

CHAPTER 1

New Bern, North Carolina:

The roosters crowed in the backyard with a vengeance every morning to inform the world it was a new day. Promise awoke every morning to the sounds of the roosters in the backyard and also to the smell of his mother cooking him a hearty breakfast.

He didn't smell anything. Nor did he hear anything.

He covered his head with his pillow to try and block out the sounds of the chickens and the roosters. Once they woke him, he found the noise they made annoying and intolerable.

He tried to figure if today was Saturday. It was the only time his mother would allow him to sleep late. When he didn't have to go to school, she would fix his breakfast later in the morning, since he was the only one there.

Promise remembered growing up in a house full of kids. His mother was a foster mother to numerous kids that didn't have homes and anywhere else to go. Now his mother was sick, she had to send all the other foster children to new foster homes. She only had Promise to worry about.

Promise never really inquired about his circumstances of being there. He saw the pictures on the wall of his mother holding him when he was a newborn baby. Also, out of all the other children who came to live there, he was the only one that had his mother's last

name. That gave him more than enough reason not to ask any other questions.

He went into the bathroom and washed up. His lagoon green eyes sparkled every time he looked at himself in the mirror. He was in love with himself and made sure to take care of himself at all cost.

He walked into his mothers room and it was pitch dark. She had thick, black curtains to block out any chance of sunlight making its way into the bedroom. It gave her time to sleep while the kids were in school.

Promise stopped in the doorway and waited for his eyes to adjust to the dark to locate his mother lying in bed. The room was still and totally silent.

He saw the huge figure under the blanket and knocked softly on the door. "Mama" he called into the darkness. "Do you want me to just fix a bowl of cereal before I go to school?" He was only twelve and the only thing his mother would let him do is boil water. She wouldn't let him cook anything major on the stove, although, he did when she wasn't home.

Stellamay Waters grunted as she turned over. She turned on the light next to her bed and immediately, her bloodshot eyes focused on the clock and then Promise. "Promise, I don't feel too good this morning." She laid her head down heavily on the pillows. "I'm sick baby."

Promise sauntered closer to his mother's bed. Although, she was a big woman, to him, her entire being was angelic. She was a church going woman and made sure they never missed a Sunday. He hated it, but never told her so. He would do anything to appease his mother, because she did the same for him.

Promise rubbed his mother's back. "Do you need to go to the hospital again, Mama?" He hoped she didn't because the last time she went to the hospital, she stayed for months. He lived with his sister who was the complete opposite of his mother.

A tear from his mother's eyes trailed down her plump cheeks and died in the center of the pillow. "There's nothing a doctor can do for me now. It's all up to Jesus baby." She said sadly.

Promise stood there and remained still. Whenever he saw his mother cry, it always triggered a chain reaction and he would start crying.

He didn't want to ask anymore questions. He feared what the answer might be. Knowing his mother well enough to know when things could only be worked out by Jesus, it was a metaphor telling him it was going to take a miracle. He didn't believe in miracles.

"Do you want me to stay home from school. We only have a few more weeks left anyway and the teacher said I'm at the top of the class."

Stellamay touched the cleft in Promise's chin. She then rubbed his cheek with her thumb and ran it across the dimples on his cheeks, as if she would be able to rub it away. She knew he was going to be a handsome man. He was the prettiest baby she ever saw and anyone that saw him wanted to adopt him, but she kept him for herself.

She felt a sense of guilt for that fact. Had she let him go with a younger couple, she wouldn't have to worry about what would become of him when she died. She had never told him the circumstances of why he was there. She raised him as her own.

It was only a matter of time for her and that time was fastly approaching. She was in the later stages of cancer and was really starting to feel it. She sensed the end was near. She had no worries for herself it was inevitable. She worried for her baby.

She rolled over and reached for the envelope on her nightstand. It was a letter she had been writing and rewriting since she found out she was in her last stages. "I want you to open this if anything happens to me. You know where I keep the little money we have. I want you to get it and do whatever I say to do in this letter." she said, her eyes filled with tears. She hated to have to tell him this, but she knew she had to prepare him for the worse if it came to that. "Promise me."

Promise wiped his own tears away. He took the sealed envelope from his mother and held up his right hand. "I promise."

He placed the letter under his mattress and fixed himself a bowl of cereal. He still had time to make it to school, but he made up

his mind he wasn't going. He was too depressed over this morning's events to even bother to try to concentrate in school.

He heard a faint knock on the front door. He opened the curtain and looked out, it was Keisha from next door. They would always walk to and from school everyday.

Promise gave her an all over glance. She had on the same clothes she wore to school three days in a row. He didn't say anything. He knew her mother was smoking coke and didn't care what her daughter wore to school. Half the time, she didn't even know Keisha was there. She only ventured out of her bedroom to cook up a spoonful of cocaine and then go back in her room with whoever was supplying her at the time.

Keisha glared back at Promise from the top step with her crescent shaped, acorn colored eyes. "Are you going to school?"

Promise knew his mother could hear a mile away. He shook his head no and pointed at her. "What about you?"

She smiled up at Promise and shook her head no also. She did whatever he did. They weren't girlfriend and boyfriend, but they had known each other since they first walked off the porch. They met in preschool and their bond has been inseparable ever since. Their presence complimented each other. Whenever you saw Promise, Keisha was either right there, or somewhere nearby.

They walked around trying to find something to do. Keisha was a professional thief. She could go into any store and take whatever she wanted, so candy was always an abundance for them.

It was now noon and they strolled past a bar called the 801. It was where the locals hung out and the only place something was going on twenty-four hours a day.

Promise saw a tall man getting out of an all white Cadillac with gold rims. He watched as the man bought something from a food stand and put his wallet in his back pocket. It was the wad of cash that caught his attention. He walked into the bar after giving the food to the two White women in his car.

"Wait here," Promise said to Keisha.

Keisha sucked her teeth. "What are you about to do?"

Promise looked around as he was about to enter the bar, making sure no one that knew his mother saw him slipping inside. “Did you see all that money he put in his pocket? I’m going to try and pick his pocket.”

Promise walked into the bar and browsed over the other patrons in the bar until he found the tall Black man. He knew he didn’t have time to waste. He had to go for it. As soon as the barmaid saw him, she would run him out and he would miss his opportunity.

He had picked pockets quite a few times. He learned by taking the end of the bread out of the toaster. He knew not to use a fork, out of fear of being electrocuted. He burned his fingers, but after awhile, he was able to retrieve the toast and his painful retrieval made the reward even sweeter.

He took to the streets with his craft and on his first score, he made twenty dollars. He was hooked ever since, especially, when he was able to see exactly where the money was. It was like taking candy from a baby.

Promise saw the tall man standing up at the bar. He meticulously calculated exactly how he would be able to pull this caper off. There were no windows in the bar, and the lights were so dim, a drunk could be easily mistaken thinking it was night outside if he lost track of time.

Promise hurried and walked over to him and stood behind him. He heard the man asking the barmaid has she heard of some woman who was supposed to be his sister and he was looking for her.

Promise raised the tail of the man’s suit jacket with the thumb and pinky of his left hand, while his right hand went in for the kill.

Promise slipped the wallet out of the man’s pocket, but out of the sheer thrill of his score, he moved entirely too fast. He didn’t lay the tail of the jacket down. He hastily allowed it to fall and the man felt it flutter behind him.

The tall man’s hands instantly went to his back pocket. He felt his wallet was gone and turned around to see Promise making a hasty retreat for the door.

Promise looked back as he pressed his back to the swinging door

and saw the man coming for him. He took off running, but he didn't get very far. One of the tall man's strides equaled three of Promise's. He caught him before he was able to set one foot off the bar's property.

"Come here you little motherfucker!" The tall man said.

Promise struggled trying to remove the man's tight grip on his arm. He saw the two White women scantily clad get out the car. "Get off me, I didn't do anything."

The tall man snatched Promise up. "You stole my money."

Promise could smell the fresh shot on the man's breath. He reached into his pocket and threw the wallet behind him without the tall man seeing him. Keisha picked it up and tried to run, but one of the White women caught her.

"Here is your wallet." One of the White women said.

The tall man looked at Promise. "So you have an accomplice." He put Promise down. "If you weren't just a kid, I'd sure as hell kick your ass up and down this here road."

Promise held his chin up with defiance. His eyes roamed up and down the tall man's expensive white suit and shoes. "I'm just trying to get me some paper. Why would you be mad about that?"

The tall man laughed. "Because I'm far from a victim as one could possibly be." The tall man reached into his pocket. "But I'm must reward you for your attempt." He reached into his wallet and handed one of his women a hundred dollars.

She walked over to Promise with a skirt on so short, Promise could see her pubic hairs. "Here you go slickster." She gave Promise a kiss on the cheek as she handed him the money.

Promise hurried and slid the bill in his pocket. "Thank you." He said to the tall man.

The tall man looked at him. "Don't thank me. I didn't give you nothing. Thank her." He pointed his head towards one of his women.

Promise nodded at the White woman and turned to walk away.

The tall man called him. "What's your name boy?"

Promise turned but kept walking backwards. "Promise."

The tall man's brows came together. "Promise." He repeated. "Who's your mother?"

Promise stopped, "Why?"

The tall man handed his White woman another hundred. "I'll give you another hundred if you take me to meet her."

Promise sent Keisha to get the other bill. This time the White woman gave it back to the tall man. He in-turn gave it to Keisha. She didn't smile as she took it, she snatched it and walked away.

Promise stood with wonder at the little ritual of the tall man and these White women. There was something strangely peculiar about their movements, but he was drawn to them. "Follow me."

The tall man opened the car door to his Cadillac. "It will be faster if I give you a ride."

Promise looked over at Keisha she shook her head no. "We'll walk. You'll just have to follow us," Promise said and started to walk.

The tall man looked at the little kid and there was something very familiar about the kid. It was his name that first struck a cord with him, but also his green eyes.

CHAPTER 2

The tall man parked his sparkling white Cadillac at the curb of Promise's house. He didn't care if his mother questioned him why he wasn't in school. He made two hundred dollars and he was hoping she would be happy with that.

The yard in front of his house was full of old bike parts and gardening tools. The house was an old house. It was not as modern as some of the others on the block, but it was owned by his mother and she brought a warmth to it that made it feel like a palace.

Promise removed the key from around his neck. "Wait here. I'll have her come out." He knew not to just allow a stranger in the house, just like he was told never to ride with strangers.

He didn't understand why this man wanted to meet his mother, but he figured what harm could it do. He already had two hundred dollars in his pocket, so it really didn't matter. The only down-side of the matter was he only got a portion of the bankroll, when he had the entire fortune in his clutches.

He and Keisha walked into the house. Promise held up his head and smelled, but didn't smell anything cooking, or has been cooked since he left for school.

Keisha sat in the living-room. Promise wondered why his mother didn't call to see who was in the house. Any other time, she would be standing at the threshold of the sun porch as soon as he stuck his key in the door.

He walked towards her bedroom, which was across the paltry hall from his own. The door was still ajar precisely the way he had left it, meaning, she hadn't left her bedroom since he was last there.

He pushed the door open with his fingertips and it creaked as it slowly opened. It sounded like a family of crickets was stuck in the hinges of the door.

The light from the window in his room beamed a stray beam of light into his mother's room. He could see her figure still under the covers. "Mama," he called in the dark. "There's someone here who wants to meet you Mama."

He slowly tiptoed into the room. He really didn't want to wake her if he didn't have to. He truly didn't have the words to explain why he wasn't in school, and then to bring a northern stranger to the house to meet her after she said she wasn't feeling well.

He paused at the edge of her bed. He could see a faint outline of her pudgy cheeks pressed firmly against the pillow. He swallowed dryly as he tapped his mother on her shoulders. He expected her eyes to open from his touch. His hand went to her face and she was extremely cold to his touch.

He hurried and turned the light on. He noticed his mother's smooth skin was now hidden by a layer of gray ash, and it made her skin two shades darker than her usual chestnut complexion.

He walked out of the room while Keisha was sitting in the living-room watching television. She jumped to her feet when she saw the tears in Promise's eyes. "What's the matter?" She asked suddenly.

Promise wanted to fall to his knees and cry with all of his might. The only thing stopping him was Keisha standing right there, but he couldn't stop the tears from falling from his eyes. He was in pain.

"My mother is dead," he said. He went to the front door and held out the hundred dollar bill to the tall stranger anxiously waiting outside. "I didn't earn this. You won't be able to meet my mother."

The tall man with ebony complexion didn't bother to take the bill. He observed the sudden change in the kid. "Why? What's going on?" He asked.

Promise glanced down the street at a family of cats playing in an open lot. "My mother is dead."

The tall man pushed his way past Promise and rushed into the house. He figured the kid was playing him for a sucker. He walked into the bedroom and saw the woman lying on the bed. She appeared to be sound asleep even with a complete stranger standing over her she didn't move.

The tall man pressed two fingers to her neck, but snatched them away when he felt how cold she was. He cocked his head to get a good look at her. It wasn't anyone he knew.

As he walked out, Promise extended his hand again to the man to take back his bill. From the loss of his mother, it caused him to develop a conscience and integrity.

The tall man looked down at him for the first time with a glimmer of compassion. "Keep it." He said, and got into his car with the two playing cards on the front license plate and drove away.

Promise calmly picked up the phone and dialed the hospital number. After he told them what had happened, they said they were sending someone to the house.

Keisha looked at Promise with complete sympathy in her eyes. She wished there was something she could do to make it better, but her situation was just as bad as his, if not worse. Now his just got worse because he had lost the only woman that truly cared for him.

"So what are you going to do now?" Keisha asked.

Promise's green eyes were transfixed with shock and grief. "I haven't thought about that yet."

Keisha cleared her throat. "You know they're going to take you away. You're too young to live by yourself. They're going to put you in a home until you're eighteen."

Promise's hurt was compounded with anger at the thought of living in foster care. "I ain't going to no foster home." Promise said fiercely. "I'd rather live on the streets." He thought about the conversation he and his mother had this morning. He ran to his room to get the letter she gave him.

He tore it open like a child expecting the gift he begged and

prayed Santa would honor him with for Christmas. It was in his mother's handwriting.

Promise sat down as he read the letter. It read: "Promise if you're reading this letter, then Jesus has called me home. Don't cry for me baby, I'm at peace right now. I have been strong for too long and I was in pain everyday you saw a smile on my face.

I didn't know how to tell you this, but I didn't bring you into this world. I loved you like you were my own, but I'm not your biological mother. I didn't mean to keep this from you, but I always wanted you to feel like you were wanted and needed.

I have an address to some good friends of mine up north who knew I was sick. They will let you live with them. Go and get the money we keep you know where and get a bus ticket and go on up there. I don't want you to go to the state. I want you to be where I know you will be loved."

Promise shook his head as he read the letter. She was thinking of him in her last days. He opened up the piece of paper that came along with the letter. It was his birth certificate.

He continued to read the letter. "Here is your birth certificate. Your last name isn't Waters like mine. You don't have a last name. Promise is your only name. I gave you my last name so you will have a sense of family.

Now, I want you to keep going to church and praying to God everyday. He brought you a long way Promise and you're here for a reason. I want you to go and find out what that reason is. Love Mama."

Promise's eyes were full of tears. He knew he was adopted when he went to live with her sister. She made sure to tell him everyday he was no family of hers and he was a trick baby. But he never told his Mama what he already knew. He thought it might change things if he told her and he wanted everything to remain the same.

He gave the letter to Keisha to read while he packed a bag. He knew the authorities would be here with a thousand questions that he certainly didn't have the answers to.

He and Keisha were a few feet away from the house when the ambulance came blaring down the street. A cop car also tailed behind.

Promise halted at the corner. He wanted to stay and watch the only mother he's ever known leave the paltry house she made into a home for him for the last time.

Keisha eyed Promise and the tears had dried. She had never seen him cry before, as long as she had known him. She read the letter and it hurt her even more. Promise prided himself in the notion he at least knew his mother. He never mentioned anything about his father. Now, he knew he was just like all of the other children Ms. Waters took care of and the thought of his situation made her heart ring with pity for him.

They walked in complete silence until they got to Keisha's house. "I guess I will be seeing you." Promise said.

Keisha's bottom lip began to curl as if she was about to cry. "How are you going to be seeing me? You're going all the way up north."

Promise secured his backpack on his back. "I ain't got nowhere else to go. Plus, I'm tired of this place. Ain't nothing going on here worth nothing."

Keisha sat down heavily on the curb in front of her dilapidated house. The weeds were as tall as both of them. Anything you could imagine was somewhere in that yard. The windows on the outside of the house were broken and covered by piss stained sheets. The front door to the house was off its hinges, because of the police kicking it in when her mother allowed dealers to sell out of her house for mere crumbs.

The door just laid against the open frame. Keisha hated to have to move the door to one side every time she came in the house. To avoid that embarrassment, she would just go around the back.

She buried her face into her hands. "What about me Promise? I'm still here."

Promise looked at Keisha and then at her house. "I dam sure ain't staying here."

Keisha looked at him with tears in her eyes. "Take me with you."

Promise cracked his knuckles in thought. He looked at the house and thought about her situation. Ever since he can remember, he's

had feelings for her. She was the only thing that ever really made sense in his life.

“Go in and get your stuff.” He said.

She leaped to her feet like she bounced up on a pair of springs. “For real Promise? You’re not going to leave me as soon as I go inside are you?”

Promise smiled and his dimples made his smile beam even brighter. “And if I do, what are you going to do?”

She waved her hand at her house. “Forget it. I’ll just go with what I got on.”

Promise looked at her. “I ain’t going to leave you. Go on and get your stuff.”

Keisha ran in the house at full speed as if the timing was going to make him change his mind. She would look through the sheets hanging over the window to make sure he was still standing there waiting. Promise started to walk down the street to play with her. When she looked out the window and saw he was gone, she flew out of the house, but he was standing right at the corner with a big smile on his face.

“You play too much.” She said angrily. Her gumdrop nose was moist from the sweat.

Promise gave her a serious look. “I don’t know what lies ahead for us.”

She stared up at Promise with her weathered nut brown eyes. Although, her attire was off, she kept her hair done to perfection. She had a cute little baby face.

“I don’t care what is in the cards for us Promise. I’m with you until the end.” A tear fell down her cheeks.

Promise hugged her for the first time in their lives. “I believe you.” He said and kissed the crown of her head.



Promise looked at the address on the paper and then looked up at the sign. The Lincoln Motel. He believed he was reading it right.

Promise looked over at Keisha who had the same look on her face

as he. They didn't know what to make of the place. Women were going in and out of the motel with White tricks and a group of men were standing on the side of the hotel where they had a major club called the Zanzibar. It was adjoining the hotel, but was owned by separate owners.

"What is going on here?" Keisha asked as she saw two women walk past her arm in arm with a White man into the hotel.

Promise glanced at the men standing by the club. "I think this is where the women have sex." He nodded over at the men standing in front of the club. "I think they have something to do with the women."

They both were startled as they saw an older man throw a younger man out of the hotel. He wore a brown workman's uniform and a pair of boots. His smooth bronze complexion made him appear to be youthful, but his gray hair, that was starting to recede at the hairline, betrayed the youthful appearance of his face.

"Don't you bring your ass back in here with that bullshit." He moved his cigar to the other side of his mouth. "You fake pimp, gonna bust the lock on my door trying to get a free place to shower and sleep! What kind of pimp are you and you don't have anywhere to live?"

A tall dark skinned woman stood in the background holding the door open. "That's enough Silk. He better not bring his ass in here no more."

Promise and Keisha walked up to the glass door. "I'm looking for a lady named Belinda Weedon."

Silk took a step back and squinted his brown eyes. He stood with his legs looking like he was about to hop on a horse. "Who's looking for Belinda?"

Promise eyed the man up and down. "I'm Ms. Waters' son from North Carolina." He lowered his head at the thought of his mother. "She said she had some friends up here that would take me in if need be."

Silk walked into the motel and held the door open as an invitation for them to follow. "What's your name boy?"

Promise cleared his throat. "Promise," he replied.

The cigar fell from Silk's mouth. "Belinda!" He called out loud. "Ms. Waters son is here to see you."

Belinda came from the back like an statuesque goddess. Although, they were in a shabby, run down hotel she walked into the room with unadulterated elegance.

Promise smiled nervously at the woman whose eyes seemed to bore into him. She held her arms out to Promise. "Ms. Waters done passed away."

Promise walked in and gave her a hug. "Yeah," he said. "How did you know? It just happened this morning."

Belinda ran her hands through his satiny hair. "She wouldn't have sent you if she didn't."

CHAPTER 3

Five years later.

Promise and Keisha were just getting home from school. Promise rushed in and tossed his book bag on the front counter. “I got straight A’s on my report card.” He said. He pulled out his card and handed it to Silk. “How much did you say you were going to give me for each A?”

Silk looked at the report card. “Don’t play me, play lotto. You got a better chance to win. I never said I was going to pay you anything. The only thing I’m going to pay you is no mind. I told you I would give you a day off for each A.”

Promise came around the counter and squared off like he was about to jump on Silk. He had grown to his height over the years and stood eye to eye with him. “Silk, don’t make me knock your old butt down. I want my money.”

Silk sat his cigar in the ashtray. “No you want to act like Michael Jackson and beat it. That’s what you want.”

Promise rushed in and they playfully wrestled, talking smack to each other the entire time. Belinda came through the door and smiled at Keisha who was just amused at both of them. After Keisha explained her situation to them, they allowed her to stay also.

Silk and Promise got along so well, they would always find some reason to laugh and joke. Their bond had grown from the first day

Silk made Promise vacuum the carpet in the hallways. The hallways were quite long.

Promise and Keisha had to do chores. They were given an allowance. They did just enough to keep a few coins in their pocket and help to buy their school clothes.

“Ya’ll stop playing so much before ya’ll break something.” Belinda said. She pushed Silk away from Promise. “Silk let him do his homework before ya’ll start all this playing.”

Silk backed up breathing heavily. “You lucky little nigga. I was about to slam you on your neck if she didn’t come and break it up.”

Promise acted like he was about to rush Silk again. “If I jump on you again, you’ll probably have a heart attack. Look at how hard you’re breathing.”

Silk wrapped his arms around Promise. “Congratulations.” He patted Promise firmly on the back. He dug in his pocket and peeled off five twenty dollar bills. “That’s more than what I said I was going to give you, you young punk.”

Promise hurried and put the money in his pocket and rushed Silk and they began to play again. Keisha and Belinda just watched them as they acted like children. They would lose themselves in play and would be carrying on like kids for hours.

Silk had applied all of his weight on Promise and pinned Promise on the ground. “Okay Silk you got me. I can’t breathe.”

“I’ll let you up if you go and fix the sink in 112.” Silk said. He put more weight on Promise.

“Okay.” Promise pleaded, “I’ll do it.”

“Do you promise?”

“I promise.”

Promise took off his school clothes and switched into his maintenance uniform. Keisha put on her housemaid uniform. She would make up the beds and do the laundry. Promise would do the plumbing and anything else that had to be fixed. Silk had taught him many trades.

Promise was on the floor in the bathroom opening the neck of the sink, while Keisha was changing the sheets and flipping the mattress over.

She came to the doorway of the bathroom. “So what are you going to do when school lets out?” She chuckled at the thought. “Are you going to go in the army?”

Promise turned his mouth up. “Please. I ain’t got no business in nobody’s army.”

Keisha placed her hands on her thick hips. She had really blossomed over the years. Her Cinnamon colored hair was cut into a bob style covering her left eye. She had full ripe lips and a full set of breast to go with them. She was 5’5 and weighed a hundred and twenty-five pounds. It was all in the right places.

“Promise why you never pay me no mind?”

Promise pulled a dingy rag out of the pipe and screwed the pipe back on. “What do you mean I don’t pay you no mind?”

Promise washed his hands in the sink. His green eyes peered at her through the mirror. “What do you want me to do? Fall down at your feet?”

“I see you hanging around those whores. I hope you ain’t become no trick?”

Promise dried his hands. “Don’t you ever call me a trick.” He tossed the paper towels in the toilet. “Some of them want to work for me. I just hear what they have to say.”

“So why ain’t you pimping?”

“Same reason why you ain’t whoring.”

“You never asked me to. I’ll make a better whore than these raggedy, drug addicted whores around this hotel.”

Promise laughed out loud. “Get the fuck out of here with that bullshit. You ain’t trying to whore.”

Keisha came closer to Promise. “I don’t know what I want. I haven’t even had sex yet to know if it is for me. But I always told you I was with you until the end. I still mean that shit to this day, ain’t nothing change Promise.”

Promise looked at her and could tell she was dead serious. “We can get this thing poppin whenever you want to.”

She pressed a sturdy finger to Promise’s temple. “Didn’t I just tell you I never had sex. You want me to let a trick be my first?”

Promise flipped the lid down on the toilet. "So you want me to be your first?"

"I've known you since I was a baby and was crazy about you then. I don't even have girlfriends because I spend all my time with you. All I know is you Promise. I'm starting to feel like you don't find me attractive. We sleep in the same room, but not once have you ever tried to come to my bed."

Promise looked at the knobs on the bathtub. "What we got is real sincere Keisha. We've been around each other without all of that and I don't want that to be the reason we part."

Keisha placed her hands on Promise's thighs. "If anything, it's going to bring us close together. I want to be with you like that."

Promise stood up. "Come on." He had a playful smirk on his face. He was going to use this opportunity to lay down the first stages of the game Silk had been teaching him.

He began to take off his clothes. Keisha stood behind him with her hands on her hips. "Promise what do you think you're doing?"

Promise spun around. "You said you wanted to do it."

"Put your clothes back on. I can see you know nothing about women." She sat on the bed. Promise any man can jump on top of a woman and just hump. What makes a man a good lover is his patience."

Promise looked at her like he had just caught her in a lie. "How do you know so much about it if you never did it?"

She pointed to her temple. "Women enjoy the fantasy, real or imagined. To make love to us, it must start in the mind first. It is easy to meet a man that will just attack the flesh without concern for our needs, but it takes an exceptional man to take his time and let it flow." She closed her eyes and held her hands out to her sides like she was flying. "You have to master the art of making love to a woman."

Promise slipped on his clothes. "Teach me."

Keisha stood to her feet. "Take off my clothes while you kiss me. I want you to use so much finesse. I won't even know my clothes are off, until I stand before you naked."

Promise awkwardly lowered his lips to hers. He somewhat was

understanding what she was talking about. He had to be soft and apply force when the situation called for it.

He kissed her slowly, only allowing his lips to barely touch hers, forcing her to come for him. He grabbed her shirt and heard her muffle a no in between their lips and used his fingers like he was picking a pocket.

He made his kiss forceful as he unzipped the back of her dress. She met his kiss with equal measure. When she felt her dress fall into a heap on the floor. She muffled a yes in his mouth encouraging him to go further.

Promise fumbled with the bra, but finally figured out its secret and snapped the clamps in-between his fingers and it fell around her swan like shoulders. He slipped one of her arms out and then the other. Her 38D's came into view.

She smiled at him and laid down on the bed. Her panties hugged her body so firmly, a V print could be seen as clear as day in the front of her panties.

She closed her eyes. "Now Promise I want you to relax me and I will tell you if you're doing anything wrong."

Promise kissed her softly on her neck. He stiffened his tongue at certain times, and then, made it soft as he nibbled on her neck with his teeth.

He made his way down to her breast and went straight for her nipples. She pushed his head up. "It's still going to be there. Make that the last place you go. When you get there, then you give my breast the attention it deserves. The nipples aren't the only sensitive part of a woman."

Promise nodded and trailed his tongue in the creases of her chest. He then made small bites around the fleshy parts of her ample breast and then allowed his tongue to gently glide across her nipples with a skill that surprised her.

He brought both of her tits together and licked and sucked on both nipples at the same time. He looked in her eyes while he was doing it. His green eyes gleamed with excitement.

He leaned up and started to remove her panties. She grabbed his

hand. "Don't take them off yet. Kiss between my legs with my panties on. It's the fantasy," She breathed.

Promise kissed her flat stomach and slowly allowed his tongue to glide across the fabric of her panties. He could taste the moistness. Keisha closed her eyes and opened her legs wider so he could get better leverage of her now swollen clitoris.

She began to grind her hips into Promise's mouth. Promise pulled his head away and could see the mist of lust in her eyes. He slid her panties off and she raised her hips so they would pass her wide hips with the greatest of ease.

Promise wasted no time burying his head between her legs. He opened up the folds of her lips and tasted the fruits of her nature. He felt her body shiver and shake on the bed. He buried his head deeper between her legs and continued to lap up her nectar like a cat drinking a bowl of milk.

Her body almost came off the bed. He knew exactly what to do for the second time she came. He covered her entire love nest with his mouth and begin to hum while she was caught in the throes of passion.

Promise smiled at her as he got up from the bed. "We're not finished." She glanced down at his pants and didn't see a bulge.

"Oh yes we are."

"But we didn't complete it."

Promise winked at her. "We have time. You just have to have patience my dear."

She grabbed one of the pillows and threw it at him. "You dirty motherfucker!"

Promise caught the pillow and threw it back. "I want it thoroughly and emphatically understood that this is my show. Don't no bitch direct me on anything concerning my game. I'm the Lord and Master, as well as the law. I will intelligently weigh any proposals you might have, but the final decision will always and must be mine. Now do I make myself clear?"

Keisha nodded. "Yes."

Promise turned on his heels and walked out the door. He knew

what she was trying to do from the onset. He learned two things out of this. He learned how to please her in the way she wanted to be pleased and he was able to place himself directly in the center of the fantasy she so openly spoke about. His sole objective was to pimp. He was just waiting until school was out to make it into a full time job.

This day was going to burn in her mind; the day they became the closest they've ever been since they've known each other. She was going to remember this day, because this was the day he made his stand.

Keisha slipped on her clothes with anger and a yearning all mixed in one. She thought she was teaching him something, but he was really teaching her. She wanted to see Promise make it to the top and she was willing to get in the trenches with him.

She would hear Silk breaking down the rules of the game to him and figured it was just a matter of time. She didn't think he would be able to grasp its elements and discipline at such a rapid pace. He spoke to her in a manner she had never heard him speak in all of the years she had known him.

She reckoned, since he was a virgin, she would have to teach him something, but his learning of the game without the cravings and yearnings of sex is what made him a potent enemy to any woman within his reach.