

Pregnant and Homeless by jollyreaderjennell chapter 26

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“Are you ready?” Valdo looked at me at smirk.

“Are you ready?” I repeated his question. Tonight was Karaoke Friday and to make it even more fun we decided to invite more people. Instead of having it at his Apartment, we kept it at the shelter. That way, the single mothers in the community can also join. Hannah hired a few nannies to watch the babies in the nursery while we have fun in one of the cla**rooms. She also arranged the cla**room to look like a karaoke bar. The lights were dimmed, and there was a platform for the stage—tables with many varieties of food to choose from. Everyone carried something.

Only Hannah could pull off something so beautiful in such a short space of time.

“Who is ready to have some fun?” Kevin yelled over the microphone.

“Me!” Hannah cheered, and everyone laughed at how her voice sound.

“We know that nobody likes to be placed on the spot first and so we’ve decided to make things 100% fair, everyone gets to choose their number. You’ll see that in my beautiful wife’s hand, there is a bag. This bag contains fourteen numbers since there are fourteen of us here this evening. Everyone will have the opportunity to choose a number. Hannah is going to go around with that bag, and everyone will blindly pick a number out. The number you get is the order you’ll sing.” Because of Kevin’s charming personality, Valdo and I decided that he was the perfect person to be Masters of the ceremony.

“Please, Lord, I beg you. Don’t let me get number one.” Zuria cried out. I laughed and uttered “same.” I don’t think they would enjoy the Karaoke night if I started.

"Let's, Rumbo." Hannah shook the bag in her hands with all her might; then she walked up to her husband. She opened the bag, and he placed his hands in.

He picked up a number then brought it up to his face. He sighed when he saw the number that was written on the paper. He smiled at his wife and turned to everyone. He lifted the microphone and spoke, "I'm happy to announce that I am not the first one to perform tonight."

I chuckled then crossed my fingers. "If you worry about getting number 1, you just might get it." I felt Valdo hot breath on my shoulders.

"I'm not worried." I denied it.

"So why are you crossing your fingers?"

I quickly uncrossed my fingers then turn to look at him. "I'll be the winner of our lil compet**ion."

"You remember that?"

"Of course I do, that's the whole point of the Karaoke, don't tell me you forgot?"

"No, I haven't forgotten. I know that I'm going to win."

Christina turned and looked at us, "Are you guys coming for the best singer?"

I laughed, "Nope."

"We're competing for the worst singer spot." Valdo finished.

She looked at the two of us and shook her head, "You guys are something else."

Valdo and I looked at each other and smile.

"Oh my god." My eyes went over to the voice. It was a new member of the DFMS Foundation. Her name is Ashley. She has a four-month-old baby and recently ran away from her abusive boyfriend. She has curly red-hair and beautiful green eyes. Even though her boyfriend abused her, she always kept a smile on her face even when it was obvious she's sad.

She lifted her head and smile, "I got number two."

I closed my eyes; I was hoping she got Number one.

Valdo chuckles beside me, "You shouldn't worry about your number, you know you'll lose even if you go first."

I ignored his statement and continued to watch Hannah as she went from one person to the next. She was also close to our table, and I could feel the sweat running down my forehead.

"I'm unofficially the most unlucky woman on the planet." I looked at Emily as she spoke. She lifted her hands, "You guys can calm down now. I'm going first. My last name is Allen, so I used to get picked first on a lot of things while in school. I hated it so much."

I let out a sigh of relief. Thank god it's not me, but I felt a little sorry for Emily. But I guess she'll be fine, she naturally confident.

I saw Hannah heading towards Valdo and I. I looked at him, "It's time. May the worst singer wins."

"That would be me."

"He's going to win," Hannah said. "I love him with all my life, but I'm telling you. Do you know how a rooster sounds when it's crowing?" I nod my head. "Well imagine that on a grater."

I laughed, "He can't be that bad."

Hannah shrugged, "You'll see." she looked between the two of us, "Go ahead. Choose your numbers."

I dipped my hand in the bag and took up my number. I lifted it to eyes and looked at it. "It got eight." I looked at Valdo, "Your turn."

Valdo dipped his hands in the bag and took out his number. He laughed when he saw it. He turned it towards me than his mother.

"Talk about saving the worst for last," Hannah muttered. She smiled at me, then walked towards the last table.

"Do you want me to get you something before we start?"

I looked up at him and smiled, "Sure. Thank you."

When Valdo was gone, Christina turned to me, "He's crazy about you."

I blushed at her words, "No. He isn't." I hadn't told anyone about Valdo and I's relationship, primarily because I didn't want people thinking that I was only using him for his money.

She smirked, "I know I'm young, but I can tell when a man is in love."

"How can you tell?" I asked.

"I've been reading romance novels since I was 11, why do you think this happened to me," she said, pointing down at her tummy. "I thought Calum loved me; he told me so many times that I believed him. Never trust a guy who tells you he loves you on the first date and never trust a guy that's older than you."

"Valdo is older than me," I muttered.

"That's different. He's different. He would never do that, especially knowing what his mom went through with him."

I placed my palm over her hand, "Calum is a jerk. He doesn't deserve you. One day you're going to find your Mr Darcy."

"You've read *Pride and Prejudice*." she looked at me amazed.

"About a hundred times," I admitted.

She smirked at me, "I think you might be my new best friend."

I touched my chest hurt, "I wasn't before."

She hesitated, "We only met a few weeks ago."

I laughed, "I'm messing with you. I'd love to be your new best friend. Come to think of it; I've never even had a best friend."

She raised her brows at me, "Really?"

I nod, "I was always hanging out with my ex-boyfriend's friends that I forgot to make my own."

"That's kinda sad."

"What's sad?" Valdo asked as he came back with both hands full.

Christina shrugged, "Oh, nothing. We're just talking about girl things."

Valdo placed the slices of cake on the table. "Would you like one Christina?"

She looked down at the table, "But there is only two."

He lifted one of the plates off the table and handed it to her, "Here, have mine. I'll go back for one slice." Before Christina could respond, he was already across the room.

"Can I have him?"

I laughed. "He's way older than you."

"Age is just a number." she beamed.

"And prison is just a cell."

"Touche." she lifted the fork and took a bite of her cake. "This is really good."

"It is?" I asked eagerly.

She nodded between a moan.

"I made it," I confessed.

She froze and looked at me, "No way."

I nod with a smile on my face. She knew that when I just arrived, I had no idea bake." Who helped you?" she looked at me suspiciously.

I lifted my hands, "I swear I did it by myself. I've had a lot of free time lately, so I watch videos on YouTube, and I try them out."

"Nothing, I've tried based on a Youtube video ever turns out good. You want proof, look at my makeup." I looked at her face, and I saw nothing wrong, but then again, I knew nothing about makeup.

"You look beautiful to me."

She smiled, "Thanks. You're a nice person."

I smiled, "You're not so bad yourself."

When Valdo returned, Christina turned around to give us some privacy, which we didn't need since Emily stood from her seat and made her way up to the stage. All our attention was now on her and the performance that she would be doing.

Kevin handed her the mic; then, he started asking her some questions. When he received the answer, he was looking for he walked over to his MacBook and in seconds the musicals to "Dancing Queen" by Abba started playing.

Emily looked at the projected lyrics then started, "You can dance, you can jive..having the time of your life..oh.." You could tell she was really into the song she started rocking her body to the music. She even stopped looking at the lyrics and was looking at us. Her voice wasn't bad, either. After a few minutes she was finished, she looked at her audience who were all smiling at her and laugh. "Okay, I have to admit that it wasn't bad."

We clapped and cheered for her as she exits the stage.

Kevin continued to call the numbers, and the person would choose their song. They weren't bad for the most part; they looked they were having fun and nothing else in the world matter than them being in the spotlight.

Everyone was happy, you could tell by how bright their smiles were. I was also laughing and enjoying myself.

At least until Kevin called my number.

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"Be brave, be brave," I whispered to myself as I slowly made my way towards Kevin. I turned my head to look at Uvaldo who had a big grin on his face and his tops up. I smiled at his goofiness then look back at the older man.

"What type of music do you like?" Kevin asked when I reached him.

I blushed, "I like boy bands and country music."

He nodded, "Boy bands, as in One Direction, The Beatles, Nsync, Backstreet Boy, Five Seconds of Summer, Twenty One Pilots, BTS, Linkin Park? There are so many of them."

I enjoyed music from all the bands he just called. It would be too hard for me to choose a song, especially one that everyone knew. "Choose a song for me." It was just a risk I had to take. Kevin is a cool enough man to choose a song that everyone would enjoy hearing, even with my bad voice.

He smiled, "I know the perfect song." He turned to his MacBook then typed away. "Go on, time to show them who's the boss." he handed me the microphone and pointed to the centre of the stage.

I kept my eyes on the microphone as I walked to the centre. When I reached the centre, I took a deep breath and kept my eyes down.

The music started to play then I couldn't help but lifted my head and smile. It was a song that I knew and loved.

Everyone loves this song.

I lifted the mic to my mouth then started, " You are my fire, The one desire, Believe when I say, I want it that way." I looked at Valdo "But we are two worlds apart. Can't reach to your heart. When you say that I want it that way." I moved to the next part of the stage; this time, I let my eyes travel over the room. "Tell me why ain't nothin' but a heartache. Tell me why, ain't nothin' but a mistake, tell me why I never want to hear you say, I want it that way."

I sounded awful, but I felt great. I felt like I'm on top of the world. I felt high even though I haven't even drink anything, the fact that I'm under-age was a significant contributor to that.

Nothing else mattered than me being in this beautiful decorated cla**room with loving strangers who've treated me like family since day one, what am I saying? They're the family I've always wanted.

I pointed around the room, "Tell me why!" I laughed, "Sing with me." They obeyed my command and sang with me. I looked at everyone from the stage and smiled.

Zuria was standing and waving her hands like it was a concert. Hannah was rocking her shoulder and clapping her hands. Valdo was laughing uncontrollably;

I couldn't help but smile. When he smiled, his eyes shined, and his face looks a thousand times better.

No one was covering their ears at my voice; they were all just enjoying themselves.

This is love.

This is family.

"Cause I want it that way." I placed the mic to my chest and curtsey as I sang the last line of the song. I lifted my head and looked at, and they were all looking at me with smiles on their face while clapping. I know it wasn't because of my voice but because no matter how bad you sound family supported each other. I placed the mic on the stool then made my way off the stage. I walked over to my table and sat down.

Valdo leaned over, "Okay, so you're not the greatest singer, but you rocked the crowd with your "Sing with me" style. That was great. I don't think I've laughed that much in a while."

I returned his smile, "You're most welcomed. "

"And of course, you're still going to lose."

I shrugged, "We'll see."

"Disclosure, I was voted the worst singer in high school. You might want to get your ears checked tomorrow." Valdo said, and with a smile, he continued, "With that said I'd begin my performance."

He looked at me as he began, "I've got sunshine on a cloudy day. When it's cold outside, I've got the month of May. I guess you'd say. What can make me feel this way?" He lifted his hands and pointed at me. "My girl, my girl, my girl. Talkin' 'bout my girl, my girl."

I heard persons swooning, and I could feel the stares. I bent my head and blushed. I can't believe he did that.

I heard some muttering, so I lifted my head, only to see that Valdo was no longer on the stage, but he was slowly making his way over to our table. I looked at him with wide eyes. "What are you doing?" I mouthed, but he continued singing. He was right. His voice was ten times worse than mine, but I wasn't really paying it much attention at the moment. My main concern was him coming slower and slower to me with that mic and his swaying body.

He stopped right in front of me, "My girl, my girl, my girl. Talkin' 'bout my girl, my girl." He held out one of his hands to me, and I accepted without hesitation. He gently pulled me off the chairs and into his arms as he continues to sing. He sang a few more lines then the song changed abruptly.

I pulled away from him to look in his eyes, "I love this song."

"Really, I can't tell." he chuckled and replied sarcastically, "It's not like you don't sing it every day."

"Thank you." I looked in his eyes, and I knew.

I was falling in love for the first time.

He smiled, "You're welcome." He pulled me back into his arms while we slow dance to 'You Are The Reason' by Calum Scott and Leona Lewis. I rested my head on his chest and closed my eyes. It felt good being in his arms. I felt safe, loved and cherished.

"I feel like I'm in a Hallmark movie."

"Hallmark movie?"

"Yeah. You know when the girl gets her happy ending. I feel like this is mine." I took a deep breath and inhaled his scent. He smelt great, I had no words to describe the scent of the cologne he was wearing, but it made me want to hold him forever.

He pulled me away and looked down at me, "No, it's just the beginning."

I chuckled, breaking eye contact with him. That's when I realised that everyone had started to slow dance as well. Hannah and Kevin were wrapped but in each other's arms. Christina was dancing with Emily, and Zuria was dancing with Ashely.

I gave them a sad smile. I wish they could find their Prince Charming too.

I looked at Valdo, "I feel like I'm in a dream. Everything seems so perfect, and I just feel like I'm going to wake up and it's going to end."

Valdo cupped my cheeks in his hands and stared at me, "This, Us. It's not going to end. Not unless you want it to."

I shook my head, "I don't." I don't want this happiness to end.

"Good." bent his head and placed a small kiss on my lips. If anyone had doubts about our relationship after Valdo sang, "My girl" then they had none now because the kiss confirmed everything.

I blushed when we broke apart. I quickly rest my head back on his chest to avoid the smiles we were receiving from the onlookers.

Valdo chuckled, "You're such a scary cat."

"This scary cat was homeless a month ago." And everyone here knew the story of how Valdo and I met. I didn't want them to get the wrong idea.

"Time is an illusion. I liked you from the moment I laid eyes on you."

"I weighed a tonne."

"Your weight wasn't the first thing I noticed about you." he professed.

"Really?"

"Yea. I saw your beautiful brown eyes. I saw the pain in it, and then that's when I noticed your belly. You being pregnant didn't the connection I felt towards you any different; in fact, it motivated me more. I wanted to heal those sad eyes. I wanted to see a smile on your face." Well, you succeed. I've never felt so happy before. I feel like I'm going to burst."

His chest vibrated as he chuckles, "You're happy, but you're not completely happy."

I pulled away from him and looked in his eyes, "What do you mean?" Of course, I'm completely happy. I finally have the perfect family, perfect friends and a beyond perfect boyfriend. "You miss your mother. I see the way you look at my mom. You wish you had yours. As much as my mother loves you, she's never gonna be yours. She's never going to understand you as much as your own mother does." he rubbed the back of his palms on my cheeks. "Don't be angry at me, but there is something you should know."

I frowned up at him, "Go ahead, tell me."

"I hired a private investigator to look into your mom; She's been looking for you. Ever since you left, she filed a missing person report for you the day after you left. She goes crazy whenever she hears that they find a female body. She misses you, Jakobia. I don't know what happened that day between the two of you, but she regrets it. People make mistakes and say things they regret all the time; that doesn't mean they don't love you." he paused, "I think you should go look for her."

Valdo lifted his hands and wiped the tears there were running down my cheeks. "Don't cry."

"I miss her so much." I sobbed.

"I know you do."

"I'm scared."

"Scared of what?" his voice was alert.

"What will people think?" Runaway Teen Returns With Baby would be the headline for the newspaper. My name would hit the hair salons real quick.

"You shouldn't care what they think. You're in a better than them anyway. You have a billionaire for a boyfriend." He joked.

I laughed at his words and shook my head. "They'll judge me, call me w****."

"If they do that, then you hold your head high and ignore them. You're not going for them; you're going for your mother, she's important."

"Will you come with me?" I begged. I wouldn't survive a minute without him by my side. "If you want me to."

I nod. "I do. I don't think I can face Alton and it's judging citizens without you."

"Then I'll be right by your side." he gave me the sweetest smile, but I wanted more.

"Holding my hands?"

"Holding your hands."

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“Are you nervous?” Valdo said he enlaced his free hand in mine.

I looked across at him and smile. “I’m terrified.”

He kept his eyes on the road while he replied, “Everything is going to be okay.”

“What will people say if I go waltzing back in their town after disappearing? What will they say when they see me with a baby? Oh, and let’s not forget you. What will they say when they see me with you?” Anxiety was killing me. Alton was a judgmental town, and the news of my return would spread like wildfire.

“You’ll keep your head up. We’re going for your mother, not for them. They’re not important. They never were, and they never will be.” he looked and me briefly then back at the road. “Can I tell you a non-secret?”

I nodded, “Sure.” “When I was around eight, my mother lost her job, so we didn’t have much money or much of anything, to be honest. She decided that she would put pride behind her and go back to her parents for some help.”

“That’s brave of her.” There were many days I thought about going back to Alton, but I knew I would never be able to look those people in the eyes and be brave. I just couldn’t do it, and so I chose to continue being homeless.

He nodded and continued. “It was. I remembered that day like it was yesterday. She packed a few pieces of clothes for the both of us and then we left on the first time bus Monday morning. It was one of those towns where everyone lived at least a mile away from each other, and then there was the town. The town is where the bus would let off pa**engers. As soon as we came off the bus, I heard the whispers. I knew they were talking about us because they were staring, pointing and even calling my mother’s name. We had to wait for a taxi to take us

to my grandparents' ranch and while we waited, we were the centre of everyone's attention. My mother was trying her best to ignore all their mean words at her, but I could see that she wanted to cry, but she didn't. We stood and waited for fifteen minutes, and as soon as we entered the taxi, she started crying. She couldn't let them see her break. You shouldn't either. Ignore, Ignore, Ignore." he looked at me. "If anyone says anything to you, then I'll be right there to defend you." I squeezed our enlaced hands.

"Your mother is brave."

"And so are you." he gave me a quick smile. "You can't change the past, so embrace it. If you didn't get pregnant, then we would have never met. You would have never got the opportunity to see the real person you were dating. You'd probably still be with him thinking that he loves you." Valdo was right. If I didn't get pregnant, then I'd still be William's puppet. Now I know that his intentions were only purely physically. I should have seen it from before, what good man slander his mother's name?

"His name is William. I think I should tell you in case we run into him while we're there." the thought never crossed my mind until now. What will I do when I face the a**hole who denied my child and called me a w****?

"He'll be running in my fist if I ever see him." I chuckled at his response. If I have the strength and confidence to punch William, then I would have when he denied my child and called me and my mother w****s, but he was too tall and big. His body ma** was nowhere near's Valdo's, but William scared me a little. I get the sense that if I hit him, then he'd hit me back and not regret it. He was ruthless, and it took me getting pregnant for me to realise how cruel he could be.

"He deserves it." I'd love to see Valdo's fist meet Will's face because he did deserve a punch. No real man would abandon his child.

"I doubt he'll want to step up and be a father." I laughed.

"No, he won't. As far as he's concerned my mother and I are town w****s."

“Good.” I frowned at his reply, he noticed my frown and smiled, “I mean good because I don’t want him near Jamaica. He’s toxic.” he gave me a look then continued. “I know it’s not my call whether he gets to be apart of her life or not, but whatever happens I want you to choose what you know is best for Jamaica.”

“We. The two of us. That’s what’s best for Jamaica. Hopefully, my mother joins the crew, if not, then I’ll always have Hannah and Kevin. Zuria is pretty amazing too.”

“Yes, we’re your family now, and we all love you. We’re not going to abandon you,” he assured.

I sighed. “I was so stupid. I thought I loved him and that he loved me too.”

“How do you know that you don’t love him? After all, he was your first.” Valdo had a point, but I’m 100% sure that I never loved Will.

I smiled, “I never told you he was my first.” he gave me a look, and I laughed, “He was though and only one to ever, you know.”

He nodded, “I see.”

“What I felt for him wasn’t love. It was infatuation or less than that, Lust? As soon as he called me a w****, the switch inside my brain flipped. It wasn’t love. Love is more than just s**; it’s caring unconditionally.” I looked at him and smile. “It’s philia, eros and agape all in one. It’s indescribable. It’s...It’s helping a stranger. It’s when your heart beats increases when you’re with that special person. It’s when that person can make you smile without even doing anything funny. It’s when you know that person will never hurt you. It’s when you always want to be with that person. It’s when you feel protected and safe. It’s powerful...” my voice

faded as I started to realise that I just voiced how I felt to Valdo. I looked at him to see how he'd respond.

He smiled, "I understand." Did he? Has he been in love? Has there ever been a girl that made him daydream? I wanted to know, so I bravely asked.

"Have you ever been in love?" I looked at him and waiting eagerly for his answer.

"No, but I'm falling in love now." he smiled and looked at me while he replied.

I blushed at his words. "Me too."

He chuckled, and I couldn't help myself, so I chuckled as well.

Everything will be okay, as long as I have Valdo by my side I'll be fine.

"Turn left in 800 metres." the GPS instructed. I looked at the backseat and smile. Jamaica was sleeping peacefully in her car seat. My beautiful baby. I closed my eyes and did a short prayer hoping that everything goes well for my stay here. I turned my eyes back to the road, and Valdo turned on the road which led to Alton.

"Everything will be okay. We're going straight to your mother's place. We'll see how goes from thereon. You'll always need to ask her for your doc**ents because you're eighteen, which means you're an adult. We need to get you fully doc**ented. You're going to need a Pa**port and a Driver's license."

"Driver's License, why would I need a driver's license? I don't know how to drive."
I said with a frown.

"I'll teach you." I smiled.

"Thanks and the pa**port?"

"To travel, of course. That's the purpose of a Pa**port."

I laughed, "I know what it's used for. I've never left the US before or made plans to leave, so a Pa**port never crossed my mind."

"Well I travel, a lot and I'd feel bad to leave you and Jamaica alone while I'm enjoying myself in the tropics."

"So we're getting a Pa**port for her as well."

"Of course." I smile. Could he be any sweeter? All my life, I've been poor. I've never got everything I wanted, and that's because my mother only bought things that I needed. When I just entered puberty, it would make me mad that my mother couldn't afford the things I wanted. While the girls in my cla** were wearing Vans, I was wearing second-hand thrift store shoes.

As I got older, I started to see that what I was wearing wasn't important. I began to appreciate how hard my mother worked for it. I always kept my goals simple. I never went out much growing up, so listening to Valdo tell me about the future trips that we will be taking is making me super excited.

"How do you feel about Jamaica?" I raised my brows.

"The baby or the country?"

"The country. It's very nice in December," he said it so casually.

"You want us to go next December?"

He chuckled, "That's not a bad idea, but I was leaning towards, this December."

"Won't the pa**port and those things take a while to get?" My mother handled all my doc**ents, so I didn't know much about how to get certain things.

"No, it takes around six weeks. Less if you get it express."

"What about booking flights and such?"

He smiled, "You don't know anything about travelling, do you?" he ruffled my hair with his free hands, "It's okay. I'll teach you everything you need to know about this big world. As for booking the flight, we'll take my jet. As for the hotels and such, my a**istant will deal with that."

"You're super-rich, aren't you?"

"I told you that the first time we met."

"Yea, but I just realise how much. Not that it matters. You deserve all your successes, especially after what happened to you and your mom."

"It's fate. For all us."

"What do you mean?"

"Both of our parents were single mothers, struggling to provide for their child. I made it in the business world, and I met you who happened to be in the same situation as my mom. Fate brought us together. We deserve to be happy, especially since neither of us knows our biological father. This is their karma for abandoning us."

I smile, "That's a good way of putting it."

"We're here," Valdo said he turned off the car engine. I didn't even realise when the car had stopped moving.

"Hmmm?" I turned my head from his face and looked ahead. I realised where I was immediate. I turned my head to the side and looked at the one-bedroom apartment that my mom and I shared, or should I say used to share. "Are you ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be. Let's go." We exited the car and took Jamaica and her car seat with us. We walked to the door and pressed the buzzer.

"Who is it?" Chills ran threw me as I heard my mother's voice for the first time in months. "I'm coming," she shouted. We waited in silence for a few seconds then the apartment door suddenly opened. I looked at my beautiful mother, and tears started to fall.

“Jacky”

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“Jacky?” Her voice trembled as she repeated my name. I could read the surprise on her face as well as happiness. Teardrops rolled by her cheek, “my baby.”

Unable to keep my distance, I pulled her into a hug and wrapped my arms around her. She wailed in my arms, and I started to feel guilty, maybe I stayed away too long. “I’m so sorry, ma” I said between sobs.

She pulled away from me, and we looked into each other’s tear-stained eyes. She shook her head, vigorously, “No. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry for how I reacted, for how I treated you. I’m so sorry. Please forgive me.”

I place my hands on her cheeks to wipe her tears, “It’s okay. I understand. It doesn’t matter anymore. I’m okay. I forgive you.”

She shook her head, “I shouldn’t have kicked you out. I shouldn’t have done to you what my parents did for me. It was so wrong.”

“Do you forgive me?” I pled.

She frowned, “Forgive you? I’m the one who needs to be forgiven. I’m so sorry. I...” It was then she realised that there as someone behind us. Her eyes widen as she looked at Valdo even more so when she noticed who he was carrying in his hands. Her eyes met mines again, “Is that..?”

I nod my head before she could continue. "Yes, that's your grandbaby."

My mother moved closer to Valdo and bent to look at Jamaica. "She's so beautiful. What's her name?"

"Jamaica Gizelle Taylor."

She turned and looked at me for a brief second; then another tear fell from her eye. "Thank you."

She wiped it quickly then looked up at Valdo. "I'm Gizelle Taylor." she held her hands out, and he shook it. "Uvaldo, Dakota."

"Nice to meet you, Mr Dakota."

"You can call me Valdo."

She smiled, "Valdo, it is."

She looked around then at us, "We should probably go inside before one of those nosey neighbours starts gossiping." She moved away from Valdo and left to open the door wider for us to enter. As I entered, I realised that nothing changed. It was exactly as it was when I left. "You can have a seat on the couch. Is there anything I can get you guys?"

"I'm okay." Valdo and I said simultaneously as we sat on the couch. My mother nod then took a seat on the opposite couch.

She looked at between Valdo, and I then asked, "Are you two...together?"

I looked at Valdo as he smiled, "Yes." we answered simultaneously once again.

"Is he the father of the baby?"

I shook my head, "No. William is Jamaica's father. I told William I was pregnant the same day I told you and he rejected me saying that she wasn't his. I haven't seen him since." I looked across at Valdo and smile. "I met Valdo when I was seven months pregnant and homeless. He took me in. His family became my own. We've only been dating for a few weeks."

My mother bent her head in shame. "I can't tell you how sorry I am. I tried looking for you. When I calmed down, I tried looking for you, but you were nowhere to be found. I even reported you missing, but the police said it wouldn't be a missing report since I had told you to leave and it was too early. I tried a few more times, but nothing came of it. "

She sobbed, "I'm so sorry."

"It's okay, ma'. I'm okay. I survived. I met Valdo, Hannah, Kevin, Zuria and some other wonderful people. I know what the real world is like now. If I had stayed here in this town, then God knows the type of scandal that would surround both of us. I would have never been able to experience other types of love and family relationship."

"You leaving still caused a scandal. Word got around as soon as I reported it to the police the next day. Dalton can't keep his mouth shut, has to tell his wife everything." Dalton and his wife, Melissa, were the town's renown chatterboxes. They couldn't keep anything to themselves. I don't know how he's been a cop for so long.

I shook my head, "It doesn't matter. We both know how toxic this town is. They hear what they want to hear and believe what they want to believe."

She smiled, "When did you become so wise?"

"Living on the streets teaches you wisdom."

She sighed, "I'm sorry you had to go through all that before you were ready."

"The funny thing is, I don't regret any of it. I've learnt so many things from that day. I wouldn't have met Valdo if things had turned out different."

"I think fate would have allowed us to meet eventually," Valdo spoke up. I smiled at his sweet words.

She looked at Valdo, "So you're my daughter's boyfriend?" This is my first time introducing my mother to my boyfriend. She had found out that William and I were dating through one of her co-workers. Her only advice was to be careful. The Nectar family was known for not only their wealth but the scandals that occur within the family.

He answered, "I am." "You've been taking care for her these past few months?" I hope Valdo don't mind my mother asking him questions. Any mother would want to know what her child has gotten herself in.

He nodded, "I have."

"You don't mind that Jamaica isn't yours?" she asked curiously.

He shook his head, "I don't. I know she isn't mine biologically, but I've been with her since the day she was born and before that. I'm the only father figure she knows." I smiled at how easy he answered my mother's question.

"You want to be her father?" my mother asked curiously with her eyebrows raised.

Valdo looked at me and smile, "I do." I blushed at his words. "And maybe one day, if Jacoby gives me a chance, I'll marry her and adopt Jamaica legally." I blushed at his words. If Valdo even asked me to marry him today, I would say yes. I didn't need more time to tell how great he is.

"That's a big commitment." she pointed out.

"It is." he agreed.

"Are you sure you're ready to be a father to someone else's child?" That was a good question to ask, and I knew exactly why my mom asked it. When I was around ten, she met a guy, but he only wanted her and not the child that came with her.

"I am. I don't consider Jamaica someone else's child. From what Jakobia told me, William denied being the father. He has no claim over her."

My mother nodded and smiled, "How old are you?"

"I'm twenty-eight," he answered honestly.

She chuckled, "You're closer to my age than hers." she quickly looked at me, "Not that it matters. I can see that you truly care about my daughter, and that's all that matters."

"Ms. Taylor..."

"Please call me Gizelle; I'm only six years older than you."

Valdo smiled, "If it makes you feel any better. You look way younger than your age." She did. Whenever we went out of town people would always think she's my sister instead of my mother.

My mother smirked at Valdo, "Are you flirting with me?"

"No ma'am. I only have eyes for your daughter."

She looked at Valdo, "Don't call ma'am again even though I'm a grandma."

He held up his pinky fingers, "I won't. I promise."

My mother looked at me and smile. "I like this one. Keep him."

"I won't let her go." I smiled. I didn't want him to let me go either.

My mother smiled. "I'm guessing you're planning on going back to"

"New York." I added-in.

I looked at her and Valdo then nod, "Yes. New York is my home now. I have real friends, a family. I'm sorry, Ma. I don't think I can come back here. Not after all that's happened."

She nodded sadly, "I understand. So are you guys leaving tonight?"

I shook my head, "No. We were planning on staying a few days. Get some papers sorted out. I left all my doc**ents here. I have some things to collect from school as well."

"I'm so sorry you didn't get to graduate. You would have looked great in that ugly green gown."

I chuckled, "I'm kinda happy I didn't get to put on that ugly gown."

"So are you planning on going back to school?"

I nod, "Next year I'll do my ACT and SAT. For now, I'm just going to be a mother to my baby."

"I'm sorry you didn't get to go to university as planned."

"It's okay. I realised that I wouldn't have been a good Civil Engineer."

"You've changed your mind?"

I nod, "I don't want to build houses anymore. I want to build families. I want to be like Hannah, Valdo's mom. She's amazing. She is a single mother, just like you. She got pregnant young just like us. Now she spends her days helping other single moms. I want to help other persons just like Valdo has helped me. I'm not sure how exactly I'm going to do that, but I'll figure something out."

"I'm proud of you no matter what you do."

"Thank you, ma" She shook her head, "I should be thanking you for coming back to me. I tried looking for you. I hired an investigator for a few months, but he was too expensive. I had to let him go. I want you to know that I never gave up on you. I'm sorry for the way I acted. I can't say sorry enough."

"It's okay; I forgive you. Let's not get sad again." She wiped her tears, "It's just that I'm so happy to see you." I know."

"How long will you be staying?"

"A week."

"Have you booked the motel yet?" Alton was a small town, and so the only place tourist had available to stay were motels. Motels that were used by the town prostitutes. Motels that barely get cleaned properly. I remember Peter one of William's friend telling us exactly how gross the rooms were. I shook my head.

"To be honest, we didn't even think about that. "

I looked at Valdo and frown. "I hate the idea of staying in those nasty motels."

"Can't we stay here?" Valdo asked.

"It's a one-bedroom." My mother responded.

"That's fine. You three can sleep together, and I'll sleep out here on the couch."

"You don't mind?" My mother asked.

He shook his head, "No. I don't. My mother and I lived in a one-bedroom apartment too. We had a pull-out couch. That was my bed for fifteen years."

"This is not a pull-out couch." I inserted.

"I'll be fine," he assured.

"Your back will hurt you."

"It won't."

"Are you sure you'll be okay sleeping on the couch?" My mom asked.

"I'll be fine. I've slept on worse, believe me." I did. His mother told me that they were living on the streets at one point too. Homeless isn't something to be ashamed of.

"You guys must be tired. How long have you been travelling?"

"I'm pretty exhausted. It's a fifteen-hour drive from our apartment to here." You could tell he was exhausted by the bags under his eyes, but he didn't let it bother him much.

"You drove all the way here?"

Valdo nod and smile, "Yeah. Jacoby has no idea how to drive a car."

"That's my fault. I never had one for myself, nor have I ever driven one."

"That's sad. Sad because cars are amazing, especially fast ones."

She laughed, "I agree. I hope you guys took stops on your drive here."

"We did. We have been to four different states in the past thirty-six hours. It's truly amazing. We stayed at a fancy hotel last night. You'd love it." It was my mother's fantasy to have dinner in a fancy hotel with a handsome, rich man. She never got the chance to, but she still holds the dream close to her heart.

"Maybe one day." She pushed the fantasy away, "Have you guys eaten?"

"I'm starving." I looked Valdo for his response.

"Same."

I looked at my mom, "What about you?" I looked at her up and down. She looked like she lost around ten pounds since I last saw her, maybe even more. "When was the last time you ate?"

"Yesterday, I think," she said casually. "Ma! You must be hungry." It's always been like this with her. She would work long shifts and forget to eat. I always had to remind me to take care of herself.

"Baby, it's no big deal."

"It is. We're going out. To the fanciest restaurant in town and you're going to eat all the food we never could." I don't know what made me say that, but I just wanted to celebrate been back with my mother. I missed her so much.

"Can you afford 'The Castle'?"

"I can't but he can," I said, pointing at Valdo with a cheeky smile.

"You're rich?" My mother asked Valdo.

"Very."

Pregnant and Homeless by
jollyreaderjennell chapter 30

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"I can't believe you look so good and you just had a baby!" I blushed and shook my head.

"I don't look good." I disagreed. I haven't felt pretty lately; where my body was concerned. I have a few stretch marks on my belly, and the baby fat still hasn't gone down yet.

My mother walked up to me and cupped my cheeks. "You don't look good, you look great. After I had you, my belly was twice the size of yours. It took a while to go down; I didn't have much time to exercise and take care of a baby at the same time. It didn't matter anyway; I was single. I didn't have anyone to impress." She smiled and whispered, "Have you guys put the cake in the oven?"

It took me a second to understand what she meant, and when I did, I laughed. "No. We haven't."

She nodded her head, "Okay, well. Has he tried to put the cake in the oven?"

I shook my head, "No. He hasn't even tried to bake a cake."

"Really?" she asked with raised brows.

I nod, "He's bought the ingredients."

She laughed, "Okay, you lost me at ingredients?"

"We've kissed."

"So first base?"

I nod, "Yep."

"Hmm...that's weird. How long have you guys been dating?"

"Only a few weeks. We started dating a few days after Jamaica was born." I answered, honestly. I know my mother wouldn't judge the situation until she knew the facts behind getting a relationship with a man a few days after giving birth to another man's child.

"So it hasn't been six weeks yet?"

I remembered clearly what Nurse Voila recommend to me before I left, "No, ma. It hasn't been six weeks yet. It doesn't matter anyway. Valdo isn't like that. He's not going to jump me as soon as he gets the chance. We've decided to take things slow."

She nodded, "I understand. He seems like a good guy. I can tell he really likes you. Do you really like him?"

"I do."

She chuckled, "Good because if you didn't, I'd be willing to shoot my shot." I laughed at her words. Valdo wasn't my mother's type. She preferred men who were n the rough side and older than her. She always had a thing for the bad guys, and Valdo is quite the opposite.

"But seriously. You look beautiful in that dress, and I'm sure you'd look beautiful without it. It takes super strength to push a child out of your v*****. If a man can't appreciate your "after-baby" body, then he just doesn't deserve you."

"I had a C-section." My body took the easier way out to some extent.

"It doesn't matter which one you had. Remember what I told you on your twelfth birthday?"

I remembered the day like it was yesterday. Everyone wore fancy clothes to school on their birthday except me. I cried for the entire bus ride home. When she saw my tears, she asked me what was wrong, and I told her that the other kids were making fun of me because I didn't get new clothes for my birthday. She bent down on her knees, and she said,

"Beauty is more than just appearances."

"Exactly. Beauty is your personality, how you interact with people." She smiled, "You're the most beautiful woman I know, inside and out. Stop worrying about how you look."

I looked down my dress and smiled. I did look good in yellow.

"That's the smile I want to see. Your man has been waiting for a while now."

She tugged my right hand and pulled me towards the bedroom door.

As my mother and I walked out of the bedroom. Valdo's attention shifted from Jamaica to us. "Wow. You girls look amazing. You look like sisters." My mother and I blushed at his kind words.

"You don't look so bad yourself." My mother muttered under her breath. Valdo chuckled.

"I try."

I rolled my eyes, "We both know you don't need to try."

He lifted his hands to his hair, "Do you think I wake up and my hair looks this good? No honey, I have to brush it and add gel to it."

"Okay, I understand the hair but look at your face. It's like gorgeous. I have to put on makeup just to look half as good as you."

He rolled his eyes, "You don't need makeup to look beautiful. You're naturally beautiful. Just like Aphrodite."

I blushed.

Did he just compare me to a goddess? The most beautiful one at that.

"I'd love to sit, and you two compliment each other, but it's also six, and if we don't leave right now then we might not get a seat until eight." I nod, agreeing with my mother. "The Castle" is usually packed by six-thirty.

"I starving so the earlier, the better."

I gave him a thumbs up. "Okay. Let's go then!"

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"Table for three please, along with a high seat for the baby." Valdo requested, but the hostess wasn't paying him much attention. Her attention was on me and the baby in my arms while shamelessly chewing on a blue gum. She smirked. I rolled my eyes, knowing exactly what she was thinking. Her name was Cara; she graduated Alton High two years ago. While she was there, she dedicated her days to make me miserable just because I was poor.

Based on her current job, she never got rich either.

"So the rumours are true?" she smirked then glance at my mother. "Like mother, like daughter, after all."

"You little piece of.."

I touched my mother's shoulders. "It's okay, ma." I looked at Cara, "Table for three and a baby seat."

"This isn't McDonald's; this is The Castle. You can't afford it here." Cara said with her lips pushed up.

Valdo chuckled so I looked at him confused, "So you're a**uming that we can't afford this restaurant?"

Cara frowned at Valdo, "Who are you anyway? Do you belong to the mother or the daughter." she chuckled, "Maybe both. I can't even tell. You..."

Valdo lifted his left hand to stop her from continuing then he slid his right hand in his pocket and took out of his phone. He dialed a number then brought the phone to his ears. "Hi, Marcos. How have been? Glad to hear you're doing well. I have a little problem. I'm at your Alton location, and your hostess is very disrespectful to my partner and her mother." he looked down at her badge, "Cara." he nodded, " Yes. Okay. Thank you. I'll talk to you soon." Valdo hung up the phone and looked silently at Cara.

She laughed, "Is that supposed to scare me? A fake phone call?" she looked, and a grinned. "Where did you get this one? Hollywood auditions?"

A few seconds after, Mr Monroe, the manager of the restaurant, came out with fiery eyes. He looked at Cara, "You're fired. Go home." He turned to us; the previous angry wiped from his face. He smiled. "It's a privilege to have you in Alton, Mr Dakota." He nodded at my mother, "Gizelle." He looked me, "It's good to have you back, Jacobia." I smiled at him. Mr Monroe was also the town pastor, so he made it his goal to know everyone in Alton. He tried to recruit my mother and I a few times but my mother was a not very religious person, and neither was I. Mr Monroe was also known for his abilities to spill people private business during sermons.

"How may I help you, Mr Dakota?"

"We'd like four seats, including a high baby seat," Valdo repeated.

Mr Munro smiled, "Okay. Right, this way, Mr Dakota."

We followed him into the restaurant. My eyes widen at the decor. I now understand why it was so expensive to dine here. The place looked majestic. There was a central wooden theme with natural colours added. Five low lightening chandeliers lit the place. Live piano music coming from the side.

I looked at my mother's dazzled face and smile. She has always wanted to dine here but could never afford to.

"If the place looks this good, imagine the food." She trilled.

I looked but at Valdo and smile. "Thank you. How did you do that back there?"

He shrugged, "I know the owner of "The Castle" Franchise."

"Wow, Do you know the president too?" I joked.

He chuckled, "I do. I met him before he came into politics."

I smiled, impressed. Wealth makes you have connections all over. If Valdo weren't here, we would have never entered this restaurant even if we had the money. Alton's richest didn't like mixing with the poorer folks unless it's to satisfy their s**ual pleasures.

Mr Munro led us to the table of three. Then he called someone over, "This is Uvaldo Dakota, one of America's finest businessman. You'll be serving him and his ...friends tonight. Hurry and get a high seat for them." Mr Munro turned to us and bowed. "Enjoy your meals."

Valdo pulled out the chairs for my mother and I to sit then he took a seat.

"Thanks." My mother and I responded.

"Everyone's looking at us," my mother whispered. I looked around and noticed that almost everyone's attention was on our table. "I guess everyone is surprised to see you back in Alton."

"They just want something to gossip about." I shifted my attention back to my mother. I looked down at the sleeping baby in my hands. "You're going to be the talk of the town tomorrow. High School Girl runaways and brings back a baby."

"It doesn't matter what they say. They can stare all they want. Their opinion shouldn't matter. Don't let their gazes bother you. They only gossip because their lives can't be as exciting," Valdo remarked.

"Yea, and he's right. Don't pay them any attention. Let them see how happy you are. That will piss them off." I smiled at my mother's words.

A pet**e blonde placed the high seat behind me. She then turned to us, "Good evening. I'm Rosie. I'll be your server for today. Here is your menu. I'll be back in five minutes to take your order." She placed the cards on our table and left.

"Talk about great customer service." My mother rolled her eyes. As a waiter herself, she believed that excellent customer service was vital, and she prides herself on it. "Oh, I understand now." She said as she looked down on the menu cards, "Tips are added automatically to the bill so no need to be friendly."

"Not everyone has that special charm like you Gizelle."

She blushed at Valdo's words.

"Likewise, Valdo. You're a real gentleman. Do you, by any chance, have a big brother?"

He laughed, "No. I'm an only child."

She sighed, "What a shame! What about a best friend?"

He laughed, "Trust me when I say, he's not a gentleman. He's a total p*****. He's not interested in anything longer than a night."

"Sounds fun," she responded sarcastically. She's had her heart broken a few times by guys who were nothing but liars and cheats. She didn't like the p***** lifestyle.

"Even with his womanising personality, he's a good guy. He wouldn't be my friend if he wasn't." I smiled at Valdo's response. He was so great at defending his friends and family.

"Oh, my God." My mom said with her eyes wide, looking behind me. "Don't turn around."

"Really? You know telling me not to look around will only make me want to look more right?" The look on my mother's face made me a little scared. I looked at Valdo, who had a blank expression on his face.

"Just don't look around Jakobia." she insisted.

I sighed and turned my head. It couldn't be that bad.

When I turned around, my eyes made contact with chocolate brown ones. My heart jumped. What was he doing here? Why isn't he off at college?

"Well, well, well, If it isn't the Runaway s***?"

