

I looked at the old brown bloodstain on the wall. I remembered that, that was where my step-father had almost beaten my mother to death. She was trying to defend me for something he accused me of, but they ended up fighting in my room instead. He was never any good for her. He's the reason why my life has been a living hell for the past six years. He's the reason why mother started doing drugs. He's the reason why she's in jail. She's doing much better now, *so I've heard.*

As I finished brushing my hair into a pony-tail, I watched as the brown curls bounced down to my shoulder. Right then I had a flashback:

*Never let a man hurt you the way Darren hurts me, you are one of a kind, and you should only waste your beauty on someone who actually loves you.*

She told me that the day the police arrested her for drugs. I tried not to think about it, but the constant flashbacks wouldn't stop. I grabbed my book-bag and my civics textbook. As I walked through the scratched and stained up threshold, I ran into Darren, "Good morning, Liyah," He smirked.

"My name is Aaliyah, don't call me anything else," I said trying to seem fearless, but it's like he could smell my fear.

"Change your attitude little girl," he said, in a deep smooth voice.

"Rot in hell," I replied on the sly while attempting to walk past him.

He grabbed my arm and pulled me closer to him and said, "Don't play with me," he tried to bring his hands down to my derriere, "Oh, and I like the way that skirt fits on you," he said licking his lips.

I jerked away from him and ran downstairs. When I got to the bottom of the stairs, his daughter - my stepsister Maylen said, "Hey, are you okay?"

"Does it look like I'm okay?" I said while briskly walking out the door to my bus.

As I arrived on the bus, paper balls flew, kids cursed and the bus driver yelled. I walked over to my usual seat next to my best friend, Jhene. As soon as I sat, she said, “Girl, I didn’t expect you to come today, you know...because the big breakup and all,” She rolled her eyes.

“Jhene, I’m not studying that boy, he is not a priority. Plus, I have other things to worry about. My step-father is being a pain in the ass,” I said as I scrolled down on my cell phone looking through my Instagram pictures.

“Hmmm, well, that’s on you, but today is Friday, so I’m going to turn up,” Jhene turned her head and started dancing in her seat.

After school, I’d decided to walk home instead of taking the bus; I’d figured that if I walk, it will take me longer to get to that hell hole I call home. When I finally reached home Darren was asleep on the couch. I tried my best to creep across the room to the stairs, but of course I tripped over the extra-long phone extension cord hanging between the end table and couch; which caused him to wake up, “Where have you been?” he got up and stood in front of me.

“I decided to walk home,” I snap back.

I tried to walk past him, but then he grabbed my arm and said, “Come sit with me,”

He pushed me on the couch and got on top of me, then squeezed my arms and pressed them down as I fought screaming Maylen’s name, “Maylen’s at her friend’s house tonight, I made sure of that,” He laughed crookedly and everything started to fade away.

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When it was over, all I could do was cry. I lost my virginity that night to someone I’m supposed to call ‘dad’. My body was throbbing, I couldn’t think straight, but I then realized that I was in his room. He wasn’t though.

I got up and walked out of the room. As soon as I got to the threshold, he was in front of me. I was shivering and I felt a little wobbly. He smiled, “Good morning, breakfast is waiting on you downstairs,”

“I don’t want to eat anything that you made!” I ran into my room and locked my door. I went into my bathroom and looked in the mirror. I saw scratch marks and bruises. I brushed my hair into a ponytail. The curls bounced down to my shoulder. Now how I’m I suppose to explain these.

When my bus arrived, I hurriedly walked downstairs. I went to grab my lunch, but I bumped into Maylen on the way, “Good morning, Aaliyah, are you okay?” she said worriedly.

“I’m fine, I ‘m just having a bad morning,” I turned to walk out of the door, but she gasped.

“What happened to your arm and your shoulder?” She looked like she had seen a ghost.

I tried to figure out a nice way to tell her that her father raped me---wait---there isn’t a nice way, “Oh, it’s not a big deal, I’m just a very bad sleeper,” It only took me half a second to realize how stupid I sounded.

“Are you sure?” she said confused, like she knew I was lying.

“Yes, look, I have to go,” I walked to my bus.

After getting on my bus, my crush, Michael, stopped me, “Hey, where did all of those bruises come from?” I was officially embarrassed and speechless. *Why did he care?*

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When I got home, Darren and Maylen were sitting on the couch together. He was twirling her curls with his finger and started to lay her down on the couch, she was crying.

“What the hell are you doing?” I purposely said loud.

“Why don’t you mind your damn business,” he snapped.

I walked away into the kitchen, I grabbed the sharpest knife. I threw my book bag on the floor and walked into the living room, “Like I said before, what are you doing?”

He got up and walked over to me, “What are you going to do with that?” he got closer.

He grabbed me and pushed me up against the wall, and of course the knife dropped on the floor. He choked me and tried to touch me in different, private places.

Next thing I know, Maylen screamed, “Let her go!” and as soon as he turned around, she stabbed him. She grabbed my hand, and ran. It all happened so fast. That was all I could remember.

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“I wish I could tell you more, Mom, but grandma and Maylen are waiting for me,” I stared at my mom as we sat across from each other at the plain-gray table, separated by a tall block of glass.

“It’s okay, I’m happy that you and Maylen are finally, and I am so sorry for leaving you guys. I tried to convince them to let you live with Grams in the beginning, but they refused,” she smiled, “I’m just glad you guys got out of there before he could do more damage,” she smiled and put her hand on the glass.

“Me too,” I grinned and placed my hand where hers’ was.