as he rested the back of his head on the sofa. Suddenly Sarah stopped the act of fellatio, jumped to her feet and ran over to the living room window.

“Damn, ma,” Raheem gasped. “What the fuck is wrong? Why did you stop?”

“You hear that loud-ass music? That sounds like his truck,” Sarah explained as she peeked through the blinds and discreetly scanned the small parking lot.

“What time is it – eight-thirty?” Raheem responded. “Have you heard from him? I thought you said he wouldn’t be back until later.”

“Oh my god!” Sarah gasped, ignoring Raheem’s statement. “It *is* him! He’s here! What the fuck?”

“Stop playing and get your sexy ass back over here,” Raheem chuckled as he glanced over at Sarah. But as his eyes met hers, the terror he saw in her panicked expression made him realize she was not joking at all. He immediately rose to his feet and pulled up his pants. “He’s here for real? What is that nigga doing back so early?”

“I don’t know, but we don’t have time for this,” Sarah snapped, her voice trembling. “You gotta get out of here Raheem! I don’t know what he might do if he catches you here!”

“I ain’t scared of that nigga! I don’t run from niggas,” Raheem replied aggressively. “Plus, I gotta get all my shit out of here anyway.”

“Then I need you to get the rest of your shit and take it in the closet, like *now*! He just got out of his truck! He’s on his way up here,” Sarah gasped as she began to hyperventilate.

“I’m not hiding from your dude, Sarah,” Raheem refused.

“I don’t have time for this macho shit right now, Raheem! Please just do it for me until he goes in the back room or leaves. I don’t want any drama,” Sarah pleaded.

“Alright,” Raheem huffed as he begrudgingly gathered his belongings. “I’ll do it for you.”

Raheem closed himself inside the living room closet and shook his head in disappointment as he watched Sarah pace the living room frantically for a moment. She dropped to the sofa and played with her hair as she tried to calm herself down. Moments after Sarah sat down, the sound of keys in the doorknob evoked an increasing level of anxiety in the young woman. Her palms and armpits became saturated and beads of sweat formed on her forehead as she crossed her arms and tried to regain some level of composure. Sarah’s boyfriend – a tall, light-skinned man with an athletic build, opened the door and entered the apartment. He walked past the closet and stood in front of the sofa looking at Sarah, waiting for her to meet his gaze. She resisted and continued to stare at the floor, her arms crossed, resting under her bosom.

“So, you’re not even going to speak to your man when I walk into the crib after working all night?” her boyfriend asked slyly.

“Oh, please, Marcus,” Sarah snickered, still not making eye contact with the man. “Didn’t you mean to say, ‘fucking random whores all night?’”

“Why you always tripping?” Marcus smiled as he sat on the sofa next to Sarah, placing his arm around her. “You know I was spinning records, selling that work and getting that paper so I can take care of you!”

“First of all, Marcus,” Sarah objected, pointing her finger in the man’s face, “I don’t need you or anybody else to take care of me! Secondly, if you weren’t out fucking bitches why didn’t I hear from you all night? You didn’t feel the need to reach out to me all night after how things were when you left?”

Raheem rolled his eyes as he listened to the conversation from inside the living room closet. “She isn’t done with this nigga,” he thought as

he sat uncomfortably on the closet floor, hanging jackets brushing against his face.

“Look, baby,” Marcus began. “You already know I had to take that long-ass drive to A.C. and I had work in the truck. I was running late because of arguing with you, so I just needed to focus and get there without getting pulled over. I needed to calm down so I could concentrate on work. I figured you could use some time to cool off too. By the time I got there I had to set up and start working. It was lit in there too, so I was so busy between spinning records, selling molly and all that, I didn’t even take any videos to post on social media. When it was over, I had more moves to make with the molly. The sun was coming up by the time I was done and went to the diner to eat, so I didn’t want to call and wake you. I ate and came straight home.”

“You’re such a liar! I don’t believe any of that! I really just think you should leave.”

“Leave *where?*” Marcus chuckled. “I know you ain’t talking about *me* leaving *my* crib that *I* moved *you* into?”

“Here you go with that ‘my crib’ shit again,” Sarah sighed. “I knew I should have never gave up my apartment and moved in with you!”

“Honestly, I don’t even know why you’re acting like you really wanna break up,” Marcus replied coolly. “Why don’t you just do what you usually do and go stay at your parents’ crib for a couple nights until you love me again?”

“Wow,” Raheem thought to himself upon hearing Marcus’ comments. “He’s a vicious dude! That nigga is a straight asshole for real!”

“Shut up Marcus,” Sarah whimpered as she attempted to hold back her tears.

“You know you love me,” Marcus grinned devilishly. “Look... you can put on your usual little show to make yourself feel better. You know you’re stuck with me anyway, so when you snap out of your little mood and you’re ready to fuck and be friends again just let me know. Or if you’d rather move back out, start over again and find another apartment and another nigga, be my guest. But if you do move out, don’t come running back to me

when the next nigga break ups with you or whoops your ass when he finds out you have herpes! Alright?!”

“Shut up! I fucking hate you Marcus!” Sarah wailed as she burst into tears.

“Hey, don’t shoot the messenger,” Marcus laughed sadistically. “You know it’s the truth! Besides, you keep acting all shocked, but how many times have we gone through this since the doctor told you six months ago? You try to act all innocent, but how am I supposed to know I’m the one who burnt you and it wasn’t the other way around? I don’t know what you really do when I’m working or when you’re at the ‘happy hours’ for your job or when you stay at your ‘parents’ house’ days at a time when you’re mad at me for whatever random reason! You weren’t a virgin when we met, so stop trying to act like you’re some type of angel. You’re just an extra-pretty smut with a decent job who knows how to ride dick! You definitely need to work on giving head, though. I really don’t even know why I let you stay around so long. As a matter of fact, maybe you should move out after all...”

“Shut up! Just shut up! You’re so fucking evil,” Sarah cried, stuttering and hyperventilating. “I have done nothing but show you love and had your back since day one. You convinced me to move in with you, that you loved me and wanted to have a life together and then started treating me so dirty when I finally did! You’re a piece of shit! I hate you!”

Raheem’s head began to spin as he listened from inside the closet. His worst fear from the previous night had become a harsh reality. He had sex with a woman other than Kim for the first time in years and she was infected with a sexually transmitted disease. He would have to get tested. He hoped and silently prayed that he hadn’t been infected. He realized that the chances that he had avoided being infected were slim because of how much unprotected sex they had that night. Raheem cursed himself, Sarah, Marcus and even Kim and his parents under his breath. He blamed everybody involved for putting him in the position to be exposed to the incurable disease.

“Yeah, yeah... I love you too,” Marcus laughed maniacally as he stood up from the sofa and looked back at his hysterical girlfriend. “But I’m

about to take a shower and get some sleep. I gotta go back out tonight so I need some rest. But if you wanna wake me up to practice giving me head later, that would be love.”

“You’re such an arrogant dickhead! This conversation is not over Marcus! I’m not done with you!”

“Whatever, yo,” Marcus replied nonchalantly. “That’s funny you said the conversation isn’t over ‘cause I’m done talking about it. You can talk to yourself or do whatever you want. It doesn’t matter to me. I’m going to take a shower and a nap.”

“What did I do to deserve this shit?” Sarah moaned.

“For real, though... stop being dramatic! You’re going to upset the neighbors and I don’t need them calling the law,” Marcus said coldly as he turned around and looked at Sarah in disgust. He turned to walk to the bathroom before pausing. “Wait a minute. Why is my shoebox out with my burner and the work?”

“Oh... um,” Sarah stuttered.

“You were dipping in my work?” Marcus asked calmly but aggressively as he walked past Sarah and approached the coffee table. He picked up the zipper-bag containing the molly and eyed it for several seconds. He then noticed the roll of toilet paper on the table. “You turning into a junkie now, bitch? Where the fuck did all my work go? I’m missing at least an eighth out this jawn!”

“Wait... what? No way,” Sarah protested as she timidly looked up at the man.

“Don’t lie to me, you dumb bitch!” Marcus’ tone was calm, but his words were searing and his eyes lit up in a controlled rage. “This is what I do! You know I can eyeball this shit in the dark!”

“I did some, but not that much,” the scared young woman admitted.

“Not that much? I can’t tell! Look at this shit!” Marcus leaned over Sarah menacingly as he held the bag directly in front of her face.

“Oh shit,” Sarah gasped as her eyes widened in disbelief. “How

much did he do while I was asleep?” The words left Sarah’s mouth before she realized she had uttered them verbally instead of thinking them.

“What? What the fuck did you just say? Who the fuck is ‘he?’”

“Oh, no... I didn’t mean that,” Sarah replied frantically, her body trembling in fear.

“You had a nigga in my crib where I lay my head, around my guns, fucking with my work while I was gone? You stupid bitch! I swear to god I should kill your dumb-ass!”

“Marcus, it wasn’t even like that –”

“Shut the fuck up with the weak-ass lies,” Marcus roared as he smacked his girlfriend across her face for the first time in their two years of dating. “I should whoop your ass!”

Raheem flinched as he heard the sound of Marcus’s hand striking Sarah. He was filled with rage as he thought of that no-good man striking her angelic face. As he listened to Sarah sob while Marcus continued to scream at her, Raheem’s blood ran thick through his veins. He sensed the feeling and pictured his blood cells fighting to burst through his skin. His chest became heavy and his stomach flipped as he tried to control the compulsion to burst out of the closet and pounce on Marcus to protect Sarah.

“Stop bitching! You bought that! You know how much of my money you just fucked up?” Marcus continued to scream. “And with some random nigga too? You outta pocket shorty!”

“But Marcus, it wasn’t –”

Smack!

“I guess you didn’t learn the first time,” Marcus growled as he slapped Sarah across her face once more. “Stop fucking lying to me! Now tell me who the nigga is unless you want to take twice the ass-whooping for you *and* him!”

Raheem had heard enough. He immediately lunged from the closet and jumped onto an unsuspecting Marcus. Raheem grabbed the back of Marcus’ shirt and pulled him from his position standing over Sarah. Before

Marcus was aware of what was happening, he had been slammed onto his back in his own living room and was being pummeled in his face by a man he did not even know. Sarah screamed as Raheem viciously punished Marcus' face with both of his fists. He began to sweat as his body heat rose dramatically as if lava was flowing through his veins. He physically vented all his frustrations from the previous twenty-four hours as he savagely struck Marcus over and over. Raheem became so engrossed in the beating that he was unaware of his surroundings and did not hear Sarah repeatedly screaming for him to stop.

“Oh my god! That's enough Raheem! You're gonna kill him,” Sarah screamed as she placed the barrel of the gun that had been sitting in the shoe box on the coffee table to the back of Raheem's head. The feeling of cold, hard steel against his hair momentarily snapped Raheem out of his rage. He jerked his head around to look at Sarah. She was standing with her knees slightly bent, pointing the gun at Raheem. “Thank you for protecting me, but he's done. He's knocked out. He's not even moving Raheem!”

“You're gonna point at gun at *me*, though? You let this nigga smack the shit out of you and didn't do shit, but you're gonna point a gun at me for having your back?”

“Raheem... I'm sorry, I didn't know what to do,” Sarah sobbed. “I kept asking you to stop but it was like you didn't even hear me. It's like you blacked out. I just don't want you to kill him.”

“Fuck him,” Raheem said coldly as he released his grip on Marcus' shirt and slowly rose from his position kneeling over the unconscious, bloody man. “You actually still care about this dickhead after what he did to you?”

“I mean, no,” Sarah sniffled. “I just don't want you to go to jail for no good reason.”

“I ain't worried about that shit,” Raheem rebuffed. “Now are you gonna get that gun out of my face?”

“Oh yeah. I'm sorry.” Sarah stuttered as she backed away and placed the gun back onto the coffee table next to the sofa. “This is just too much for me. See... this is what I was talking about when I said I didn't want

drama. I don't know what to do."

"Well, you need to pack your shit so we can get the fuck up out of here," Raheem huffed in frustration as he plopped his body onto the sofa. "You know the neighbors heard that shit. They might fuck around and call the law. You better hurry up!"

"Well, I can't just leave him here all bloody and fucked up like this."

"For real Sarah? Are you serious? Niggas get trashed every day, B. He'll be alright! He's tough, right? Cam'ron voice!" Raheem chuckled.

"Oh my goodness Raheem," Sarah shook her head. "That's not even funny! You *are* crazy!"

"If you say so," Raheem glared at the woman as he felt the passion and infatuation he felt for her leave his soul more quickly than it had entered.

"I'm gonna go pack some shit real quick so we can figure out what we're doing." Sarah quickly left the living room and scurried to her bedroom. As Raheem waited, he lit a black and mild cigar and took a few swigs from the bottle of E&J. It had been sitting out all night and the sweet liquor was room temperature. The slight burn Raheem felt in his chest as he drank was exactly the sensation he was in need of. He looked down at Marcus's still body and sighed.

"Maybe this wasn't what the Universe had planned for me after all," he thought to himself. A few minutes later, Sarah reappeared with a medium-sized designer duffle bag in tow.

"I got some shit. We can go. I just gotta figure out when and how I'm gonna get the rest of my shit, but I'll worry about that later," Sarah stated hurriedly. She then looked down at Marcus. "You beat him bad Raheem. He's fucked up."

"Yeah, well, better him than you," Raheem replied, devoid of emotion as he rose from the sofa and retrieved his own duffle bag.

"I'm surprised he didn't even start to wake up yet." Sarah looked concerned as she walked over to where her ex-boyfriend lay. "He doesn't

even look like he's breathing." Sarah knelt beside Marcus and held a finger to his neck for half-a-minute. Raheem noticed as panic and terror filled the beautiful young woman's face. "He's dead!"

"Stop playing," Raheem casually replied. "Let's go. He'll eventually wake up and go to the hospital. We'll be long gone by then."

"No, Raheem! He's dead," Sarah started to sob.

"What are you talking about Sarah? I just beat his bitch-ass up real good. He's probably not used to getting hands put on him like that. What makes you think he's dead?"

"I'm a fucking CNA, Raheem! I just took his pulse and he doesn't have one," Sarah bawled. "What the fuck did you do? We have to call 9-1-1!"

"First of all, what the fuck do you mean, 'what did I do?' I was riding for you! That's what the fuck I did," Raheem growled angrily. "Plus, what the fuck you think is gonna happen if you call the police! I'm not getting locked up for this shit!"

"So, we're supposed to just leave his body here and go," Sarah's voice cracked as tears streamed down her face.

"That's the only option I can think of," Raheem answered matter-of-factly. "He has drugs and guns here, so when somebody finds him and calls the cops they'll think it's drug-related."

"Um, no Raheem," Sarah objected. "My name is on the lease and I'm sure the neighbors heard us arguing. The cops are gonna come looking for me!"

"Well, then, we're just going to have to do what you were talking about last night and take all the valuables and the molly and sell them on the streets," Raheem proposed. "We can take the money and run away somewhere."

"What? What are you talking about Raheem?" Sarah gasped, crying even more hysterically than she already had been. "You work at UPS – where is all this shit coming from? We're not about to be on some Bonnie and

Clyde shit! I'm not living my life like that! Besides, we can't just leave him here. It wouldn't be right!"

"But I guess not telling me that you already knew you had herpes for six months and then acting like you were upset at the thought that he might have burnt you was 'right?'"

"Wait a second, Raheem," Sarah interjected. "You gotta listen to me..."

"Listen to what? I would have listened last night," Raheem snapped. "This ain't even cool, though. I ride out for you and protect you even after I find out you intentionally burnt me and now you wanna get me locked up? I'm willing to leave my family and my daughter and runaway with you because of this shit and you want to preach to me about right and wrong? I didn't ask for none of this shit! You got me fucked up Sarah. Your nigga was right – you *are* just an extra-pretty smut with a good job and good pussy!"

"Ugh! You know what? Fuck you Raheem," Sarah sobbed in disgust. "I'm not gonna let some nine-dollar an hour, UPS nigga talk to me like that!"

"Oh, so that's why you put up with this nigga's shit all this time, huh?" Raheem sneered. "It's all about money, huh? Y'all bitches are all the same. Y'all all ain't shit. My mother, my wife *and* you... Fuck you Sarah. At least my wife didn't fucking burn me!"

"Eat a dick, Raheem! I'm not going to keep arguing with you! I'm calling the cops!"

Sarah sobbed as she ran to the kitchen. As soon as she grabbed the cordless house phone Raheem was upon her.

"Let me go!" Sarah screamed as Raheem attempted to wrestle the phone from her hands. Sarah gripped the phone tightly with both hands and kicked Raheem.

"Lower your voice Sarah," Raheem commanded. "Give me the fucking phone and let's go! I'm not getting locked up over this shit! You're not calling the cops!"

“Oh, yes I am! I’m not going anywhere with your crazy-ass! Let go!”

Raheem instantly felt his body go numb and his consciousness transform into a state he had only experienced while he was beating Marcus.

Minutes later, Raheem snapped out of the dream-like state. He drove down Marshall Road, across Cobbs Creek Parkway and onto Spruce Street. His mind raced as he drove without a specific destination in mind. He saw signs for Interstate 76 and took the exit onto the highway.

“I guess I’ll hop on 95 and get a hotel near the airport until I figure out what the fuck I’m doing,” Raheem said to himself aloud as he lit a black and mild and turned on the radio. “Hold up! I don’t even have a car. Whose truck am I driving?”

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