

***JUST US***

***Sinville Series***

***Vol. 1***

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## **Food for Thought**

*“The enemy is not men. The enemy is the concept of patriarchy, the concept of patriarchy as the way to run the world or do things.”-Toni Morrison.*

*“Now they got two little nice statues in Chariot Park to remember the gay movement. How many people have died for these two little statues to be put in the park for them to recognize gay people? How many years has it taken people to realize that we are all brothers and sisters and human beings in the human race? I mean how many years does it take people to see that? We’re all in this rat race together!”-Marsha P. Johnson.*

*“There is an unbroken line of police violence in the United States that takes us all the way back to the days of slavery, the aftermath of slavery, the development of the Ku Klux Klan. There is so much history of this racist violence that simply to bring one person to justice is not going to disturb the whole racist edifice.”-Angela Davis, the Guardian interview circa 2014.*

*“The number one misconception is that everybody in a gang is a mindless killer, just an ignorant, self-hatin’ n\*gga with an uzi runnin’ around killin’ motherfuckers all day. I’m not gonna sit here defendin’ what’s wrong—killing and gangbanging, that’s just wrong. But at the same time, the way that adolescent teenagers get done in these courtrooms, based on, “Oh, he’s a gang member,” so he gets a trial like a terrorist. We’re not the cause, we’re the effect. As gang members, as young dudes in the streets, especially in L.A., we’re the effect of a situation. We didn’t wake up and create our own mind state and our environment; we adapted our survival instincts. Gangbanging is a survival instinct, regardless of how anybody tries to paint it. It’s a lot of, like you said, sensationalized conceptions of what it’s about—lowridin’, fuckin’ bitches, runnin’ amok—but at the same time, it’s a survival instinct first.”-Nipsey Hussle, Lost DJ Booth interview circa 2009.*

## Chapter 1: "Oppress and Suppress"

*"Where a woman rules, a stream runs uphill."*- Ethiopian Proverb

The sound of police sirens and the sight of flashing lights were all too familiar in the Southside of Sinville. Local residents started to crowd around the crime scene. Lieutenant Lenny Sanders exited his white and burgundy patrol car. He was a grey and bearded veteran of the force with a pale complexion, light blue eyes and a slim physique. Sanders watched as his fellow officers pushed the crowd back as they tried to get closer to the crime scene.

"Twenty-five years in this department. Ten years as a lieutenant and yet I'm still here cleaning up monkey shit like I'm a zoo keeper," he mumbled to himself.

"No justice! No peace! No justice! No peace! No justice! No peace!" the local residents chanted.

Sanders began making his way to the crime scene. He stopped when he saw an older Black man staring directly at him.

"What the fuck are you looking at?"

"Fuck you pig!"

Sanders stuck his middle finger up in the man's direction.

“The feeling is mutual!”

Lieutenant Sanders made his way to the center of the crime scene. A Black teenage boy had been shot dead in the chest multiple times. It was nothing Sanders hadn't seen before. He would have to approach Officer Aaron Dale to learn what happened. Everything about the situation was routine, another young Black punk dead. File the paperwork, return to the precinct, and move on with your day. Dale was in his early thirties. He looked like a tanned leprechaun with a military fade, standing only a few inches north of five feet. Sanders thought he had potential. He knew when to keep his mouth shut, like any good cop should. Sanders smile instantly turned into a frown when he laid his eyes on Juanita Cousins. She was questioning Officer Dale about the shooting.

“Lieutenant, how nice of you to join us,” Juanita said with a devilish smile on her face.

Juanita Cousins was a year shy of thirty, but she had already made a successful career out of locking up corrupt cops. She was taller than most men, with a brown skin complexion, short dreadlocks, light green eyes, and a slim figure. Juanita could have been a model, but instead had devoted her life to

locking up corrupt cops in the Sinville Police Department for Internal Affairs. She had locked up more than a few former officers in Lieutenant Sanders' 43<sup>rd</sup> Precinct.

“Are you done speaking with Officer Dale?” Sanders asked rolling his eyes.

“He’s all yours,” Juanita said with a smile.

Juanita began to walk past Lieutenant Sanders when he purposely bumped into her, she turned around and questioned him.

“Was I supposed to feel something?”

“That was just to let you know how hectic things can get out here, you—“

“It’s going to take a lot more than a shoulder bump to stop me.”

Juanita brushed her left shoulder off and walked away from the crime scene.

Officer Dale shook his head. “That Black bitch is going to be a problem.”

Sanders watched her like a hawk before turning around to face Dale.



“She already is a problem,” he sighed.

## CHAPTER 2: “The Best of Frenemies”

*“An intelligent enemy is better than a stupid friend.”*-African Proverb

The sun had just disappeared as Kat and J-King walked into a strip club called “Exxtasy”- Kat was a short, slim, yellow-complexioned woman. Like her cousin J-King, Kat was of half-African-American and half-Puerto Rican descent. J-King had a darker complexion and far thicker body than her cousin. Unlike Kat, she wore her hair in dreadlocks. Kat preferred to wear her hair in four braids. Different as they were, there was a family resemblance, and both were short and in their mid-twenties. As Kat and J-King entered the club, they heard the sounds of YFN Lucci’s “Boss Life” as it pumped throughout the club.

“Yo Jay, coming here was a dope idea!”

“I told you sometimes you have to get out of the crib!” J-King yelled.

The song reached Offset's verse :("60k solitaire I cannot vibe with queers, uh-uh.")-Kat screwed her face up as she glared at the DJ.

“Yo Jay, I’ll be right back.”

“Where are you goin’?”

“I’m a make a song request.”

Kat stormed towards the DJ booth while the song continued to play.

“Excuse me. Can you change the song?”

“Why?”

“That homophobic shit ain’t cool man.”

“Well if you don’t like it then leave!” the DJ hissed.

Kat slammed her green bandana onto the turntable set. Sweat started to drip down the DJ’s face after he caught sight of her bandana.

“Ok, I’m changing the song now. Please don’t hurt me!”

“Thank you,” Kat replied with a smile as she put her bandana in the back of her pocket.

The DJ immediately started playing Young M.A’s “Praktice”-Kat smiled at the DJ before walking back over to J-King.

“What was that all about?”

“I just wanted to request a song.”

“If you say so.”

A stripper by the name of Peaches approached Kat, Peaches was half African-American, half Asian, over six feet tall, and had a chocolate complexion and curvy figure.

“Long time no see baby,” Peaches said licking her lips.

“I’m just out here tryin’ to have a good time with my cousin. Peaches, this is J-King, J-King, this is Peaches.”

“It’s nice to meet you, J-King,” Peaches said with a smile.

“Same here Peaches.”

Kat gently grabbed Peaches’ right hand as she looked her up and down while biting her bottom lip.

“So Peaches, are we goin’ back to my place or yours later on?”

“I’m surprised you got time for me tonight.”

“Baby, I’m just busy all the time.”

“I bet you are busy. Busy fuckin’ all these bird-ass thots out here,” Peaches hissed.

“Whoa! Fall back now! I ain't the police. Ain't no hand cuffin' over here.”

“Whatever, Kat!” Peaches shouted.

“Look, I'll make it up to you tonight. How about after the club we go eat and chill together? What do you say?” Kat asked with a slight smile.

“I'll think about it.”

“Don't think too hard baby.”

Mark was a year shy of forty with light skin, tattoos, a piercing in his right ear, and dreadlocks. Kareem was five years younger. He was chubby and had a high-yellow complexion. Mark waved at Kat once he spotted her.

“Oh shit! What's good with y'all?” Kat questioned with excitement.

“Ain't shit! Just wanted to get out the crib,” said Mark.

Mark gave Kat a hug before they did their Street Disciple Gangster handshake.

“Mark, Kareem, this is my cousin J-King.”

“Nice to meet you,” said J-King.

“Likewise,” Mark replied.

Kareem folded his arms and stood there with a scowl on his face. J-King went to extend her hand out to Kareem. He slapped her hand away.

“What the fuck?” J-King questioned.

Kat began to hold J-King back. Mark held Kareem back.

“Kareem, what the fuck is wrong with you?” Kat asked.

“Your dyke ass should’ve never been allowed in the Street Disciple Gangsters! You ain’t built for this!” Kareem shouted.

“You don’t call any shots! You’re not the big homie, pussy!” Kat spat.

“I wonder what the big homie would have to say about you hanging around a South Side King,” Kareem snarled.

Mark grabbed Kareem as they exited the club.

Kat shook her head “I’m sorry about that.”

“I ain’t stressin’ that. Let’s get some hoes and get this shit jumpin’!” J-King said with a smile.

“Now you’re speakin my language.”

### CHAPTER 3: “Hate in Its Greatest Form”

*“A hypocrite’s hatred is hidden behind flattering words.”-*

African Proverb

It was business as usual at the Sinville Real Estate office. Fred Thomas was sitting down in his office going over files for an upcoming venture that he was working on. An authoritative knock came at the door.

“Come in,” Fred said as he jotted down some notes on his notepad.

“Good morning, Fred!” Taylor hollered as he entered.

“Good morning, Mr. Hall. How are you doing today?”

“I’m doing great. How’s that pretty wife of yours?”

“She’s working hard, just like yours truly.”

“That’s good to hear.”

Taylor sat down in the chair in front of Fred’s desk.

“I came to ask you about that home on Goines Boulevard. Have you found any buyers yet?”

“Not yet. It’s a nice house in a good neighborhood but no one seems to want to buy it.”



Fred sighed deeply as he prepared to give his answer.

“I think it’s because there’s a huge gay and transgender population in that neighborhood.”

Taylor burst out in laughter. Fred started sweating at a rapid pace.

“I thought I was the only one who felt that way,” Taylor replied through the laughs.

“I’m glad that we’re on the same page,” Fred smiled as he started putting away some of his files.

“You know, things went to hell ever since Obama gave the rainbow gang more power, as if they needed it,” Taylor hissed.

“That was the reason I became a Republican. I like how things used to be, how if you were a homo you kept that shit hidden. Now everywhere you turn it’s out in the open or on your TV screen. This gay agenda is making me sick!” growled Fred.

“It’s not natural. A sack and a sack don’t go together and don’t get me started with all of the transvestites,” Taylor snarled.

Fred grabbed his bag after straightening up his desk. Taylor put his coat back on as he stood up from the chair.

“Don’t worry, Fred, that house will be sold soon enough,” Taylor said as he extended his hand out.

“Will do, Mr. Hall,” Fred shook Taylor’s hand as they both exited the office.

## CHAPTER 4: “Staring the Devil in the Face”

*“A warrior fights with courage, not with anger.”*-African Proverb

Juanita was sitting down inside of the 43<sup>rd</sup> precinct’s interrogation room waiting for Officer Dale to arrive. She began to stare at the time on her iPhone. Juanita glanced at the two-way mirror just as the door swung open. Officer Dale walked in with his attorney, who was holding a grey suitcase. Juanita stood up to greet Dale and his attorney Ronald Moon. Ronald was a white man in his mid-fifties who was chubby, short, and so bald that all that was left was a horseshoe of hair around his head.

“Good morning Officer Dale.”

Juanita extended her hand out to Dale for a handshake. He frowned at her hand before sticking his middle fingers up in her face. He then sat across from her. Ronald sat right next to his client.

“I’m familiar with Officer Dale, but who are you, sir?”  
Juanita inquired.

“How rude of me. My name is Ronald Moon, attorney at law.”

Ronald shook hands with Juanita before they both sat down on opposite sides of the table.

“Please state your name for the record,” Juanita huffed as she turned on the video camera.

“My name is Officer Aaron Dale of the Sinville Police Department,” he snarled.

“On March 29th, 2018 you received a call about a robbery at a nearby deli, correct?”

“Yes.”

“What happened after that?”

“As I was driving towards the deli I saw this chubby Black kid holding tons of snacks in his hands. He was running away from the store.”

“Ok, then what happened?”

“I then stopped my police cruiser and jumped out in pursuit of the suspect.”

“What happened next?”

“I told him to freeze and put his hands up. I told him to slowly turn around towards me while I had my gun trained on him.”

“Then what happened?”

“He charged at me. Next thing I know I fired at him until my clip was empty. I was in fear for my life!”

Juanita rolled her eyes.

“How many times did you say you fired your weapon at Darrel Brown?”

“Who?”

“Darrel Brown. That was the name of the young man who you killed.”

Officer Dale shrugged his shoulders. “Oh. I couldn’t recall his name.”

“How do you forget the name of a human being who you killed?”

“What is the importance of my client knowing the suspect's name? That does not have anything to do with him being justified in his actions.” Ronald scoffed.

“I just find it strange that your client can take the life of an adolescent and not at least try to find out what his name was.”

Dale turned to his attorney and shook his head in disgust.

“Are you kidding me? I mean animals like him, they look the same, act the same, walk the same, talk the same. I'm supposed to tell them apart?”

Juanita took a deep breath before continuing.

“So you say that he charged at you, correct?”

“That's correct.”

“Now when he charged at you did he reach in his pockets for anything?”

“Not that I remember.”

“So are you saying that his hands were visible throughout the altercation?”

Officer Dale turned to his attorney. Ronald nodded his head.

“I don’t see why that matters,” said Ronald replied speaking for his client.

“Did he have anything in his hands when he charged at you, Officer Dale?” Juanita repeated.

“Ms. Cousins, I don't see the point in this question. Therefore, if you have no further questions, my client and I will be leaving.”

“That will be all for today,” Juanita said.

Officer Dale stormed out of the interrogation room. Juanita turned off the video camera.

“How do you sleep at night representing a white supremacist like him?”

Ronald stood up from his seat and adjusted his blazer and tie.

“I sleep at night because I know somebody has to do it.”

Juanita shook her head in frustration as she watched Ronald exit the room.

## CHAPTER 5: “Respectability”

*“If you think education is expensive try ignorance.”* - African Proverb

Fred was dribbling a basketball as he played a game of two on two with his friends at the Sinville community center. Jamie a brown skinned, African-American in his mid-thirties was Fred’s teammate. They were playing against their friends Bryan, a white man in his early forties and Hector, a Puerto Rican man in his late thirties. Bryan guarded Fred while Hector covered Jamie.

“Your game is garbage Fred!” Bryan shouted.

“Watch this!” Fred spun around.

Bryan as he drove towards the basket. Hector switched off of Jamie to stop Fred from taking it to the hole. Fred saw Jamie cut towards the basket and whipped it to his teammate. Jamie grabbed Fred’s pass and threw down a nasty dunk.

“Ah!” Jamie yelled in exhilaration.

“That’s what I’m talkin’ about, baby!” barked Fred.

“You got lucky,” Bryan complained.

“It ain’t luck if you got skills,” Fred replied.



“Ooooooooouuuuu!” said Jamie and Hector in unison.

“You know white men can’t jump, Bryan. How many times we gotta go through this?” Fred asked.

“One day I’ll beat you man. Count on it,” Bryan said.

Jamie and Hector were dying of laughter. All of them grabbed their Gatorades from the bleachers before leaving the court.

“You all hear about that cop that shot that kid? What do you think about that shit?” Bryan asked his friends.

“He’s a fuckin’ asshole. These cops constantly shoot Black men unjustifiably because they know they can get away with it,” spat Jamie.

“It’s fucked up, man. Growing up as a kid the cops knew us and our families. They actually took the time to know the community. Now, they just give anybody a badge and a gun and let them do whatever,” replied Hector.

Fred frowned. He couldn’t believe that his friends were taking the side of one of the troublemakers that brought down the community rather than the police who protected it.

“Everyone loves to blame the cops, say it’s their entire fault. What about personal responsibility? If his momma would’ve

raised him right, then that boy's ass would've been inside and he would still be alive today.”

“Why are you saying that?” Bryan asked.

“I hate to say it, but Black people always want to play the victim. If we didn't kill each other every day, then the police wouldn't need to come to our neighborhoods. The cops' job is to protect and serve. Their job is extremely dangerous, especially when they have to deal with all these thugs and gangbangers.”

Jamie, Hector and Bryan all shook their heads. Fred’s friends began to walk away from him.

“Where are you guys going?” Fred asked.

“Away from you!” shouted Bryan.

“Ever since you moved out to the suburbs, it's like you forgot where you came from,” Hector said.

“It's like you're ashamed to be Black. You always defend people who do harm to us and justify the bullshit that America puts us through,” Jamie explained.

Jamie, Hector, and Bryan all left Fred standing by the bleachers as they exited the community center.

## CHAPTER 6: “A Stroll down Enemy’s Lane”

*“When there is no enemy within, the enemies cannot hurt you.”*-African Proverb

Birds were chirping and the sun was shining on the Southside of Sinville. The aroma of Marijuana smoke filled the air in her house as Kat took a pull off her joint. Freddie Gibbs & League of Starz “Colors” was pumping through her stereo.

“This vanilla pre-roll is fire!” Kat shouted as she looked at it.

Kat made her way to the kitchen. She grabbed a bowl and a spoon, rinsed them, then she placed them on the table. After opening the refrigerator, Kat sucked her teeth in frustration.

“Damn! No milk? Now I gotta go to the store and shit.”

A green bathrobe was draped over one of the kitchen chairs and a pair of slippers was under the table. Kat kept them there for convenience in situations just like this.

She put on her bath robe and slippers, then grabbed her bandana and her wallet. It was time to take a trip to the deli.

The deli was only a block away from her home. Kat ambled down the street. A group of young boys were playing a

portable video game system. When one of the boys noticed Kat, he screamed to his friends,

“Kat is coming! Let’s get out of here!” A second later, the group of children scrambled away, eluding Kat’s path.

Kat raised her right eyebrow up as she surveyed her surroundings. She continued making her way to the corner deli. Standing in front of the deli were the “Southside Kings” who were playing a dice game in front of the store entrance while they blasted Reeky G’z “Get on my time” from a portable speaker. The Southside Kings were rivals of the the gang that Kat belonged to. Before moving any closer, Kat tied her green bandana around her forehead. She then marched towards the group.

“Yeah, nigga! I told y'all what time it was. Give me my money!” said one of the members of the Southside Kings.

He picked up his money from the sidewalk. When the Southside King looked up, he saw that Kat was heading towards his crew.

“What the fuck are you doing here, bitch? No Street Disciple Gangsters are allowed over here!”

The other six members of the South Side Kings all stood up straight and fix their eyes on Kat. She stopped dead in her tracks and cut her eyes at the orange bandana wearing gang standing directly in front of the group. Kat grilled each and every member of the Southside Kings. They did the same to her. Parents, knowing what was about to happen, grabbed their children and began quickly running in the opposite direction.

“Nigga, I go where the fuck I want to!” Kat shouted.

“Not on this block you won't!” said the leader of this group of Southside Kings.

Ignoring his boast Kat walked closer to the store. The Southside Kings all stood their ground with their arms folded. Kat cracked her knuckles. Before anything could go down, J-King stepped out of the store with a smile on her face.

“Hey Kat, what’s good with you?” J-King asked.

“I'm just trying to get some milk, but your goons over here are in my way.”

“Step aside y'all and let my cousin walk through.”

The members of the Southside Kings all looked confused. After a second, they stepped aside and allowed Kat to walk through to the deli's entrance. Kat gave J-King a hug.

“What’s good Jay?” she asked with a smile.

“Ain’t shit. What brings you over to our side?” J-King had a similar smile on her face.

“Shit, this is the closet corner store to me so it ain’t like I got another choice.”

“I hear that we’ll have to link up sooner or later” replied J-King.

“Most definitely we’ll go get some hoes and chill.”

J-King held the door open for Kat as she made her way into the store. Once inside, Kat squeezed through one of the two aisles in the cramped bodega. She grabbed a gallon of milk from the refrigerator, and then walked to the counter.

“What’s good Kat?” the cashier asked.

“Same shit different day, ock.”

“That was crazy what you did out there.”

“I’m 7:30, these niggas just don’t know how crazy I can get,” Kat hissed.

“As long as you don't do it in my store or by my store, I don't care.”

“Heard you.”

The cashier rang up the gallon of milk.

“That will be three-fifty.”

Kat went to pull out her wallet. J-King stops her in her tracks.

“This one's on me.”

“Are you sure?” Kat asked.

“Positive.”

J-King took out her wallet and placed a five dollar bill on the counter. The cashier handed J-King her change, and then J-King and Kat exited the store. Kat walked past the Southside Kings without a second look.

“Kat, hit me up later,” J-King shouted.

“I got you and thanks again. I'll see you later.”



“Yo J-King, I know that's your cousin, but that shit makes us look weak,” said the most outspoken member of the Southside Kings.

J-King lifted up her shirt and showed off the gun in her waistband.

“That's my cousin and if anybody don't like it, then come see me!” she snarled.

## CHAPTER 7: “What’s Love Got to do with it?”

*“It’s much easier to fall in love than to stay in love.”*- African Proverb.

Rain and thunder plagued the sky as Fred drove at a slow speed. He yawned but never took his eyes off the road as he pulled into his driveway.

After Fred killed the engine, he dashed towards the front door of his home not wanting to miss the start of his favorite television program; Fred scrambled for his keys and opened the door. Once inside, he hurriedly changed out of his wet clothes and plopped down on the couch. He started to smile. Fred had turned on the television just in time.

“Good evening, I’m your host Ryan West and this is the West Factor. Tonight we’re starting off with the story of Darrell Brown who was shot and killed by Sinville police officer Aaron Dale. First, let me send out my condolences to the Brown family during this difficult time. This could have been avoided if his mother had done a better job of raising him in a proper fashion.”

Fred nodded his head at the television screen in agreement with Ryan West’s rant. The sounds of a turning lock drew his attention away from the television.

“Hey baby. How was your day?”

“It was cool. It would’ve been better if it wasn’t pouring outside.” Juantia removed her wet clothes and boots by the front door.

How was yours, babe?”

“It was okay.”

The two of them tongue kissed for a moment before Juanita’s noticed what was on the television.

“Are you really watching this? He’s talking down to our people all the time just to appeal to white folks.”

Fred sighed loudly as he turned his attention back to the TV screen.

“Why are you always defending these low-life, ignorant, lazy, ratchet-ass people all the time?” questioned Fred.

Juanita raised her eyebrow, shocked by her fiancé’s ignorance.

“So investigating police-involved shootings of unarmed Black and brown people who were shot to death is the same as defending criminals?”

Fred grabbed the remote and turned the volume up to the max. Juanita gritted her teeth before snatching the remote and turning the TV off.

“Why did you do that?” Fred asked.

“I did that because I’m talking to you and your being disrespectful to me!”

“Disrespectful? So because I don't want to argue about some of these illiterate, welfare-abusing, stereotypical-ass baboons that don't know how to act when they are stopped by the police that makes me disrespectful?”

Juanita shook her head . There was nothing she could say to Fred to make him understand. She made a swift dash upstairs and slammed the bedroom door.

“Good, now maybe I can watch my show in peace,” Fred screamed loudly, hoping that Juanita would hear him. He picked up the remote and turned on the television.

Juanita locked the bedroom door, out of breath from rushing away from Fred. It was over. She couldn’t understand how a man could be that brainwashed against his own people. She had to pack everything up and leave. Juanita grabbed all of her folders, her laptop, and her backpack, along with her clothes, shoes, and toiletries, then started to type a text

message. The only thing missing was her cell charger. She started to look around the room for it. When she finally found it, her cell phone began to buzz. Juanita sends a text message on her cell phone. Juanita punched in her pass code and reads the message, then quickly typed her reply.

“Time to go,” Juanita said to herself.

Juanita grabbed her charger and her bag, then stormed out of the bedroom. Fred was snoring loudly while lying down on the couch.

“I’m sick and tired of your sellout ass! You always put Black people down and never try to lift anyone up but yourself !”

Fred slowly woke up, wiping the sleep from his eyes.

“Well, if you feel that way about me then take your ghetto ass back to the projects and defend those scumbags because I won’t!”

“Don’t worry. I will do just that, Uncle Tom!”

“Bye!”

Juanita jettied to the door. She slips on her rain boots and jacket, grabbed her keys, and walked out the front door. Even

though she loved him, it was a liberating feeling to leave. Fred was trying to bring their people down. She was trying to lift them up. There was no way a relationship with an Uncle Tom like Fred could work. Sometimes love wasn't enough.

## CHAPTER 8: “Demons in Plain Sight”

*“Evil prospers because good men fail to act.”*- African Proverb.

The sky was grey and cloudy. It looked like rain was on its way. Journalists and news cameras swarmed around the plaza in anticipation of more information on the story that had divided Sinville. Ronald is at the podium standing next to Officer Dale and Lieutenant Lenny.

“Good morning. Today I’m here to proclaim the innocence of my client, Officer Aaron Dale. He is a decorated police officer. The allegation that my client's shooting of Darrell Brown was an unjustifiable action is ridiculous and degrading. When this trial is over, it will be evident that Officer Dale was simply defending himself against a common criminal.”

Journalists anxiously shouted over each other, trying to ask questions. Ronald stepped away from the podium. Sanders took his place.

“I’ll be taking questions now,” he said.

The crowd of reporters immediately stood up, all raising their hands, desperate to discover the rationale behind Officer

Dale's senseless murder of Darrell Brown. Sanders pointed to a middle-aged African-American woman journalist.

"One question that many residents from the Southside of Sinville have is why hasn't Officer Dale been suspended?" she asked.

"There's no reason for us to suspend an officer of his caliber when he hasn't even formally been charged with anything. Next question."

Lieutenant Sanders took a sip of Essentia water that Ronald had passed to him, then pointed at a Latino journalist in his late thirties.

"What measures are you and your department going to take to make sure that tragedies like this won't occur again?"

"The only way to prevent these kinds of things from happening is quite simple. People like Darrell Brown need to obey the law instead of breaking it. Also, his parent's should've done a better job of raising him. No more questions will be taken at this time."

Sanders, Dale, and Ronald all left the stage as they made their way to their cars. The journalists grumbled about the short press session, but none of them cared what they



thought as they made their way to their cars. Ronald turned to Sanders.

“You really know how to deal with the public,” he said sarcastically.

“Fuck it. It's time that those animals know that we mean business. Besides, they'll protest for two weeks and then some new sneaker or rap song will come out, or some overpaid basketball player will do something that gets 'em talking, and then those apes will be on to the next thing.”

“Lenny, you're drunk with power. Don't forget that your job is to protect and serve, not judge and execute!” barked Ronald.

Ronald agreed with Sanders that the Black community tended to overreact to these difficult incidents that sometimes left an innocent person dead, but he wondered if the lieutenant actually wanted things like this to happen.

“Ronald, who's side are you on?” Officer Dale asked.

Ronald shook his head.

“I'm your lawyer, so I think you know the answer to that question.”

“Just remember that your job is to defend us, not them!” Dale huffed.

Ronald shakes his head. He felt like a sex worker, but the precinct’s money was too good to pass up, regardless of what was right and what was wrong.

## CHAPTER 9: "A night to remember"

*"Where there is love, there is no darkness."*- African Proverb.

Khalid's "The Ways" was playing in the background as Juanita continued her work. She typed a few more words on her laptop and then took a sip of Hennessy. When Juanita stood up, she was startled to feel someone's arms wrapped around her waist.

"What the fuck?" She turned around. When she saw who it was, Juanita immediately calmed down.

"You scared the shit out of me! I should you fuck you up for that."

Kat kissed her on her right cheek.

"I'm sorry for scaring you. I just wanted to see what's stressing out my chocolate sundae," Kat said as she looked Juanita up and down while licking her lips.

Juanita smiled.

"It's this case. It's got my emotions all tangled up. I want to nail that fucking cop to the wall for what he did to that boy."

Kat noticed Juanita had clenched her fist and started to breathe heavily. She started to massage Juanita's shoulders.

“I’m good, babe.”

“No, you’re not. What you need to do is come to bed with me and get back to this in the morning,” Kat suggested.

Juanita looked Kat up and down as she bit down on her bottom lip. Kat smiled, showing off the grills on her teeth. Juanita began to caress Kat’s yellow tattooed skin.

“Sometimes I wish we would’ve never broken up,” Juanita said in a low voice.

“Well I didn’t want to slow you down just because my light-skinned ass was locked up for three and a half years,” Kat frowned. “I knew you had a bright future and I didn’t want to be the one to alter that.”

Juanita closed her laptop. She could do more work some other time. Juanita turned around gave Kat a passionate tongue kiss. It had been way too long. Fred had never been able to satisfy her the way that Kat could, and although she had loved her former fiancé, Kat always remained in the back of her mind throughout the entirety of her relationship with Fred. Kat and Juanita began to moan and groan with ecstasy as they resurrected their intimacy. They both felt that it was as hot as it had been before, just as if Kat had never been locked up.

“I wanna see if you have that same energy from earlier when we go upstairs,” Kat said.

“Wait until we get upstairs. I got something for your ass,” Juanita said.

Kat scooped Juanita up and carried her upstairs to the bedroom. They had both waited for years for this day. Now, they would enjoy each other’s bodies to the fullest extent.

## CHAPTER 10: “Foolish Pride Destroys Everything”

*“Do not treat your loved one like a swinging door: you are fond of it but you push it back and forth.”- African Proverb.*

It had been way too long. Fred knew that every couple fought. He and Juanita had fought before, but this time was different - she didn't come back home. Fred sat on his bed with his iPhone on speaker and tried his fiancée again. He allowed himself just this one last time to try her before he had to start getting ready for work. Once again, he only got Juanita's voicemail.

“Hey this is Juanita; I can't answer the phone right now. Leave a message and I'll get back to you.”

Fred decided to leave a message this time, “Juanita, you're really being immature about this! Stop being hardheaded and pick up the damn phone!” he shouted before hanging up.

Juanita wasn't answering. There was nothing else he could do until she came to her senses. Fred put on his dress clothes, picked his suit case up, and made his way out of the front door. As soon as he got outside, he pressed a button on his key chain, started the ignition, and got inside his red 2016 Mazda 6.

“Some jazz will start the day off right,” Fred turned up the volume on the radio station.

As he started backing out of the driveway the sounds of Kamasi Washington’s “Vi Lua Vi Sol” began to echo throughout the vehicle. He was wrong. The jazz didn’t do anything to make his day any better. Fred began to cruise towards the highway. Out of nowhere, he heard a loud pop.

“What was that?” He looked around inside his car. Nothing seemed unusual.

“Must be something wrong outside.”

Fred put his blinkers on and pulled over to the side of the road. He and Taylor had a good relationship, but Fred didn’t want his boss to think that he was a slacker. His parents had raised him right, teaching him the value of hard work, unlike the young troublemakers who were always hanging in the streets causing trouble and giving the cops a hard time. Fred pulled out his cell phone, dialed his boss, and got his voicemail. Fred hung up the phone and began to sweat in a panic, drenching his whole shirt. He ran an online search for the nearest mechanic on his iPhone. Fred was fortunate.

There was a five star auto shop just two blocks over in the search results. He dialed the auto shop’s number, pacing back and forth the whole time he was on the call.

“Hello, I caught a flat near the North Side Expressway near Martin Luther King Boulevard. Yes, I'll hold,” Fred said.

Fred rolled his eyes as he leaned on the hood of his car.

“Ok, so the tow truck will be here in ten minutes? Ok, thank you so much,” Fred smiled.

This was the first good break he had in an otherwise unreasonably awful morning. Ten minutes later, Fred found himself inside of Knots Auto Shop. He looked around watching customers enter and exit the establishment. The customers all looked satisfied. The auto shop's five-star business was booming. Fred wondered what the proprietor was doing right. Maybe he could not only get his car fixed, but also pick up a few good business practices to share with Mr. Hall. Fifteen minutes later, still watching the customers flow in with doubt on their faces and flow out with the joy of having a perfectly repaired car, Fred felt someone tap him on the shoulder. When he turned around, he came face to face with Knots Brown. He was a big boned African-American man with a brown skinned complexion and a light Caesar haircut. He was fifty-four years old, but Knots didn't look a day over forty.



“Hello, I'm Knots. I'm the owner. Is there anything that I can help you with?”

Sweat continued to drip down Fred's face. His body continued to tremble. “Well, I just got my car towed in here. I need a tire repair as quickly as possible.”

“I got you right now. Our best mechanic just walked through the door.”

“Thank you so much. I really appreciate you doing this,” Fred said after he exhaled.

“No problem. You can have a seat in the waiting area while my ace takes care of your car,” Knots instructed.

“Thank you.” Fred walked over to the waiting area to take a seat. He found one of the few empty chairs and closed his eyes.

Thirty minutes later, Knots shook Fred to try to wake him up. It took three shakes, but Fred finally wakes up.

“Sir, your car is ready now.”

Fred jumped up with a smile on his face.

“Thank you so much, how much does that cost?”

“You have to go to the cashier, sir. They’ll help you complete this transaction,” Knots explained as he handed Fred a ticket stub.

Fred sprinted towards the cashier, handing her the ticket and his Capital One card. After he paid for the tire repair, Fred walked out of the waiting area just as his car was being driven to the front of the auto shop.

“God is good all the time!” Fred shouted with a huge smile on his face.

Once the car came to a complete halt, the driver door swung open.

“I just want to say thank you—“Fred stopped in mid-sentence, his jaw dropping as he saw who stepped out of his car. Instantly, his smile turned into a frown.

Kat adjusted her uniform before she gently closed the driver side door. Knots walked towards Kat and gave her a pat on the back for the excellent job. They both turned to face Fred.

“Hey sir, this right here is our best mechanic!” Knots said with a smile.

Kat smiled from ear to ear, pleased with being recognized for her work.

“I’m just doin’ my job the best I can. Nothin’ more, nothin’ less,” Kat responded.

Kat extended her hand out to Fred. He rolled his eyes and stormed right past her, leaving her hanging with her hand out. Kat turned around with a screw face, watching Fred as he headed towards his car.

“Hey! What’s the problem?” Kat asked.

“The problem is that carpet munching dykes like you keep trying to steal Black women from Black men!”

Kat took a step closer towards Fred. They are now staring each other face to face.

“Oh boy, another insecure hotep ass nigga that thinks that lesbians are trying to steal their women from them,” Kat scoffed.

“One day all of you dykes, fags, queers and trannies won’t have time to save your souls when Jesus comes back,” Fred hissed.

Kat started laughing as Fred’s face began to turn red.

“What’s sad is that you really let religion cloud your vision. If all of you insecure-ass niggas spent more time handling

your business, then your women wouldn't be putting their pussy on my grills," Kat said with a cocky grin on her face.

Fred threw his middle finger up in the air before he jumped in his car and sped off. Knots walked over to Kat and put his arm around his favorite employee.

"Don't let him get to you."

Kat smirked "I ain't stressin' shit. For all we know I might've fucked his bitch." Knots and Kat both shared a laugh as they walked back inside the auto shop.

## CHAPTER 11: “Justice or Just-Us”

*“The more laws the less justice.”*-German Proverb.

The earth’s beauty was on full display in downtown Sinville today. Juanita cruised down Angela Davis Boulevard while Janelle Monae’s “I Like That” crooned throughout her silver SUV. She had reached her destination. Juanita pulled up in front of the Sinville District Attorney’s office.

“There’s never any parking around here.”

Juanita drove around the parking lot. The day kept getting better and better for her usually, it was extremely difficult to find a spot. Today, there were plenty of vacant spaces in the parking lot. Juanita made sure to grab her folder and flash drive as she exited her SUV. Before locking her doors, Juanita double checked to make sure that she had everything that she needed for this meeting. Juanita did not want to stress it, but what she had was big and she wanted to make sure that she didn’t blow this opportunity for justice. Juanita sat down in the reception area and started to check her emails. She looked up and saw Leila Atkins standing in front of her. Atkins was only thirty-five but had risen to become Sinville’s District Attorney on the strength of her record of successful high-profile prosecutions. Her high-yellow complexion and sensuous curves also played a part in

endearing her to the lecherous Chief Executive of the Jurisdiction who appointed Atkins to her current position.

Juanita smiled “D.A. Atkins, I’m glad that you agreed to take this meeting with me on such short notice.”

“Whatever. Let’s get this over with.”

Leila Atkins led the way into her office while Juanita followed closely behind. Once inside, Juanita closed the door.

“Okay, let’s get right to it. What do you got for me, Cousins?”

Juanita walked over to Atkins’ desk and gave her a plastic bag with a flash drive inside.

“I think you’ll find the evidence to be concrete.”

Leila Atkins plugged the flash drive into her computer. She started scrolling through the information.

“This is not only enough evidence convict Officer Dale, but Lieutenant Sanders, and the entire Sinville Police Department” she remarked with her eyes wide open.

A sly smile appeared on Juanita’s face as she sat down and crossed her legs.

“I know it is which is why I’m giving it to you. Think about all of the countless innocent lives that were decimated because of racist policing for decades. Now with that evidence in your possession you can finally change the system in a way we haven’t seen before.”

Atkins nodded her head attentively. She shut her computer down and unplugged the flash drive from her computer.

“Everything you said was absolutely right which is why I will be holding onto this.”

Leila Atkins placed the flash drive in the bottom drawer of her desk.

“Thanks Cousins, for bringing this to me today.”

Juanita stood up and extended her hand out. The District Attorney met her hand with a firm handshake.

“Well, this was a pleasure and I guess I’ll see you around,” Juanita said.

“You most definitely will.”

Juanita exited the office, closing the door with a confident smile on her face. Justice had won. It wouldn’t be long before the officers’ corruption was exposed and the real bad guys were behind bars.

## CHAPTER 12: “One Hell of a Day”

*“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.”- African Proverb.*

Fred tried to wipe away all the tears as they streamed down his face, but some still dripped onto his car’s leather seat. His father had taught him that it was unmanly to cry, but he couldn’t help himself as he flipped through the pictures on his phone of him with Juanita. Fred’s eyes had grown puffy and red from all his tears.

“Let’s get this over with,” Fred said as he stepped out of his car.

Fred entered St. Mark’s Baptist Church. As he made his way inside, his eyes swayed back and forth to see if any familiar faces were around, but the church was completely empty.

“It’s good to see you, Fred. What brings you by on such short notice?”

Pastor Thomas was a 61 year old, African-American man with a dark complexion. Fred hugged Pastor Thomas tightly. Tears began to once again flow down his face.

“What’s wrong son? Why are you crying?”



“It's Juanita. We got into an argument and I haven't heard from her in days,” Fred cried.

Pastor Thomas frowned. He pulled away from Fred's hug. “Pull yourself together! I didn't raise a little sissy. I raised a man!”

Fred wiped the tears off of his face. He fixed his posture and stood tall. Fred hated to embarrass himself with such feminine emotions in front of his father, but Juanita was different. Juanita was his world. It was almost impossible for him to be manly and stoic when it came to the love of his life.

Pastor Thomas folded his arms. “Why are you coming to me about this?”

“I've never been in this situation before and I didn't know who else to turn to, so I came to you,” Fred said in the calmest tone that he could muster.

“What you and Juanita are going through is normal for couples. I bet if you proposed to her and married her like you're supposed to, then you wouldn't be having these issues.”

Fred nodded his head in agreement.

“You're right dad.”

“Just give her some time to herself and she'll come around.”

“Thanks dad. You always give good advice, just like mom used to,” Fred hugged his father. This time, seeing that his son had decided to man up, Pastor Thomas accepted the gesture.

## CHAPTER 13: “The Wicked Ritual”

*“If you dance with the devil you can't change him but he will change.”*- African Proverb.

Lieutenant Sanders was the only customer at an otherwise empty restaurant. He was devouring a medium-well done steak alone at his table when he felt a hand on his shoulder. Sanders slowly turned around. When he sees its Officer Dale, he starts to chuckle.

“What a pleasant surprise. I didn't expect to see you here. Pull up a chair and let's talk.”

Officer Dale grabbed a chair and pulled his seat up to the table, sitting directly across from Lieutenant Sanders.

“We got a problem on our hands. It has been brought to my attention that this fucking internal affairs agent has some serious dirt on us,” said Officer Dale.

Sanders placed his fork and knife down on his plate.

“How the hell did she get any dirt on us in the first place?”

“That I don't know yet. Atkins called me and told me that that bitch Cousins gave her enough evidence to bury the two

of us and the entire Police Department. Paying Atkins was definitely worth it.”

Sanders was stunned. The half-chewed steak that had been in his mouth fell out when Sanders opened his mouth wide from the shock. He brushed the scraps off his shirt and onto the floor.

“Damn it! Calm the fuck down! Look, I know you're nervous, but trust me I got a solution,” said Officer Dale.

Sanders stood up. He snarled at his subordinate.

“You better take care of this. If you don't do something, then you will suffer the consequences!”

“Hey, don't fucking threaten me! We're in this together, motherfucker! Like I said, don't worry. I got just the solution to our problem,” said Officer Dale.

Sanders took a deep breath and sat back down.

“I'm listening.”

He cut another piece of steak and skewered it onto his fork. Sanders chewed it slowly, savoring every sharp bite.

## CHAPTER 14: “Cleansing the Soul”

*“He who loves, loves you with your dirt.” - African Proverb.*

Kat and Juanita were having dinner at “Coretta’s Seafood Palace.” The Internet’s “Come Over” played in the background over the restaurant’s speakers.

“Baby, how was your day?” Juanita asked.

“It was ok. I almost went back to the old me today, but I caught myself,” Kat said.

Juanita leaned closer to Kat.

“What happened?”

“Check it; I was workin' on this car that my boss asked me to fix a flat tire on. Once I was done with the car the customer flipped out and he started talkin' wild shit to me.”

“What did he say to you?”

“He was talking about how lesbians are stealing Black women from Black men. This ass clown then said all LGBTQ people are going to hell as if God sent him a text message or some shit.”

Juanita bowed her head in disbelief.

“It’s a sad world that we live in where people still think like that. It’s 2018 and lesbians, trans people, gay people, and bisexual people of color still catch hella shade for existing.”

“Fuck it. I’m not gonna let these insecure-ass niggas get me locked up. Only thing I’m focused on is fucking up this plate right now.”

Kat grabbed a hold of her fried lobster and began to devour it. Juanita stared at Kat as she ate her food with an insatiable appetite.

“Damn, Kat. Slow down. No one’s gonna take your food.”

“I ain’t eat all day,” Kat said with her mouth still full of food.

“That’s disgusting. Don’t talk with your mouth full,” Juanita giggled after she realized what she had said; her thoughts had shifted to an image of Kat’s mouth being full with something far more delicious than fried lobster.

Kat swallowed her food with a smile on her face.

“The last time my mouth was full you wasn’t complaining.”

Juanita and Kat shared a laugh. The food at Coretta's was good, but Juanita wanted to have some fun tonight. She waved for the waitress to give them the check. When the waitress placed the check on the table, Kat went to pull out her wallet. Before she could take it out, Juanita clasped her hand over Kat's hand.

"Baby, I got this. You've done more than enough for me."

"Are you sure?" Kat asked with a sly smile.

"I'm positive," Juanita paid the bill in cash.

Juanita pays the bill in cash. She and Kat exited the restaurant together. Later that night after a three-hour visit back at Kat's home to get their faces and tongues wet with each other's juices, Kat and Juanita headed to the Forbidden Pleasures nightclub. Forbidden Pleasures was the only LGBTQ night club in Sinville. The lovers both entered the club after the bouncer allowed them to walk through the velvet rope without any problems. Inside, everyone in the club was on the dancing floor grooving to the sounds of Siya's "Witchu."

"How did you get us past all of those people?" Juanita asked.

Kat was about to respond when Tatiana, a curly haired biracial transwoman, tapped her on the shoulder. Kat turned around, smiling when she saw who it was.

“Kat! I’m glad to see you!”

Kat hugged Tatiana, then turned back to Juanita.

“Juanita, this is Tatiana, the best bartender in the world! Tatiana, this is my boo, a.k.a. the hero without a cape!”

Juanita hugged Tatiana.

“Odell just left for the night about an hour ago,” said Tatiana.

“I’ll catch him later. I just want to show her around the place real quick,” Kat replied.

“Cool. I’ll see you before I leave for the night.”

“You got it. I’ll catch you later.”

Kat led Juanita upstairs to the office. She swiped her ID card and opened the door. Juanita walked over to the glass window. She observed the dance floor below.



“Please explain all of this to me. I'm really confused right now.”

Kat sat on the black leather couch.

“I'm part owner of this nightclub. My partner is Odell, who was my mother's friend back in the day.”

“Kat, that's great, but if you're part owner of this club then why do you work as a mechanic?”

“I always loved cars and I love fixing them. Plus, my P.O. got me the job at Knots Auto Shop. Odell asked me to protect him and his club from these homophobic motherfuckers out here. I agreed and he made me a silent partner in exchange for protection.”

“Wait a minute, how do you protect the club?”

Kat pulled out her green bandana from her back pocket and placed it on her lap. Juanita folded her arms in disgust, a scowl forming on her face.

“So you're still with the Street Disciple Gangsters?” asked Juanita.

“Baby, I never left.”

Juanita and Kat stared at each other in an awkward pause. Juanita's cell phone ringtone broke the silence. Juanita glanced at the screen. It was Fred. She swiped to ignore his call.

“You never did tell me why you called me and wanted to come stay with me,” Kat said.

“My boyfriend, fiancé, whatever, he and I got into an argument and I called you because you were the only person that I knew would answer.”

“What did he say to you that got you in your feelin's?”

Juanita sat beside Kat.

“We were arguing over the police killing that kid, which is the case I'm investigating. He was talking all of this respectability politics bullshit.”

“Damn, baby, so you fuckin' around with an Uncle Ruckus-ass nigga?”

“I'm also three months pregnant by him.”

Kat's face turned stone cold.

“Do you know if it's going to be a boy or a girl yet?”

Juanita looked away from Kat.

“Well, you better tell him before you make any decisions. I mean, shit, Uncle Tom or not you should at least talk to him about this before you do anything.”

“You’re right babe,” Juanita got out her phone and wrote a text message to Fred.

“Meet me at 8AM tomorrow in front of the courthouse.”

She hit send. Kat smiled. She began to rub Juanita’s back.

“You did the right thing baby.”

Juanita received a notification on her phone. She opened Fred's text message.

“Ok, baby. See you there. I miss you.”

“He agreed to meet me tomorrow.”

“Good, I'm going with you to make sure that things don't get out of hand.”

“I got this boo.”

“I’m going and that’s final.”

“Ok. Besides, I’m going to the courthouse to see the trial for that case that I’m on.”

“Whelp, I’ll be right there with you,” Kat said.

Juanita kissed Kat on the lips. Kat, began to tongue kiss Juanita on the couch.

“Baby, hold on a second. Let me get us a little privacy.” Kat got up, locked the door, and then began to unzip the back of Juanita’s dress.

## CHAPTER 15: “The Calm before the Storm”

*“Life is the beginning of death.”*-African Proverb.

Birds were chirping. The sun was shining. Fred was standing next to his car decked out in a classy gray suit and a pair of black dress shoes.

“Where is she?” Fred checked the time on his iPhone.

It was 8:03 .When Fred turned his attention away from his phone, he caught a glimpse of Juanita’s car as it pulled up nearby. His eyes began to widen. Fred glanced down at his expensive watch. He hoped that it would impress his girl. Juanita put her car in park. She took a deep breath. Kat gently grabbed Juanita's hand and held it tightly.

“Baby, go handle your business. I got your back,” Kat said.

“Thanks, I appreciate it,” Juanita said.

Juanita stepped out of the car. She made her way towards Fred. They stared at each other. Neither was sure of what to expect.

“You look beautiful as always,” Fred said as he looked Juanita up and down.

Juanita smiled. “You don't look bad yourself in that suit either.”

They both had a chuckle at her remark. Juanita and Fred continued their conversation, unaware of who was inside of the abandoned apartment building across the street. Boyd stood by the building's window, observing Juanita, and Fred as they conversed outside of the county courthouse. He was a muscular middle-aged white man who, no matter the weather, always wore a black trench coat. Boyd opened his suitcase. Inside was a sniper rifle. He began to assemble the rifle piece by piece. Once Boyd had finished assembling his rifle, he opened the window. Boyd doped his scope, setting the crosshairs on his target. After Boyd had readied for the shot, he tensed up and put his finger around the trigger.

Kat scrolled through her text messages while sitting in the passenger seat of Juanita's car. “Damn, these hoes are thirsty,” she said to herself with a laugh. When Kat heard yelling, she looked up to see what was going on.

“The fuck?”

Kat stormed out of the car and made her way towards Juanita and Fred.

“I should've known that your high-maintenance ass was never going to change!” shouted Juanita.

“I guess I'm not woke enough for you! Just because I don't run around harassing police officers that have to deal with brain dead ghetto niggas all day doesn't make me any less Black!”

Fred locked eyes with Kat. They stared each other down.

“What the fuck is this dumb dyke doing here?”

“I'll show you a dumb dyke, pussy-ass nigga!” Kat barked.

Juanita squeezed between Fred and Kat as the two of them tried to charge at each other.

“Both of you stop this shit right now!” Juanita demanded.

“So Juanita, you've been spending your time with this abomination to God?”

“I wasn't an abomination when I was eating your mother out last night!” Kat shouted.

Fred and Kat were about to take a swing at each other. Before they could get into it, blood splattered onto them both at the same time. Kat and Fred looked at each other in amazement. They then turned their attention to Juanita. Her body was on the ground. She had, been shot in the left side of her chest.

“No! Somebody help!” Kat shouted.

“We need help!” Fred yelled.

Kat and Fred both kneeled by Juanita's side, trying to stabilize her. Their efforts weren't working, Juanita kept coughing up blood. Kat pulled out her cell phone. Fred took his blazer off and placed it under Juanita's head while he tried to stop the bleeding.

“Baby, don't you die on me!” Fred cried, a tear forming on his face.

“The ambulance is on its way! Juanita, baby, don't you fucking die!” Kat begged.

Kat held Juanita's left hand. Fred held her right hand. Juanita's body stopped moving. Knowing that the worst had happened, Fred and Kat both started to sob uncontrollably.



## CHAPTER 16: “Stolen”

*“Death is a thief.”*-African Proverb.

Kat and Fred are sat across from each other inside of the Sinville Medical Institute. They both had blood on their clothes and hands. Kat rocked back and forth in her seat. Fred stared at the floor with a blank look on his face. One of the doctors who had tried to treat Juanita entered the waiting room. He walked over towards Kat and Fred with a grim expression on his face.

“Doc, please tell us you have good news,” said Kat.

“Doc, please tell me my fiancée is going to pull through,” said Fred.

The doctor sighed.

“I’m sorry. We did everything that we could, but she didn’t make it.”

Kat and Fred were both prideful individuals, but tears started to stream down both of their faces after they heard from the doctor. Kat punched the wall in frustration.

“It also appears that she was three months pregnant as well,” the doctor added.

“Fuck!” Kat barked.

“Motherfuckers killed both of my babies!” Fred shouted.

Fred started crying uncontrollably. Kat stormed out of the waiting room. The doctor always hated to share news like this, but it was part of his job. He left the room, ready to get back to work.

## CHAPTER 17: “The Initiation”

*“I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hate so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.” - James Baldwin*

The sky was cloudy and grey outside of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Precinct. Inside the precinct’s locker room, Raymond Crawford, a middle-aged African-American man, changed into his Sinville PD uniform. After Raymond exited, Sanders and Dale waved for him to walk over. Raymond approached the men.

“Hey guys, how’s it goin?” Raymond asked with a smile.

“Good. Tell me something, Crawford, you're new in this department, but you're not new to the way things work, right?” questioned Lieutenant Sanders.

“I’m not following you.”

“We have a problem that can possibly destroy the fabric of our entire relationship with the community.”

“How can I help?”

“Before we can have you help us, we need to know that we can trust you. You see this badge and uniform is not just a job, it's a brotherhood. Do you understand what I'm saying?” Sanders asked.

“Absolutely,” Raymond asserted.

“So how do we know that you are willing to ride or die for your brothers in blue?” Officer Dale asked.

“I'm down for whatever. Just tell me what I have to do to earn some trust and loyalty from both of you.”

“Come with me and Dale. We'll show you how you can earn that trust,” said Lieutenant Lenny.

Forty minutes later Lieutenant Sanders, Officer Dale, and Raymond exited their police cruiser. The three men made their way inside of a Burger King across the street from the courthouse.

“Why are we here?” Raymond asked.

“You're about to find out,” Officer Dale said.

The three men walked straight to the cashier. Sanders showed his badge.

“Sinville Police. I need to speak with your manager.”

“Is there a problem, sir?”

“No problem, just get me your manager,” Sanders instructed.

The cashier ran back to alert his boss. Angel Rosario was the manager of this Burger King. He was, a chubby Latino man halfway through his thirties who had worked at the restaurant for over a decade.

“Hello. What can I do for you officers?” Rosario asked as he glanced to make sure that his employee had resumed his normal duties. The cashier was already onto the next customer. Rosario had trained his staff well.

“You can help by showing us your surveillance footage from yesterday to help us with a murder case,” Sanders responded.

“Oh, God! Follow me!”

Rosario led Sanders, Dale, and Raymond into the surveillance room.

“Here you go officers.”

Rosario walked over to the monitor. He pulled up the previous day's surveillance footage.

“Can I help you find what you're looking for, officers?”

“No. Thank you. We'll let you know if we need anything,” Lieutenant Sanders replied.

“You got it.”

Rosario exited the room and shut the door. Sanders began to fast forward through the video at the maximum speed.

“Are you sure that we should have him here with us right now?” Officer Dale asked Sanders.

“Have I ever steered you wrong before?”

Officer Dale shook his head. He looked back at Raymond with a scowl on his face.

“Look, I want to cover my ass just as much as you do, but tampering with video footage in front of this guy isn't the best idea.”

“So are you on Internal Affairs' side now? Is that what you're saying to me?”

“Hell no!” shouted Officer Dale.

“Then stop whining like a little bitch and play your position!”

Officer Dale took a deep breath and exhaled three times. Sanders outranked him. There was no way he could go against the chain of command.

“I found it!” Sanders barked.

Officer Dale and Raymond moved closer to the monitor.

“Ok, wait, stop right there,” Officer Dale said.

“That's when they were arguing,” Sanders clarified.

Dale pointed at the screen. “Boyd is right there walking into that condemned building.”

“Crawford, this is where you earn your stripes,” Sanders said.

“What do you mean?”

“Either you're with us or against us,” Sanders remarked.

“I'm with you.”

“Good. Come over here and delete this video,” Sanders ordered.

Raymond moved over to the control panel and erased the recording.

“Good job, Crawford. That bitch Juanita Cousins was Internal Affairs. She was going to take down our entire department.”

“I did what had to be done,” Raymond said.

“Motherfuckin' right you did. Now you're one of us,” Officer Dale replied.

“Just remember that if you rat on us you're going down with us because you just helped us commit a crime,” Sanders said with a sneer.

“Also, we'll make sure that you're known as the mastermind behind this whole thing. Got it?” Officer Dale asked.

“I understand,” said Raymond. The men exited the Burger King. Their job was done.



## CHAPTER 18: “The First 48”

*“The naked truth is always better than the best dressed lie.”-*  
African Proverbs.

Fred sat across from Detective Brooks, a white man in his mid-forties, and Detective Thompson, an Asian man in his late thirties. He gave the detectives a blank stare, unable to muster even the slightest bit of energy since the loss of Juanita had sunk in.

“Ok sir, we just want to ask you a few questions,” said Detective Brooks.

“Ask away,” Fred replied in a low voice.

“Did your girlfriend have any enemies?” Thompson questioned.

“She was my fiancée, and no, not that I know of,” Fred answered.

“Mr. Thomas, there was a woman named Katherine Marrero at the scene,” said Detective Brooks.

“What’s your point?” Fred asked.

“We believe that your girlfriend may have been the victim of a gang-related shooting,” said Detective Thompson.

Fred shook his head and looked away. They were trying to use Juanita’s death for their own purposes. Their behavior woke up Fred’s fury.

“I told you already she was my fiancée. And what is this shit? Gang members pull a drive-by and hit innocent people. This was obviously an assassination by a trained marksman right near a courthouse!”

“Calm down, buddy!” instructed Detective Brooks

Fred shook his head. He couldn’t believe how dirty and uncaring these guys were that an innocent woman was shot dead in plain sight.

“There's reason to believe that this was indeed gang-related, and with your testimony you can help us rid the streets of one less gang member,” said Detective Thompson.

“Think about all the good you would be doing for the folks of Sinville if you did that. Isn't that what Juanita would've wanted?” Detective Brooks questioned.

“Don't act like you two knew Juanita because you didn't know her like I knew her,” Fred said.

“You're right. Neither of us personally knew Juanita. However, I'm pretty sure that she wouldn't want these scumbags running around giving your people a bad name,” said Detective Thompson.

“Fred, let's face it, you're a law-abiding citizen that pays his taxes on time. We checked your Twitter account. We know where you stand politically. So my question is why won't you help us lock up these gang banging lowlifes?” Detective Brooks asked.

Fred started grinding his teeth. He couldn't believe what was happening.

“Has anyone threatened you?” Detective Thompson questioned.

“No.”

“Fred, if you want us to help find her killer, then all you have to do is help us help you. I mean Black lives won't matter as long as these assholes are on the street,” Detective Brooks said.

“That's it! I'm done with this shit! You two don't care about catching Juanita's killer! You just want me to help you pin this on some gang member to make you look good! Am I free to go?”

“Yes,” answered Detective Thompson.

Fred opened the doors and stormed out. If he wanted justice for Juanita, he knew it wouldn't come from the police.

## CHAPTER 19: “The Transition of Life”

*“If you’re a good person even after death your grave is loved.”*-African Proverb.

A week later, St. Mark’s Baptist Church was at full capacity as friends, family, activists, community members, and co-workers stuffed inside for Juanita's funeral. The church was so full that some mourners had to stand up in the back near the exit. Everyone was crying. Pastor Thomas made his way to the pulpit.

“We are here today to celebrate and mourn the life of a beautiful, intelligent, persistent, and kind young woman. Her life was tragically cut short last week. Juanita Cousins was a fierce human being who was dedicated not only to her job, but to helping those in need,” preached Pastor Thomas.

Fred was up front with Juanita’s family and some of his cousins. He was wearing a light brown tie, an expensive brown suit, and brown dress shoes. Kat sat in one of the pews towards the back of the church. She wore all four of her braids down and was sporting a sharp black suit, black dress shoes, and her old necklace.

“My son Fred is here today mourning the tragic death of his fiancée. Fred, come up to the podium to share your eulogy for Juanita.”

Fred walked up to the podium.

“Good afternoon everyone. My fiancée was a phenomenal woman. Juanita had a big heart. I wish that I had just an ounce of the fire and desire that she had for her mission. Juanita was my world. She held me down through the good times and the bad. She was a strong, influential, outspoken, intelligent individual. I know that we'll see each other again in God's Kingdom one day. I miss her so much. This hurts so bad, you all have no idea.”

Fred began to sob as he stepped down from the podium. He made his way back to the casket. Fred gently caressed Juanita's face and then gave her a kiss on the lips before he walked away. Fred and Kat made eye contact for a moment as Kat walked up to the casket. Pastor Thomas, along with all of the members of his clergy scowled at Kat as she made her way towards Juanita.

“Baby, I'm so sorry. You did not deserve this. I promise, you whoever did this to you will pay for it,” Kat whispered

walking away with tears streaming down both sides of her face.

As Kat made her exit she locked eyes with Fred again, then continued to the door. Fred departed right behind Kat. He slipped her a note and dipped off. Kat was puzzled by Fred's actions, so she read the note. It said: *"Call me at this number if you have info that could help find Juanita's killer."* Kat scrunched up her face. She nodded her head up and down, before leaving the church.

## CHAPTER 20: “Society on Trial”

*“Maize cannot get justice in a chicken’s court.”*-African Proverb.

Five months after the murder in cold blood of Darrell Brown, Officer Dale is sat next to Ronald Moon at his trial. Dale had a carefree expression on his face because he knew that he would be declared innocent today. District Attorney Atkins had been charged with the prosecution, but her efforts were purposefully lax care of the police department’s well-placed bribe.

The bailiff addressed the court, “All rise!”

Everyone in the courtroom immediately stood up. Judge Wilkins left the chamber and walked back to his bench.

“Department one of the Superior Court is now in session, the honorable Judge Wilkins presiding. Please be seated.”

After Judge Wilkins sat, all the other individuals assembled in the courtroom followed his lead.

“In the case of the people versus Aaron Dale-due to a lack of evidence provided by the District Attorney-I hereby dismiss



all criminal charges against Officer Aaron Dale. Court is adjourned,” Judge Wilkins concluded, slamming down his gavel.

Cries and yells erupted from the back of the courtroom. The bailiff had to call for backup to remove several distraught observers from the court. Officer Dale and Ronald ignored the outraged as they hugged each other with big smiles on their faces. Atkins grabbed her suitcase and stormed out of the courtroom. The entire proceeding had been a farce.

Officer Dale and Ronald were escorted by police officers as they departed the courthouse. Angry protesters stood behind a police barricade outside. They chanted,

“We want justice! We want justice! We want justice! We want justice!”

Officer Dale blew the protesters a kiss in an effort to rile them up even more. Dale and Ronald entered a black SUV parked in front of the courthouse as the protesters continued to chant.

“We fuckin’ did it Ron!”

Ronald smiled. “Yes we did.”

Dale and Ronald shared a laugh as the S.U.V. rode off into the sunset. Dale had killed an innocent boy. Ronald had taken the money and ran with the lie. Both had gotten what they wanted.

## CHAPTER 21: “A Bastard’s Celebration”

*“Better to stay with the devil you know than the angel you don’t know.”-African Proverb.*

Lieutenant Sanders, Officer Dale, and Ronald were at Al’s Steak House drinking and getting lap dances from several white and Asian strippers. Al was a chunky white guy in his mid-fifties who had closed his restaurant tonight for his friend’s private party. He was 54 years old. He watched the antics with a smile on his face.

“Hey, Al! Thanks for letting us celebrate in your joint tonight!” shouted Lieutenant Sanders.

Sanders, Dale, and Ronald all gave Al a round of applause. Dale put his arm around the lieutenant.

“Sanders, I don't know how to thank you for getting me out of that jam.”

“No problem. Listen, we have to look out for each other. Besides, these thugs are too worried about some new rap song, brand new sneaker, or new cell phone to focus on us for that long,” Sanders said with a grin.

Officer Dale howled with laughter. Boyd began to bang on the glass. Al made his way towards the door to check on the commotion.

“Sorry we’re closed.”

The men turned their attention away from the seductive strippers and to the door. They all smiled when they saw who was standing on the other side.

“Hey Al, let him in! Let him in!” instructed Lieutenant Sanders.

Al unlocked the door. Boyd entered the restaurant. Sanders put his arm around Boyd.

“Welcome to the party!”

Boyd looked down at Sanders hand with a scowl on his face.

“Don't touch me!”

“Easy, pal! I don't mean any harm,” said Lieutenant Sanders in a timid manner.

Sanders slowly backed away from Boyd, not wanting to get on the hitman’s notorious bad side.

“Do you have my money?” questioned Boyd in an annoyed manner.

“Hey Al, can you give us a minute?” Sanders asked.

“Sure, I have to go to the bathroom anyway.”

Al headed into the bathroom. He didn't care what these guys were up to. They were friends and they kept the city safe.

That's all he wanted to know. Sanders removed an envelope from his pocket and handed it to Boyd. The hitman opened it and saw a large number of hundred dollar bills inside.

Satisfied with the transaction, Boyd placed the envelope in his coat and started to head for the exit before stopping in his tracks. He swiftly turned around with a devious look on his face.

“I almost forgot to tell you that I saw Cousins' boyfriend and some dyke chick with her on the day of the shooting. If you want me to pay them a visit, you know how to find me,” he said with a sly smile as he slithered out of the restaurant.

For Boyd, more bodies meant more money. If he had to prey on a few crooked cops' fears to get paid, he would gladly do it.

Officer Dale is dripped with sweat as he walked up to Sanders.

“You think those two know anything?” he asked with a nervous quiver in his voice.

“Relax. If they even seem like they're on our ass, we'll just call our buddy and have him reunite them with Ms. Cousins,” said Sanders.

The potential need for an even greater body count worried Ronald, but the fat paycheck he already received, the nonstop flow of Johnnie Walker Black that Al had arranged, and the promise of a double blowjob later tonight from a white girl and an Asian girl at the same time calmed his nerves.

## CHAPTER 22: “Tonight’s the Night”

*“Don’t beat the drums of war unless you’re ready to fight.”-*  
African Proverb.

The night was young as darkness descended over Roscoe’s Diner. Kat pulled up in her green Rubicon, bopping her head to Nipsey Hussle’s “Rap Niggas.” She killed the engine after making sure that no other cars were close to hers, and then exited the Rubicon. Kat, dressed in a black Colin Kaepernick 49ers jersey, walked to the entrance of the diner. Fred was alone inside the diner at a table eating a slice of cheesecake and drinking coffee. When Kat entered, Fred immediately locked eyes with her.

“We meet again.”

Kat sighed as she sat down.

“Let’s get right to it.”

She pulled out a flash drive from her pocket, placed it on the table, and slid it across to Fred.

“This USB contains all of the evidence that Juanita had in the case against that cop that shot that kid.”

Fred picked up the USB and placed it in his pocket.

“How do you know Juanita?”

“Juanita and I knew each other for a few years.”

“Oh really? That's funny. She never mentioned that you were her friend to me.”

Kat started laughing at Fred.

“What’s so funny?” questioned Fred.

“You said that Juanita and I were friends.”

“What’s so funny about that?”

Kat looked Fred dead in the eyes. She leaned back with a smile on her face.

“You see, Juanita and I were more than just friends. Before she met you she was my girlfriend.”

Fred stared at Kat with disbelief in his eyes and clenched teeth. He wanted to reach over the table and lunge at Kat. She sensed that Fred looked like he was about to do something



foolish. Kat lifted up her jersey and showed the .40 caliber in her waistband. Fred stopped dead in his tracks.

“I suggest you sit back down,” Kat growled.

Fred slowly sat back in his seat. Roscoe, an African-American man, in his sixties who owned and operated the diner, walked over to Kat and Fred's table.

“Is there a problem over here?”

“No sir,” Kat replied.

“No. Sorry about that. I just get excited when I start talking about sports,” said Fred nervously.

“Yeah, well, I don't want any trouble in here so don't start no mess!” barked Roscoe.

“You got it,” Fred and Kat said in unison.

Kat and Fred waited until Roscoe walked away before they turned their focus back on each other. They resumed their heated conversation, but this time at a much lower volume.

“You see, I'm not the type to pull out a gun unless I plan to use it.”

Fred trembled. “What type of gun is that?”

“It’s a .40 caliber. It takes off limbs and if you try some shit like that again I will empty this clip into you.”

“What do your tattoos mean?”

“I’m a Street Disciple Gangster,” Kat proclaimed.

“You’re in a gang? Please. They would never let a little woman like you be a Street Disciple Gangster.”

“I may be little, but I’m bigger than you on these blocks,” Kat warned.

Fred gave Kat a stink face as he stared her down. Kat knew she had to put Fred in his place.

“Let’s go. You and I are going outside to shoot the fair one,” said Kat.

“Good. Since you want to act like a man, I’ll treat you like one.”

“Make sure you have that same energy when we step outside.”

Fred pulled out enough money from his wallet to cover his meal and left it on the table. Kat walked out of Roscoe's diner with Fred following right behind her. Once outside, Kat lifted up her jersey. She places the jersey inside her Rubicon along with the .40 caliber. All she was wearing was a tank top. Tattoos covered almost every inch of her neck, hands and chest. There was even a small tattoo on her right cheek. All four of her braids were hanging. She cracked her knuckles. Fred took off his dress shirt, exposing his white under shirt. He cracked his knuckles.

“You want to dress like a man and act like one, well now you're going to get beat like one,” said Fred with confidence.

“Enough talkin'. Let's do this.”

Kat began to move closer to Fred. Keeping her face guarded with both of her fists. She was no stranger to fisticuffs. It was always better to deal with ignorance without bullets, but her .40 caliber came in handy when necessary. It had been years since Fred had been in a fight. His last time trading punches had been back in high school. He took a wild swing in Kat's direction and missed. Kat landed an uppercut with her right hand to Fred's jaw. Fred stumbled back a bit from the blow. He touched his bottom lip and noticed that it was bleeding.

“You stupid bitch!”

Kat made sure to protect her face as Fred rushed towards her. He kept swinging in her direction and missing. Kat stepped on his left foot, causing Fred to let down his guard. Seeing the opening, Kat struck Fred with a hard punch to his jaw. She then punched him directly in the face with her left hand. Fred dropped to the floor like a stack of bricks. Kat stood over his body and spat on him.

“Homophobic piece of shit.”

Kat began to make her way back to her car. She turned around and walked back over to Fred. Kat kneeled down and checked his pulse.

“You're still breathing. If it wasn't for Juanita I would leave yo' ass right here.”

Kat dragged Fred's body towards her car and popped open the trunk. She slowly shoved Fred inside and then slammed the trunk shut. Kat drove off after she started to play Dave East's “Set It Off” in her car. The sound of Fred's head hitting the trunk was distracting her on the road and getting in the way of her appreciation of the music. She turned up the volume and continued to drive.

## CHAPTER 23: “A Fool’s False Confidence”

*“It’s out of ignorance that a goat will attend a leopard’s party.”-African Proverb.*

The sun shined brightly over the city of Sinville. Officer Dale drove his police cruiser through the streets of Sinville with a cocky smile on his face. A group of Black and Latino residents, recognizing him as the police officer who had shot Darrell Brown, threw up their middle fingers in his direction as he cruised past them. Dale rolled down his window.

“The feeling is mutual, scumbags!”

Officer Dale gave the group his middle finger. Like most police officers, Dale had an appreciation for donuts and coffee. The sugar and caffeine kept him alert to deal with the worst of whatever Sinville threw in his direction. He parked the cruiser in a Dunkin’ Donuts parking lot, and poked his chest out as he strolled towards the entrance. Inside the shop, several Black customers scowled at Dale. He was used to it. It seemed like every Black and brown person in Sinville hated his guts. Officer Dale chuckled as he made his way to the front of the counter. The barista, a petite college-aged Indian immigrant, stepped up to the counter.

“How may I help you today?” she asked.

“Give me three glazed donuts and a medium iced coffee,”  
Officer Dale ordered.

Ten minutes, after the longest wait for an iced coffee Dale had ever experienced, he jogged back to his squad car and jumped inside. As Dale pulled off, someone across the street in an unmarked car snapped several pictures of him.

## CHAPTER 24: “Unholy Union”

*“Enemies may unite to eliminate a common threat, but never without a wary eye fixed on their ally.”* - Richelle E. Goodrich

Fred moaned in pain when he woke up. He looked around an unfamiliar room dazed, and confused.

“Where am I?” he asked.

Fred slowly got out of the bed. He exited the bedroom and made his way into a hallway. From downstairs, Fred heard Kat’s distinctive laugh. He walked downstairs, his eyes wide open in disbelief. Kat grinned.

“Look who finally woke up.”

“Where am I?”

“Welcome to my crib.”

“How did I get here?” Fred asked, holding his face.

“I was going to leave your homophobic ass laid out in the parking lot, then I realized that if I wanna get Juanita's killer I'm a need your help.”

“Do you have any ice? My face is fucking swollen,” said Fred in agony.

“The ice is in the freezer and there's a sandwich bag on the counter for you.”

Fred opened the freezer and grabbed the ice tray. He poured the ice into a plastic bag and sealed it, then placed the ice bag directly on his swollen face.

“My face feels like it was hit by a truck.”

Kat started to chuckle.

“Fuck you!” shouted Fred.

“If you can raise your voice you better make sure you can raise your fist,” Kat opened up her laptop and booted it up.

“Do you want to see what was on that USB that I gave you last night?”

“Ok, bring it over here,” Fred ordered.

“Nigga, my name ain't Jeffrey and you ain't the Fresh Prince! Bring your ass over here,” Kat barked.



Fred sighed loudly, then made his way over to the couch, sitting on the other end. Kat rolled her eyes, then moved closer to him. Fred moved further away from her.

“Listen, I'm not going to hit you if that's what you think I'm goin' to do,” Kat said.

Fred moved closer to Kat. He read every detail on her computer screen.

“Holy shit!” Fred yelled.

“What happened?”

“Juanita's murder has to be linked to this case that she was investigating.”

“I was thinking the same thing because she kept talking about how she could finally nail the police department for all the dirty shit they've done.”

Fred nodded in agreement.

“Hey, when the case was happening was this evidence introduced?”

“The articles I read about the case don't mention any of the evidence that Juanita dug up.”

“We need to find out if there's anyone who knows why this evidence wasn't introduced in court during the case.”

“The person that would probably know anything is the D.A. that was handling that case,” Kat replied.

“What makes you say that?” asked Fred.

“Not long before we met at the courthouse, Juanita went to the D.A.'s office and gave her the evidence to use so she could convict that cop that shot the kid.”

“Who knows how high this shit goes,” said Fred.

“You're right. You should go down to the D.A.'s office and see what you can find out.”

“What are you going to be doing?”

“Looking through this and seeing if anybody in the hood knows anything,” Kat answered.

Kat and Fred stared each other down after they got up from the couch. Neither was sure they could trust the other, but

they would have to partner anyway because Juanita deserved justice.

“Can you drive me to my car?” Fred asked.

“I got you. Let’s go.”

## CHAPTER 25: “Paying it forward”

*“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”-Angela Davis.*

The birds were chirping, a breeze was blowing, and the sun was beaming as a purple and gold Rolls Royce Phantom pulled into “Forbidden Pleasures’ parking lot.” Stack Bundles’ “The Way I Feel” was pumping through the Phantom’s speakers so loudly that you could hear it a block away. Odell, an African-American man in his early fifties dressed in a purple Armani men’s dress suit, parked his Phantom in the lot outside of Forbidden Pleasures. He flamboyantly emerged from his car and strutted, towards the club’s entrance.

Odell waved to the members of the Street Disciple Gangsters that were posted around the club. A few Street Disciple Gangsters waved back while some just gave him a head nod. The walls in the hallway that led to the dance floor were decorated with pictures of African-American LGBTQ+ icons. Odell nodded with appreciation at the icons' pictures as he strolled through his club. He smiled with pride as he watched a large group of LGBTQ+ community members, African-Americans and Latinos, men and women teenagers, adults,

and the elderly, all waiting in line to get tested for STIs. He had arranged for the medical providers to provide these services at his club because he wanted his community to have fun, but stay as safe as possible while doing so.

“That's right. Make sure y'all get tested for those STI's! Remember y'all, knowing is half the battle!”

Some people on line snapped their fingers as Odell walked over to the bar.

“Good morning, Tatiana. How are you doing today?” Odell asked with a smile.

“I'm good, but I want to ask you something,” Tatiana whispered.

“What do you want to know?”

“Why do you keep having everyone tested every week?”

“My club is more than just a place where we all shake our asses to the latest songs. This is a safe haven for our community.”

Tatiana grinned. “That's dope to see you paying it forward.”

“Listen, honey, us gays, trans, lesbians, and bisexuals have got to stick together.”

“You’re right about that,” said Tatiana as Odell moonwalked into his office and closed the door behind him.

## CHAPTER 26: “Seeking the Truth”

*“Truth cannot be hidden behind evil forever.”*-African proverb.

Rain drops were pouring down on Sinville while Fred parked his car in the parking lot of the District Attorney’s office. Fred had kept Juanita’s flash drive in a small plastic bag on his passenger side seat. It was time for him to find out why the D.A. did not use this evidence in court. Fred placed the USB inside his pocket, grabbed his umbrella, and exited his vehicle.

“I have to do this for Juanita,” Fred opened up the umbrella and jogged towards the entrance.

Leila Atkins was at her desk going through some case files on her computer. She rolled her eyes when her office phone began to ring. After four rings, she answered the call.

“Hello?”

“Ms. Atkins, a man by the name of Fred Thomas is here to see you,” said her Receptionist.

“Fred who?”

The receptionist responded, “He's the fiancé of Juanita Cousins.” Leila froze, overcome with anxiety.

“Should I—”

Leila cut her receptionist off mid-sentence, “Send him in.”

Fred entered Atkins office with a slight smile on his face. The District Attorney extended her hand to Fred, giving him a firm handshake.

“Good morning, Mr. Thomas. Let me start by saying that I am terribly sorry for your loss.”

“Thank you so much for your kind words,” Fred replied in a low voice.

Leila Atkins sat behind her desk. Fred took a seat across from her.

“Now how can I help you today?” Atkins asked.

“I wanted to know how the investigation into my wife's murder is coming along.”

“Well, at the moment we don't have any leads, but we're still in the early stages of this investigation. Don't worry. We



won't stop until we find her killer,” Atkins nervously explained.

Fred nodded. He pulled out the flash drive from the plastic bag.

“I read an article in the newspaper about the case that Juanita was heavily involved in. How come the evidence that Juanita gave to you wasn't used in court?”

“The computer with the evidence on it was stolen prior to the Darrell Brown case.”

Fred shot the District Attorney a cutting look.

“Ok. Well, this here is a flash drive with the same evidence that she gave to you before.”

He placed the flash drive onto her desk.

“Mr. Thomas, I appreciate your dedication and determination; however, you have to trust the system and let it work at its own pace.”

“The system is what Juanita was fighting against and you're telling me that I should trust it?”

Fred snatched the flash drive and put the plastic bag back into his pocket. He heads towards the door.

“Thank you for the meeting with me on such short notice.”

Fred slammed the door shut. Atkins quickly dialed a number on her cell phone.

“Listen, I think Fred Thomas may be on to us. I need you to handle this because this can't be traced back to me.

Remember, if I go down all of you are going down with me!”

She disconnected the call.

## CHAPTER 27: “A Bigot Meets His Match”

*“Hatred corrodes the vessel in which, it is stored.”*- Chinese Proverb.

Two clippers buzzed as they reshaped the appearance of the customers who had entered “Rusty’s Barbershop” for haircuts. Rusty’s was the oldest Black owned business in the entire city of Sinville. Despite running a barbershop, Rusty had lost his hair decades ago and now kept what had once been a proud Afro smoothly shaved down to an eighth of an inch. Rusty was now was 71 years old. He was proud that at his age he still was cutting hair. Mark was one of Rusty’s employees. He too was cutting a client’s hair. Mark kept on his Beats by Dre wireless headphones to block out the conversations whenever they got a bit more ridiculous than he could deal with.

Three customers waited for their turns on the bench. George was a slim African-American man, in his forties, Henry was an obese Jamaican-American man, in his mid-fifties, and Tony was, a tall African-American man who just turned fifty.

“One thing I can't stand is how all these batty boys are taking over the world. I swear the Illuminati want to stop the

population from growing. I mean it's all over the TV now,” Henry said.

“They got the young boys turned out crazy! They got separate bathrooms for the transsexuals and shit now,” George laughed.

“Back in the day if yo' ass was a homo, dyke, or nigga-bitch you kept your faggot ass in the closet where you belonged!” Tony added.

Rusty, his elderly client, and Mark all shook their heads. Mark turned on his wireless headphones and returned his attention back to his client's hair. When Kat entered the barbershop, everyone turned their attention to her. Mark took off his headphones.

Rusty smiled. “How are you doing, sweetheart?”

“I'm good, Rusty. How about you?”

“I'm doing fine. Just cutting some hair.”

“I hear you, get that money!”

Kat gave Rusty a hug and a kiss on the cheek. She then walked towards Mark. They did their Street Disciple Gangsters handshake.

“What's up with you?” Mark asked.

“Ain't shit. Just tryin' to get this tape-up.”

“Good thing you had an appointment. Also, I'm sorry to hear about your girl Juanita.”

“Thanks, homie. Whoever did that shit is gonna get it back ten times worse.”

Kat placed her umbrella to the side and hung her jacket up on the coat rack. Tony, Henry, and George stared at her as if she were from another planet. Mark finished up with his client. The client passed Mark a twenty-dollar bill and then left the barbershop. Kat sat in his place. George, Tony, and Henry started to whisper to themselves as they continued to stare. Mark put the cape around Kat's neck.

“Ok, Kat, what are we doing?”

“I'm just getting a tape-up with the razor.”

“Heard you.”

Kat's phone began to vibrate. She checked her text messages and typed out a text back. Mark sprayed disinfectant on his clippers. He started shaping up Kat's hairline with his Andis T-Outliner clipper.

“Yo, Mark, I thought I was next. What happened?” asked George.

“She had an appointment,” Mark replied.

“That's that bullshit, Mark!”

Mark clenched his teeth. “Fuck are you talkin' about?”

“I mean all of a sudden some dyke comes strolling through the door and she gets the easy pass to the chair before me,” George shouted.

“Word, let me find out you down with the rainbow gang,” Henry added.

“Shit, Mark might be in the closet his damn self,” Tony scoffed.

“What she probably needs is some good dick. I mean you know with these carpet munchers that's what they be missin,” said George.

George, Henry, and Tony all started chuckling. Mark stopped cutting Kat's hair. Kat pulled out her .40 caliber and aimed it at the three homophobic men.

“Oh shit! Please don't shoot us!” George whined.

“We was just playin!” Henry said.

“We're really sorry!” cried Tony.

“Yeah, I bet y'all pussy-ass niggas is sorry! I want all three you niggas to strip down to your underwear right now!” Kat demanded as she aimed her .40 cal at the center of George's chest.

George, Henry, and Tony immediately stripped off their clothes one item at a time in front of everybody.

“Hurry the fuck up!” said Kat.

George, Henry, and Tony were down to their underwear. Kat waved her gun at them.

“Now drop yo' clothes to the side over here,” she demanded.

George, Henry, and Tony submissively tossed their clothes to the side.

“Now be some good bitches and go run outside in the rain before I start busting my gun!” Kat growled.

George, Henry, and Tony zipped out of the barbershop faster than Kat thought was possible for three middle aged out of shape men.

“Sorry about that y’all.”

Kat tucked her gun back in her waist band.

“Shit, I’m glad they gone.” said Rusty.

Mark laughed. “Kat, you crazy as hell.”

“You already know what I’m about.”

Kat sat back down in the chair. Mark continued right where he left off with Kat's haircut.



## CHAPTER 28: “War cry”

*“Death is a robe everyone has to wear.”*-African Proverb.

The grey sky hovered over Sinville Cemetery as Fred stood in front of Juanita's tombstone with a single red rose in his hand. He placed the rose on her tombstone.

“I miss you each and every day. I swear to God whoever took you away from me is going to pay for it!”

Tears began to stream down Fred's face. Out of the blue, a bouquet of red roses was placed on top of Juanita's tombstone. Fred turned around in a panic. He calmed down once he saw that it was Kat.

“My bad. I didn't mean to scare you.”

“It's ok. How's everything with you?”

“I'm hangin' in there. How about you?”

“Taking it one day at a time,” Fred replied.

“You texted me and said that you had something important to tell me.”

“I went by the District Attorney's office yesterday.”

“Ok. What did you find out?”

“She told me to let the system work. You and I both know the cops aren't trying to find Juanita's killer.”

“We're goin' to have to take out possibly an entire police force, plus the D.A., the cop who shot that kid, and anybody else tied to this,” Kat said.

“It definitely looks like that. I completely understand if you don't want to help me, especially with how much of an asshole I've been to you since the moment we met.”

Kat extended her hand out to Fred. He breathed heavily for a second before finally giving her a firm handshake. Kat pulled Fred in close to her as she squeezed his hand hard.

“I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing this for Juanita. If any homophobic shit comes out of your mouth around me I'll put your ass where they won't find you. Are we clear?”

Fred moaned in agony.

“Yes! Now please let me go!”

Kat released Fred's hand causing him to stumble.

“You notice those niggas over there?” she asked.

Fred turned around. Boyd and three other assassins, all wearing similar black trench coats were standing in the distance.

“Get down!” Kat shouted.

Fred and Kat tried to hide behind some nearby tombstones. Boyd and his men began to fire. Their shots began to chip away at the tombstones.

“Stop! Men, spread out!” Boyd instructed.

Kat pulled out her .40 caliber from her waistband. She removed the safety.

“You strapped?”

“No.”

Kat reached down to her left ankle. She pulled out a snub nose .38 and slid it over to Fred.

“You ever shot a gun before?”

“Yeah,” Fred lied.

“Good, take good shots only because I don't have too many bullets on me.”

“You got it.”

“I'll cover you as you make your way towards the exit.”

“Ok. On three.”

“One...two...three!” Kat shouted as she popped up from behind the tombstone and started letting off shots.

“Get down!” Boyd yelled.

Kat nailed one of the assassins in the chest. He fell to the ground dead. Fred began making his way towards the exit, hiding behind another tombstone to evade fire. Boyd rose up from behind a tombstone and fired several shots in Kat's direction. Kat ducked just in time.

“These motherfuckers gon' learn today!” she screamed.

Kat crouched low and started to fire shots to keep the assassins distracted.

“I’m a make a run for it,” Fred attempted a wild dash.

The assassins turned their attention to him as they popped up from their cover. Kat scored hits on two of the assassins, one in the back of the head and the other in the spine. She managed to get Boyd in the shoulder as Fred continued to run away from the shootout.

“I gotta get out of here!” he said as he hauled ass out of the cemetery. Once Fred reached his car, he turned on the ignition and sped off at a hundred miles an hour.

Boyd grabbed his AR-15. He started to blindly fire where he last saw Kat until he heard clicking.

“Fuck!”

Boyd dropped his gun to the ground, then hopped into his van while avoiding Kat's fire. He jammed his key into the ignition and drove off. Kat continued to squeeze the trigger until it was empty.

“We'll meet again, motherfucker!” Kat barked with a crazed look on her face.

The sound of police sirens was getting louder by the second as Kat ran to her car. She jumped in and sped off.

## CHAPTER 29: “Throwin’ Stones”

*“It is the property of fools to be always judging.”* - Thomas Fuller.

Odell was cruising through the Southside of Sinville as Ty Dolla \$ign’s “Don’t Judge Me” played in his car at a volume that could be heard from a block away. When he hit a red light, Odell watched two shirtless muscular men cross the street. He licks his lips as he looked the men up and down with hunger in his eyes. Groaning in frustration, Odell turned his attention away from the hunks to his rear-view mirror after he heard the sound of police sirens. Odell turned on his blinkers and pulled over to the right side of the road. He opened his glove compartment, then placed his license and registration on top of the dashboard and turned down the music. Odell checked his rear-view mirror again and saw Officer Dale and Raymond exit their patrol car. Odell took a deep breath and kept both of his hands on the steering wheel. Dale tapped the glass on Odell’s driver side window. Odell slowly rolled his window down.

“What seems to be the problem, officers?” Odell asked with a smile.

“We got a call about a robbery in this area and your vehicle fits the description.”

“Officer, with all due respect, I'm an honest businessman. I don't need to steal from anyone.”

“Sir, I'm going to need you to step out of the car.”

Odell slowly opened the door and stepped out of the car with both of his hands up. Officer Dale began to frisk Odell. Raymond peeked through the car's windows.

“Officer, you got some very soft hands, I must say,” said Odell in a flirtatious manner.

“This flamer's clean!” yelled Officer Dale.

Odell, stared at Dale with a puzzled look on his face.

“You look very familiar.”

“What makes you say that?”

“You're the cop that shot that little boy, aren't you?”



“That's right, and if you don't want to take a dirt nap like him I suggest you get your fruity ass back in your car and go home,” Officer Dale hissed.

Odell rolled his eyes at Officer Dale, then reentered his car and slowly drove off.

“You see that, Ray?” Dale laughed. “That's how you put fear in these thugs.”

Raymond stared his partner down.

“I don't like Nazis with badges, Dale,” he snarled.

“I can already see that this won't last long,” Dale huffed.

## CHAPTER 30: “Closet Case”

*“Who is inferior and is ashamed of it proves that he really is inferior.”-Chinese Proverb.*

The night was young as Tatiana and Kareem laid naked in bed. Ella Mai’s “Trip” is playing in the background.

“It’s been such a long time since we’ve last been together,” Tatiana said with a smile as she moved closer to Kareem.

“I’m not gon’ hold you. I needed that my damn self. That ass been calling me.”

Kareem sat up in bed and put his pants on.

“Hey baby, why are you leaving?” Tatiana asked.

“I got to take care of some shit.”

“Hey, why don’t you come to the club with me this weekend?”

“Why would I do that?”

“Are you ashamed of me? What's the problem? Is it that you don't want people to know that you're sleeping with a trans woman?”

Kareem grabbed Tatiana by her throat and pinned her against the headboard.

“Bitch, if you tell anybody about what me and you got going on I will chop yo' dick off and shove it in your mouth!”

Tears streamed down both sides of Tatiana's face. Kareem finished putting on his clothes. He placed his green bandana in his back pocket. Kareem stared at Tatiana with disgust, then walked out of her bedroom. As soon as he left, Tatiana jumped up to lock the door, making sure to fasten the chain on it. Afterwards, she dropped down to the floor and started sobbing. Tatiana had hoped for love, but all she received was abuse from Kareem.

## CHAPTER 31: “Seeds”

*“Ask no questions and hear no lies.”*-English Proverb.

Fred was behind his desk at his office staring at pictures of him and Juanita on his iPhone when he heard a knock on the door.

“Come in!” he yelled.

Taylor entered Fred's office. He closed the door behind him.

“I just wanted to know, how you are doing, Fred. Are you alright?”

“I'm taking it one day at a time, sir. I just needed to get back to work to keep my mind occupied.”

“Listen, if you need anything don't be afraid to give me a call.”

“Thank you.”

Taylor patted Fred on the back, then left his employees office. Fred began to pack his bag when his cell phone started to vibrate. He grabbed his phone and saw that Kat had sent

him a text message. Fred sat on his desk as he and Kat began to exchange a rapid series of text messages.

“Do you like seafood?” Kat texted.

“Yeah, why do you ask?” Fred sent as a reply.

“I’m fryin’ up some shrimp, lobster, fish cakes, and steaming some mixed vegetables.”

“Sounds good, my place or yours?”

“My place at eight.”

“Ok, see you then.”

“Peace,” texted Kat.

Fred grabbed the last of his things. He was about to leave the office for the day when he noticed a piece of paper on the floor.

“What’s that doing there?” Fred picked up the flyer and examined it. The flyer was a promotion for Odell and Kat’s nightclub. He placed it in his bag.

“I’ll ask Kat about this tonight,” Fred said as he exited the office, locking the door behind him.

## CHAPTER 32: “Expect the unexpected”

*“The axe forgets, but the tree remembers.”*-African Proverb.

Boyd pushed a shopping cart down the cereal aisle. He pulled a box of cereal down from the shelf, inspected it, and then placed it back on the shelf. Boyd continued down the aisle. He found another box of cereal and inspected it. This brand had far less sugar. He placed the cereal box in his shopping cart. Boyd noticed Kat at the other end of the supermarket. When Boyd saw that no other customers were nearby, he screwed on the silencer on his nine millimeter.

Boyd crept out of the cereal aisle and started to follow a light-skinned woman with braids who was in her mid-twenties. When Boyd was confident that the woman would not be able to react, he violently shoved her to the floor and whipped out his pistol, aiming it at her skull.

“What the fuck?” Boyd asked as he stared in disbelief. It wasn’t Kat.

“Please don’t shoot me!” the woman pleaded.

“Get the fuck out of here!”

On command, the woman ran away from Boyd. He placed his pistol back into his holster. When he turned around, Kat socked him in his jaw, causing Boyd to stumble backwards.

“You were lookin' for me, motherfucker? Well, now you found me!”

Kat picked Boyd up by his neck and punched him in the face. He fell into the produce section on top of the oranges and bananas. A security guard rushed over and tried to grab Kat's left wrist.

“Ms. Stop resisting!” the security guard ordered.

“Get yo motherfuckin' hands off of me!”

Kat kicked the security guard in the balls. He fell to the floor in anguish. Kat turned her attention back to Boyd.

“Ah shit!” Boyd shouted.

“You look a little dry, let me help you with that,” Kat said with an evil smile.

She grabbed a bottle of baby lotion off the shelf and sprayed it into Boyd's face. Boyd tried to reach for his gun but, Kat's hard right hand and forearm put a halt to his efforts.



“I hope you're not gettin' tired. I'm just gettin' started.”

Kat followed as he stumbled his way towards the cold storage area. She picked up a carton of eggs.

“You want some eggs?”

Kat started tossing eggs one by one at Boyd. Boyd grabbed a huge bag of flour and smacked Kat with it. She fell face first to the floor.

“Fuck!” yelled Kat.

“Playtime’s over, bitch!”

Boyd picked Kat up by her neck. He carried her to the walk-in freezer.

“Get your ass in there, little bitch!”

Boyd tossed Kat inside of the walk-in freezer and slammed the door. He double checked to make sure that the freezer was locked. Boyd stumbled his way back out towards the cereal aisle, not too far away from the refrigerator with the beverages, stopping for a second to catch his breath. Kat stepped out of one of the refrigerator doors. She was drinking a small gallon of milk.

“Hey. Got milk?” she asked.

Boyd's eyes dilated as he whipped out his pistol. Before he could fire a shot, Kat hit him in the face with the milk container.

“Ah shit!” Boyd cried.

Kat smacked the gun out of Boyd's hand, and then kicked him in his nuts. Boyd fell on his back. She reached into his pocket and grabbed his cell phone.

“See you later, fuck boy!”

Kat could hear the police sirens in the distance. She gave him one last kick to the face. Kat had knocked Boyd out cold. With that accomplished, she rushed out of the supermarket.

### CHAPTER 33: “Cleaning House”

*“A secret for two is soon a secret for nobody.”*- Algerian Proverb.

Fred sat in his parked car across the street from Kat's house. He called her on his cell phone, but only reached Kat's voicemail.

“Where in the hell is she? It's almost nine,” Fred said as looked at his watch.

Fred stepped out of his car and crossed the street. When Fred turned around, he saw headlights and heard DJ Premier & Casanova's “Wat u said?” blasting from the speakers of Kat's car. He made his way to the front door of Kat's house, folding his arms in displeasure. Kat parked her car, then stumbled out of her vehicle.

“What's good, Fred? Sorry about the delay. I bumped into our friend from the cemetery at the supermarket.”

Fred noticed several minor cuts on Kat's body. “You look like you just fought Deontay Wilder. Let me help you with those bags.”

Fred grabbed the groceries. “Wait, so you actually bought some food at the supermarket after you scrapped with our friend there?”

“Nah, I went to a different place after. Let me get this door.”

Kat opened her front door. Once inside her home, she turned off the alarm system and locked the door, then sat in a chair at the kitchen table. Fred brought the grocery bags inside.

“Hey Kat, so what happened to you?” Fred asked as he laid Kat’s grocery bags down on the kitchen floor.

“That big tall white motherfucker that I shot it out with at the cemetery happened to be at the same supermarket I was at.”

“What? Aw man, how are we going to deal with all of this?”

“Well, while he and I were throwing hands all over the supermarket, I snatched the motherfucker’s cell phone in the process.”

“That’s good, except we don’t know his pin code,” Fred said.

“I got that covered. I know this hacker that will help me. I’ll see him tomorrow.”

“That's great news. Now let's put these groceries away and get you cleaned up.”

Fred started putting all of Kat's groceries into the refrigerator, kitchen cabinets, and the freezer.

“Where's the first aid kit?” he asked.

“It's in the bathroom upstairs next to my bedroom.”

Fred ran upstairs and made his way to the bathroom. He opened the medicine cabinet and grabbed a box of bandages and a box of alcohol pads. Fred closed the medicine cabinet and started to make his way downstairs. He stopped dead in his tracks after he noticed a picture on the wall.

“What the fuck?”

Fred took a closer look at the picture. It was a family portrait that showed Kat when she was around ten years old. A Puerto Rican woman in her early thirties was holding her. Standing next to her was a younger Pastor Thomas. Fred gritted his teeth as he snatched the picture off the wall. He stormed downstairs, breathing heavy with the picture in his hands.

“Hey Fred, thanks for everything. I really appreciate it.”

“What the fuck is a picture of my father doing in your house?”

“You went through my shit?”

“Yeah, I went through your shit! Why in the fuck do you have a picture of my father in your house?”

Kat kept shaking her head. “Fred, right now is not the time to fuck with me.”

“I swear on my mother's grave that I will mop the floor with your little ass all through this house if you don't answer my question.”

“You want the truth?”

“Yeah! I do!”

Fred slammed the picture on the table. The glass shattered all over the table and floor. Fred got directly up in Kat's face, itching for a fight.

Kat stood up and looked Fred right in the eyes. “The reason why I have that picture in my crib is because he's my father too!” she shouted.

Fred froze. His turned blank. After a minute, he grabbed a seat at the kitchen table.

“What the hell? I can't believe that we're actually brother and sister.”

“It's funny that this Bible-thumping hypocrite talks all this religious bullshit and got a whole side family instead of just a side bitch.”

“God bless the dead. My mother used to always tell me that the closer you are to the church the further you are from God.”

Fred paused for a few seconds, then asked the question.

“Where is your mother?”

“She passed away from cancer four months ago,” Kat said in a low voice.

She took a seat at the kitchen table, careful to avoid sitting on any of the shattered glass, then wiped the tears from her face. Fred hugged his sister tight.

“It's all good, sis. I got you.”

“Thanks, bro. It really means a lot to hear that from you.”

“After we get those guys that killed Juanita, we're going to have a word with our dad.”

“You ain't never lie,” Kat said.

Fred pulled out the flyer for the Forbidden Pleasures nightclub and placed it on the table away from the shards of glass. Once Kat realized what it was, she asked Fred

“How did you get a flyer to my night club?”

“Wait a minute, you own this club?”

“I'm part owner of it.”

“I found it on the floor of my office earlier,” Fred said.



“Someone at your job must've been at the club recently for them to have that flyer, since me and the other owner just put it out last week.”

“I think I have an idea of who might've dropped this in my office, but I'm a find out for myself.”

“Whoever it is don't judge them, just embrace who they are.”

“I will,” said Fred.

## **CHAPTER 34: “A Hypocrites Tongue Tells A Thousand Lies”**

*“All are not saints, who go to church.”-Italian Proverb.*

Odell was examining some paperwork. He stops when he heard yelling coming from outside his nightclub. He looked out the window and saw his security and the Street Disciple Gangsters holding back a large group of protesters led by Pastor Thomas. Odell stormed out of his office and made his way downstairs.

“I already called the cops. They said they will be here shortly,” Tatiana said.

“Thank you, baby. Stay here no matter what's going on outside,” Odell instructed.

“Be careful, Odell.”

Odell nodded, then walked towards the entrance. He pushed past his security and stood toe to toe with Pastor Thomas and his congregation.

“Why did you bring these tacky-ass hypocrites with you to my club on a Friday morning?” Odell asked with a scowl on his face.

“Today, we are here to save the souls of those who have engaged in demonic acts of sodomy!” Pastor Thomas preached.

Odell rolled his eyes and folded his arms. He stared Pastor Thomas down.

“You know what's so sad about homophobic assholes like you and your congregation? What's sad is that y'all sit here and call us gay, lesbian, trans, and bisexual people demons while y'all go rapin' little boys!” Odell roared.

“Do you know that unrepentant homosexuals led Our Heavenly Father to destroy not just Sodom and Gomorrah, but many other civilizations? We know it!” Pastor Thomas barked.

“Negro please! Maybe us Black LGBTQ citizens shouldn't march and protest when you straight Black folks are gettin' shot dead by the police. Maybe we shouldn't march and demand justice for y'all ignorant and hateful asses anymore since you feel that way!”

Pastor Thomas and his congregation all watched Odell with hatred on their faces. Some began to move towards him just as the police arrived. Raymond stepped out of his police cruiser. He made his way through the crowd towards Odell and Pastor Thomas. Raymond questioned both men.

“What seems to be the problem here?”

“The problem is that these hypocritical assholes are on my property spreading hate!”

“God, please help this sick man and his evil perversions!”

Raymond sighed as he squeezed in between Odell and Pastor Thomas.

“Look, the reverend and his congregation have the right to protest here as long as they stay on the sidewalk.”

“You hear that?” Pastor Thomas laughed. “Me and my congregation have the right to preach God's word anywhere and everywhere.”

Raymond folded his arms, annoyed by both men's antics.

“Do you have a permit to protest?”

Pastor Thomas hung his head low. “No we don’t officer.”

“Then you and your congregation are going to have to leave”

“Odell, this is not over!” Pastor Thomas swore.

“Bring it on, bitch!”

Odell snapped his fingers as he watched Pastor Thomas and his congregation leave his property.

## CHAPTER 35: “A Favor for a Friend”

*“A true friend is a special gift.”*-African Proverb.

Kat knocked on the door of a brown house on Donald Goines Boulevard.

“I called this nigga like five minutes ago,” Kat said as she checked her cell phone.

Finally, Kat heard the locks turning. She smiled, relieved that he was home. Skizzy, a chubby, albino, in his mid-thirties, opened the door.

“Sorry about that. I just came from the bathroom.”

“I hope you washed your hands,” Kat said.

“I always wash my hands.”

Kat entered Skizzy’s home. Skizzy closed the door behind her. Kat began to look around the place. She had known Skizzy for a while, but this was her first time inside his home.

“You really keep this place clean I see.”

Skizzy gestured towards the couch. After Kat took a seat, he joined her.

“Thank you. What do you need?” Skizzy asked.

“I need you to unlock this phone for me.”

Kat handed Boyd's cell phone to Skizzy.

“Ok, give me like fifteen minutes,” Skizzy got up from the couch and headed towards a back room.

“Take your time.”

Fifteen minutes later, Skizzy opened the door and returned to his living room with Boyd's cell phone in hand.

“I cracked the code and scrambled the tracker so they won't find your location.”

Skizzy gave the phone to Kat.

“Good lookin' out. How much do I owe you?”

“You don't have to pay me.”

“There's gotta be something you want?”

Skizzy smiled. “Well, how about if you hook me up with a beautiful woman you haven't fucked yet? That would be great.”

“I have someone in mind that would be perfect for you, playboy,” Kat said with a modest smile.

“Sounds like a plan. Just hit me up when you're ready to introduce me to her.”

Kat gave Skizzy a pound and a hug, then went on her way.



## CHAPTER 36: “Darkness Surfaces to the Light”

*“Secrets have a way of making themselves felt, even before you know there’s a secret.”- Jean Ferris.*

Fred pulled up into the parking lot of “Forbidden Pleasures.” After he found a parking spot he killed the engine and headed towards the line of club goers waiting to enter.

“Well, Taylor, let's see if you're here.”

Once the bouncer let Fred into the club, he watched as almost everybody in the club was grooving on the dancefloor to Big Freedia’s “Play.” Fred took a seat at the bar and glanced around the club. He was trying to get over his homophobia, but it still felt a bit weird to be in a club like this.

“This is going to be a long night,” he said to himself.

“What can I get you to drink?” Tatiana asked.

“Do you have any soda?” Fred replied.

“We have Pepsi, Sprite, and Coke.”

“I'll take the Sprite.”

“That'll be two-fifty.”

Fred handed Tatiana a twenty-dollar bill.

“Keep the change.”

Tatiana smiled. “Thank you.”

Fred took a few sips of his Sprite. After a couple of minutes, Fred couldn't believe his eyes. His homophobic boss was holding hands with a flamboyant gay man and they were both making their way towards the bar. Fred turned back around; trying to avoid being spotted, but the bar had only a small number of seats. If they sat down, it was guaranteed that Taylor and his partner would see him.

Exactly as Fred feared, Taylor and his man both grabbed seats at the bar. Tatiana poured soda in Taylor's glass and rum in his partner's glass. Taylor gazed with affections in the man's eyes. It was only a matter of time before they noticed him. Fred thought it was best to get this over with and find out what was up. He tapped Taylor on the shoulder. Taylor turned around. He looked shocked to see Fred here at Forbidden Pleasures.

“So I see all of that homophobic shit that you were saying at work was nothing more than a front.”

Odell folded his arms and focused his attention on Taylor.

“Who is this? Is what he's saying true?”

“This is Fred Thomas. He’s an employee at my real estate firm. I said some hateful things about our community to hide who I was,” Taylor acknowledged.

He shook his head and sighed deeply.

“Fred, what are you doing here?” Taylor whispered.

Fred pulled out the flyer for that he found in his office and showed it to Taylor.

“I found this on the floor in my office the other day. I never saw it before, so I knew it had to be from you.”

“So you're sure that's the only reason that you came here tonight?” Taylor asked.

“I beg your pardon?”

“Are you gay?”

“No. But you are. Why’d you lie?” Fred asked.

“Fred, you're a great worker, but you also were very homophobic. I chose to stay in the closet to keep things running smoothly in the office.”

“Mr. Hall, I'm not here to judge you. It's not like I'm perfect either. I was homophobic like my father until I recently learned the error of my ways.”

Fred looked to his left and smiled. Kat was heading his way.

“What’s good, sis?”

“Nothin' much. I got that phone unlocked that we talked about last night.”

“That’s music to my ears.”

“Kat, baby, where have you been?” Odell asked, smiling with open arms.

Kat grinned. “I've been getting myself together.”

“Let's all go upstairs and have ourselves a little conversation. Taylor, excuse me for a few minutes, sweetie.”

Odell kissed Taylor on the lips, then he walked with Kat and Fred up to the office. Once inside, they all sat down on the couch. Odell was still in shock from his co-owner's revelation.

“So Kat, this is your brother and last night y'all just found this out?”

“Yes!” Kat and Fred said in unison.

“I'm sorry for your loss. I know both of you loved Juanita deeply,” Odell replied in a low tone.

“Thank you,” replied Fred in a low voice.

“Thanks, man,” Kat said in a similar tone.

There was a hard knock on the door that startled everyone.

“Come in!” Odell shouted.

When the door opened, Tatiana stood in the entrance.

“Hey baby, what do you need?”

“I just need to speak with Kat for a minute,” Tatiana responded.

Kat got up and joined Tatiana in the hallway. Kat closed the door for privacy.

“What’s good?”

“I got a problem with this guy I've been with for a while. He's threatening to kill me if I tell anyone about our relationship” explained Tatiana with tears in her eyes.

“What is his name and what does he look like?” asked Kat.

Tatiana pulled up a picture on her phone of Kareem and showed Kat his photo.

“Get the fuck out of here!” smiled Kat.

“I hope you can help me.”

“Don’t worry, I got you,” said Kat.

## CHAPTER 37: “A Fools Brazen Ignorance”

*“You can beat a fool half to death but you can’t beat the foolishness out of him.”-African Proverb.*

Al’s Steak House was packed with customers tonight. Lieutenant Sanders, Officer Dale, Ronald, and Boyd sat a table in the far corner of the restaurant by the bathroom, doing their best to remain unnoticed and keeping their voices low to prevent others from overhearing their conversation.

“Ok Boyd, tell us what happened after you and this lesbian bitch fought at the supermarket the other night,” Sanders said.

Boyd held his chin, still feeling the effects from the fight. “This dyke bitch caught me off guard. We fought all over the supermarket. Next thing I know I’m out cold and my cell phone is gone. I can’t fucking believe it!”

“So you mean to tell me that you got your ass whipped and your phone stolen by the same dyke that killed your men?” Officer Dale laughed.

Boyd was a trained hitman with a long record of confirmed kills dating back to his time as a sniper in the U.S. Marines

MARSOC Raiders. He was not used to and did not appreciate mockery. Boyd got up and flipped the table over. Sanders and Ronald fell backwards. They both stood up and dusted themselves off.

“I bet I can whip your ass!” Boyd hissed at Dale.

Dale rolled his eyes. “Please. You couldn't beat a woman, so how the fuck are you going to deal with me?”

Boyd bodied up against Dale. Dale gave Boyd a shove.

“Knock it off. People are watching,” Sanders instructed, although the low profile that he had been trying to have everyone maintain had been blown.

“Cut that freshman year stuff out!” Ronald shouted.

The entire restaurant stared at Boyd and Dale. Some customers had begun to exit, hoping to avoid any trouble. Al makes his way over to Dale and Boyd.

“If you two don't stop this bullshit I will throw both of you out!”

Sanders pulled Dale away from Boyd.



“Ron's right. You guys know that this is exactly what those two savages want us to do,” remarked Sanders.

“Get off me! I had enough of this shit!” Dale exclaimed.

He walked out of the restaurant in a huff. Sanders and Ronald both shook their heads in dismay. Boyd sat back down, eager to return to the matter at hand.

## CHAPTER 38: “True colors”

*“Credibility is someone else’s idea of what I should be doing.”-Paul Stanley.*

Tatiana was on her leather sofa watching a comedy talk show when she heard a knock at her door.

“Just a minute!”

She looked through the peephole. Kareem was standing on the other side. Tatiana took a deep breath, then opened the door.

“What’s up, Kareem?”

Kareem charged in and locked the door behind him. Tatiana slowly backed away.

Kareem said, “Let’s get this over with, I got shit to do.”

“I wanted to talk to you about our relationship.”

“Relationship? We ain’t a couple! We’re just bedroom buddies, nothin’ more nothin’ less.”

“Why do you feel ashamed to be seen with me in public?”

Tatiana questioned with tears in her eyes.

“You really wanna know why?”

“Yes!”

“I'm a Street Disciple Gangster. Being caught with a tranny would kill my rep.”

“So you'd rather live a lie than to live in truth? Now that's sad.”

“Whatever, I just know you better not tell anybody about us,” Kareem threatened.

“Or what are you gonna do about it?”

Kareem shot Tatiana a nasty look. Tatiana backed up onto her couch.

“Please don't hurt me, Tatiana” pleaded.

“I think I'm a dust yo' ass now so I can make sure you don't tell nobody anything.”

Kareem lifted up his shirt, cocked back his nine- millimeter, and aimed it Tatiana. He was about to pull the trigger when Kat shoved a Beretta into the back of his head.

“Put the gun down on the floor before I clap yo' ass,” Kat commanded.

Kareem slowly dropped his gun to the floor.

“Now slide it over to me,” Kat instructed.

Kareem slid his nine-millimeter with his right foot over to where Kat was standing.

“So Kat, you gon' betray me over some he-she?”

“You know I never liked yo' ass since I came home. You made it damn near impossible for me to join the gang because I'm a lesbian.”

“Look, I was only hard on you because you and I both know that the streets don't respect faggots, dykes, and trannies,” spat Kareem.

Kat slapped him with her Beretta. Kareem fell to the floor.

“Shit!” cried Kareem.

“If anything happens to Tatiana, then I'll make sure everybody in the streets know about you and her,” Kat said.

“Nobody’s gonna believe you.”

Kat pressed the play button on her phone. A recording of Tatiana and Kareem's conversation started to play. Kareem stared at Kat in total shock. Kat stopped the recording.

“I think everyone will believe me. Now get the fuck out of here!” barked Kat.

Tatiana held the door open for Kareem. Kareem grilled Tatiana and Kat before he left. Tatiana slammed the door behind him and locked it.

“Kat, thank you so much,” cried Tatiana.

“Are you ok?”

“Yes, I'm good. How can I repay you?”

“I got an idea, but it'll benefit you more than it will me,” Kat said with a smile.

## **CHAPTER 39: “The system is shady and needs to be taken over”**

*“If you see wrong doing or evil and say nothing against it, you become its victim.”-African Proverb.*

Leila Atkins was sipping on some wine while watching a trashy reality television program. She shook her head at the manufactured drama on the screen. The buzz of a cell phone notification caught her attention. Leila checks the phone. The text message that she received had an embedded audio file. Atkins pressed play on the audio, her wine glass still in her free hand. She started to tremble, then dropped her wine glass, as she heard audio of her and Officer Dale’s phone conversation about Juanita.

“No fucking way! Who the fuck is this?” Atkins screamed.

The unknown number that had sent the audio file sent Atkins a second text.

“Meet me in front of your office in the next hour alone! If there's a single cop around, then this audio will be leaked to the press in the morning.”

The District Attorney immediately threw on the first outfit that she could put together.

“This has got to be a fucking nightmare!” Atkins cried, as she hauled ass out of her apartment.

Thirty minutes later Atkins parked her car by the entrance. She was sweating bullets as she looked around to see if anyone was there. No one was around. Atkins started to paced back and forth when her phone began to vibrate. It was a call from the unknown number. She answers her phone.

Atkins answered with a quiver in her voice. “Hello?”

“I see you followed my instructions. Now later on this week you will have a press conference and announce your resignation as District Attorney,” said a strange computerized voice.

Atkins began to cry. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Why are you doing this to me?”

“You took an oath to protect the people of Sinville from criminals and you let greed cloud your vision.”

Atkins buried her face in her hands, not wanting to admit that what she was hearing was real.

“Once you go and announce your resignation you will have no worries whatsoever. Goodbye.”

The caller hung up. Atkins stared at her phone in disbelief. Whoever was doing this, they had some serious dirt. If she didn't resign, her reputation would be destroyed forever. Quite possibly, she might also have to serve time. Atkins returned to her car and drove off. There was nothing more that she could do but give in to this demand.

“They fucked with the wrong one,” Fred said as he drove off.



## CHAPTER 40: “A Clean Slate”

*“Love is a pain killer.”*—African Proverb.

It was a beautiful cool night outside of Serena’s Soul Food restaurant. Tatiana sat at an outdoor table for two. She looked at her watch and folded her arms. The man who Kat had promised she would like was more than ten minutes late. When Tatiana looked up, she saw a sharply dressed albino man standing nearby.

“Excuse me, you wouldn't happen to be Kat's friend Tatiana would you?” Skizzy asked.

“Who wants to know?”

“My name is Skizzy. Kat had told me that you were here for our date.”

“I'm sorry about that. It's been a long week,” Tatiana said in a low voice.

“No need to apologize.”

Skizzy sat down at the table. He waved for a waitress to come over.

“Good evening and welcome to Serena's. Are you two ready to order?”

“I'll have the flounder with cheese grits and whole wheat toast,” Skizzy said.

The Waitress wrote Skizzy's order on her notepad.

“What will you be having, miss?”

“I'll have the catfish with home fries.”

The Waitress wrote Tatiana's order down.

“What will you two have to drink?”

“I'll take some orange juice,” said Skizzy.

“I'll have some water,” said Tatiana.

“You got it. Both of your orders should be ready shortly.”

The waitress grabbed the menus and headed over to the kitchen.

“So tell me, how did you get your name?” Tatiana asked with a smile.

“Everybody calls me Skizzy because I was the nicest rollerblader in Sinville. I even won a few championships.

“Wow! Do you still roller blade?”

“Only on Saturdays.”

“Ok, because I would love to go rollerblading with you,” said Tatiana.

“I would love that too.”

After a satisfying meal at Serena’s, Tatiana and Skizzy walked back to her apartment building.

“I had a great time tonight and we're on for Saturday afternoon, right?” asked Tatiana with a smile.

“Definitely. Saturday at twelve. I'll meet you in front of your place right here.”

“You got it and thanks for walking me home.”

“No problem. I'll see you Saturday. Have a good night,” Skizzy said as he started to walk off.

“Get home safe,” Tatiana replied as she entered her building.

## CHAPTER 41: “The Revolution Is Televised”

*“While revolutionaries are individuals that can be murdered, you cannot kill ideas.”*-Thomas Sankara.

Kat was rolling a joint in her living room while listening to Don Q’s “Yeah Yeah.” The news was on at a low volume in the background. She hit the joint.

“Damn, this Wakanda OG is strong as a motherfucker,” Kat said as she exhaled.

She took a few more pulls, then licked her index finger and placed it over the flame so that she could save the rest of the joint for later. Kat placed the roach in the ashtray and glanced at the television.

“Get the fuck out of here!” shouted Kat.

Kat paused the music and turned up the volume on her television.

“Today, I'm here to announce my resignation as District Attorney of Sinville. I've decided that it's time for this city to have a new face lead the fight for justice. It's time for someone with bold new ideas and solutions to step up to the

plate. With that being said, I just want to thank the citizens of Sinville for everything. You deserve better and will receive better. Thank you,” said former District Attorney Atkins.

Kat relit the roach. She took another pull, and then stubbed it out in the ashtray.

“See bitch, that’s what you get when you do dirt. Juanita probably hauntin’ yo ass right now!” laughed Kat.

## CHAPTER 42: “Society vs. One’s Identity”

*“You can’t stop a flower from blooming and then get mad at it for not feeding the bees.”-Kaylie Love.*

It was a sunny summer day. Tatiana and Skizzy had just finished roller blading. Hungry from the exercise, they stopped at “Alfonso’s Pizza” for a quick bite, still wearing their rollerblades.

“So what are you going to get?” Tatiana asked with a smile.

Skizzy rubbed his belly. “I’m going to get me two regular slices.”

“I’m a get me a veggie slice.”

“You know what, I’m a get me one plain slice and one veggie slice.”

“What made you change your mind?”

“I love being a dough boy, I just wanna try to lose some of this Pillsbury.”

Tatiana laughed. “You’re stupid.”

Skizzy smiled. “I know.” They both made their way to the counter. Skizzy gave the cashier their order. “We’ll have two veggies slices and one plain slice.”

“What will you all have to drink?”

“I’ll take a large orange soda,” said Tatiana.

“I’ll take a large root beer.”

“That’ll be \$14.50.”

Skizzy went to go for his wallet. Tatiana stopped him. She pays for the order.

“This one’s on me.”

“You got it.”

Tatiana took out her wallet from her purse and handed the cashier a twenty. The cashier made change for her. After a few minutes, their pizza and sodas were ready. Skizzy expertly skated over to a nearby table for two with their tray in hand. Tatiana joined him at the table. They both took their rollerblades off and placed them under the table, then started to eat.

“So what do you do for a living?” Tatiana asked.

“I do freelance programming for software companies. I also fix computers on the side as well.”

“Wow, that's very impressive.”

“Yeah, I guess. So what do you do for a living?”

“I'm a bartender at a nightclub.”

“Now that's way more interesting than my job! You must have a ton of cool stories” said Skizzy with a wide smile. Two skinny African-American men in their late thirties began to laugh and point at Tatiana. Skizzy started to grill the men as he stood up from his seat.

“What's so funny?” he asked, a scowl on his face.

“What's funny is that you're sitting here with a he-she.”

“Nigga, you out here trickin' on a tranny! Nigga, go get yourself a real woman with yo' albino ass!”

“Fuck both of you ignorant ashy-ass niggas!” Tatiana barked.



“Fuck you, nigga-bitch and fuck you, tranny lover!” hissed one of the men.

They both stuck their middle fingers up at Skizzy and Tatiana as they exited the pizzeria. Skizzy sat back down and sighed.

“I can understand if you don't want anything to do with me” said Tatiana.

Skizzy gently grabbed her hand and gave Tatiana a passionate kiss on her lips.

“Wow, I wasn't expecting that at all,” she said.

“You're not the first transwoman I dated.”

“Skizzy, you know this isn't going to be easy. The world we live in will make it difficult for you and I.”

“Then we're just going to have to fight the world then,” Skizzy said with a smile as he continued to lovingly hold Tatiana's hand.

## CHAPTER 43: “You Better Have It Covered”

*“Those who dig an evil hole will fall into it.”*-Palestinian Proverb.

Officer Dale and Ronald sat on a couch in the living room of Dale’s cabin in the mountains twenty miles outside of Sinville. Mounted on the wall over the couch was a large taxidermied deer head that Dale had recently shot on a hunting expedition. He liked to joke with his friends that he shot animals both on and off the job; however, now was clearly not the time to horse around.

“Now that Atkins resigned, who's to say that she won't snitch on us?” Dale asked Ronald with panic in his voice.

“I'm gonna talk with her to see where her head is at. I'll get back to you.”

“You better do something! Whatever it is, make it happen fast!”

Officer Dale took a pull off his vape. He exhaled in the air. Dale's cell phone started to ring. He checked the screen. When he saw that it was Sanders, he answered the phone.

“Hey. What's up, Sanders?”

“Have you seen the news?” Sanders asked.

“Yeah, I saw it. I just got through talking to Ronald about it.”

“I hope you two have a plan.”

“He says he's got it all covered.”

“You two better have it covered,” Sanders warned before he hung up.

Dale shook his head in frustration. He was the law. He had been found innocent. His nightmare should have been over, but somehow it seemed like it would never end.

## CHAPTER 44: “A Meeting between the Soulless”

*“Evil people know one another.”-Arabian Proverb.*

Ronald was nursing a glass of water alone at a table for two at Marsha P’s Wall, an upscale restaurant. His frown turned into a wide smile, his eyes completely lighting up, once Leila Atkins arrived at his table.

“Please have a seat. I’m so glad you could make it.”

Atkins sat across from Ronald, eyeing him warily.

“I’ll cut right to the chase. I want to know what was so urgent that you felt the need to call me for this meeting?”

“I called this meeting because my client and his associates are concerned about your press conference the other day.”

“So you called me because you guys think that I’m going to rat you out?”

“You have to admit that you resigning out of the blue does seem suspicious.”

Atkins scowled at Ronald with utter contempt as she rose from her seat.

“Look, you limp dick leprechaun, I'm not going to rat anyone out. I'm off this.”

A sanitation truck was driving down the street as Leila Atkins stormed out of the restaurant. Atkins walked towards her car, opening the driver's side from the street. As she stood in the street, the sanitation truck driver swerved to hit her head on, taking the entire door with the remnants of what remained of Atkins' lifeless body after it was decimated by the truck. Unfazed by the impact, the truck continued on, speeding through a series of red lights.

Boyd flashed his associate in the driver's seat a wicked smile. “Two down, two more to go.”

## CHAPTER 45: “Cold world

*“The fear of death takes away the joy of living.”* - Ukrainian Proverb.

Tatiana and Skizzy cuddled on the couch after they had enjoyed Chinese takeout for dinner. Mario’s “Drowning” echoed in the background. The evening news was on the television.

“That Chinese food was slammin,” said Skizzy.

“I know, right? I just wasn’t in the mood to cook.”

Tatiana giggled. The news switched to the next story.

“Hey Skizzy, can you pause the music and pass me the remote?”

“Sure.”

Skizzy did as asked. Tatiana turned the volume up on the television.

“I am here at the scene of a gruesome murder of an African-American transwoman. Keisha Williams was only twenty-nine years old. Her body was found behind the dumpster at

Al's Steak House with multiple stab wounds to her face and chest. This makes her the eighteenth transwoman of color to be murdered in the United States this year,” reported correspondent Brenda Parker.

Tatiana shut off the television and began to cry. Skizzy put his arm around her.

“Skizzy, why does the world hate us so much?”

“People hate anyone or anything that doesn't fit their idea of what is normal.”

Tatiana folded her arms. “It's so scary out here with politicians not passing any hate crime laws or protections for queer and trans people, particularly us who are Black and Latino.”

“Which is why we have to defend ourselves by any means,” Skizzy proclaimed.

Tatiana sat up, intrigued by Skizzy's point of view. She had seen too many transwomen of color murdered to simply turn the other cheek. “What do you suggest?”

“We could gather up a group of people in our community that know how to use certain weapons and teach others so they can defend themselves.”

“You mean like the Deacons for Defense and Justice?”

“Precisely.”

Tatiana smiled. “I’m with you all the way.”

“Same here. As long as I’m around, I won’t let anyone harm you.”

“I know. Thank you,” Tatiana said as she rested her head against Skizzy’s chest.



## CHAPTER 46: “A Moment of Clarity”

*“Responsibility is the price of greatness.”-Winston Churchill*

It was a humid summer night as Fred and Kat drove to “Justine’s Place”, a bar frequented mostly by LGBTQ Black and brown people. After Fred parked the car outside of the bar, he turned to Kat. He knew that he had acted like a jerk to her and to many other people because of his ignorance. It was time to make amends.

“Hey Kat, I just want you to know that I've learned a lot from you since we met.”

“What did you learn?”

“I learned that judging someone based on their sexuality is no different than someone judging me for the color of my skin.”

“Well shit, it's about time yo’ ass got hip to the game and left the Stone Age,” Kat teased.

Fred smiled. “Hey, don't start with me, Kat. I'm still your big brother.”

Kat folded her arms. “What's that supposed to mean?”

“You don’t want no smoke with me,” Fred joked.

Kat cracked her knuckles. “Listen, the last time you was talkin' like this yo ass woke up with a swollen face.”

“You got lucky.”

“That’s what they all say, bro,” Kat said, with a sly smile.

As the siblings entered the bar, Fred noticed Ronald was at a table drinking alone. He tapped Kat on the shoulder and whispered in her ear.

“Hey Kat, isn't that the lawyer that got Dale off?”

“Yeah, that's definitely him. I never forget a face.”

“I got an idea, sis.”

“I’m all ears, bro.”

Ronald had a wife and two teenage children at home. He and his wife had not made love in over three years. They stopped having sex when Ronald could no longer get an erection. Even when two gorgeous strippers were giving him head, Ronald couldn’t get hard. In high school and college, he had experimented with a few men, always as the top. Ronald was

twisted after having ten drinks at Justine's Place. It helped his confidence, or what little there was of it. He had made five different passes at men in the bar. None of them wanted his attention. There was nothing more to do tonight except return home to his frigid marriage.

The streets were eerily silent as Ronald stumbled out of the bar onto the empty street. He began to swerve his way in the general direction of his car in a drunken stupor. Fred snuck up behind Ronald and dropped a potato sack over his head. Kat threw a punch that connected with Ronald's jaw. Ronald was out like a light.

“Night, night, motherfucker!” said Kat.

Kat and Fred tossed Ronald into the trunk of Fred's car. They closed the trunk and then drove off.

## CHAPTER 47: “God Loves, You Hate”

*“From the deepest desires often come the deadliest hate.”-*

Socrates

The wind was blowing as a breeze sailed through the air outside of St. Mark’s Baptist Church. Pastor Thomas was preparing a sermon in his office when he heard a knock at his door.

“Come in!”

His assistant Stephanie Matthews, a white woman in her early thirties, entered the office.

“What can I do for you, Stephanie?”

“Sir, you need to come out here. It's an emergency.”

Pastor Thomas hopped up from his seat and darted out of his office with Stephanie right behind him. She opened the doors once they reached the church's main entrance. They could see that right outside the church were a crowd of angry protesters led by Odell and Taylor on the front lines. Pastor Thomas headed outside to confront the group that had been

assembled. Stephanie stood behind him, looking fearful and keeping her eyes away from the protesters.

“God loves! You hate! God loves! You hate! God loves! You hate!” chanted the protesters.

Pastor Thomas locked eyeballs with Odell.

“What are you doing here?”

“Paying back an old bigot that crossed the wrong queer!”

“Go away! This is a house of worship!”

“Nigga please! God is omnipresent! That dusty ass church is just a building!” shouted Odell with his chest out.

“Heathens like you are destroying the Black family!”

“So let me get this straight, LGBTQ people are the ones destroying the Black family, not child molesting pastors? Dead beat dads? Abusive mothers and aunts? Bible thumpin' hypocrites?”

“I'm calling the police!”

“Call the motherfuckin' police! We already know y'all not gonna protest for us if we die anyway!”

After Pastor Thomas and Stephanie headed back inside, Pastor Thomas slammed the open doors of the church shut.

“Stephanie, I'm going to get ready and start this service. While I do that, please have these demons removed from in front of my church.”

“Yes sir.”

Pastor Thomas made his way towards his office to make his final preparations for today's sermon. Worship would begin in one hour. He hated to think that God's people would have to be subject to the words of unrepentant sodomites when they should be entirely focused on making a joyful noise for the Lord.

“God, give me the strength to deal with all of this,” Pastor Thomas prayed, desperate for divine intervention against the protesters outside his church.

## CHAPTER 48: “Questions”

*“He who betrays is not from far away.”-African Proverb.*

Ronald awoke to find himself tied to a chair inside of a garage with his mouth covered by duct tape. When the garage door opened, he began to feel overwhelmed with fear as Fred and Kat walked into the garage. Kat was holding a power drill. Ronald screamed, but his words were muffled by the duct tape. Fred pulled up a chair and sat across from Ronald. He peeled the tape off Ronald's mouth.

“Ok Ron, the reason you're here is because you are connected to some people that interest us.”

Ronald trembled. “Wh-what are you talking about?”

“You know the people that killed Juanita Cousins.”

“I'm not telling you anything.” Fred nodded to Kat. She turned on the power drill and made her way towards Ronald with a devilish grin.

Kat aimed the drill towards Ronald's left knee and pressed the trigger.

“Ok! Ok! I'll talk!”

Kat turned off the power drill. It was a mere three inches from Ronald's knee.

"What do you wanna know?"

"I want to know who killed Juanita Cousins! I also want to know where's the cop that she was trying to have locked up?" Fred asked.

"They'll kill me for saying this."

"For saying what? And who's they?"

"Officer Dale, Lieutenant Lenny Sanders, and their hit-man Boyd all conspired to kill Juanita Cousins. She was going to expose the entire police department for corruption and prove that Officer Dale wasn't justified in shooting Darrell Brown."

"I want you to take us to those motherfuckers," Fred commanded.

"Do I have any other choice?"

Kat turned on the power drill. "Not if you want your motherfuckin' knee caps to remain in one piece."



Once Ronald had agreed to choose his kneecaps over his loyalty to Juanita's murderers, Kat and Fred returned to the house to clean and load up their guns.

"Hey Kat, can you pass me that cleaning kit?" Fred asked.

Kat passed the cleaning kit to Fred.

"You got it."

"Thank you."

Fred started to clean the barrel of his Heckler and Koch and his nine-millimeter. Kat put bullets into the extended clips of her two Airsoft UZI's. She then started to load clips into her Beretta's.

"Bro, I'm a need you to go and take care of that motherfucker's car because once the shit hits the fan I don't want none of this to be traced back to us."

"I'm on it," said Fred.

He finished cleaning his guns and then left to handle that bit of business.

## CHAPTER 49: “Judgment Day”

*“Revenge is a confession of pain.”*-Latin Proverb.

The night was dead silent as Kat drove Ronald's car. Fred was in the back seat with Ronald, watching him like a hawk.

“Ok Ron, take us to them,” said Fred.

“I don't know exactly where they are.”

Kat stopped the car. She whipped out one of her Airsoft UZI's and pressed the barrel to Ronald's head.

“Motherfucker, you better stop playing games and tell us where these bitches at!”

“Ok, ok! Pass me my cell phone.”

Fred gave Ronald his cell phone. Ronald scrambled to make a phone call. Sweat streamed down his face as he waited for someone to answer.

“Hey Dale, it's me, Ron. I'm outside the cabin. Where are you?” Kat and Fred continued to keep their eyes locked on Ronald.

“Ok, so I drive to the left and then walk straight to the red cabin? Ok, I'll see you in a few minutes,” Ronald ended the call.

“Good job, Ron,” said Fred.

Kat put the car in drive and they began to head towards Dale's cabin. Ronald remaining above ground was too risky of a proposition for Sanders, Dale, and Boyd. The three conspirators waited in Dale's cabin, eager to eliminate one more problem.

“When that fat cupcake eatin' motherfucker comes in through that door his ass is grass. No loose ends, you got that?” Sanders shouted.

“You forget who you're talking to? You don't need to tell me twice.”

Boyd started to screw on his silencer.

“I'm going outside. Once I bring his ass in, it's a wrap.”

Officer Dale opened the door. Headlights shined in his eyes as Ronald's car sped towards the cabin.

“Oh shit!”

Officer Dale jumped to the side just in time as the car crashed through the cabin. The three conspirators all started to shoot at the car.

“Stop! Stop!” shouted Officer Dale.

Everyone halted their fire. Dale walked towards the car. He looked inside to see who they had shot. Inside the vehicle, Ronald's body was riddled with bullets.

“What the fuck is going on?” Sanders asked.

Dale, Boyd, and Sanders began to look around in confusion. Lieutenant Sanders was struck by a single bullet to his left arm.

“Lenny!”

Officer Dale ran over to Lieutenant Sanders to check up on him.

“This shit hurts like a bitch!” cried Sanders.

Boyd let off shots into the darkness with his AK-47 until his clip was empty. Before he could reload, he was shot in both of his kneecaps.

“Goddamn it! Somebody help me!” Boyd yelled out in agony.

Officer Dale caught sight of Boyd lying on the ground.

“Fuck me,” Officer Dale whimpered.

His eyes widened as he saw two people emerge from the darkness wearing ski masks. They were holding weapons in their hands and aiming them at the three conspirators. Dale dropped his gun to the ground and got down on his knees.

“Please don't shoot me! Please don't shoot me!” Dale pleaded.

Fred kicked Officer Dale in his chest. Dale fell on his back from the impact of the blow.

“You're the reason that Juanita is gone, you piece of shit!” Fred barked.

“You stole the one person that brought joy to my life!” spat Kat.

Kat and Fred both turned around when they heard the echo of a gun cocking back.

“Both of you drop your weapons!”

Raymond had his firearm trained right on Kat and Fred. Fred and Kat kept their weapons locked on Officer Dale.

“I ain't droppin' shit! I ain't goin' back to jail!” Kat hissed.

Raymond kept his gun aimed at Kat and Fred.

“I'm FBI. I'm here to take these assholes down for police corruption, conspiracy, and for the murders of Juanita Cousins and Leila Atkins,” Raymond explained.

“You motherfucker! I knew Lenny shouldn't have trusted your ass!” Officer Dale snarled.

“As for you two, I need for you to leave before my partners get here. I only want these three.”

Kat and Fred gave each other a head nod.

“We'll leave, but just promise me one thing,” Fred said.

“What's that?” Raymond asked.

“Promise me that you will make sure that they won't walk free because if they do—“

Raymond cut Fred off mid-sentence. “You have my word on that.”

With Raymond’s promise secured, Kat and Fred disappeared into the night.

## CHAPTER 50: “Intervention”

*“Family is supposed to be our safe haven. Very often, it’s the place where we find our deepest heartache.”* - Iyanla Vanzant.

Fred parked his car right in front of the church as Leon Bridges’ “Forgive You” played from the car stereo. Kat was in the passenger seat, decked out in a green suit. They both stared at the church, anxious about their father’s reaction.

“I don't think I can do this,” Kat said.

“I'll be right there with you.”

“Suppose he doesn't accept me or love me?”

“Then that's his loss, not yours.”

Fred grabbed Kat's hand and held it tightly. Kat carried a yellow envelope as she exited the car with Fred by her side. She adjusted the fit of her suit, then they entered the church. Fred led Kat down the hallway to their father’s office. Kat turned to Fred.

“Are you ready?” She asked.



“Let's do this.”

Fred knocked on the door three times.

“Come in!”

Pastor Thomas was delighted to see his son as Fred stepped into his office.

“My son! I'm so glad to see you! Please come in!”

“Dad, I have someone I want you to meet.”

Fred waved towards the doorway. Kat entered the office. She looked her father directly in his eyes. The smile that had been on Pastor Thomas' face instantly turned into a frown.

“Fred, who in the hell is this?”

“This is my sister Kat,” Fred said nervously.

“Boy, what's wrong with you? You don't have a sister.”

“This will prove you wrong.”

Kat handed the yellow envelope to Pastor Thomas. Pastor Thomas snatched the envelope from Kat's hands, pouring its

contents out onto his desk. He looked at the birth certificate and family photo with a stunned expression.

“I was scared. I didn't know what to do.”

Pastor Thomas hung his head low in shame. Kat walked up to Pastor Thomas. She stood face to face with him.

“Scared? You mean to tell me that you were scared to take care of your family?” Kat asked through clenched teeth.

“What do you want from me?”

Kat began to cry.

“I want to know why you abandoned me and my mother!”

“I had a family, but my wife and I were going through a rough patch. I met your mother at a nightclub,” Pastor Thomas huffed.

“So let me get this straight, you got my mom’s pregnant and then dipped off?”

Pastor Thomas wiped the sweat off his forehead. “Your mother wanted me to leave my family and I couldn't.”

Kat started to pace back and forth, anger boiling inside her.

“Look, your mother—“.

Kat cut Pastor Thomas off, “Is dead! She died from cancer earlier this year. You never came by to see how she was doing!”

“Well, maybe if she took better care of herself then she might still be here,” Pastor Thomas snarled.

Kat punched her father in the face, knocking him down on his back. One of Pastor Thomas’ front teeth fell out from the impact.

“You fuckin' hypocrite! You stand there and call yourself a man of God after sayin' some foul shit like that?” Kat said as she wiped the tears from her face.

“Fred, take this sexually confused creature out of my church. I have an image to maintain.”

“Dad, I don't ever want to see you again!” Fred barked.

“Son, are you really going to choose a dyke over your own father?”

“She's not a dyke! She's my sister! As for you - go fuck yourself!”

Pastor Thomas struggled to pick himself up off the floor as his children stormed out of his office. Various worshippers and staff members had assembled inside the church's hallway. They all glared at Kat and Fred as they walked out the front doors.

Later that day, Odell, Taylor, Skizzy, and Tatiana were having a barbecue at Harriet Tubman Park. YBN Nahmir's “Bounce Out With That” was pumping through a portable speaker.

“Hey Tay, are those chicken wings almost done? A bitch is starvin' over here!” yelled Odell.

“They're on their way. We've got to work on that patience of yours, honey,” said Taylor.

While Taylor, with a little help from Odell, handled the grill, Tatiana and Skizzy began setting up the picnic table.

“Did anyone hear from Kat and Fred?” Tatiana asked.

“I spoke to Kat. She said they were on their way, but that was half an hour ago,” Skizzy replied.

“Well, speak of the devil. Look who it is,” said Odell as Kat and Fred headed towards the picnic. Fred was wearing a white tee shirt with blue Nike basketball shorts and blue Nike sneakers. Kat wore a green Kevin Durant Seattle Supersonics jersey, green Adidas basketball shorts, and a pair of green Air Jordan 1’s.

“It's about time y'all showed up!” said Odell shouted.

“We had to change and bring some stuff from the store,” said Fred.

“That food smells good as a motherfucker! Boy, I can't wait to eat,” said Kat.

Kat and Fred started to help Skizzy and Tatiana set the table. Afterwards, the siblings removed some drinks and ice from their bags and placed them on the table.

“Who's this coming towards us?” Odell questioned.

Everyone turned around. Raymond was heading in the group's direction.

“How did he find us?” Fred asked in shock.

“He’s the FBI remember?” Kat stated.

Raymond neared the group. He stared Kat and Fred down.

They returned it in equal measure. Fred folded his arms.

“How much time are they sentenced to?”

“Officer Dale got fifty years, and that's only because he ratted on the Sinville Police Department about their corruption. Boyd and Lieutenant Sanders both got multiple life sentences,” explained Raymond.

“Thank you!” Fred said.

“I’m just doing my job.” Raymond cut his eyes at Kat and Fred. “Make sure you two stay out of trouble, otherwise I’ll be taking you both with me.” Raymond walked away from the barbecue. His business here was finished.

Odell broke the silence. “Well, enough of that. Let's eat y'all. I'm starving!”

Across the street from the park, Pastor Thomas and Kareem were inside of a silver sedan. Designer’s “Hood” blared from the car speakers.

“Just give me the word and I'll drop both of them right now,”  
said Kareem.

“No, I got a plan for those two. I'm a show them who I was  
before I put this collar around my neck.”

“I'm down.”

“Good. Let's roll. We got work to do,” said Pastor Thomas as  
Kareem put his car in drive and pulled off.

***TO BE CONTINUED...***

***Sins of Society***

***Sinville Series Vol. 2***

***Coming in 2020***