TURNING CORNERS

Chapter 1

Based on a true story. Such a stupidass cliche movie script writers use to draw their viewers in to boost movie tickets if you ask me. Someone could tell an absolute complete stranger a story, which is bogus, and moments later that stranger could tell their friend of the encounter. The encounter actually happened, but that former person was a phony and there isn't anyone who could prove them otherwise. Who would think of this when it doesn't matter? Just someone who is detested at home, alone at school, an embarrassment to old-fashioned parents, and despised by everyday society.

See, the LGBTQ community is a large group of people who are misunderstood individuals and myself Anita Mars finds it very appealing to look at the bounce of another female's behind and even sometimes fantasize about the butt cheeks later. I didn't realize I was gay until I was ten years old when I kissed my cousin Mia in her room upstairs.

My uncle wasn't that far off in his life than my dad. They worked for the same company, but their house always seemed cleaner than ours. It wasn't! My aunt was just OCD making their house seem bigger. Mia wasn't in the living room, but I knew where she was, though I still asked my aunt.

"Aunt Ellie, where's Mia? I asked.

"Hello to you too Anita," she said as to say Salutation to you too. I just smiled.

"Hello...Aunt...Ellie."

"You know where she is."

I took a right past the foyer and beelined to her room. When I opened her door immediately Mia asked "What did my mom say to you?”

"Nothing just made me speak to her." She just laughed. She found it funny when her mom tantalized me, but knowing this I knew aunt Ellie did it because she loved me. I sat on the bed to relax. And she sat next to me.

"What's up, cuz? I've missed you. It's really been a while." Mia said.

"Yes it has. I've missed you too, but I'm good. What's up with you."

She breathed out a deep breath like she'd been holding it a little too long. "Nothing is just good to see you. Nita. I hate that you always have to leave. As soon as we start chilling, you have to go. How's school?"

"The same ole same ole, people act like they don't see me."

"Maybe because you don't see them." Mia said with a wide eyed stare. I did one of her gasps with a smile.

"Maybe I don't"

"I bet you don't even have a boy you're interested in?"

"I bet I do"

"Prove it! Have you ever kissed a boy?"

I stared at Mia opened mouth, heart thumping with a bead of sweat down my back.

"Maybe I have, maybe I haven't." I said nervously.

"Listen cuz. I can show you, you know.”

"Okay, I haven't!" Mia grinned with the same devilish smile she did when I first came into her room. She put one hand on my shoulder and told me to close my eyes. I felt her leaning toward me. I was so afraid I cringed.

"You have to open your lips a little bit." She said and I obliged. "No! No peeking!" I couldn't help but see what she looked like. But I shut my eyes quickly. My lips were slightly apart and then in a flash her lips were upon mine hungrily, but gentle like a teacher and a student, kissing 101. I had to admit they were moist. More than I thought and then it was over, but not before I saw someone looking through the door. By now my cousin's eyes were closed and she didn't notice but I did. So afterwards, I got up, walked to the door. I looked out Then shut it. No one was there. "You good?" Mia said with the same smile she's used to. She was making me afraid.

"Yes, of course", was all I said.

But I've never been good since then. First off, who was that at the door? I mean, about ten minutes later my mom called Mia to catch up with her to see how she was doing. She asked her how everything was at home, everything at school, and was she passing. School was a very important thing in the Mars family. I thought this was throughout all families until I saw the imbeciles who walked around Dotson high school. Secondly, how long were they standing there?

I thought that today at school was going to be like every particular day at Dotson until Madison Reeves came out. High school tended to be repetitive, on loop if you asked me. Like an educational prison for high schoolers where we came to learn about things we would never use at all or apply the skills the teachers equipped us with. My experience seemed more than just the learning experience. Madison Reeves came out to the back of the school to wait for her brother. Her brother played football like my brother David. Both seniors, both starters and both stars intending on going to college. Good for them.

Madison didn't notice me, but I noticed her. She had great legs. She was a basketball player, long legs and toned muscles. She leaned on one leg distributing her weight to her left side. The curves in her hips. The tightness of her butt. She tapped on her phone while playing with her hair for a moment. I wondered what it would be like to smell her scalp.

"Hey, who are you?"

I nearly fell off the bench I was sitting on. I was confused. I started to rattle some form of my name trying to shake back to reality.

"N-N-N Ani Anita Mars", I said, barely getting my name out. Did she know? Did she see? How long was I day dreaming?

"Why are you sitting here alone? Are you waiting for someone?"

"My brother's the quarterback", saying matter of factly.

"What! Your brother's David. David Mars? I knew you looked familiar. Maaars..." She said my name, admiring it like some kind of trophy. "But why are you off..." She ventured off lowering her voice. I was taken aback. Off! What did she mean by "off". "Off alone, by yourself most of the time." She picked back up what she was asking. I was about to say, I am not slow.

"It's better." I said feeling proud to own it.

"What are you working on?" Madison said, snatching my notebook without my permission.

"Hey-"

"Oh you're wicked-"

"-Give that back!"

"-But I like it."

"Wait what." I gasped leaving my mouth wide.

"Yes, you heard me, I like it." She handed me my notebook back. "Here. There's my brother, I've got to go."

I turned, and to my astonishment it was no one other than Matthew Reeves. I saw that he had his hair down. His olive skin was still glistening from the two hour football practice. In the sunset his hair looked black but I knew it was brown from when he passed me in the halls. He was so tall! From my naked eye he looked 6'5, very close to my brother David, although David was a little shorter. He was lean which made him seem taller than he really was.

Madison left and they caught up with each other. They passed me. They were too far for me to make out what they were saying, but close enough for me to see their lips moving and heads turning in my direction. I wondered what they were saying. What was Madison telling him? I started to drift off trying to place their words and read their lips.

"Nita!" My brother yelled. I'd lost track of time. "Are you ready?"

"Oh yeah."

I wondered how often I journeyed out of time only to be interrupted by someone. Who was the rude one?

Chapter 2

Arriving home pulling up to the house you could already hear the yells and screams from inside. Just being completely honest, I was afraid before I walked in the house. I knew that dad was drunk. The entire neighborhood knew dad was drunk. I looked at David. "It's time for the madness."

"I don't care," David said and opened the door and tried to zip straight to his room. But my dad grabbed the back of his shirt and yoked him up. And dropped all 6 foot 3 inches 195 pounds of him on the ground.

Dad was huge! He was 6'7, 380 pounds of body fat and muscle. His fist were Iike softballs. His biceps were like watermelons. Veiny, hairy arms, broad chested pot belly, but solid muscle and flat-footed. So, when he walked barefooted his feet made a smacking sound and when he's coming, look out. He grabbed my brother by his neck. David was parallel to the floor. A handful of his shirt was balled up in my dad's hand. When he pulled him, David's shirt ripped. I could hear the *riiiip* sound. And then.

*Boom*!

His back slammed to the floor.

"Hi mom, hi dad," I said quickly and shot straight to my room not looking back. No pillar of salt for me, but I could still hear the commotion.

"You're just gonna walk past me and don't speak," yelled dad.

"What's wrong with you?" My brother said sounding like he was back on his feet, but out of breath

"That's not what I asked you."

"You're drunk!"

"Don't you walk away from me."

"Walk away? Yeah, like Darryl walked away. He hated you guys."

*Smack*!

At that sound I shot out of my room only to bump into Dante, my younger brother. Dante was taller than me by 2 inches. I was 5'10 and he was in great shape. Hence, he was the freshman football team cornerback. He was so fast when he flew out of his room his braids were flopping but he was skinny to me because my hips were wider and legs were thicker, plus I always told him he had no butt knowing mine was a lot bigger and plump, but for a black boy his butt was so small, if you asked me. His chest was broad, but mine was fuller. So when he glided past me, he grazed my breast.

"Ouch!" I said, as we collided, but he ignored me and was first to the living room to see my brother David with tears on his face obviously from his eyes. Knowing my brother, I knew it wasn't from the ferocious bear paw slap my dad gave him. Clearly not from my mom who was on the computer smoking a Benson and Hedges cigarette. Her bony brown finger clicked away. Her puckered lips puffing and blowing out the smoke vapors. No, not from her. The tears came from years of pent-up pain and hatred and exhaustion from living in a dysfunctional black home, where the children had to fight for a life of their own. No support from the parents or understanding. Just we are right, and you are wrong and like Stone Cold said because you're crazy ass parents said so.

Darryl, our oldest brother from the outside looking in, some would've said he was an athletic graduate honorable student with a full ride academic and athletic scholarship in computer engineering to Louisiana State University as a linebacker. The Mars were no fools.

"Can I go now!" David asked.

"Get out of my face." My dad replied. He could be obnoxious when he was drunk, but why should children have to fear their parents? Aren't parents supposed to be guardians, sort of protectors, but with a father as a walking atomic bomb and a mom who thought no one was right except her and had the most sense you had an unhealthy abnormal household.

Dante and I went to his room because we couldn't stand to see our brother with such repugnants for our dad. So to put us at ease I begin braiding his hair. I loved doing hair, and I also loved doing nails. Our parents didn't mind long hair, except it be kept.

"I hate it here, Nita," my brother Dante said, getting comfortable.

"Don't say that." I could have agreed with him but he was my younger brother and he looked up to me and we were very close and shared everything. Although sometimes we could be allies and axes.

"You know, it's true."

"I know, but he's our dad."

"Yeah, a horrible one." Seemed i wasn't going to win this one so I just remained silent and let him express himself. "Why does he have to come home? Mom is bad enough. Dad is always getting drunk and then he can't control himself. Mom never says anything. I wish you and I could leave."

Now he started to go off the deep end.

"Where would we go?"

"I don't know. Maybe-"

*Bang*!

My dad caved in the door. There was no way it wasn't broken off the hinges.

"What the hell is going on in here? What are you some kind of faggot!" My dad stumped over in two huge plank steps like my entire floor was stepping over a curb. He grabbed my little brother's hair, which was obviously not even half done into his bear paw softball grip fist and yanked him off the bed. What an asshole! I thought this, not spoke it. He could have ripped his hair out. He shoved him by the chest out into the hallway. I could still hear the sound of the impact of my dad's fist punching into my brother's hollow chess.

"Ow dad, you hurt me!"

"Shut up!" my dad screamed. He looked at me next. Oh goodness. What he planned to do I couldn't tell, but the fury in his red eyes, sweaty shirt and alcoholic smelling pores were all unpredicted. Only thing I knew was whatever came next was pure destruction. “So you’re condoning your brother into a faggot?” Dad breathed reeked. Yes, I was afraid, but I was fed up with him, the back-and-forth sober then drunk, drunk and sober. Why won't he just give it up?

“Don't call him that,” I said , defending my brother. He wasn't gay or even close, but that word. He was being ridiculous.

“What are you going to do?” And before he came close to tearing his nails too far into my arm, though the little bit of force he'd already applied was bad enough, my mom came in.

“Darnell stop, that's enough!” My mom said finally stepping in, but someone was knocking at the door.

We all were surprised, even my dad. He was so sweaty. When he drank, he really used the alcohol and allowed it to take its effect, and he would not stop until he had passed his limit. My mom rushed to the door, she turned the knob and to her surprise, she opened the door to Dotson police department.

“Good evening ma'am. We received a call for a disturbance. At the door stood two officers. The one that spoke was a white male. He appeared to stand at about 6’4. I knew this because he was taller than my brother David, but not by much. Maybe the same, but because of his age he seemed taller. He had a comb over, possibly covering some thinning hair with broad shoulders. Flat chest, tiny waist and wide hips from being an athlete. “Ma’am my name is officer Jacobs and this is officer Wilde, my partner. We received a call stating there might be a domestic violence situation going on. What seems to be the problem?”

“I didn't call you guys. As a matter of fact, I don't know why you all are here.” My mom said annoyed.

I couldn't see the second officer. Up to his right shoulder he looked to be about the same build as the other officer, only black with what seemed like a military cut. Everyone in the house started to walk through the living room.

“Alice, close the God-damned door!” my dad screamed.

“Everything's fine, thank-”

“Are you sure you're fine, ma'am?” The other officer finally spoke up as he materialized from the other side of the door. His heavy boot blocked the door from shutting. David, who was now beside me, scampered from his room and struck a look at my dad who stormed to the door uncoordinated, knocking over the lamp.

“Get the hell off my property! As you can see we're fine.”

“Sir You need to calm down.” Jacob's spat back.

My dad came to the front door and my mom automatically moved aside, while dad removed Jacob's arm that was in the doorway. The moment he did that officer Wilde reached across, pressing an open palm into my dad's chest only to be combated with my dad grabbing his wrist.

“Get the fuck off me!” My dad shouted. Officer Jacobs seized my dad's right arm with two hands in an attempt to reverse it behind his back.

“Arrrgh!” My dad bull rushed him.

“Sir watch it!” Wilde yelled.

He knocked officer Jacobs backwards, making him pinned up against the wall. “Uh!” Jacob responded by hitting the wall. “Get down on the ground!” Wilde reached his left arm around my dad's neck with his right leg and kicked dad in the back of his knee, making him stumble a bit.

“Get your hands off my husband!” Mom hollered at the policemen, but they ignored her like she was a toddler. They were so focused and trained on my dad she nearly didn't exist. Like I've stated before dad wasn't an average size man. He hovered over these men by at least a head and was bigger in weight by at least one hundred pounds. So this wasn't your everyday challenge which didn't take your everyday maneuvers.

My dad was now on one knee with his right arm behind him in officer Jacob's grip and his neck in Officer Wilde's lock, sort of a headlock from the side.

“Stop resisting! Stop resisting! Stop resisting!” Both officers howled one after another. After a while my dad gave up, they finally got him to the ground. They handcuffed him. Some of the neighbors were standing outside of their homes just staring. Some looked like they were relieved, while others seemed to be troubled by the terrible scene. Many of them have seen my dad ranting in the yard or slamming doors. He had even gotten into a few altercations with some of them, so to see the sight of my humongous Father pinned to the ground and handcuff could have been a bit exhilarating. I couldn't agree with that.

My dad could be belligerent. He could be very aggressive to no end. Arguments were his best friends, he took them with him everywhere. And yes, because my dad was a mammoth, combined with a militant attitude, he was also combative, but I did not give a damn, that was my father. The way he acted didn't bring me to tears anymore. It didn't frighten me either. The way he acted I believed was a complete hindrance to my wellbeing. Sometimes I question his love for us. I truly believed my mom pretended to love. She could've just stopped. Like Dante said she could’ve left and I'd agree but he didn't need to hear that.

Alice, a deadbeat lousy mother, was of absolutely no value to the house and lately it appeared she was pretending with everything. The care for dad, the affection she had for her kids. There was no fondness. Where did the love go? Clearly not to her family. There was no way I could openly announce my sexuality. I would devastate my parents, my dad just called my brother gay. No, he didn't say gay, and he accused me. He blamed me as if my identity was rubbing off on my little brother. They would attempt to remove me from the household.

Chapter 3

My dad and his brother joined the same company a few years back. I was about twelve when my uncle started. He instantly liked it because it adjusted to his schedule. Both of them had the same schedule: wake up in the morning, go to work for twelve hours, seven in the morning to seven in the evening. In the morning after my dad headed out he would arrive at Berry's Dairy around 6: 45 to give him maybe fifteen minutes to relax. Darnell was a hardworking man. He really was, and that's what made me wonder about him and the way he felt about his family because he provided for his home. My uncle Danny was very similar, except the aggression and a contentious personality. I couldn't understand it. They were so different.

My dad wasn't like this when we were younger. He wasn't distant, especially toward my mom. Just recently I would say about two years ago I started to see slight signs of detachment from my dad. Like he blamed everyone for everything. My mom's emotions seemed like a hoax to the family. She wanted attention from my dad and I knew she couldn't tolerate his drinking but last night she perceived to ignore his drunkenness until his melee with the children went too far.

My dad spent two and a half days at the Dodson Police station, but was released on charges of battery of a Leo. My mom went to pick him up while we went to school. My brother's and I hopped in the pickup truck my dad gave David for his senior year and started a regular ride to Dotson High. It was a hot morning after a beautiful sunrise. Partly cloudy at approximate 83°. Great morning down in the South in the Spring. Dante was the first to speak up.

“I wish he wouldn't have come back.

“Dante!” I yelled. “What have I told you?”

“Screw him. He's right.” David snorted.

I couldn't believe him right now, really both of them. Our dad needed help and that we could all agree on, but I couldn't agree with not wanting my dad at home.

“So what do you want to do then?” I replied to both of them, then looked out the back window, not at either of them. I was already in the back seat so doing this was fairly easy.

“I want the old dad back,” shot Dante. Now that sounded like a winner, but “right” was all I said. We rode the rest of the way without a single word, but it wasn't too much longer to school.

At our school some electives like Spanish, Art and Music were mixed with all grades, so there were upperclassmen and lower classmen in the same class. In Spanish class, taught by Ms. Rivera, there were twelve seniors, ten juniors, six sophomores, and four freshmen. One of the seniors was Matthew Reeves. Our teacher Ms. Rivera was an average height woman with long brown hair. When she let her hair down she could sit on it even when she had it in braids. She had braces, which seemed to fit her because she loved to smile which seemed to her standard. Dotson High was her Alma Mater. She was once on the volleyball team giving her the figure she had today.

We worked in pairs to give us a real experience of conversing with real people. It was an intelligent way to learn a language. I didn't believe in coincidence. But what were the chances that I got paired with Matthew Reeves? If I wasn't gay, this would've been one boy I would have dated. He had this asshole generosity thing going on. He was so cute, the guy that didn't look for attention. We were sitting next to each other today because the following day the pairs were set. Ms. Rivera was explaining how we were supposed to fully engage with the person. That would not be a problem.

“Eye contact is key.” She was saying “Make sure to pronounce each letter. The R’s are supposed to make a slight roll unless it is a double R. Then you would roll your tongue. Matthew's hair was so silky and not sweaty. He started to grow his beard. There was a beard, almost a shadow. His lips were not thin, but they were not thick either. They were perfect. “Remember, double L’s makes the Y sound.” Ms. Rivera continued. Wow, his jawline was so mature. “Okay, begin.”

He was definitely the tallest in the school. I admired height in boys and girls. The fact that he- “Are you ready Anita?”

“Oh yeah.” My goodness, was I staring at him? Why was I always drifting off? My mind tended to float off in its own world. He was just so captivating. “Yeah, Sí buenos días.”

We started the lesson and after hearing him I thought about what it would be like if he really had a Spanish accent, if he had difficulty speaking English. I would have been honored to teach him. In our lesson We were portraying a couple arriving home.

“¿Usted tengo la llave?”

“Tengo la llave si.”

This was our last class of the day so when it was over I ran into the bathroom, entered a stall, closed the door and sat on the toilet. I pulled down my pants and began massaging my fingers between my legs. The way Matthew licked his lips, he wet them completely. I imagined him putting his lips down on me between my thighs.

Afterwards, I flushed the toilet, pulled up my pants, washed my hands and left to go to the back of the school. Today I sat far enough away to not be seen. After what I did in the restroom I felt somewhat creeped. No one was there I told myself and no one knew. When I showed up the boys came out about ten minutes later. They came out and walked my way. I could see Madison, she freaked me out. “What up kiddo? How are you?” Madison said finally next to me.

“Hello Madison, I'm fine.”

“You're okay with me here.” She pointed to the bench and I nodded.

“Coming back here is great. Most students don't care, though.”

“I'm not most students.” I fired back.

“That you were not. So, do you have your eye on any boys?”

“No.” I lied.

“I do.” I knew my brother.

“Who?” I asked not wanting to know.

“David. I hope he asks me out.”

“We're sophomores.”

“That doesn't stop everyone else.”

In high school it was looked at as okay for seniors to date lower classmen, for grades to mix in relationships. Little did Madison know, but I'm very interested in her brother as well. It would seem likely for Matthew to ask me out, but would that be fair and I mean on my part because Madison was very pretty and intriguing herself. She had a similar attraction as her brother. That's what made them unique. I allowed Madison to read parts of my notebook. She was enlightened to see the expression of my thoughts. Most of it was about my family.

“I didn't think someone could go through so much,” She said after reading a few pages. “And you go home to this everyday.

“Yes, unfortunately.” I said with sadness, but “I survive.”

“How long have you been gay?” Madison was not the first I revealed my sexuality. And she wouldn't be the last.

For some time now I've been feeling real comfortable in my skin. Homosexuality did not run deep in my family. I believe it took a certain class of people to understand LGBTQ. Those people are definitely not in my household and personally I hope Madison would not be judgmental.

“About 5 years now.” I replied

“Anita…this is a lot.” And of course the practice was over and the players were running to the locker room. “I could understand if you don't want to chill anymore.”

“I never said that.” But she certainly showed it. For the next couple of days, Madison was out of sight but not out of mind. My focus was on her brother Matthew but after exposing my true identity to her my attention was coated with her and how she was accepting who I was.

Meanwhile at home I was in my room looking in the mirror. I stared at my cheeks and looked at my lips. I stuck my tongue out making *ahh* noises. Some might say this was weird, but I was looking at my features trying to see how others viewed me. How did Madison feel about me? Did she like the way I looked? Was I pretty or handsome? I could hear my parents whispering, but they were not whispering but talking quietly. Forcefully. I got out of the mirror and put my ear to their wall.

“How many times do I have to say I'm sorry.” Whined mom.

“I haven't figured that out yet.” My dad responded. He was such an asshole!

“I've been trying.” Mom was pleading.

“You need to do better.

“You're the one who can't stop drinking?” That was the truth.

“I have my wife to thank.” What!

“And I've apologized.”

“Apologies can't erase the past!” my dad sounded hurt.

“You know he came onto me.” What had my mom done that has put my dad into a frenzy? I listen closely. My head was almost going through the wall.

“You should have stopped him.”

“Darnell, I'm trying.”

“Don't give me that.” My dad fired back. “I walked in, but I waited a while before barging in. I heard you, Alice. I heard you. You were enjoying yourself. You guys were consensual. You were doing it for a while. A whole God damn year! You would have continued. I can't believe him. My own fucking brother.”

Uncle Danny and my mom were in an affair. I’d heard enough. I went to lay in my bed as I looked up at the ceiling. I was thinking about my dad's frustration. His abuse. His hatred. It all stemmed from my mom. But why did he take it out on his kids? I'm afraid to even ask. My mom was unbelievable, but if she left what would be the outcome of my dad? What if dad left? How careless my mom would become? My parents were so separate. They just about drifted apart. I wondered what was keeping them together.

Chapter 4

Dad and uncle Danny were on the same schedule, but their days were different. They both work for five days a week and off two. My uncle's wife, Eleanor, was a teacher, so she left the house like she was a student. My mother, on the other hand, was a stay at home mom. She did her motherly duties on that part as if it came naturally. It was natural because her mother did the same for her husband, my grandfather. My aunt left in the morning along with Mia. Their house was completely empty. Our house was alike except for my mother. When everyone came home, the house was clean. That was one thing I noticed that pleased my father. My parents' home was close to my uncle and if either one of them wanted to stop by my parents on the way they sure could and that's what my uncle did. On His way to work he stopped at the house.

“Danny, what brings you here? My mom said opening the door for him. This was the beginning of their affair. So my mother's confusion was understandable. She went from letting him in through the front door puzzled to inviting to leave the back door unlocked for him. My uncle entered the house letting himself in without knocking and found mom dressed in the kitchen. My mom was over the sink drying dishes. Uncle came up behind her pressing his groan to her backside, and my mom followed with a moan, leaning her head against his chest. By now they were so comfortable. My uncle kisses on her neck we're inviting.

“Mmm…” She sounded licking her lips snuggling in for more.

“Does he make you feel like this?”

“No…”my mom whispered in her pleasure. She thought about my dad but dismissed the thought by thinking about the lack of attention he didn't give her. In the beginning when my uncle was coming through the front my mom would walk to the kitchen after greeting him. She asked if he would like anything to drink tea, coffee, juice, milk because of her hospitality again a trait she learned from her mother

“I'll take coffee ma'am. Please.”

My mom proceeded to the kitchen to retrieve him a cup of coffee not knowing my uncle followed her. She turned around and told him to sit and make himself at home. He had no problem doing this since him and his wife came over all the time. After the coffee was made, they both sipped in silence for a while. My uncle was the first to speak up.

“Seems like I'm sleeping alone at night.”He said

“Tell me about it.” Mom agreed

“Darnell could be jaded.” Danny said with a simple smile.

“Glad you stopped. I'm always here alone, but I guess I signed up for this.”

“I can stop more often if you like.”

“No dear. You have to be headed to work.”

“Never said I would stay long. One cup of coffee is not so bad.” My uncle got up and sat his cup of half drink coffee on the counter. “Thank you. By the way.” He hugged my mom while she was still holding her coffee. She took in the smell of my uncle as he gripped her with his hands on the small of her back. She also sat her coffee down and they hugged a bit.

“Yeah, you're welcome.” she replied with a chuckle. My uncle kissed my mom's cheek and released her. She looked up at my uncle and smiled. He caressed her chin and headed out of the kitchen leaving her holding her face. Mom walked up to him, finding him in the foyer and opened the door to let him out. He walked out and turned.

“May I? Tomorrow?” he asked, biting his lip. My mom cocked her head to the side and smiled. She released her breath like she's been holding it. She smacked her lips.

“Sure, tomorrow.” But tomorrow turned to every day. He worked for a year and they met up so much it became routine. My mom didn't want neighbors to notice, so she made him walk around the house and left the back door open so he could let himself in.

When my uncle came in he started to find my mom in different places in the house. One day he walked in and found her lying in her bed on her stomach. She turned her head slightly to acknowledge his presence. But turn back to show her approval. He took that as his key to come closer. He did and when he was beside the bed, he kneeled down on his knee and traced her spine down to the middle of her butt. She was wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans without socks or bra.

“Like what you see?”my mom said, enticing Danny.

“Doesn't everyone?”

“If so, everyone would be here.”

On other occasions My uncle had difficulty finding my mom until he went deeper into the bedroom finding her in the tub filled with bubbles.

“Hello, beautiful.” He said winking at her.

“Hi.” My mom smiled as if she'd never heard those words. truthfully, she hadn't heard them in a while. My uncle kneel down and scooped my mom naked out the tub drenched with water, covered in bubbles smelling like tangerines on her brown skin. He held her, taking her in with his tongue, finding his way to her nipples. “Mmm. Yes, the bed.”

Water vapors were coming off my mom as he carried her through the cold air of the house to the bed. He laid her down softly slipping out of his shirt with one hand. My mom came up on her knees and attacked my uncle with deep tongue kisses while unbuckling his belt. She got them unbuckled and my uncle finished the rest using his hands. My mom continued to kiss him. Running her hands through his hair. He had a medium Afro with curly locks. She fell back on the bed from my uncle pushing her.

He completed coming out of his clothes and climbed on the bed. His shaft was as hard as a hammer handle and my mother's insides were saturated with fluids from the tub, but mostly from the adulterous kissing. He grabbed the back of my mom's thighs with a little help from her and pushed them back and without using his hands, he slid himself into her and my mother shouted in elation. My uncle applied rhythmic strokes to her with his length. He exercised pressure which only opened my mom up into a state of euphoria. He threw his head back with his eyes closed and arched his back to go further. My mom reached her hands around grabbing his buttocks. And followed his rhythm and finally released an orgasm from earth to heaven.

That moment without either of them noticing, my father stood in the doorway, teeth clenched. My dad stood in his anger. He didn't make a sound. My mom continued to yell and moan in her ecstasy. my dad's emotions began Boiling, he couldn't take it anymore. “What the hell is going on!”

“Ahhh!” My mom yells and my uncle jumps off her. They Were both covered in sweat. My dad charged over to my uncle. He launched off the bed jumping on the other side of the bedroom. “Darnell I'm sorry.” My mom pleaded.

“Shut up woman!” He struck back. “Danny I'm gonna kill you.” My dad tried to trap my uncle. His private parts were exposed, but they seemed to be transparent.

“D, don't do this.” My uncle finally surrendered and my father got his hands wrapped around his neck.

“I hate you! I hate you!” My dad Repeated himself in rage as he attempted To strangle my uncle. He shook him over repeatedly as My uncle tried to remove his hands.

“Honey, stop it, you're going to kill him," Mom shouted.

“I'm trying to! I hate you, Danny. Why? Why?” And the tears came. My dad cried, but he didn't boo hoo cry. I could never see my father crying, but that day he did. He was in so much pain. I knew he wanted to kill my uncle. If he could have done it without the guilt, he would've, but he released his grip. He didn't cry like a baby but the tears fell down his face onto my uncle's chest. He got up and told both of them to get out of the house.

I could understand he couldn't be in front of either of them. My mother's affairs started over a year ago, but ended a few months ago. My mom stayed away for a week at her father's house. When we asked where mom was and why she left our parents would sum it up with grandpa's sickness and she went to help him. My dad eventually allowed her to come back. Ever since then, dad had been distant.

Mom’s performance at home had been up-and-down. One minute she was doing great and the next she was negligent. The day my dad caught them he was coming home to take my mom out for lunch. He absolutely had no clue or suspension mom was having an affair, so when he came home the sight of them was a sucker punch, a low blow. When I heard my parents through the wall everything started to make sense. I now understood the hostility for my dad, I understood the atomicity. The upsetting fact that you lay next to someone you hardly trust. I had no idea. How did he do it? Although I now knew this I couldn't tell my brothers. It would only open up another can of hatred toward my mom. This information I wouldn't even know until later, but that night I found myself thinking of Madison.

Chapter 5

That night I'd already planned not to go to the back of the school, I didn't want the chances of running into Madison. I reached over to my nightstand and grabbed my notebook and started writing down what I felt about my mom's affair. I had to admit it hurt to know. My mother and my uncle? How could they do something so untrustworthy, something so vile. I couldn't even imagine what My mom was thinking. Everything started making sense now. It still didn't give my dad an excuse for his domestic abuse. I wonder if the neighbors went through what the Mars family went through. Sometimes it felt like we were the only people in the world to experience such things. As I wrote in my book, I could hear the whispers continue. And then.

*Slam*!

A door shut forcefully. It was at the front door. Then I could hear my dad's planked feet walking to the kitchen. I remained in my room pretending to sleep. “Nita…” I didn't even hear my door open. Someone was in my room whispering. “Nita, are you awake?” It was my brother David.

“Yes,” I said silently, but trying not to be heard.

“Did you hear that?”

I asked him if someone had left, making it seem like I've been sleeping, as if I've never heard anything. I didn't want him to know.

“I think dad put mom out.” David came to sit on the edge of my bed. I left my nightstand light on so I could see him in full view. He had his joggers on with no shirt and his durag. I stayed under my covers while we talked.

“For what?” Still playing confused.

“They were arguing.”

“What did you hear?”

“Mom and uncle Danny were together.”

Damn. He heard them too, but I continued to be oblivious. “That explains everything.”

“I told you mom was terrible. Both of them, I'm leaving.”

“What, now?”

“No silly after this year on my scholarship. I can't take it here Nita." I didn't say anything. “I got an offer from LSU.” Now I spoke up.

“LSU!” This was great news. I slid up in my bed.

“Shh!”

“Sorry, I'm just excited. That's great when-”

Slam!

We both stopped because we heard the front door. This time the truck started and then it was gone. My brother and I stared at each other, and then my little brother stormed into the room like he saw a ghost.

“Lil D, are you okay?” I asked

“Yeah, where's mom and dad?” Tonight seem like no one was going to sleep

“They're gone, we're here alone.”

“Thank God!” I laugh though this was not funny, but he was right. It was great to finally be alone for a change. We sat around my bed not really knowing what to do.

“Dante, I'm not going to be here this summer, I'm leaving for LSU.” David said.

“No, you can't leave, what are we going to do?" he shot back. Dante was nearly in tears at the news. I knew they weren't tears of joy, but tears of discomfort.

“I’ll come to visit once I get settled.”

“That's the same thing Darrell said, and he hasn't been here in two years.” It was true but it hurt it so bad. The truth always hurts.

“I promise.”

“David, don't make promises you won't keep.” I finally spoke up.

“We're going to be okay.” David said, trying to pacify us. It didn't work. My brother Dante stumped out of the room. I jumped up to go after him, but David grabbed me.

“He'll be okay, let him deal with this.”

“It's gonna be hard.” I admitted.

“I know but I will not stay away.”

“Please don't because we really need you.”

And with that David walked out. We were really home alone. The house had a different atmosphere to it. I laid down, cut off my light and fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow.

Chapter 6

Ever since my first experience with Mia I was itching for another taste of her lips. Yes, she was my cousin, but I looked at it as someone safe that I could share my tenderness with. I knew she wouldn't say anything to anyone. I couldn't afford being exposed. That day five years ago I knew I saw someone at the door, but it didn't stop me, not even a little bit. I would ask my parents to spend the night at my cousin's house. They would agree of course, simply because my uncle's stayed closed, so if my parents needed me to suspend my stay They could come quickly.

After the first time I started coming a month later on the regular. my dad would drive me to their house on the Other Side of Town and When We Showed Up my cousin was already waiting for me. I would only spend the weekends because we had to go to school. Mia and I attended different schools. She went to Saint Angels middle school and later went to Saint Angels high school. I would see Mia during school when our sports teams would face off. We will meet up during football games in the bleachers. Mia would take me into her house. Then my dad would leave and we would head to her room, But not before I spoke to my aunt and uncle. Sometimes my uncle would be out running errands or if my dad dropped me off at night they would be in bed and I would stop in their room.

“Hello Ellie.” I would say with a smile. My aunt would smile back. I would then speak to my uncle.

“What's up? Honey.” My uncle would reply with a wink. I would run out for the room before they would go to any further questions. Entering Mia’s room you could never know what she was doing. She could be playing on her phone, playing the video game, reading or just painting her nails and that's exactly what she was doing. Her nails were cherry red, along with her lips. I became a sucker for lips at a young age of ten years old. I knew I would already have full lips.

“Mia, your nails look so pretty,” I exclaimed honestly.

“Thanks boo I can do yours.”

“Yes, let's do it.”

“Come here, sit down.” I found a spot on the floor next to her on her towel. She used a towel on the carpet to catch any spills. My aunt almost killed Mia the last time she spilled nail polish, so since then she started using the towel.

“What color do you want?”

“Blue please.” I giggled. Blue was my favorite color

“Why do you laugh?” Now she asked me why I was laughing, but she always laughed and never let me know why, leaving me in the blind. I still told her though. “Because I'm happy. We can start being together.”

“Yeah, you're right. The whole weekend”

I took off my socks and shoes while she cyphered through her nail kit. I was so ready. This was the first time my cousin and I could spend the weekend together. I preferred to be at her house. My parents tried not to expose anyone to the tyranny of a household we had even though my parents and her parents were close. They knew a little but not much so when we spent time I would definitely be at her house. My cousin was painting my hands first and she was taking gentle strokes of the brush.

“Mia, remember when you asked me if I was interested in any boys?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I'm not. I mean there is one boy in my art class who is cute, but I'm just feeling there is no way he would be attracted to me.”

“And why not? Anita you're beautiful.”

“He might not like black girls and plus he's white.”

“Are you serious right now?” She sounded upset. “You're being foolish.”

“I'm not. It's just-”

“You are.”

“-I like some girls' attention.”

“What! you're gay?” She said stopping her painting.

“Shh! Why are you screaming?” She was overreacting. I knew that would happen.

“What! I like girls too.” Oh my. That was all I could think of. My cousin liked girls. I'm saying I understand enjoying being around them is one thing, so what did she mean?

“Like how?” She grabbed my hand and started finishing her last finger.

“You know like, like them like them.” And she was now complete with my nails. Now they had to dry, so she held out my hand and started blowing one while I blew the other. I had to admit they were pretty. Now to my toes.

“So you think about girls often?” She smirked.

“All day sister.” And with that she pecked my lips while I had my lips out already blowing them. Woah! I stared at her with her staring back at me. She smiled. “Let's kiss.” I accepted by resting my painted nails softly on her thigh. But before I leaned in. I got up, went to her door, opened it and peeked into the hall to hear if my aunt or uncle was up. I definitely heard them snoring, so I quickly shut the door lightly and started to lock the door. “No, don't! My mom likes to come and check on me at some time of the night, and if the door is locked, she will go bananas. I obeyed and sat back down without saying anything.

We both gauged each other and began locking lips. I trusted my cousin. I didn't like her in that way, but I looked at her as a teacher. I could tell she had already been kissing for a while. I opened my eyes and found my cousins closed. She seemed to be deeply engaged like she wanted to look experienced. She most definitely was for our age.

I was enjoying every second. It was so wet. And her breath tasted great. Minty from the toothpaste I figured. She stuck her tongue out. Putting the tip in, breaking through my teeth. I accepted it gracefully. I never felt this before, but something inside my heart, body and soul approved of every tongue flipped, the one hand on my chin, but not the hand between my legs. Mia was starting to try something that was maybe out of my league. She slid it in the bottom of my shorts so smoothly, I almost didn't notice but I had to quickly abort. She immediately stopped opening her eyes and asked me. Was I OK?

“Yes, just not yet that. Another time.” That was not what I was ready for. She looked like she felt awkward, so I kissed her real quick and asked her to put on a movie. She instantly grabbed her remote, turned on her TV, along with Netflix, and we surfed through the movies until we found a horror one to watch.

My cousin and I seemed to get closer. We looked at it as we were just learning, but truly I was enjoying those moments with her. When I thought about how we spent time together it made me want Madison more. I walked into school the next day looking for her. I could never find her moving through classes. I was in honor classes and this was a huge school. I wouldn't see Madison until after school. I very rarely ate lunch, so I wouldn't go to the cafeteria. I walked into Spanish class late but not too late. Just seconds after the bell rang. I was in the bathroom and class was right after lunch. I went to the bathroom because it's a perfect time to be alone.

Most people were in the cafe which freed the restroom of traffic. I sat on the toilet and took my pants off giving my legs room to spread. I started making circular motions between my legs and imagined how it would be for someone else to have their hands on me. I thought of Madison and then the bell rang. I had my eyes closed but they shot open in panic. I rushed to put back on my pants because lunch was over and I had to make it to Spanish class. But my thighs were soaked. Oh goodness. I was wet. I had to get a paper towel and dry myself up a bit. Time was ticking. I even came out of my underwear that time. I finally finished dressing and ran to class and then the last bell rang and seconds later I crashed in. Class didn't start. Ms. Rivera was sitting behind her desk.

“Buenas tardes, Anita,” she said as I walked to my desk.

“Hola, Buenas tardes, Ms. Rivera.

“¿Dónde estabas?”

“El baño, lo siento. Enfermo.”

“Ah ¿está todo bien?”

“Si gracias, Ms. Rivera “

Every eye was on me. I hoped I didn't stain my pants so when I finally reached my seat, I looked down and sure enough there was a wet spot on the inside of my thigh. I told myself that nobody saw it, they couldn't plus nobody knew that I rubbed myself in the restroom. I didn't even have time to wash my hands. So I took out my germ x, dabbed a little on. This day we were in groups like any other day. I noticed Matthew with Jessica Wilde. She was gorgeous. Her caramel skin, light complexion with brown curly hair. She was definitely mixed. You could tell by her features, but what gave it away was her green eyes, maybe from her mother. She wasn't as tall as me but I was done growing though I was 15. She was a senior.

I saw them together and just that fast I was over Matthew. He didn't do anything in particular, but I could tell by the way he was looking at her. What do I care about him? I would be looking at her the same and I actually was. She seemed to like him very much. She was smiling. Her teeth were so white. She had on lip gloss making her lip seem to pop. I could hear someone calling me, but it sounded like white noise. Matthew was now staring at me looking along with Jessica. Her green eyes were sparkling in the light as she looked at me. She smiled again showing her pearly whites. Her eyes.

“Disculpe Anita?” Ms. Rivera was literally standing next to me. I couldn't believe I got lost in space. Actually lost in beauty.

Everyone was either staring or laughing at me. I couldn't even look around. I was so embarrassed, but looking at my partner for the day, Charlie Peña, I felt the lesson was going to be okay. He was a scrawny kid. Cute and he had a curly fro. He was Spanish so he was great help. He helped me with rolling my tongue. I knew I would even learn a lot of Spanish. I did better pronouncing the words and even remembering. I had a hard time knowing how to spell Spanish words.

The bell rang after our lesson for the day was completed. Our classes were only a half an hour, but school was over. I decided to walk the halls, I'm glad I did because I ended up spotting Madison, but she didn't see me just yet because she was in the library standing between the book aisles. She was staring at something. I bent the corner, and bingo! I saw my brother, David and Jessica. The same Jessica from class. She was behind the computer with my brother talking. They were smiling at each other and then my brother leaned in to kiss her and she accepted it. Afterwards, Madison ran toward the exit and she was out of the door in seconds. I took off after her, and finally caught up with her in the bathroom. I knew it was her because I could hear the crying and sniffling. I took a moment before speaking.

“Madi…” I said, trying to be polite. She sniffed really hard then spoke up.

“Yes, who's there?”

“Anita…”

“What are you doing here?”

“I heard you crying. Are you okay?”

“Does it look like I'm okay?” I stop speaking, not knowing what to say. She unlocked the stall and came out wiping her eyes. “I'm good. What do you want?”

“Can I do something for you?”

“No.” She walked past me, threw her tissue away and walked out without saying another word.

“Madison, wait! I'm sorry, I just didn't like seeing you like this. I'd rather see you laughing and smiling. I prefer to be having conversations with you. You know, I actually started liking you hanging with me.”

She stopped and stared at me. Look me up-and-down and started walking again.

“What's with you, why do you like me?”

“May I ask you a question?”

“Sure.”

“Why did you stop coming to the back of the school?” I need to know something. Are we still friends? You just disappeared for days?” There obviously was something wrong. I needed everything to be fine.

“Well, now everything is really okay, thanks to your brother.”

“What is it about my brother?”

“I actually wanted to talk to him and maybe something more, but clearly he's not interested. I'm sick of it, no guy seems to get it that a girl likes them. They're clearly blind and I'm done. I really liked your brother. He started to like me too. We actually met sometimes before he went to practice. But he started to not meet in our regular location.”

“What location?”

“That's irrelevant, but now I see why. I saw him exchanging kisses with Jessica, so it's apparent he doesn't want me.”

“Should I say something?”

“No!” She was serious. She was firm and earnest about not mentioning anything. “Do not.” While walking and talking to Madison we stopped at the gymnasium that led to the field and Madison looked at me and made the decision to sit in front of the gym. “We can chill here for now on, if you'd like, please.”

I knew she couldn't enjoy the view of the players knowing that my brother was out there. “Of course, I just wanted to be with you.” Madison snapped her head and then relaxed. I smiled then sat down. Our school had many benches surrounding the premises, so we sat comfortably.

“You are so weird Anita,” she said, but jokingly, I believe every joke had some truth to it.

“Is that okay?” Without answering my question she asked me to pull out my notebook. I did, and she actually looked at it. Madison was skimming and flipping pages. Honestly, I was a bit nervous. I didn't want her to take off again.

“You really go through a lot, don't you?”

“Yes, but it's normal right?” I knew I exposed many of my thoughts. My life was in that notebook. My mom was a worthless cheater. My dad was an abusive drunk. My older brother Darryl was a selfish coward. I wrote in my notebook about everyone, even my brother, David. He was arrogant and secluded, such a distant unemotional prick sometimes. I couldn't think of much about my brother Dante. The little that I wrote Madison saw that I thought of him as a hate filled child with so much animosity toward my parents. What she did see was the feelings I had toward her. She now knew that I actually took our meetings as more of a date. She was a girl that roused me. She was attractive, striking and absolutely charming, if you know what I mean.

I could see her butt spread as she sat down. She had a nice full butt and her legs were wonderful. Her basketball practice was during the last hour of school so it would be difficult for me to attend and watch her. I knew she was good because she was a tall girl. I love that about her and she read every bit of it in my book.

“Anita. Wow, this is, this is something. Her eyes were wide. She hasn't yet shut the book and ran, so that was great so far.

“How long have you felt this way about girls?” She didn't ask anything about my family or anything. I had to face it. She only wanted to know about me being gay.

“Five years now.”

“What does it make you feel like?” She was curious, but I was ready for this. I decided I was going to share everything.

“I accept it. I know what I like. I feel free. I feel like an outsider sometimes, but who cares? We're open to liking what we like. And we are open to do what we want? I want girls, they're easier and understanding. I know I like you. The only thing about being gay is wondering what the other girls think or the other girl.”

“Show me.”

There was a time when I had to be shown and guided. And it was my time to take the wheel and I drove my lips into her so quickly that she wouldn't have had time to reject and she almost did until she felt how moist my lips were and when she didn't refuse I placed my hand on the side of her cheek. My legs started to tighten, but in between my legs started to become watery. I knew what was happening, I wanted fingers there, but instead, I continued to suck on her lips. They were captivating. She smiled graciously between kisses and broke away with her lips parted open in shock.

“Oh my Anita, you're good.

“You liked it?”

“More than that, I loved it. I just didn't know.”

“We never do until we do.” I knew Madison was locked in and she was every day after school. We no longer met at the back of school but at the front of the gym.

Chapter 7

Summer was coming and the seniors were high strung. The energy at Dodson high was exciting. Although I was a sophomore, I was feeling the thrill of summer as it was approaching. Exams were sent out and grades were put. Me being in honors classes for my exams I had to really buckle down and study. I was naturally smart but I wanted my scores to be the best in the classes. This year came and went. Next year I would be a junior. I've experienced much to say I was only in the tenth grade. I didn't have many friends, but when I wasn't spending time alone or at home, I would go out especially on the weekends. I was still with cousin Mia, but sometimes I would go out to vibe with lower classmen and upperclassmen. When I was with the lower classmen I would talk alot about when I became a senior, what I would do and how I would be.

The group of people I would spend time with was Marcus, a black high school junior. He was a player and he was attractive, light skin and average built. He could make anybody laugh. Alisa, a Spanish girl. She was Puerto rican. She didn't have a hard accent, but she did speak Spanish. She had huge breast and she was a year older than me. In her junior year she was 5’7 and quick because she ran cross country. As she ran her tits would bounce up-and-down and it was a pleasant sight to see, if you know what I mean. Cory was another black guy. He took a liking to me and he was okay. I could've even seen myself with him but he was just too quiet. I mean I was quiet, but Cory was too quiet. He had cornrows and long ones at that and I loved his hair but he was too dark for me also. Kelsey was a white girl with piercings and a few tattoos. She was a senior, but hanging out with lower classmen wasn't a bother to her. She was in a band called Screaming Devils and they would perform at school, at parties and at concerts in town. I loved to see her on stage with her bright red hair, pale skin, and in her mini skirt playing guitar. She was the lead singer. When she sang, she would swing her long hair in her face and whip it back. She was my height, so she stood up with the boys in the band.

I didn't find out who Madison's friends were until after she didn't come to the last day of school party. Her friends were Lacey, a hot cheerleader. Eric, a football player for the junior varsity football team and Brandon, a guy that she sort of liked Madi but pretended not to. I really expected her and her friends to come, which they didn't. They had their own plans to hang out at the bonfire with some other high schoolers. Madison and her friends were considered cool for sophomores because they were either Jockies or cocky. I never understood why she never mentioned them. We sat together for a few months throughout the year. I never had the nerve to bring it up because I was enjoying the moments we shared; they were electrifying. But when she didn't show up, I would either sit by myself or I would hang with my friends.

Alisa befriended me because we were in Spanish class together. We worked together before. We would meet sometimes after class because she would help me understand some of what Ms. Rivera was saying. Ms. Rivera would speak Spanish often in the class to get us used to her repetitive words. At lunch before me and Alisa would go to class we would meet up with the rest of our friends at lunch. Sometimes I would not go, actually a lot of times I would not go. It would surprise them every time I showed up.

“Anita, glad you can join us today.” Marcus would say sarcastically.

“Shut up Marc.” I would reply.

“Hey, Anita.” Kelsey said between eating her fries.

“Hi.”

“Aniiiita!” Alisa would say my name with a big smile. She was so sweet and her tits. You couldn't help but notice her tits. Just a glance.

“Aliiiisa!” I repeated her tone.

“What's up?" She said as I sat parallel to her.

“You. How's your running?”

She ran and ran and ran some more , it was what she did. Everytime she had time she would be on her feet running through a pair of shoes on her way through another new pair. When I used to sit in the back of the school, I would see her running the track if she wasn't running a route

“Better. I'm always getting a faster time. We have a marathon this summer. I'm going.”

“Guys! Are we going to the last day of school party? Everyone's going to be there.” Kelsey sounded so fired up about attending this party. She was right, everyone was going. It wasn't going to be your everyday high school party. Lower classmen and upperclassmen, practically the whole school were going to be there. So of course we had to go.

“Yes,” I said. I was ready.

“No, I'm good.” Cory finally spoke up. He was sitting there playing with his food.

“Why Cory? What do you have planned?" Shouted Marcus. He gave Cory a hard time, but we all knew that he would do anything to protect him.

“I have to clean my-”

“You don't have to clean anything, You're gonna go to the party.” I was glad Marcus stopped him. I wanted to see Cory with us.

“Fine.” Corey said, breathing out heavily.

“Because I want y'all to see me.” Kelsey interjected. She was probably going to perform for the school. “Cory, you don't want to see me?”

“Of course, he does.” Teased Alisa. Cory just stared at us with a wide mouth, shaking his head and out of nowhere Marcus shoved a fry into his mouth. Cory jumped back, but took the fry and ate it, he smacked Marcus on his arm at the same time the bell rang, and we picked up our things and headed in separate directions except for me and Alisa.

“What are you going to wear?” Alisa asked as we exited the cafe.

“Maybe denim.”

“Denim! I'm wearing a dress, and you should too. We have to look sexy.”

“I don't have any dresses, Ali.” I cried

“Good thing we're friends.”

“I've only worn a dress for my mom and dad's wedding. And maybe once at church.”

“We will find one that's perfect.”

“I can not even fit your size.”

I was three inches taller than her and also she was a little skinnier than me. There was no way I would fit her clothes. But here we were at her house trying on all the dresses. She had so many. They came with different sizes. Big and small, long and short one strap, two straps, no straps; some had slits in them. Alisa even had dresses that were see through.

“What are those for? I am speaking of the see through dresses. Does your parents even know you have that?”

“No. So hush! You never know what the occasion might be for.”

“What occasion might that dress be for?”

“I'm not answering that. Anyway, try this one.” She handed me a two strapped dress with my favorite color. I looked at myself in the mirror my friend had in her room. I haven't seen this person standing back at me in a long time. Since then, I've grown. My legs were exposed. The dress was skin tight. Alisa was shorter and smaller but it was perfect. I looked so hot. Alisa was gawking at me wide eyed and mouth.

“Close your mouth.” I said smiling.

“Anita…,” she remarked. I knew how she felt the dress completely made me into a new person.

“So…what? What do you think?”

“It's stunning. You will shut the party down. I have to find a dress here for me now.” Alisa started throwing clothes everywhere.

Eventually she found a dress that satisfied her. The dress was a thin two strap that had a slit down the left leg. It was gray with black lining. Alisa wasn't the type to compete but the style of her dress seemed like she wanted to match the skin I was showing. It wasn't too much, but she looked amazing. We began doing our hair. Alisa did my makeup, something I absolutely was not used to. Although I allowed it considering the event. our image definitely mattered so we were making sure everything was the way we wanted it. She even had me practice wearing heels. I didn't have a choice but to get accustomed to walking. It would be so embarrassing if I were to fall.

She put on music while we continued to prepare. Alissa Carra was blasting through her television speakers. I started to loosen up just a bit, relaxing myself. She switched the music to rap and eventually a Drake song came and I started dancing, forgetting I had heels on. They were only three inches, so it wasn't too hard for me. Alisa and I were gazing in the mirror side by side. I really loved her. I had a good feeling she knew I was gay, but neither of us tried anything. She completed my outfit with pretty jewelry. A bracelet. Hoop earrings. Two rings, one on the right finger and the other on the middle finger. I had a necklace and a glittered watch on my left wrist. She finished with Chanel perfume. We were breath-taking, so before leaving her mom took pictures.

“Ladies, you guys are gorgeous.” Her mom said.

“Thank you Mrs. Morales, " I replied.

“OK, now smile for the camera.” She snapped the photo. We took a look of course, and she was right. I couldn't even recognize myself but I loved it. Kelsey, our senior friend, drove to school, so she was the one who came to pick us up. She pulled in the driveway. When she opened the door she stepped out in a dress herself. Hers was black, which was her favorite color. She wore black leather boots that came past her knees to match. She was cute. Mrs. Morales took a pic of all three of us outside on the porch under the light. By now it was night, so the porch light illuminated us making us look like Charlie's Angels.

Afterwards, we hopped in the car and headed to the party with a song playing called “natural born sinner” by a band only Kelsey knew, but I was amped up. I was ready. I was alive. Alisa lived away from the school. She was able to go to the school in the district because her parents used her grandparents' address. When we finally arrived at school, it was so filled it was crammed. We found a parking spot and got out. You could hear the music from the parking lot. I immediately knew it was going to be awesome.

Chapter 8

As soon as we entered the entrance of the school gym I thought of Madi, how we made out a few times here. She was with her friends at the bonfire. We planned on going afterwards. The gym lights were off, but there were bright laser lights flashing like a rave. They were marvelous. I didn't party hard, but I enjoyed myself dancing with Alisa. Kelsey made her way to the back of the stage when we came in, but seeing her coming out was rocking. She looked startling with her face paint. Her band liked using red face paint and their band was an emo punk rock band. Their music was a trippy alternative rock genre. All I could say was they had the party rolling. My brother David stopped by for about an hour with Jessica Wilde. He was wearing a button down blue shirt. Gray pants with boots. Jessica had a blue dress on herself. Hers had thin straps and it came to her thighs. She had glitter heels, and when the lights shine on her you could even see the glitter on her face. She was radiant. She sparkled! Even her skin was beaming. Many times I caught them in the corner, and she was grinding on him like a stripper.

I didn't know Matthew was there. I stopped dancing with Marcus and Cory to ask Matthew Reeves from Spanish to dance. He accepted and Alisa replaced me and they watched me from a distance. They googled at us, I guess expecting something more. Matthew was gapping at my chest which made me feel confident. In class he never gave me those kinds of looks or attention, but I knew I did my best and Alisa knew what she was doing when she was fitting me for tonight.

Matthew started grabbing onto me and Dua Lipa “Levitating" was playing. I loved this song, so I freed my limbs dancing to the rhythm. I could tell he was delighted in my body because he kept pressing up against the back of me. He continued to and I just started to feel a bit clumsy which turned uneasy and then the song ended. I turned around and hugged him and walked away kind of regretting it. Catching up with my friends and saw that Kelsey was finally back. I was about to ask if they were ready to leave, but then Ellie Goulding “Lights” came on. The DJ, who was my brother Dante, knew exactly what song to play at exactly the right time because that song was one of Alisa's favorites. Earlier, David dropped Dante off to set up and left only to return later. Alisa was already high on the moments of tonight and the thrill of being together only made it more riveting. The song didn't last long and immediately I asked everyone if they were ready. They seemed like they knew how I was feeling. I was fine honestly.

Matthew was decent and he wasn't trying anything as far as I knew, but we all still left. We piled back in Kelseys car and started to make our way to the bonfire. It wasn't that far, but it was more of a trail in the woods. I could see from afar there were cars parked everywhere, but we parked somewhere random and got out. As we approached the scene I spotted Madison, along with some people around her. They were all drinking. When I came near them, Madison gave me a silicone cup.

“Hey Madi,” I said, taking the cup and taking a sip. The liquid inside I knew was alcohol. It was so strong but light and smooth, cold, but still burned when it touched my stomach. The music here had a nice vibe. French Montana “Lockjaw” was blasting through the speakers. Rap music was something a lot of high schoolers enjoyed, so if you couldn't find anything you could always get away with rap. The liquor was going straight to my brain, and I instantly started feeling the effect. It didn't take long for me to have an effect.

“Hey Nita, I want you to meet my friends. This is Lacy. The two guys are Eric and Brandon. Eric you probably have seen on the field. Brandon's a basketball player. You probably don't see him much because I took his position.” She replied with a snicker.

“You wish!” the Spanish guy who I'm thinking was Brandon spoke. He was tall and slender but in great shape. Eric was his height, but his chest was wider. He was a black guy with a faded haircut and squinty eyes maybe from the alcohol but they look closed, so I guessed he had tiny eyes. Lacy started laughing at Brandon's defensiveness.

“Hi Nita, I'm Lacy.” She was cute and she was shorter than me, but a lot of girls were. Her hair was put up in a bun and it was blonde. At night it glowed making it look glossy. She was wearing a crop top shirt, white short shorts with all white nikes, her shoes looked brand new like they'd never been worn . “Don't mind them.” She called me by my nickname.

“Hello Lacy,” I said as nicely as I could. Thanks for the heads up.

“What's up Madi? Hi guys.”

“What's going on?” replied Brandon.

“Hey, Anita.” spoke Eric “Are y'all sophomores.”

“No, I'm a senior.” Kelsey stated. I knew it felt good to say those words. I truly couldn't wait.

“Yeah, I've seen you around.” Brandon said as he noticed her. He knew Kelsey from her band's performance.

“Hey, Lacey, I'm Alisa. I've seen you at the football games. You're a cheerleader? Right?” She took it upon herself to grab a beer, popped it open and sat next to Lacy. “I'm a junior. I'm so ready for next year.”

“Yes, I am a cheerleader and I'm a good one,” she said matter of factly.” Lacy started walking away to another group of people “I'm going to cheer next year.”

“Oh okay. I'm a runner.” Alyssa said walking alongside Lacey.

“A good one too," remarked Cory. It's crazy because Lacy turned around, stared at him and kept walking with Alisa smiling. They left the rest of us.

“She's cute," Marcus said to Cory, trying to whisper. Brandon chuckled when he heard him, but didn't say anything, 9nly looked at Eric.

“Hey, bro, you know, she's taken,” commented Eric.

“Dude, we're not dating,” defended Brandon.

Madi stared at them, shaking her head. She looked at me and said “Let's leave these weirdos.” Madi was feeling good off the drink. I finished my first cup and went to fill it back up. We walked over to a log and sat down. “Do you like them?” She asked me.

“They're okay.” I replied.

“I know you're wondering how long we've been friends. Well, we have for a while. Before I started hanging out with you, I would roll with them all the time, but they soon started to see I was with you so they began asking questions so I told them we were friends and you're gay.

“Why? Why would you?”

“Anita, what's the problem? Are you ashamed?”

“That wasn't their business?” I was so heated. Madison was not supposed to do that. She was not supposed to spread my identity to the world. I just sat on the log sipping my drink stewing in my anger.

“Sorry I didn't think it mattered much.” I was not paying her any attention. I heard her voice, but I wasn't looking in her direction. Her voice began to diminish. While my eyes were still off in its own world in the distance, Matthew came into view. I was watching his steps. He was coming closer and he looked better the closer he got.

“Hey Sis.” I heard still mesmerized.

“Hey, Anita.” Matthew began smiling. His smile grew revealing more of his teeth

“Ouch!” was all I was able to say because Madison smacked me.

“He's not an angel," Madison stated, sounding a little annoyed. I was hypnotized by her brother.

“Big Matt!” screamed Eric. He came charging toward us and scooping all of Matthew in his hands. “Bro, let's party! B get Matt a drink.”

“Don't mind if I do. What's up Matt?”

“Are they always like this?” asked Alisa.

“They love the senior football team.” Kelsey remarked.

Brandon got a drink for Matthew and handed it to him and they made their way to the other groups of juniors and seniors on the football team. Fires surrounded a mass of fires in the center. One moment Madi was next to me and the next she was with Alisa, Kelsey and Lacey. Marcus went to chat it up with the rest of the jocks. He blended in nicely with the jocks. It consisted of players on the sports team. If you are not an athlete, then hopefully your grades were good enough to keep you in the loop. That's where I came in. I wasn't much of an athlete though I was a tall girl but my grades were astounding. I knew I would get a scholarship in academics. Cory wasn't an athlete himself which was why we were left together. Seemed strange to be really at a bonfire with Corry.

“How are you feeling?" I asked him. Now, everyone was a bit tipsy. Some of us were more than others, nearly drunk.

“I'm fine, what about you?” We sounded disoriented.

“Cory, come on, what's bothering you? Loosen up.” I was trying to help him adjust

“Everything's fine. The music, the fire, the drink; definitely the drink. Did you get some of the punch?” I did get some as soon as we arrived. The fires were moving, sparkling. The shapes of the trees were changing and swinging, I didn't take notice until I finally relax with Cory

“Look at the moon Nita.” I looked at the sky, and the moon was spinning like it was ticking. The moon ticked like a clock. We were laying on the ground staring into space. Matthew Reeves appeared over me, he reached out his hand and I placed mine in his. He pulled me to my feet. Eric was standing beside him. Matthew whispered something into my ears and kissed my cheek then smiled as he looked over to Eric. We started to walk away leaving Cory on the ground swimming in the stars.

Next thing I knew we were in the woods. Matthew had his arm around me the entire time. As we were walking, he led me to a tree and pressed my back up against it. He seemed to be so controlling but very calm, so demanding yet delicate. I couldn't help but give in to him. He held my left hand as he kissed my cheek again. His lips were so balmy. They were nice. With the right hand he pulled me closer by squeezing my butt. And pulling closer I felt more kisses on the neck. I smelled another aroma which to my surprise was Eric. I didn't know he actually came into the woods with us. I liked him too. He was cool. I watched him on the field when he practiced. He played on the defensive side of the ball in the back of the other players, and when my brother would mess up, Eric would catch the ball or block a pass by swatting it. Eric sometimes played with the seniors during practice, but would be subbed out of the game from time to time.

We made our way to the grass. Matthew was between my legs, while Eric was on the side. Eric slid his hand under my shirt grabbing my breast. “Umm, Wait…” I moaned. He didn't stop.

Matthew continued exploring my mouth. My brain felt like it was in another dimension like we were actually in space. I lost track of time. I tended to do that but this time I was open. I was drunk. I drank two beers and three cups of punch. And I'm sure the punch was spiked. I knew it was, but it was so good. The boy's touching and kissing felt like swimming. I couldn't feel where all the water was going. All I knew was it covered my entire body. When I swam I didn't swim with clothes on, so when my dress came off I didn't need help. When my dress came off I needed no assistance and my panties were left, but I swam in My underwear or a bikini. Guys always took off their shirts, so Matthew being without his didn't seem out of the ordinary. He used his fingers to plunge inside of me. My body already felt moist so my insides being wet didn't feel indifferent. Matthew spread my legs and slid in me rougher than he was touching me. It sort of hurt, I yelled.

“Ahhh!” which was muted by Eric covering my mouth. He followed by holding my hands down with his knees. My arms were raised above my head and Matthew continued to shove himself in me. I bit Eric on the hand and he slapped me and pulled my hair. The pain was excruciating. Matthew began choking me. His grip was powerful like a gorilla grip. He wouldn't let go. Eric jumped off my hands freeing them but I was so sore I tried clawing at both of them. I tried twisting and turning but both of their hands were so strong around my neck. I barely was able to breathe

“Bro, fuck her!” Matthew grunted.

Eric pulled his pants down hastily and entered me with so much force. I began gagging and they both still had their hands wrapped around my neck. As soon as I got some air in my lungs I tried to scream for help but it only came out as a gasp. Oh my. The pain was so agonizing. I was sure my insides were bruised by the pressure that was being applied between my thighs. Eric punched me on the cheek then grabbed me under my chin, shoving his nails into my jaw and spitting on me like I was garbage. He finally got off pulling up his pants. My eyes were hidden into the back of my head. Between blinking I could see him and Matthew running off and then I blacked out.

I woke up and it was still dark outside. I could see the stars in the sky. Was I lying next to Cory? The last thing I remember was looking at the moon, but then I felt agony in my legs, around my neck and my face. My body was sore. I then remembered walking In the woods with Matthew and Eric. Then I started to assess the situation. I realized I was naked. My dress was off. My underwear were ripped. I began walking anywhere out of the forest trying to find a road. Some form of direction. My brain was so dizzy. It was more cloudy than the sky.

After about ten minutes of walking I fell into exhaustion leaning against a stone. My legs hurt tremendously, but I had to get up and walk. After maybe another ten minutes I found a trail so I followed it for about fifteen minutes and ran into a road with a house. I had to make a call because I was in so much discomfort. I couldn't walk home either. I stepped up on the porch and saw a small light on inside, so I knocked and heard a voice on the inside

“Who's there?” the voice screamed.

“Anita Mars. May I use your phone please?”

The door swung open and a man about my height came to the porch, he was solid. He reeked of stale cigarettes and a hint of scotch. I knew the smell because my mom was a smoker and my dad was an alcoholic. His five o'clock shadow was coming in and his head matched the length. He wasn't bald, but he was shaved extremely low.

“What? What is it you want?”

“ I need your phone!” I yelled back. He was being rude, I was a little afraid I had to admit, but I wasn't going to let this man scream at me. He just stared at me but he eventually let me in. I walked in, but stopped in the doorway. He shut the door then told me to follow him. He led me to the kitchen and handed me the phone. I took it but saw that there was no service. “It doesn't work.” I told him.

“Let me see that thing,” he said snatching the phone away and looked at it for a long time. Then he attached it back to the wall. “Just wait until my wife comes home.”

“You can't be serious.” I was so shocked by his solution, but it seems like my only choice.

“Unless you want to walk?”

“Do you have a bathroom?”

“Down the hall on the right, But I warn you, there's no door.

“What house doesn't have a door on the bathroom?”

“It’s okay, it's not as bad as you think.”

I started walking down the hall and it was so obvious where it was located. This whole place seemed like a big trip. I looked into the bathroom from the hall before entering. I walked in and looked in the mirror. I was really about to do this. I'd never done this before. But the liquor was running through me like a racehorse. So, I did what I could do to make it quick. I sat down after pulling up my dress. I began to relieve myself. I sounded like I was shooting bullets into the toilet water. When I finished I started looking for the tissue and the man in the house materialized out of nowhere holding a roll of tissue.

“Come get it,” he said. This guy was crazy, he had to be. He had to be delusional. Was he tripping on acid and knew how he looked? I just stared at him, embarrassed and nervous at the same time. Was he playing with me? I didn't move. I was stuck. He was just standing there rolling the tissue around just teasing me, taunting me. I began to pick up my panties, and in a second he was on me with his hand wrapped around my wrist. Oh my, this could not be. I actually was terrified.

“Please…” I pleaded. He snatched me up. My underwear were still at my ankles. I could barely walk. He turned me around, lifted my dress up and we stared at each other in the mirror. He came closer to my face and started speaking to me.

“You need a ride. You need a phone, and now you need my fucking tissue. You are such a needy little cunt.” He started untying his joggers. They fell with one pull of the string. Exposing his full length.

“Sir, please don't do this…”I was nearly crying, more like whining.

“Shut up you black bitch and you might get what you need.” I actually needed all those things but I didn't need what he was about to do to me. He pressed himself into me with his strength. I reached around trying to scratch his chest. I tried stumping on his feet, but it only made my underwear come off more. He grabbed the back of my head and smashed my forehead into the mirror

“Arrrgh!” I cried. He was stroking himself repeatedly into me and I started to get dizzy, almost blacked out again, but right before I was about to I saw where the mirror was chipped with shattered blades, and grabbed a shard of glass and swung the blade around my head. I didn't know where I hit but I heard him yelp and broke apart from me. He fell backwards onto the wall and with my underwear at my ankles I hobbled out of the bathroom.

Once I was out I jumped out of them with only my dress. They were almost ripped anyway. As soon as I was in the hallway I ran again, but the man grabbed the corner of my dress and ripped a shred. I was pulled back a little but I charged even more. I was out of the house. I looked left. Then I looked right, then behind. I saw a car coming down the road, but when I looked behind I saw that maniac rapist sprinting toward me. I didn't wait a second. I ran into the street into the forest to hide in the woods, not before I turned around to see the same car turning into the driveway running into the guy. I kept running and pressed forward. “That's what you get, you disgusting piece of shit.” I spoke to myself.

I didn't stop running for about five solid minutes. Really till I was out of breath. I walked through the woods. I couldn't understand how I ended up in these sexual situations where I was completely violated like trash. What is it that goes through the mind of a man? What is it that makes them want to do what they do? my body ached. It hurted to walk. I hated those guys. The way they entered me and took control of me and my body as if they're dominant. Does a woman have to be put into submission? Are we supposed to be tamed animals? I knew that I couldn't let anybody know about anything.

Chapter 9

I eventually found my way home. As soon as I exit the woods. I saw on the side of the road a sign that pointed to my city of Dotson and started heading in that direction. In the car it was about fifteen minutes to the bonfire, but an hour and a half on foot. It was so draining to hike the way back to my house. Arriving home it was ten minutes to six. I walked up to the porch, I didn't have my key. I must have lost it during my mishap, I had to knock on the door. I could hear my dad coming to the door and when he opened it he immediately started shouting.

“Anita!” He yelled. He was enraged. He had this look of fury on his face. He grabbed me by the shoulders and pulled me inside, shutting the door with other hand. When the door was shut I spoke up.

“Dad, I'm sorry.” I whined. I actually was afraid this time. He shoved my back against the door causing a sharp pain. “ Dad, not now.

“You better have a good reason.”

“I was raped. Ahh!” He clinched my throat, making me gag and he started clenching even harder and I began heaving. I couldn't breathe. I was losing breath.

“How…could…you!”

“Dad…” I could barely get any word out. He lifted me off my feet by my neck like it was nothing. “Please…”

“AH!” my dad hollered and dropped down to his right knee. He dropped me and I was gasping for air on the ground. I knew my neck would be bruised because when I touched it I could feel the pang in my throat like it was crushed. When I gained vision after almost blacking out, I noticed my brother Dante holding a knife in his hand. He went to stab my dad again in his back and it went through. My dad cried out once more, but this time he swung, clipping my brother and I used that time to regain my footing and opened the door. Before exiting I saw my brother David running up and kicking our dad in the jaw.

“You all are going to get it.” He said, spitting out blood in his mouth. I ran out of the house and didn't turn around. I didn't know where I was going. I was full of panic, fear , adrenaline and everything else in between. Tonight had been miserable. I left my friend's house to have a great time. I was supposed to enjoy this night and create memories I will remember forever, but now I found myself running for my life from my own house.

Since I didn't know who to call or where to go, the only place close by was my aunt's house. They were about an hour's walk away. I took a shortcut through houses and a nearby neighborhood. I was running but eventually fatigue set in and I was out of breadth. I walked the rest of the way and soon came up to their house. I didn't go to the front door. I found Mia's window. I knocked softly and there was nothing. I kept knocking and after a while I saw Mia lamp turn on. She walked to the window and I was standing outside in the morning air which was breezy, but not too cold. Mia opened up for me and was surprised. “Anita.” Mia announced.

“Yes, cuz it's me.”

“What are you doing here?” She asked, trying to whisper, and reached her hand out to help me in. Once I was in her room, I felt secure; safe was the better word.

I stopped spending the night with my cousin all the time when I started high school. We always went to different schools. While I went to Dotson high in the district I lived in, Mia went to Saint Angel's high. It was kind of hard to always be at her house. But this morning, on a Saturday, I was running from my dangerous father and ended up at her house. She was laying in bed so I joined her. It was cold in her house, which made it so comfortable.

“What happened to you? Your neck is bruised.” Mia was whispering I guess to not wake her parents so I followed.

“My dad was choking me.” I replied. At the same time, I started to tear up at the thought of it. “Mia, I can't take it anymore. I'm so tired of him. He's always doing something. And my mother. Did you know her and your dad were having an affair?”

We were under the blanket breathing in each other's faces. My uncle liked to keep it so cold that breathing under Mia's blanket with our hot breath still was perfect. My cousin jumped up, threw the covers off and just stared at me.

“Are you serious?” She spoke up finally. I just nodded my head. “How do you know for sure?” She started lowering her voice again.

“I heard my parents in their room fighting about it. How don't you know?”

“Does my mom know? They don't tell me shit.”

“Maybe so.” I really didn't know but when I began to think about it, I actually realized that my family stopped visiting them. Not completely but a lot less than before. Mia slowly lowered herself back down to a lying position covering her head again with the blanket?

“They never told me.” She cried. She was actually in tears. She wasn't sobbing but tears were falling down her cheeks. It was terrible to think our parents were like this. Never thought that they were capable of causing this kind of confusion and attention within the family. Mia and I laid there holding each other baffled. She stopped crying eventually.

“Mia I was rape.” I couldn't hold it any longer. I didn't know what she would have felt but I couldn't keep that from her. My cousin was hysterical. I stared at her eyes. She was speechless. When she finally spoke her voice cracked.

“How?” What she meant by “how”.

“What do you mean? At the last day of school party I was drunk and high and two guys held me down and raped me. I didn't know it was going to go that far and I started tripping. We were just walking in the woods and I should've-”

“Just stop. You don't have to relive it, you're here now.” And she put her arm over and kissed me on the forehead. I started crying again and cried myself to sleep. It was only a few hours later when I woke up.

It was because my aunt Ellie was screaming while walking to the room. She opened the door and saw me laying in the bed. “Anita?” she sounded surprised.

“Hey, aunt Ellie.” I was nervous when I spoke. I already knew what she was thinking.

“Get up. Your dad and brothers are at the hospital.” She wanted to question me, but she didn't press it. I didn't hesitate to move. Why were my brothers in the hospital and how were they? Ellie turned around and yelled at Mia to hurry up in the shower. I needed to shower myself, but I wouldn't have had time. Mia was coming out and I knew we would be leaving. I started to make my cousin's bed and found some other clothes to wear. The clothes I had on were soggy. And though I didn't take a shower, the least I could have done was put on clean clothes. By the time I was done my cousin came out of this bathroom wearing black jeans and a white Louis Vuitton T-shirt.

“I see you've changed. Is it my clothes on you or yours?”I didn't answer her but I rolled my eyes and walked to the bathroom. “You look great.” I just smiled as I entered the bathroom and pulled my shorts down.I had to pee so bad. The night before was an adventure. I wondered as I sat on the toilet about if girls around the world endure the pain of being forced into sex by men. I felt terrible. I felt humiliated, I had no one to help me or call if something like this happened again. Those boys and all boys who think it's OK to force themselves on girls to get what they want deserve death. Yes, it was harsh and yes, it may have been a bit too much, but with girls it's more genuine. I wouldn't have to feel like I'm dominated. I technically wouldn't be submissive either but I feel with a girl when I say stop they will stop. I got up and looked in the mirror and wondered why my dad and brothers were in the hospital. Last thing I remembered was my little brother Dante standing over my dad holding a knife. My brother, Darrell couldn't be one that was in the hospital. He hasn't been home in almost three years. So it had to be both Dante and David. How did David end up in the hospital? The only explanation was that he got involved with dad and Dante. I understood it, I just couldn't bear it myself. I felt like a coward.

My father should have defended me. He should have protected me. He should have found those boys and taught them a lesson to not mess with his daughter. Instead, he lashed out on his daughter. That shouldn't be, but here I was going to see him. I continued to look in the mirror and I had to say I did make Mia clothes look better. I had on a pair of her jeans shorts with my long legs out with a red thin strap cropped top shirt that showed my stomach a bit. I was wearing her Nike forces, the all white ones. I felt cute and I was glad my cousin took notice. I finished up in the bathroom and walked out. My cousin was walking past me.

“Come on, let's go wait in the car.” She passed me up grinning. Still, I couldn't help but laugh at her. We tended to do that , laugh and not know why , just plain goofy.

I never understood why parents rushed their kids to get ready, but were late themselves. Sitting in my aunt's car I was anxious. Five whole minutes later plus about thirty seconds, aunt Ellie finally came out the garage door. She entered the car without saying anything, turned on the AC and hit the garage door button. She put the AC on full blast and it felt invigorating. Soon we were off to the hospital in silence. My aunt's music was playing. I hated Charlie Wilson songs, but they had so much meaning; my aunt loved them. Though we rode all the way without saying anything, my aunt didn't even look back at us. Mia was looking at me, then back out the window, then at her phone, back looking at me. I guess she didn't think I noticed, but we were probably thinking the same thing. How bad were my brother's and father? The hospital we were going to was in town. I was almost afraid to face my dad. He was a hulk of a man. I could only imagine the bed the nurses had to lay him in and the injuries they had to repair on him.

And my brothers. What would they think of me? The sacrifice they made to defend me from my dad's tyrant. Would I have done the same? Of course I would've. Was Mia thinking of any of these thoughts? What about the fact the both of us were homosexuals and our parents didn't have a clue? They would have disowned us. It's already hard at school and being stood off from most of the population. I figured my parents already knew they were just waiting for me to come out of the closet and openly admit it. I would eventually tell them, only on my time when I was ready. We arrived at the hospital faster than I predicted. My aunt seemed to be going slower than traffic, but she took the best routes in the shortest time. We took the back roads instead of the interstate. We pulled into the parking garage, found a spot and hopped out. Scoping out the parking garage the thought of being attacked by someone there seemed so easy to get away with, it was so wide open. We came to the elevator and took the ride up to the reception floor.

Chapter 10

David threw a right hook to my dad's face and threw another. He absorbed both and reached both of his arms around him. As he came upon his feet, he lifted David up in the air and looked around. Dante, still holding the knife, stabbed my dad in the leg and both him and my brother crashed through the living room table. Dante ran and jumped on my dad's back and rear naked choked him only for my dad to climb to his feet. He started swinging side to side attempting to untangle my brother, but Dante clenched his teeth down on his ear like Mike Tyson himself. . Dante didn't try to startle my dad. He bit down to physically harm him.

“Son of a bitch!” Dante had a piece of my dad's bloody ear in his mouth. David regained consciousness and surveyed the room and found my dad running backwards with Dante on his back smashing into the wall. He got up, dislodged the knife from my dad's leg and pierced him in his belly. My dad turned his body along with Dante and knocked David sideways. My little brother flew off crumbling to the floor. David jumped, Superman punched my father in the side of his head, leaving him dazed. He kicked him in his wounded leg, knocking him to one knee again. He hooked to the right. My dad spit more blood and pulled him by the shirt ripping it as he brought David down eye to eye. David punched dad in the ear, his bit ear, and my dad yelled. Dad leaned back, pulled out the knife and brought it down on my brother's shoulder. He looked up with tears in his eyes and saw my mom walking in the door. She ran over and pushed my dad to the floor knocking David back also. Dante slammed into my mom. Making her tumble and begin punching out dad repeatedly in the face.

“Dante!” my mom yowled. He quickened at her scream and halted from striking him. By then, he was knocked out. My mom already had the phone to her ear calling for emergency. She had no choice. There was just too much blood. Dante was on my dad gasping for air with his fist balled up crying tears down his face. Mom had removed the knife from David's shoulder and was applying pressure to his open wound. She was telling the operator to hurry and hurry was what they did. They were there in under ten minutes.

Chapter 11

I walked into my dads room first. He was asleep, but I was able to see all of his bandages. The police were also present. This might have been more serious than I figured. The police turned his head to look at me. It was the black police officer from the last altercation. I almost forgot his name, but as he turned his badge gleamed, showing his tape. “Hello, Ms. Mars, I'm officer Wilde.” And it finally clicked.

Dotson high was a really big school, making the community big, so it was hard to keep up with everyone and everything. This wasn't the little town where everyone knew everyone and everything about everyone and everything. But this was Jessica Wilde's father. The beating they gave my dad came fleeting through my brain. Without saying anything I turned around and walked out of the room. I ran right into a pair of scrubs. “Oh, nurse, I'm-”

“Woah. Excuse you,” the nurse chuckled, grabbing hold of me.

“Sorry, where are my brothers?”

“Is everything all right?” Officer Wilde asked, coming closer.

“Anita, what's wrong?” My aunt interjected.

“Your brothers are right across the hall, Dear,” the nurse finally said.

“Show me please,” I said frantically, and with a hand on the small of my back the nurse led me to their room.

“Of course, I'm Nurse Fields by the way,” she said with a smile. “And you are Anita, the boy's sister. Do you know what caused this? The mother is in complete shock. David, your brother has not said anything since and Dante.

“I. I don't know.”

Mia came up behind me holding my hand as we walked into the room.

“Nita! Nita!” Dante started whimpering soon as I stepped into the room. I ran over to his bed. David was right next to him with his eyes closed.

“Dante, are you okay?

“No! Dad just, he just lost it and and I didn't know what to do I just.”

“It's OK, it's OK.” He was in tears as he tried to find the words to say.

“Nita…” A voice spoke silently. It was David.

“David, how are you?”

“Mmm.” David moaned, adjusting himself in bed, turning toward me. “I'm good, where's dad?” Wow, he really asked that. After everything, of course he still cared. “Is he okay?”

“Dad's in the other room.” I replied to him as I came closer rubbing his head. “How's your shoulder?”

“It's not my throwing arm, so we're good.” He said with a lift of his lip. “Cousin Mia, what's up?”

“Hi David, glad you're doing better.” She said and then the police walked in with mom and aunt Ellie.

“Boys, glad to see you all are responsive.”

“David, Dante. Are y’all alright? I'm so sorry I should've been there,” mom stated.

“But you weren't.” Dante spoke up.

“She called for help Dante” David affirmed. I couldn't believe it. He actually stood up for mom, but he was right. She showed up late but it was better late than never. Mia and I went to sit on the couch by the window. Officer Wilde went toward the boys to ask them what happened. They were very uncooperative, telling him nothing, seeming to have amnesia. My brother Dante went from talking to us to not saying a word. Officer Wilde eventually gave up and said he would be back another time for further questioning.

When he walked out of the room, it finally clicked whose father he was. That was Jessica's dad, officer Jacob Wilde.

“David, I didn't know he was Jessica's dad.” I uttered

“Yeah,” was all he said.

“And you're cool with that.”

“David, what is your sister talking about,” mom interrupted?

“It's nothing.”

“What is it, son?” Mom was nagging.

“Mom, please! Ow oh.” David winced in pain. I knew it by the looks of it. I jumped up and ran over to him along with mom. “I'm OK, I'm OK.”

“Rest son, I'm sorry. Just get you some rest, you too, Dante.”

“I'm ready to get out of here,” Dante wined.

The hospital was not far and I could imagine how my little brother felt. I knew he wanted out of that place to get back to his regular life. But the hospital had their policies.

When I went into my dad's room, we immediately locked eyes. I had a look of disgust, hate, and sadness at the same time. I approached my dad's bed as his eyes followed me.

“What happened Dad?”

“You children need to learn some respect. I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. I shouldn't have to go through this with my family.”

“Dad, stop.” I couldn't take it anymore. He wasn't making any sense.

“That's what I mean. Ow! Grr! Dammit.” He caught a sharp pain in his belly. My dad was induced a lot, but his children were going through just as much. It wasn't easy for anyone. Our family had so many problems. I had a strange feeling that we were the only family that went through what we went through.

“Mr. Mars, glad to see you're awake.” Officer Wilde walked in. Their stare off was so perplexed. The history between my father and officer Wilde was pristine. Everything seemed to flash back before them.

“Why are you here, sir?” My dad instantly was pissed off .

“I came to ask you the same. Why are you here?”

“Clearly, I was hurt. I was attacked. How are my sons, by the way?”

“They're fine. Yes, they're okay, but they seem shattered. I've questioned them, but neither of them had answers. And to be frank, they seem shocked. Could you know why?”

“No. And we're going to keep it that way!” My dad shouted. He was leaning up in his bed with the look of rage in his eyes. “If they haven't said anything, then that's what happened. Nothing.”

“Enough, Mr. Mars. I'll leave you to it, but you will have to answer to me. Good day, everyone.”

As he left, everyone's eyes were trained on him. Officer Wilde left the room, but I was lost for words. I didn't have the energy to tolerate my dad. So like Officer Wilde, I walked out of the room. As soon as I stepped out, officer Wild was still standing outside in the hall.

“Anita.” I jumped, startled by his presence.

“Yes, officer.”

“I know he's your father, but we need answers.” He said “we” meaning the police. My siblings and I were taught growing up not to talk to the police.

“I don't know why I wasn't there, sorry.” I walked past him.

“Please.” He pleaded, grabbing my arm. I stopped looked down and immediately he released me.

“Sorry,” I said , rejecting him and walked back into my brother's room. When I walked in, they both were asleep. As soon as they heard me, my brother David just opened his eyes. Dante stirred in his sleep and blinked himself awake.

“What did he say?” David was the first to speak up.

“Dad is ignorant and it's not looking good. Officer Wilde was on his case and of course dad lashed out. He was being belligerent, but officer Wilde was not having it.

“What did he say?” David repeated.

“He said you guys do not need to say anything, to keep it that way, like everything was an accident.

“Nita, it wasn't an accident. Dad attacked you. He tried to choke you to death. And I couldn't see that happen to you. I'm so tired of him. He's only going to try it again. I'm tired…” Dante started tearing up. I can see a tear coming down his cheek. I can hear the fear in his voice. He didn't want to return home. I knew that look.

“You don't have to worry, I won't let him get another attempt to lay a finger on either of us.” David started saying all this and I was so happy no one except us were there. Maybe it would have been nice for my mom to hear this. Maybe it might have made her want to step up a bit. My mom and my aunt were in the room with my dad. My uncle didn't arrive yet.

“David, please don't do anything drastic. Remember he is our father.” I said trying to make him understand as always, really the both of them. I'm always letting them know when it comes to love you accept things with your loved ones. I was the one trying to find peace.

“I'm thinking we should get a job, all of us and move out. I could always put my football on hold.” What was David saying?

“You sound crazy as hell right now.”

“Apparently that's what you suggest. Because what I suggest is we take him out so we never have to deal with him anymore.”

*Ring! Ring! Ring!*

We all went silent. As I walked toward the door I had to go around Dante's bed. I got to the door and stepped out into the hall. I looked left. I looked right and saw officer Wilde on his phone down the hall. I came back into the room and shut the door. With my back against the door and my mouth wide open I just stared out the window before. I eventually ran over to look out.

Chapter 12

When I approached the window. I saw the daughter of officer Wilde walking through the hospital parking lot. At that moment, something started to make sense. Jessica Wilde was on the phone with her father. She had to be. Maybe ensuring him that she had arrived.

“What. Nita What do you see?”

I was out of it for a while, just scoping everything out. I barely heard my older brother David say something. His voice was audible but I was trying to figure out what I saw too.

“Um, I think Jessica's coming up,” I reply. I didn't see neither father nor daughter. But soon as I thought I lost him he appeared and got into his car and drove off. Minutes later, Jessica came stumbling in. As soon as she saw David, she ran to his bedside, rubbing her hand on his face.

“Oh, poor thing. How are you? Are you okay?”

“I'm fine.”

She turned around and spoke to me. I told her I was okay. Then without being asked, Dante said he was fine also. Everyone just looked at him.

“Jessica, were you talking to your dad?” I had to know.

“When?” Was all she said?

“Just a little while ago. Were you on the phone with him before you came in?”

“Oh! Yes, he told me before he came that he was coming to the hospital because David and his brother were here.

“Okay,”

My mom and aunt Ellie walked in. They were just staring at us for some time before my mom broke the silence.

“David, Dante, how are y'all?

“Everything's okay, mother,” David announced.

“Okay, you guys are going to be here another night, but are going to be discharged tomorrow morning.”

“I'm staying with them. Mom,” I told her.

“That's fine by me. I will leave but be back tomorrow.”

My mom came over and kissed both of her sons on their heads. It was so uncustom to what she did that Dante jumped at her gesture. She told them she loved them and both her and my aunt walked out. Before they came in, they were in the room with my dad for a while. He was right across the hall. As the hours passed into the night, I started to think about Madison and how I wished she could have been here with me.

I started to think of Madi. And how she made me feel. She probably would not believe me if I told her that her brother raped me. I cared about her so much. I didn't want to ruin what we had. It took so much to get her to like me. I knew I had deep feelings for her and hope to God that she's shared mutual feelings for me. I could ask her to be my girlfriend when I ran into her again. Maybe I could have called her but I didn't. I just wanted to tend to my brothers until they were out.

While sitting in the chair next to David's bed. I fell asleep and started dreaming about the terrible experience Of running into That complete psycho. The man was really crazy. In my dream, I was wondering how someone's bathroom in their house didn't have a door. How or why it wasn't replaced was a mystery. I dreamed I was fighting him and he got the upper hand on me and I didn't escape. He forced himself in me and I was bleeding out of my behind. In my dream, I couldn't cry for help. His wife didn't arrive and I didn't get away. I saw myself with tears falling down my cheeks. Not only was this man huge, but he was drunk. He was strong, very authoritative. He had control of me and my body. I had no defense. I couldn't protect myself and that was an issue. I never wanted to be put in a situation where I wouldn't be able to guard myself but he had an advantage over me.

My dreams switched from the old man in the house to Matthew in the woods. He held me down by himself and my body seemed numb because I couldn't push him off. His hands were gripping my face, crushing my jaw. It seemed real for some reason. I felt the throbbing and I couldn't scream. Then I remembered Eric punched me. This time he punched me even harder.

“Ahhh!” My yell made my eyes burst open. My dream forced me awake and a nurse came running into the room. My brother's both jumped awake, staring at me.

“Ma'am, is everything all right? The nurse sounded tender when she spoke.

“Yes,” I responded. “Just a bad dream.” More like a nightmare. I got up and started walking to the door. “I'm stepping out for a minute. I'll be back.”

“Nita, are you sure you're okay?” Dante asked worriedly.

“Yeah, Lil D, I'm good. I'm coming back. I just need some air.” I stepped out and headed to the elevator. Once outside I got on my phone and tried calling Madi. She picked up on the second ring. Sometimes I gauged the amount of rings It took for someone to answer, if you know what I mean.

“Hello.” She sounded so serious.

“Madi.” I didn't know what to say.

“Why haven't you been called? I haven't seen it? I haven't heard from you or anything. You say we're friends. Yeah okay. Well, what's up, friend?”

She was upset. I knew I was a lousy friend. I talked to Madi like every day.

“Madison, I'm sorry.” What else could I say? “I've been in the hospital?”

“Why? Are you okay? What happened to you?”

“Not me, my brothers, they've been injured. It's a long story. I would love to see you Madi.” I really missed her. I had a lot to tell her.

“Honestly, Anita, ever since the bonfire, I've been thinking about you. You dipped out and I didn't see you.”

“Listen, get your brother to drop you off at school tomorrow.” I was trying to find out how I was going to see her. How was I going to tell her about her brother? He wasn't who she thought he was. He tried to rape me not try but did. I knew she loved her brother but telling her everything in detail she could believe me. Why would I lie about that? “Don't tell him you're meeting me.”

“Why would I say that she shot back?”

“Just saying.” I laughed. “But look, I'm going inside to see how David and Dante are doing. I'll talk to you later.”

“OK, bye.”

As soon as she hung up, I ran back inside. I walked in my dad's room Instead. he was asleep. Seeing him with his eyes closed looked like he was at peace. He didn't look aggressive. His features were pleasant. You know, my father wasn't always abusive And hostile. He was calm and mild-mannered. His actions were understandable but not excusable. Looking at my dad, he looked older as if life was wearing on him. I knew he was going through it. Thinking about him, I went to sit on the couch in his hospital room and eventually lay down. I was so tired and my body ached. And what I needed most of all was a shower.

Chapter 13

I was awakened by my mom walking in. My dad was still asleep. She stood at the door and we made eye contact and my mom waved me over. I got up and walked over and she hugged me and walked me out of the room. Soon as she shut the door she spoke. “Honey, how are you?”

“I'm OK, mom.” My mother was sort of acting strange. I felt like she wanted something. We sat in the waiting room down the hall and continued.

“Nita, I haven't been the greatest mom. And-”

“You think!?”

“And I know this, but I need to make things right.”

“Mom, what do you need?

“Baby, I just, I just.” She stopped and started shaking her head. Then begin to cry. “I love you, kids and I love my husband. I want to be a better mom.” She stopped again and began to cough. A smoker's cough. “I just don't know how anymore.”

“First thing is accepting your children for who they are.” I was fetching.

“I do. I know Who you guys are.

“What!? no you don't. Mom, who am I?”

“You're my daughter. You're smart and beautiful.

“Mom, I'm gay.” My heart dropped and I was almost out of breath. Actually, I was holding my breath.

“That your not. And I know that.”

“See that's what I mean. You can't accept anything. “

“You're serious?” As a heart attack I was and I was not changing. I had to go all the way with that. But what was going to happen to me? I didn't know but I didn't care. I didn't say anything else, I just kept looking at her. “You are serious?”

“Yes, mom, I've been for about five years. Of course I'm serious.”

“What do you mean five years? How did you just know you were gay?”

“It was the way I felt after I was with guys. But I wasn't comfortable around them. And I felt that they didn't understand me the way girls did.”

“Anita stop, please. You're not making any sense.”

“But I am mom. This is what I feel. I am fifteen years old and could understand my own feelings.”

My mom stood up and walked away from me. I sat there and watched her but went up behind her. This wasn't easy for either of us, but I was done hiding. I was done feeling ashamed. I was ready to own up. I wanted my family to accept who I was when I walked up to my mom. She had her back toward me looking at a painting on the wall. “So, you don't love me anymore?”

My mom turned her neck and caressed my face. “Honey, I will always love you. I may not agree with The choices you make, but I will love you. It will even be difficult for me to accept the new you but.”

“Mom, this isn't new.”

“What? What do you mean?”

“Five years now, remember.”

“Five years what? That you knew.” She was looking crazy and curious. But it seemed like she wasn't trying to understand on purpose.

“Five years I've been gay.

“Oh, Anita, you're losing it.” She was the one that was losing it. I was actually ready for this. At least I thought I was but today she was going to have to handle what her daughter was like. I wasn't changing, I was going to stand on what I believed in.

Right now I couldn't anymore. I started walking away this time. I walked to my brother's room. I walked in and they were both awake.

“Are you guys OK? I know y'all ready to leave? Mom is here.”

“Where is she?” Dante asked?

“I'm right here.” I didn't even hear her Come in. "And yes, we're leaving.”

“What about dad,” Dante said? He sounded worried. My brother David would be wearing a cast on his arm, but he would be returning to football. My mom started coughing out of nowhere before she spoke, it went on for a while. Then nurse Fields walked in.

“Good morning, boys. I'm here to check your vials before leaving. But you guys are being discharged. Your father will have to be here a few more days, but will soon be following. I just wanted to ask again if you may. But what happened to cause such injuries?”

“Their dad was trying to protect the ma'am.” My mom told her.

“It must have been a terrible altercation.”

“It was,” I said, feeling terrible.

Neither of the boys talked while nurse Fields was tending to them. I knew by the looks on their faces my brothers were ready to leave. They were here for about two days. David needed stitches in his shoulder, but that was about it. My dad also needed to be stitched up, but in his body they wanted to make sure he wouldn't withstand internal bleeding. After the nurse was done, she said she would be back to have their transportation. They will need wheelchairs to be pushed out. Dante argued that he could walk, but it was hospital policy that we followed the rules.

A half an hour later we were out, not before we stopped in my dad's room. He spoke to us and told us that he loved us. And everything that happened was uncalled for. That things would be easier if we were more humbled. He never wanted anyone to get hurt. But as I listened to my dad speak, I just couldn't piece together what emotions he was actually feeling versus expressing. But we all sat there and listened without interrupting. Mom was even sitting in a chair behind David. She was attentive as if she was one of the children. But when my dad paused, she spoke up.

“OK, I'll go drop the kids off and come back if you would like?”

“Sure.” was all he said. And mom stood up along with myself and we pushed my brothers out of the room toward the elevator. In the truck, my mom started telling us about how our dad really did love us.

“He has a weird way of showing it.” Dante admitted.

“He does," my mom agreed. I shot a look at Dante and we both locked eyes. He raised his eyebrows as if to say sorry I had to do it. Somebody had to do it. The ride home was almost like any other. When my mom asked David if he was okay his mind went straight to football.

“Coach is going to be pissed.”

“Son, trust me, he will understand . Tell him your dad was protecting his family from an intruder.”

That was truly pathetic to hear. My mom was excusing my dad and wanted her children to lie about what happened. We were literally abused by our own father. And instead of reporting it, we had to make up stories to excuse our dysfunctional family. That moment I felt it wouldn't ever end. I felt as soon as my dad got out of the hospital his madness would never end, only continue. I was almost feeling like Dante. I didn't want my dad to come back after his attack on us.

I started to feel afraid. The worst part about it, I would have loved to leave, but I didn't know where I could have gone. If I went to cousin Mia's my parents would have only found out and came to retrieve me. If I went to Madison her parents would have immediately wanted to know why I was there and what would I have told them and the same went for the rest of my friends. I felt trapped and it was about to bring me to tears, until my mother pulled in the driveway to our house. I had to get out to help my brothers out The front seat. David's shoulder would need a few months to heal and therapy.

When we all made it in, it felt uneasy. The last experience was traumatizing. I just head straight to my room and shut the door behind me. Once in, I grab some of my clothes and jump straight into the shower. The bathroom was in between two rooms. The relief was painful. The hot water hurt so bad, but It felt so good if you know what I mean. I stayed in for at least twenty minutes. Once I was in, I just couldn't get out. But once I was out my body ached. The only energy I had was to dry off, barely put my clothes on and fell into bed. I was asleep in five minutes. I was so tired everything I endured was so exhausting, I was drained. I woke up to the smell of some kind of breakfast. I looked over at my clock and it was 9: 13. I didn't know the time we got in, but I knew I slept the rest of the day and all through the night until the morning.

I tried getting up and accomplishing nothing. I fell back down on the pillow with my eyes still open. So I tried a new method. I attempted to roll over on my back and kick my feet on the floor and set up on the side of the bed once up I sat there for a while gathering myself. Eventually I got up on my feet and headed to the bathroom to brush my teeth. I heard Dante across the way through the other door snoring. He never snored much only when he was weary. I walked over and took a peak in his room. He was dead to the world. I just brushed my teeth and found my way to the kitchen. I couldn't lie or exaggerate, I was starving and the scent in the house only made my stomach rumble. Mom was in the kitchen fully dressed as if she had been up for some time.

“Morning, baby,” she said to me as soon as I appeared. “Hungry?” Oh, goodness I was.

“Very!” I sat on the stool in front of the island. She sat a paper plate in front of me with grits, eggs, bacon and a biscuit. Even though we moved from section 8 Apartments to the suburbs, we still ate on paper plates. I never understood why when it clearly saved money. I was so hungry that the thought of why mom was cooking breakfast went in and out of my mind. Don't get me wrong, she always cooked, But I felt this meal was forced but not rushed because it was so delicious. To be honest, everything seems to have great taste when you're hungry.

“Your brothers are still asleep.” Mom sounded like she was telling rather than asking, but I still answered.

“Yes.” I responded.

My mom sat next to me watching me eat which sort of made me uncomfortable. “What's up, mom?”

“I'm going to try to start treating you guys a little bit better. Things are going to start being different around here. You're going to be a junior next year. Dante, a sophomore and David will be going to college. So everyone will have to play their part. Good morning son. Are you hungry?” My mom jumped up when Dante stumbled in and he went immediately to the food. “Sit down. Sit down.” She started squatting Dante's hand when he tried to fix his own plate.

Dante sat next to me. Our kitchen, living room and dining room were all in one room so the island sat three, but we removed the middle chair and used it only when necessary. Once my brother's food was in front of him, it was obvious that he was ravished. He immediately started scoffing his eggs down.

“Slow down son. Your food isn't going to grow legs and run away.” Mom had to remind him.

He looked up chewing with his cheek's puffy. Mom made a third plate and took it to David's room. When she was gone I smacked Dante because he went back to eating like a mad man.

“Dude!” He yelled.

“Dude, chill!” I screamed back. I brought my voice back to a whisper. “Do you like your new mom?”

He smiled in between bites. “She's alright, let's see how long it lasts. Everytime something happens mom gets all like this and then right back to her old ways.”

“You're right, only time will tell, but honestly D, I hope she doesn't.” I replied.

“Don't get me wrong. I hope he doesn't either, but it's our mom we're talking about, not someone else's and our mom doesn't even last a week of her lovey dovey bullshit.”

“She's been in Dave's room for a while. What do you think they're talking about?”

“Maybe the same thing she said to us, like how everything's going to be different.” My brother was waving his hand in front of the air in an imaginary way. He really didn't believe mom or even believe in her for that matter, but I didn't blame him. Our mom was predictable. It was my dad who was unpredictable. That man would be cool for one second and start smashing things or yelling the next. I truly wanted things to be different and I wanted things to be better at home. I wanted us to have a normal functionalable family like our neighbors. Maybe their families weren't as pretty either. They made things seem perfect from the outside. And they did a great job at it because they definitely had me fooled. When my dad tyranny and rants disturb the neighbors, the way they looked at us was as if they've never seen anything like us in their lives. My mom walked back in the kitchen and told us she was going to run errands and stop to see dad in the hospital. She left us and we were home alone again and the house felt so peaceful.

Chapter 14

When mom arrived at the hospital, she didn't go in immediately. Instead she sat in the parking garage. Sitting in the truck, she turned the music off and stared out the window shield for a bit. And soon her eyes became moist from the thoughts in her mind. She was thinking of the past and all the times she neglected us. How instead of stepping up, she sat down and it hurt her heart to the core. The entire year that her and my uncle Danny had an affair under my dad's nose was killing her. How could she allow herself to stoop so low and destroy her marriage like that? Her own husband's brother.

And her oldest son Daryl. She hasn't seen him in two years. She knew he didn't want to be home. He was still in Louisiana. He could have easily come home to visit, but he insisted on not returning. They used to fight with him and the decisions he used to make. Mom and dad pretty much disagreed with everything Daryl wanted to do. Actually they disagreed with everything all the children did, even Dante and he was the youngest. She sat in the car reflecting. She stopped bawling, but the tears still fell down her face. Mom felt like a disappointment. The children felt like a disappointment until she actually sat back to see everything from a different view. She sniffed her nose and wiped her face and checked out herself In the mirror. Her cheeks and eyes were puffy. But she gathered her things and headed into the hospital. She made it to the room and dad watched her as she approached the bed. He was trained on her the whole time.

“Thought you would never come back.” Dad opened up.

“Oh no, of course I would.” Mom said

“Were you crying? why?”

“I’m sorry. I wish you couldn't tell. Honey, I just want things to be better. And it's hard.”

“There's no sense in crying about it.”

“You're right. That's why it's time to change. I know everyone didn't think I was serious, but now is the time. I'm just tired of failing everyone, especially you. You probably will never forgive me.”

“You don't know that.”

“Yes, I do. Darnell, let's face it, we're done. This is over. How could we continue to live like this? The kids are getting older. Actually, they are practically grown. Dante has three years left, Daryl’s gone, David's will be leaving and soon Anita will be next. And us. What do we have left? What are we hanging on to? What are we hanging on for?” Dad licked his dry lips and asked for water. Mom grabbed his cup. Dad drank some then spoke.

“Alice slow down. Let's take our time. Don't get me wrong. I was hurt, and I'm still hurt. But that's something that people who love each other do. They hurt you.”

“That shouldn't be,” mom interrupted.

“Hold on, let me finish. Some of the worst pain comes from those who love you. Family has a weird way of showing love, forcing you would be difficult but it's possible.”

“I'm sorry, dear.”

“Yes, you said that many times and I heard you. Before your affair, you attempted to straighten up but resulted back to your normal behavior. This is going to be hard Alice.”

“I know…” mom tears streamed down her face.

“But you're my wife, and I believe we have to try not to give up at least for the kids. We can split the family but that would only make matters worse. Last night while I was sleeping I remembered Anita telling me she was raped. I completely forgot about that. When she told me I blacked out. I lost it. I was enraged. The only thing I remember was the boys.”

“Darnell.”

“I may have really hurt them.”

“Honey.”

“I just wish that things could have been a little different. If only-”

“Your daughter's gay.”

“-I could've thought. What?” My dad was so focused on what he needed to tell mom, he barely heard her trying to tell him about his own daughter.

“You heard me?”

“What did you say?”

“Your daughter likes girls.” My mom felt relieved to finally get that out. She sat there watching all of his expressions. His face froze like stone. The look that he cast could have meant anything.

“I figured.”

“Excuse me, what do you mean, you figured?”

“I just mean that it was only a matter of time.”

“Darnell, how long did you know?”

“And I'm guessing my niece is too.”

“You're not making any sense.” Actually he was. He knew because Eleanor, his sister-in-law, told him. She knew her daughter was an homosexual. Or at least bi. Girls could be curious or bi curious. Danny and Eleanor have been keeping their daughters' identity a secret and that day five years ago, aunt Ellie peeked into Mia's room, which was the usual and saw us kissing. But before that, she always saw signs of her daughter's sexuality. It took them a while to accept, but eventually cousin Mia's mind was made up. I'm pretty sure aunt Ellie had to work with dad not to blow everything out of proportion and not to expose mom to anything. The fact that dad was prepared enabled mom to embrace me and the decision that I chose.

“How could you not tell me?” Mom's shouting caused her to start coughing uncontrollably.

“You're okay.”

“I'm fine.” But the look on her face said otherwise. She got up and grabbed a cup of water and came to the side of my dad's bed. A nurse knocked on the door and proceeded to enter without anyone saying anything.

“How's everything Mr. Mars? Your wound should be getting better and your leg also. Your body is a little banged up. That was a serious stab wound. It could've been alot worse.”

“Yes ma'am. I'm alright.” My dad was doing better. I just wish he could have really been protecting us. Our dad was the real intruder. If there was a next time, I'm positive that we would not survive. There is a high possibility that at full potential My dad could have killed his entire family. The only question was would he?

Chapter 15

At home we all ate our food? I did Dante's hair without my dad attempting to rip it out or call him the “F” word. That was the last thing we needed. Once I finished I grabbed my Phone to text Madi and send her a nearby location where I could walk and meet her. I would have taken my brother's truck, but I was certain that mom was returning soon. She texted me that she was on it.

I took a shower and got dressed and headed to where I should've been arriving. We were meeting at a local fast food joint by the interstate. When I got there I went inside and sat at a table and waited for her. She arrived fifteen minutes later and came in and noticed me right away. We stared at each other. Her smile was sort of a grin.

“What's this about, that you have me come over here.” Madison said. She approached the table and sat down across from me.

“Madi, please calm down. I have so much to tell you. How long can you stay and what did you tell your brother?”

“Are you okay? I told him I'm going to eat and walk to school. And I'm going to meet him in two hours at school. So whatever you have to tell me, I'm all ears.” She literally cupped her ears to show me.

“Yes, Madison, I'm straight. Listen, you remember the bonfire?”

“Of course, you left.” She really wasn't having it right now.

“Yes, I did but I didn't leave.”

“Yes you did.”

“I was lured." She paused for a while then spoke.

“Lured?”

“I know it sounds crazy.” Here we go.

“You think.”

“Yes, I know but it's true Madi, it's true.” I didn't think It was going to be this difficult but right I knew she didn't want to hear this.

“Anita, I don't have time for this.” Madison got out from the table and I followed her and grabbed her head. She snatched it back and stopped and shot me a look as if to say don't you dare touch me. She took off again and I only ran behind her and jumped in front of her.

“Madison, it was Matthew, your brother.” She gazed at me with piercing eyes. Her stare turned into a tear and she shoved past me and pushed me out of the way. I didn't chase her. Not yet at least. I watched her leave out and cross the street onto the sidewalk, then I took off running.

I caught up with Madison screaming for her to stop, but she kept on trucking and I kept on screaming.

“Madison! Stop! Please!”

“What do you want?” Her face was red and her eyes were draining. The makeup on her face was smeared and smudging.

“Please give me a chance to speak.”

“You've already spoken, but what else could you possibly need to say? My brother lured you away from the party. And what? What Anita? I paused for a few seconds and lowered my voice.

“He raped me Madi.”

“I knew you were a problem.”

“Eric too.”

“You're insane!” She took off walking again. I followed her but from a distance. I knew she was aware of my footsteps trailing behind her, but she kept on walking. We went on like this for a while and then she turned around and snapped at me.

“Stop following me!” she yelled and kept walking.

“No!” I shouted back. "Madi This will take some time for you to process and I know-”

“I’ve already processed everything.” she stopped and said turning around toward me. “Why would my brother have to rape you?”

“I don't know, Madison.”

“OK, let's say they did, why should I believe you?”

“I wouldn't lie to you? I've never lied to you since we first met. Since I first kissed you, since I first held your hand. Madison, Please.” Madison looked deep into my eyes. We were standing on the side of the road. Cars were going past us at all speeds, but we were in an unbreakable trance. I really cared about this girl. She was one of the only people that didn't judge me. Except my little brother.

“Nita this shit hurts.” She finally broke the silence between us.

“I know.”

“Hush! I'm not done.” I stopped. My lips were sealed. “Matthew could have any girl he wanted, but I remember after Jessica rejected him and chose your brother, he came home pissed. He was so hurt. I thought she was a whore and I thought your brother was a prick.. I'm not saying anything. I'm just trying to make sense of it all. And Eric is Matthew's main man. I just want to ask him and-”

“No, please don't.”

“Yes, and how he reacts. If he reacts a certain way, then you will know if he's telling the truth or not.”

“I guess you're right. I just want you to believe me Madi.”

“Trust me, I don't want it to be true. But I know you wouldn't lie to me. At least I hope not.”

“I haven't.”

“Okay, don't make this harder.” By now we walked past the gas station and neighborhood and crossed over to the school and sat on the bench in front of the gym.

“What time is it?” I asked Madison. She already had her phone out

“One o'clock.”

“What time is your brother coming?”

“He should be here in about an hour.”

“Honestly, I don't want to be out here when he comes.”

“Yeah, okay. You didn't bring your notebook?” She said it not asked. Still I was shocked she even noticed.

“No I didn't. I just wanted to focus on getting you back.”

“Getting me back?” Madison was taken aback. She certainly leaned back.

“Yeah, Madi, I thought we were together and if we're not I want to be.” She was smiling, but didn't say anything. She spoke and when she did, It was definitely something I wanted to hear and wanted to see. Madison leaned over and kissed me deeply. Her hand rested on my cheek while her other hand rested on my thigh.

“I want to. I just don't like everything that has happened. I believed we had a good thing going and hope you didn't screw anything up,” She said after breaking apart. I stood up and kissed her again.

“I'm out of here.” I turned around to walk away and she grabbed my butt. Wow, she was really feeling herself, but I kept on walking, smiling feeling relief and pleasure.

Chapter 16

Matthew arrived at school to pick up Madison about twenty minutes after I left. She got in the truck and didn't say anything to him while they drove home.

“What did you have to do again?” He asked after driving in silence for a while.

“I told you I had to meet a friend. And we walked the track. Is that a problem?”

“No, it's not. You know what. Nevermind. You can do whatever you want. I just needed to go see David while we were over here. Coach told all the players that David was in an accident. They're dad to stop some guy from breaking into their house.”

“We're going by David's house.” Madison started thinking about me, but at the same time she didn't want to be around my brother. Talk about being stuck between a rock and a hard place. Madison and her brother were at the red light waiting to turn down the street to head to my house. The light turned green and they made their way down the street and I was about to cross the overpass.

“Matt, stop!” Madi screamed.

“What!”

“That's Anita!” He pulled over in someone's yard and blew the horn. I stopped and looked at the maniac who could've ran me over. It was Matthew Reeves and my Madi. I jumped in the back seat once Madison slid her seat up.

“Thank you guys.” I said once in the truck.

“Why are you out here Anita?” Matthew wanted to know.

“Umm, I had to go to the grocery store.” What's crazy Is I didn't know they were going to be here and I actually had to go to Hudson's market to grab a few things for the house. “Why are you guys over here? And where were you all headed?”

“We're coming by you, apparently.” Madison admitted.

“Why?”

“Because I'm checking on your brother. Coach told all the players to try and drop in to check on David. How is he doing?” Matthew asked.

“Fine. He's talking, eating.”

“I'm talking about him coming back to play football.” Of course, that's all he cared about. Boys. Who was I kidding? They were the same, if you asked me.

“Yes, Matthew his shoulder is healing up.” I told him. We turned into the driveway and got out and went inside. Dante was on his game. He didn't have practice on the weekend. I led Madison and Matthew into David's room. He was flushing the toilet and making his way back to his room and stopped when he saw us.

“What's up D?” asked Matthew

David continued to walk to his bed, but on his way spoke to Matthew and reached out his fist to pound him with his cast arm.

“Are you serious? Don't left me bro.” Matthew stated with a smirk. “Real funny dude.” My brother started grinning, but reached out his right hand when he sat on the bed.

“David, you're okay, right?” I asked him before leaving.

“Yeah, we're good. Thanks.” Madison and I left the room and went to mine.

Once we were in my room, I shut the door, locked it and pressed Madison up against the door and began kissing her. I took her in fully, covering her entire lips with mine. She didn't resist nor stop me, instead, she grabbed my ass. I followed by grabbing her breast, she stopped and moaned In my ear. I started sucking on her neck which only made her moan even louder.

“Shh…” I whispered, I couldn't risk us being caught or exposed. But I was falling for her and right now I just wanted us to remain quiet about the whole ordeal. I knew she was feeling it. She undid my button on my pants and stuck her fingers inside of me. It was so fast and I was so horny I couldn't catch it. I guess that's how you feel when you start to lose control. I lifted her shirt off, pulled down her bra and started licking deeply on her nipples. We could no longer stand, we fell to the floor but then I heard someone in the hallway. We both looked at the door. Madison immediately fixed herself, and I did the same. I went to unlock the door and Matthew yelled out Madison's name. I opened the door and a pillow came flying at my head.

Chapter 17

“I'm going to head to the house now. The kids have been home alone enough.” Mom was standing beside dad looking at him in his eyes giving him all her attention. Honestly, she had been taking care of him since David and Dante left. Ever since mom's affair the process of trusting her again was dreadful but tolerable. Dad could manage the hurt and disappointment because if he was going to leave he would have been going by now, but he hadn't. Instead he'd been taking in every word my mom had been saying but been watching her closely.

Alice had to prove herself to be a loyal wife again. Dad never was a fool. He just didn't expect his wife to sleep with his brother. Who would? Mom wasn't a perfect mom or even the best before the affair, but she was decent. She used to do a lot more for her children. But then her attention started to drift off. Her love for my dad started to wither and of course her affection changed. Now when you think of it, everything actually became different around the time mom started seeing uncle Danny. My aunt may have noticed that things weren't the same at home also. They went on for more than a year. Did they think they would never be found out? Now that my dad was in a vulnerable state my mom was doing everything to mend things back together with her husband and children. She had a lot of broken pieces to pick up and put together. And dad was allowing her. The thought of how long mom was going to last had to cross his mind.

“Thank you for being here, Alice,” said dad before mom walked out of the room. He was opening himself up again. After what he's put his children through may have opened his eyes, hopefully his heart.

Chapter 18

“What made you throw the pillow at me?” I asked Madison over the phone. They left after only spending about twenty minutes. As soon as they left I went to see if David was okay and if he needed anything.

“I'm not a cancer patient or a newborn! I'm fine, thanks.” He yelled.

“I was just checking. My gosh. I'm leaving,” I replied. I went to check on Dante before returning to my room.

“Yes, Nita. may you bring me some chips, please.” He had his headphones on his head with his PlayStation controller In his hand, but I went to the kitchen to get him some Doritos, his favorite which I just tossed at him. In my room I clicked Madison's name in my call log. She was at the top of the recents.

“I didn't know what else to do,” she said. “He was just standing there looking lost. I know he had to see something, but did he hear?”

“I don't know, I couldn't tell. I sure hope not, but honestly Madi, I think you should tell him. My brother's know, I'm pretty sure both of my parents know by now.”

“Your parents know about us.”

“No.”

“But you just said they know. Which one is it Nita? First, you say they know, then you say they don't.”

“They know I'm gay, but they don't know about you and me.” I was soon to tell them. I liked Madison that much I could no longer keep it a secret.

“Nita, Please give me some time?”

“Of course. And if you need my help then-”

“I don't need your help.”

“Okay, then, whatever.”

Ding! Dong!

“Someone's at the door.” I got up. And started walking to the front door.

“Do you want me to call back?” I had my phone to my ear, but I plugged in my earbuds.

“No, you're good, hold on. Don't hang up.” I told her. I wanted her to hear. I made it to the door and Jessica Wilde was there when I opened. “Jessica! Hey. You're here for David, aren't you?

“Yes, where is he? She asked.

“Come in, he's in his room.” I closed the door behind her and walked her to his room. Once she saw my brother, she jumped in his bed and laid next to him.

“Oh baby, how are you? Can I do anything for you?” She exclaimed

“Anita! Could you please get the hell out of there?” Madison said, screaming through the phone. I smiled though I knew my friend was hurt by them becoming a couple. I left the room and I shut the door behind myself and went back to my room.

“Sorry, is that better?” I asked, still smiling.

“Yes, oh my goodness. We continued talking on the phone about how we were going to pull off telling our family about our relationship. This was harder than it seemed. Thinking back I felt like I might have changed the dynamic of my family's household. My parents barely accepted me liking girls and to find out that I had a full fledged girlfriend was going to be absurd. What about when the school saw us together next year? Because I planned on being with Madison for a long time. I believed my parents were going to be harder on me than Madison's. While we were on the phone I asked Madison if she watched porn and to my surprise she said yes.

“All the time, or at least whenever I could.

“What about lesbians?” I was reeling her in. I've looked up porn also and even lesbian porn. I've watched it but haven't yet touched myself to it.

“Yes, Nita. I have.” she said as if to say, get to the point and I did. I asked her, had she ever masturbated to lesbian porn. And just what I knew she hadn't.

“When?”

“When what?”

“When are you going to try?” I wanted to know so bad I was curious. It felt so good to have her fingers between my legs earlier. She rubbed me there, then entered inside of me. I needed to have that feeling once again. “Because I’m going to try now.”

I hung up the phone and went into the bathroom. The bathroom was in between me and Dante's room. So I had to lock both doors. Once I locked the door, I took off all my clothes, turned the shower on and sat on the toilet. I looked up a porn site and searched lesbian girls. So many videos came up. I chose a video that looked like Madison and I, a black and white girl.

The video started with the white girl licking between the black girl's legs. She had her fingers shoving them in and out of her. The black girl had her head tilted back and her eyes were closed. Her hand was on the back of the other girl's head. I was circling myself imitating the white girl's tongue. My insides were soaking wet making my thighs wet also. The toilet seat became slippery. I fast forward a little of the video and stopped at the girls colliding with each other with their legs. They both were screaming. I've seen this before, but I never tried it, but I planned on attempting it. It looked like it was full of so much pleasure. And the girls were filled with ecstasy. I continued to circle my fingers heavily on myself and right when I was about to splash, I heard my mom calling for us. I jumped off the toilet, exited the video and climbed into the shower.

Chapter 19

When I came into the living room, all attention was put on me, David and Dante both were talking to my mom.

“Hello, honey!” Exclaimed mom. Dante was in the recliner, and David was sitting in a chair in his cast. My mom was sitting across from Dante in the love seat. I could tell they were already conversing. “Come sit down.” Dante's expression on his face was aggravation, I could tell that he didn't want to be present. Jessica was also at the table parallel to David. She decided not to leave. I went to sit closest to my mom, which she appreciated. “Your dad will be coming home soon. I believe he's going to be better. I've been talking with him. We've been discussing and understanding how everything's been. Truthfully, We all could be a bit different.”

“I think I'm fine,” Dante said after my mom.

“It's not fine son. Just listen, please. I want y'all to know that as your mom I needed to be the first to make change around here. And your father is on the same page.

“How do you know,” asked David? “He can just be feeling like this because of what happened.”

“I know. I actually think it's for real this time.”

“You don't know that for sure, trust me.” Trust. How could we trust her?

“Whatever mom. All of us are tired of him.” David was actually letting her have it. He was the one who had to endure most of the wrath. Technically he was the oldest, at least in the house.

“I understand but he is your dad. Please just trust me. I've spoken with him and believe me. I know my husband. And as far as myself I want to show you kids that the nonsense and neglect is.” Mom stopped and put her hand over her mouth and started coughing for a minute. I thought she would never stop, but she eventually did. Still with her hand over her mouth she got up and ran to her room. We all were looking at each other confused. Not knowing what to do

“Is your mom okay," asked Jessica, speaking to David while he gazed into her eyes without saying anything. He was breathing heavily. He sighed then finally spoke. “I don't know”, was all he said. “Listen, I'm gonna get ready to leave but will come by to check on you.”

“Okay, sure that'll be nice,” David responded. I looked at Dante trying to read his thoughts. He was laid back and was looking at the ceiling, But appeared to be asleep.

“Lil. D.” I called. But he didnt move. “Dante!” He didn't budge. Then I threw a pillow at him. “Dante.”

“Huh? Yeah, what's up?” He replied.

“Were you just sleeping with your eyes open?”

“No, I was just thinking about everything. I hope mom's OK, I'm going to go check on her.” He was about to get up. He kicked the legs down on the recliner.

“No need, I'm good, I'm right here.” She was turning the corner as she was saying it. Jessica was done speaking with David and walked to the front door.

“Text me when you make it.” David told her

“You're leaving?” Mom asked.

“Yes, I have to get going. My dad will probably start wondering and complaining.” Jessica said.

“You're right. I don't need the police at my house.” I didn't know if my mom was actually saying it with humor but she was smiling when she said it.

Mom opened the door and Jessica turned to say goodbye. I walked out to her car. She had a white Nissan. My mom closed the door and she turned around and stared at us.

“Okay, I'm sorry, but I know we were talking. I'm just not feeling too well.” My mom's voice was raspy as if she was screaming and lost her voice. “I need to lie down. I need to. Could you bring me some water?”

She was telling though she was asking. I knew my mom and I knew she wasn't asking so I got up to get her some to get it out of the way. Dante immediately got up and went back to play his game. David went to his room and got on his phone I guess waiting for his girlfriend's message. After returning to my room I got on the phone and texted my cousin Mia. I asked her if she had ever masturbated to lesbian porn. I really wanted clarification about this whole thing. It was new to me and I wanted to make sure I wasn't alone. Sometimes when I think about things. I felt like I was the only person who had these thoughts. My mind started exploring and I was experiencing things I've never experienced before. I knew there wasn't any turning back. I believe that once a person went as far as I went with their sexuality, their mind was made up. Mia texted back saying, of course, she had watched porn. I should have known my cousin was faster than me and more experienced than me.

I still remember the first time I was touched between my legs. It was Mia. The second time it was also Mia. We were eleven. I let her touch me but not too much because it was hard for me to accept the emotions I was having. We would carry on like this time after time. It's almost as if I was teasing her. Mia started rubbing my thighs, but always found her way further and every time I will say not yet.

“Okay, I'll wait.” She would give me a chance to become comfortable. Not realizing it then, but realizing it now she was being patient with me. She was understanding that I had to come around to accepting more. Her fingers would rest on me. But that was all they would do until one day she rubbed the top of my private part while kissing me, something we both became experts at. Mia eased her fingers between my legs and I squeezed my thighs together clenching her fingers, trapping them. Mia still found a way to circle me, which only made my legs gradually come apart. Before I knew it my legs were spread. We stopped kissing and made eye contact. She didn't stop. Instead she asked me did I like what she was doing?

“Yes, it feels good.” My legs were wet, but it felt good. “It's supposed to do that. It means you're going to cum.” She continued to massage me but then put her fingers inside of me. When she took them out, they came back dripping. She went back to kissing me. Her mom and dad were at the supermarket picking up groceries so we took the time to play around. We really felt in our minds we were learning. Mia was learning herself, but I was still figuring out the feelings I was having deep inside of me. Her hands weren't doing everything I believed they could’ve been doing so I took off my shorts. Mia stopped kissing me once again and looked at me. Mia then took her pants off. I guess that's what was enticing. She wanted me to touch her but I didn't know the first thing about feeling on a girl but I followed her motion. Mia and I were both on our knees rubbing on each other. I spilled all over her hand and let out a scream that I didn't know was comin. Later when we finished, the scream I didn't know about, I found out was called an orgasm and I reached a climax, which was a certain amount of pleasure. The girls in the video I was watching were screaming and moaning. And I was pretty sure that I was experiencing similar feelings.

That day I was young but I was so anxious for more. After we were finished, I was already planning on how I was going to get with Mia again. A few days later, my dad had returned home. He was walking with a slight limp. His belly was wrapped and the hospital gave him a cane to assist him. Mom was doing, I'm guessing, her best, to be at his side, helping him out of the bed, to the toilet, and into the shower. My brother was back-and-forth from school and practice because during the summer they had off-season drills. Our school was one of the best athletically and academically. I was picking up the slack at home , but mom really was doing what she was supposed to do and dad seemed to be very pleased with her because he had no complaints. Instead of yelling and screaming and lashing out which was his routine, he was more mild and patient. You could have said he was even a bit humble himself. Not everyday a family would have a brawl, end up in the hospital and nearly facing a jail sentence. Officer Wilde did stop by but his visits were frivolous because everyone stuck to their story. But he still had his duty and he also had his doubts. I never understood why he was so drawn to my dad. When his daughter was in a relationship with my brother. Ever since the altercation they had in front of our house I believe that officer Wilde had a personal vendetta against my father. That day outside my brother's room at the hospital I saw him walking away from the door. He was lurking. Possibly listening in on us, but only time will tell what his next move would be.

In the meantime my friends and I were planning a trip to New Orleans. Kelsey and her band had a show to perform and we of course were going to support her. While we were there we were going to tour the city. My family spent every year in New Orleans. We would stand on the ground for many years, collecting trinkets, stuffed animals and spears, but for the last couple of years instead of standing collecting, we were riding throwing to all the people on the ground. Our school let us out for three days. From Saturday to Sunday parades ran and after going to school on Monday, That night we would head to New Orleans and wouldn't come back until Thursday night. My mom would let us call in on Friday so We would literally go from Saturday to Saturday with Monday being the exception. This wasn't your every year Mardi Gras holiday visit. This was a summer event. Something to remember with my friends, a way to get away without being surrounded by my parents. That's one of the reasons why I joined. I felt like I needed the break. Of course, I asked Madison if she would come along, and she accepted, bringing Lacy with her. Kelsey drove, it was all the girls, no boys and honestly I wouldn't have felt comfortable dealing with any boys, especially Eric or Matthew. It would have been extremely difficult to tolerate them even to think about them. They disgusted me, but I couldn't let that worry me. I had a vacation to think about. We finally made it and arrived at my cousin Pauletta's house to park. She lived on canal street, and the parade route ran through here. Walking down the street I was viewing the houses and the people. It was strange how just driving a little over an hour in the same state changed so much. The accents, talking to people from here down to the way they dress was so dynamically different. I was taking notice of everything as we walked down the street. June was pride month and we were going to enjoy the New Orleans pride parade. I was enjoying the dancers and the bands and the performances in honor of the LGBTQ community. After a while, we got hungry and went to a nice poboy joint down the street. We were able to get our hands on a cooler full of liquor from a sorority and I thought about the last time I was drunk. It was a horrific experience. Still to this day I hadn't recovered, but this week would not be ruined but remembered along with the rest .

Chapter 20

We crashed at my cousin's house that time in NOLA every night. She was pleased to have the company. What's crazy is that she let us have access to her bar. And we stayed up listening to music and played on our phones. I had to post our time on my page for everyone to see. Some nights I would get so drunk I would do crazy stunts in front of everyone. One of the nights we were all in a room listening to music as usual and I was staring at Madi. I called her over by me and Madison had the nerve to crawl on all fours to me.

“Yes, baby, what do you want?” She said still on the floor.

I saw how Alisa and Kelsey were throwed when they saw this. I paid it no attention.

“I want to kiss you.” I told her leaning forward but not touching her.

Madi set up on her shines and I fell to my knees and she grabbed me by the face. As quickly as we could started making out. I immediately thought of my cousin Mia and everything she taught me over the years. I knew the rest of my friends weren't gay but seeing me and Madi kiss made them wonder what was going on. I didn't want to let Madi down. I knew the alcohol stimulated the urge to express myself and my identity but the thought of how the other girls would take this went through my mind. Would they judge me? Would they accept me? Would they tell others? Would they no longer want to be friends? All of this was on my conscience. But having someone on the same time as me and the same channel made the experience easier. I began to not care what others thought of me. Again, also motivated by the liquor.

When we stopped, we still had our eyes closed. As soon as we opened them, the stares from our friends showed us exactly how they had taken it.

“Have you guys done this before?” asked Alisa. We both smiled and laughed, showing teeth and all with big smiles not from being embarrassed but from familiarity. I was used to kissing Madi and tonight only showed just how comfortable I was. I was definitely feeling confident from alcohol.

“I'm guessing that's a yes,” Kelsey concluded with a smile on her face too. “You girls were actually getting into it.”

“I thought it was hot,” said Lacey.

"Right," agreed Madi.

“So, what are y'all?” asked Alisa.

“What do you mean?” I wanted to know? I felt like I knew what was coming.

“Like are you all girlfriends?”

“Are we?” I looked at Madison for confirmation? She had a look on her face to say “Are you serious?” And it was because I knew we were together. But now we were in front of friends and I was used to being rejected or embarrassed in front of people.

“Of course,” she replied. The moment of truth, the cat was out of the bag. She was my girlfriend and we were official. I just hoped that once the alcohol wore off, I'll wake up in the morning and things wouldn't be different. This was one of the first times someone accepted me in public though I felt this was a private setting amongst friends.

We all fell asleep so fast. Me, Madi, and Alisa were in the bed and Kelsey and Lacy were wrapped in blankets on the floor.

Once asleep, the next day came so fast. My eyes shot open and I looked for my phone to see what time it was. 12: 16. Everyone was still asleep so I got up and went to the bathroom to take a shower. By the time I was out everyone except Madison was moving around. I went to jump on the bed next to her head screaming “get up , get up!”

“Ugh,” she growled.

“Come on, we have to go. We're going into the city. Get up! Or are you staying behind?”

“My head hurts.” She was whining like a child but I was going to get her up.

“Anita, was the water cold?” Asked Lacy. What kind of question was that? Were we at a public pool or at my cousin's house?

But instead of being sarcastic I answered directly.

“No, the water's hot," I said with a friendly smile.

Madison finally got up, but everyone else had already made it to the kitchen to eat. Cousin Pauletta cooked us a great brunch. Grits, eggs, bacon, biscuits and pancakes. It was so delicious and I knew Madison's nose was going to lead her. A meal like this was perfect for a hangover. Today we planned on seeing more of the city. There was going to be a performance in the French quarter we were going to attend. Before I ate my food, I took a picture of it and posted it on my page.

“Kelsey, when is your band going to be performing,” asked Lacy. Everyone was chewing while talking. Lacy had a strip of bacon in her mouth.

“We are going to be putting on a show at around five o'clock,” She said back, really speaking to everyone.

We all eventually put our food back. The eggs were cooked well done. The biscuits were golden brown. The bacon was crispy every bite. Not too hard. Not too soft, but just right. The grits were very creamy. I knew that by how my cousin was able to stir them in the pot. And as we all sat down, the pancakes were just now being ready. My cousin warmed up the syrup, which only made them even greater. If I was just being honest you couldn't ask for any better meal at the best time. Last night we had our own party. Today, we were going to tour the city. Even though my cousin lived. Canal street we still use Kelsey's car to drive around, but if need be we would park the car and pick it back up in the morning.

“Anita, did you live out here before?” Alisa wanted to know.

“I did, but I didn't go to school out here.My family and I would come to New Orleans to handle a lot of business. We wouldn't stay long.” I was looking out of the window as I was telling her this. I was having memories of my childhood that I could only understand. “Kelsey the museum is coming up around here.”

“Yes, it's very close, I see it on the GPS.” I didn't blame her for using the GPS because this was a big city and you could get lost very easily.

Today we planned on viewing the museum then maybe going to the park, and afterwards we were going to the concert in the French Quarter. Kelsey and her band did not ride together. I'm guessing they agreed upon separate forms of transportation. Because when we finally made it to the French Quarter, they were already there. While we were standing out there watching her it was nice and hot, so we ended up getting snowballs. You could find snowballs everywhere in New Orleans.

Kelsey was performing her last song. The crowd wasn't very huge but the little crowd that they had were clearly enjoying her music. You couldn't help but stop to check out the band because their appearance was very appealing.

“Doesn't Kelsey look amazing up there?” I asked Madison in her ear, so that she can hear me between the music.

“Let me find out that you have a thing for punk rockers,” she said leaning back towards me. I just

smiled and turned my head to look at her.

“I can never want to replace you,” I told her, kissing her on the cheek. I spotted Alisa eye balling us in the corner of her eye.

“She's actually really good. I could see myself listening to her music. How long has she and her band been together?”

Kelsey was doing her hair flips and spinning, but the music came down and I was able to hear myself talk again. “I believe they've been together since freshman year. They're all seniors.”

The song ended and Lacy and Alisa came walking up to us. “Wasn't she great?” shouted Lacy. You could tell she either loved this genre of music or loved seeing Kelsey. I didn't blame her. To be honest I didn't really listen to her music genre, but seeing her on stage opened me up a little bit.

“Yes of course, Kelsey's band is outstanding. Actually I believe she could be a celebrity.” I responded. We made our way to the front of the stage while we waited for Kelsey.

After a while she appeared Without any face paint. “Sooo….what did you guys think?”

“Girl, I've never seen you like that.” Madison announced. “Your music makes me want to smoke weed?”

“No kidding,.” agreed Lacy.

“I get that a lot. Anita, what did you think?

“I thought it was amazing. You're really talented and I know you're gonna make it big, you and your band.”

*Ring! Ring! Ring a Ding Ding!*

“Hold on y'all. Let me see who this is.” *Ring! Ring! Ring a* “Hello.” I stepped away from the conversation. And I'm so glad that I did because when I got on the phone it was my cousin Pauletta. She was informing me that my mom was sent to the hospital. But she didn't tell me what was wrong. All she said was, I should make it back to the house. I walked back to the group stoned face.

“Babe what's wrong?” I've never heard Madison say those words to me.

I didn't say anything for a little while, at least about ten seconds. When I spoke, my voice was very low. “It's my mom. Something's not right. I'm sorry, please, we have to go.”

“Anita what's the matter?” Lacy asked.

“Kelsey, you have to drive us back to the house that was my cousin.”

“ Okay come on let's go.” She started walking.

“Nita, darling, tell us what happened.” Alisa said, putting her arm around me as we walked to the car.

Everyone stopped asking me and we walked the rest of the way to the car in silence. When we finally got in the car, all the girls looked toward me.

“So…” Madison said first.

“My mom is in the hospital. She blacked out at home.

Chapter 21

We didn't stay long at my cousin's house. As soon as we got there we packed everything up and hit the road. It's crazy how you can go from despising a person, to start trusting them again to possibly losing them. On the ride back home, my friends were comforting me, Telling me it's going be OK, everything's going to be alright. I didn't believe any of it if you asked me. But I know they were doing what they could to make me feel better.

I've got to say Kelsey made it to the hospital in time. She made it there faster than our trip to New Orleans. When we arrived, I asked the front desk for the room number. I gave them my last name, told her I was the daughter of Alice and the lady gave me the direction. My family was in the waiting room. They were told to wait there because my mom was in critical condition.

I found out that mom passed out while at home. She couldn't breathe. It was difficult for my dad to drive and for David too. So they had to call the ambulance. And since then mom was out. I was told that they were performing surgery on her and the best thing for us to do was to wait.

“Anita, I'm so glad that you can make it,” my aunt said when I entered the waiting room.

“Did you see my mom before she came?”

“Yeah she wasn't looking good.”

“Hey honey, how are you feeling?” Uncle Danny greeted me. My brother Dante came up to me with watery eyes but not crying.

“ Hello uncle. I'm okay. Dante you good.”

“They're not letting us see mom,” he said, putting his head on my shoulder.

“Yea I know we have to wait.” I didn't know what to say myself. I was also in complete shock.

I walked over to where dad and David were sitting. My aunt and uncle had to drive both of their vehicles to pick up my brothers and father. Mia was sitting next to David, so I sat next to her.

“What's up?” She whispered.

“Hey,” I said back.

“I really hope your mom will be okay.”

“Yeah me too. Dad, Dave. Did y'all get the chance to see mom.

“Yeah, she was on the floor,” said David.

“Your mom just started coughing up blood. And they said that she's been having sore throats but haven't mentioned anything until a lump started to form in her neck,” stated dad.

My dad was just staring off into space. To my recollection I believed he couldn't make eye contact with his brother and he was trying his best not to look in his direction. But we were all sitting in the waiting room waiting to see my mom. About 2 hours later a nurse came out and said that we can go in to see her two at a time. Me and aunt Ellie went in to see her first. She barely had her eyes open and when she spoke her voice was hoarse.

“Everything's going to be okay baby ,the doctor said I'll be fine.” I barely heard her and this took longer for her to get all her words out.

“Alice, how long did they say you had to stay?” My aunt was definitely worried for her sister-in-law but at the end of the day we didn't know how bad this truly was.

“I don't know, but I don't feel too bad. I just couldn't breathe and I started coughing and fainted. Everything should be OK. I should be returning back home.” My mom was talking slowly, barely getting words out but she said that she was doing okay. I couldn't believe it.

“Okay, we're going to leave and let everyone else come. Are you okay with talking to them?” My aunt made sure because it seemed my mom was having difficulty speaking.

“Yes, tell them all as well.”

My family walked in pairs to check on mom. Ultimately, she was okay and a few days later she was released from the hospital. She had lost so much weight. She was feeling very weak and my father had to take care of her even though he was still taking care of himself. It really wasn't easy having both parents disabled in the house. So me and Dante stepped up to assist them. My brother David was also out of commission but he was able to walk around. His shoulder just gave him lots of pain. My dad would call me in the room to help get my mom out of bed. Dante was also present. Though he was my little brother, his physical ability and his physical strength was better than mine.

From time to time I will catch David in his room trying to do push-ups doing butterflies with his shoulders, rotating them around. He would have a therapist come to thepare him for getting back on the field. Good thing my mom taught us how to cook because I was doing most of the cooking. And in order for everyone to get their strength back, they needed food. David eventually was able to drive and he would take us to Hudson's supermarket to buy groceries. But before that, me and Dante would walk down the road to pick up a few things and bring it back.

To my surprise officer Wilde came to check on my family. I'm sure he used his daughter to get in.

“So Anita, how is your mom holding up? “ He asked once when he made his appearance.

“She hasn't been eating. She has been nauseous and throwing up. She's been having a loss of breath, almost passing out every time I pick her up. But I think she's going to be fine.”

David and Jessica would sit on a back patio and talk to each other. Dante would be in his room Playing his game waiting for someone to call him. He was of good help, but he definitely stayed out of the way until needed.

*Buzz! Buzz!*

I took my phone out of my back pocket. It was Madi texting me. Also, I saw I had some text messages from cousin Mia and my friend Alisa. I stopped talking to officer Jacob and looked down at my phone.

*“Wyd?” - Madi*

*“Do you want me to come over?” - Mia*

*“No! Don't say that, she's gonna be fine.” - Alisa*

“Is everything all right?” Asked officer Jacob

“Yes, it's just my cousin and my friends. But you were saying.”

“I was saying, you know, you can call if something goes wrong.

“Will be sure to do that.” I definitely wasn't calling him. I would have just called for emergency instead.

We walked to the back and he called Jessica.

They rode together in his truck. It was kind of strange seeing officer Wilde in civilian clothes.

Chapter 22

My uncle and aunt came over. My dad was walking around so he opened the door and let them in.

“Danny.” Dad said

“Darnell,” his brother responded. Dad turned around and walked away with the door wide open.

“Could you please talk to him?” My aunt pleaded to her husband.

“Only if he let me.” They walked in and went straight to my mom's room. After Danny spoke to Alice, who didn't really say anything in return, went outside with my dad. My dad headed straight to the patio after letting his brother in.

I was so glad that Mia came with them. Me and her went in the room with David to talk with him about my brother Daryl. Dante wasn't around to hear this conversation. I didn't really know about Dante but I knew that me and David texted our brother Daryl many times. I would get a response from him saying he would come back home one day. Or he would ask questions about how mom and dad were. Sometimes he wouldn't hit me back. When he asked how our parents were I told him that mom was sick. It was the off-season for him also. He said he would stop by. But that was days ago. Mom was out of the hospital for about two days but she was in the hospital for a week.

“He's not gonna come. I'm telling you Nita.” David said .

I knew he missed his old brother because I missed him too. We haven't seen Daryl in years.

“I miss him Dave,” I cried.

“Yeah I know, but it feels like he doesn't miss us.

“You can't say that.”

“David-” Mia started.

“Ah! No!” Everyone stood still and stopped all conversations. Stop all activities. My aunt was screaming and it was coming from the master bedroom. Me, Mia, and David all got up and ran. On the way there I saw my uncle and my dad coming back inside. We entered the room and my mom was just laying there. “Alice, wake up!”

“No. No. No. No. Alice honey. Make a call. Hurry somebody. Honey.”

I whipped my phone out and called 911. I thought that the hospital said my mom was okay. She even said that she was feeling alright. They must have given her a wrong diagnosis because she was just laying in the bed. I was sure she wasn't breathing. I spoke to the operator.

And again an ambulance was on his way to my house for the second time. Actually a third time, but this time I was present.

Chapter 23

Seeing my mom laid in the hospital was a devastating sight. No one knew what was wrong with her. They had an oxygen mask hooked up to her face. She was having trouble breathing on her own. To be honest I don't think that she was breathing at all. Some of my family were in the waiting room. I just couldn't leave my mom's side. She had put us through a lot. My father also put us through, but none of that mattered at this moment. We were waiting to find out what the issue was with my mom.

“I'm sorry. I just really don't know how to relate this. It's always hard to deliver any news to the family, especially if it isn't good news. But the diagnosis came back and it seems your mom is diagnosed with stage four terminal cancer. Has she shown any signs?” I just don't understand how she didn't know. After the doctor said I'm sorry I didn't hear anything else that came out of his mouth. I heard a ringing in my ear. My conscience was taken out of reality and I was just loading into space. She was just sitting there with her eyes closed. Her skin and bones looked fragile. She almost looked pale. The monitor. The sound of the monitor. “Excuse me, did you hear me ma'am?”

“Yes…” I ran into the restroom and looked into the mirror. Tears were streaming down my face. How many families had to deal with this. How many children had to look upon their parent as they withered away. As their body became soulless. The doctor stated that my mom would have to endure chemotherapy. On the time expectancy of her life he was unsure of.

I came out of the restroom and the doctor was still standing there.

“If you'd like, we can walk together and notify the rest of the family. I'll let you do the honors.” I didn't know if he's done this many times but he was speaking as if he's practiced on numerous occasions.

“I'm hurting.”

“I know and we will do everything we can to save her.”

We walked back into the waiting room and I walked up to my brothers and relayed the terrible news. Dante fell apart. He literally was falling out of the chair. David stood up and started walking , I'm guessing toward the exit. My aunt put her face down between her legs. I grabbed my phone and texted Madison and told her I needed to see her. I asked her when her next available time was. Dante had his face on my shoulder and I had my hand resting on the back of his head. He was wailing and shaking. You never really knew the true emotions you felt about someone until something occurred. But seeing my brother like this.I knew that he really cared about our mom.

Mia and I were looking at each other then she got up and came by me.

“Let's go find David.”

“Okay.”

I was pretty sure he walked outside so we walked out of the hospital. I was turning my head in all directions, I couldn't see him anywhere. We walked further in the parking lot and I spotted him standing by the trees.

“D how are you holding up?” Mia asked when we came upon him. He just stood there and started shaking his head.

“I just don't know. “

“ They said they will save her, Dave. Mom should make it.

“You don't know that!”

“David.” I stopped him. “She could beat this.”

“It's not likely.” He said.

“Well, I will have faith that she will.” And I walked away.

Chapter 24

Madison convinced her brother to drop her off at the hospital. He didn't want to turn her down at a vital moment like this. Seeing her arrive at the hospital gave me butterflies in my belly. I needed a different kind of affection that only she could fill. She greeted me with a kiss.

‘“How are you feeling?”

“This is hard to handle Madi.”

“Listen, I will be here for you. Whatever you need just let me know. I may not know how it feels but I can understand.”

The boys eventually left the hospital with my aunt and uncle. Dante didn't want to leave unlike David. David was doing his best to suppress his emotions. But I knew my brother, I knew that he was having a hard time dealing with all of this and what I didn't like was how he was pretending to bottle up his feelings instead of expressing them. But everyone dealt with pain in a different way. I stayed at the hospital along with my dad. My mom began her chemotherapy and it was taking a toll on her body. Every time I saw her she looked like she was shrinking, wasting away, she has stage four cancer and was in the late stages. I asked Madison if she was able to stay. She accepted, but had to ask her parents.

Madison stayed for a while and told her parents that she was supporting her friend.

“She needs me and I want to be here with her,” she said over the phone. I saw for myself that she did not let her parents know who I really was to her. I just was her friend but I didn't let my parents know who she was to me yet either.

My dad was sitting on the couch with his feet on the stool while me and Madison were next to my mother's bed.

“Did you ever see this coming?”

“No, I mean, I used to hear her cough a lot, but I never thought anything of it. But do you wanna know something?” Before I spoke, I looked over at my dad then I grabbed Madison by the back of the head and whispered in her ear. “I think my mom saw signs of this coming. I didn't, but something is telling me she did. Just think about how she started becoming more active.” While I was already close to her shoulder I rested my forehead on her. “Madi…it's hard. It's so hard. She couldn't experience us or anything.”

Madison wrapped her arms around me. She looked up because she felt a hand on her back. It was my dad. He had gotten up and came over by us.

“Anita, who is this young lady?” He asked.

“This is my girlfriend Madison.” Those words slipped out before I could have even caught them. The look on my dad's face was unpredictive. I didn't know what he was thinking, but he kept it very simple when he spoke.

“Nice to meet you, Madison.”

“Hello, sir. Nice to meet you too.”

“How long have you been seeing my daughter?”

“Since the beginning of Spring.”

“And do you plan on staying with her?” Dad was really questioning her but Madison was answering perfectly.

“Mmm…” I jumped and turned and looked at my mom. I knew I heard her say something or tried to say something, but she was moaning. She was awake.

My dad moved around us and lowered himself down to my mom's face. “Sweetheart, What is it? Anita go call the nurse. My mom started moaning again. Stirring a little bit, this time. I jumped up and yelled for a nurse. They came in and we moved out of the way.

“Welcome Mrs. Mars. How are you feeling?” The nurse asked. My mom just was shaking her head with her eyes closed. She looked so weak and so fatigued. She had already started her chemotherapy. I heard about people getting cancer and it was never a pretty sight and to have to go through something like twas too much to handle. I didn't know if I could be here. I didn't know if I was strong enough. I felt it was a perfect time to speak to my mom about me and Madison. I didn't even know if she was listening.

There was only so much the hospital could do. My mom was just too far. We were losing her every day.

“Mom, mom, this is Madison, my girlfriend. I've decided to be with her and I want you to meet her.” Madison grabbed her hand and looked her in the eyes. Moms eyes were nearly closed, but she turned her head a little and observed Madi taking as much of her in as she possibly could.

“Hi dear.” Her audible voice was as low as a whisper. You are very pretty.

“Thank you, Ms. Mars and you are too. I really care for your daughter. She is very special to me. Everything that she has endured. She is a strong girl.” She was speaking to my mom and my dad standing posted on the wall. I turned to look at my dad but didn't say anything trying to read his facial expression. What I got from it was, he knew this was the end, but he was trying to hold himself together, maybe until later.

The oncologist and his assistants were nearby. I believe everybody knew what time it was. I also believe everything happened for a reason. And everything happened in its own time. Time waited for no one.

“Nita…” My mom was breathing heavily. “Remember to always love yourself in order to love someone else. Self-preservation is the first law of nature.”

“Yes ma’am. I love you mom.”

“I've always loved you.” She produced a smile and turned her head to her husband and only with her lips mouthed she was sorry and exhaled her remaining energy.

Chapter 25

My dad walked closer to her bed, went down on his knees and rested his head. My dad was too strong. He was the strongest man I knew. But the pain that he had to face any man would've broken. Madison walked out of the room and left me, my father and my lifeless mother alone. My natural instinct was to hold my dad.

“I'm sorry. I'm sorry Alice.” He wept.

“Dad, we're gonna make it. We're gonna be OK. Mom had to go. She was in so much pain. You saw it for yourself.”

When my brother's found out they didn't want to be in the room. Neither of them liked to be next to the dead. I text all of my brothers. Daryl Didn't respond and it started to upset me. How could he hear about his mother passing and not care? My dad no longer wanted to be at the hospital. Madison had her brother to pick her up and she told me that she was going to catch up with me when things settled down. She said she was going to be at the funeral.

Me and my dad got into his truck and headed back home. The sight of my mom was killing us. I truly started to believe that things were getting better. And maybe my mom was serious about everything. When I got home. I went straight to my room and picked up my notebook. I wrote about how I believed my mom knew her day was coming. I wrote about the futures me and Madison were going to have together. I wrote about the hope of my dad being better to his kids. The Mars household was facing real live trauma , we were all high strung on emotions.

While we were all tending to our own personal doings, the doorbell rang. Yes, I got up but I didn't go to the door instead. I peeped out of my own door to see if anyone was gonna beat me to it. The house was silent. No one was moving so I crept out into the hallway and made my way into the kitchen. Still no one moved the doorbell rang again. Who could that have been at the door? It was only one way to find out and I was the only one up, so I went.

I looked out the side window of the front door and I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. My unbelief brought me to severe tears. I saw my oldest brother and thought he was an angel. I opened the door so fast I cut my finger and started bleeding. As soon as the door opened, I jumped in his arms and kissed him on the cheek. I haven't seen my brother in years. I had to touch him to see if he was real. Oh goodness. He was real alright.

“Daryl!” I Screamed. “Everyone Daryl is here!”

Everyone went from being quiet as church mice to dinosaurs in Jurassic park. Even my dad. I was crying tears of joy. I truly needed this right now. I needed this. I did not think he was going to come.

“Son! Oh my goodness. My son.” Just like the prodigal. My dad was frozen but tears were coming down his face. He grabbed Daryl and held him. He scooped him up and his grizzly bear arms.

“Daryl!” Dante ran and tried wrapping his arms around f my dad and his brother.

“Oh! Oh! Daryl…”

“David…” It seems as if time stopped itself. Daryl was piecing David together. “Bro, look at you. Look at you!” Daryl and David approached each other. Neither of them knew what to do. Except hug.

This reunion was memorable. I just sat back and watched all the men that matter most to me in my life embrace. These are the men that I wished never violated any woman, never took advantage of any lady or never had to force themselves on any girl. I knew that all men weren't bad. And this set of men changed my thoughts about all men but didn't change my sexual preference. I knew since I was a ten year old girl that I was going to like girls and be gay. No man could change that. Not even my father. Once a girl's mind is made up and she stands on it then that's the way it is.

We were all talking at the table. Daryl was telling us about how LSU was. Of course, David was attentive. Daryl was letting him know that he made a mistake of not returning home and that he didn't need to make the same mistake. There was no problem in going to college, but family was everything. My dad broke everything down to Darryl about mom.

“She just couldn't make it, son.”

“I should have been here. You see, David. You see why staying away isn't good. I'm sorry everyone, I'm sorry.” Daryl started sniffling and crying in his hands. “ I know mom wanted to see me. I screwed up. Dad, I was so mad the last time. But I shouldn't ever stay away like that.”

“We all have to learn in life. You're learning.” Dad was trying to comfort him with his words.

“And Anita. How is your girlfriend.”

“She's great. She really cares about me..”

“How about this? Everyone invite their friends over. I'm a fire up the grill. And we'll barbecue. How does that sound? Your mother would've loved it.

That was my queue to call Madison, invite her over and introduce her formally to my family. While in my room getting prepared for today I called Madison and invited her. After we spoke, I started to write in my notebook again about how my mother would have loved to see her oldest son. It was so much pressure. My heart was in my chest but I couldn't feel it. The pain that I was feeling for the loss of my mother was horrendous. She was no longer gonna be here. My dad was going to be here to raise us by himself. Me and my brothers had no choice but to give my dad another chance. I just sure hoped that he used it wisely and made a major comeback. Trust is something that's built and earned. Not given. My dad hasn't yet earned our trust, but he's our dad and the things that you do for loved ones were crazy.

I still wasn't finished with high school. Next year I was happy that I would be able to walk the halls with my new girlfriend. Madison eventually told her parents about us. They were astounded. It was hard for them to accept, but with me showing up to her house, they took us for more as friends and didn't give us any privacy until we left. I still had so many years of my life. I wasn't twenty one yet. As a matter of fact, I wasn't yet eighteen. I knew my mom or dad didn't know anything about being gay or homosexual, but having to face this world alone as a gay black girl was going to be a tremendous task. And to make it more complicated I had a white girlfriend. And my brother David had a white girlfriend himself. So not only was I a girl , but I was black, I was gay and I was entangled in a interracial relationship. I didn't have the first clue how I was gonna take on all of this, but one thing for sure and two things for certain, I wasn't gonna be taken down easily.