Sequel to That Thing Called Love

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Contents

1. 4

2. 8

3. 11

4. 16

5. 19

6. 23

7. 26

8. 30

9. 32

10. 35

11. 38

12. 42

13. 47

14. 50

15. 53

16. 59

17. 65

18. 71

Epilogue. 75

About this edition

An extract from a book read by a character has been omitted from this edition.

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1.

“Aly! we gonna be late, hurry up." Frankie honked her horn in front of Daniel's mansion.

“Calm, your tits, I'm here." She said as she opened the car door and sat inside.

It was their first day of high school and they didn't want to be late, as much as they wanted to fit in, they didn't want to be a part of the popular group or those stuck up plastic barbie dolls. They just wanted to fit in and have friends who would love them for what they were and not who they were.

“Finally!" Frankie exclaimed as she drove to school. Both Aly and Frankie attended the same high school that Aly's Aunt, Narcia attended. Frankie searched for a parking space to park. She drove for a little while before getting a place to park.

“This is it, high school here we come." Aly sighed as she got down with Frankie in tow.

The walked to the administration to get their schedules for the school year.

“Let's see which classes we have together," Frankie suggested. They had Gym, Math, English and lunch together.

“At least we have some classes together." Aly awkwardly added.

“Yeah, let's find the Gym before we get late for the assembly." Frankie smiled at her best friend as they went looking for the gym.

He was the CEO of versus systems in Los Angeles, It makes conditional prize technology for gamers. The software provides a more interesting game environment, matching users to prizes redeemable through an app. From downloadable content to real money, Versus allows gamers to choose prizes based on their age and location.

“I'm sorry Sir, the receptionist, Kassandra Chanel picked up the files she had unintentionally dropped in front of her boss. She bent down to pick them as Xavier walked passed her without a word. She wondered what she had seen in his stuck up ass that made her crush on him.

She sighed and picked up the files from the floor and stacked them up on her desk, still daydreaming about Xavier who had long forgotten about her existence.

“Kassy, you're trying too hard. Let love take its course and cupid do its work." Kamara, her co-worker said.

“But, ---"

“No buts, if he's yours he'd come back to you," Tamara added as they went back to their duties.

“Hey man," Sean said entering his best friend's office.

“Heeey, what's up man, how's Zoe and the baby?" He asked.

“They good, its been a while so I decided to come to say hi," Sean stated.

“Well, I'm good and work is fine as well." He smiled.

“Man, it's high time you settled. You aren't getting any younger you know." Sean said.

“The right woman hasn't come." He defended.

“She probably might have, but you've refused to notice her, your mind has refused to accept her because you painted a different image of the one you're seeing. Who would have thought I would end up marrying Zoe? But years later, we're happily married with a baby on the way. Life is full of choices you've got to make the best out of it." Sean added getting up from his chair.

“Let me see you off, man," Xavier added as they took the lift down. He escorted Sean outside as Kass looked at him dreamingly.

“You've got an admirer back there, shoot your shot man." Sean tapped his back as he got in his car and drove off.

Xavier was walking to his office as he turned around and walked towards Kassandra's desk.

“Hi." He said as Kamara turned around.

“Um, where's Kass?" He shyly asked.

“Just a minute Sir," Kamara said as she went to call Kassandra.

“Sir, you sent for me?" She asked trying to hide her excitement.

“Um, uh, yeah I did. I was wondering if you'd like to join me for dinner at my house tonight?" He asked.

“I, um, er..." She fumbled with her words.

“Hey, it's just dinner, but if you're not comfortable it's fine." He said tight-lipped.

“Sir, I would love to." She said after some minutes.

“Alright then, I'd meet you down here after work." He said as he walked to his office.

After her shift, Kassandra waited for her boss downstairs while talking to Kamara.

“Enjoy yourself and I want details," Kamara added as Xavier approached them.

“You ready?" He asked her.

“Sure." She said as she waved her friend and stepped out with Xavier. His driver parked the car in front of them and opened the door for them to enter. The ride was awkward until the song “Savage Love" by Jason Derulo started to play in the car.

Kass began the song as Xavier chimed in.

“If I woke up without ya

I don't know what I would do Thought I could be single forever 'til I met you Usually, don't be fallin', be fallin', fallin' first You got a way of keeping me comin' back to back I just found out the only reason that you lovin' me Was to get back at your ex-lover but before you leave Usually, I would never, would never even care Baby, I know she creepin' I feel it in the air

Every night and every day I try to make you stay But your

Savage love Did somebody, did somebody Break your heart? Lookin' like an angel But your savage love When you kiss me I know you don't give two fucks But I still want that Your savage love Your savage lo-lo-love Your savage lo-lo-love You could use me 'Cause I still want that (your savage)

Baby, I hope that this ain't karma 'cause I get around You wanna run it up, I wanna lock it down Usually, don't be fallin', be fallin', fallin' first You got a way of making me spend up all my cash

Every night and every day I try to make you stay But your

Savage love Did somebody, did somebody Break your heart? Lookin' like an angel But your savage love When you kiss me I know you don't give two fucks But I still want that Your savage love Your savage lo-lo-love Your savage lo-lo-love You could use me 'Cause I still want that, your savage love

Ooh-la-la-la Ooh-la-la-la Your savage lo-lo-love Ooh-la-la-la Your savage lo-lo-love Ooh-la-la-la You could use me

Baby Savage love Did somebody, did somebody Break your heart? Lookin' like an angel But your savage love But when you kiss me I know you don't give two fucks But I still want that Your savage love (savage love) Your savage lo-lo-love Your savage lo-lo-love Girl, you could use me 'Cause I still want that, your savage love”

“You have a beautiful voice, Sir, I didn't know you could sing that well." Kassandra complimented.

“Why, thank you. It's my hidden talent." Xavier said as the driver opened the door for them to get out. His house was simple yet elegant. Kassandra loved how beautiful it looked.

“You coming?" He asked her.

“Sorry." She grinned as she followed him inside the house.

2.

Hey, how was dinner with the boss yesterday?" Kamara asked her friend.

“It was lovely, I thought it would be awkward and all, but it was fun." Kassandra happily recounted.

“I'm happy for you Kass, you deserve love." Kamara genuinely told.

“Thanks, Kamara." She smiled at her.

“Hi Sir," Kassandra said as she met him in the elevator, but he blatantly ignored her looking on his phone.

*Maybe he didn't hear me. Let me try again. S*he convinced herself.

“Good morning Sir." She tried again.

“Oh hi, Adela." He said looking at her as he got off the elevator as he got to his floor.

“Adela?" Kassandra sadly said.

He had even forgotten my name after the time we spent yesterday. She thought to herself. She wasn't going to cry. She vowed never to cry over love, no matter how it hurt.

The elevator stopped and she got out and headed to her supervisor's office.

“Urgh, college sucks!" Mindy exclaimed.

“Tell me about it." Her best friend Vince rolled his eyes. Mindy and Vince met in high school and ever since that encounter, they've been inseparable. Vince was the popular, wild guy and Mindy the sassy one. He understood the fact that she didn't want to hang out with the popular kids, so she and Vince mostly hang out after school, or in detention.

In college, because of his charming features and stature, he made it into the popular group and Mindy wasn't interested in joining as well, so they hang out anytime they had. Despite all of that, their friendship bond was tight.

“You coming to the bonfire tonight?" Vince asked her as they found a spot to sit in class waiting for the lecture to begin.

“Er, maybe, maybe not." She stuck her tongue out at him.

“Mindy, live a little, don't be a spoilsport." He told her.

“Okay, now you sound like mom." She chuckled.

“Okay, I will, Stace has been bothering me about it anyways." She said as the lecture began.

Kass walked down the road to her apartment. Kamara had already taken her route home. She walked with her head bowed thinking why and how love wasn't fair to her.

Was it because she was a plain Jane?

That she didn't dress sexily?

She had a beautiful figure under those long dresses and skirts she wore to work. She wasn't one to dress in short clothes or revealing clothes. That was just her. Changing her personality to someone else wasn't her.

She wanted a man who would love her for her and not her body or beauty.

I hope I find a man who would appreciate me for who I am. She smiled to herself while entering her apartment.

“Hey, handsome." A tall blonde wearing a skimpy dress said to Xavier. The clothes barely covered her body as it was supposed to do. And the makeup on her face was just so much.

“Not interested." He said to the woman who muttered swear words to her as she walked off.

The women in the bar were pretty, no doubt about that but they only wanted money and a night with him but he wasn't ready for all that. He was tired of playing that game and needed a woman who he could relate with, one who shared the same interests or similar interests with him.

I'm outta here. He thought to himself walking out.

Kass had run out of milk. She wore a coat over the dress she was wearing and then went out to get some milk. The night was a little chilly, even though she wore a coat, she felt cold.

Xavier stopped at the Shop. He needed to get a mint and some tubs of ice cream he had been craving for a while. He wasn't one who was a fan of ice cream, but he just felt for ice cream. He parked his car and headed for the Shop.

Kass walked to where the milk was and picked two cartons, she decided to get some junk food as well.

Thank God I brought my credit card as well. She murmured. After loading everything she wanted into the trolley, she headed towards the check out point.

Isn't that your boss?

Her conscience pricked.

Shut up mind, what would he be doing here at this time. She argued with her conscience.

“Hey, reception girl," Xavier called.

Reception girl, really Xavier. His conscience pricked.

“Its Kassandra, not reception girl." She said getting mad.

“You live around?" He asked trying to make small talk.

“Have a great nice Sir, I can't believe you forgot the name of the lady you took to dinner," She added picking her bags walking out of the shop.

Urgh, such an arsehole, reception girl, really? She muttered as Xavier ran after her.

“Kassy, wait!" He called as she picked up her pace. The bags she was carrying slowed her down making him catch up with her.

“Hey, I know I've been an ass, and I'm sorry." He apologised.

She looked at him for a while wondering if she should forgive him or not.

“It's fine, I hope you don't meet me at work tomorrow and call me reception girl." She chuckled.

“I won't Kassy, " He assured.

“I better get going, it's getting late, goodnight sir." She stated walking off.

Xavier walked to his car with a goofy smile on his face.

“Kayla, wait up!" Her friend Maureen called catching up with her.

“Where's Nolan?" She asked Kayla. Nolan was Kayla's boyfriend. He was hot and on the football team. He wasn't a typical Jock, going to unnecessary parties. He cared about his education unlike most of the jocks.

“Um, I don't know, what of Anthony?" Kayla asked.

Anthony was Maureen's boyfriend. They'd been going out since freshman year. Their love was the cliché bad boy good girl love story. But it was beautiful anyway. She liked the way they related to each other.

“Hey, babe." Anthony hugged Maureen from behind.

“There you are." She said kissing him.

“Too much PDA, get a room!" Kayla exclaimed walking away from the love birds.

3.

"Ms Britt Coleson, this is your new colleague, Mr Fidel Armando. You both would be working together on cases until whatever." The chief of police announced as he gave Fidel his badge.

*"*Hi*." He said in a strong sexy voice.*

"Hello, pleased to work with you," Britt said as she withdrew her hand from his. A surge of electricity ran through her veins making her retrieve her hand in haste.

"Thank you." He said in his British accent.

"Any new cases to work in today?" He asked walking with her to their work station.

"Yes, there's been a murder at the hideout of the drug lords we put in jail a couple of years back. I think someone wants to send a message by leaving dead bodies around, " She said to him.

"Have there been any leads yet?" He asked her.

"No, not yet." She added.

"Detective Coleson, you might want to see this." Officer Paris said to her as she walked towards her.

It was a video of a masked man asking the realise of her dad else there would be more bloodshed.

"I think I know who they are, " She sighed.

"Well, then...who are they?" Fidel impatiently asked.

"Gang members from my dad's gang, this is freaking messed up." She added walking to her table and sipping her coffee.

"Coleson, we have bad news." One of the officers said walking to her desk.

"What is it, Officer, Lee?" She asked.

"You might want to see this yourself." He said as they walked to her father's cell.

Britt stopped in her tracks as she saw the lifeless body of her dad sprawled on the cold floors. His throat had been split and blood was oozing out. There was a message left for her on the walls. It read; *Karma's a big bad bitch.*

Britt sunk unto the floor. Her dad was everything to her. He cared about her more than her mom ever did. All she cared about was shopping and then spending his money. Although he pampered her a lot, he loved her as much as she loved him.

There were like two peas in a pod.

She let out a shriek as it dawned on her. Fidel carried her bridal style out of the cell. He met their Chief at the entrance and nodded at him telling him he had to leave with her.

He put Britt in the car as he drove her to her home with her directions. She unlocked the door and entered with Fidel to see the place scattered and messed up like someone had been there and was sending her a warning or perhaps a gift.

I hope you've seen your gift. Did you like it, Daddy's bitch. She read the message on her wall written in blood.

"Hey, let's get out of here, get your things and let's leave," Fidel said as Britt climbed up the stairs and picked a few of her belongings and files and then descended the stairs and joined Fidel.

"Do you have anywhere else to go?" He asked as they sat in the car.

"Yes, I do. It was our to-go place whenever he needed fresh air from my mom." She smiled.

" So, have you heard from your mom ever since you came out of jail, no wait. Did she ever visit you and your dad in jail?" He asked.

" No, that bitch never did, as soon as dad was arrested she went MIA until now." She said as they parked in front of a beautiful penthouse.

"Do you want to interrogate her?" He asked helping her with her bags.

"You've got a point there." She said as they entered the house.

"She might be a suspect." She added.

"Well, I would be stating with you for a while, if that's, okay," Fidel said.

" There's no need, I would be fine, I'm a big girl," Britt added.

"Chief's orders baby, show me my room." He smirked as they walked up the sstairs.

"Hi, you must be my neighbour." A sexy man said holding cookies and standing behind Myra's door. He had moved in before and was going round to greet his neighbours.

He was mesmerised by Myra's beauty. She wore a black tank top with blue bum shorts that hugged her figure. Her hair was held up in an updo. It was her day off from work so she was just relaxing at home, it wasn't as if she had somewhere else to go.

“Yeah, I’m Myra Reynolds and You?” She smiled.

“I’m Byrant Grey.” He smirked.

“Nice to meet you, Grey.” Myra blushed.

“The pleasure's mine love." He winked handing the cookies over to her.

“Would you mind if I came in?" Bryant asked Myra before she shut the door in his face.

“Erm, um--" Myra awkwardly said not able to form any reasonable words. She didn't know this man that well and she just met him a couple of minutes back.

Can I trust this man? She pondered over the decision she was about to make.

“I won't bite love, I'm just bored and need some company." He stated.

“Fine, try anything stupid and I'm throwing your ass in jail." She told him as she opened her door wide enough for him to enter.

“Such a lovely place," Grey added looking around. The interior decor of her house was simple, homely and beautiful.

“Thank you, so you from L.A?" She asked making small talk.

“No, I just moved in from Massachusetts." He said following her into the kitchen.

“Hot chocolate?" She asked.

“Um, I'm good." He said.

“Massachusetts is a nice place." She said.

“Ah, I see. So, you're a lawyer I guess." Bryant said making her feel uneasy.

How did he know I was a lawyer?

Has he been sent by someone to harm me

Am I in some kind of danger?

These questions run in her mind.

“Earth to Myra, " He said.

“Um, yes I am, how did you know that?" She asked.

“Well for starters, the award seated on your shelf is a giveaway. It says best lawyer 2020 award." He said as she heaved a sigh of relief.

“You kinda look pale, have a seat." He helped her to the couch.

“T-thanks." She stuttered.

“You're welcome." He added.

“So, since you know much about me, what do you do?" Myra asked feeling better. Bryant had brought her a cup of hot chocolate with marshmallows floating at the top and a plate of the cookies he gave her earlier.

“I'm a chef, I run a restaurant. I just opened one here in L.A. " He told her.

“That's why these cookies taste so gooood." She moaned.

“Thank you," He smiled.

“Your welcome, you have to teach me how to make them." She lightly punched his arm.

Chloe returned from her shop tired. There was a crowd at her shop when she headed for work this morning. She was glad she didn't have to struggle for customers as other cafés and bakeries did.

“Hey baby," Zara said through the phone.

“Hi Ma, how's the vacation going?" She asked her.

“It's going better than I expected it to be, I'm enjoying myself out here.

“Enjoy Ma, you deserve it. I love you." Chloe said.

“I love you too, I gotta got there's a sexy hunk coming my way." She added.

“Ew, Ma...have fun with your sexy hunk." She laughed hanging up.

Zara had retired from babysitting for the Daniels, she needed to take a break and enjoy life. She had been busy working for them that she forgot to live her own life after her husband's passing.

As much as Jay didn't want her to leave, he understood her, she sometimes called to see how he and his family were fairing. He was like that son she never had.

Home sweet home. Chloe thought to herself as her best friend and roommate Claudia emerged from her room.

“And there goes my me-time." Chloe murmured.

“I missed you too bestie, " She said as she clearly heard what Chloe said.

“Nightshift?" She asked Claudia dropping her bag on the couch.

“Yeah," She said moving her fork around her plate.

“Are you okay Claudia?" She walked towards her friend.

“It's just, I'm tired of being alone, no offence, you're a great friend and all but I need a man in my life, someone who could share my interests with, my life, have fun times together, I'm tired of being alone." She poured her heart out to her friend.

“Aw, it's going to be fine Claudia, you're going to find the one just for you, give it time. Who knows he's already searching for you." Chloe added making her friend smile.

I hope so Chloe, I y does. Claudia thought to herself taking a bite from her mac and cheese.

4.

Hey, don't stress too much, we'd get to the bottom of this, no one would get hurt," Fidel assured Britt.

"I hope so, this is just stressing me out, I'm exhausted." She truthfully told him.

"I know they cool ice cream place perhaps it can cheer you up." He suggested.

"How old am I, five?" She sassed.

"I'm sorry, I just---"

"Its fine Fidel, I'm craving ice cream, let's go." She stuck her tongue at him as they headed out.

"Zhavia darling, I'm glad you could make it." Jose Miguel said in his sexy Spanish accent.

"The pleasure's mine Jose and this place is gorgeous." She smiled at him.

"Don't mention it." He added holding her hands as she blushed. She took her seat as she stared into his gorgeous baby blue eyes.

"A penny for your thoughts mi amor?" Jose Miguel asked.

"Um- er, urggh." Zhavia struggled to make meaningful words making him burst into laughter. She covered her face with her hands as her face turned rosy.

"Don't be shy Zhavia, I don't bite." He took her hands off her face.

Daya set her stuff beside her as she lay a blanket on the sand and was about setting her beach umbrella, but it wasn't working. She groaned in frustration as a man approached her.

"Can I help?" He asked.

"Yeah, sure," She rubbed her hands around her neck. The man looked so familiar, he looked like someone she saw ages ago the man she fell in love with, the father to her daughter, Mindy.

" Chaz?" She called as he turned to look at her.

"Daya?" He said in surprise. Daya sat on her mat in disbelieve, she just couldn't understand anything at that moment.

"Daya..." Chaz said softly sitting beside her.

"You left." She managed to say after a while.

"Daya, you know it wasn't my fault, I had no choice." He defended himself.

“You could have called, you left us alone." She added.

“Daya, I lost your number." He added.

“You could have checked me in Facebook or Instagram!" She yelled.

“I-i, damn, it didn't cross my mind to do that." He told

“We didn't matter to you if we did you would have looked me up." She quietly added.

“Come on Daya, you know that's not true." Chaz raised his voice.

“How long have you been back from Africa?" She inquired.

“Its been five years now." He bow his head.

“5-5-5 years and you didn't search for us, you didn't bother checking on your daughter?" She sobbed.

“I did, I came to your old home, they told me you relocated with your mom after your dad died, I went to your workplace they didn't know where you guys had gone to. Heaven knows I tried." He took her hands in his.

“Where's my baby girl?" He asked.

“She's no longer a baby you know, she's in the university now." Daya smiled.

“Really?" He asked making Daya roll her eyes.

Nolan sat on Kayla's bed texting and scrolling through his news feed as She lay on his laps also lazily scrolling through hers. He was playing with her hair absent-minded.

“Kay, Logan's pulling mi hair." The three-year-old toddler said as her lips quivered.

“Aaaw, such a cutie," Nolan said picking her up.

“Logan, Lex, in here now," Kayla called the boys as they walked into her room.

“What did I say about pulling Lois's hair?" She stood with her hands on her hips.

“But-but---"

“No buts, say sorry." She told them.

“Sowwy sissy." The boys said adorably.

“So adorable" Kayla cooed hugging them both. Her parents had gone out on a date and that was the only reason, Nolan was allowed in her room. If her dad was home there was no way he'd allow him into his princess's room.

“Who's up for some cartoon?" Nolan asked.

“Me!" They raised their tiny hands as they descended down to the lair. Yhup! Narcia and Reign thought it wise to build a lair for their kids, so if they had friends over they could all hang out there.

“...so now here I am." Jose Miguel told Zhavia how he ended up in L.A.

“Such a touching story." She said as she held her heels in her left hand while they walked on the beach. After their meal at the restaurant, they decided to go take a stroll on the beach.

“Your name, Zhavia is a Spanish name you know, your grandma or great grand uncle a Spanish?" He asked her.

“Oh no, no my parents were just obsessed with Spanish names, they named me Zhavia and my twin brother Xavier." She chuckled.

“Oh, you have a twin?" He inquired.

“Yeah, yeah I do." She smiled at him taking his hands in hers, it felt homely. They sat at the shore watching the sunset.

“It's beautiful," Zhavia said after a while.

“Just like you princessa," He said as Zhavia turned her face to his. He kissed her unawares. She tasted like bananas and smelt like pineapples.

“Thanks, babe for helping me babysit them." Kayla pecked Nolan on his lips making Reign scrunch his nose in disgust.

“I'd see you at school tomorrow," Nolan spoke up.

“Alright drive carefully." She chuckled at her dad's reaction. If looks could kill, Nolan would be six feet underground by now.

“Cut the girl some slack Reign," Narcia added as they took the kids upstairs.

“But what did I do?" He asked.

“You almost killed Nolan with your looks." Narcia chuckled.

“That was fatherly instincts." He defended.

5.

“Ethan, Aiden, Dad, dinner's ready!" Aly called from downstairs where she helped her mom. Footsteps were heard descending down the stairs. Courtney looked at her husband in admiration, he looked sexier as he aged and those glasses made him more handsome.

The twins had grown fast. It was like yesterday that Courtney gave birth to them. She smiled as she dished out dinner for her family.

“Dad! Mason's being annoying." Kaia whined as she descended the staircase. Kaia and Aiden were in the same grade, Ethan and Mason were also in the same grade in middle school. Ethan and Aiden were a few months older though.

”Dad, she's lying she's just being a spoilt brat!" Mason yelled after her.

“Dad!" They both yelled frustrating Zaid.

“What?" He asked rubbing his temple.

“Where's Ma?" Mason asked.

“In the kitchen, go bug her." He smiled mischievously.

“Ma!" They yelled again.

“Damn it, Zaid Peterson!" Anya cussed. She knew it was her husband that had put them to this.

“Yes, love," Zaid said entering the kitchen.

“I hate you." She said putting the brownies into the oven.

“You know you love me, I know you care

Just shout whenever and I'll be there You are my love, you are my heart And we will never, ever, ever be apart ” Zaid sang off-key.

“Dad!" Mason called.

“What?" Zaid answered.

“Your singing sucks!" He yelled back making Anya burst into laughter.

“Tell him, Mason!" Kaia added.

“Hey,” Fidel said to Britt who had curled up in a ball on the couch. Her house had been raided as well so she had been taken to her dad’s secret apartment only her knew about. She smiled up at Fidel and squeezed his hand.

He squatted before she caressed her cheek’s

“Its going to be fine Britt, I think you should go on a leave for a few days while we search for the perpetrators,” Fidel suggested.

“No, no I won’t be fine staying home alone while you guys go out there.” She stubbornly said.

“It may be dangerous Britt, ” He argued.

“With all due respect Fidel, I was in this before you came along, and who says they can’t figure out my destination, I’m going and that’s final, I’m not answerable to you after all.” She rudely said as Fidel got up and walked to the window.

He wasn’t going to fight with a woman, her words stung deep and he had gotten her point.

Mental note, stop meddling in her affairs. He thought to himself walking up to the guest room. As much as her words stung, he wasn’t leaving her all by herself.

Myra and Zhavia sat in the restaurant waiting for their meal. The waiter set a plate of Grilled country bread with Roma tomatoes, olive oil, garlic and basil before them as their appetizer. “So, what’s new?” Zhavia asked her friend.

“Well, apart from work, I’m seeking for love and attention. It’s kinda sad when I get back home tired and my apartment is all quite, no one to welcome me home. That sucks. Xavier probably must have moved on I gotta do same.” She said to her friend.

”You’re right, I’ve been seeing someone, Jose Miguel a sexy Spanish hunk.” Zhavia dreamingly described.

“That’s wonderful Zhavia!” Myra happily said to her friend.

“Thanks.” She replied as Bryant arrived at the table with 30-minute crispy beef and Shiitake noodles and then the waiter followed with two plates.

“Hey ladies., Bryant said as Myra looked up at him. The voice sounded oddly familiar.

“I didn’t know you owned this place.” She said as he served them.

“Well, now you do.” He grinned.

“Zhavia, meet Bryant my neighbour and friend, Bryant, Zhavia my best friend.” She introduced.

“Nice to meet you, Bryant.” She smiled at him.

“The pleasure's mine love, enjoy your meal ladies.” He said walking away.

“OMG, he’s hot!” Zhavia exclaimed.

“Zhav, shhh!” Myra shushed her friend. Bryant had already heard what Zhavia said and smirked at her comment.

“He's sexy and cooks well.” Myra dreamingly added taking a bite from the meal.

“Girl, you better grab that sexy man fast before some hoe does,” Zhavia told her friend.

“Hahahahaha, you never change Zhav.” Myra laughed. She knew her friend was right.

“I will Zhav, but baby steps.” She said patting her stuffed tummy. The waiter brought dessert to their table a few minutes after their meal.

“Could you, erm, package the dessert for us?” Myra asked.

“And could you get us the bill?” Zhavia also asked.

“The meal was on the house Ma'am, just give me a moment so I could package this for you.” He walked off as Myra turned to meet Bryant’s eyes.

Why didn’t you let us pay for the meal? She mouthed as he smirked at her.

“Thank you, ” Zhavia said taking her dessert.

“I feel like I’m going to explode.” Myra laughed as they wobbled out of the restaurant like penguins.

“It was fun catching up you Zhavia.” Myra added as she dropped her at home.

“We sure would do this next time, maybe a double date?” She asked.

“Its a date.” Myra responded as she drove off.

“So what have you been up to these years, any businesses or companies?” Daya asked him.

“Well, I opened a fashion boutique.” He said to her .

“That’s wonderful, well I ended up as a judge.” She told him.

“That’s wonderful, I named the boutique Chayaz.” He told her. Chayaz was their ship name way back in high school. She thought he would have forgotten about it long ago.

“You-you remembered?” She questioned shocked.

“I never forgot love.” He said.

“So, when do I get to meet Mindy?” He asked her.

“I’d have to give her a heads up first Chaz, let her know before you meet her if that’s okay with you.” She suggested.

“I get you Daya, I'd wait until she’s ready.” He smiled rubbing her hands.

6.

Stace and Mindy arrived at the bonfire. The party had already started and it was in full swig. It was Stace's fault they were late to the party. She said she'd rather be fashionably late than go early to the party, and that was how they got there late.

“Hey Stace, lets go...Stace?” Mindy called as she realised her friend was no longer by her side.

Typical Stace. Mindy said to herself.

“I might as well have fun on my own.” She said to herself as Vince hugged her from behind. She knew that cologne. She had grown fond of it as well.

“Hey bestie,” She said turning to face an incredibly hot Vince smirking at her.

Her favourite song “New Flame by Chris Brown” starting blasting through the speakers as she stepped in the middle and started to dance the moves to the song.

“There can be one only you And baby, God could never make two And I know you came here with your crew But I promise you that it feels like it's just us two

Oh, I don't know what you had planned to do tonight But I just wanna be the one to do you right We're standing here looking at each other, baby, eye to eye And I'm hoping that you're thinking about leaving with me tonight

Who said you can't find love in a club? Cause I wanna tell them they wrong Come on, just baby, try a new thing And let's spark a new flame You gon' be my baby Love me, love you crazy Tell me if you with it Baby, come and get it Maybe try a new thing And let's spark a new flame

I can't believe you came here all alone, baby girl, where's your lover? Oh, it don't really matter cause I got ways to get to know you better Baby baby, baby baby, let's make what we got here last forever Girl, cause I don't wanna let you go, never

Oh, I don't know what you had planned to do tonight Girl I just wanna be the one to do you right, right We're standing here looking at each other, baby, eye to eye I hope that you're thinking about leaving with me tonight

Who said you can't find love in the club? 'Cause I wanna tell them they wrong Come on, baby, try a new thing And let's spark a new flame You gon' be my baby Love me, love you crazy Tell me if you with it Baby, come and get it Maybe try a new thing And let's spark a new flame

Homeplate, world series, sour nigga sliding in her huh Baby, I'm a boss, I'm talking George Steinbrenner Panamera, Yogi Berra, my two-seater Derek Jeter Got more stripes than all these

niggas Babe Ruth balling in a Beamer Collar on my Polo, kisses on my necklace All my diamonds watching, now my watches getting jealous Smoking on a bomb in my autograph LeBron's Yeah, she told me I'm the one, that's when I only hit it once

Said you can't find love in the club? 'Cause I wanna tell them they wrong Come on, just baby, try a new thing And let's spark a new flame You gon' be my baby Love me, love you crazy Tell me if you with it Baby, come and get it Maybe try a new thing And let's spark a new flame

Vince joined her as they danced together with the crowd cheering them up. She had learnt the dance moves way back in high school with Vince anytime they were bored.

“That’s my bestie!” Stace cheered from the crowd. Mindy chuckled at the voice of her drunk friend but concentrated on her moves in order not to make a mistake. The song ended as a lot of people congratulated the dance duo.

“I never had no one I could count on I've been let down so many times I was tired of hurtin' So tired of searchin' 'Til you walked into my life

It was a feelin' I'd never known And for the first time, I didn't feel alone You're more than a lover There could never be another

To make me feel the way you do Oh, we just get closer I fall in love all over Every time I look at you

I don't know where I'd be Without you here with me Life with you makes perfect sense You're my best friend You're my best friend

Oh yeah, you stand by me And you believe in me Like nobody ever has When my world goes crazy

You're right there to save me You make me see how much I have And I still tremble, when we touch And oh the look in your eyes When we make love

You're more than a lover There could never be another To make me feel the way you do Oh, we just get closer I fall in love all over Every time I look at you

I don't know where I'd be Without you here with me Life with you makes perfect sense You're my best friend

Ooh ooh, you're my best friend Uh huh, you're more then a lover There could never be another Make me feel the way you do

Ooh, we just get closer I fall in love all over Every time I look at you I don't know where I'd be Without you here with me

Life with you makes perfect sense You're my best friend Ooh ooh, you're my best friend (my best friend) oh yeah Oou oou oou, you're my best friend (My best friend) (Oou oou oou, my best friend)

“Care for another dance?” Vince asked as a much slower song played. My best friend by Tim McGrew played as everyone found themselves a dance partner.

“I’d love to.” She said as Vince took her hands into his. He drew her closer to him lowering his hand to her lower back. His cologne filled her nostrils but that wasn’t what bothered her but the sparks that moved through her body as they danced.

Someone is falling in love. Her conscience teased.

Shut up you! She retorted.

“Fidel?” Britt called knocking on his door. She felt guilty for what he said to him earlier when she knew he only wanted to help.

“Yeah, ” He opened the door leaning by it. He had just had a shower since his hair was wet. He was bare chested and wore black joggers that hang loosely around his well-toned waist.

“Um, I well-toned if you were hungry.” She said trying not to look at his arbs or run his hands on them.

“You could order pizza, and a large coke.” He suggested.

“Okay.” She said walking off.

“Call me when the delivery guy gets here.” He called after her.

7.

“Hey Chloe!” Claudia said as she happily entered her shop. “Hey roomie, you seem happier today, what’s up?” Chloe asked her friend.

“Well, I was going on a morning walk to clear my head and sulk more about my single life. I had plugged in my headphones and then a young man tapped me only shoulders.” She paused as Chloe served a customer.

“Go on.” She urged her.

“And then….Omg, that’s him!” Claudia pointed to a young handsome man in a long coat who was behind two people before getting to the counter.

“Act cool Claudia.” She told her friend as she served the two people in front of the man.

“Hi, what can I get you?” Chloe asked him.

“I’d like a, Claudia?” He said spotting her beside Chloe.

“Hey, Rex .” She smiled at him making Chloe roll her eyes at how cheesy they were becoming.

“I thought you were a nurse?” He asked vetting out of the line.

“I am, this is my friend's café and I just came to see her.” She replied.

“Okay, no work today?” He asked again.

“I’m on the night shift tonight.” She told him.

“That’s nice then, we would meet at the hospital tonight then, Nurse Claudia.” He added getting his coffee and buns then walking off.

“You work in the same hospital?” Chloe chimed in.

“Yeah, he’s the new radiologist.” She sighed making Chloe chuckle.

“Ma?” Kayla called entering the house.

“In here baby girl.” She called from the poolside as Kayla walked towards her.

“Anything the problem?” She asked as Kayla sat on her laps.

“So, you know Nolan and I have been going out for a while now and um, it’s our 6month anniversary next week Saturday. Well, we both haven’t had sex since we started dating and um…” She trailed off as her cheeks turned rosy.

“You want to have sex with him and you wanted to ask me if it’s okay?” She completed the question for her as she nodded.

“Baby girl, if you’re ready for sex, go for it. But please use contraceptives.” Narcia said as they climbed the staircase to her room. She handed her a pack of condoms and packs of pills.

“For the pills, if you take it on the first day of your period, your good to go. But if you wait until after your period, you’d have to wait seven days before having sex.” She explained.

“Okay, mom.” She said.

“But in the case of forgetfulness, I would advise you to take the pill, maybe excitement can make you forget to use a condom.” She advised.

“Thanks, mom, you’re the best,” Kayla said as she walked off to her room. Her period had started that very day so she took a pill.

“Are you done with your shift?” Xavier asked through the phone. He was done with his work but was waiting for Kass to close from work so they could go home together since they were spending the night together.

“I’m done.” She responded picking her coat.

“Good, wait for me outside I'd be down in a jiffy.” He ended the call as he picked his coat and car keys. He locked the office and then took the escalator down. The building was almost empty, except for those who were working overtime and those who had meetings. He greeted the security man on duty and then walked to his car. He backed up from the parking lot and then met Kass by the exit. He honked his horn signalling her as she joined him in the car.

“Why were you standing so far away?” He asked as he stopped at the red light.

“ I didn’t want to seem lost, standing ad the entrance of the building, so I decided to stand at the exit.” She smiled at him as he chuckled.

“Sooner or later, they’d find out we’re going out so get used to it babe.” He smiled loosening his tie.

Kass and Xavier arrived home. She helped him with his briefcase up the stairs as he parked his car and then entered the house locking the door behind. He entered the room to find Kass wearing her bathrobe heading into the shower.

“Hey, wait for me.” He said taking off his clothes to reveal hi perfect body. She entered the bathroom with her cheeks red as a rose. Xavier locked the bathroom door as Kass dropped her robe revealing her beauty.

Xavier walked closer to her running his hands over her body making her respond to his touch. She turned on the shower just as Xavier took his boxer shorts revealing his long heavy manhood. She intentionally dropped the soap in front of her. She knew he was just inches away from her. She bent down to pick the soap as her soft ass rubbed against Xavier's manhood making him groan in pleasure.

He moved an inch closer, just as he rolled on a condom and then penetrated through her making her moan in ecstasy.

"Hey Axel, Anya." Narcia greeted her friends as she joined them on the table in the cafeteria.

"Hey, girl, had a rough day?" Axel asked.

"A very hectic one." She sighed.

"Tell me about it," Anya said, interested.

"Nothing interesting, just a young man ranting about how his wife has changed and all. But from the whole story, he's at fault and needs help but he's not seeing reason with that. I've been trying to convince him to start a session with me, where we meet and talk, but the dude says no." She added taking a bite from her lasagna.

"I can't imagine the stress on your face while you were talking to him, hahaha." Anya laughed.

"I miss being a teenager, where there's no much worry," Axel added

"I miss hanging out, everyone seems busy and grown-up," Narcia said.

"Me too, being grown up is too tiring." Anya sighed as they continued with their meal.

Jay stood watching his wife and daughter bake. He was happy to see those smiles on their faces. He wished his command dad were alive to see their grandbabies.

Their souls continue to rest in peace. He thought to himself as he walked into the kitchen.

"What's cooking?" He asked his wife hugging her from behind.

"Brownies, cookies and muffins." Aly answered.

"It smells real good in here." Jay added as Courtney chuckled.

"Mom, dad can I go to Frankie's for a sleepover tonight?" She gave them the puppy eyes. Her parents were a bit protective of her because of what happened to her a few years back.

"Who's going to be there?" Jay asked as his fatherly instincts kicked in.

"Me, Frankie and other female friends from school." She answered fingers crossed.

“Fine, you can go but stay safe,” Jayden told her.

“I hope Axel and Isla would be home to keep an eye on you girls,” Courtney added.

“Yea, they will,” Aly said as she runs off to her room.

“Now where were we?” Jayden asked kissing his wife.

8.

“Did the brat get the warning?” Dora Coleson, Britt's mom asked the men she had sent to eliminate her husband.

“By now she would have gotten the message loud and clear.” The man said.

“Good, now I can get my money.” She smirked smoking a cigarette.

She had wanted to withdraw some money from her husband’s account but, she was told the only way she could get access was when her husband was dead. That was no problem for her because she never really loved him anyway, getting him out of the way was a simple job for her.

I’m gonna be rich. She said to herself.

“Look, my bitches all bad, my niggas all real I ride on his dick, in some big tall heels Big fat checks, big large bills Front, I'll flip like ten cartwheels Cold ass bitch, I give broads chills Ten different looks and my looks all kill I kiss him in the mouth, I feel all grills He eat in the car, that's meals on wheels (woo!)

I was born to flex (yes) Diamonds on my neck I like boardin' jets, I like mornin' sex (woo!) But nothing in this world that I like more than checks (money) All I really wanna see is the (money) I don't really need the D, I need the (money) All a bad bitch need is the (money) I got bands in the coupe (coupe) Bustin' out the roof I got bands in the coupe (coupe) Touch me, I'll shoot (bow) Shake a little ass (money) You get a little bag and take it to the store (store, money) Get a little cash (money) You shake it real fast, you get a little more (money) I got bands in the coupe (coupe) Bustin' out the roof I got bands in the coupe (brrr) Bustin' out the roof (Cardi)

I gotta fly, I need a jet, shit I need room for my legs I got a baby, I need some money, yeah I need cheese for my egg All y'all bitches in trouble Bring brass knuckles to the scuffle I heard that Cardi went pop Yeah, I did go pop (pop) That's me bustin' they bubble I'm Dasani with the drip Baby mommy with the clip Walk out Follie's with a bitch Bring a thottie to the whip Is she fine or she thick, goddamn Walkin' past the mirror, ooh Damn, I'm fine (fine) Let a bitch try me, boom Hammer time, uh

I was born to flex (yes) Diamonds on my neck I like boardin' jets, I like mornin' sex (woo!) But nothing in this world that I like more than checks (money) All I really wanna see is the (money) I don't really need the D, I need the (money) All a bad bitch need is the (money) I got bands in the coupe (coupe) Bustin' out the roof I got bands in the coupe (coupe) Touch me, I'll shoot (bow) Shake a little ass (money) You get a little bag and take it to the store (store, money) Get a little cash

(money) You shake it real fast, you get a little more (money) I got bands in the coupe (coupe) Bustin' out the roof I got bands in the coupe (brrr) Touch me, I'll shoot (bow)

Bitch, I will pop at your pops (your pops) Bitch, I will pop on whoever (brrr) You know who popped the most shit? (Who?) The people whose shit not together (okay) You'da bet Cardi a freak (freak) All my pajamas is leather (Uh) Bitch, I will black on your ass Wakanda forever Sweet like a honey bun, spit like a Tommy gun Rollie a one of one, come get your mommy some Cardi at the tip-top, bitch Kiss the ring and kick rocks, sis (uh) Jump it down, back it up (ooh, any) Make that nigga put down 2K I like my niggas dark like D'USSÉ He gonna eat this ass like soup (any)

I was born to flex, diamonds on my neck I like boardin' jets, I like mornin' sex But nothing in this world that I like more than Kulture All I really wanna see is the (money) I don't need the D, I need the (money) All a bad bitch need is the K, K, C (woo!)

Money (Money) (Money) (Money) (Money) (Money) (Money)

Dora sang along to the song twerking in her living room as she took a sip of her whisky.

“I’m living life bitches!” She exclaimed to no one in particular.

“I gotta get myself some D, I deserve it after a good job done.” She turned off her music as she walked to her room to prepare herself for the club.

I finally got rid of that dude, sorry Britt but a woman's gotta do what she gotta do, hahaha. She laughed to herself.

“Night club and some D, here I come!’ She exclaimed stepping into the shower washing her body clean from the alcohol, she had consumed earlier.

9.

It was the sixth month anniversary of Nolan and Kayla, so far the night was going well. Nolan had set up candlelit dinner up in the triplets treehouse. Marcia had allowed him do that since Reign had travelled on a business trip. They were going to spend the night up in the tree. They didn't want any disruptions from anyone.

"This is beautiful," Kayla said. She had been on the pill since the beginning of her period until now. So she was sure, she was safe.

"I'm glad you like it." Nolan took her hands as the opened the roof of the treehouse with and automatic remote. They lay watching the stars sparkle up the beautiful sky.

"Happy sixth month anniversary, " Nolan said handing her a necklace and a charm bracelet.

"Show it up in the lights." He said to her as she did same. As the light reflected on the necklace, it showed a poem engraved on it. It read ;

"My heart speaks softly, through reminiscing of past times and the kiss of your seemingly honey-lips in the future. Your essence rampages like a wild horse galloping to find a fresh stream of water on a scorching summer day. Your love triumphs because of your commitment and zeal for life.. And because you encompass my love everyday…

Last night was the best night of my life. I can't wait until we become man and wife. Then we wouldn't be making love in sin. We could let our love flow within. I love the taste of your sweet tender kiss, This I don't ever want to miss, The way you hold me, oh, so tight, You make everything seem just right. I'm so happy that I have you. My love for you is so very true. So for now I will let the thought go, Cause I just wanted you to know That I love you so much my sweetheart I don't ever want us to be apart

I love you from head to toe And more than you'll ever know. It hurts when you are sad, And makes me sad when you are mad. I know we fight every now and then, But please know I will love you until the end. I just know you are the one for me, And the only one there will ever be. You are the one I want to spend my life with, To call my wife and to share a kid. I will never tell you the words goodbye, And I will love you till the day I die. If I was to pass on before you do, I will be waiting at the gates of heaven for you.

I will love you, Not starting with Your skin or Your organs or Your bones: I will love madly first, Your naked soul."

"Thanks love!" She squealed hugging him tightly.

“You deserve it and more, much more.” He smiled taking her hands as they closed the roof and stood up.

“Care for a dance?” He asked .

“I’d love that.” She smiled as Love is patient started to play from his laptop.

“For love is patient

and love is kind

love is not jealous

love is not easily provoked

love is not proud

it’s not unbecoming

love does not boast

and love does not seek its own

For love is patient

and love is kind

love is not jealous

love does not boast..”

They danced together as Kayla rested her head on Nolan's shoulders. She took her head off as the music ended and stared directly into his eyes. He leaned in and captured her lips in a soft but passionate kiss. He swooped her in his arms and carried her to the bed.

“You sure you want this?” He asked.

“I do.” She responded as he kissed her more passionately this time.

“Detective Coleson, what are you doing here?” The chief of police asked as she entered the office.

“Morning to you too, Chief.” She tapped him on the shoulder as she walked to her desk.

“Fidel?” The chief called demanding explanations.

“I tried to stop her, but she was having none of it, so I let her come along.” He shrugged as the chief rubbed his temples.

“Fine, any leads on the murder and vandalism?” He asked walking towards Britt's desk.

“Well, we have a suspect.” He added.

“Who?” The chief asked again.

“Dora Coleson, my mom. It’s time I paid mama dearest a visit.” Britt added.

10.

“Vince?” Mindy said shocked to see her best friend in her apartment.

“Sorry, I came here so early. I need your help.” He said with puppy eyes.

“What do you need our help with?” Stace said coming out of the kitchen with a bowl of cereal and sitting on the floor just a few inches away from Mel and Vince.

“There’s this girl in my English class. She’s so pretty and down to earth and I think I…” He trailed off.

Mindy felt her heart shatter into a thousand pieces as her friend and roommate gave her a sad smile. She knew how much she liked Vince, but here he was having a crush on another lady.

“Have a crush on her?” Mindy asked painfully.

“Yes, I do.” He sheepishly admitted.

“What’s her name?” Stace asked.

“Her name is Danica.” He said. They couldn’t say anything bad about her because she was actually a nice person and down to earth as Vince explained, that made it hurt more, if she were to be a mean bitch, they could have convinced him against it.

“Have you asked her out yet?” Mindy asked.

“No, that’s why I am here.” He sighed.

“Okay, I know you have her number, so ask her if you could hang out at KFC or a coffee shop, and then see what she says.” She told.

“If she says yes?” He asked.

“Dumbass you tell her the time you would come pick her up.” Stace said.

“Why do I got to pick her up? Why can’t we just meet at the venue?” He asked.

“You are one big jerk, it’s a first date and a first date you gotta pick the lady up.” Mindy added.

“Okay, okay, thanks. I would tell you how it went.” He said happily walking out the door and Stace locked it behind him as Mindy burst into tears she had been holding up for long.

Mindy picked up the phone after wiping her face dry.

“Hey mom.” She said.

“Hi baby, are you okay, you sound as if you were crying.” Daya said.

“No, no it’s just a stuffed nose.” She lied.

“Okay, I have some news, I don’t know how you’re going to take it.” Daya added.

“Are you pregnant or getting married?” Mindy asked as her mom laughed.

“I’m not pregnant, I may consider getting married.” She said.

“What do you’re an mom, what about dad?” She asked walking into her room.

“Mindy, your dad is back and he wants to meet you.” Daya dropped the bomshell waiting for Mindy to protest or tell but what she did surprised her.

“OMG, Dad, I would be glad to meet him. I can’t wait.” She said excited. Her mom had told her everything when she was younger. She had no cause to hate her dad because he hadn’t done wrong to her.

“Really?” Daya asked.

“Yeah mom, is he there can I talk to him?” She asked.

“Sure.” Daya said handing the phone over to Chaz.

“Hey baby girl.” He said through the phone.

“Dad, I’ve been yearning to hear your voice and to finally meet you.” Mindy said through the phone.

“I miss you too baby girl, I can’t wait to see you.” He told.

“Okay, how about, I come home this weekend?” She asked.

“That’s a great idea sweetheart,” Chaz said.

“Okay then, I would see you both during the weekend. I gotta go I love you both, bye.” She hang up.

“Your mom?” Stace asked.

“My mom and Dad.” She smiled.

“I thought you didn’t know him, so how come?” She asked.

“He came back to town, I can’t wait to see him and no, I’m not mad at him. Circumstances made it that way.” She told her friend.

“I’m happy for you love, at least you can get a distraction.” She said to her friend.

“Yeah, I would be leaving this Saturday by the way.” She told him.

“Enough of me, how far with you any crushes?” She asked her friend. Of course she did, she was hopelessly in love with the most popular guy in their school, not Vince, eww , no but Devyn Dion. He’s sexy, well -built, intelligent and rude. But she still fell for him. What if he also felt the same way for her?

“Yeah, Devyn.” She said.

“The Devyn Dion?” Mindy asked shocked.

“Yeah, welcome to our crappy lives where we can’t get the guys we love just cause they are way beyond our league.” Stace sighed.

“Tell me about it.” Mindy sighed as Stace sat closer to her.

Vince stood outside Danica's apartment waiting for her to come out. He had called her to tell her he was outside. She told him to wait for a while, she would be out in a jiffy. He checked his time for the third time while tapping his foot on the ground. He was about losing his temper when she came out looking so beautiful melting his anger instantly.

“I’m so sorry for keeping you waiting, I had to do some stuff, I’m really sorry.” She apologized.

“Its fine boo, come on in, our coffee awaits.” She said as he opened the car door for her as she entered. He joined her in the car as he drove off.

“So tell me more about Vince Mathews, how come you don’t associate a lot with the popular crowd, though I see you with them, I see you mostly with Mindy and Stace.” She said sounding like a stalker.

“I guess, you already know much about me, haha.” He laughed.

“Just a little, so tell me more.” She said as he initiated a curve.

“ Okay, I do hang out with the popular crowd at times, but not all times and I ‘ve been best friends with Mindy since high school, we met Stace here and became friends with her.” He told.

“That's cool, but a guy as hot as you, you definitely need to hang out with Devyn and the rest.” She said as they got out of the car.

11.

Britt stood in front of the pulpit reading her late father's tribute. She searched through the crowd to see if she would find her mom, but to no avail.

Where the hell was the bitch? She thought to herself. As if on cue, Dora entered the church majestically. She wore a long black dress and a scarf on her head, with black sun glasses, and her black bag paired with 6-inch stiletto heels. She sat at the very front where her daughter could see her very well.

She had been able to cash the money from her husbands account to hers, unfortunately, Mr. Coleson had no will, this Dora had access to a lot of his properties, except those in L.A. she left those for her daughter since she wasn't interested in them.

"*My dad was my hero and best friend since I was a child, I could say I didn't have the best training, because of a lot of this I did when I was a young teenager, made stupid mistakes that landed me in jail. But yet still, dad was there, he loved me nevertheless and I did same. We bonded much in prison as well, but it's unfortunate he's here no more, it's unfortunate he's not here to see his baby girl has changed."* She paused looking at the crowd after eyes landed on an uncomfortable Dora.

"May your soul rest in peace dad, and wherever you are. I hope you're with me. Until we meet again." She dropped the microphone on the podium and walked to her seat with was two chairs away from her mom.

"Does anyone else have something to say?" The priest asked looking around and waiting for someone to mount the podium.

"I do." A woman the same age as Dora walked from her seat to the front. Dora froze as she saw the woman, she thought the woman had died, or that was what she was told.

"I know you're all wondering who I am?" She asked.

"Well, I am Inez Coleson, biological mother to Britt Coleson and ex-wife to Adrian Coleson." The woman said shocking everyone.

"Well, I'm just here to pay homage to my ex-husband and nothing else, I'm just pained at how Adrian let a woman wreck our blissful marriage." She said.

"Adrian, rest in perfect peace." She said as she walked back to her seat. His casket was carried outside and lowered into the trench that had been dug.

May your soul, rest in perfect peace. Britt murmured.

She hurried after Inez before she sat in her car and drove off.

“Ma’am,” Britt called as Inez stopped in her tracks. They both had similar features. The same eye and hair colour, their noses to looked the same. Inez was glad she could finally see her daughter or even talk to her. It had been year’s she last saw her.

“Yeah, how may I help you?” She asked.

“Can we talk?” She asked her.

“Of course, come on in.” She opened the door as Britt sat inside.

“Are you my mom?” She voiced out.

“Hmmm, I am.” She rubbed her temple.

“Then, how come you never showed up until now?” She asked.

“It’s a long story dear.” Her mom said.

“Hey, you seem stressed are you okay?” Kass asked Xavier as he walked through the door.

“I’m just tired and hungry, how was your day?” He asked kissing the side of her head.

“It was good.” She smiled.

“I’d be upstairs taking a shower, be down in a bit,” Xavier said as he climbed up to his room to freshen up.

Mindy and Stace arrived in L.A quite early in the morning, they had intended to spend the whole weekend before heading back on Sunday. One would have asked where Vince was. Well he doesn’t hang out with them anymore, he was most at time with Danica and the popular group, so they didn’t spend time with each other that much as they used to do so.

The girls took a cab from the airport to Mindy’s house. She was excited to finally meet her dad, after how many years?

The cab parked in front of their house as they paid the driver off and headed towards the house. Mindy rang the doorbell waiting for her mom or dad to answer.

“Coming.” Daya said as she rushed to the door. She opened it to reveal her daughter Mindy and her friend Stace, whom she had met a couple of times.

“Mindy.” Daya said hugging her as she ushered them inside.

“Where’s dad?” She asked as Chaz walked into the room form the kitchen.

“Dad?” She said as she dropped her luggage and jumped into his arms hogging him right.

“Hey Kiddo,” He said as she continued to hug him.

“She looks like you love.” He said referring to Daya.

“My bad, Dad meet Stace, my best friend and roommate, Stace , my dad.” She introduced as they shared a quick hug.

“Okay, how ‘bout you girls go upstairs and freshen up.” Daya said.

“Okay mom, we would see you later.” Mindy said as they climbed upstairs to her old room. Nothing had changed, just that it looked cleaner than she left it.

“Cool room.” Stace added.

“Thanks.” She said as Stace looked around seeing pictures of Mindy and Vince, from their childhood until high school, there was one that had the three of them in it. It was taken a couple of weeks when they started college.

“Hi, Vince.” Mindy looked at her friend as she put her phone on loudspeaker for her to hear

“Mindy, I came over to your apartment but it’s locked, where are you and Stace?” He asked.

“We are in L.A.” She told.

“L.A. for what? Is everything alright?” He asked.

“Everything is fine, I just came to see mom and dad.” She told him.

“Okay, wait did you say dad? Your dad came back?” He asked more questions.

“Yes, dad is back.” She smiled at that thought.

“But why didn’t you girls tell me, I would have tagged along.” He chuckled.

“We didn’t tell you because ever since you started going out with Danica, the bitch in disguise, you have ignored me and Stace, why am I even talking to you in the first place?” She inquired as it dawned on her.

“Because, I am your best friend.” He shrugged.

“No, best friend’s don’t do what you did, they don’t ditch each other just cause they got a new hoe.” She raised her voice.

“You know what, you are just jealous, jealous that I wanted her and not your plain old self. I should have stopped being friends with you and that bitch called Stace, tell her Devyn would never like a bitch like her.” He said as he struck a nerve.

"Hey jackass, Danica doesn't love you, all she wanted is what you've just done, after getting heartbroken and all, don't dare show your face in our apartment, because if you dare so, only God knows what I would do to you, idiot!" Stace huffed as she dropped the call. She was so mad at Vince right now and wished he was standing before her.

No need to cry over spoilt milk, Mindy.

You knew he never loved you, all you needed was confirmation and you just had it.

It's time to move on. Mindy told herself, there was no way she was going to cry over Vince. He had hurt her enough and today was just the height of it.

Enough is enough! She thought.

"Hey, are you okay?" Stace asked her best friend.

"I'm fine, time to move on from Vince." She smiled as she hug her friend.

"That's my bestie." Stace added.

"Girls!, it's dinner time." Chaz called from downstairs.

"Hey, what can I get you?" Chloe asked the handsomely dressed man in front of her.

"I'd like a coffee, black, no milk and one sugar and then some scones." He said in his sexy British accent.

Chloe took his order as he sat at the table waiting for it.

"Here's your order." She set the food before him as she was about leaving he called after her,

"Chloe, can you join me since there's no other customer in here?" He asked as she checked her surroundings, and has was right. He was the first customer she had that morning.

"Sure." She said sitting down.

"So you aren't from New York City right?" She asked making small talk.

"No, I'm from London, I just relocated to New York City." He smiled at her, revealing his dimples.

"Since you already know my name can I know yours also?" She asked.

"Okay, I am Marcel." He smiled at her.

"Marcel, as in Marcel in Originals?" She raised her eyebrows at him.

"Hahahah, very funny but no, I'm not that Marcel." He laughed.

"I know, I was just teasing." She smiled as they continued with their conversation.

12.

" So why didn't you do anything why didn't you fight for your marriage?" Britt yelled at her mom.

"Dear, I tried, I really did. He being a powerful business man, and having lawyer friends didn't help. God knows I tried to take you along with me but her refused. He filed for a restraining order against me." She sadly smiled.

So all along, I've been living with my dad's mistress thinking she was my mom?

No wonder she never cared about me, she only takes it when dad was around. Britt pondered.

"Thanks for the information mom, I think I know who is behind his murder." She told.

" You are welcome, hope to see you when all of this is over." She said.

"Don't worry, Ma we will meet, see you later." She stepped out of the diner and headed to her car. This was too much information for her to process.

"Hey, are you alright?" Fidel asked her.

"Its just...yeah I'm fine. I'm just trying so hard to process this information." She recounted as he started the car and drove off.

There's more than to what meets the eye. Could it be that Dora killed him?

But why? These questions run through Britt's mind. Fidel sensed her stressed and stopped at her favourite coffee shop.

"Why are we here?" She asked as he opened the door.

"You need caffeine in your system, now come on." He dragged her out as she reluctantly close the door of the car and followed him.

"Hi, " Devyn said to Stace as he stood in front of her locker. She looked at her friend in shock communicating with their eyes.

What is he doing in front of my locker? Stace asked Mindy.

I don't know, you ask him. He's looking at us in a weird way. Mindy replied.

"Oh, hey." Stace answered as Mindy walked to hers.

"I guess you're wondering what I am doing here?" He inquired.

“Of course, I don’t get to see the most popular guy in front of my locker everyday.” She rolled her eyeballs at him.

“Feisty and Sassy, not bad.” He smiled showing his white pearlies.

“Um, if you don’t mind I have a class to attend and I don’t want to be late, so i'd see you around.” She tried to convince him.

“We have that class together, so I will walk you if you don’t mind.” He insisted as he walked to class with Stace and Mindy.

What the hell is going on? Mindy asked herself as they got to class.

She spotted Vince with Danica seated at the back, their tongues down each other’s throats. She felt her breakfast rising up to her mouth. She shook the thought out of her mind and found herself another seat since Devyn had taken hers.

“You can sit here.” Beth, one of the bubbly girls said.

“Thanks Beth.” She grinned.

“ Don’t mention it, it’s fine.” She smiled just as the lecturer entered the hall.

Mindy walked past Vince and Danica in the hallway. She put her headphones on and proceeded to her locker. She wasn’t ready for, that devil in disguise's rants, just not for today...Maybe some other time.

She could feel Vince's gaze on her back but she didn’t turn, as much as she wanted to do so, she decided against it. She slammed her locker shut and then hurried off to the next class. Stace had a class with Devyn, which he had dragged her along with him. She was happy for her friend at least her crush had noticed her.

Or was it a dare? She couldn’t help but wonder. Stace was a pretty girl, no doubt about it. But Devyn suddenly coming after her out of the blue after all these years was definitely strange.

A tall handsome hunk walked passed her hurriedly bumping into her shoulder and walking into the class.

Klutz. She murmured to herself entering the class and sitting at her usual spot.

“Kayla?” Narcia called entering her room. She was lost in thoughts of her own.

“Hey Mom.,” She turned towards her.

“Are you alright? Is anything the matter?” Narcia asked concerned.

“It’s just that, we are about graduating in a few months and Nolan and I are going to different universities…” She trailed off.

“You’re wondering if long-distance would work for you guys, and scared he might meet another girl and leave you?” Narcia voiced out the 18-year-old’s fear.

“Yes,” She sighed.

“Kay, if You both love each other that much, just give long distance a try, if it works out fine and if it doesn’t, you tried but it wasn’t meant to be. Enjoy the moments together, as it lasts. When you get to that bridge you both would cross it.” She advised.

“Thanks Mom, you’re the best.” She said feeling better as she hugged her.

“You’re welcome, love.” Narcia hugged her tight.

Ah, young love. Narcia reminisced.

“Its been long we hang out like this.” Zaid said as they sat outside Axel's beach house. Zaid, Reign, Axel and Xavier had travelled just to take a break from work. Sean wasn’t able to make it due to some issues beyond his control.

“Yeah, very long. So Xavier what’s up with you, no woman yet?” Reign teased.

“Actually, there is she's called Kass.” He smiled when he mentioned her name.

“He’s blushing,” Axel teased.

“Ouch!” Axel rubbed the back of his head as Zaid grinned.

“It’s nice to hear you're in the dating scene again, it’s high time you, Zhavia and Myra get partners and settle you aren’t getting any younger.” Zaid advised.

“Who are you and what have you done to Zaid?’ Xavier questioned as the guys burst into laughter.

“All jokes aside, he’s right. You, my man, need to get married.” Reign poked his chest.

“Aye, aye. By the way, how’s the fam?” Zaid asked his best friend Reign.

“They good, I am happy Narcia came back into my life.” He sighed recalling their breakup and issues surrounding it.

“You know you’ve got Britt to thank right? You won’t have been with her if she didn’t crack open her skull.” Axel said sipping his beer.

“Yeah, I actually regret treating her bad, I let Britt's lies get to me, meanwhile she was the culprit all that while.” Reign answered staring into the skies.

“I heard she’s now a police, sorry a detective.” Xavier spoke up.

“Good for her, it’s great she changed for the better,” Zaid added as they clicked their glasses.

“Myra?” Bryant called as he entered her house.

“In here!” She answered from the laundry room. Bryant followed the sound of her voice which led him to her.

“Hey.” He stood by the door.

“How was work today?” She asked folding the clothes.

“Stressful.” He shrugged.

“Sorry babe.” She smiled.

“What's for dinner tonight?” He loosened his tie.

“Mashed potatoes and steak.” She lifted the laundry basket.

“Nice!” Bryant exclaimed walking out to the room.

Dora was about stepping out of the house as Britt and Fidel met her at her doorstep.

“Um, hi how may I help you?” She panicked.

“We need you at the station for questioning, mom,” Britt told.

“Too bad, I am stepping out for a while, I would come there with my lawyer.” She was about walking away.

“We have a warrant Ma'am and we don’t want to use force on you, so, please oblige,” Fidel added as she walked with them and entered the car. Fidel locked the doors as soon as they all were in the car to prevent escape.

“Zhavia?” Anya called as she met her friend with Jose Miguel at a coffee shop.

“Oh my gosh! Anya, it’s been year’s I last saw you. How are you doing?” She asked hugging her friend.

“I am fine dear, where have you been?” Anya asked.

“Around, oh, my bad. Meet my fiancé Jose Miguel, Jose Miguel meet my good friend Anya.” She introduced.

“Its nice to meet you Anya.” Jose Miguel shook her hand.

“The pleasure’s mine Jose Miguel, and I am glad she has decided to get married.” She teased her friend.

“The pleasure is mine, I would see you guys around, have fun then!” Anya hurriedly walked off happy for her friend.

“Shall we?” Jose Miguel asked as they exited the shop.

13.

Kayla , Maureen and Nolan had left home for University. Maureen and Nolan were in UC Berkeley, CA and Kayla was in Duke University. Kayla and Nolan had decided to try out long-distance, to see if it was going to work. Within the first months, everything was good and falling in place, but then Nolan changed. He seemed busy for her. Anytime she called him on phone, he seemed busy. He was always telling her "I'd call you back babe", "I am caught up with some work", "I need to rest, later." And whatnots. It had affected Kayla emotionally. She was mostly stressed and unhappy.

Maureen and her boyfriend broke up before they got to the university because she knew long-distance wasn't meant for them.

"Hey, are you okay?" Miranda, Kayla's roommate asked.

"I just don't get it why Nolan isn't answering my calls. We used to be so close together, what happened?" She sobbed.

"Stop stressing yourself out. You could travel to his school to see him and talk things out." Miranda advised.

"Its not a bad I sea, how come I hadn't thought about it?" She chuckled wiping her face.

"Because I am the genius." Miranda teased.

"What's for lunch?" She asked getting up from her bed.

"I was thinking Mac and cheese." Miranda told as they both walked to the kitchen chit chatting.

"Nolan, you need to stop doing this. Kayla's my friend and she deserves much better than this. How would you feel if she did same?" Maureen scolded.

"Maureen, were no longer in high school, she's not here , so allow me have fun, sweet harmless fun. Buh-bye." He walked out on her to his table.

At least I tried, I'm sorry Kayla but he's just a prick, Maureen shook her head and then walked off to her table.

"I've heard there was a secret chord That David played and it pleased the Lord But you don't really care for music, do ya? Well it goes like this: the fourth, the fifth The minor fall, the major lift The baffled king composing Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, hmm

Well, your faith was strong, but you needed proof You saw her bathing on the roof Her beauty in the moonlight overthrew ya She tied you to the kitchen chair She broke your throne and she cut your hair And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Well baby, I've been here before I've seen this room and I've walked this floor I used to live alone before I knew ya And I've seen your flag on the marble arch And love is not a victory march It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Well, maybe there's a God above But all I've ever learned from love Was how to shoot somebody who outdrew ya And it's not a cry that you hear at night It's not somebody who has seen the Light It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah

The song played as Marcel drove Chloe home in a peaceful silence. The events of the night replayed in her head as there was a smile on her face.

“Thanks for tonight, I had fun.” She smiled at him as he dropped her infront of her apartment.

“The pleasure is mine, let’s do this next time.” He said.

“I’d love that.” She smiled waving as he drove off into the night.

A night well spent. She thought as she unlocked the door and entered the house. Claudia was on a night shift that meant she wasn’t back till morning.

Devyn sat at the ice cream parlour with Stace. At first this was a bet, but now he was falling hard and fast for her. It was better he came out clean with it before some big mouth told her about it.

“Stace, there's something you should know.” He sighed.

“What’s up?’ She asked.

“First, when I approached you... It was all a bet. I made a bet with my friends that I could make you fall for me, sleep with you and dump you after. But, after hanging out with you for these couple of weeks, I can’t see myself doing that. You’re sweet, funny, lovable and caring and I think I might be the one for you.” He said to her waiting for her reaction.

“I knew there was something fishy about you approaching me, because Devyn Dion doesn’t do nobodies. So I psyched myself waiting for the worst to happen, as much as it hurts that I was just a bet, I’m glad I heard it from you and not someone else.” She smiled at him.

He looked at her disbelievingly, if it were to be another lady, she would have stormed off and never talked to him again, she was just an angel sent to him from the heavens.

“Are you okay?” She asked after scooping some ice cream from her bowl.

“I am fine, just shocked at your reaction.” He admitted.

“You thought I was going to throw a tantrum right?” She voiced out what she was thinking about.

“Yes, yes I was.” He smiled.

“Nope, I’m glad I heard this from you. And I know people are going to try and separate us with lies, from your past and so on. Everyone has a past, if you want me to know about it, I am all ears. If not, we move on.” She added taking his hand. She was tired of moving in and out of relationships because of lies, betrayals and heartbreak. She wanted this one to last a lifetime, she knew it was past experiences of her exes or herself that caused those relationships to die. But now, she wasn’t going to let that happen. All she needed was trust, and love and she was good to go.

As if on cue, Vince, Danica and some other popular guys entered the ice cream parlour. She met Vince's gaze as he immediately looked away making her shake her head. Danica saw what had transpired between the two ex- friends. She smirked and pulled Vince to their booth.

“Looks like we’ve got company.” Stace told as they reached them.

“Hey guys,” She greeted fake grinning.

“Hi, what do you want?” Devyn responded uninterested.

“We just came to say hi, oh Stace where's your little side kick Mindy?” She asked chuckling.

“ Oh Barbie, she’s out on a date with Kieran Sullivan.” She smiled as her face turned pale. She knew Danica had been hopelessly in love with Kieran for a while now. Since she decided to be a bitch, taking Vince from her and Mindy, well Kieran found Mindy and liked her. She was glad her friend was going out more.

Danica stormed off with Vince in tow. She took her purse from their table and left the parlour.

“Good riddance to bad trash.” Devyn added.

14.

“I had fun Kieran, thanks for asking me out.” Mindy smiled showing her dimples.

“Its nothing, I was bored and just needed the company, thanks for being a great company.” He smiled fully.

“Ah, the bad boy smiles.” She chuckled making him smirk.

“You are not seeing that smile again.” He groaned.

“Okie dokie Mr Grumpy pants, I’d see you tomorrow, drive safe.” She told as he sat in his car.

“Make sure you double lock your door. Goodnight.” He answered as she waved him.

“I hope you enjoyed your night?” Stace asked startling her.

“I did, it was fun.” Mindy sighed sitting on the couch beside her bestfriend.

“I’m glad you did, guess whom we run into today?” She asked turning on the tv.

“Who?” Mindy questioned not ready to do a guessing game.

“Vince and Danica.” She told.

“Oooh, what did they want?” Her interest piqued.

“As usual, Danica was being a bitch until I told her you were out on a date with Kieran. She automatically shut up and walked out of the ice cream shop. Vince also stood there with an unreadable expression on his face.” She added.

“Ha! It serves them right.” She chuckled.

“I'm happy you’re over Vince, to think you guys would have ended up together.” Stace recalled.

“Its fine Stace, I also thought same. The cliché best friends falling in love, but I guess that wasn’t our story. But I didn’t think he'd become a douche bag.” She stood up from the couch.

“You're right.” Her friend agreed.

“I am heading to bed Stace, I have an early class tomorrow. Goodnight babes.” She pinched her cheeks and headed to her room.

She deserves this newly found happiness, I'd kill Kieran if he messes up. He better not is shagging that Danica bitch, else he is doomed! Stace said to herself turning off the tv and retiring to bed herself.

“I missed you bestie!” Maureen hugged her friend at the airport

“Missed you too, how’s school?” She asked as she entered Maureen's car.

“Stressful.” She muttered as Maureen drove off to campus. She knew and understood why her friend was in such a sour mood. Nolan had changed and she never thought he would behave that way towards her, considering how they were in high school.

What went wrong? She wondered as she parked her car in front of her apartment. Kayla froze in her tracks when she saw her high school sweetheart locking lips with another girl.

Maybe he isn’t the one.

He wouldn’t do this right?

Kayla fought back the tears as she walked towards them ignoring Maureen's calls.

“Nolan?” She called.

“What do you want, I’m kinda--- Kay-Kayla?” He turned to face her in panic and shock.

“This is why you’ve been ignoring me and my calls?” She asked.

“Well, what did you expect? You went to another university, how did you expect me to cope?” He tried playing victim.

“Oh, hell no. You don’t get to play victim. I did nothing wrong. We were fine before. You and your greedy self couldn’t stick to me and you wanted other girls. Well, feel free to do so. Because, this is over. I am done with this toxic relationship. It’s done and dusted. See you never.” She said as she walked towards Maureen.

“Let's go Maureen, I’m exhausted I want to rest. Besides I’d be taking the next flight back tomorrow.” She smiled at her friend as they headed inside her apartment.

Perhaps, we are better off without each other. Nolan murmured and walked away

“That was pretty intense, are you okay?” Maureen inquired offering her a glass of juice.

“I don’t know, maybe I am not, maybe I am. I should have seen this coming, but as Estelle says:

We all make mistakes

You might fall on your face

But you gotta get up!

We all make mistakes

You might fall on your face

Don't ever give up!" She recited.

"He would come to his senses, but it's going to be too late for him. He's gonna wish that he could :

Turn back the hands of time

Then my darlin' you'd still be mine

If I could turn,

Turn back the hands of time

Then darlin' you, you'd still be mine

Funny,

Funny how time goes by." Maureen cheered her up.

"What's for lunch I'm starving." Kayla voiced out.

Cf ""How 'bout some Mac and cheese, then we could get ice cream later and blubber about how guys are jerks?" Maureen asked.

"Sounds like a good plan. I am so in!" She exclaimed as they walked into the kitchen.

"We could have ended things like you and Anthony did before coming to the university. We all thought it would work out somehow, only to be disappointed." Kayla added as they sat in front of the television set watching Frozen II and eating their food.

15.

“Why has Dora been on the run for two weeks straight?” Fidel sighed rubbing his temple.

“Cause, her fake ass is guilty and why would she ant to kill dad, what did he ever do to her?” Britt said setting their coffee on the table.

“Making money.” Fidel answered.

“ Her tracker blinked again, she’s here in L.A.” Britt said looking at the screen. They had kept a tracking device on her which she was unaware of.

“Dad, what brings you here?” Mindy said opening the door for Chaz. She had dropped her address for him before coming to school.

“Um, I was in Durham, NC for a meeting, I decided to come say hello after that.” He replied.

“Okay, it’s good to have you here, how’s mom doing by the way?” She asked as he smiled.

“She's doing good. She sends her regards as well.” He got married to Daya a few months ago after they rekindled their love. He had discussed with her about adopting a second child and Daya was in agreement with it.

They agreed on adopting a 7-year-old boy since they already had a girl, that’s Mindy.

Daya's ovaries were weak to mother another child and that’s why they had settled for an adoption.

“Kiddo, there’s something we need to discuss,” Chaz said as they sat on the kitchen stool.

“Is everything alright?” She asked slightly worried.

“Everything is fine.” He assured her.

“Okay, go on then.” She added relieved.

“Your mom and I have been trying for a baby, but it hasn’t been easy. The doctors said she has weak ovaries.” He sighed.

“I am sorry to hear about that dad.” She squeezed his hands right.

“Thanks sweetheart. Well, we got talking and we decided to adopt a 7 year old boy, since we already have a baby girl and that’s you.” He finished waiting for her response.

“Daaad, I’m not a baby no more and I think adoption is not a bad idea. Having a little brother would be fun, I hope he’s adorbs.” She giggled.

“He is, he’s so cute.” Chaz grinned.

“You went to the orphanage already?” She inquired.

“Yes we did, we went to make some inquires and that’s where we met him. Daya fell in love with him instantly.” Chaz smiled.

“Im happy for you both Dad, when is he coming in? And what’s his name?” She questioned.

“Thanks baby girl, we would go back to complete the paper work next Monday, and leave with him. So he would be with us next Monday.” Chaz told as Stace came out of her room rubbing her eyes.

“Hey Chaz, when did you get here?” She asked.

“A couple of hours ago.” He sipped his hot cocoa.

“I'm getting a baby brother.” Mindy announced to her friend.

“Is Daya pregnant?” She happily asked.

“Nope, mom and Dad are adopting.” Mindy told.

“I love you so much

I hate you so bad

Said "I don't miss you"

You know that's not true

Boy I want you bad

I hate you so much

But I love you oh so bad

When I say I'm leaving

I don't mean it

I just want you back

Got my hopes up

When we broke up

That we would get back, always said that

No matter what we would be together

I want you back now more than ever

Feels like we on a roller-coaster

You take me up high then take me down low

There go them games boy, you think you're clever

You try to play me it's so whatever

Some days we on the same page

(Oh-oh)

Then we go our separate ways

(Oh-oh)

And our love's down the drain

(Oh-oh)

Then I'm calling you again

(Oh-oh)

Some days we on the same page

(Oh-oh)

Then we go our separate ways

(Oh-oh)

And our love's down the drain

(Oh-oh)

Then I'm calling you again

I love you so much

I hate you so bad

Said "I don't miss you"

You know that's not true

Boy I want you bad

I hate you so much

But I love you oh so bad

When I say I'm leaving

I don't mean it

I just want you back

(La la la la la la la)

Tell me a way we can make this better

Boy I want you back now forever

We can base it all on this week together

Boy I want you back now forever

When you call me, and I hang up

And I call right back and you pick up

Phone dies cause we talk for hours

Can't resist, you got super powers

Only want me when you're lonely

But when I want you, you don't know me

You text me I say "I'll hit you later"

Really I wish you would come and save me

(Oh-oh)

Some days we on the same page

Then we go our separate ways

(Oh-oh)

And our love's down the drain

(Oh-oh)

Then I'm calling you again

(Oh-oh)

Some days we on the same page

(Oh-oh)

Then we go our separate ways

And our love's down the drain

(Oh-oh)

Then I'm calling you again

I love you so much

I hate you so bad

Said "I don't miss you"

You know that's not true

Boy I want you bad

I hate you so much

But I love you oh so bad

When I say I'm leaving

I don't mean it

I just want you back

(La la la la la la la)

Tell me a way we can make this better

Boy I want you back now forever

(La la la la la la la)

We can base it all on this week together

Boy I want you back now forever

(La la la la la la la)

Tell me a way we can make this better

Boy I want you back now forever

(La la la la la la la)

We can base it all on this week together

Boy I want you back now forever."

Aly and Frankie sang along to Keke Palmer's Love You, Hate You. They were in Aly's room watching rags and munching on some junk food.

School was on vacation and Frankie had gone to spend the holidays at Aly's house. They were going to sophomore year, when school reopened.

"Charlie is so dreamy and why is Finn acting like a douche?" Frankie asked.

"He is a douche in the movie, see how he acts like a five year old child. That's why Kadee likes Charlie." Aly explained as they continued with their movie.

16.

Oh, a silly hat. A silly hat.

I wear it on my head because that's where it's at.

And I know it looks as funny as can be.

Oh, a silly hat. A silly hat.

I wear it on my head because that's where it's at.

And I like it 'cause it feels like part of me.

It may be too big or it may be too little.

It might even have a hole in the middle.

And it might be colored red or blue or green.

And if someone saw my silly hat,

That I had on my head because that's where it's at.

They'd think it was the funniest thing they'd seen.

Oh, a silly hat. A silly hat.

I wear it on my head because that's where it's at.

And I know it looks as funny as can be.

Oh, a silly hat. A silly hat.

I wear it on my head because that's where it's at.

And I like it 'cause it feels like part of me.

It may be too big or it may be too little.

It might even have a hole in the middle.

And it might be colored red or blue or green.

And if someone saw my silly hat,

That I had on my head because that's where it's at.

They'd think it was the funniest thing they'd seen.

And I like it 'cause it feels like part of me.

There was a hole (there was a hole)

In the middle of the ground (in the middle of the ground)

The prettiest hole (the prettiest hole)

That you ever did see (that you ever did see)

And the green grass grows all around all around

And the green grass grows all around

And in this hole (and in this hole)

There was a tree (there was a tree)

The prettiest tree (the prettiest tree)

That you ever did see (that you ever did see)

And the tree in the hole

And the hole in the ground

And the green grass grows all around all around

And the green grass grows all around

And on this tree (and on this tree)

There was a branch (there was a branch)

The prettiest branch (the prettiest branch)

That you ever did see (that you ever did see)

And the branch on the tree

And the tree in the hole

And the hole in the ground

And the green grass grows all around all around

And the green grass grows all around

And on this branch (and on this branch)

There was a nest (there was a nest)

The prettiest nest (the prettiest nest)

That you ever did see (that you ever did see)

And the nest on the branch

And the branch on the tree

And the tree in the hole

And the hole in the ground

And the green grass grows all around all around

And the green grrass grows all around

And in this nest (and in this nest)

There was an egg (there was an egg)

The prettiest egg (the prettiest egg)

That you ever did see (that you ever did see)

And the egg in the nest

And the nest on the branch

And the branch on the tree

And the tree in the hole

And the hole in the ground

And the green grass grows all around all around

And the green grrass grows all around

And in this egg (and in this egg)

There was a bird (there was a bird)

The prettiest bird (the prettiest bird)

That you ever did see (that you ever did see)

And the bird in the egg

And the egg in the nest

And the nest on the branch

And the branch on the tree

And the tree in the hole

And the hole in the ground

And the green grass grows all around all around

And the green grass grows all around.

“This is torture.” Reign said as he met his toddlers dancing to Barney and friends.

“Hey guys, you wanna watch something else, like um Moana? Frozen? Kongfu Panda?” He tried convincing them to change the channel.

“No, we want Barney!” Lex added as his sister and brother agreed with him while watching their show.

“This is torture!” He exclaimed walking into the kitchen to his wife.

“We would talk later honey, it’s going to be fine. You would get through this. He doesn’t deserve you. Take care.” Narcia dropped the call.

“Who was that?” Reign startled her.

“Kayla.” She responded.

“Where are my triplets?” She asked changing the topic.

“In the hall, dancing to ;

Oh, a silly hat. A silly hat.

I wear it on my head because that's where it's at.

And I like it 'cause it feels like part of me.

It may be too big or it may be too little.

It might even have a hole in the middle.

And it might be colored red or blue or green.

And if someone saw my silly hat,

That I had on my head because that's where it's at.

They'd think it was the funniest thing they'd seen.

And I like it 'cause it feels like part of me." He cringed as Narcia burst out laughing. She knew how much her husband hated Barney and Friends. He saw the show as torture.

When Kayla used to listen to it when she was younger, he hated it and always wanted to change the channel but she didn't allow him to. So anytime she started with her Barney and Friends stuff, he picked up his car keys and left her with Nora.

"What's with Kayla, I hope that stupid boy didn't do anything to harm her?" He asked.

"Apparently, he cheated on her right in front of her face, she dropped his sorry ass right there and then." Narcia explained.

"You see why I never liked that boy? He was no good for my princess. I hope she gets past this phase." Reign told.

"She would be fine, she's got Maureen and us. In no time she would be alright." Narcia told.

Squishy, squashy, washy, give your hands a-washy

Squishy, squashy, washy, give your hands a-washy

You can't wear out your skin

So squishy, squashy, wash your hands all clean

Germs are oh so small

(Germs are oh so small)

You can't see them at all

(You can't see them at all)

You can't taste 'em, you can't see 'em

And after you wash, I wouldn't wanna be 'em

So squishy, squashy, wash your hands all clean

Squishy, squashy, washy, give your hands a-washy

Squishy, squashy, washy, give your hands a-washy

You can't wear out your skin

So squishy, squashy, wash your hands all clean

You can't wear out your skin

So squishy, squashy, wash your hands all." They screamed their guys out.

"Please make it stop!" Reign cried as they turned up the volume of the tv singing to another song.

"I can't take this Barney torture no more, I am outta here!" Reign exclaimed running out of the kitchen and heading upstairs to get his car keys.

Narcia held her tummy laughing so hard at her husband that she began to tear up.

Aly lay on her bed reading "To all the boys I've ever loved by Jenny Hann". She seemed so engrossed in the book as she read on;

[An extract from the book read by the character has been omitted from this edition.]

Aly slammed the book shut after bookmarking the 8th chapter. She had heard her mom cry for help from their room.

What was going on? She asked herself rushing to her parents room.

"Mom, is everything alright?" She panicked seeing her dad on the floor.

"Call the ambulance Aly, and please hurry." Courtney sobbed holding her husband.

In a few minutes later, the ambulance arrived and took Jayden on a stretcher.

Aly knew she had to stay back and watch her younger siblings as her mom went along with her unconscious dad.

She took her siblings to her room and turned her laptop on for them to watch cartoons. She tried to continue with her book but her mind drifted far away, wondering what was happening to her father.

17.

“But Jay never had cancer, what was happening? How come he suddenly began growing cancer cells?” Narcia asked Anya who was Jay's personal doctor.

“He did have cancer cells, they were in hiding and it’s now that they’ve made themselves visible and they are eating him up fast.” She told.

Jayden had been sick for a couple of weeks now and it was two weeks ago that they found out he had Liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer. It begins elsewhere and then spreads to the liver. A closely related cancer is intrahepatic bile duct cancer, which occurs in the duct that carries bile from the liver to the small intestine.

“Even though he’s on drugs, we pray he makes it through to remission.” Anya advised.

“What’s remission?” Courtney asked.

“Remission means that the signs and symptoms of your cancer are reduced. Remission can be partial or complete. In a complete remission, all signs and symptoms of cancer have disappeared.” Narcia explained.

“In his case do you think he can make it through?” Courtney's voice broke.

“I'm not sure about it, because his kind of cancer is deadly, let us keep on praying, maybe a miracle may happen.” Anya assured.

Narcia sat in her chair quiet. Jay was everything she had all these years. He had been there for her when she was facing a hard time. It broke her to see her once vibrant brother laying on a hospital bed battling for his life.

How cruel can life be? She pondered to herself.

Courtney walked into her husband’s room and sat beside him. He was connected to different tubes at the same time as he slept. She took his hands in hers sobbing silently to herself.

He had been her rock and shield. Been there for her when everything seemed wrong and now he was battling for his life. A thin line between death and life.

“Like a small boat

On the ocean

Sending big waves

Into motion

Like how a single word

Can make a heart open

I might only have one match

But I can make an explosion

And all those things I didn't say

Wrecking balls inside my brain

I will scream them loud tonight

Can you hear my voice this time?

This is my fight song

Take back my life song

Prove I'm alright song

My power's turned on

Starting right now I'll be strong

I'll play my fight song

And I don't really care if nobody else believes

'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

Losing friends and I'm chasing sleep

Everybody's worried about me

In too deep

Say I'm in too deep (in too deep)

And it's been two years I miss my home

But there's a fire burning in my bones

Still believe

Yeah, I still believe

And all those things I didn't say

Wrecking balls inside my brain

I will scream them loud tonight

Can you hear my voice this time?

This is my fight song

Take back my life song

Prove I'm alright song

My power's turned on

Starting right now I'll be strong

I'll play my fight song

And I don't really care if nobody else believes

'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

A lot of fight left in me

Like a small boat

On the ocean

Sending big waves

Into motion

Like how a single word

Can make a heart open

I might only have one match

But I can make an explosion

This is my fight song

Take back my life song

Prove I'm alright song

My power's turned on

Starting right now I'll be strong (I'll be strong)

I'll play my fight song

And I don't really care if nobody else believes

'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

Know I've still got a lot of fight left in me." Courtney softly sang to her husband.

How was she going to take care of the kids alone ?

How would Aly and the twins feel?

Even as at now, they are broken at his condition. Courtney wiped a stray tear off her eyes as she picked up her bag and walked out of the ward.

"This is the FBI, open your door." The police said banging on Dora's door. She had been on the run since her husbands' burial but she wasn't lucky today. She didn't know how the police got to find out she was in town.

Before she could say a word, the door burst opened and the cops rushed to get a hold of her handcuffing her.

One of the cops took the files she had scattered on her bed and then took them along with her to the police station. She remembered a poem she chanced across by Chandra S in November,2019

It read ;

Dead Ends

You asked:

"How you came to your dead end?"

How did I?

Perhaps too much of chasing butterflies,

or maybe running barefoot in hot, avid pursuit

of those looping, berserk kites

adrift like airborne serpents

in delirious evening skies.

Then there were those chimeric rainbows -

sedately fantastic illusions of dream jobs,

and loving homes with ambrosial glows.

They all eventually led to the same prosaic end,

for, any-which-way, all roads wound up

at appropriately conventional

and consequently beaten bend.

Till the chase went on, it was the same old story -

All fulfilled ambition promptly subject to

increasingly falling marginal utility.

After all of it was said and done,

every little crown lost and won,

the agony of the question still remained

no last words arose,

to which to exclaim and say Yay!

Life had me in its hook. See:?

while this is what it meant to be free: !

Fossilized in my den, I stared wistfully

at life's irrevocable loose ends

and this is how my friend

I arrived at my proverbial dead ends.

Truly she was at a dead end. Everything she fought for was about to be taken from her. She didn't feel like running no more. She was ready to face any punishment that awaited her in the prison cells.

Britt stood there looking at the woman she once called mom, in the interrogation room being questioned about her actions. She hoped she had no hand in what she was being accused of. But she was wrong. Everything she was accused of turned out to be true. She was guilty of all charges against her.

Britt balled her fists as she listened to the devil she once called mom. The woman whom she loved dearly despite her shortcomings.

“Detective Coleson, I’m so sorry you had to go through this trauma, you would be fine.” Fidel assured her. Fidel had been crushing on Britt for a while now but He wanted everything to end first before proposing.

18.

Xavier and Zhavia had set their wedding date to be on the same day and their friends couldn't be any happier. They were glad that the twins decided to get hitched.

Zhavia and Kass run around for dress fittings, cake testing, venue bookings in addition to their work.

"I wish the days get closer so we can finally get married. These errands are so tiring." Kass sat in the coffee shop rubbing her sore feet.

"Urgh, tell me about it. It's so, so tiring. I just want to lay in bed and sleep." She yawned as the waitress got them their cup of coffee.

Myra and Bryant had gotten married a couple of weeks back. Her brother Green was present for the ceremony with his family and she couldn't be any happier. She was happy and at the same time sad because Jay wasn't present. He was there for her all her life.

How come it was now she had found happiness and was getting married that he fell sick?

How evil and cruel could life be?

What did he deserve to be paid back this way? Myra lamented in her office.

They were all praying he made it through this deadly sickness and came back to his family have and hearty. That's all that they had wanted.

There was a knock on the door as Stace opened it. Her expression turned from happy to angry then to furious.

"What the hell do you want here?!" She fumed.

"I am here for Mindy." Vince arrogantly added trying to walk in as she pushed him back.

"Who's--- What do you want?" Mindy asked equally angry like Stace, perhaps even more.

"I want you back, I want you as my girlfriend. Kieran doesn't deserve you." He boasted.

A cheek of it.

He had the guts to stand in front of her and spew that nonsense?

Who the hell did he think he was? Mindy thought.

"Who the hell do you think you are? My guardian angel?" She fumed.

“You have no right, no right whatsoever to walk into my apartment and demand I be your girlfriend claiming my boyfriend Kieran isn’t good enough for me. You left, you walked out on us remember?” She gestured to the three of them.

“You chose fake ass Danica bitch on us, you let her change you to this. Where were you when I cried myself day and night to bed thinking you would come in through for me? Where were you when I would send notes and countless messages, voice mails and calls for you. Did you answer any of those?” She inquired.

“You threw our friendship out in the trash for some bimbo and now you think you can waltz in because I’m soft. Well, listen here Vincent, you left and I moved on and there’s no way, no fucking way I am letting a toxic person like you in my life no more. I know Danica bitch likes Kieran, you guys can do whatever you want to break is up, like how you set Devyn up making him make a bet to get Stace, use and dump her, whatever you try, boy. THERE. WILL. BE. NO.US.” She finished and Stace couldn’t be any proud of her friend than now.

“You will regret not choosing me.” He added.

“I won’t regret nothing Vincent, now get out and never ever come back.” She slammed the door on his face.

“We've got to file for a restraining order for that guy he’s messed up.” Stace advised.

“I thought so too, let me call mom.” Mindy said dialling her mom’s phone.

“Hey Ma.” She put the phone on loud speaker.

“Mindy, how are you and Stace?” She asked.

“We are fine Daya, but we need you to help us with something.” Stace said.

“I am all ears.” Daya added.

“We need to file for a retaining order on Vince.” Mindy spoke.

“You mean your ex-bestfriend Vince?” She asked. She was with Vince's mother having some coffee.

“Yeah.” Mindy added.

“What did that fool do this time around?” Vince's mom asked. She was aware of all that he had done and the new crowd he was following that was giving him awful advice. She had talked to him severally but you no avail. It’s better he learnt the hard way.

“ He’s acting weird and I have a feeling that he’s up to no good, Mrs Battello.” Mindy voiced out.”

“That child is driving me nuts, don’t worry, mom would file an order soon.” She said dropping the call.

“People love, people leave, people let down

People show up, roll up, people grow up

People move out, people disappear

People don't change, people rearrange

People miss the game, people lose

People try, people lie, can't look you in the eye

People suck, people fuck, people leave their shit behind

People throw up on the carpet, people trip up on the stairs

People laugh, people dare, people scare, people tell you what to wear

People jump, people sink, people float, people think

People fail, people hate what they don't know

People think they're worth nothing, people think they're worth the top

People drop, people love what they know, people think but don't stop

I keep looking in the mirror

'Til I see myself, I see myself, eh

Hey lover, will you blow my cover?

'Cause I'm not myself, I'm not myself

I wake up in the middle of the night

And I look like a stranger in the bathroom light

I, I keep looking in the mirror”

They jammed to Ider's song Mirror.

“Hilda, I thought you might be worried about what Mindy said and plead on Vince's behalf.” Data voiced out.

“He has to learn the hard way Daya, I have talked to him countless number of times but he wouldn’t listen. That Danica of a bitch is a bad influence and has ruined my Vince for me. Getting them a

restraining order from Danica and Vince is the best thing to do. I advice you get a private bodyguard to keep an eye and ears on the ground concerning anything involving the girls." She advised.

"*I'm starting with the man in the mirror I'm asking him to change his ways And no message could have been any clearer If you want to make the world a better place Take a look at yourself, and then make a change Na-na-na, na-na-na Na-na, na-na"*

"I always sang this song as an advice to him, but I guess he wanted to learn the hard way and this is the hard way." Hilda urged.

"Okay, then I would do so right away." Daya told as she picked her phone to make calls.

"Ma, there's someone I would like you to meet, wait let me rephrase that. There are some people we would like you to meet." Chloe said to Zara. She had come to visit Chloe and her friend Claudia for the weekends and then she was going back home.

"Okay, who are they?" She asked as her interest piqued.

"You would soon find out." She said as the doorbell rang and Marcel and Rex walked in after Claudia opened the door for them.

"Have a seat." Chloe smiled as they did.

"Mom, meet Marcel, my boyfriend and Rex, Claudia's boyfriend." She introduced waiting for her mom's reply.

"Finally! I'm proud of you both." Zara said shaking the hands of the guys.

"Ma, no need to be petty about it." Chloe playfully glared at her.

Epilogue.

A few years down the lane, Jayden Daniels had been laid to rest by his family and friends. He fought a good fight trying to battle cancer, but eventually he gave up.

“Forever in our hearts.” Aly sobbed as she dropped flowers unto his grave as they lowered him into the ground. Courtney stood watching the funeral processions. She felt numb. No feelings whatsoever.

Narcia stood by her sister in law, feeling the same way she felt. She didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. She was now an orphan, even though she had married her family had been wiped off. She was the only true Daniel apart from Courtney and her kids. She never envisioned a day where Jay would be no more. A day where he won’t be there to wipe her tears or bring her hot cocoa to help with her nightmares.

“Love is patient, caring. Love is Kind. Love is felt most when It's genuine.

For Love Is Patient

And Love Is Kind

Love Is Not Jealous

Love Is Easily Provoked

Love Is Not Proud

It’s Not Unbecoming,

Love Does Not Boast

And Love Does Not Seek His Own” The priest announced as he was finally lowered into the ground.

“Until we meet again” Green murmured to himself.

Xavier, Myra, Britt, Chloe , Claudia and Zhavia we’re happily married and had started with their own family. Dora was locked up in jail and given a life imprisonment sentence. Britt reconciled with her biological mom before Fidel proposed marriage.

Love is a mystery on it’s own, just as the title says, That thing Called Love.

THE END.