



Airing Out Dirty Laundry

Latisha Patterson

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This book is dedicated to Darian, one of my best friends. Thank you for sticking by me through the rough patches of my life. You inspired me to write this book, and I will forever be grateful for your friendship.

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Skye

Chapter one

Today, it's all about me. I'm in desperate need of some alone time. I decide to spend a couple of hours at Sylvia's Day Spa - you know, get a massage, facial, manicure, and pedicure, just pamper myself. Lord knows I need it.

As I'm lying on the massage table, getting one of the best massages ever, my cell phone rings. At first, I ignore it, but someone keeps calling back. I pick up my Blackberry Pearl and notice the number on the caller ID. It's Omar, my boyfriend.

"Hello!!" I yell into the receiver, completely agitated.

"Hey, baby. Why are you yelling? Is something wrong?" Omar asks, sounding shocked by my tone.

"I thought we talked about this. Today is for me. M-E...just me, Omar. I want to relax and be alone for a couple hours. I thought you understood that," I reply, my anger growing.

"Well, I do ... but, umm, I just wanted to talk to you. I miss you. We just wanted to make sure you were alright. Skye, you know sometimes out of frustration people say things they don't necessarily mean."

I could hear in his voice his feelings were hurt, but at this point I really don't care. "In this case, I meant what I said. I don't have time for this Omar; my patience is wearing thin. If everything is okay with Omari, then there is nothing more to say. I'll see you when I get home."

Click! I hang up the phone before he can utter another word. Damn! There goes my day of relaxation right out the window.

Trying to calm myself, I resume my position on the massage table, and begin reflecting on how things had gotten to this point. My life is so hectic right now. Who would've thought Skye Ariel Jordan would be at her wits end! I've always considered myself to be an intelligent black woman, with too much style and grace for all this drama.

At twenty-five, I have a pretty decent job at Richmond Premier Staffing. The agency I work for is well-known, and I make \$29,000 a year plus commission. I'm an account executive, responsible for filling temporary job positions for local companies. I interview candidates and have them take a series of assessment tests. If everything goes well, I send them on an assignment. My job is the one thing in my life I truly enjoy.

Omar and I have a beautiful two-year-old daughter, Omari. She's so precious, and the only good thing that came out of this dysfunctional relationship. Omari has a golden-brown complexion and green eyes like mine, but she looks exactly like Omar. There is no mistake, she's his daughter. She even has black curly hair and a small round nose like her father. The only difference is the chubby cheeks that carry her deep dimples.

We've been together for about four years. Omar is the hotel manager at the Marriott Courtyard located in the West End of Richmond. He makes way more money than I do, so I guess you could say we are financially stable. We live in a two-story brick house in a middle class neighborhood called Glenden Hills.

Don't ask me why we have a five-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath house when it's just the three of us. Omar wanted to go all out when it came to purchasing a home, so we ended up with

this big house. It's a lot for just three people. The subdivision was new, and we got our house built from the ground up. I picked out everything.

Omar's an excellent provider and a great father. Omari adores him. He spends a lot of time with her. He reads her bedtime stories, gives her baths, and tucks her in at night. I don't even take her to daycare or pick her up, because he does that too.

Omar has proposed to me millions of times. Of course, I always turn him down. I'm not ready for marriage. I can barely deal with having him as a boyfriend.

On the outside looking in, one might say I have a good life and a good man. Yeah right, on the surface, maybe. No one really knows or cares to understand how I feel. Omar is too clingy and emotionally needy. It's like he has to be with me 24/7. He's smothering me with way too much love and affection. I don't know how much more I can take. Lying here thinking back, I'm trying to remember if I missed something, like a sign - a bright neon sign that said, "Run, this nigga is crazy!" Who knows? Everybody always says, "Love is blind." Well, now it seems I have 20/20 vision. This brother seriously has some deep-rooted issues, and I don't know if I'm equipped to handle them. My mother and father both think he's God's gift to the world. All of my friends, except one, are envious of my relationship with him. I guess my girl Coco is the only one with some damn common sense. Everyone else always takes his side.

What about me? What about my feelings? I always find myself asking. My married best friend, Jamyya, says in disgust, "Skye, you're too spoiled; everything is not always going to go your way. You have to compromise sometimes. That's what relationships are all about. Omar loves you and just wants some attention. He's a good man. I don't understand your problem."

I quickly reply, "Compromise; yeah, that's what I want him to do. He's always underneath me. I need some space, Jamyya. Why can't anyone understand that?"

I find myself having this same conversation with her day in and day out. Frankly, I'm tired of all this shit. I hate to admit it, but maybe I am spoiled. I guess being the only child does that to you. My dad and I are also really close. You got it - I'm daddy's little girl. So, yeah, I'm used to having things my way. So what?

It all started four years ago when I met Omar at a VCU vs. ODU basketball game hosted at the Siegel Center downtown. I should've known I was going to pull a bunch of niggas, 'cause my gear was hot like fire. My girl, Coco, is a stylist, so my hair was definitely laid. Those honey-blond highlights she added to my hair drew more attention to my green eyes. I'm about 5'6, have a golden-brown complexion, and long wavy hair. And yes, my hair and eyes are real. There's nothing fake about me at all. My hips and butt are kind of big for my size-4 frame but that's what the guys like, so I use that to my advantage.

When I walked in, all eyes were on me because I was "fresh to death" in my dark denim Apple Bottom jeans, red long sleeve Apple Bottom shirt, and red Enzo pumps. Hmm ... you couldn't tell me anything. My dad had bought me a pair of two-karat diamond earrings and a diamond necklace with my name on it, so you know my neck and ears were blinging. Actually, my whole crew was turning heads. I can't be hanging out with no "bamas."

I roll with a crew of five. Yeah, the Fabulous Five, that's us. It's Jamyia, Coco, Damisha, Jasmine, and me. Jamyia and I go all the way back to middle school. Coco is what I call "ghetto fabulous". She grew up around Creighton Court projects, but she stayed fly. Coco always had the latest gear.

Can you believe that one time, Coco got the new Dooney & Burke bag before I did? I know what you're thinking, but it was authentic. Me and my crew didn't mess with the bootleg, counterfeit, Chinese store shit.

Damisha, better known as Mimi, is my girl from way back too. We went to the same high school. Everybody was hatin' on me and Mimi 'cause she's half Filipino and half Black. Well me, I just look good, plain and simple. You know how girls are when you got long hair and light eyes. They instantly become jealous. So me and Mimi became friends because I wasn't intimidated by her beauty.

Jasmine, whose nickname is Jazz, is the youngest of the bunch. She moved in down the street from me and didn't know anyone, because she had just moved there from Philly. So me, being the nice person that I am, invited her to join my crew, which is nothing short of a privilege.

During half-time I decided to go get something to eat from one of the concession stands. "Anybody want to go with me to get something to eat?" I asked the girls.

"I'll roll wit' you, Skye," Jazz replied, getting out of her seat. People were everywhere. I turned as we approached the concession stand and accidentally bumped into a tall fine chocolate brotha.

"Excuse me. I didn't mean to bump into you. My bad." I was embarrassed.

"Shawty, that's a'ight just be more careful next time," he replied, laughing in a low tone.

"No, I'm just joking. My name's Omar. What's yours?"

"Skye."

"Really, Ma, what's your name?"

"My real name is Skye. That's what my parents named me. Do you have a problem wit' dat?" I asked with an attitude, holding up my chain.

"Naw, actually it's kind of fly. It's just different, that's all," Omar said smiling.

Damn, he sure does have some pretty dimples, I thought to myself.

"So, do you have a man, Miss Skye?"

“Not at the present time, but then again, I wasn’t looking.” I stood there with a smirk on my face and my hands on my hips.

“That’s a shame. You might pass up something good.”

“Like you?” I questioned with my eyebrows raised.

“Yeah, like me. Why don’t you give me your number so we can hook up sometime?”

“You’re not crazy, are you?” I asked in a joking manner.

“Only a crazy person would dignify that with an answer.”

I looked at him with inquisitive eyes, but gave him my number anyway. What could it hurt? A brotha as fine as he is couldn’t be all that bad. I stood still for a moment, taking in everything about his physical appearance until Jazz screamed my name, which broke me out of my trance.

“Skye, come on here,” Jazz said very curtly.

Damn. I had almost forgotten what I had come out there for. I made a U-turn and headed toward the concession stand to get a hot dog.

“Let me find out a man got Skye all hot and bothered, don’t know which way to go,” Jazz teased.

“Girl, shut up. He was cute, but it ain’t all like that,” I said as I handed my money to the short lady behind the counter.

“Jazz, did you want a soda or something?”

“Yeah, I’ll get a Pepsi and some onion rings.”

“Make sure you got some gum for that onion breath,” I joked, and we both laughed and headed back to our seats.

“Girl, what took y’all so long? I was about to call the search team to come find y’all,” Jamyya said, laughing at her own sarcasm.

“You know Miss Fly had to stop and have a conversation with every man that looked her way,” Jazz said jealously.

“Actually, I bumped into this tall, fine, chocolate brotha, and he asked me for my name and number,” I said, matter-of-factly.

“Really?” Jamyya said in a questioning manner.

“Yep, he is the cutest one I’ve seen so far tonight.”

“So, what’s the deal with him? Did you give him the digits?”

“Hell yeah, I gave him the number! I told you he was fine. Anywa,y his name is Omar, and he’s about 5’10”. He’s got dark brown eyes, pearly white, straight teeth, the deepest dimples I’ve ever seen, and his smooth milk chocolate skin made my body shiver. That’s about all I know”.

“She ain’t lying, neither. Mr. Omar had my girl gone as soon as he flashed that Colgate smile,” Jazz said laughing.

“Seems like you noticed a lot. No wonder it took you so long to come back,” Jamyya said, cutting off Jazz.

“Oh, yeah, I almost forgot. He’s got long pretty cornrows, and he was G’d up in his LRG outfit.”

“Mmm, guess I missed out. Maybe next time I’ll roll wit y’all. These lazy heifers don’t ever want to mingle. We walked around for about five minutes then ‘grandma’ said her legs were tired. So we came back to our seats,” Jamyya said, looking at Coco and Mimi smiling.

“Who’s ‘grandma’?” I asked, looking at Jamyya.

“Coco; this heifer just had to ruin the fun.”

“Who in the hell are you calling a heifer? Everybody ain’t a hoe who’s on the prowl for every man she sees,” Coco retorted, loudly cutting off Jamyya.

“I was just joking. Chill out. What got your ass all on your back?” Jamyya asked, trying not to get upset.

“Girl, she’s just mad ‘cause she saw André with some chicken-head hanging all over him,” Mimi said, trying to whisper to the rest of us.

“Thanks for telling all my business, Mimi,” Coco said, rolling her neck.

“You’re welcome. You know they were going to find out anyway. Everybody knows I can’t keep a secret,” Mimi said laughing, hoping to lighten up the situation.

A week went by before Omar finally called me - not that I was sitting around waiting. I believe it was a Sunday evening, around seven o’clock. I was just chilling in my room watching the Lifetime Movie Network. Suddenly, my cell phone started to ring. I looked at the caller ID, but didn’t recognize the number.

“Hello?”

“Did I catch you at a bad time?”

He had such a deep voice.

“No, not really. Who’s this?” I asked, acting as though I didn’t know who he was.

“My bad, ma, this is Omar, you know, the nigga you met at the VCU vs. ODU game last week.”

“Yeah, I remember. What’s really good wit’ u?”

“Nothing much, just been working. I had some free time today so I thought I’d give you a call and see when we could hook up. You know, go get a bite to eat, catch a movie or something.” His voice was so sexy.

“Umm, well I don’t have much going on this week. When would you like to hook up?”

“Friday, around eight o’clock is good for me.”

I nonchalantly answered, “Yeah, that will work.”

We continued to have small talk, the usual basic get-to-know you conversation. Omar appeared to have it all together at twenty-three years old. He was three years older than me, but I liked that. I needed a mature man. He’d graduated from VCU two years ago with a Bachelor’s degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management. He was currently working at the Marriott Courtyard as a shift supervisor, but he aspired to be the manager. You’ve got to start somewhere. At least Omar had goals he wanted to obtain.

Omar was a perfect gentleman on our date. He picked me up from my house at exactly eight o’clock. He didn’t come empty handed. He arrived with a bouquet of pink chrysanthemums. He opened and closed the car door for me, and even pulled out my chair at the restaurant. Not once did he try to make a move on me. After dinner and the movie, he drove me straight home. He kissed me gently on the cheek and walked me to the door. This guy was different from anybody I had ever dated before. I called up all my friends and said, “I think I’ve got a winner. Omar is definitely a keeper.”

Soon, I would find out how wrong I was.

After six months of dating, I decided to introduce Omar to my parents. This was going to be good. Mr. Omar Keith Rhodes was about to meet Vivian and Paul Jordan. At this time, I was still living with my parents in their tri-level home located in Springdale Estates. My mom said to

me, “Skye, darling, your father and I would love to meet this young man you’re so fond of. Why don’t you invite him to Sunday dinner?”

Reluctantly I replied, “Sure, that sounds great, Mom. What time should I tell him?”

She pulled up a chair to sit beside me. “Is something wrong, dear? Are you embarrassed of us?” I could hear a hint of hurt in her voice.

“Oh, nothing like that. I just don’t know how he would feel about it. Meeting parents is like taking the relationship to another level. I’m not sure if he’s ready for that type of commitment,” I said, wondering if she would change her mind.

“Well, honey, just ask him and see what he says. No pressure. Just ask if he would like to come to dinner Sunday at six o’clock.”

“Alright, Mom, I’ll let you know what he says.”

Embarrassed? Ha! I think to myself, how could I possibly be ashamed of my parents? My mom’s forty-two years old, but she looks young. Everyone always mistakes her for my older sister. We do look a lot alike. My mom is about 5’8” and has a smooth pecan brown complexion. Her eyes are green just like mine. She started getting gray hair, so she dyed it spicy cinnamon. The color looks great on her short, spiked haircut. Even after having me, my mom still has a great figure. She’s a size 10. Her job is the bomb. She’s the regional manager for Victoria Secret stores. So, you know my lingerie drawer is off the hook.

I couldn’t be any more pleased with my father either. My father is forty-six years old and wears a pair of small round frame Hugo Boss glasses. He’s kind of tall, about 5’11”, and his complexion is a shade darker than my mom’s. He has a full beard with a low haircut, and unlike mom, he doesn’t dye his gray hair. My father has a nice build, too. His waist is a 36 and he has wide, broad shoulders. I always feel so safe in his arms. To him, I’m still a little girl. My daddy

buys me everything 'cause he has plenty of money. He works at Merrill Lynch as a financial advisor. With parents like these, what would a girl have to be embarrassed about?

I called up Omar and asked him to dinner on Sunday.

“Oh, now you want me to meet your parents,” he said excitedly. He had been asking to meet them for a while, but I declined. I didn't know if I really wanted to take this relationship to the next level. To me, Omar was just too nice and considerate. Something had to be up with him. This good boy act was killing me.

“Yeah, I feel it's time,” I responded after several seconds of silence.

“What time should I come?”

“Be here at six. My mom's a good cook, so come hungry,” I said, trying to sound cheerful about the whole thing.

Sunday came quicker than usual. This was a special day, so mom pulled out all the stops. She cooked roast beef with potatoes and carrots, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, corn pudding, homemade biscuits, and for dessert, strawberry cheesecake. My parents don't drink soda so she made Lipton ice tea.

Omar arrived on time, as usual, which gave him extra points with my dad. My father is very big on punctuality. I was still upstairs getting ready, so my mother opened the door.

“Come in, honey, and have a seat. Skye will be done in a couple of minutes,” Mom said with a warm smile.

“Thank you very much for inviting me, Mrs. Jordan. These are for you,” Omar said, handing my mother a bouquet of white Calla lilies.

“Oh, honey, thank you. You are such a nice young man. Please, call me Vivian. Omar, this is my husband Paul.”

“How are you doing, Mr. Jordan?” Omar asked timidly.

“I’m fine son, please have a seat. No need to be shy. I’m not going to interrogate you. We just wanted to meet the young man that was taking up so much of our baby’s time,” my dad stated, trying to ease Omar’s nervousness. Dad and Omar chatted, getting to know one another while mom finished last minute preparations in the kitchen.

I came down the stairs.

“Hello, Omar. I hope my dad’s not harassing you,” I said half-jokingly.

“No. Not at all. Actually, your father’s pretty cool.”

“Everything is fine, honey. Why don’t you go help your mother in the kitchen?” my father said waving me off.

“Good idea, ‘cause I’m starving,” I said, rubbing my stomach as I approached the kitchen.

I helped my mom put the food on the table. “So mom, what do you think?” I asked anxiously. I couldn’t wait to know what my parents thought about Omar.

“Well, honey, your father seems to like him a lot. I haven’t had a chance to talk to him, but he seems like a nice young man. Look at those Calla lilies he brought me. That was a very sweet gesture.” My mom was smiling.

“Yeah, Mom he’s always like that. That’s what worries me. He seems too good to be true.”

“Well, honey, some people are just genuinely nice. Maybe he was brought up in a good Christian family. Have you met his parents?”

“No, I’ve been making excuses to get out of it, but since he has met y’all, I’m supposed to meet them this coming Sunday.” My voice was full of skepticism.

“Honey, I’ll talk with him at dinner and let you know what I think. It wouldn’t hurt to meet his family. Maybe it’ll give you some insight about him,” my mother said reassuringly.

My mother and I were interrupted by my father. “Is the food ready?” he asked. “This young man and I want to eat.”

“Yes dear, come on in and have a seat.”

My father sat at the head of the table and my mother sat at the other end. We ate, and my mother got her chance to converse with Omar. I must admit the evening turned out pretty well. Omar stayed for nearly three hours before leaving. I walked him to the door, and he kissed me lightly on the lips.

“Your parents are wonderful, Skye, you are lucky to have them.”

“Yeah, they are very special people,” I said, feeling sleepy.

“Goodnight Mr. and Mrs. Jordan. Dinner was absolutely delicious,” Omar said, heading out the door.

“Goodnight,” my parents yelled simultaneously from the other room.

It was a hit. Both my parents liked Omar very much. Picture that. I wish I was into him as much as they were.

Over the next couple of months, my father and Omar grew closer. He eventually was spending more time with my dad than he did with his own family.

It had been three months since Omar had met my family, and the time had come for me to meet his. I could not put it off any longer. Every time I was supposed to meet Omar’s family, I came up with a good excuse. After three months of dodging the meeting, now was the time to go through with it. He never knew his father because his mom had him at fourteen, and his father

hadn't bothered to stick around. I would just be meeting his mom, two sisters, and three brothers. The two youngest lived with his mom in a three-bedroom house on the Northside of Richmond.

Omar had his own apartment and had been living on his own since he had graduated from college.

It was around 5:30 P.M. Sunday evening when Omar came to pick me up in his black Honda Civic. It was a very nice car. He always kept it clean, plus it was only two years old. He told me that his grandparents on his father's side bought it as a graduation gift for him.

"I guess they feel bad that my father had nothing to do with me. They told me they were proud of me and thought I could use a car," he told me nonchalantly.

On the way to his mom's house, Omar tried to give me the scoop on everybody. "My mom's name is Shakita, and she works at 7-Eleven as a cashier. She can't cook like your mom, but don't worry, I'm sure she ordered some good take out. Then there are my sisters, Kenya and Tamara. Kenya is twenty-two and has two kids—Kayla, who's four years old, and O'Ryan, who's three years old. Tamara is eighteen years old, and this is her last year of high school. She also has a little boy, Kemomni, who's two years old. I also have three brothers, and none of them have kids. Damon is twenty and is visiting this weekend 'cause he usually stays on campus. This is his sophomore year at Norfolk State. Tyquan is sixteen and Devin is fourteen. They both go to John Marshall High School. My family is a bit different than yours, but everybody is really nice. Please just look over their flaws and give them a chance," he said, pleading his case.

"A'ight, baby, I'm sure your family is not as bad as you make it seem," I said, trying to remain positive.

We pulled up to the one level brick house on Crafton Lane, and I saw four boys playing football in the yard. “What’s up, li’l bro?” Omar yelled out the car window at the boys playing ball.

“Hey, Omar. We just playing a little ball,” Devin replied.

Omar opened the car door for me, and we approached the front door. Since this was his mother’s house and the door was already open, we just went on in. “Hey, Mom, it’s me. Where are you?” he yelled.

“I’m in the kitchen, boy, trying to get dinner straight,” she said with attitude.

“Mom? I know you didn’t cook,” he asked, sounding scared.

“Hell no, you know I can’t cook! What you want me to do, scare the damn girl off? Y’all just have a seat in the living room. I’ll be out in a few. Have you seen your brothers?” Her voice was extremely loud.

“Yeah, they out front playing ball wit’ some friends. Where is everybody else?”

“Kenya on her way over here, and I sent Tamara to the store to get some ice and sodas. Act like you got some manners, boy, and see if the chile want something to drink.”

“Would you like something to drink, Skye?” Omar asked, trying not to be embarrassed.

“Well, I can wait until your sister comes back from the store.” I was unsure of what to say.

“Mom, she said she’ll just wait for Tamara to get back.”

“Alright, baby.”

Omar’s mother finally came into the living room to introduce herself. She was a short lady, about 5’3”, with a milk chocolate complexion - the same as Omar’s. She also had two deep dimples. Her hair was braided in small micro-braids with burgundy hair. Her petite shape held

wide hips and a big ghetto booty. She was very pretty and looked younger than thirty-eight years old. She also had two gold teeth. Shockingly, her outfit was banging. She had on a pair of tight Baby Phat jeans with a brown and gold Baby Phat shirt to match. Even her gold Baby Phat boots were cute.

“Hey, baby, nice to meet you. My name is Shakita but you can call me Kita,” she said, extending her hand to shake mine.

“Nice to finally meet you. Your outfit is very cute.” I was trying to make conversation.

“Thank you baby. I got it from Citi Trends about a week ago. You ever go there?”

“Yes ma’am, I go there all the time. I also go to Marshall’s and A. J. Wright too,” I said excitedly.

“Oh, girl, I like you already. Maybe we can go shopping together sometime. I can tell by your outfit you got style,” she said, smiling.

A few minutes later, a tall, skinny girl with a mocha-colored complexion walked in. She had long black hair in a layered wrap and was carrying two brown paper bags as she tried to hold a little boy’s hand.

“Hey Omar, I sure could use some help!” She definitely had an attitude.

“Why didn’t you get Tyquan or Devin to help you? They were out front playing ball in the yard,” he asked, trying to be smart.

“Well, they ain’t out there now, jackass. Don’t you think I would’ve asked them first? Use your college brain sometimes.” She was frustrated and out of breath.

“Skye, this is my rude-ass sister, Tamara. Tamara this is my girlfriend, Skye. Baby, I’ll be right back,” Omar said looking at me.

“Okay.” I was wondering what was going to happen next.

“Honey, excuse my daughter, she just don’t know how to act sometimes.” Shakita rolled her eyes at Tamara.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Skye. I’ve just had a bad day. It’s nice to meet you.” She was trying to be pleasant.

“Don’t worry about it. I have my moments too.” I tried to laugh it off.

Omar came back in with two grocery bags and a large bag of ice. As he walked in, a tall, fine chocolate brotha was with him. Instantly I knew this had to be one of his brothers. They looked just alike. I guess they all look like their mom, because Omar said they have different fathers.

“This is my brother, Damon. Damon, this is my girl Skye,” Omar said, smiling.

“Nice to meet you, Skye. You are prettier than Omar said,” Damon said, flirting. He proceeded to kiss my hand.

“You better get off my girl before I beat your ass.” Omar was angry. I had never seen or heard Omar act like this before.

“Calm down, O, I was just being friendly. I got my own fan club at school anyway,” Damon said, laughing.

Damon went on to tell me that he was a wide receiver for Norfolk State. According to him, he was a star player and all the girls wanted him. Tamara came in the living room after putting away the groceries and joined the conversation. Finally, the food was ready and Shakita called everyone to the table. As soon as we sat down to eat, Kenya and her two kids came strolling in.

“Hey, y’all, sorry I’m late. Do you have enough for us? Who’s this?” She pointed at me.

“This is my girlfriend, Skye. Skye, this is my sister Kenya and her kids, Kayla and O’Ryan.” Omar tried to remain cool.

“Hey, girl, that’s a cute outfit you got on. I see my brother finally got a girl wit’ some style.” She laughed.

“Thank you. You look cute yourself.” I was complimenting her on her House of Deréon denim dress. She was rocking the hell out of that dress with a pair of high black Chanel boots and Chanel glasses to match. She was truly getting it, I had to admit.

Omar was right. His mom did order take out, if that’s what you want to call KFC. She had three big buckets of chicken, extra crispy, with the sides and biscuits. She had two-liters of Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, and Sunkist Orange sodas to drink. Everyone was hungry, so no one really talked much while eating. For dessert, we had banana splits that Shakita and Tamara made.

Although their Sunday dinner was different than my family’s, I had a good time. After we ate the banana splits, Omar’s two younger brothers came in, and we all watched “American Gangster” on DVD. I really had a good time.

It was time to go, and Omar drove me home. “So, what did you think?” he asked hesitantly.

“They were really nice, a bit ghetto, but I liked them a lot,” I said, smiling.

“I’m glad, because I could tell they liked you too.” He sounded happy.

My thoughts of how Omar and I met were interrupted by Martha softly nudging me. “Skye, your massage is finished. Kim is over at the pedicure station waiting to do your facial and pedicure.”

“Girl, have a seat and put them feet in this water. While your feet are soaking, I’m going to start your facial. Would you like the cucumber or mud mask?” Kim asked while she set things up.

“I’ll take the cucumber!!” I say excitedly, as I lie back in the chair and continued reminiscing.

A year had passed since I’d met Omar’s family, and we were still together. Lately, I hadn’t been feeling well. I had been vomiting and sleeping more than usual. I called up my girl Jamyya.

“Jay, I think I’m pregnant. I’ve been throwing up for days, and it seems I can’t get enough sleep. My period is late! What am I going to do?” I screamed into the phone frantically.

“Calm down. Have you taken a pregnancy test yet?” she asked in a calm voice.

“No. I didn’t really think about it. We have been using condoms, plus I’m on the Pill. What am I going to do? This can’t be happening! I just started my college classes. Damn. My life is over!!” I said, still not calming down as Jamyya had suggested.

“First, you need to find out if you’re pregnant. Go to Walgreens and get two different pregnancy tests. Come to my house and take them. We’ll see what they say and go from there. Please Skye, pull yourself together,” Jamyya said, trying to comfort me.

We were the same age, but Jamyya was much more mature. It’s probably because she had to raise her younger brothers and sister. Her mother was a dope fiend almost all her life, so she had to grow up quick. She also got pregnant at sixteen and decided to keep her baby. When she turned eighteen, Jamyya and Keenan got married and moved into a three-bedroom apartment. Her mother was in and out of jail, so she took her two brothers and sister with her.

Keenan is such a good man. He never ran from his responsibility. He was only two years older than us, but he became a father to their child and her siblings. They now have four children together; twin boys and two girls. Their daughter Ke'Asia is the oldest.

Anyway, I headed to the store as Jamyya suggested. I picked up a "Fact Plus" that had two tests inside and a "First Response". I quickly drove to Jamyya's apartment. She lived about fifteen minutes away from my house in an apartment complex called Fair Oaks Apartments. I made sure I parked my silver Lexus in the visitor's parking space. This was no time for me to get my car towed. Now, I know what you're thinking. How did a twenty-one-year-old girl with no job get a Lexus? Well, that's simple - I'm spoiled. My mom and dad bought it as a high school graduation gift.

I ran to the door and knocked three times very hard.

"Damn Skye, you didn't have to knock like you was Five-O," she yelled as she opened the door. "The kids are taking a nap so try to be quiet. I have a million things to do," she said in a much nicer tone.

Ke'Asia was five years old and in kindergarten, so she was at school. Tamia was three and the twin boys were nine months. Their names are Keontaé and Deontaé. Jamyya's sister Jamesha, who was the youngest, was now fourteen and in her freshman year at Highland Springs High School. She was the only one of her siblings still living with her. Her two brothers James and Jamal were now eighteen and nineteen. They both got scholarships for college. James played football. He went to Virginia State University. Jamal got an academic scholarship and decided to go to Hampton University.

"I'm sorry girl, I forgot all about the kids. I guess I was just too wrapped up into my own problems," I said apologetically.

“That’s okay girl, let me see what you got in that bag.”

I pulled out the pregnancy tests and showed them to her. She said they were good ones, and I trusted her judgment. Besides, she had four kids.

I went to the bathroom and took both tests. We had to wait about five minutes for the results.

“So, what are you going to do if you are pregnant?” she asked, trying to break the silence.

“Girl, I don’t know. I haven’t even told Omar I missed my period. I have no idea how he’ll react. Everything has been so good between us. I knew something bad was bound to happen,” I stated, feeling really depressed.

“Well, it’s time to check the results. I’m sure Omar will support you, just like Keenan did me. Omar is such a sweet person. I couldn’t imagine him turning so cold,” Jamyya said, trying to smile.

“I hope you’re right, because it looks like I’m pregnant,” I said sadly.

“It’s not the end of the world, Skye. Sometimes things happen, and it seems it’s not the right time, but everything will turn out fine. Just remember you’ll always have me. I’m your best friend, and I’ll support you till the end,” Jamyya said, hugging me tight.

“Well, I better make an appointment with my gynecologist. Thanks for being my rock. You are always holding me up. What would I do without you?” I said with tears in my eyes.

“I hope we never have to find out. I know you would do the same for me in a heartbeat. Don’t cry, everything will be okay. If you need me, don’t hesitate to call. I’ll drop everything to help you out,” she said with a huge smile.

“Thanks, Jay. I guess I’ll be going home so I can give Omar the big news,” I said, hugging her once more before I left.

As soon as I shut the front door I heard the babies crying. I started to turn around and go back to help her but I was in no mood to deal with babies. I drove home in a daze. As soon as I sat down on the couch my cell phone started ringing. I looked at my caller ID. Damn, it was Omar. I wanted to talk to him, but now was too soon. “What should I do?” I wondered. Might as well get it over with.

I answered the phone sounding exactly how I felt, downright miserable. “Hey, Omar, what’s up?”

“Nothing much, just called to see if you wanted to go out for dinner. Is something wrong? You sound sad,” he asked, heavy concern in his voice.

“Actually, there is something we need to discuss. How about you pick me up for dinner and I’ll tell you all about it.”

“It sounds serious. Are you sure you don’t want to tell me now? I have about thirty minutes left on my break,” he said, trying to get me to open up.

“No, I’d rather tell you in person. Plus, I’m tired. I think I’ll take a nap. What time are you coming?”

“I’ll pick you up around seven, and Skye, if it’s about school, I’m sure your grades will improve,” he said, trying to comfort me.

“Thanks, sweetie. You always know exactly what to say. I feel better already.”

I hung up the phone and went upstairs to my room. I flopped down on my queen size bed with the black marble headboard.

In the midst of my anxiety, I must have fallen asleep. I awoke to my mother yelling
“Skye... Skye, are you in there sweetie?”

“Yes Mom, come on in,” I said, still kind of groggy.

“What’s the matter, honey? You look terrible,” she said as she sat next to me on the bed.

“Thanks, Mom, that was a nice thing to say,” I replied with sarcasm and a smile.

“Sorry, honey. I’m just used to you caring about your appearance. Plus I haven’t seen you smile in days. Is something wrong with you and Omar? You know you can tell me anything. Well, just about anything,” she said half-jokingly.

As I thought about what I had just learned, I burst into tears. My mother put her arms around me and held me close. “It will be all right, dear. Tell me what’s wrong. I can’t help you if you won’t talk to me.”

My mother looked into my teary eyes.

“You and dad are going to be real upset with me,” I said, sniffing.

“Well, that may be true, but your father and I love you unconditionally. Please just tell me what’s going on,” she replied with sincerity.

“Mom, I’m pregnant. I don’t know if I should even be telling you, because I haven’t even told Omar yet. He’s picking me up at seven and I’m going to tell him then. Please mom, don’t say anything until I’ve had a chance to tell him!” I begged her to keep my little secret.

“Skye, you are a grown woman even though your dad and I sometimes treat you as a child. This is your decision, and you are responsible for telling Omar. I’m not going to say I’m happy about the situation, but I know Omar is a good man. I’m sure you both will work this out. Do you have any idea what you want to do?”

I was silent for a moment. My mother really shocked me by her response. “Well, I just found out today. I’m not sure, but I don’t really want to have an abortion. Then again, I don’t think I’m ready for a baby either. I’m just finding myself, and I just started school. What about college? I know Dad is going to flip out,” I said as I began crying again.

“Honey, I’m sure your dad may be upset at first, but you are his little princess. He can’t stay mad at you long. I’ll leave it up to you to tell him. One more thing: whatever you decide, I’ll support you. If you still want to go to college and have the baby, I’m sure your father and I can help you pay for daycare,” my mother said as she hugged me.

“Thanks Mom, for being so understanding. I hope it goes as smooth with Dad and Omar,” I said, trying to cheer up.

“Well, there is only one way to find out. You better hurry up and get dressed, ‘cause it’s almost six o’clock. You know Omar is always on time,” she said as she walked out the door.

This was no time to be cute, but I couldn’t leave the house looking a hot mess either. My mom even said I looked bad, so something had to be done. I jumped in the shower and washed my hair. When I got out, I brushed my teeth and combed my hair. I just brushed it up into a ponytail and left it wet. My hair curls up when it’s wet, so I just let it do its thing. It was warm outside for early September, so I threw on a short red-and-white spaghetti strap dress made by Michael Kors and my red stiletto pumps by the same designer.

As soon as I got downstairs, Omar was ringing the doorbell. I opened the door and he was standing there with a dozen of yellow roses and a big brown teddy bear in his hands.

“Hey, baby. I bought these for you. I hope this can cheer you up,” he said, kissing me quickly on the lips.

“Thank you. This was very sweet of you. Mom, I’m gone,” I yelled, walking into the kitchen.

I sat the vase of roses on the kitchen table. As I put them down, I noticed a card sticking out. I opened it and it read “I don’t know what’s got you so down, but I’m sure we can get through this together. Just remember, I’m here for you whenever you need a shoulder to lean on. If it’s too much for me, give it to the Lord. I know he can handle it. I’ll pray for you. I love you very much, Omar.”

“Wow, he really does love me,” I thought to myself. I dried my eyes and walked out of the kitchen. I found Omar and my mom having a conversation in the living room. I wasn’t worried though, I knew my mom could keep a secret.

“I’m ready whenever you are,” I said, looking at Omar. We both said our goodbyes as we headed out the door. We rode in silence for about ten minutes until I decided to just let loose and tell him what was going on.

“Omar, honey, I took a pregnancy test today and it came up positive. I’m pretty sure it’s right ‘cause I’ve missed my period and I’ve been vomiting,” I said with tears starting to form in my eyes.

“Is that what you’re so upset about?” he asked, as if what I said wasn’t major.

“Yeah, that’s what I’m upset about. How about you? What do you think about me being pregnant? Do you want a baby?” I asked, wondering why he wasn’t mad.

“Well, I’m not mad about the baby. It sure is a surprise. Well, a nice surprise, actually. Skye, I love you and I want us to be together. I know this is ultimately your decision, but I would like for you to keep the baby. You know my mom had me young, and I never knew my father. I

don't want to be like him. I want my kids to know me. I want to be the kind of father that you have," he said in a sincere voice.

"I love you too, Omar, but I don't think I'm ready for this. I still live with my parents, and I don't even have a job. How will I support a child? I don't even take care of myself financially," I said, trying to reason with him.

"Do your parents know? Have you told anybody else?" he questioned.

"Yeah, I told my mom, but my dad still has no clue. And Jamyya knows, but I don't know if she told the rest of the crew yet. I wanted to tell you first, but my mom came in my room and started asking questions. I'm sorry," I said as tears streamed down my face.

"That's a'ight baby. I understand you needed support from your mother. How did she react?" he asked, not sure if he wanted to know the answer.

I told him everything my mom and I had talked about.

We finally arrived at the Cheesecake Factory for dinner. The food was exceptionally good. I was really hungry. I hadn't realized I didn't eat all day.

Over dinner Omar asked me to marry him and I said "no". Then he suggested I move in with him, since he already had a two-bedroom apartment. His roommate had just moved out because he had gotten married. I thought it over and told him I would move in next week. I still needed to talk to my dad about everything.

When I got home it was a little after nine and my dad was sitting in his black leather recliner watching TV. I went in the den and sat on the black leather love seat.

"Hi Dad, how was your day?" I asked, trying to sound chipper.

"Today was good, I can't complain. What about you? Your mother tells me we have something to talk about. What's going on?" my father asked, smiling. He then picked up the

remote control and turned off the TV. “You have my undivided attention. Tell Daddy what’s wrong and how much it’s going to cost me,” he said trying to make a joke.

“Well, Dad, it’s going to cost a lot, almost as much as I did, or still do. You see, I’ve gotten myself into a little trouble. I’ll just come right out and say it... Dad, I’m pregnant. I’ve already told Mom and Omar. We decided to keep the baby, and he wants me to move in with him. Actually, he asked me to marry him, but I said no,” I told him, as if I had everything planned out.

“I see. Well, you know a baby is a big responsibility. I’m glad Omar wants to do the right thing. If you ever need any help don’t hesitate to call me or your mom. I hope you know me and your mom love you very much and would never put you out. You are a grown woman now, so I respect your wishes. Don’t be a stranger. You know you and Omar are welcome here anytime. Now, I guess little Miss Princess has to get a job,” dad said laughing.

“Yeah, I guess that would be the next step. Thanks, Dad, for being so understanding. I love you too,” I said, giving him a big kiss on the cheek.

“Welcome to the real world, sweetie. Do you think you’ll ever marry Omar? You know, he’s a fine young man. Not too many of them out here nowadays,” Dad said matter-of-factly.

“That’s a good question. I don’t know. I just know I’m not ready right now. I’ll see how things go with us living together. One step at a time, Dad. Are you trying to get rid of me?” I asked, joking.

“No princess, not at all. I just want you to be happy. I know you’ll need some money to help you get started, especially since you’ll need a new wardrobe. I’ll write you a check,” he said as he got out his checkbook.

My dad wrote me a check for eight hundred dollars and handed it to me.

“Wow, thanks Dad, you’re the best! I really mean it. Well, goodnight. I’ll see you tomorrow,” I said as I headed to my room.

“Goodnight, sweetheart.”

Thank you, Jesus. Everything turned out better than I could imagine. Now I could rest and think straight. Maybe having a baby wouldn’t be so bad after all. Besides, Jamyya has four, and she’s doing great. One couldn’t be that much trouble, plus I have my family’s support. I’m one lucky lady.

When I first moved in with Omar, everything was great. On the days he got off early, he cooked me dinner. When he went to work in the afternoon, he cooked me breakfast. He did all the cleaning and even washed both of our clothes. I didn’t work, and I dropped all my classes because my morning sickness was terrible. I was sick the majority of the time for the first four months.

Omar treated me so good. I couldn’t ask for a better man. He went to all my doctor’s appointments. He was so excited about the baby. He called me from work on all his breaks to check on me and see how I was doing. He always came home with a gift -flowers, candy, bears, balloons, food, something. He had something for me every day.

At first, I was flattered by all the gifts and attention, but then it became too much. When I was six months pregnant, I found out we were having a little girl. Omar was so excited, he called everyone on his cell phone while we were still in the doctor’s office and told them we were having a girl. The baby wasn’t even born yet. I thought I was a shopaholic, but with the baby coming, Omar had me beat. He bought stuff that the baby wouldn’t even be able to use for at least six months.

My mom and Shakita went all out when it came to my baby shower. They invited everybody in Richmond. My baby shower was inside the Marriott Hotel banquet room. You know we got a discount because Omar works there. As a matter of fact, right before the baby was born, Omar got a promotion to Assistant Manager of the hotel. It was good timing, because we needed all the money he could make. You know I wasn't working.

The day had come for me to have the baby. It was April 24th at eight o'clock in the morning when Omari Janaé Rhodes was born. She weighed 5 pounds 5 ounces and was 17 inches long. Omari had a head full of black curly hair.

Omar was so wonderful when it came to his baby girl. He would wake up in the middle of the night and feed her. He changed diapers, and would keep her whenever I wanted to go out. The only problem was when I did go out with friends, Omar would magically appear. Wherever I was, he and the baby would show up. If he couldn't follow me, then he would call four or five times a day. It got so bad that I stopped answering the phone, but that didn't stop him. He would just call and harass my friends.

On the rare occasion Omar would hang out with the boys, he would still call and check up on me. He might as well stay home as much as he worried the hell out of me. Now four years later, he is still the same possessive person.

He finally got promoted to hotel manager at Marriott Courtyard. One year after Omari was born I'd gotten a job at Richmond Premier Staffing as an account executive. About three months later Omar and I moved into our five-bedroom home. He asked me to marry him again on the first night we moved in. I turned him down once again. I would think by now he would be tired of asking. As I finished reminiscing, my pedicure, facial and manicure were finished. It was time to snap back into the present.

“All done. You can pay at the front counter,” Kim says in a low, squeaky voice.

“Thanks Kim. You worked a miracle on these feet,” I say, giving her a tip.

“You’re welcome. You know you’re one of my favorite customers,” she replies, grinning.

As I get inside my silver 4 door Lexus 300LS, my cell phone starts to ring. I get in and check the caller ID. Whew, thank goodness it’s just Damisha.

“Hey, girl what’s up?” I ask as I begin to drive off.

“Girl, where you at? I thought we were going to the mall. It’s already two o’clock,” Mimi states, sounding irritated.

“Damn. I didn’t realize it was that late. I’m on my way to your house now. Are you ready?”

“Yeah, I’m ready. I’ve been sitting around waiting for an hour and a half. You could at least call and let somebody know you were running late.”

“I was at the spa and didn’t realize the time. My bad. Hey, why don’t you call Jazz and see if she can meet me at your house?”

“A’ight, how long are you going to be? Shit, I’m hungry,” she says with an attitude.

“I’m about 15 minutes away. You can get something at the food court.”

“Hurry up. I’m gonna call Jazz. Bye.”

Damisha

Chapter Two

Fifteen minutes, yeah right, more like thirty. I don't know why Skye is late for everything. She know damn well as soon as we get to the mall, Omar is going to start calling and acting crazy. Shit, I got a date tonight. I don't have time to fuck around wit Skye. As soon as we get to the mall, she's going to start rushing people to hurry up and buy something so she can get home to her deranged-ass boyfriend. I don't know why Omar is so damn pressed anyway. I mean, Skye is cute but she's not all that, plus she's spoiled as hell. Nobody else would put up wit' her anyway.

Finally, I called Jasmine. "Hey, can I speak to Jazz?" I ask, sounding confused. I thought I called her cell phone, but some guy answered.

"Just a minute," the deep voice replies.

"Hello, who dis?" Jazz asks in an upbeat tone.

"It's Mimi. Skye wants you to meet her over here so we can get to the mall faster. You know she got a curfew. Her dad will be calling in a minute to check up on her," I said laughing.

"Well, I told Mario he could use my car. I'll see if he can drop me off... Hold on a sec."

I can't believe my ears. Are all my friends stuck on stupid? How in the hell is somebody going to use your car and not take you where you need to go? I can't understand the mentality of this chick. Mario is Jazz's oldest sister Joy's husband. *Why can't Mario use his wife's car?* I think to myself.

"Hey, I'm back. He said he guess he got time. You want me to leave now?" she asks hesitantly.

"Please. I'm really hungry and I'm starting to get irritated," I say with a definite attitude.

"I'm on my way," Jazz says before she hangs up.

I decide to get me something to eat, because I know how them hoes are late for every damn thing.

Jasmine arrives at my house first.

"Come on in. You know Skye ain't here yet," I say as I open the door.

"Where is she coming from?"

“She said she was leaving the spa, wherever that is.”

Our conversation is interrupted by somebody laying on the horn. I look out my bay window and see Skye sitting in the driveway.

“Jazz, that’s her now. Come on.”

We walk outside and I lock the door to my townhouse. When we get in the car, Skye wants to make small talk, like she isn’t late. Lying bitch took forty-five minutes to get here. I’m so heated, I sit in the back seat.

“Hey, y’all. You look real cute, Mimi,” Skye says trying to suck up.

She can tell I’m pissed by my facial expression. Even though I’m mad at her, I know she’s right. It’s the middle of June and hot, about ninety-five degrees. I have on a tight, white and gold Juicy Couture T-shirt, dark denim Juicy Couture mini skirt, and my metallic gold flip-flops. I put on my big gold hoop earrings, two bangles, a diamond ankle bracelet, and my gold rim Chloe sunglasses. I don’t really need her compliment, because I know I look good. I’m half-Filipino and half-black, about 5’5” and a size six. I have long black hair down my back, and dark brown slanted eyes. My skin is silky smooth, and my size six feet are very pretty. The only advantage Skye has over me is her ass. She has a big butt for her size.

Unfortunately, I’m not that lucky in that department. I have what you call “nassatall,” no ass at all. Even still, I pull many niggas. Shit. I know I’m fly. I’m 26 years old, single, no kids, and I have my own shit. I work at Virginia Dominion Power as a Customer Service Supervisor. I make sixteen dollars an hour, and I work Monday through Friday. I live by myself in a two-bedroom townhouse, and my ride is a’ight. I drive a burgundy Toyota Avalon. You could say I’m doing the damn thing.

“Don’t give me that shit, Skye. You knew I would be pissed. I should’ve just driven my own damn car to the mall. Now you are going to be rushing to get home to Omar. I got a date tonight. I have to find the perfect outfit,” I say angrily.

“Mimi, shut up. It’s only a quarter ‘till three, by the time we get to the mall it’ll only be about three thirty. I told Omar I would be back around six. What mall do you want to go to anyway?” she asks, paying my attitude no mind.

“Let’s go to Short Pump. I’m sure I’ll find something there.”

“Do you want to stop at McDonald’s or something?”

“No. I knew you were lying, so I filled up on some chips and cookies.”

It's Saturday, and the mall is packed. We have to park way in the back of the parking lot. "Let's park at Nordstrom's," I say.

"Why don't we go to Saxon Shoes first?" Skye replies.

"Okay, whatever, let's just get in the mall," I say, still mad.

"Is somebody PMS'ing today?" Skye asks, trying to be funny.

"No, but it might be coming." I had to admit I was a little snappy today.

Changing the subject, Jazz asks, "Who are you going out with?"

"Some dude named Chris that I met last week on my lunch break. He was at Olive Garden getting take out, and we conversed a bit while we waited for our orders."

"Where does he work at? I know he had to be fly for you to give up the number," Jazz says, being her usual nosy self.

While we are in Saxon's having our little conversation, Skye's cell phone rings. It's no surprise that it's Omar calling. I don't know why she even answered the phone. Then she has the audacity to tell him where she is. How dumb can one person be?

I find a couple pairs of cute shoes, get the salesman's attention, and ask for a size six in both pairs.

"He works at Capital One as a computer analyst, and yes he is sexy," I say with a huge grin spread across my face.

"What y'all talking about? Ooh, Mimi, I like those. If you don't get them, I want them." Skye walks over to where Jazz and I are.

"I was just telling her about this dude named Chris I met. We're going out to eat dinner, and then to the Funny Bone Comedy Club. I'm not sure which ones I like better."

"I think you should get the black Prada sandals, since you don't know what you're wearing," Jazz says.

"That's exactly my point. That's why I wanted to get my outfit first. You know Skye always does stuff ass backwards."

"Well, we can go to Nordstrom's if that'll stop your whining," Skye says, sounding snobbish.

"I have a better idea. Let's go to BeBe first, then, if I don't find anything there, we can hit up Nordstrom's."

"A'ight," Jazz replies.

As we head to BeBe, Jazz runs into a couple of people she knows. She stops to talk to them but they look tacky, so I keep going. I don't have time for this friendly shit. Every time we go somewhere, Jazz sees somebody she knows and she can't just say "Hi" and keep it moving. Oh, no, she always got to stop and converse. Sometimes I forget she's not even from here.

When I go inside BeBe, I instantly see the perfect top. "Hey, Skye, what do you think about this?" I hold up the turquoise halter-top.

"It's real cute, but what are you going to wear with it?"

"I don't know, maybe a pair of white Capri pants or some jeans."

I grab a small and medium top to try on. The medium top fits perfectly; I think the small was way too tight. I find a pair of white Capri pants with BeBe written on the back pocket in turquoise. These are perfect. I grab my size and go up to the counter.

The short blond saleswoman rings up my purchase.

"That'll be \$186.84, Ma'am."

I pulled out one hundred and ninety dollars and pay for my clothes. Skye and Jazz are still browsing the racks.

"Do y'all want to meet me at the shoe department in Macy's?" I ask impatiently. "Yeah, go ahead. I see something I like. I'm going to try it on," Skye waves me off.

"Fine," I mumble under my breath.

As I'm walking to Macy's, I hear somebody calling my name. I turn around to see Jerell coming towards me.

Damn, I haven't seen him since high school and I don't remember him looking this good.

"What's up, Damisha?" he asks, while hugging me tight like we go way back.

"Nothing much. Just doing a little shopping," I reply, batting my eyes.

"I see you still look good. Are you here by yourself?"

"No. I came here with Skye and Jasmine, but they're taking too long, so I told them to meet me at Macy's."

"Oh, my bad. Am I holding you up?" he asks hoping I say no.

"Not really, but how about we walk and talk?"

"That's cool. So what's been going on wit' you? I see you and your girls still tight. Are you married? Got kids?"

If I'm not confused, I believe Jerell is trying to holla. The funny thing is, I don't think I mind. He has grown into a fine specimen. Jerell is a redbone brotha about 5'9" with a slender frame. I can tell he has been working out because of the muscles bulging on his arms. He has pretty gray eyes and sandy brown hair that he wears in a low cut. I look him up and down and notice his Movado watch and his spanking brand new Jordan's. His other wrist wis blinging wit' a diamond bracelet. I see somebody making some money. I have to pull myself together, but what should I say?

"No, I'm not married and no kids either. I'm just enjoying being single."

"I heard that. Well, I don't want to take up too much of your time. I saw you and thought I'd come over and speak. I would ask for your number so we could stay in touch, but I'm not in the mood to play myself today," he smiles.

"You just did, asshole," I thought to myself, but something about him piques my interest, so I decide to be nice.

"What about you? Do you have kids? A crazy baby momma?" I ask, laughing.

"No, not yet. I guess I've been lucky not to get caught out there," he replies, still smiling.

"Well, in that case, I don't see a problem wit' giving you my number."

With a surprised look on his face, he pulls out his Apple iPhone and I give him my number.

"Guess I'll be hearing from you soon," I say in a flirtatious voice.

"I'll holla at you, ma," he says before leaving.

Once he's gone, I turn my focus back to shopping. I rummage through a couple of shoe racks before I find the perfect shoe. It's a pair of turquoise snakeskin two-inch sandals made by JLo.

"Please, please have my size," I say to myself. I run to find a salesperson to see if they have my size.

"Excuse me, Miss. Do you need some help?" a young, tall, dark-skinned man asks.

"Yes, do you have this in a size six or six-and-a-half?" I ask politely.

"I'll go check, have a seat. I'll be right back."

While he's in the back getting my shoes, I spot Skye and Jazz.

"Over here, y'all," I yell from across the room.

They see me and come over carrying two large bags apiece.

“I see y’all finally found something.”

“Girl, I found a whole bunch of stuff on the sales rack. You should’ve stayed with us,” Jazz says excitedly.

“I’m glad I didn’t, because I ran into Jerell. You wouldn’t believe how cute he’s gotten,” I say, smiling.

“Jerell who?” Skye asks, confused about whom I was speaking of.

“Jerell Thompson who went to school wit’ us,” I reply, acting as if she should know whom I was talking about.

“Oh, he’s always been cute, Mimi. You were just too damn fly to pay attention to high school boys,” Skye says truthfully.

“I guess you’re right. Anyway, I gave him my number.”

“He must be making some dollars now, huh?”

“I’m not sure, but he was blinging, and the gear was tight.”

“That figures,” Skye and Jazz say in unison.

The salesman finally comes back out with three boxes of shoes. “Ma’am, we didn’t have a six, but I brought you a seven, and I also brought the silver and pink in a six,” he says with a smile.

“Thanks a lot,” I reply.

I try on the seven first, because I really want these shoes. Yes, they fit. I guess they run small.

“How did you find those? They are so cute?” Skye says, screaming.

“They are, and they match my outfit perfectly,” I reply, gloating.

“Are you going to get both colors?” she asks. I know she’s scheming on the other two pairs.

“You can get a pair if you want, but they run small. I had to get a seven, and those are six’s,” I reply, trying not to sound annoyed.

She gets on my damn nerves. Why can’t she find her own style and her own damn shoes?

“I’ll look around first and if I don’t find anything else, I’ll see if they got silver in my size,” she says, as if she read my mind.

Finally, everybody has found a pair of shoes. Skye decided not to get the J. Lo sandals like mine. She found a pair of Dolce & Gabbana peep toe pumps. They are actually cuter.

“I’m hungry. Let’s go to the food court and eat,” Jazz says, looking at me and Skye.

“What time is it?”

“About five-thirty,” Skye says looking at her white leather Gucci watch.

“A’ight. I want to get something from Chick-fil-A.”

“Sounds good,” replies Jazz.

As we are walking to the food court, I see a tall chocolate brotha with long black cornrows. He’s smiling, showing off his deep dimples. Mmm, he looks good. As people move aside, I notice him pushing a dark green and cream Eddie Bauer stroller with a little girl sitting inside. Oh shit, it’s Omar! I can’t believe this crazy motherfucka came up to the mall. I knew Skye shouldn’t have told him where we are! Engrossed in a conversation with Jazz, she must not have noticed him approaching us.

“Skye, your psycho boyfriend and baby are in the mall,” I say, laughing as if it’s funny. It’s anything but funny, actually; it’s ridiculous.

“I don’t believe this shit,” Skye shouts.

“Why the hell you tell him where we were, anyway?” I ask, not really wanting an answer.

“I didn’t think he would come up here. He agreed to give me space. Today was supposed to be my day to be without him and Omari.” She sounds mad and frustrated all at the same time.

“Hey honey, funny running into you here,” Omar says, trying to make a joke.

No one laughs because this shit isn’t funny. Omar’s tactics have gotten old. I’m tired of it, and he isn’t even my man.

“Hi, Mommy,” Omari shouts excitedly.

“Hey, sweetie.” Skye kisses Omari on the cheek.

“Mimi, can you watch Omari for me while I have a word with Omar?” Skye asks,, looking at Omar but talking to me.

“Sure, just meet us at Chick-fil-A.” I walke off with Jazz and the baby.

“Nice to see you Damisha and Jasmine,” Omar says, waving.

“Whatever.”

“Nice seeing you too, Omar,” Jazz says laughing.

“Why are you here, Omar?” Skye asks in a serious tone. “How many times do we have to go through this? I can’t even come to the damn mall with my friends without you following me. This is not a normal relationship. You got my friends laughing at me. I will never hear the end of this shit,” she says scolding him, not even giving him a chance to respond.

“Skye, I don’t care what your friends think. It was getting late and I was bored, so I thought I would bring the baby out for some fresh air. We missed you. Omari kept saying, ‘Where Mommy?’ and pointing at the door, so I decided to come to the mall. I didn’t expect you to still be here. You know how you do. You go to three different malls in one day,” he says, trying to be amusing.

“I don’t find this funny at all. I don’t have time for this. I’ll see you when I get home,” Skye says angrily.

“And when will that be? You said you would be home at six; here it is almost quarter till seven. You still have to take Jazz and Mimi home. I’m not going to sit in the house and wait for you all night,” he replies, sounding upset.

“Fine, don’t sit in the house. I never asked you to anyway. Please go out. I want you to go out and leave me the hell alone!!” Skye screams at the top of her lungs.

People start turning around and looking at them, but she doesn’t care.

“Skye, calm down, people are looking,” Omar says quietly.

“I don’t give a fuck who’s looking! Oh, *now* you care what people think? Omar, shoot yourself! Shoot your damn self!” she screams as she stomps off.

Skye lost her patience with Omar. She doesn’t care that she has just made a complete fool of herself and him. She tries to calm her nerves.

Omar looks at Skye with sad puppy dog eyes. “You know what, Skye? You got your wish.” He turns around and walked off.

“Where the hell you think you’re going? You’re leaving the baby, jackass!” she yells as he keeps walking.

Slowly, he turns around and yells, “Find somebody else to keep her, or take her wit’ you. I’m not your personal babysitter. I’m tired of you treating me like shit!”

“Fuck you, Omar.”

Apparently someone called mall security, because they are quickly approaching them.

“Ma’am, is there a problem?” a short, fat, old gray-haired man asks.

“No sir, the problem just left,” Skye says calmly.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yes sir, I’m fine. I apologize for the scene. It won’t happen again.”

After the big commotion, Skye is ready to leave the mall. She feels so embarrassed. She walks over to the food court to meet up with me and Jazz. Omari’s sitting in a booster seat eating chicken nuggets and fries.

“Thanks for watching Omari. How much do I owe you?” Skye pulls out a chair to sit down.

“Girl, don’t worry about it. Where is Omar?” I ask.

“He left. We had a big argument and I flipped out on him. I’m not even hungry anymore. You guys mind if we leave as soon as y’all finish eating?”

“No, I’m good. I already got my outfit. I did want to look for some accessories, but I can drive my own car. I can tell you’re upset.”

“I’ll be okay. He just upsets me so much. Then he acts as if he didn’t do anything wrong. I don’t know. Maybe I’ll call my mom and see if she’ll watch Omari.”

“Everything will be a’ight, you just need some space. Why don’t you come with me and Coco to T.G.I. Friday’s?” Jazz asks.

“A’ight what time y’all going?”

“We’re leaving at ten, and if you’re not at my house by nine fifty-five, we are leaving your black ass.”

We finish eating our food and leave.

End of Excerpt

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About the Author



Latisha Patterson, a Richmond VA native, began to hone her skills as a writer through poetry. It wasn't until she began to pursue her bachelor's degree did her passion evolve into a career.

"Can't stop won't stop," is Latisha Patterson's motto, and it fits her life appropriately. A mother of two beautiful daughters, Latisha uses them as motivation and remains steadfast to her goals of being the best mother possible and becoming a best selling author!

Her enticing fictional novel [*Airing Out Dirty Laundry*](#), eases you in and out of erotica by weaving real-life situations and love/hate characters with an authentic voice.

Enjoy the ride!

"Thanks for allowing me to share my gift with you!" ~Latisha