

# Love Unfounded

## Amaris Ricci

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# **Author's Ramblings**

Any relationship should begin with a solid foundation. What I have realised is that when our relationships begin based on previous hurts, lies, secrecy and selfish agendas – they never last and if they do, the strain of pretense, social standards and basic need to appear happy – is mere tolerance.

# **Prologue**

"You may call your first witness, Mr. Branch."

Maddison took a deep breath as her attorney spoke.

"Thank you your honour. I would like to call Jeremy Chandler to the stand."

Madison knew the day would come when she had to face her husband. As she walked past him he looked up and tried to smile. She had never felt more lost in that moment than she could ever remember.

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

The Grant and Carrington families made their way to Grant House. They were all exhausted. With the news reporters following them and people stopping them in the street asking all kinds of questions, they just wanted to be alone. The children wanted ice cream, so they had stopped at the Gas Station and Tobias got out to get it. It was there he saw Sherry.

"Hi Tobias."

"Sherry. The children are out in the car you can go say hi."

"I'm drunk, I will see them another day."

"It's 2 in the afternoon and you are drunk. How are you getting home?"

"My boyfriend will take me."

"Okay, see you."

Tobias got the ice cream from the freezer, paid for it and left with his family.

"Bitch, let's go, I don't have all day."

"Slow your roll Vic, I'm coming, geeze."

Victor was Sherry's boyfriend. They had been together for years and he supplied Sherry with drugs and alcohol and she had sex with him whenever he wanted. He never slept at her house and she was adamant about that. Her children were never to be subjected to the likes of him and she didn't want to face Tobias with yet another issue or her making. She had taken Feona's business proposal and she was now the owner of a food van. Business was so good she had to purchase 2 more vans and hire six more people to work. She cooked the food on mornings and they packed up the van and went out looking for sales. The vans always came back empty.

It was only when she found out she wasn't the only one he was sleeping with, that she also found out he was bisexual or so it appeared. She had gone to his old apartment one night when the children were with Tobias and using her key she unlocked the door to find Victor sitting naked in the living room while another man and a beautiful woman were having wild sex on the floor. She confronted them only to find out she was the outsider and they had been involved in these acts for years. What they didn't tell her was that Victor only liked to watch.

One day Sherry was shopping with Victor for furnishings for his new apartment, a well-dressed woman saw them and walked over.

"Hey Victor, where did you pick this one up, the sewer?"

- "Vanessa, for someone dressed so well you, still manage to remind me of something the cat left back."
- "That's not what you said a few months ago."
- "A few months ago?" Sherry finally opened her mouth.
- "Yeah about 6 months, we had a lovely tryst down Batts Rock in his back seat."
- "Vanessa, quit lying, I haven't seen you since last year, now stop it. Sherry come on let's go."
- "I forgave you, you got down on your knees crying and begged me to forgive you and I did and now this? You said I was special, what else are you lying about?"
- "Nothing babe, she doesn't mean anything."
- "Ohhhh she's special and I mean nothing yet you needed to call me for one last romp." Vanessa stated the obvious.
- "I hope you told her." Sherry started to walk away but Vanessa grabbed her arm.
- "Told me what?"
- "Oh Vic you are such a dog. Vanessa or whoever you are, you need to stay away from this man if it's not already too late."
- Sherry shifted her arm away from Vanessa's grip, turned in a huff and walked away.
- "What did she mean?"
- "Nothing important."
- "You better tell me or I will embarrass you right here, in front of all these people."
- "Not here, come back to my apartment, Sherry is way too mad to go back with me and she will go home.
- "Fine, we can finish what we started six months ago."

When they got back to Victor's apartment, he headed straight for the liquor. He poured himself a glass of Mount Gay Black and sat down.

- "This is serious Victor what did you do?"
- "You remember my partners, Andrea and Junior right?"
- "Of course I do, Junior has skills and so does Andrea."
- "Well, you know I don't have sex with them right but they got tested and were clean, I'm not. I gave it to Sherry."

It took a few minutes for Vanessa to fully understand what the man she had been having sex with for over a year, said to her.

<sup>&</sup>quot;What?" She whispered.

"I'm sorry Van but you need to go get checked, I know we always use condoms but just to be sure, you need to go."

"Do you know what you have done? All the partners we had, they could all be infected! They have wives, husbands, and children!!"

"Oh NOW you care?"

"It's one thing to be fucking another woman's husband but passing on diseases like that is beyond me, I am NOT that cold hearted!"

"What you thought you were above AIDS? You have sucked and fucked hundreds of men for the last 10 years, what did you think would happen??? That you would get a little infection every once in a while, take some pills and begin again?"

"You bastard! I better not have AIDS or I will come after you and tell everyone what you did!"

"Careful who you threaten Vanessa, I know as much about you as you know about me, now get the fuck outta my house!"

Vanessa grabbed her bag and stormed out, slamming the door. She took a left and opened the door to her own apartment.

#### **CHAPTER TWO**

Andrea had met Victor when she was 13 and she fell in love with him. She had a boyish figure and boys never paid much attention to her or they treated her like one of their buddies. As she grew older her body changed drastically. She went from wearing trainee bras to a full 34B within a six month period. Her tummy remained flat and her hips and buttocks filled out exactly where they should. Now the boys started paying attention but only Victor had her heart.

When Victor realised the power he had over her and he turned her into a prostitute when she turned 16 but with a difference. He made sure of course he was the first man to touch her. Andrea thought things would have been different but she loved and trusted him so completely she could not see her future without him.

Victor sought out high profile men who would pay good money for sex with a fresh out-the-box teen ager and there was no shortage of those. Within six weeks, he was making over four thousand a week. Out of that Andrea would get one thousand every Sunday night. She was a quiet little thing, never arguing, always

did what she was told and she would do anything Victor instructed her to do. Her mother never questioned where she went because she was a straight A student and didn't have a habit of lying. Her line was always "Going out with friends, be back by 8." She had asked Victor to open a bank account for her and she saved all of her earnings.

He rented an apartment on the South coast of Barbados and Andrea would go there three nights a week. Appointments would be made via cell phone and only cash payments were accepted upon arrival. Victor had rules, use condoms, don't hit her and never try to perform any act outside of what was agreed upon. For a long while, they never had any issues with jobs. Then one day a young man made an appointment to see Andrea.

All the time she was working for Victor, he made her study and hard. Her mother had saved money for college as she knew Andrea would make her proud as always.

When Andrea turned around, she was face to face with her neighbour. All she could think about was he would tell her mother. Sam had been away for a year and she heard her mother say he was back but she hadn't seen him as yet.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hello Andrea."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hi, can we get started, I have exams in the morning." Andrea was backing the door as she spoke.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay but can I ask you a question first?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;What?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Would you like to leave this life?" She stood upright.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Don't talk like that, Victor will get mad." She whispered.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm not afraid of him."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Well I am. Can you just do what you came to do and go?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Sam? What are you doing here?" She whispered.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I came for you. I have loved you from the day your mother brought you home until now. Say yes and I will take you away from Victor."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Please Sam, don't. Victor has never hurt me because I never gave him reason to. I don't want you to get into trouble because of me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I have been following you for months, people thought I was away, I was here but just on another part of the island."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I love you Andrea, isn't it written all over my face?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You can't, I'm nobody."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You will always be the most important person in my life, you always have but you never saw me."

- "I'm so sorry Sam, you should have told me."
- "I'm telling you now."
- "You can't want to be with me!"
- "Why?"
- "You know what I am!"
- "No, I know what you do and all you have to do is say you will leave with me and Victor will not be an issue."
- "I can't just up and go, he will never give up looking for me."
- "I am not running from him, I just paid for my mother's house and when we get married that's where we will live and I will buy your mother's house as well and turn them into one household."

Andrea hid her face in her hands. She secretly wanted to leave but the fear she had in her was real and she wasn't willing to see how Victor would react.

- "Sam, if you love me, really love me, you will give me some time."
- "You have a week."
- "Do you still want to have sex with me?"
- "Not here and when we get married."

Sam walked to the door, opened it and closed it behind him. Victor came in right after.

- "You okay babe? That was quick."
- "He just wanted company. Can you take me home? I have exams at 8 in the morning."
- "Fine babe, let's go."

When Andrea got out of the car, her other was waiting on the front porch.

- "Hey mum." Andrea walked up to her mother and hugged her so tight, her mother started to cough.
- "What's wrong with my baby?"
- "I need to tell you something, you won't like it but I promise things will get better soon."
- "I already know. Sam was here earlier."

Andrea could not hold back the tears.

"Please don't hate me, ask me to leave, tell me you never want to see me again but please, please don't hate me."

"How could I hate the one thing in my life I did right? I got pregnant with you when I was 15. My mother threw out because I refuse to have an abortion and I was living on the streets for six months before a nice man found me. He took me home and I took care of his family until he died. I loved his wife like she was my own mother. She saw how troubled I was in and they all took me in. I helped raise their little ones who in turn helped me with you. They got me this house to rent when I started working and you know the rest. Now, Sam says he wants to marry you."

"Oh mummy, I'm so afraid of Victor."

"Sam says not to worry, he knows how to handle men like Victor but are you ready to leave that life?"

"Yes mum, I am."

Funny enough, when Sam told Victor Andrea was leaving, he didn't object but his parting words bothered Andrea.

"You will never love anyone the way you love me so you will be back."

Sam and Andrea dated for a year, they went counselling, they went to church together and when he proposed, she said yes. They were married a few months later.

Unfortunately, Sam was killed in a hit and run when Andrea found out she was pregnant, she lost the baby and her mother died a few months after. She couldn't cope and once again she turned to Victor.

"I said you would be back didn't I? Now here's the deal, I found a tasty little morsel, his name is Junior, you will like him. He is the only man you are to have sex with unless it is not a job or I will kill you, understand?" Andrea nodded her head slowly.

Over the next six years, Victor played with Andrea's life. When he wasn't drugging her, he brought in groups of business men and they all took turns with her while he recorded it. She no longer cared about life, everything she held dear was gone in a short space of time. She never remembered the faces of the men or what they did or sounded like. When they left, she would zombie into the shower and wash from head down, and drive home automatically.

Sam's mother had died as well just after they got married and the houses were now hers. They had never gotten around to joining them so Andrea decided to rent one out as a guest house. She was already making three thousand a week by

prostituting but she knew she would have to stop someday when Victor tired of her. She had gotten her degree and decided to take a hold of her life Victor or not.

"You are one of those people who want to live their lives as they see fit and not what society thinks they should. You had no problem falling back into this life and no matter how much you think you have convinced yourself that you don't like being a bad girl, that is exactly what you want to be. So go on, do your thing, I will still be here."

Andrea was determined not to go back, she wanted to fall in love again, have a family again, use her education and make her mother proud. She turned one of the spare rooms into an office and started an Accounting consultancy firm. Quickly realising her potential, her client base began to grow along with her bank account. She named the business Sam's Solution because she figured other than her mother, Sam was the only one who had any positive influence on her life and she felt she owed it to him to try. As time went on Andrea felt lonely, Victor had not bothered her to work for him and she was missing the love of her husband. She only had him a short time but he loved her and that meant something. She decided she would start dating again and she wanted to have a baby. She was 28 and had lived a long life, it was time to be happy again.

After two years and selfish men, she did what seemed to be written into her DNA – she went back to Victor.

Andrea was shocked. She took this as a sign but she needed a fix so she chose the best thing.

<sup>&</sup>quot;You what?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I am done with this, you never cared about me, I see that now. I just want you to leave me alone let me get my life in order, can you do that one thing for me?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You will be back as usual."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why do always say that?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why are you here?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I need to feel useful."

<sup>&</sup>quot;No, you need stability and I have always given that to you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You used me to make money."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What's your point? You enjoyed it and you came back but this time I have someone else, younger, sexier and she likes having sex with men for money. I have no need of you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Where's Junior?"

"In the back doing the books, you can go see him if you want."

She pushed the door of Junior's office. He looked up and smiled when he saw her.

"Hey J."

"Ann."

"If you're busy I can come back later."

"Never too busy for you babe. What can I do for you?" As if he didn't know. When Andrea wanted good loving on her terms, her body displayed it in the way she walked and talked, she didn't do it for everyone and he hoped it was just for him.

"I need you."

"Give me a sec, actually come sit on me, I need to finish these by 4 today."

Andrea turned and locked the door, walked over to Junior, unzipped his pants, took him out, pulled her panty to one side and sat on him. Junior continued to punch numbers into his laptop.

"How come you are already hard?" Andrea said as she moved up and down on him slowly, mumbling into his neck.

"I saw you on the monitor, quit talking."

"Why are you here Ann?" Junior had done as much work as he could but the woman sitting on him was doing things no one could ever do to him, she always made him feel good.

"I tried dating didn't work, too much lies, greed, drama. At least with Victor, I know he doesn't care and it's all about money."

"What about me?"

"You? I don't understand."

"This much is clear. I know you think I am just one of Victor's lackeys but I've been in love with you for years."

"Oh, J, not now, just give me what I need and let me go, I'm no use to anyone." Junior sighed, stood up, wrapped her legs around his waist and took her to the sofa. He looked down and her and saw only the woman he loved. For him it was never just sex, he would do anything for this woman. He knew all about her life and if she gave him a chance he knew he could make her happy.

Andrea relished in Junior's skills as a lover. He always made her feel as if she was the only woman in the world. He paid attention to what she liked and never did anything she didn't. When she felt her body explode, she sagged into the sofa. Through her heavy breathing she heard Junior say something.

"Marry me Ann." Junior whispered.

When it hit her she tried to push him off.

- "I can't." Andrea flew off the sofa and tried to fix herself up. Junior got up as calm as he could and wrapped his arms around her.
- "Do you want to be happy Ann?"
- "Yes but...."
- "That's enough for me. Say yes and I will quit working for Victor and we can move away."
- "Why would you do that for me?"
- "Don't you know what love is? It's when all you can see is the light a person brings into your life when they smile. I live to see that smile."
- "Oh."
- "Say yes."

She shook her head.

- "Tell you what, I will take you out on a date and tell you all about myself and you can decide if I am the kind of man you need."
- "Okay."
- "Now get your clothes on, I will pick you up at 7, wear jeans and a nice top, no heels and no bag, so just walk with your house keys, cell phone and your vex money."

Andrea laughed.

- "You would never leave me stranded anywhere J, I know that much about you."
- "No, I wouldn't my love but things happen and we might get separated, I don't want you to have to depend on anyone." He kissed her on her forehead.
- "See you later."
- "Bye.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

- "Well if it isn't the town slut and her pimp. Had a little sendoff romp?"
- Andrea looked at Victor as if she was seeing him for the first time.
- "I wonder Victor, if anyone in your life has ever loved you without asking for anything in return."
- "You do."
- "Did. Good bye." She turned and left the building, got into her car and drove home with a smile.
- At 7 she heard Junior's truck pull up and stop. She rushed down to the door and flung it open.

"Hey babe, come on!"

She closed the door and bounced over to the truck. When she was getting in, she saw a lovely looking woman sitting in the back seat and her face changed.

"Oh hello."

"Hello Andrea."

"Um....."

"Don't worry Ann, I will explain in a minute, buckle up, let's go."

Andrea did as she was told. Her shoulders slumped and she stared down at her feet with her hands folded in her lap.

They pulled out and drove for about fifteen minutes in silence.

"Oh I can't handle it anymore. Ju, you have to tell her, we are making her uncomfortable." The lady in the back seat giggled as she spoke.

"Oh alright. Ann this is my mother Faleisha, I am just dropping her off at my sister to baby sit for the night."

"Oh."

"Ju you beast! Here we are, Ann it was nice to see meet you finally, you should come over for dinner sometime, let Ju bring you. Have a nice night yall."

Faleisha opened the door and sprung outside. Before she could make it to the porch, three children burst through the door in all squeals and giggles.

"Nana!"

"Alright, alright, I'm here now, who wants apple pie?"

"Me, me me!" Faleisha ushered the children inside as she waved to her son and Andrea.

"She has so much energy."

"She likes you too."

"Because she doesn't know me."

"Yes she does actually."

"You told her?" Andrea shrieked.

"I tell my mother everything because I know she will give it to me straight. When I told her about Victor she told me when I find the right woman I will walk away from him and not even care what he says. When I told her about you, she said go after what I want, sometimes people just need a push in the right direction no matter where they were before."

"Oh."

"Here we are."

"The beach?"

"Yep. Come on."

Junior got out and opened the back of the truck, he took two medium sized coolers and stacked them one on top the other. His biceps rippled under his shirt. Andrea licked her lips. She shut down the truck and locked it with his key.

They had stopped at the Bay Street Esplanade and there were youth groups practicing singing and dancing in the gazebo. There was a Muslim gathering sitting on mats and eating food. People were jogging and a few were swimming. Junior set down the coolers and opened both. The aroma that burst out was enough to make Andrea as hungry as a bear.

"Oh gosh that smalls great."

"Thank mom when you go for dinner."

"Oh I will."

Junior set out the plates on a mat and he shared food and drinks. He sat next to Andrea and while he ate he started talking.

"Do you know why Victor introduced you to me?"

"No."

"He has AIDS."

"I figured that out but that doesn't explain why he insisted that I be with only you."

"He gets off on it. While the girls are working he watches from his office. Except you."

"What's so special about me."

"You loved Victor from a child, he knew what he had done to you and he put you above all the other girls."

"I see. What about you?"

"I don't sleep with the other girls, he insisted that I only be with you as well."

"From since when?"

"Day one. I have never been with another woman since I met you."

"I don't understand."

"Victor told me you needed someone in your life who could make you happy, he thought that was me. He pretends to be all big and bad but he told me to protect you if you ever came back and when you did I was so happy."

"I see. So now what."

"I will tell you everything about myself and who I really am and you will make your decision in two weeks."

"Okay."

Junior talked all night and when he was finished, Andrea was in tears. She thought her life was hard until she heard what he and his family had been through.

"Yes."

"What?"

"Yes, I will marry you Junior."

Junior fished into his pocket and dragged out a ring.

"How did you know?"

"Wishful thinking on my part." He slipped the ring her finger and kissed her deeply.

They got married a few months later and for the first time in a long while Andrea was happy. About three months after they said I do, Andrea walked into her husband's office.

"Of all the things you could do to me, you do this?" She flung a brown envelope at him.

"What's wrong Ann? What did I do?"

"I caught you J. You did this on purpose."

Junior took the brown envelope and opened it. Immediately he began laughing so hard. Andrea pretended to be angry still.

"Aww honey, come here."

"No, explain this to me."

"It's what happens when two people who are so in love have unprotected sex and it results in pregnancy."

"Do you want a baby with me?"

"I'm the one who got you pregnant wasn't it?"

Andrea burst into tears. Junior walked over to her, lead her to the sofa and sat her down.

"I thought you would be happy, you don't want children?"

"I didn't think I could do it again after I lost the first one. I thought something was wrong with me and now look. What if this one doesn't make it, will you leave me?"

"Ann?"

"They all leave me, my father, Sam, Victor, they all left. Something must be wrong with me that no one stays."

"Aww come one you can't think like that. Listen, sit here, I will get some tea and finish up work so I can take you home."

Junior didn't wait for a response, he got up and walked over to his coffee station and made some tea. He turned to give it to her and she was fast asleep. He smiled and put the cup down on the counter. He went to his secretary and told her he was leaving early and to just lock up when she leaves. He packed up and took his

things to his truck. Came back, lifted his wife up and while he was walking out with her she mumbled something.

"A baby J, he will be just like you."

Junior felt his heart swell and fill up his chest. He was happy.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

Victor was selling babies on the black market, when his girls got pregnant he would make them keep the baby and when it was born he would sell it for fifty thousand and they got to keep their jobs.

Rashida was Victor's favourite girl. She moved in with Victor after Sherry dumped him. He had gotten drunk one night during a private party with some wealthy business men and he had sex with her. He didn't force himself on her but she was so drunk she didn't protest. When she found out she was pregnant, he gave her money to get an abortion.

"I don't want any fucking children from you or anyone. Get rid of it!" He flung a large wad of hundred dollar bills at her. She snatched it and left. Victor didn't see her for a few months and when he found her one day it was clear she didn't do as she was told. Victor dragged her into his office and beat her unconscious. When she woke up in the hospital, he was sitting in the chair next to her.

"Good you're awake now listen up, you will not be keeping this baby do you hear me? I have already sold it to the highest bidder and I will have you under watch until it's born."

Rashida said nothing, she just stared at him. She would find a way to get out of the island but Victor was so well connected she knew she had to be careful. Her mistake was contacting the one person she thought would help but what she didn't know was that this woman would do anything for money and she didn't care where who or how she got it.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hello may I speak to Ms. Seale?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;This is she what do you want?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;My name is Rashida, I'm...."

- "Victor's pet, yes what do you want, don't make me ask again."
- "I'm pregnant and the baby is Victor's he wants to sell it but I need you to tell him you will take it."

Vanessa laughed herself into a coughing fit.

- "What the fuck would I want with a baby?"
- "I just need you to tell him, you will keep it, I will do the rest."
- "What's in it for me?"
- "I don't know what would you want?"
- "You could come work for me, I know Victor's clients pay well for someone like you."
- "Fine. I will get you his book, I want \$2000 a week."
- "How much does Victor pay you?"
- "\$3500."
- "Okay deal."

Vanessa told Rashida she managed somehow to convince Victor that she wanted the baby and he was skeptical but since she had been through hell and high water with him, he decided to give her that much.

Vanessa had moved into Victor's building and she and Rashida became business partners. Rashida had recruited a few girls to work for Vanessa and she was delighted.

Rashida was now eight months but she had stopped working when she was around six months. She had already put all her money into savings and she figured she could survive for at least two years on the money she had. She was still living in Victor's apartment but she had a key for Vanessa's.

When it was time for the baby to be born, everything went to hell in a hand basket. When the first contraction hit, she told Vanessa she was ready to give birth and to call an ambulance.

"No no dear, you will have the baby here, I will call my people." Vanessa picked up the phone and within fifteen minutes an elderly woman and two men came through the door. One of the men stuck a needle into Rashida's arm mid-scream and she drifted off into space. When she came to, she was strapped onto a gurney and a sheet was thrown over her. She felt a dull ache and her internal organs were suddenly shifting. She was having the baby. She screamed when the pain gripped her.

"Push girl, you are almost there." The elderly woman muttered.

Rashida screamed again and she felt the baby's head slowly making it's way out.

"Will you cover her mouth with something before someone hears her! Shit, do I have to do everything myself?" It was Vanessa.

Rashida realised too late she had been tricked. She didn't know what to do and even if she did, there was no way she could risk the life of her baby. Vanessa walked over to her and put a scarf over her mouth.

"Oh don't look at me like that, you are way too trusting and you should know better."

The tears came, the pain came and then... a slap and a loud cry.

Rashida felt another stick in her arm and within seconds she was in darkness.

She was back at Victor's apartment. The lights in the room were dimmed. She looked around and her fear was confirmed. Her baby was gone. She felt empty, abused and betrayed. Then she felt it... anger and hatred all the way to her core.

"So you are awake. You thought you could trick me?" No response.

"You will be pleased to know you had a healthy baby boy with brown eyes and my dimples. We got 100 grand for him. That's your cut." He pointed to the table next to the bed. Rashida never looked, she just kept staring at the ceiling.

"Next time you think about trying to trick me, find someone else, Vanessa is a snake."

"Takes one darling." Vanessa appeared in the door way.

"Come on babe, let's go have dinner, I am hungry." Victor held out his hand to Vanessa and they both left.

Rashida, slowly got up, got dressed, took the money and with great pains, packed all her stuff and shoved it under her bed. She lay back down on the bed and waited for night to come. The one thing she was thankful for was that miraculously she did not contract the AIDS virus and from her doctor visits, her baby was as healthy as a horse.

Around 7 she took some of the pills to ease the pain or at least to allow her to do what she needed to. Just as the pain subsided she heard Victor and Vanessa come in and someone else was with them. She knew the voices to be that of Andrea and Junior, so she figured out quite quickly what was going to happen.

Junior and Andrea would have sex and Victor and Vanessa would watch and get themselves off. Junior and Andrea would leave, Vanessa would then go to her apartment.

Just as she predicted, she heard the steamy sounds of sex in the next room and when it was all over, the door shut twice. Victor was on the floor drunk as usual and she knew Vanessa would be as well.

Rashida dragged her bag from underneath the bed and made her way out of the apartment. She made it to the elevator and out to the front of the building and got into the cab that was waiting for her.

Victor or Vanessa never bothered to look for her or report her missing, she was a nobody.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE**

About six months later Rashida returned to the apartment building but this time she rented her own place. She had come across a businessman she had been with before and he had always treated her well, giving her extra money even after he paid Victor. He was older than she was and he wanted a full time companion so he asked her to marry him and she said yes. They moved into the building and settled in nicely. Things went well for the first week, then as Rashida stepped out of their apartment to walk her husband to his car, Vanessa came out of her place.

"Oh look, it's back."

Rashida straightened her shoulders and kept walking. Vanessa followed, talking as loudly as she could.

"Are you gonna come back and work for me Rashida? You know we made some good money together. I will pay you more than he's paying you."
Rashida's husband took her hand and kept walking.

Vanessa wondered how she managed to snag such a handsome man and he was clearly wealthy. Oh yes, the wheels in her head began to spin out of control as she planned for her next victim.

Rashida decided that although her husband provided enough money for her to do whatever she needed, she wanted to have an actual job.

"Why do you want to work? Don't I give you enough, I can increase it if you like."

"It's not about money Shawn. I have never had a real job, I met Victor as a teen ager and you know the rest, I need this. You have a vacancy at Sunplex." She paused.

"As a cleaner? Hell no."

"They won't know I'm your wife if I use my middle and maiden name. I will use my old ID card. Please Shawn, let me do this."

"Is it really that important to you?"

"Yes, if something happened to you, I need to be able to look after myself and not go back to that life again."

Shawn sighed loudly.

"Okay but if I died you would be wealthy I could never let you suffer."

"I don't want you to die so I could have money, I have grown to love you, I hope you know that."

"I feel the same way, never thought it would happen but yes, I do love you. Now, since I am the boss, you can start in two weeks, don't bother with an application." "Thank you."

"I think I will take a vacation and spend the first two weeks with you, when you go back to work, I will take an extra week. Where would you like to go?" "Surprise me."

Shawn booked a trip for them to visit St. Martin, they spent the next two weeks touring the island, they explored Illet Pinel island. They experience the wild life, took in a few parties and events but most of all they enjoyed each other's company. When they got back home, Rashida knew she was pregnant. She wasn't sure if Shawn wanted children and if he didn't she would raise her child on her own.

The day they got back to Barbados Vanessa had already hatched her plan. She overheard Rashida telling on of their neighbours, she was starting a new job after they came back from their vacation. Oh this was even more perfect than she expected. The hardest part was to get Shawn to sleep with her. Piece of cake. She still had skills damnit.

First day of work and Rashida stepped out into the morning air, she felt great, she decided to wait a few weeks before she told her husband about the baby. She would drop a few hints and see if he picked up on it. She got into her Toyota Corolla and made her way to Sunplex in St. James. She spent the first day, in training and touring the facility. She would be responsible for cleaning the entire first floor of the complex, the payment plan was great and she knew she would do the best she could.

Shawn walked away from Vanessa without another word.

"Shit, guess I will have to try a new tactic. He will give in sooner or later, I prefer sooner so I can rub it in that bitch's face."

For the next three days Vanessa harassed Shawn. He continued to refuse her but he was getting angrier each time. Then one day he snapped.

"So are you gonna come to my place or do you want to do it in your bed, I don't care either way."

It was 8 in the morning and Vanessa was standing in the hallway, wearing a hot red Alannis teddy. Over it she had on a red satin robe. There could be no doubt in anyone's mind what she was looking for.

"Come on you know you want to. Just for fun, I won't tell her if you don't." All the while she was talking she slinked over to Shawn. She touched him on his face and when he grabbed her hand and dragged her into the apartment, she was not surprised in the least. Shawn looked at the woman who clearly knew how to get a man to do what she wanted, even if he slapped her around a bit.

Shawn was a big man, over 6ft all muscle, strong as an ox. He was going to teach Vanessa a lesson she would never forget and then he would have nothing to do with her ever again. He threw her across the room and she fell over the table and landed on the couch. She cut her lip in the fall and as she wiped her mouth, she gave Shawn a wicked smile.

"Come on you can do better than that."

Vanessa changed position and opened her legs and held up a condom in her hand. Within minutes Shawn giving her what she wanted in the worst way possible and she was loving it.

When Shawn grunted his orgasm, Vanessa grunted hers.

"Wow I actually enjoyed that. I will be back for more."

She attempted to get up but Shawn pulled a gun from under the sofa and touched it to her temple.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Well hello Shawn, how was the vacation?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hello, um what's your name again?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Vanessa."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Oh yes you are the lady who lives upstairs and has no respect for my wife or me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Who cares about respect, I can give you what your wife can't."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Oh I doubt that."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why not test me and find out."

<sup>&</sup>quot;No thanks, my wife knows how to handle me. Have a good day."

"Listen to me bitch, this was a onetime deal, stay away from me and my wife. If you tell her about this, your mother will find your body in pieces on her doorstep." Vanessa slowly took her finger and moved the gun from her temple and slowly pushed it down her body right between her legs. She rubbed it up and down and grinned wickedly.

It was then Shawn realised his mistake. He figured it was all about money and if he wanted her to be quiet, he would pay dearly.

Vanessa fixed herself and left but not before she dropped her earring on the floor. Now she will wait.

#### **CHAPTER SIX**

"I don't understand why Shawn."

Rashida was sitting in the dark, waiting on her husband to come home from work. She had been doing a general clean of the apartment and rearranging furniture when she saw it. Immediately she knew who it belonged to. She went over and over in her mind, what she could have possibly done wrong to have Vanessa win again.

"Why are you in the dark honey?" Shawn switched on the light and for some reason he knew what was coming.

"Was she worth breaking my heart? Was I too much of a whore for you to remain faithful to me as I have been to you? I was waiting for you to come home so I could tell you I was pregnant. I cleaned the entire place from top to bottom and when I found it, do you have any idea how I felt? The man who I thought loved me decided I wasn't enough and for who...... Vanessa?"

"I'm sorry, I don't know what I was thinking." He stepped towards her and she raised his gun.

"I guess I would deserve it."

"I am in love with you Shawn, I married you because you were willing to forget my past and start over. You are the only man who has ever shown me any respect, knowing what I did for a living. You never called me any names or reminded me of who I was. Do you have any idea how much that meant to me?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;How much?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;A thousand a week."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fine, now get out and remember what I said, I have no qualms about gutting you like a fish."

"What can I do to make up for it, I don't want to lose you."

"First you need to get an AIDS test since Vanessa is infected but tonight you need to move out. If you can stay celibate until after the baby is born and you get another test, then we can try to work things out. Right now all I can think about is my baby. You have downgraded yourself to number three."

"I used protection with Vanessa but I will get the test anyway to be safe. I want to be there for Doctor visits and the birth, please don't take that from me."

"I can't promise I won't get upset when I see you, this hurts, it really hurts and I won't get over it in any hurry."

"Fair enough. There is an empty apartment on the next floor I will take it. Are you going to quit your job?"

"No, I need to stay active, when I get closer I will apply for maternity leave."

"Okay. I really am sorry."

"One more thing. I checked the finances. Don't pay Vanessa another cent, if she wants to blackmail you let her."

"Okay."

"You didn't ask about the baby."

"I was waiting for you to tell me."

"I'm at least six weeks, and everything is going well so far. If nothing goes wrong I will carry to term."

"I know it may sound empty but I want this baby with you, I've always wanted children, I guess that's why I never bothered to use protection with you, I knew I could trust you."

"Clearly I can no longer say the same for you." The tears began to fall.

Shawn threw caution to the wind and made his way over to his wife. He knelt at her feet and rested his head in her lap. For a moment she remember the man she married and his lovingness towards her, she caressed his bald head and then she stopped.

"You need to go now, please."

"Okay but if you need me for anything, I'm still your husband and you call me first."

"I can handle that."

"I will take a walk so you can pack."

"Please don't, it's dark out and I need you safe."

"Okay."

Shawn went into their bedroom and packed up his stuff, he called the landlord and told him he had the deposit for the empty apartment. Within an hour he was moved. He went back up to see Rashida and Vanessa was coming across the landing. He ignored her and went back inside.

- "All finished?"
- "Yep, I will unpack tomorrow when I get home from work."
- "I can help if you want."
- "Why? After I've managed to screw everything up."
- "For better or for worse. I remember saying it to you and I meant it. Leave the key with me when you go to work and when I get home I will start."
- "Okay. Is there anything you need?"
- "I need my husband back."
- "I will get there, I promise." Shawn lifted her hand and kissed it.

Early next morning, he was leaving around 6, he still had the key for his old apartment and when he pushed the door, Rashida was in the bathroom throwing up.

- "Hey, it's okay, I'm here, I'm here." He sat with her until her stomach eased.
- "Feeling better?"
- "Yes thanks."
- "Stay home whenever you need to, I will make sure you still get paid."
- "People will think something is up."
- "I don't care anymore, something you said last night, grabbed my heart and squeezed it. For better or for worse. I betrayed that and those words are supposed to mean something. Last night you didn't call me names or insult me. That meant something as well. I want you to use your name at work, I don't care. You will go back to school and study whatever you need to work by my side. I will get the papers drawn up with you as my business partner no matter where in the company you are working. I have a good woman and I hope I have not ruined the love she has for me."
- "Give me time Shawn. My self-confidence is shot to hell. There is something I never told anyone but I've made my peace with it."

- "Vanessa sold my baby. I got pregnant for Victor and I asked Vanessa for help and she turned on me. They sold my son for a hundred thousand dollars. I don't know where he is."
- "Oh Jesus, honey I am so sorry. I will hire a private investigator to find him."
- "You would do that for me?"
- "I would do anything for you. Come on, let's see if we can get you to eat, I have to go get the test done this morning."
- "Thank you. I won't divorce you if it's positive, know that."
- "What have I done to deserve someone like you?"
- "You loved me, that's enough."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Tell me."

Rashida and Shawn developed a routine. He would come up for breakfast and they would get ready and ride to work together.

Rashida avoided Vanessa, she didn't feel like confronting her at all but one day Vanessa was waiting for her. She had left work early because she felt sick.

"Oh yes, he made me his partner, I am going back to school and working my way up. Leave me alone will you!"

Vanessa grabbed her arm.

"I can ruin you Rashida, I know things about you I'm sure Shawn doesn't know."

"Just try me. I'm not the naïve pregnant girl anymore, I would put a bullet in you so fast you will think it was part of your DNA. Now back to fuck up and stay away from me." Rashida shoved Vanessa and she stumbled back onto the wall.

Rashida unlocked her door and went inside and headed for the bathroom.

"Why don't you leave her alone, you took her baby, you fucked her husband, leave the poor kid alone."

Rashida was furious. She decided she had enough. She completely changed her look, she put on a wig, used her contour make up skills to change her facial appearance and added a few temporary tattoos in case someone saw her. She got up, put on her gloves and took Shawn's gun from the drawer in the living room. When she cracked the door open she saw a man knocking on Vanessa's door. She watched as he went inside. She listened and then she heard arguing. The man burst through the door and left. She was about to enter the hall way again when a woman knocked on the door this time. Minutes later she heard shouting and the woman burst through the door and left as well. Everything had gone quiet. People were accustomed to Vanessa and her noisy apartment so no one even bothered to look. Perfect.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hey bitch, I still want you to come and work for me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why would I work for you when I own Sunplex with my husband?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;What?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I hate her."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why Vanessa, because she is prettier than you are? More Intelligent? She actually got someone to marry her even with her past and you are still a cold and vindictive bitch. Leave the kid alone or I will put your head on a block."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why are you defending her, you sold her baby remember?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yeah I know, worst day of my life. Like I said, leave her alone."

"What the hell is going on?"

Rashida waited a few more minutes then she made her way to Vanessa's door. She turned the knob and crept in.

"If that's you Jeremy, your wife was just here and I'm not in the mood so go away!"

"You know Vanessa, I always used to admire you at first. I thought you were this hot sexy chick who had it going on but you are nothing but a gold digging slut and the day you decided my husband was going to be a part of your blackmail list, you signed your death warrant."

"Who are you and what are you doing in my house."

Vanessa looked at the gun and laughed.

"Oh now I know who you are, only one man I know has a gun like that, plus, I am pretty sure he was carrying it the last time I fucked him on the couch in your apartment. Oh yes, every time you leave for work, I slip down stairs and fuck his brains out."

When the woman left Vanessa was no longer laughing.

#### **CHAPTER SEVEN**

Rashida woke up in a prison cell surrounded by other women. She smelt like she had been drinking for weeks. Drinking? She stopped drinking when she found out she was pregnant. There is no way she would touch a drink. How did she get there?

As she tried to focus on her surroundings someone touched her shoulder. She jumped.

"Easy there little girl, no one will harm you. How are you feeling?"

"Train wreck, how long have I been here?"

"Only a few hours, I think I just heard someone posted your bail. Take care of that baby."

"Thank you. How did you know?" Rashida whispered.

"It was all you talked about in your sleep."

"Rashida Walters. You're out!"

Rashida heard the cell doors open and she followed the guard. When she saw Shawn, she flew into his arms. She started rattling on.

- "Stop, stop honey, let's get you home first, you must be tired and hungry and you really need a bath."
- "Okay."
- "I need to tell you something."
- "What?"
- "Vanessa's dead, someone killed her in her apartment."
- "Honey, wake up."
- "What?"
- "Wake up, you have been out for hours"

Rashida sat up in bed and looked around her. She was wearing a robe and she was naked underneath.

- "What happened?"
- "I should ask you the same thing. Come, get some food and we will talk."
- "Okay." Rashida got up off the bed and made her way to the dining area. She plunked down in a chair and put her forehead in her hands.

Shawn heated up some food in the microwave and handed it to her. She ate as if she hadn't eaten in months.

- "More?"
- "Dessert and some juice please."

Shawn took a piece of cheesecake from the refrigerator and a bottle of Golden Apple Juice. In minutes that was gone too.

- "Okay before you start to chew on me, tell me what you remember."
- "I killed Vanessa, I have to go to the police station."
- "Why do you think you killed her?"
- "I remember pulling a gun and now she's dead."
- "You woke up in St. James in a bar, someone called the cops and told them you were being disorderly, you had my info in your bag so they called me."
- "Well if I didn't kill her, I am a witness, I still have to go. I will go in the morning, right now I am starving." Shawn stood back he watched his wife devour almost everything they had in the fridge. He smiled knowing that things weren't as bad as they were and he would do everything he could to make up for his mistake. He had one more week to go before the test result came back and funny enough, he was glad that his episode with Vanessa came after Rashida got pregnant. He could never live with himself if he put both of them in danger.

Bright and early the next morning, the police came back to question people they had missed the night before. Rashida heard a knock on the door and thought it was Shawn.

"Door's open!"

The door pushed slightly and two officers peeked in.

"Morning ma'am, we are here to ask you some questions about last night."

"Oh! Well I was coming down to the station last night but I found myself in a predicament I could not give account for and being pregnant I was too tired and hungry. Ask me anything you like, I have nothing to hide."

"Where were you last night?"

"I disguised myself and took my husband's gun, here are the papers for it. I went to Vanessa's apartment and I confronted her. I pointed the gun at her and the next thing I know I woke up in a jail cell. My husband posted bail and he brought me home. He said someone called the cops and told them I was causing a disturbance. That is all I remember, I didn't know Vanessa was dead until my husband told me when he came for me."

"I think you need a lawyer."

"While I might agree officers, you didn't process what she just said. Think about it. She remembers confronting Vanessa, she remembers waking up in jail. The bar in St. James is a good half hour driver from here, how did she get there, I had the car. Hers was parked here when I got home. The alcohol was on her clothes and since she is pregnant she would never touch a drink. They did a breathaliser test while in custody. Clearly someone was trying to protect her by putting her in a different location."

"Are you her lawyer?"

"I'm her husband and if I need to I will bring her down to the station myself, she hasn't been well these last few weeks and I don't want her under any stress."

"Understood sir but I still think she needs a lawyer, she might not have been the killer but she might remember something that will tell us who it is. I will double check her whereabouts with the station and let them confirm everything you told me so far."

#### **CHAPTER EIGHT**

Jeremy was sworn in and he glanced at his wife every few minutes. He looked haggard and disheveled.

"Mr. Chandler, how long were you having sex with Vanessa Seale?"

Jeremy squirmed in his seat.

- "About two months." He muttered
- "In that time how much did she extort from you?"
- "A thousand a week."
- "How much were you making a month?"
- "Just over twenty-five thousand."
- "Did she transfer any sexual diseases to you?"
- "Yes."
- "Gonorrhea am I right?" Mr. Branch looked down at his notepad.
- "That was the second one."
- "And the first?"
- "Chlamydia."
- "Did you pass on any to your wife?"
- "The first one."
- "Did you confront Ms. Seale about the disease?"
- "Yes, I went to her apartment and she told me she didn't care who she gave it to and we men should learn to keep our dick in our pants."
- "Language Mr. Chandler."
- "Sorry your honour but that's what she said."
- "Is that when you killed her?"
- "Objection your honour, Mr. Chandler is not on trial for Vanessa Seale's murder, and that's my question he is asking."
- "Sustained."
- "Mr. Chandler, why is your wife here today?"
- "She is on trial for the murder of Vanessa Seale."
- "Do you think she did it?"
- "Of course not! As angry as she was with me, she could never do that to another human being, I swear on my life she didn't do it."
- "No further questions your honour. Unless the prosecutor wants to cross, I call my next witness."
- "Nothing from me your honour."
- "I call Maddison Chandler to the stand."

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"Hi Maddison."
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<sup>&</sup>quot;Hi."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Let's get through the easy part first okay."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Tell the court how you came to meet Vanessa Seale."

<sup>&</sup>quot;She was my boss's best friend. She came to the office often to visit her."

- "Was she friendly towards you?"
- "Very. Always complimented me on my professional way of dressing."
- "How long were you married before trouble began?"
- "Eight months."
- "Okay Maddison, now comes the hard part. Take your time. How did you find out about Vanessa?"
- "I have PCOS, Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome, it causes painful sex at times, heavy bleeding and basically my period may last more than the average 7 days. I visit the doctor regularly to make sure the cysts are not growing and on one of my visits the doctor told me I had Chlamydia. He said it was curable but I needed to tell my husband and let him come in to get checked as well. It was also at that visit he told me I was pregnant. My husband had started acting funny, sex had changed and he was always angry at something and he would get up and leave me alone at night. At one point he accused me of being with another man."
- "Were you?"
- "No, the only man I have ever been intimately involved with is my husband."
- "So tell me who is the man in this photo?" Mr. Grant handed Maddison a photo of her and a man standing up kissing outside a hotel.
- "This was 5 years ago and that was my boyfriend at the time, he lives in our building."
- "What's the significance of the photo."
- "I wear that suit to work, my mother gave it to me, she said when I feel down, put it on and it will lift my spirits. Whoever found this photo assumed because I still wear that suit, it was recent. I am also assuming they showed it to my husband, hence the accusation."

Jeremy hung his head. Vanessa had shown him the photograph and he used that as an excuse to sleep with her.

- "Thank you Mr. Branch. Mrs. Chandler, you said you didn't kill Vanessa, did you think your husband did?"
- "He may have wanted to just like me but she isn't worth it and she was alive when I left and he was at home when I got there, so no, I didn't think so."
- "Do you know what this is?" He handed her a photo of two men and a woman in bed together.

Maddison glared at the photo then looked at her husband.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Did you kill Vanessa Seale Maddison?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;No I did not."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Nothing further your honour. Mr. Dean?"

- "It's a photo of two men and a woman having sex."
- "Do you know any of the people?"
- "Vanessa Seale and my husband." The tears began.

The people in the courtroom began muttering.

- "Did you know your husband was bi-sexual?"
- "I do now."
- "Your honour, I think Mrs. Chandler has had enough."
- "One more thing your honour then she can go."
- "Just one."
- "Your husband lied to you Mrs. Chandler, Vanessa Seale was not the one who gave him the infections, he gave them to her."
- "What?" Jeremy's head was on his forearms now, not willing to face his wife.
- "Nothing further your honour."

Mr. Branch rushed over to help Maddison down from the stand, she was shaking like a leaf.

- "Come on sweetie, this won't last much longer."
- "We will take a recess and come back after lunch."

Maddison spent the next half hour throwing up her breakfast.

"I call Feona Grant to the stand."

Feona was sworn in and she sat down in the witness box.

- "Mrs. Grant, how long did you know Vanessa Seale?"
- "All my life, we were raised by the same nanny, went to the same schools from nursery to college."
- "I know the next question is going to be hard on you but I know you can handle it." "I hope so."
- "Vanessa was determined to ruin your life.... Why?"

Feona took a deep breath and glanced at her family. Tobias nodded gently.

"Her father who was my music teacher at the time, molested me and she always believed it was my fault her sister disappeared."

You could hear the muttering across the courtroom but the face Feona wanted to see was her mother's. She was met with a blank stare.

- "What was Vanessa's plan as she relayed it to you?"
- "She said she wanted everything that I had and she would stop at nothing to get it."
- "How did your husband come into this?"
- "She accused him of raping her."

"Did you ever at any point think that your husband killed Vanessa to protect you or himself?"

"No, he loves his family way too much to jeopardise it and I dealt with Vanessa without having to touch her."

"Thank you Mrs. Grant, no further questions your honour."

"Cross Mr. Dean?"

"Yes I think I shall. Mrs. Grant, you said you dealt with Ms. Seale. How did you accomplish that?"

"I went to visit her in the hospital after she accused my husband, I took an officer with me and hid him behind a curtain, not only did she reveal everything that went on and her plans but she attempted to attack me after pretending she could not even move from her bed. Everyone in the room saw what went on."

"What happened after that?"

"Clearly, she went after someone else's husband."

"How do you know that?"

"Vanessa made a living from black mailing men all over this country, a mere boyfriend won't have any effect and she targeted high profile men. A husband would rather pay her than see his name in the news. She has never worked a day in her life, yet she wears full brand. She would her hair done twice a week sometimes three, manicures, pedicures, spa treatments whatever Vanessa wanted she extorted the money to pay for it."

"How do you know all of this?"

"I was her best friend all our lives, she didn't hide much from me. In any event, she showed me the book she kept with everyone's names. For years we shopped at the best stores and ate at the finest restaurants. Many times and only after, I wold find out who owned some of these places."

"Why did you stop?"

"I grew up and met the man of my dreams."

"You said Vanessa's father molested you as a teen and her sister disappeared, why would she blame you?"

"If there is one man in this world Vanessa had the utmost respect for, it was her father. He was everything she looked for in a man but when she found out what he was doing she refused to believe it. Her sister ran away because he was molesting her as well and she blamed me because I was the closest thing she had as a scape goat. You see, Vanessa grew up poor in the love department, her mother spent more time skirting around the island from one event to the next and she totally ignored her children and her husband. When he started on her daughter she denied it and went on with her life. Vanessa never knew until I spilled the beans."

"How long have you known Maddison Chandler?"

- "A few years, she is my best employee other than my sister. I wouldn't trade her for the world."
- "Did you know Vanessa was sleeping with her husband?"
- "When I found out I wasn't surprised, she was sleeping with everyone's husband it would seem."
- "Except yours."
- "That's right."
- "Nothing further your honour."

Mr. Branch call your next witness."

### **CHAPTER NINE**

"I call Tobias Grant to the stand."

Tobias was sworn in and he took his seat.

- "Mr. Grant, how long have you known your wife?"
- "Less than two years."
- "How long did you know her before you got married?"
- "Your honour, what does this line of questioning have to do with this case?"
- "Bare with me your honour."
- "My bare level has limits Mr. Branch."
- "Yes your honour."
- "Tobias... answer the question."
- "Less than six months."
- "In as few words as your honour's bare level will allow, explain to me how you met and why you chose to marry her within such a short time."

A few people in the courtroom snickered, including the judge.

"Feona hired me as her handyman, I fell in love with her the very first day I saw her and we had a few issues for a few weeks. We realised quickly how compatible we were and how well we got along and we were willing to battle whatever came our way together. Most of her friends and family were dead-set against it and back then I was overweight, struggling financially and not considered suitable to be even seen in her company. Even her own mother tried to pay me to stay away from her. She stood up to them...... For me and my children. How could I possibly let go of someone so special?"

- "What was the relationship between your wife and Vanessa Seale?"
- "They were best friends but as Feona and I got closer, Vanessa tried quite often to break us up and when that failed she accused me of raping her at our home. She even badgered my wife while she was pregnant with our daughter."
- "Have you ever thought of killing Vanessa?"
- "Honestly.....many times but when I think of the pain and suffering my family would have to go through I decided she wasn't worth the trouble. I struggled hard to provide a stable home for my children and someone like Vanessa could never understand that."
- "Nothing further your honour. Cross if you like."
- "Mr. Grant, just one question. Is it true that the mother of your first two children is infected with the AIDS virus?"
- "I refuse to answer that."
- "Your honour!"
- "I don't see the relevance, I won't allow it. Ask another question or let Mr. Grant go."
- "Do you have the AIDS virus Mr. Grant?"
- "Objection!"
- "Sustained. Mr. Thomas, I don't care what your angle is, please refrain from asking Mr. Grant any questions along that line, is that clear?"
- "Yes your honour."
- "You may continue."
- "Tobias, did you at any point have sexual relations with Ms. Seale?"
- "No I did not."
- "Why not?"
- "Have you seen my wife?"
- "Answer the question please."
- "I just did. If you would turn around and look at my wife, you wouldn't need an answer. Feona is perfect, no one can compare to her, I would kill myself first before I hurt her, especially with someone as vicious as Vanessa. Does that answer you?"
- "Yes it does actually. You wife has literally vouched for your faithfulness within your marriage. How can she be sure what you say is true?"
- "To understand that I would never cheat on my wife is to understand what true love is. I cannot explain what my wife and I have, it is something you have to live through yourself with someone who feels the same way about you. What I can say though is that our marriage has a firm foundation and that is what we stand on."
- "No further questions your honour."
- "Anymore witnesses?"

The doors of the courtroom opened and an elegantly dressed woman walked in and took her seat in the witness box and sworn in.

Mrs. Seale glanced at the judge, shrugged her shoulders and answered.

Feona's face displayed severe shock, her mother simply stood up and left the courtroom.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Just one before we go for lunch your honour."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Go ahead Mr. Grant."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I call Mrs. Venetta Seale."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mrs. Seale, what kind of relationship did you have with your daughter?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Which one?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Vanessa."

<sup>&</sup>quot;We didn't, I did my thing she did hers, as long as we never crossed paths, we were fine."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm not sure I understand, so explain it to me in simpler terms."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I did not want children but my husband did so I gave him what he wanted and he paid a nanny to raise them."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Are you sure you want to stick to that statement?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes I do."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Then tell us Mrs. Seale, how is it that you gave birth to a daughter who is not your husband's?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Who told you that?" Vanetta stood up with a scowl on her face.

<sup>&</sup>quot;It doesn't matter at this point. Your answers will determine what my next question is."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay fine, Vanetia is not my husband's child okay!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Good, whose daughter is she?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Don't make me say it, it will ruin people's lives!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;More than they are already ruined? You have lost a daughter because of the way she lived, clear the air and set the record straight for a change."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Sandiford Rawlins." The courtroom went wild.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Order!" The judge yelled.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mr. Grant, I was waiting to see how her answer affected the proceedings, now I do and I have had enough, court will be adjourned until tomorrow at 8AM sharp. Mrs. Seale I will see you in my chambers before you leave."

"All rise."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I thought you told me she was mine. How many men were you involved with?"

"Two, you and Sandiford. I always knew she was his simply because I was three weeks by the time we started."

"All this time I have kept my mouth shut, I gave you everything you asked of me and to find out this way? Why would you expect Vanessa to turn out any different?"

"She made her choices without my help."

"Clearly we have nothing more to say to each other. Get out and the money stops."

Mrs. Seale let out a huff and vacated the chambers. On her way out, she bypassed a woman who she knew she would have to face eventually but not today, she couldn't handle anymore confrontation.

Everyone went out and had lunch, dreading what else they would find out about themselves and Vanessa's shenanigans. Maddison was taken to a private room so she could eat and rest for a few minutes. Funny enough no one really believed she killed Vanessa but it still have to be proven that she was innocent.

Jeremy asked to see Maddison and she refused. Her lawyer encouraged her to speak to him. He wanted to find out what else Jeremy was hiding, that they wouldn't have already heard in court.

"Okay."

Maddison sat down in her designated room on a sofa, she lay down in attempt to stave off the nausea. As soon as Jeremy stepped into the room, she flew into the bathroom. Jeremy went over and patted her back and gave her a towel. "Thank you."

"I'm sorry Maddi, you have been so good to me and I ruined everything. I couldn't tell you. I was ashamed of who I am."

"Clearly your shame has its limits. I see women sleeping with all sorts of men, leaving their children to be raised by other women. They steal their husbands' money by spending it on frivolous things. I got up every day and went to work so we could both have some peace of mind financially. You always knew where I was, I never went out with anyone but you. You were my first and no one else after that. How could possibly want to have sex with a man? Am I that repulsive to you? Didn't you love me at least a little bit?"

"I do Maddi but this situation is not something we can recover from. I can't change who I am. I am not worthy enough to be your husband. I will file for

divorce and leave the house for you and the baby. All I ask is that you let me see him or her."

"This is the time when I need you the most and you are giving up on me."

"I would never give up on you but my lifestyle is a dangerous one and I have only now realised with friends like Vanessa, I will be dead soon too. I can't do that to you. I need you and the baby to have a safe environment surrounded with love and happiness. Something I can never give you. I will set up a monthly payment for you."

"You keep talking about money. What about when they need their father in the middle of the night because of the monster under the bed? When they need him to teach them football or how to fish. I need you to be there for them. I don't care what happens to us but our baby needs you in their life no matter how bad it gets."

Jeremy stared at the woman he married and in those few minutes he realised what kind of person she was. He knew he had messed up badly and he would try to make up for it somehow.

"You still want me in your life?" he whispered.

"I married you Jeremy not because of how much money you made but because I truly love you. All the things you did before and after don't matter now, we created a life together and I would like us to raise him or her together. That's all I ask."

"I see. You deserve better Maddi."

"You can give me what I deserve but you need to believe in yourself and stay away from people like Vanessa. If you know full well you will go back to that life then I won't fight the divorce and I will accept whatever support you provide for us."

"Oh Maddi, I love you so much, I will do everything I can to make you happy. First we need to deal with this case and get you out of jail. Your lawyer is doing a good job and I believe he will win, if he doesn't we will try until we succeed, I don't want our baby to be born in prison."

"Thank you Jeremy."

For the first time in a long while Maddison felt happy, her husband was trying to make up for his mistakes and they had a baby on the way.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

As the days crawled on, more and more, Maddison was becoming less of a suspect. There was no weapon, no evidence at all pointing to her. The prosecutor agreed that to continue would be a waste of the courts time and that he recommend she be release as soon as possible. However, she should not leave the island in the event that she was needed again.

Maddison stepped out into the morning sun a free woman. She was met on the steps of the courthouse by her mother, sister and the love of her life, Jeremy. He picked her up and twirled her around. Maddison squealed and held on tight. "Mrs. Chandler, let's go home."

While they were walking towards their car a woman stopped and stared at Jeremy, then Maddison.

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"Jeremy?"
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"I'm sorry but I don't remember you and the fact that you just blurted out whatever went on between us, tells me you have no respect for yourself or me. Have a good day." Jeremy took his wife's hand and turned her towards the car.

"Well, I could never forget the father of my child." Maddison froze.

"What did you say?"

"Look, I'm sorry about telling you this way but I spent a few months looking for you and I couldn't let you walk away without you knowing. Here is my card, if you want to see your child, let me know."

"No, hold on, Jeremy is my husband and if you are claiming you had a child together, I want to do this now, so either you come with us or we go somewhere and talk about this." Jeremy was staring at the woman, clearly in shock.

"Okay fine, I will go with you."

"Here is our car."

A still silent Jeremy opened the door for his wife and went to the other side and got in. The woman was left to open her own door. Jeremy drove home in silence. He got out, opened his wife's door and guided her into the house.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hello, do I know you?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You should, we had sex quite a few times. I am surprised you don't recognise me."

Maddison went to the kitchen got Sharon a soda and brought it back.

"Talk." Jeremy said, finally finding his voice again.

"I met you at one of Vanessa Seale's house parties. I think we were all drunk or high or both and you and I somehow ended up in Vanessa's bed. I woke up the next morning and you were gone. I asked Vanessa who you were but she was too high to remember who was even there. About six weeks later I found out I was pregnant. I had the baby and she lives with my mother, I don't want any children but I decided if I ever found you, I would let you know in case you wanted to have her."

"Sharon, I would like you get a DNA test for Jeremy and the baby, if she is his, we will take care of her. We will adopt her and that will be the last contact you have. We will pay you whatever expenses you incurred over the last year if you can provide the proper receipts, not a cent more. Her grandmother is welcome to see her. Her name will be Chandler are we clear? When we think she is old enough, we will tell her about you. If she wants to find you, let her, I would rather you tell her you don't want to see her than hear it from us."

Sharon left and she actually felt good that the child would be raised by Maddison, she seemed like a good person.

<sup>&</sup>quot;What is your name?" Maddison asked.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Sharon Smith."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay, would you like something to drink?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Any red soda is fine."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Have a seat, I will be back in a minute."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I don't. Now leave please."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Jeremy!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I don't know who she is and I don't want anything to do with her."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fine with me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Maddi? You would take her?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You told me how much you loved me, this is how much I love you."

# **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

The police were baffled. Unless they found a weapon, they had no idea who killed Vanessa and the number of people she pissed off, was exponential. Unless someone slipped up or they found new evidence, this case would but on the board for a while.

The Grant's, Chandlers, Walters all the families who were broken up by Vanessa were beginning to put their lives back together. Some will take longer but their end goal was the same – happiness.

As she by the seat of her bay window looking over the grounds of the massive house she lived in, she wondered if anyone would ever figure it out. She smiled knowing things were working out better than she had hoped. She sipped her tea and as her husband came up behind her, she leaned her cheek for a kiss.

"I wonder what is going on in that head of yours."

"I was thinking about the life we built for ourselves. I'm glad you took me back, I don't know how I survived all these years ignoring you. I'm sorry."

"It's okay, we have to live with the choices we make. I made quite a few."

"Enough misery talk, will you make love to me please?"

"After last night you still want more?"

"I can't seem to get enough of you." She turned completely and rubbed her hand up and down her husband's shorts. He quickly hardened underneath her hand.

He didn't even bother to take her up to the bedroom, he unzipped his pants, pushed her onto the seat and took her right there.

Somewhere a telephone was ringing.

"Honey, get the fone." She whispered to her now satiated husband, who was draped over her, still on the window seat.

"Mmm." She pushed gently.

"Phone ringing, it may be important."

"Okay okay, is it mind or yours?"

"Mine."

As her husband grunted and eased out of her, she put her legs down and walked over to her bag. The call had rang off. She picked up the cell and looked at the missed call.

"What does she want?" She whispered to herself.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Who was it?"

- "Unknown number love, I hope they call back. I'm going upstairs to freshen up, what would you like for lunch?"
- "You are cooking me lunch? Wow, you have really changed."
- "Yeah I have."
- "Okay well surprise me then."
- "Great, give me a few and I will be back."

She quickly made her way to her bedroom, she had moved her things back and she hadn't sorted them out as yet. She closed the door and made her way to her bathroom.

She punched redial on her cell.

- "Mother."
- "What do you want?"
- "Money as usual, you came up short last month."
- "Well Your father wasn't very forth coming but I have moved back home so just be patient."
- "No I won't, you will find me some money or I will go to the cops and tell them every little gory detail about the high society bitch that you are and I don't care who gets hurt, even father."
- "Oh don't be such a dramatist, I will see what I can do for you."
- "Oh you better, I don't want to see you just put the money on the account and let me know." The caller clicked off.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I need to do something with her or she will ruin my plans."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Honey, lunch is ready."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Be there in a minute just look looking over the books."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Need help?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;No, I got it covered."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Here you are, lunch is served."

<sup>&</sup>quot;This looks great, thank you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Only for you. Now I have to move my things back into our bedroom today, do you need anything done?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I have a few errands to run later then I can help you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Uh...."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I need some money to do a few things." She hung her head slightly.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Is this why you came back?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes and no."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why the no?"

"As bad as things were, I have always loved you. I may not have known how to show it but I do. I wasn't a good wife to you or mother to our children and I am trying to make up for it. I am not broke, I have nest egg but it's not enough. If you want me to work I will find something to do."

"At least you are being honest. Your old account is still there, I just restricted your access to it when you moved out. I will give you the card and I will put an allowance in it every month."

"Thank you." Her plan was working, she would be able to keep her husband satisfied and he would put more money in her account. From what she remembered, she had over half a million in that account before he cut her off. Funny enough though, she was beginning to see her husband in a new light. He wasn't the soft, cowardly man she married. After everything she put him through he still loved her. The day he found out about the affairs after she confessed in court that Vanetia was not his child, he flipped. When she got home he was packing her stuff, well more like throwing them into garbage bags.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"You dare come into MY house and ask me what I am doing? Here's the deal, you will be gone by the end of the day and don't take anything you didn't buy with your own money. As of now your account is frozen. I will be changing the locks tomorrow. Don't bother coming back. I put up with you for way too long. It's time I lived for me."

#### "I HATE YOU!"

"Frankly I don't give a shit. Imagine, you had another man's baby, I gave you everything you have ever asked for and more. Most women had to work for a living but no, you wanted to stay home so I made sure we always had the best no matter how tired I was or what sacrifices I made for my family. You never cared about me, so I am DONE. A taxi will be here to take you wherever you want to go."

"What am I supposed to do now? You leave me with no money, how am I supposed to get by?"

"Get to the part where I care." Mr. Seale threw the bags on the floor in front of his wife and walked away. He knew if he stayed another minute she would get to him and guilt him into what she wanted. Well he was having none of it.

Vanetta Seale was livid. She needed to suck it up and ask for a favour before things got too bad.

"Hi."

"Whatever you want, I don't have it and even if I did, I will not be giving it to you."

"Ramon threw me out, I have nowhere to go and no money."

Silence.

"The apartment on Worthing Main Road is vacant, pick up the keys from my office in half an hour."

"Thank you."

"Oh I intend to make you pay dearly." The other person ended the call.

Vanetta went into the offices of Benton Chambers and asked for the keys to the Worthing Apartment.

"Oh hello Mrs. Seale, here you go. Will you be staying long?"

"Not sure, I just need to get away and have some me time."

"Okay understood. I think everything should be in order. You will need to get your own food as we didn't have any bookings."

"That's okay it was a spur of the moment thing."

"Okay enjoy the rest of your evening."

"I have the keys, I need food."

"Email me what you need I will have it sent over in an hour. Anything else?"

"I need a shoulder to cry on."

"Seriously?"

"Please don't make fun of me, I can't handle it right now." Vanetta whispered.

"I will go get the groceries myself and I will see you soon." Once again the person ended the call.

Vanetta drove over to Worthing and pulled into the drive way of the apartment. She felt weary and although she was angry, she knew it would happen eventually. She took her bags out from the trunk and made her way inside.

The room smelt of potpourri. She took her things to the bedroom and threw them on the floor. Walking back to the kitchen she flicked on the percolator and sat at the table with her hands on her forearms.

"This is not the welcome I expected."

Vanetta jumped out of her sleep to see one of her nightmares come true. A man she vowed never to ask for anything again was standing 2 feet away from her. He was built like a Greek God, his toned skin begged for her touch, his lips curved into a smile she knew she would give in to. He stood with his hands in his pockets and stared at her.

- "I fell asleep."
- "Clearly. I could have killed you. I packed all the groceries fifteen minutes ago."
- "I didn't realise I was that tired."
- "Well you need your energy so go get a shower and get some food. I will wait." Vanetta was excited and afraid. This man could ask anything of her and she would say yes. No one ever had this power over her and he knew it. When he had called her into his chambers, she never thought she would need to ask him for help after she betrayed him so badly. She needed to tell him the truth.
- "I need to tell you something."
- "Don't want to hear you lies, save them for someone who cares."
- "You care, if not I wouldn't be here."
- "Oh you think so? Trust me, this is all about my gratification, since you have no concept of love, fidelity, honour or anything that is good, you don't get a say in the next few hours. I will have my fill of you and I will go but if you think I am done with you, you are wrong. You are not to leave here without my permission, no one is to come here at all except me. I am taking the keys to your car. I will supply whatever food you need. Now do as I say and go take a shower and eat."

Vanetta hung her head, she knew she had hurt him but this was cruel. She vowed to tell him the truth anyway.

She took her shower and out on a silk robe. When she got back to the kitchen, he was sitting at the table eating. He has set a plate for her with some juice. She sat down and began to eat.

- "Why did you call me?"
- "You loved me once, I was hoping there was a little left."
- "There is none, I am not doing you any favours."
- "Venetia is not my child Ben." She whispered."
- "WHAT?"
- "Are you willing to listen now?"
- "You have fifteen minutes."
- "Marlena and I were pregnant at the same time, due the same week. She had a fraternal twin, my baby was still born. When I said she was Sandiford's child, I wasn't lying. Marlena didn't want the responsibility of two babies, so we agreed she would have the children at home and I would take one of them. We paid a mid-wife to deliver them and keep her mouth shut. We were fortunate they came out looking so different. Although I had Venetia, I couldn't get over the loss of my

baby. So I tried to get pregnant again quickly and I did. So I had two babies but I still felt empty. I hired a nanny and I turned away from my husband. The rest you know."

"So hold on, Ramon molested both Feona and Venetia and neither of them are his?"

"Correct."

"How could you be so stupid to think that he didn't know they weren't his?"

"What?"

"Ramon knew Venetta. Why do you think he never touched Vanessa?"

"Oh god!"

"Yeah, let that sink in. He thought you had an affair with Sandiford and he found out somehow that the girls were sisters. Oh this is getting twisted. I found it strange when he dropped remarks but it all makes sense now. What a bastard."

"I have to go home and talk to him."

"In a week, that's how long I plan to keep you."

"Okay."

For the next week, Ben kept Venetta under lock and key, he had sex with her whenever he wanted and she had no say. When the week was up, she called Ramon and told him she needed to talk to him."

"I will be at the house around 10:30, be there when I arrive."

"Vanetta parked her car outside the house and waited for her husband. She hadn't seen or heard him in the week she was at the apartment. She knew this meeting would not go well but she was prepared to get down on hands and knees and beg him to take her back. Ben would give her whatever she needed but her husband's money felt less guilty.

Ramon's car pulled in and he parked behind hers. She got out and waited. Much to her surprise, he got out, walked past her and went inside, leaving the door open. She followed silently, went inside and closed the door behind her.

"Of course I knew, how could you possibly think Marlena having a twin would escape the entire neighbourhood. The mid-wife told someone before she died. She told them everything. You buried our baby without telling me. Do you have any idea how that hurt? I did so many wrong things in my life but the one thing I

<sup>&</sup>quot;Say what you have to say and get out."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Did you know Vanetia wasn't yours?"

always thought I did right was marrying you. What kind of woman would just take another woman's child and not tell her husband that theirs died. I realised you were acting strange after Vanetia came home. You didn't seem to want to be around her and as a new mother I saw it as weird. Many times she cried and I changed and fed her. I was dead set against the nanny but you insisted. I overheard two women in the bathroom at work talking about us. US! Feona was filling out, and she was always here. I would touch her in the most intimate ways, and when she finally told, no one believed her. I started with Vanetia right before that and I was glad when she left. I always wondered if Vanessa was mine. Is she?"

The next day Vanetta showed up with her papers. Ramon read them over, ticked off what he agreed with and told her the others were not acceptable and either she agree to them or no deal. She agreed.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes she is."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Imagine that, the one child I didn't touch turned out worse than her mother. "Anyway what can I do for you? Since I already knew what you wanted to tell me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I want to come back home."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You don't love me you just need my financial support."

<sup>&</sup>quot;So? You have always known I wanted to be a housewife."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What's the point in being a house wife if you are never at home to spend time with your husband? All you had to do was stay faithful, how hard was that? I would have given you the world but that would not have been enough. I am tired of going back and forth with you. I am filing for divorce within the next few days."

<sup>&</sup>quot;So that's it? Throw me out with nothing?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You had nothing when I met you so..."

<sup>&</sup>quot;How could you?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You cheated on me with Ben, you had my child and didn't let me share in your grief. You were depressed and never even let me try to help. You abandoned the girls to a nanny. What possibly could I have to give you now besides money?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;We could try again."

<sup>&</sup>quot;HA!" Ramon walked over to Venetta and towered over her.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I would need a contract detailing what you will and will not do so there won't be any surprises."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I will see you back here tomorrow at the same time, bring your rules and regulations and I will think about it."

She moved back into the house and while unpacking, her cell rang.

- "He let you back in the house?"
- "He still loves me, what can I say?"
- "I want money, get it or I will tell him everything."

Venetta was getting nervous. She had a secret that only one other person knew and she was afraid that after giving them the money they asked for they would tell just to spite her.

Feona sat at her desk going over some notes she made over the course of Maddison's trial. She was suspicious of so many things since Vanetta revealed that Vanetia was her sister. She decided to ask her mother.

"I don't want to talk about it."

"You have got to be kidding me. Vanetta spills out in a courtroom filled with people that she gave birth to your husband's child and that seems to sit well with you. Well it doesn't and I will have all my answers."

"She didn't say she gave birth."

"What?"

"Vanetta did not say she gave birth and since you are so insistent on the truth be prepared to hear all of it."

"I'm a big girl."

"Vanetia is your twin sister. I had a twin, Venetta's baby died so I gave her one of my daughter's, no one knew except the mid-wife. That's why she said the child was your father's. Happy now?

"Shit. I need to find her."

"NO!"

"She doesn't know."

"She has to, all the things Ramon put us through, he knew all this time, he had to. That's why he never touched Vanessa."

"You can't know that!"

"I don't see why you care if she knows or not, you never cared about me or dad. What's wrong with you women? You get married and have children only to pass them off on nannies. You sleep around and have children in secret and expect your own children to be pristine and untouched. Ugh you make me SICK."

"Not everyone is lucky enough to find the man of her dreams. I settled for your father because he had money and he loved me. I didn't want children and when

you and your sister were born, I didn't want the burden of having both of you. Vanetta was glad to take one of you. Your father was just happy he had someone to dote on. He begged me to have another child and just to stay in his good books I had your sister. I am not the motherly type and will never be. Do what you have to do. I have a meeting at the club."

"She is not my daughter. Ya know everyone is jabbing at me for abuse but what they don't know is that she came to my room. She saw the documents Vanetta thought she had well hidden. I was just a cash cow to her and she was definitely no child. You on the other hand.... I really am sorry. I never should have touched you. I thought I would hurt Sandiford but we can see how that worked out. At least I didn't completely ruin you. Can't say the same for your other half, she is a bitch from hell."

"Where is my sister and I don't want any excuses, apologies. Where is she?" Without saying a word, Vanetta wrote an address on piece of paper and handed it to Feona.

"She isn't the good abused sister you are looking for. You will find a cold hearted leech who will stop at nothing to get what she wants and it's usually money. Good luck."

#### **CHAPTER TWELVE**

Feona snatched the paper and left the house. When she pulled up to the house, she could not believe her eyes. The building was run down, the door was hanging off the hinges, all the windows were broken and the grass was half way inside the house.

She got out of her care and made her way up.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Do you know where Vanetia is?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why would I know?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Did you even care about her at all, you are her father. How could you?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm no interested in your sorry's, I just need to find my sister."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ask Vanetta, she knows everything about everyone."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fine, where is she?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;In her room."

"No matter what our parents and their friends have done to us, you are my flesh and blood and I want to see you happy."

A strange emotion took over Vanetia. For the first time in her life she could see that someone cared for her genuinely.

"I can't Feona. I'm too damaged, too many years have passed and the people who have ruined my life don't give a shit about me."
"I do."

"I can see that but I am not a good person, my time is coming soon and I don't want you tangled up in my mess and it's a huge mess, so please just go. I appreciate you coming to see me. You have no idea how much it means but I need you to go."

"Please don't push me away. I can help if you let me."

"Feona... I killed someone and I am going to prison for a long time. Don't associate yourself with me."

"You killed Vanessa didn't you?"

"Yeah, it was an accident but she died at my hands. I was planning to go confess tomorrow, I can't eat, sleep and I am always looking behind my back. I can't live like this anymore."

"Let me help you, you are my twin, we shared the same space in our mother's belly, let me help."

Vanetia stared at her sister, she knew she had to do the right thing eventually, she just needed a push in that direction.

"Let me get my bag, I will go to the station if you go with me."

Vanetia went back inside, got her bag and walked with Feona to her car. They rode to the nearest police station and Vanetia began to cry when she got to the door. Feona grabbed her hand and held on tight.

"I'm here for you, no matter what."

Vanetia squeezed her sister's hand and pushed the door with the other.

"Can I see Detective King please?"

"Sure, he just came in, have a seat over there."

The officer behind the counter pressed a button and spoke into it.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Vanetia!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Well if it isn't the sister I never had. What do you want?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm here to take you home."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay."

"Detective King, front desk please."

Five minutes later a tall dark sexy cop came strolling through a glass door. The officer at the counter nodded towards Feona and Vanetia.

"Hey Van, what brings you here, are you in trouble?"

"Yeah and this is my sister Feona, she says she will help. You are the only person I can trust."

"Aww come on, is it that bad?"

Vanetia began to shake. Detective King, walked over to the coffee machine, filled a cup and gave it to her.

"Come on, let's go to my office and we can chat, okay?"

Vanetia nodded slowly. She refused to let go of Feona's hand.

"Now, tell me what's going on? I've never seen you like this."

"I killed Vanessa Seale."

King got out a sheet of paper and a pen and handed it to Vanetia.

"Write everything down, don't embellish, don't lie and don't protect anyone." His voice was soft and soothing."

"Feona, are you going to get her a lawyer?"

"Yes whatever she needs."

"You don't seem to bothered by what she has done."

"Honestly speaking, I would have killed Vanessa myself but she just wasn't worth the bother. I knew someone would eventually. Vanetia was a good girl, she made mistakes and this is just another one. I am upset that I didn't find out about her first, if I had, we may not be here now."

"Understood. Go ahead and call the lawyer from your cell phone, I don't want you leaving her alone."

Feona called her lawyer and when Vanetia was writing the last sentence of her statement, a short copper haired woman sauntered into the office.

"Hey King, you badgering my client?"

"Never, you know the drill, she won't get bail but you can try. I think Judge Armstrong is in his office, go quickly."

"Thanks. I will be right back."

"You want me to grant you bail for the woman who killed Vanessa Seale? Are you nuts?"

Brenda called her friend at the clerk's office and told him she was on her way. She took off running and made in five minutes. She filled out the paper work and went back to where Vanetia was.

"All done, you can go home. I need all of your documents immediately if not the judge will issue a warrant for your arrest and we don't want that."

"I have all of them with me, here." Vanetia handed Brenda a brown paper bag.

Brenda left King's office and took the documents back to her father and then went home. Feona, left Vanetia and the detective to talk, she could see there was some spark of something.

When Daniel kissed Vanetia, her world spun out of control. She always knew how she felt about Daniel and he always told her how he felt about her. She never

<sup>&</sup>quot;Judge you know this case is going to blow up the minute people find out my client confessed and not to mention who her sister is."

<sup>&</sup>quot;No matter how high I set bail someone will pay it right?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yep."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Two hundred and fifty thousand, I want all of her documents, ID, Passport, Visa, Credit cards everything. She is not to leave this island. I am placing her under house arrest until the trial begins and that date will be three days from now so be ready and I don't want any trouble. Call down to the clerk's office, they are closing n fifteen minutes, if you get there too late Vanetia will have to over-night." "Thanks Dad."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Go before I throw you out of my office."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Tough love, is all that is."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Thanks, now get out of here before someone gets wind of this. Feona, we will chat tomorrow and discuss strategy."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Thanks a bunch."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Do you need anything Van?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Do you have to ask?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why didn't you come to me sooner?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I felt ashamed and I didn't know how to face you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I would do anything for you Van you know that!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I didn't want to tarnish your reputation, I love you too much for that." "When this is over I am quitting my job, I want to start a company and I need you as my partner."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Deal, now kiss me before my sister comes back."

thought she was good enough and that she was tainted because of her past. Daniel never made her feel worthless.

When she pulled away, she almost fell back onto the door.

- "I can't wait to make love to you again Daniel."
- "Don't pressure yourself love, let's get through this first and then we can make plans for our future, okay?"
- "Yes."
- "Feona is coming back, go with her and call me and let me know where you are."
- "Okay and thank you for trusting me."
- "Love does that to you."

Vanetia and Feona went back to her car and left for home. When she pulled up, two children a husband and a baby, greeted her at the door. She had called a head and told Tobias what had happened and he told the children.

- "You must be our aunty Vanetia, I'm Kendra, it's nice to meet you." Kendra rushed over to hug Vanetia and she burst into tears.
- "K honey, let her be, she has had a hard day."
- "Oh, no it's okay, I haven't had this kind of love since I was a little girl, thank you Kendra."
- "Hi, I'm Kavin." He stuck out his hand and Vanetia shook it.
- "Welcome to our home Vanetia, I am Tobias, the husband. Your room is ready and everything you need is in there."

Vanetia burst into fresh tears.

"Oh dear, I think we are making her cry more. Come on sis, let get you freshened up and fed."

Two hours later, Vanetia was all nice and clean from head to toe. She had washed her hair, Feona dried it and Kendra twisted it.

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

"Dinner's ready guys." Tobias called out.

Everyone sat at the table and Kavin said grace.

Vanetia was extremely quiet while the others chattered away.

The next day, Daniel showed up with lunch and while they were eating Vanetia spoke.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Vanetia, you can talk, it's okay."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm sorry, I was just replaying the day and thinking about how things will turn out."

<sup>&</sup>quot;We understand, did you call Daniel?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Oh no! I don't have a cell phone so I didn't remember."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I have an extra one and it already has a sim card and about \$40 credit." Kavin stated. He got up and went to the den and brought out a brand new LG50 Sporty and handed it to Vanetia.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Thank you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You can use the same room he just came from for privacy."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay." Vanetia got up and made her way to the den, she closed the door and sat in the nearest chair. She pulled up the menu on the fone and punched in Daniel's number.

<sup>&</sup>quot;King."

<sup>&</sup>quot;It's me sweetie."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hey babe."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I miss you so much, what am I going to do if they find me guilty?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;One day at a time love."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I know, D, I know."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I will bring you lunch tomorrow if it's okay with your sister."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I will ask her when I go back out. This is her address." Vanetia gave Daniel the address and hung up.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I didn't mean to kill her, I need you of all people to believe me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Did I accuse you?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;No I just need you to believe me. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, only you."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay first things first. I have never doubted you, I knew something was wrong but I had to wait until you were ready, if I had known that's what it was I would have brought you in myself and hired a lawyer. For some reason you have ruined it for other women, don't start doubting me now."

Vanetia started to cry. For the first time in weeks, she held on to Daniel and cried. Feona heard her and came downstairs.

Judge Armstrong wanted this case over as quickly as possible, so many lives were being exposed to the lies and treachery of others. Daniel didn't tell Vanetia that the judge who would be presiding over her case was his father and that her attorney was his sister. He didn't care who knew he was in love with the accused because he knew in his heart that she was the best thing that ever happened to him.

He was undercover on a drug bust and just before he was about to blow the case wide open, he was discovered by a well-known drug Lord and while he was crouched behind his car waiting to charge in to the building, the man was sneaking up behind him. Vanetia happened to be passing by and she pretended to be his girlfriend who was looking all over for him. When she got close she whispered in his ear that the man nearby had a gun and was pointing it at him. The guy managed to get closer but when he raised his gun again to shoot, Daniel got him first and then all hell broke loose in the warehouse. Police swarmed the place and everyone was arrested.

From that day Daniel looked out for Vanetia, she told him everything about her past and why she was living away from all her rich family. When she took him to where she was sleeping his heart broke but he never pitied her and she respected him for it. he vowed if she ever said yes to marrying him, he would make her happy.

<sup>&</sup>quot;What's wrong?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I think everything just crashed in her head. Can I stay with her a bit?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Sure, take her to her room."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Okay and thanks for everything you are doing for her, I didn't think she had anyone she could trust but me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;That's because she didn't know me. She does now. See you later. I'm going to get some groceries, can you wait until I get back so she won't be alone?" "Sure."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Dad, I have a problem."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What's up son?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Vanetia Seale."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You have something on the case?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm in love with her, she was the one who saved me."

- "I see. I've read her statement and I think she is hiding something, you need to find out what before she comes in in two days. If she trusts you she will tell you. Does she know Brenda is your sister?"
- "No, I haven't told her anything yet, she cried all day yesterday at her sister's house, I guess it all hit her at once."
- "Tell me what kind of person is she?"
- "She has been through a lot, her mother was no help, the man she thought was her father wasn't and he molested her. Her sister Vanessa was sleeping with the man she found out was her father. Now she finds out she is half of a twin by the man her sister was sleeping with."
- "Jesus Daniel, are you sure about this woman?"
- "Come on Dad, you know my life, how I think, if she was anything less than what she says, I would be the first to admit it. She is hurting so bad and she tries to play hard ass but I know it was an accident."
- "Okay, I will try to be as fair as I can, if she is found guilty so prepare yourself for that."
- "I will still love her no matter what. I'm leaving the force anyway, starting my own company."
- "I'm proud of you son you know that but if I see even a small amount of malice, I will throw her in prison until you are sixty."
- "Fair enough. I am going back to see her now, I promised to take her to dinner nearby so she doesn't break the house arrest rules."
- "Bring her to our house, I would like to meet her outside of the courtroom, I don't want her to find out who we are in court."
- "You sure that's a good idea?"
- "Yes, trust me on this one. Your mom has a detector for people who hide things, you never know she may get her to say what's she is leaving out of her statement and if she is at my house I know where she is."
- "Okay, I will bring her over around 7:30."
- "Good I will call your mother and tell her we will be having guests."

- "My dad invited us to dinner, there is something you need to know and I don't want you to find out from anyone but us."
- "Is it something bad? I wouldn't care."
- "Thanks but no, it's nothing bad but it will change the way you see me."
- "Nothing could do that Daniel, I promise."
- "That's left to be seen."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Where are we going?"

Daniel pulled up to his parents' home and got to open Vanetia's door, she loved when he did those small things, it made her feel worthy of his love. She paused when he put his key in the door. He sensed her hesitation and took her hand.

"You will be just fine."

"Daniel, come give your old mama a hug. Every time I see I swear you get taller. Well either that or I'm shrinking. Who is this lovely girl. Come tell me all about yourself. Daniel your father is in his dungeon, he wants to talk to you for a bit before dinner. Come child, you can help me in the kitchen."

Francis Armstrong hugged her son, took Vanetia's hand and went into the kitchen all in one smooth motion. She could tell Vanetia was nervous and she wanted to get her alone before she clung to Daniel.

"Now my dear, tell me about yourself. You can just sit there and talk, I am almost done."

Vanetia hung her head, she was ashamed of her life and she didn't want Daniel's mother to think she was a gold digger."

"Ah I see. Okay let me tell you what I think about you. You have had a hard life, people who you trusted and thought would keep you safe are the head ones who have cast you aside. You finally met my son and you feel you are beneath him and now you are in his parents' presence, you don't want us to think you are after him because he has money."

Vanetia lifted her head and the tears fell. In just a few minutes Francis told her what she was thinking. How could she know?

"I know my son, he can spot a gold digger a mile away, if he brought you here, it means he has plans for you and nothing can change his mind. I don't care if you only made it to high school, never had a job, live on the streets or have six children. My son cares about you and he sees something inside you." She handed her a tissue.

"My parents got married young, my mother never wanted children but she got pregnant anyway just to keep dad giving her money. He owns Seale Distributors, he started with car parts and now he has most of the contracts for most of the imported products on the island and half of the Caribbean. I don't know if anyone

told you but I confessed to killing Vanessa Seale, my sister." She expected to be thrown out.

"Go on." Francis whispered softly.

"I found out the man who molested me was not my biological father and that my mother is not my real mother and I have a twin sister who is helping me with a place to stay and she is paying for my lawyer. I met Daniel while he was on a bust and a man was about to kill him so I pretended I was his girlfriend. I fell in love with him that night. I am not good enough for him and all he does is show me kindness. He buys me clothes and food, even though my family is filthy rich. I didn't mean to kill my sister but she....."

Francis turned off the stove and walked over to the counter and sat down. She rested her hand on Vanetia's.

"This is not a confession but what you say to me will stay with me until you say otherwise."

"My son doesn't have a hate bone in his body, he is the most understanding man I know, even more than his father. You need to tell him or it will eat at you. Tell me how she did it."

"Daniel convinced me to spend the night with him. I wanted to pay him back for all the good things he was doing and when I told him this he got angry and canceled our date. I was so hurt and I felt rejected but he called me the next morning and asked me to come over for breakfast. He sent a cab and paid for it when I got there. He made breakfast and then he told me I don't owe him anything and never feel I have to have sex with him as payment. If there was any doubt in my mind about him he erased it. We made love and I found out I was pregnant about two months later. He was my first. My father never had sex with me even though that's what people thought. I told Vanessa, not realising she was so jealous of me. She couldn't have children, I didn't know. I thought she would be happy for me. She invited me to dinner and she put something in my drink. I woke up the next day at my parents' house. I didn't know what she did until, I started bleeding. Vanetta took me to the hospital and I was told someone aborted my baby and they messed it up. She took my baby Mrs. Armstrong, how could she do that to me?" Vanetia began crying again and Francis who was also crying, got up and hugged her.

<sup>&</sup>quot;She took my baby from me. Daniel's baby."

<sup>&</sup>quot;He doesn't know does he?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;No and you can't tell him he will hate me."

Daniel and his father heard crying and decided to stay out of the kitchen.

"I told you she was good, makes no sense being a shrink if you can't get people to talk. Now, Francis won't tell us what she knows but she will encourage Vanetia to talk to you. You need to be strong no matter what she says. If you get angry with her she will clam up and she will make mistakes in court. Give them a few minutes."

Francis and Vanetia stopped crying eventually and when they came out, Vanetia smiled at Daniel.

"Okay guys, time to eat, everyone go in the kitchen and grab a dish, we will eat in the garden."

Throughout dinner Vanetia was quiet, Daniel would reach over and squeeze her hand every once in a while and she felt safe.

"So Vanetia, would you like to go back to school, I heard Daniel say something about you wanting to open a Children's Home?"

"Daniel says he will pay the fees and when I pass my exams he will give me half the money to start."

"Half? \*scoff\* When you pass your exams I will give you all of the money if you can find land to build on."

Vanetia looked at Daniel, then glanced at his mother and burst into tears again.

"Girl if you cry anymore I will need to plug you into the plumbing." That got her a laugh.

"I'm sorry, I ...... oh boy."

"My mom can be a freight train when she wants and if she says she will help she will do just that. Now I need to tell you something, don't get mad."

Just then a voice rang through the house.

"Guys are you here?"

"Perfect timing. In here Brenda!"

"Hey guys, am I late for dinner?"

"No and we have a guest so behave yourself."

"Brenda.... but she's... I don't understand." Vanetia was clearly confused.

- "Van, let me formally introduce you to my family. Dad is Judge Armstrong, Dr. Francis Armstrong Psychologist and Brenda Armstrong Attorney-at-Law."
- "But he's... and she's...."
- "Yeah. I didn't want you to find out in court we are all related that's why I brought you here. Are you okay?"
- "Yes, I'm fine, I just don't know what to say. Isn't this a conflict of interest?"
- "Not at all, I set your bail and determined the parameters of your release, you are in my house so there can be no question as to where you were. Brenda is my daughter but she won't be discussing your case with me unless she needs advice."
- "Okay, I understand. I feel a bit overwhelmed."
- "We understand. Now, the rest of us are going inside, I think you and my son need to talk." Francis said softly and she got up.

Brand and her parents went inside and closed the patio door. Vanetia became nervous, she knew it was time to tell Daniel everything and she hoped he would forgive her.

- "What's wrong honey?"
- "I need to tell you something but first I need you to promise you won't get angry at me."
- "I promise."
- "Remember the morning we made love?"
- "How could I forget? You made me so happy with the gift you gave me."
- "Well you gave me a gift that day as well but I couldn't keep it."
- "What do you mean?"
- "I was pregnant with your baby Daniel. I told Vanessa and she took our baby from us."
- "WHAT?" Daniel stood at his full height, the chair flew backwards and hit the floor.
- "Why didn't you tell me this before?"
- "I didn't know how to."
- "How could you keep something like that from me? You could have died and I wouldn't have known why."
- "I was two months when I found out, I was so happy. When I found out what she did, I confronted her at her house and well you know the rest."
- "I need some air. Someone will take you back to Feona's."
- "Please don't go." Vanetia whispered.

Daniel turned and made his way to the front gate. A few minutes later she head his SUV drive away.

"I would like a ride home please or I can call a cab if it's too much trouble." Vanetia spoke through her sniffles.

"Where's Daniel?"

"He left though the gate."

"Oh dear. Give him some time, he doesn't hate you he is just feeling bad that he couldn't help you. Come on I will take you home."

Francis took Vanetia home and went back home. Sure enough Daniel's car was parked out front.

"How could you just leave her like that?"

"She didn't trust me mom."

"Do you have any idea how she feels about you?"

"She doesn't tell me much, I know she likes me a lot and.... Well."

"Yeah she told me you were her first. For someone who went through what she did, that's not just gratitude sweetie, that girl loves you and she trusts you more than anyone. Can you imagine the pain of losing a baby so horribly and not be able to tell the man you love for fear he will hate you?"

"I could never hate her."

"That's what she thinks now. She feels she betrayed you by not protecting the one thing that created such a wonderful bond between the two of you."

"I will go talk to her in the morning."

"Call her now, don't let her fall asleep feeling abandoned by the only man she ever loved."

"Okay, thanks mom."

# **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

Daniel left his parents' house and began to make his way home. Half way there he took a chance and drove over to Feona's. He quietly parked his car and waited. He took out his cell phone and dialed the house number.

"Hello."

- "Hey Feona, sorry for calling so late, I was wondering if Van was awake, I really need to talk to her."
- "She is right here, hold on." Feona handed Vanetia the phone.
- "Hello."
- "I'm sorry, I know I have no excuse for my behaviour and I would love the chance to tell you face to face how I feel."
- "You promised you wouldn't get angry with me."

Silence. Then.

- "Can you come outside, I won't keep you long."
- "I'm afraid of you. You shouted at me."
- "Jesus, Van, just come to the door then, Feona can come with you."
- "Okay."

The front door opened and Vanetia stepped on to the porch. Feona came up behind her.

Daniel walked up to them and stood upright.

"I apologise Vanetia, I know it wasn't your fault and I know it was hard for you. I'm sorry I raised my voice at you, I will never do that again."

"Works for me, I will be in my room if you need me sis. Oh and the children are at their aunt and uncle in case you wanna sleep over Daniel." Feona tapped Vanetia on her shoulder and left.

Vanetia blushed.

- "Sorry, she knows how I feel about you."
- "I don't."
- "I love you Daniel, I don't know how else to say it."
- "Would you like me to stay? I'm working the night shift tomorrow, so I can be in court with you in the morning."
- "Yes, I would like you to stay."
- "Okay let me get my bag, be right back." Daniel left and went to his car, took out his overnight bag and went back to the house. Feona had setup the guest room downstairs for Vanetia so she could have her privacy.

"Honestly, I'd like to make love to you."

Vanetia looked into Daniel's eyes and all she saw was love, plain and simple.

She nodded her head and lead the way to her room.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Would you like something to drink?"

Daniel was a giant of a man compared to Vanetia. He lay spooning her and many things were going through his head. He needed her to know that he was never going to abandon her, no matter what. Instead of making love he just got them both naked and lay down.

"I'm sorry Vanessa put you through that and I'm sorry I wasn't there for you. I love you so much it hurts. Marry me Vanetia, I don't think I can survive any more months without you as my wife."

"Wait until after the trial, I may not get off when I say what Vanessa did to me."

"Dad is a fair man, he will review all the evidence and he will make a suitable judgement, you just have to believe in yourself."

"In that case, yes I will marry you."

Daniel reached behind him and pulled out a ring from the pocket of his pants. He lifted Vanetia's hand and slipped the ring on her finger.

"I bought this three weeks ago, I was going to propose then but things were busy at work and I didn't want to pressure you."

"Oh. I love you." She kissed his lips softly.

"When would you like to get married?"

"Six months from now."

"No." Daniel whispered in her ear.

"No?"

"I am not waiting. You get six weeks and that's it. Whatever the outcome of the trial, we are getting married if we have to do it in a jail cell."

"Oh my."

"I waited too long, if I had taken better care of you, we would be living together and Vanessa would never had had the opportunity to take our baby. Would you like to try for another one?"

"I'm not sure if I can have another one Daniel, the doctor did some damage."

"We will go see a specialist and if you can't we will adopt, use a surrogate, but we are having children that we both can love and love us back unconditionally."

"Okay, can we start trying now?"

"I need you to be sure Van, I need you in my life, I will dedicate myself to giving you the best of everything and I will be faithful always. I will treat you with respect and any mistakes I make, I will try my best to make up for them."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Daniel?"

"I was sure the day I gave myself to you. I felt I wasn't good enough, then when I found out about the baby, I was so happy that I had a part of you that no one else had. Make love to me Daniel."

The next morning, Daniel woke up and he and Vanetia got dressed for court. Feona and Tobias would meet them there later along with Brenda.

"All rise, Judge Armstrong presiding."

The judge walked into the room and sat down in his seat. He glanced around the room, keeping his expression unreadable. He nodded to his bailiff, who got up handed him a file.

Vanetia stood up and made her way to the box. The bailiff swore her in and she sat down.

Brenda walked up to her and spoke.

"Vanetia, I know this is hard, there are people in this room who love and want the best for you. All I ask is that you tell the truth and don't leave anything out no matter how unimportant it may seem okay?"

"Okay."

"Dad was paying more attention to me than he was her. She would call me names and she would make fun of me when her friends came to the house. She would play pranks and tell boys that I liked them and when they came to the house I never knew what was going on. This went on for years and I couldn't understand why

<sup>&</sup>quot;Attorney for the defense present you first witness."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Your honour if it please the court, we only have one witness to present, we leave it up to the prosecution to prove my client's guilt."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Are you sure that is wise Ms. Armstrong?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes your honour."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Proceed then."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I call Vanetia Emilia Seale to the stand."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Tell the court what your childhood was like."

<sup>&</sup>quot;My parents never got along, my mother was never home and dad was into his music. I spent most of my time with my nanny."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Did you and Vanessa have a good relationship?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;In the early years yes but then she started to notice boys and....."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Go on."

she was being so mean to me. Even though I was older, I never treated her like that."

"You said your dad paid more attention, how?" Vanetia glanced at Daniel, he winked at her and smiled.

"Ramon Seale is not my biological father and when he found that out, he decided he would get back at my mother and the man who he thought she had an affair with. He would wait until my mother went to one of her social gatherings and he would pretend to want to watch a movie. He made me sit on his lap and he would put my hand on his penis. Many times he made me take it out and hold it in my hand. He would fondle my breasts sometimes.

"How old were you when this started?"

"I was about 12 but I looked like 18. I was taller than most girls and I developed early."

"What else did he do?" Brenda kept her voice firm but soft.

"Just before my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, he said he wanted to celebrate with me, mom wasn't doing anything, so he took me and my sister shopping. She picked out whatever she wanted and he bought similar things for me. We came home and he asked the nanny to take Vanessa over to one of her friends, he was going to spend time talking to me. He told me to go shower and put on one of the dresses he bought. I did as I was told. I went to the tv room and he was sitting there in a pair of boxers and no shirt. He told me to sit on the sofa and he locked the door behind me.

Vanetia paused and took a deep breath. She didn't want to look up and see people's faces so she kept her eyes close and raised her head.

"For the first time since he started he came over and kissed me on my lips. He got angry that I didn't kiss him back and he slapped me. I started to cry and he ripped my dress and pushed me to the floor. He took off his boxers and lay down on top of me. He began kissing all over me and rubbing himself on me and I just lay there. He started calling me names I didn't know and after a few minutes I felt a wetness on my legs. He got up and told me to shower and go to bed. I ran away the next day."

"Where did you hide?"

"An old abandoned house in Carrington Village, an old lady found me and she would bring me food and clothes. I told her why I ran away and she kept me hidden. Until I turned 18. I moved in with her and helped around the house, she

would buy books so I could at least keep reading. She passed away when I was about 21, the house was hers and her family didn't want it so they left me there." "How did you survive?"

"I helped out a friend and he started taking care of me. He would bring me money, food and he would keep me company, when he was off from work."

"Where were your parents in all this?"

"They never looked for me, I called my sister once to talk to her and she pretended to care about me so she could find out where I was. I gave her my address and she stood outside the house because of the state it was in. I told her I met someone and I was finally happy. She said she was glad and that I could ask her for anything if I needed it.

"That was not the case?"

"No, I confided something to her that was special and she..." Vanetia reached in her bag for tissue.

"Your honour can we have a fifteen minute recess?"

"No, it's okay I can do this."

"Are you sure Ms. Seale?" The Judge asked.

"Yes your honour."

"Okay then go ahead."

"Everyone believed that Ramon sexually abused me but he didn't he never did more than touch. When I met my friend I was still a virgin, he never pushed me for sex and he never made me feel as if he needed payment for all the good things he was doing for me. I fell in love with him and one morning after he made me breakfast, we made love. I found out 2 months later I was pregnant. I told Vanessa. If I knew what she was going to do I never would have told her."

"Vanetia, I would like you to tell the court exactly what your sister did in your own words."

"My sister invited me out to dinner, she drugged my drink, I guess I would appear drunk to anyone looking on. I don't know where she took me but I woke up in my parents' house the next day. I couldn't remember how I got there but I started bleeding and Vanetta took me to the hospital. I was told someone aborted my baby and they did some damage to my reproductive system. She told Vanetta she found me on the street whoring out myself and I went to have a back street abortion done. Vanetta left me at the hospital, I was there for a few days then I went back to my home and stayed away from all of them."

"Thank you. One more question. You confessed to killing your sister, why?"

"I was so angry at her for what she did. She took something created out of love and totally destroyed it with no regard for me or the baby's father. She ruined her life and she almost ruined mine. I went over to her house with my father's gun and I pointed it at her. We argued for a bit and then she lunged at me while grabbing the gun. I closed my eyes and then I heard a shot. When I looked down there was blood coming from her abdomen. I let the gun fall out of my hands and I used my cell to call the ambulance service and ran from the apartment. I spent the next few weeks, preparing myself."

"For what?"

"Confession. I didn't want to get my friend in trouble so I had to come clean."

"Tell me Vanetia, you said you heard one shot and you saw blood coming from her abdomen?"

"Yes the gun was wedged in between our bodies."

"Are you trying to waste the courts' time Ms. Seale?"

"What? No, it was my fault she died, how could I be wasting time by telling the truth?"

'Your honour, I would like the murder charge against my client dismissed on the ground that Vanessa Seale died of a gunshot wound to the head not the abdomen. The shot as a result of gun Vanetia's used was barely enough to make Vanessa bleed to death in such a short time."

"What?"

"Clearly no one told you that small bit of information for a reason."

"Approach both of you." Indication to the defense attorney and prosecutor.

"Your honour, I don't think we need to take this any further, ballistics will show there is no way she could have murdered Vanessa. With a check of the fone records, I matched the cell number she gave on her statement. Vanessa was shot with two separate weapons, and we have yet to find either of them." Brenda suggested.

"I agree your honour and frankly I'm tired, we can charge her with something eventually but definitely not murder."

"We will come back tomorrow and hash out the details. Dismissed."

"Court will assemble back here at 9am sharp. Ms. Seale, her attorney and the prosecutor are all I require. Ms. Seale you are free to go pertaining to this charge but there will be consequences for your actions nonetheless."

The judge went back into his chambers smiling. Today was a good day.

"You didn't tell me she was shot twice!"

"Sometimes we keep things from the public in case anyone makes false claims. In your case, I needed the evidence to prove you didn't kill her. This way you tell your story according to what you knew and only we knew the full story so there can be no doubt."

"Thank you Brenda."

"Most welcome sister-in-law, don't think I didn't see that rock. Congrats and welcome to the family, mum will be so fussy." Brenda hugged Vanetia and left.

"I have no home, the bank put a notice on the property last week, they want me to leave by the end of this week. I have been trying to reach the old lady's family but I didn't have the money and I didn't want to ask you."

"I can solve that, we will deal with it tomorrow. Now since the trial is over and you are a free woman of sorts, let's plan our wedding."

"I need to talk to Feona first."

"No problem, would you like me to drop you off and come back for you? You can stay with me from now on."

"Not until I say I do."

"Hurry up and say it then." Daniel kissed her and helped her into his car.

"What? Girl please, it was nothing after everything you have been through I am glad I could do something positive. Our families really did a number on us and besides, you and I are a twin, it makes us responsible for each other, so no talk of pay back. What do you want to do with your life now that everything is in the open and the trial is over?"

"Daniel wants me to go back to school, his mother is paying and she wants to open a Childrens' Home with me."

"Oh that is wonderful and when's the wedding?" Feona giggled.

"That's what I really wanted to talk to you about, will you be my maid of honour, I have no one now."

"You have me and it's time you met your real father, he wants to see you, don't worry if our mother gives you the cold shoulder, you don't need her in your life and you will meet our other sister and her children as well so you are not alone and yes I will. Do you need help planning the wedding?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I love you Mrs. King to be. Let's go home."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Home..... I...."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What honey?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Feona."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hey sis, I am so glad for you." She hugged her sister tightly.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Thank you, when I start to work, I will pay you back."

- "Yes I do, I do."
- "Great! You can stay here as long as you like, do you need money for anything?"
- "Daniel provides for me but I want to start working so I don't have to depend on him so much."
- "Can you drive?"
- "Yes, the old lady who took me in made sure I got my license as I was doing her errands."
- "Come to my office in the morning after court and I will give you one of the vehicles, you can be my personal courier, Tobias will need things done as well. You can work 4 days a week and still be able to attend school. How's that?"
- "Great, I will let Daniel know. Oh, I have to go change, he promised to come back for me soon, thanks again."

The sisters hugged again and Vanetia left to go change.

# **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

"I wonder what the judge's sentence will be tomorrow."

"I have it on good authority it won't be too bad. I think meeting you will have a positive influence on his decision, not worry and besides, he can't have his future daughter-in-law and mother of his first grand-child locked away in prison can he?"

"I'm scared Daniel."

"Of what honey?"

"I may not be able to give you another baby, I know it's what you want. I know you said we could adopt or use another method but having a baby the natural is a dream for most women and men."

"Honey listen to me, if there is one thing I have learnt is that although blood bonds two people together, sometimes that is not grounds for automatic love. Have you ever wondered why my last name is King and not Armstrong?"

"No, I just thought they had you before you got married."

"King is my mother's maiden name, she adopted me before she met dad, she thought she couldn't have children and she wanted to share her love. Dad accepted me as his own and then they had Brenda, they loved me and my sister the same way. I understand your fear but let's not worry about that until we have to. I am not going to leave if you can't and I know that's what you are really afraid of."

"I can't help it, you have been so good to me, I don't want to lose you."

- "You won't at least not by me leaving you, you make me so happy Vanetia believe in that."
- "Okay, I must sound like a broken record."
- "No, you had a hard life and sometimes it plays on our insecurities, never be afraid to tell me what you are feeling."
- "Okay, so what do we do now, Feona agreed to help plan the wedding and she gave me a job for a few days a week so I can earn my own money."
- "What I give you isn't enough?"
- "NO! That's not it, I just need to step out on my own, I appreciate everything you have done but I need to do this."
- "Okay I understand but no matter how much you make whatever you need, come to me first."
- "Deal."

The next morning, Judge Armstrong called everyone associated with Vanetia's case into his chambers. He motioned for Vanetia to come forward.

"Now, due to the circumstances presented in court and we established that you were not responsible for Vanessa Seale's death, I need you to be very clear on the decision I am about to make. Intent is a serious thing, you left home to take the life of another human being. I understand your anger and truth be told most of us would react the same way. Having said that, your actions cannot go unpunished. I hereby sentence you to six months in prison for attempted murder."

"Vanetia began to cry."

"Don't cry I'm not done. You will spend three months inside and the following three months after that you are to report to the nearest police station every morning at 6am and every evening at 6pm. If you miss any one check in, you will be arrested and you will spend the full six months. Feona Grant called to inform me that she has hired you as her personal courier, when you receive your wages, every Friday you are ordered to purchase lunch for a different child at a children's home of my choosing. Every Saturday you will spend three hours reading to the children's ward at the QEH. Your sentence will begin in seven weeks time. Dismissed."

Eight weeks later.

- "Morning sweetie, how are you feeling today?"
- "Daniel King I wish I could express how much I love you."
- "Well Mrs. King, you will be out in less than three months, you can show me then."

"I wanted to wait another week until your birthday but I don't want to take any chances, so as an early birthday gift, this is yours." Vanetia handed her husband a white envelope. From the moment he saw what was inside he stood up, walked over to his wife, lifted her in the air and kissed her.

"Does this mean you approve?" She said breathlessly.

"YES YES YES!"

"KING! I know you are happy but keep it down will ya and try not to impregnate the woman again with the rest of us within eyesight."

"They know?"

"Everyone in here knows, I passed out and they were worried, I told them not to say anything until I told you."

"Vanetia King, I love you!"

"I love you too honey. As soon as I get out we can make some plans for the baby, Dad is coming to see me and I want to tell him first."

"How is he doing?"

"He is fine, he accepted me without a fuss and said he was sorry for everything I went through and if I need him he is there for me."

"That's good. I miss you badly, I can't wait to hold you in my arms again."

"We could arrange for a visit here if you like."

"No, I want you in our bed with no time frame, rules or regulations."

"Okay." Are you coming tomorrow?"

"Yes do you need anything?"

"Food, apparently I skipped morning sickness and went straight to full-fledged hunger. They can't afford to feed me in here."

"Anything specific?"

"Fruits, chocolate, cake, jello anything, doesn't matter, what I don't use I can share."

"This is why I love you so much. Okay I have to go my shift starts in an hour. I will see you tomorrow love of my life. He rubbed her tummy gently.

"You too buddy."

The time flew by quickly and even thought Vanetia was happy she wondered who killed her sister.

"Honey, can I ask you something?"

"Sure babe what's up?"

"Is there any clue as to who killed Vanessa?"

- "I've always suspected it to be Victor but with no weapon, no witness and both of the people claiming to be responsible being cleared it's a dead end for now but I'm sure someone will slip up and we will get them. You loved her didn't you."
- "Yes I did but she took that away from me, I did go to her house to kill her but the one thing that made me think twice was you. I thought how disappointed you would be and that I would never be able to face you again."
- "Well I'm glad you didn't do it. I would have to dig deep and forgive you but I wouldn't love you any less. How my son doing?"
- "Son? HA, this is a girl."
- "We shall see, come here."
- "Will you two quit it! Geeze I swear all you do is have sex, that poor baby must be hiding his face on a regular basis."
- "Morning Feona, so says my twin sister who is pregnant again."
- "Ah yes, my husband can't keep his hands off me, wouldn't it be great if we delivered on the same day!"
- "Now that would be awesome and what would be even better is if we both had a twin."
- "Oh gosh, more family to love!"
- "Now, I came over to bring the papers for the new building and to get you to sign off on the land lease agreement for five years. When does construction begin?"
- "Next week, I wanted to build wall but Daniel suggest we go with board and wall, the wall parts being the bathrooms, it's easier to expand especially after we purchase the land."
- "Okay, Tobias already has the materials, he finished all his pending jobs so he could pull the entire crew for this one, they will be done in six weeks, no rain, no delays."
- "Great, mum will be thrilled when she sees what we did with the place."

Vanetia had spoken to the family of the old lady who took her in and they agree to rent the land for five years and if they wanted to purchase after, it was not a problem, their mother had spoken good things of Vanetia and they were glad she had someone.

As he sat on his bed with the gun in his hand, Victor was ready to die. He wrote a letter detailing everything he did and who played a role in the life he lived. At the end of the letter he confessed to killing Andrea's husband Sam and Vanessa and. He gave the reason that she was just evil and at least he did it for money although

that was no excuse. Vanessa lived her life just to hurt people and she had no remorse whatsoever. He also provided a list of every woman whose babies he sold and to whom he sold them to. He admitted to helping Vanessa abort Venetia's baby among others. He had amassed a fortune off the lives of others and he left specific instructions to Andrea and Junior to disperse of the money as they saw fit. The first thing she did was to find starter jobs for all the girls he left behind. Then she started a charity called "The Life We Live" it was focused on women who had a hard start in life and wanted to change.

Feona gave Tobias the sixth member of the Grant family. Kavin finished college and decided he wanted to work full time for his father. Kendra took over her mother's food business as Sherry refused to take any medication and she deteriorated quickly, she died soon after Victor. Kaila and Michael decided to have one more child and they renewed their vows. Madison and Jeremy had their first child and they worked towards reuniting the love they once shared. Shawn and Rashida got her baby back and decided to have another one. Andrea and Junior finally got married and with a baby on the way they merged their three businesses and ran the Charity Andrea started. Daniel and Vanetia were on their second child and the families were even closer. Ramon decided to stay with Vanetta who for some reason made a complete turnaround. She paid more attention to her husband, who was in counselling for the things in his past, her attitude towards Vanetia took on a motherly role, she even helped baby sit, when they had to work. Sandiford and Marlena Rawlins also made great changes in their lives, Marlena apologised to her entire family for the way she allowed them to grow up, she sat down with everyone and listened to how they felt about everything and they in turn listened to her. She apologised to Tobias and said she was relieved he didn't take the money she offered because she saw how Feona felt about him and if her daughter was willing to stand up for herself she would be proud of the man she chose.

At the end of the day, we all have our own paths to choose. Sometimes we veer off course but the idea is to find your way back and continue towards your goals.

The End.

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