

Call

Me

Mora

Cachline Etienne

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First Printing, 2019

Dedicated to my readers. After sharing a chapter of the original draft of Ammora, I was asked to release the entire first draft as a book. I'm not sharing any more drafts! Hope you enjoy this!

Chapter 1

I am convinced that I had pissed someone off in my past life and is now paying for my wrong deeds. It seems that almost everything I do results in some type of failure. Take for instance me winning the international spelling competition in the seventh grade. I had spelt every word correctly and the crowd went absolutely crazy, I was the first person to ever win a spelling bee competition in our school district. Somehow on my way down the stage, I managed to trip over an eraser resulting in a broken trophy and a broken wrist. After that the screaming grew louder, most of it was coming from me.

Today is Monday and that meant waking up early. For the first time since the semester started, I arrived in history class early; only to find the class almost empty with no teacher in sight. As much as I love school, university life was not going well for me. I hate this place; I

hate the smell of bitterness that lingers into the air and the cloud of depression that seems to hang over everyone head. For some reason, I found that almost everyone I knew hated this class. The professor, a short fat man with a sharp tongue and ruthless insults didn't make it hard to dislike his class.

Glancing at the clock I see that our lecturer is fifteen minutes late, I squirm in my chair annoyed by the fact that I'm not doing anything of importance. Slowly I let my eyes drift over to his seat, he isn't here yet.

For the last fourteen years, I've had a crush on him, I would do anything to catch his attention. To my dismay, he shows absolutely no interest in me. In fact, he only ever spoke one word to me. I still remember the first time I met him, he was a vision in those dark blue shorts and blue and red checkered shirt. He had a strange smile. It was something between a smile and a frown, but when he directed it towards me, I

remember feeling a burning sensation in my cheeks before returning him a full-blown smile.

At the age of five, I fell in love with Stefano George, and with the limited intellect of a little girl of such age, I knew that he was the most beautiful being in the world. Okay, I may be exaggerating but he was beautiful.

It was as if time stopped when he approached me in the sandbox, I was choking on sand that I had somehow manage to swallow and he had whispered a soft hello before dashing to his group of friends that were giggling hysterically. Fourteen years later not much has changed except my development a major speech impediment. I've had some opportunities to speak to him, but I never did because of my speech problem. I hate having to start a conversation, so most people assume I'm rude or stuck up and doesn't talk to me.

It is now 7:25 am and I feel like screaming. why isn't anyone in this class? Sighing softly, I drum

my fingers on the desk rolling my eyes at the annoyed looks I'm getting. People can get so aggressive over a simple sound. Smiling to myself I begin to drum harder against the desk, then I hear his voice in the corridor and the drumming cease immediately.

Avoiding the unamused looks of my classmates I slowly turn my head towards the entrance of the room and pretend to be writing. All the while, I am watching out of the corner of my eye for the moment until Stefano appears.

My heart begins to race at the sound of footsteps getting closer to the classroom, and I sit a little straighter. My excitement dies a little when I realize that the person approaching shoes is making a clicking sound. Stefano doesn't wear clicking shoes. I smell her before she reaches me.

“Oh, you feeling good today, hair on point and you're actually on time,” Carolina says dropping her books on the table with a bang.

“Cara, how are you this morning?” Carolina is my best friend and my only friend at Barrington University. We met when we were little and then again at University where we became great friends. She has put up with my attics and daydreams and is the only one who knows of my crush on Stefano. ‘What are you up to now?’

“Me?!” - Carolina exclaims placing her hands over her heart, “I know not of what you speak.” Carolina is referred to as a drama queen and a trickster, and she’s always plotting inside that tiny head of hers. At 4’5, Carolina is one of the tiniest girls I know. With her smooth ebony skin and shiny curls, Carolina managed to be one of the most well-known girls in Barrington University.

“We’re not skipping class today” I remind her, we had skipped the class two times already. When speaking with Cara I hardly stammer.

“Please, Mora, I know you aren't going to skip class, you literally the best in the room” Carolina grumble. Noticing my not so discrete interest on the door she rolls her eyes and snort “You still like this boy?”

“Something like that” I mumble, and Carolina finally sit in the chair beside mine. “But I, I think, think I’m starting to get over him.” The downside of my speech impediment is that I always stumble over words when lying. He just does not know that I exist.

“Don't you have a lot of classes together or something?” Carolina asks, “I only get to have two subjects together with you.”

I open my mouth to answer her but never gets a chance as during that exact moment I realize that Stefano is making his way to the History room which we are currently in. He looks absolutely stunning in his team’s jersey red with white letters. His long, curly black hair falls over his shoulders and his green eyes

frame his perfect face. His Carmel skin shines with sweat and he towers over his friends. As usual, he does a quick scan of the classroom and before finding a seat.

Although we are studying two completely different majors, me English Literature and him engineering, we manage to share a whopping five classes together. I was genuinely surprised when I learned that he was majoring in engineering. I had assumed that since he was a football player, he would be majoring in some sport related subjects.

“So, he's here” - Carolina's voice cuts through my thoughts “try to be more subtle with it. You look like you're about to jump his bones,” She shoots him a look of disgust and turns her attention to moisturizing her curls. She always carries around a spray bottle around and whenever she gets annoyed or bored, she sprays her hair.

“Carolina, put that bottle down” - Professor St Dicks shoes click hard against the floor as he enters the room. His tie is loose, and he looks like he went through a hurricane. A lone strand of spaghetti hangs from his hair and with the angry look in his face, I begin to laugh uncontrollably. It's absolutely uncharacteristic of Mr. St. Dick to be late and untidy, the man breathes professionalism.

For some unexplained reason I can't stop laughing, loud hard haw haw laughter, everyone's now staring at me and I'm still at it. I really want to stop but I haven't laughed in so long so I laugh until I can't any longer.

Chapter 2

Needless to say, Professor St Dicks threw me out of the classroom, and I ended up doing the work and listening to the lecture outside of the classroom window.

As soon as I was out the room professor St Dicks removed the spaghetti, fixed his tie and got right into business. “Today we will be discussing the French Revolution. I trust that you did your readings as this topic is merely a review of high school knowledge. I want you to get into groups of five and discuss the impacts that Marie Antoinette and Maximilian de Robespierre had on the French Revolution.”

Although it wasn't my intention to get kicked out of class, I was grateful that I didn't have to do group work. I've always been one to do group work all by myself, it isn't that I'm selfish, I just want to know that the work that's going in is the best quality I can give. Also, me

not being outspoken makes it easier for my ideas not to be heard.

Before class was over, I had managed to write down all of my ideas and was not surprised to hear that our homework was to write a paper based on the discussions.

Right now, I'm currently stuck on a long line waiting on one of my favourite food, nachos. Hoping impatiently from foot to foot, I accidentally step on a lady's foot. Her eyes flashed angrily as she steps closer, almost menacingly, toward me. My heart begins to beat a little faster and my stomach slowly begins to bubble, beads of sweat appeared on my forehead.

"I know doggone well you didn't just put your filthy shoes on my foot" flipping her blond hair she steps even closer toward me. Before I can answer her phone, rings causing her to step away from the line.

“Girl I'm so mad right now, this girl on the line hopping around like she has ADHD.... she freaking dirtied my shoes.... I just want,” the angry lady voice fades away as she walks away from the line. I let out a huge breath, my stomach still churning nervously. Seeing it's my turn to order, I order a large nacho and a sprite soda and head towards my sitting tree.

Treeola, my sitting tree has been a huge part of my university experience, I found it on my first day of university. I didn't really know that much people, therefore, after my first lecture I had wandered around trying to look like I know where I was going. Then I came across the Treeola, it was a beautiful mango tree and it welcomed me with open arms. It was there I met Cara.

crack...

Snapping out of my thoughts, I realized that there was an intruder under my tree. I spun

around to face the intruders. Forest green eyes make contact with mine.

“I'm sorry, did I startle you?” Without waiting on my reply, he drops his bag beside mine and sits next to my spot.

‘But how, what, why, but’- words rush out of my mouth each one desperately trying to overtake the first. I am confusion.

My mouth remains agape until I realize that my nachos were kissing the floor.

“Come on” I wail “I’m having such a bad day.” For a moment I forget the intruder and I begin to pick up the nachos.

“I know you aren't going to eat them, right?” startled, once again my nachos hit the floor.

“Me, me, absolutely not. I was -er- er- going to put them in the gar-garbage” I finish lamely looking anywhere but at him.

I'm Stefano, he said flashing me one of his famous smiles.

'I know who you are' I responded. My stomach is churning again, I'm going to have an upset stomach tonight.

I'm trying not to panic, but it's so hard, Stefano is under Treeola and is actually talking to me. Stefano is TALKING TO ME. Cara's going to flip, she's been telling me to talk to him since forever.

Handing me his plate of nachos, he asks, "can I ask for your name?"

"Mora, my name is Mora"

Chapter 3

It's 8 pm, Marvin Gaye is playing from my speakers and I've just finished washing my hair. It's something about Marvin's music that I can't seem to put my hands on, for some strange reason his songs never fail to put me in a mood.

It is strange how one can look at the mirror and see a total stranger. It hurts because the mirror shows what we might not want to see or believe, it simply shows what's there. The truth has always hurt. The stranger that stares back at me has the skin of English Oak, loose textured hair that refuses to listen, and dark bottomless pits as eyes.

I always blend in the background, I'm safe, somewhat between two worlds but never fully picking a side, at times I often wonder how Cara feels about it.

Cara is everything but safe; she's bold, strong, loud. Everything I want to be, and I admire her for it. People respect her for it.

It was for that reason why I was surprised when Stefano approached under Treeola. I refused his nachos as I didn't know where he got them from or what he can do with them.

He ended up teasing me about my laughing incident and made me add him on my socials, he accepted the request right there.

Rinnngggg, Cara's calling.

"Hey, girl what's up? Got your butt kicked out of class today I see" Cara's amuse voice greets my ears.

"Nothing much," I reply

"Nothing huh, so what's this rumour of you and pretty boy hanging out about?"

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” I answer smirking at the phone. She remains silent on the other line

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“Okay okay - me and Stefano just talked. He stumbled across t-t treeola and I happened to be there at that particular moment. I was so shocked, my nachos dropped, he offered his though. I didn't accept. He has the most gorgeous eyes and.... and-”

At this point I'm rambling, and I honestly don't care. Stefano, the Stefano, five-year-old mora had finally spoken to him today I think I should be allowed to vent.

I drift off to an easy sleep talking to Cara.

One month later

For the next five weeks, I don't speak or cross paths with Stefano. There's a rumour going around saying that his sister had gotten into a huge car crash. Savaughn, Stefano sister, is a party animal, it isn't a party if Savaughn doesn't show up. I'm not one to believe in rumours or gossip so I ignore all of the stories.

One week later

Turns out the rumours were true Stefano sister had died in a car crash. All of the news stations were talking about and various talk shows were using her as an example to tell their younger guests to be careful.

"Seriously, I just don't understand, someone's sister has died and everyone's using this opportunity to promote themselves" Everyone's talking about the death of Stefano's sister, I've heard so much different theories that I've somehow managed to know more about the car accident than my math exam I've spent two weeks studying for.

However, Cara doesn't seem to be paying much attention to me, following her line of sight, I try to find what she was looking at.

It was Stefano. He's here for the first time since weeks.

"The Hell?" Cara whispers to me. "Why is he here on campus??"

We're not the only ones wondering this as there seems to be a gathering crowd. No one says a word as he passes by. However, I catch a lot of students making wide eyes at each other and communicating through obvious facial expressions.

This continues on for a while and I'm annoyed at how far everyone's crossed the awkward stage and is now bordering on downright rude.

He seems to be occupied with his phone as he settles right under treeola. There's a frown of concentration on his face and those gorgeous eyes of his never stray away from the screen of

the phone. He almost seems normal but there's something about that's quite not.

He sits stiffly against the tree, something that's odd because he always easy going and relaxed. It's odd, something that made me want to know more. I want to feel sorry for him, but he doesn't need my pity.

"Well, I'm going," Cara suddenly says snapping me to reality. She grabs her bags "just remembered I'm supposed to be at the rally.

The rally, I can't believe that I've forgotten about it. Since last year there have been tons of rallies asking to put a stop to police brutality. Two of our students had gotten shot and Cara was livid. Her mother was a victim of police brutality and justice was never served. She attends almost every rally and has even written to the chief of the police department. She's been convincing me to attend some rallies but I'm not comfortable with that as yet.

I wave goodbye to her as she walks away and turns back to Stefano.

Another group of students stops to gawk at him and almost instantly I made my decision.

I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to do say

There is no time to think as I grab my bag and make my way towards him.

‘Um, I heard what happened to your sister. It's not right how everyone's using her name for some type of gain. I'm really sorry for your loss, Stefano... I'll go now.’

He doesn't say anything to me. I wonder if he even recognizes me.

I turn and start heading for the library. A while later I hear a faint thank you. Heads up, shoulders squared I make my way to the library.

Chapter 4

For the last few days, Stefano and I have been making small talk. We would greet each other in the hallways, complement each other and crack a few jokes here and there.

He seems like a genuinely great person.

Though he's always smiling and laughing he still seems to have an aura of sadness around him, and though I've never experienced the death of a loved one, I empathize with him. I'd hope that Cara would have shown more empathy towards the whole situation, but she didn't.

In fact, I realized that she doesn't seem to like Stefano at all. Every time I mentioned him, she seemed to change the topic or made a snide remark about him. This is confusing to me since she was always the one telling to talk to him or make a move. Now that I'm doing just

that, she isn't quite as happy as I had anticipated.

I can't help but wonder what exactly her problem is, she's a lovable person and loves just about anybody. Maybe I should ask her about-

“Don't worry Stefano”- a male voice interrupts my thoughts- “you'll be ok, just explain to coach why your grades are dropping.”

I abruptly stop in my tracks. Stefano was failing? That's new. Looking around I see the hallway is almost empty, moving as quietly as possible I rest my ears against the door hoping to find out more about this situation.

“Look this is my second strike. I just don't understand the work, it's hard. I just need a little help.”

“Look man, I understand, explain the situation to coach and try to get some help, you know you'll get kicked out of the team.” The voices

grow louder, and I know they are going to head out of the room. I quickly move away from the door and scurry to my class.

fff

I find Stefano sitting underneath Treeola.

“Hey Stef, how's it going?” I ask him while setting my bag on the bench.

“I'm good. Tired” he answers dryly. Noticing his history book and the pile of mashed up paper beside him, I can tell that he's not having the best experience with the subject.

“I see St. Dicks stressing you out,” I teased while watching him rip yet another page out of the book and tossing it to the growing pile.

“Yeah, I'm failing his class he grumbles. I just don't understand the way he teaches.”

This shocks me because although St. dick may be strict and annoying, I actually like his

teaching methods. Minus the group works of course.

“Well, um, h-h-ow bad are you, I mean, I could tota-, I can help. I think.’

Embarrassing. I'm always embarrassing myself. My face is burning hot and I'm trying not to make eye contact with him. What must he be thinking about me? I can never do anything right.

“You really won't don't mind helping me out?”
He asks eagerly.

“No, I don't, I'm free all the time.” Now, this is not exactly true but I can always reschedule my nights with Cara.

Helping Stefano may be one of the brilliant things I've done yet.

fff

“That's not a good idea Mora” Cara states disapprovingly. “You like him, everyone can tell and he's going to use this as an advantage.”

“Seriously stop what is your problem you seem to hate him for no apparent reason he's a good person.” I snap at Cara. I’m getting tired of her always being so negative about Stefano.

“So you think,” she answers sneering. “The guy recently got dragged on social media for racist tweets and you're here all lovey-dovey agreeing to help him for free.”

I frown at the news, I'm sure it was a mistake. Stefano himself is a minority and I can't imagine him saying hurtful or racist things about other minorities. I make a mental note to check it out as soon as I get home. I don't usually keep up with social media so I'm a bit behind on all of the different news.

“Although you like to play safe, you’re black Mora. He literally insulted you. I understand you have a crush but that's puppy love. I don't want you getting involved in something that can potentially hurt you” Cara says earnestly playing with her pen.

Cara words have me fuming with anger. She'd cross the line; how dare she go there. I can understand her being worried but using the 'race card' is insulting. She knows I don't get into race. My parents fell in love and they didn't see race. At least not until my mother left my father claiming that she didn't care about black issues so she couldn't stay with him.

“Look, Cara, you crossed a line, I agreed to help the guy, not sleep with him. You don't get to tell me what to do. Don't you a rally to go too or something?” Throwing my bag over my shoulder, I don't give her a chance to answer.

Chapter 5

My father was a widower at a young age, that is, my mother died when I was 7 years old, she died of breast cancer and since then we have been my father and me. He works in an office as an administrative assistant, that job does not give him a lot of money, but at least he keeps us both, however, my father's salary was not enough to send me to study at Yale, even though I had a full scholarship, that scholarship did not cover food or academic expenses, so I preferred to stay with my father.

But this is not about me at the moment; I have a plan. The bell rings, signalling the end of my literature class, however, I want to go first to the office of student affairs management.

Arriving at the office, I see the familiar long desk. I've only visited this office about three times since I started Pearson. Making my way towards the desk, I see an elderly lady, she

looks about 65 years old; with her white hair and wrinkled face. I linger for a while hoping to catch her attention but no such luck.

Taking a deep breath, I open my mouth; “Good morning.”

“Morning, Young lady,” She replies her blue eyes making contact with mine.

“Uh yeah, Good morning” I repeat, and I instantly want to punch myself “I just-- uh wanted to know how I could become an academic tutor?”

“Academic tutor?” Her thinning eyebrows raise in surprise. “You want to be an academic tutor”

“Yes mam” I answer quickly.

“Well, that is wonderful” Her confused face breaks out to a warm smile “Not a lot of people want to be academic tutors these days, especially for free. It makes me so happy to see that you are interested in helping” She searches

through a pile of papers before finally grabbing a slightly wrinkled paper from the middle of the pile. “Looks like I found one, won't be needing to print another one.”

“Is this the application?”

“This is the paper you'll need to fill out to become an academic tutor,” She says “Fill in your information and bring it back, I can assign you a partner or you can pick whoever you want to help”

This is even better than I initially expected. I can quite simply request to be an academic tutor for Stefano.

“That's wonderful, so I wanted to help someone in specific, they are going through such a hard time-”

“Who did you have in mind?” She asks flashing me another sweet smile. I can't help but smile back.

“Well I wanted to help Stefano Méndez, You know the Football player, I thought he might be struggling with some subjects.”

“I see; you like him” she teases “and here was I thinking that you were doing this of the goodness of your heart.”

“Ah not really.” My face is gradually growing warmer as I speak. I’m pretty sure I’m turning a bit red

“Well I think so and its perfectly ok, I will assign you to your friend”

“Seriously?” I ask. At this point I want to jump up and scream, I can’t believe this is happening

“Yes, seriously - But you must fill out your paper first”

“No problem, I’ll fill it out right here.”

I quickly fill out the form requested and hand them out to the lady before trying to make my exit. She stops me and seals the papers and

inform me that I am now an official academic tutor of Stefano Méndez. Right before I leave the office she yells “wait, wait. I think he should come up here and meet you. It’ll be quick I promise”

“Good day,” She says through the PA System “Can Stefano Méndez, please make his way to the office of student affairs”. I cringe the whole while, she could have easily called his cell phone this is embarrassing. Noticing my discomfort, she offers me a smile “He will be here in a few minutes.”

“Thank you”

After a few minutes of silence, the door blasts open. A dishevelled Stefano stands by the doorway.

“Good morning Mrs. Smith’. At that moment I realized that I’ve spent all this time speaking to the lady and I never thought to find out her name. As Stefano makes his way over to the

table, I can't help but stare at him. He's just so beautiful. He can only be described as a work of art sent by the very gods.

"Good morning, Mr. Méndez" Ms. Smith responds flashing him one of her smiles. "Just wanted to inform you that one of your peers has offered to be an academic tutor for you. This is a great opportunity and you should make the best of it."

"Seriously?! This is great, I was just talking to my friends about needing a bit of help. You said someone offered to help?"

"Yes, and lucky for you she is still here, there she is" She says pointing to me. Miss Mora Alene will be your tutor for the rest of the academic semester."

Oh, it's you? A surprise Stefano exclaims. Thanks, I could really use the help.

And just like that, I managed to get one step closer to Stefano.

Chapter 6

I didn't speak with Stefano until a few days later, we had agreed to meet on Friday at the library. There Stefano could explain to me specifically what areas he needed the most help in and who knows, maybe I could also get a chance to know Stefano better.

That day I dressed in my best clothes, hoping to impress Stefano in the library. I wore my favourite dress and matched it with a wedge-like sandal. The dress was white and covered with yellow flowers and rested midthigh. I picked my hair out into an afro and placed a yellow sunflower on the side. I felt really beautiful and that gave me the boost I needed.

I hadn't looked at the time and I arrived at the library at 2 in the afternoon, I guess I'd been too excited to pay attention, I wasn't meeting with Stefano until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I had a whole hour free, so I decided to look for

some of my favourite books in the Romances section. There I browsed to *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pride and Prejudice* and many other classic literature books I really liked. I started reading from an early age, I always imagined that my life would be like one of those romantic books found on the shelves of a bookstore. I find it a bit silly now, but I still enjoyed reading those books. In fact, I'm thinking of writing some romance books of my own after all I'm studying literature. A major that most would find silly and nonsensical.

The hour went by really fast and before I knew it was already 3 in the afternoon. I found a table and waited for Stefano to arrive. Stefano arrived at the library 15 minutes late dressed in a simple white tee-shirt and washout blue jeans. His curly hair looked messy and his shoes looked worn out. I felt so silly here was I dressed up so cute and he didn't even make an effort. I sighed.

His perfume greeted me before he did. “Hey Mora,” he slid smoothly in the seat beside me. My heart skipped a beat, I didn’t expect him to be so close. I thought he would sit in the chair opposite me.

“Hey there” I responded. Why do I always sound so lame?

“Thanks for agreeing to help me out with this stuff,” He said “I really appreciate it.

“It’s nothing really,” I said “I like to help. Sure you a wry voice said in my head.

“Feels really good to know that there are still people like you around,” He said

“I know we’re supposed to be discussing this stuff, but I think it’ll be a great idea too, I don’t know, get to know each other better? We’ll be spending some time together”

“Well, my name is Mora Alene,” This was kind of stupid I honestly wanted to help this guy but

here is was talking about 'getting to know each other'. It's no wonder why he was failing. His priorities were a bit skewed.

"That I already know," He flashed me one of his amazing smiles. "We share a lot of classes together. You're always reading, and I thought you hated me for the longest. You always ignore me."

"I don't hate you I exclaimed."

"I think I figured that out by now" he smirked.

"But yeah, I do like reading though."

"Not me" He replied "I have never liked to read and plus with the time it takes me so I wouldn't have time to anyway. Probably one of the reasons why I'm currently failing."

"About that, you won't have a football team to practice for if you lose your scholarship." I didn't know what's possessing me, I felt like being wading in dangerous waters. I also

noticed that I wasn't stammering at all with Stefano. What was up with that?

"I know that" he winced "but drafting season is close-"

"Drafting season"? I asked

"Yeah, it's the season when they select several college team players to play in the professional leagues. It is a great opportunity for me – I have to make a name for myself. I have to!"

"I didn't know you wanted to play professionally," I said

"I want to graduate with a degree in engineering, but I also want to be a recognized Football player. I'm the first person in my family graduating from college."

Stefano was very interesting. I was glad he suggested this; I was learning so much about him'

Stefano shifted his chair and turns towards.
“And you, what are you studying?”

“I’m majoring in Literature and minoring in French I said”

There was an awkward pause. Both of us waiting on the other to start up the conversation again

“So, how old are you?” He questioned.

“I am 19 years old,” I said.

“I’m 20, You know, I remember you from elementary school you used to talk really bad and you were always with that dark girl. You were so much prettier than her, I always wanted to talk to you, but she was always in the way. We never got to be in the same class though.”

I winced at his words; I didn’t like the way he spoke of Cara.

“Well, Cara is very pretty and she’s an awesome friend. If you wanted to talk to me, you would’ve.”

“True I was younger back then, plus you were always in a higher class than me. For all, I know you would’ve had your friend beat me up.”

Really? I shook my head it is apparent that he doesn’t like Cara. I felt that I should probably tell him to stop but then again Cara always talks about him.

“I used to like seeing you with your purple glasses in high school. Your hair pulled back in messy bun thing and you wore very baggy clothes. Thought you were a nerd back then.”

I wasn’t sure where this conversation was going but I was slightly annoyed. This had turned into an interview. I began questioning if helping him was even a good idea.

“I think that we should probably start –”

“YO STEF, you going to the party on Sunday”
someone yelled across the room.

I look around for the librarian. Why in the world was this guy yelling in the library, to my surprise she seemed nowhere to be found, I sighed. This was going to be a long afternoon.

A tall guy approached us. I recognized him as Alex from the Football team. Alex skin was a deep rich brown and his large brown eyes were gorgeous.

“Don’t think I can make it, to be honest, I need to get those grades up, you know I’m not trying to get kicked out right?”

“Come on man it’s the last party for the semester, you know they going big, plus think about all the girls. Weren’t you trying to get with Gina?”

Apparently, I was invisible because this idiot didn’t even bother greeting me. I sighed

“I can’t man, my first exam is next week. I’m going to need that time” Stefano explained.

“I hear you, but you should think about it, I have to go, I’ll call you later.”

“Sorry about that, Alex a good friend of mine” Stefano broke the silence.

“So, you’re going to a party on Sunday huh?”

“I want to go but I don’t know yet.” He paused
“maybe you can help me with something.”

“We both know I won’t be able to improve my scores this quick, that’ll have to be a friggen miracle. How about you let me sit behind you. I have good eyes and I’ll be able to sneak a quick glance here and there. This means we can go to the party on Sunday. Trust me it’s a formal thing but the boys always do their thing.”

‘Um, We?’ I asked raising my eyebrows

“Sure” he responded “Let’s go together, like a kind of date”

“That’s very flattering” I blushed, I could not believe that Stefano was inviting me to a date. “But plagiarism is wrong, plus I’ve never let someone copy me, I don’t even know how to do it.”

“It is simple really. I’ll sit behind you and I’ll handle everything.”

“I’ll have to think about it” I responded, “Plagiarism is dangerous grounds.” Letting him cheat can result in me being expelled. I’ve never had to deal with any of this before this is so scary.

Chapter 7

After my encounter at the library, I went directly home. I was so overwhelmed with everything that I simply went to bed. Sometime that night, I called Carolina and told her I needed to talk to her and ask her if I could meet her at her house. We agreed to meet today. The weather is getting very cold this time of the year, so I make sure to put on my jacket before heading to Cara house. Cara house is a few blocks away from mine and it isn't long before I see the familiar outline of her house. I spot Cara sitting in one of the rusted swings in her backyard. When we were younger, we were always so happy to play in these swings. We would talk about everything.

Cara's hair is braided today, and she's wearing her mother's neckless. I approach her cautiously; Cara still suffers from losing her mother and sometimes she gets into these

depressing moods. The wind blows a single clump of hair that had managed to escape her braids into her eyes. She quickly reaches to adjust the hair.

“Hey, Cara, what you are doing sitting outside in this cold?” A dumb question to ask but I got to start the conversation somehow.

“Hey, Mora” she responds with a smile. “I’m just having some me time.”

“Well sorry to disturb that”

“Yeah, it’s no problem.” She adjusts herself “how did your little study session go with Stefano.” She doesn’t quite look at me instead she focuses on picking an imaginary object from her nails.

“It was kind of strange” I grumble.

“Strange what could possibly be strange about helping a colourist fool improve his grades?”

An amused Cara now turn to face me. “Is he dumber than you thought.”

A sigh escapes me, this is going to be long. “I didn’t even get to go over any work with him. He kept asking me questions and stuff.” I try to keep my voice as neutral as possible when saying this.

“Shouldn’t you have been the one asking the questions? Was he trying to intimidate you or something? I knew his trifling self wasn’t up to any good.” she sucks her teeth.

“He was nice really however our session cut short after Alex decided to interrupt. Alex was trying to get him to go to this party on Sunday.”

“Okay” Cara looks confused “-this isn’t connecting to me at all. How come you guys never got to study anything?”

“I’m getting to that Cara” I’m getting slightly annoyed, she could be so judgmental

sometimes. “He invited me to this party on Sunday and asked if I could help him out.”

“Help him out how?” Cara's face seems fairly neutral, but I know that she's judging.

“He wants to sit behind me during some of the finals, says he has good eyes and I don't even have to do anything but sit. “

“And you said no, right?” Cara's eyes burn into mines.

I shift nervously. “I told him that I would think about it”

“Let me get this straight, this guy invites you to this party just so you can let him cheat and you are actually considering this crap?” Cara is looking at me as if I'm the stupidest person in the entire world.

“You're an idiot,” Carolina says as she gets up from the swing. “But You're my idiot and

although I'm very disappointed in you. I trust you'll make the best decision for yourself."

She pulls me into a deep hug, and I can't help but hug back

Chapter 8

Sunday came around more quickly than I anticipated. I quickly realized that I didn't pick out an outfit and sent Cara a text asking her to stop my place.

"I'm here girl, you better have a good reason to get me out my bed this fine Sunday"

"I need your help. I'm going out Stefano tonight and for some strange reason I don't have anything to wear."

Cara strode over the clothes that littered the room. Her eyes quickly assess the situation. She grabs my shoulders firmly and looks me straight in the eye, "Are you sure you want to do this?"

I sigh casting a quick glance at my closet. I really didn't have any time for theatrics. "Yes, I do, but I need something to wear."

"Alright then, let's find the perfect outfit."

The first dress Cara found was way too loose, the next one too tight. There was another one that I really liked but it showed too much skin for winter.

There are only two dresses left in the pile, a rising sense of panic in stirred in my gut.

I try on the first, it slips on relatively easy, but the zipper doesn't seem to bulge. I pull on the zipper with a bit more force and to my surprise, I manage to pull the zipper completely out.

At this point, I'm praying that the last dress fits. I carefully slip it on, it fits perfectly. The dress is a burgundy spaghetti strap velvet piece that rests mid-thigh. It has an open back and cinches in at my waist, a casual yet cute look.

I finish getting ready in record time. A knock on the door interrupts my thoughts, glancing at the clock I see that it is eight o'clock on the dot. Sneaking a quick glance at the mirror I head towards the door. Tonight, I opted for a more natural look with my only makeup being some eyeliner and lip-gloss. My hair is in a neat bun and with soft curls falling on the left side of my face. Cara had left soon after I found my dress and didn't say much to me. I should probably talk to her tomorrow.

I open the door to a handsome Stefano.

“Hey, I hope I wasn’t early. You look great by the way,” he runs a hand through his hair and flashes me a smile.

“No, your timing is perfect. Truth is I already told myself if he didn’t show up by nine o clock I was going to sleep.

By the time we arrive, the party had already started. In fact, the party is packed. Turns out, that the get together was not small at all nor did it seem formal. I hate being in spaces like this.

“Hey, it’s okay. I’ll be by your side the entire night,” Stefano says noticing the look on my face, he gives my hand a reassuring squeeze.

“Yo Joel get this lady something to drink”

Moments later Joel appears with a cup “Drink some of this,” he orders handing the drink to me. The logical voice in my head tells me I probably shouldn’t be drinking from these people, but I grab the cup anyway. Bracing myself I take a sip from the cup. It’s nothing more than cherry soda

Three cups later I'm convinced that whatever it is I'm drinking isn't soda. I usually avoid drinking at all times, but here I'm in sipping on whatever nonsense this is.

"Come on Mora I want you to meet my friends." Although I'm not in the mood for conversing with anyone with the dull ache that had begun to spread in my head, I follow him. I don't want anyone thinking I'm self-righteous'.

"Hey everyone, this is Mora" Stefano introduces me to a group of friends. Everyone waves and said a form of greeting. This was going to be a long night.

fff

The rest of the night went by fast. Someone began playing music on the speakers and soon after I was dragged to the dancefloor. Some girl name Damien danced with me the majority of the night. By the time the party was over, I had made a lot of friends and was feeling a bit lightheaded.

“So, did you enjoy tonight?” Stefano asks playfully pushing me to the side.

“Yeah sure, I guess” I bite my bites to hide the smile. The sky is so pretty. I wonder why I never bothered to look at the sky before.

“Sure, I guess Stefano teases, looks like you had a lot of fun tonight. Wonder where I’m going to take you next time, I mean you practically left me to fend for myself.

“Next time?” I thought this was a onetime thing.

“Yeah, next time, I wanna have you all to myself.”

“Boy please, you think I wanna be alone with you after yall feed me alcohol? “

“I’ll ask you when you aren’t drunk”

Glancing up I see that we’re by my door, where did time go? Or was this an effect of being mildly drunk?

“I guess I should be going” Stefano casually announces.

“Yeah, it’s getting a bit late,” my voice is barely a whisper.

I'm feeling really lightheaded at this point. Stefano moves closer to me. Great, he's probably going to kiss me, and I won't remember it the morning. The wind is extremely cold. A black shadow dart across my feet. What in the world is that?

Stefano's arms tighten around me as he leans forward. When had he even got this close? I close my eyes. Almost instantly his lips are on mine, gentle at first, barely touching, and then more passionate. I pull away first, an attempt to catch my breath.

"Wow, that was nice, "I say breaking the silence. This is awkward and the kiss was not even great. Right now, I have a pounding headache

"I'm glad we went out today" Stefano offers me one of his charming smiles.

"Me- me too. Th-thank you so much for today, I had the- the best time?" with that I scramble towards my door a desperate attempt to remove myself from the situation.

Once inside I look out the window just in time to see a retreating Stefano.

I can't believe it; I spent the night with my childhood crush. I quickly remove my shoes and throw myself on the couch. Almost instantly I fall asleep.

Chapter 9

I woke up that Monday with a resounding headache and dragged myself to class. Throughout the day various persons from the party stopped to greet me. I was a great feeling. In fact, Damien and I even grabbed lunch together. I'd spotted Cara but I wasn't able to get to her. It was amazing to see how one night can change everything. I was invisible before the party but now I was it.

Although it was really hard, I made the decision to allow Stefano to sit behind me. He was very grateful and thanked me profusely.

He'd invite me to grab some ice cream and I agreed.

That weekend we went to get some ice cream at the parlour. We spent the whole afternoon getting to know each more. By the end of the night, we'd agree to be exclusive.

Dating Stefano turned my life completely around. I was now invited and included in events, and I liked being around people. Sure, I need to take breaks a few times but for the most part, I'm enjoying my life. I haven't spoken to Cara nor have I visited Treeola. I think that I've honestly outgrown that tree.

Cara stopped talking to me after finding out I started dating Stefano. I tried texting her, but she never responded. These days she's running a very successful blog called 'Black Girl Things'. Her videos usually talk about the hardships of being black. Her most successful video to date is a video talking about something called colourism and leaving behind friends who don't fight or want to understand the problems darker women face. Damien thinks that in the video Cara threw some shade at me, but I never bothered to watch it. I have other things going on in my life. If Cara did throw some shade at me, it just means that she's bitter.

HOONNK, a car swerves aggressively off the parking lot missing me by inches.

“Are you serious?” I scream at the driver. I hate reckless drivers. I glance at my watch to see that its almost six pm. Stefano told me this morning that he would be there for 5 pm. I hate when he does stuff like this. He started doing this late mess about a week ago. I think I’ll have to speak to him about this tonight.

“Wyd?”

I groan at the three letters that appeared on my screen. Alex, a friend of Stefano, for some odd reason, began texting me out of the blue. Sometimes I entertain him other times I don’t. today I was not in the mood.

“Did you happen to do something to Stefano?”

Ok, what in the world this guy is talking about. Stefano and I are fine. I mean we spoke this morning. It’s obvious that he’s lacking attention today. I’m not responding to him.

Moments later I receive a text from Cara

“U OK?”

Now I’m convinced that something awful is going on. Why would Cara text me out of the blue if she stopped talking to me?

My heart starts pounding.

“Hi Cara, I’m doing great. Is there something wrong?”

I wait. Within seconds she shoots another text.

“Check your socials.”

My stomach is churning. What could it possibly be? My hands tremble a bit. I rush to open my socials.

My heart stops. My brain freezes. Oh God No! Please don’t tell me I’m seeing right.

In the picture, I am completely naked posing in the mirror my phone in hand. The caption reads: “Damnn I didn’t know Ole Girl got a body like that”

The comments are in the thousands, I scroll down. Another picture

My face burns aggressively.

These pictures were taken privately, but somehow, they’d gotten public. I only sent them to one person.

The phone vibrates viciously in my hands. Cara is calling. I cannot breathe.

I answer the phone. “Mora honey what did you do. See I know something like this was going to happen. You send him nudes? For F*** sake, you made a video with him. “

“Video, hold on, I didn’t make no video I sent him a few pictures. I’m beginning to feel lightheaded.”

Oh God, there is a video. That means he made a video of me without my consent. But Stefano wouldn’t do that, someone else did.

“Mora where are you?”

“I’m in the parking lot. Jimmy’s ice cream parking lot.” Nothing seems to be making sense.

“Look I’m coming to pick you up. Stay right where you are ok.” Cara hangs up.

Almost immediately I dial Stefano’s number. The call goes to his mailbox.

I slam the phone hard against the ground. Its bounces three times before settling down. The screen is completely cracked.

Then I cry. I cry hysterically ignoring the looks from people around me.

The next thing I know is that I'm being escorted to a car.

"Mora, I'm going to need you to calm down." Cara climbs into the driver's seat and pulls off without saying another word to me.

Gradually I begin to calm down. "Cara what happened."

"From what I can see, it looks like your boyfriend was sharing pictures and videos of you in a private group. The group got hacked last night." Cara's face is grim.

I don't know what to say. It seems so crazy. Too many theories are running through my mind. I remain quiet until I get home.

"Thank you so much, Cara. I don't know what to say."

Cara shrugs and looks at her phone “I call you in the morning.”

As soon as I’m inside I fling myself in the bed and fall into a deep troublesome sleep

Chapter 10

I wake up with a pounding headache I reach for my phone but can't seem to find it beside me. Grumbling I open my eyes to look for it. I can't seem to find it anywhere.

"What the he-," the memories of last night smack me hard. Oh god the pictures, Cara, a video. Where the hell is my phone.

I rush to my laptop to confirm if I somehow dreamt this whole scenario.

Please let this be a dream.

Opening my feed, a very naked picture of myself seem to stare at me. This wasn't a dream. The tears begin to fall slowly scalding, my face as they dripped down.

I could lose my scholarship over this. how can I possibly begin to face my dad about this? Why

was Stefano sharing my pictures to his friends?
The questions whirled around in my head.

I'd moved on too fast with Stefano, I'd convince myself that we had a connection. I should have never sent him my pictures. As for the video, I never sent him any. I need to talk to Stefano. I need to clear up this messy situation. Thousands of people are viewing my pictures.

I click on the picture and report it for nudity, as I scroll down, I continue to do the same. The vile comments left by some of the persons leave a bad taste in my mouth. Having enough, I reach over to turn off the laptop.

However, a certain post catches my attention.

Mora is a Student of the Barrington University, In the pictures floating around, she's clearly seen posing for these nude pictures before leaking them on the internet. Her behaviour is a vile representation of our university and we will not

stand for it. This week our university is participating in various national activities and none of this is being highlighted. Last year Scholarship student Hailey Brown lost her scholarship over similar behaviour, the same needs to happen to Mora. This university has morals and values. #makebarringtongreatagain

Oh God, not this. I need this scholarship. I remember Hailey Brown story; I'd call her dumb and now I was in the same position. Hailey was exposed by her ex-boyfriend and the scandal caused her expulsion.

Tears still falling down my face, I grab the house phone and dialled Stefano number. To my surprise, he picks up right away.

“Hello”

For a while, I don't say anything. I listen to him breathe. His breath is calm and controlled. He

doesn't seem to be trouble. Does he not hear about what is going on?

I take a deep breath before answering.

"Stefano, what is going on? Why were you sharing the pictures? I trusted you. I mean I'm your girlfriend" My voice cracks at the end. No, I can't let him hear me cry.

"Girlfriend? I don't date, whatever label you put on us was from your side only." The words deliver a striking blow.

During my relationship with Stefano, he never asked me to be his girlfriend. I simply assumed. I feel so stupid my face is burning and I can feel my anger boiling.

He continues to assault me with his words. "You aren't so innocent yourself, you tried to play that nice girl act so you can bask in my spotlight. You sent the pictures Mora, I never asked you for them. They were a gift and I did as I please with them. I'm sorry the group got

hacked but I'm honestly not sorry for sharing the pictures."

"Stefano I'm hearing that there's a video I never sent a video. And nice girl act? I genuinely wanted to help, I tried to be a good person and that's how you repay me?" My voice trembles as I speak, I can't believe the nerve of this jerk. Cara tried hard to warn me, and I didn't even listen.

"Look Mora I'm trying to keep a clean record; I'm not going to get involved in this mess."

"Clean record" I shriek "you single-handedly ruined my life. I can literally lose my scholarship don't you understand? This is my life, Stefano. You did this-"

The line cuts before I can finish my sentence.

§§§

I didn't leave my house for the rest of the week. The internet can be such a cruel place. My

inbox was filled with perverted and slut-shaming messages. Facing my dad was the hardest. He looked so disappointed, he cried with me when I cried. During my time home, I opened up to him. We spoke about everything mom, school, love, work. The worst part was that he thought that he was to blame, maybe if he had spent more time with me I wouldn't be in that situation. One of the biggest things we spoke about was race. I told him about how I felt like I didn't fit in I told him how I regretted my I dealt with my friendship with Cara. Dad was always listening and told me that I should apologize to Cara.

Dad went out and got me a new phone and urged me to press charges against Stefano. He told me that it was a crime. I told him I would think about it and do it in my terms.

Towards the end of the week, I received an email from Barrington University. I was ordered to go up to the Deans office. I had a sinking feeling in my gut.

That sinking feeling seems to intensify as I trudge towards the administrative building. Today is my first day back on campus. I'm dressed in oversized dark clothing hoping to blend in with the other students. I make it to the dean's office without an incident.

After speaking to the secretary, I wait to be summoned to the Dean's room. Why had I trusted Stefano so easily? What was wrong with me?

"Ms. Aline?" the Dean's voice pulls me out of my thoughts.

I enter his office and quietly sits down on one of the chairs opposite him. My heart is pounding so hard and fast I'm sure that he can hear it, the cold white room does nothing to ease my tension.

The office smells like old books and paper. Various documents with the University's logo are scattered all over his table. I'm fortunate

enough to attend an Expensive School and yet I messed that up. There was no way I was going to keep my scholarship after this

“How are you, Ms. Aline?” The question was so simple but my heart races faster. “I’m ok sir, how are you?”

“I’m doing great, I assume you have an idea why we’re meeting here today correct?” the Dean asks, his blue eyes peering up at me through the reading glasses perch on his nose.

“Yes, Sir,” My face is burning. I cannot look at him any longer.

The dean flips through a file on his desk, nodding his head at whatever he’s reading. he moves to the computer, typing out things and frowning at the screen. When he turns around to face me, I know that I definitely messed up. His face is a mixture of regret and sadness.

“You were admitted to this university on the Dean’s list scholarship. That means that your

grades in high school were high enough to ensure you graduate with honours from college, had you kept it up. You did keep it up, for but it seems like you stop attending classes at the end of the semester. Your professors have expressed concerns about you missing your exams.”

“Unfortunately, most of the classes you selected this semester relied heavily on the final exams. Further, your recent behaviour clashes with the terms on the scholarship. Had your grades been better, you could have had a fighting chance. I’m sorry to inform you that you are no longer a recipient of Barrington’s Dean’s List Scholarship.”

I am unable to breathe, forcing myself to remain calm, I reply “Thank you so much for the opportunity to be a student at this amazing institute.”

I grab my bag and drag myself out of the office.

The Secretary who had told me to wait casts me a sympathetic look, from the look of things about everyone at the office already knew my fate.

Chapter 11

At 3 PM that day I decided to officially press charges against Stefano Méndez for sexual harassment, violation of privacy and cyberbullying. I'd call my father in tears about me losing my scholarship. He picked me up and I told him I wanted to press charges.

Enough was enough. By 5 PM, I was back home, relaxing before the war ahead. Around 9 PM, Stefano had been informed he had been accused of sexual harassment and that the video he uploaded had made him look guilty enough for the case to go to trial. By 10 pm I'd received a series of apologies, and threats from Stefano.

The following weeks were a frenzy of paperwork & lawyers and packing. Since I had no classes to attend, I decided to take up some hobbies. I discovered yoga. Yoga took me out of a dark place. I still practice yoga every day. Due

to this, I've become happier and more relaxed. I also decided to take some online classes on law. I even applied for an internship at various law firms.

Bit by bit, I started piecing myself together. The hardest days were the ones where I met with my lawyer. Stefano had hired a lawyer and had the intentions of defending himself.

Guys like Stefano screw girls over. They pretend to genuinely care about girls, but they don't. they use girls. Stefano is a classic f*** boy and I'd fallen for him. I couldn't see past the façade. Not only this I suspect that he is also a colourist. I've been watching Cara videos online.

Speaking of Cara, we're meeting today. I'd finally gathered the courage to message her. I want to apologize. Cara genuinely cared about me and I abused her. I was a horrible friend.

Breathing in the fresh cool air, I take the time to acknowledge the gorgeous scenery around me.

The setting sun fills the entire sky with a fiery orange glow, setting the clouds ablaze. Faint laughter travel across the air. The wind blows ever so softly causing the tree leaves to sway in harmony.

“Don’t like trees anymore?” Cara’s voice slices through my thoughts. I can’t believe she’s here
Stay calm Mora, just breathe.

“Tree’s aren’t the best place to make decisions”
I respond wryly.

I face Cara. She looks so different; she seems so much happier...empowered. She literally flourished so much. Maybe I was the one holding her back.

“You look good”

‘Thanks.’

I take a deep breath. “I know you’re probably wondering why I message you. I want to apologize; I haven’t been the best friend I could possibly be to you. Shoots I Barely supported you. But you always supported me no matter what.”

“The last few weeks took a toll on me. At first, I was angry at you because how dare you not support me. one of my biggest flaws is my selfishness.”

I sigh before continuing “I had to learn that you don’t owe me anything. You did your part in our friendship and I did mine, watching your videos on YouTube has been very eye-opening. I’m sorry for holding you back and using you.”

I look at Cara for her reaction. She nods and pulls me into a hug.

“It’s ok babe. The past is the past, I appreciate you for apologizing. I have to go; we should grab something to eat one of these days.”

“Yeah, yeah, sure that be great!”

Cara offers me a smile and turns to leave. As she walks away, I can't help but feel that this is the end of our chapter. For once I've done my part.

I think it's time I watched that youtube video I've been avoiding.

fff

As soon as I'm home I race to the laptop to find Cara's channel. I scroll down until I come across the video.

The video is entitled 'Letting go of Negative energy (This is going to be long)'

For some odd reason I feel tense, I'm not sure what's going to come out of this video. When Cara made it, a lot of persons thought that she was talking about me. This is my time to find out the truth. I press play.

“He Guys! It's your girl Cara and I'm back with another YouTube video. As you can tell from the title, this is going to be a long video. Since this is going to be a lengthy video, I decided to do my makeup while I talk with you guys.” Cara reveals a bag of makeup and promptly begins to dig inside. “I think I have everything so let's begin.”

“Letting go of persons can be a very difficult task especially if you've known them since forever. You begin to make excuses for them, trying to explain their actions and ignoring how they treat you. You see, people like to hold on to things and brag about them. I mean 10 years of friendship does sound better than one.” Cara pauses to show the box of the primer she's been applying to her face while speaking. “Off topic but Cammy's Primer is everything. It's literally the best primer I have, I'll put the link in the bio in case you guys want to check it out”

Cara places the box down and begins rummaging through the bag. “The gag is,

holding on to persons can be a horrible habit, you trap yourself, it's unhealthy. I'm saying all of this because we're going to be discussing letting go of persons around us, who do not have the same energy as us."

"We black women, have so much weight on our shoulders already we don't need to have more. We need people who are going to support us, care about us and make some type of effort in the relationship. Unsupportive and lazy friends are toxic. One of the hardest things in had to do-" Cara pauses to grab a beauty blender, "is come to the realization that one of my closest friends was not the best person to be around." She blends the foundation on her face with the beauty blender.

I feel a bit nauseous. Was it that bad? Part of me wants to close the video but I continue watching.

"For as long as you know me, you know that I'm passionate about justice and equality. You

know that I feel strongly about police brutality. I regularly attend and host rallies demanding justice and accountability. My mom passed away as a result of brutality and no one was held accountable, she was just a hashtag” Cara’s voice cracks a bit here. Her mother’s death still affected her strongly. She finishes applying her foundation and reaches for her eyeshadow palette.

“This friend, she knew all about this. She knew how passionate I was, and yet never once did she offer some support. She never attended a rally, made or share a post. In fact, she avoided anything that dealt with these issues and every time she failed to support, I made excuses.”

“One time I decided to approach her about the situation and guess what? She cried; said I was accusing her of being a bad friend. So, like the fool I was, I apologize for hurting her fragile feelings. Our friendship always felt a bit one-sided I had to make the first move”

Wow, I had no idea she felt like this. She could have told me! But you would have probably cried a small voice replies in my head.

Cara sighs then shrug “we black women like to play the hero. That’s not good for us.”

“I got my wake-up call when my friend used my rallies to diss me. Keep in mind she knows everything against me. To make it worst, this was about a guy. An openly colourist person”

By the time I’m done watching the video. I know for a fact that Cara and I will never be the same.

fff

On the morning of the trial, I woke up early. I had been practising my statements with my lawyer, he taught me how I would be questioned and cross-questioned. I thought our case was solid, with no loopholes, no matter which way one looked at it. I never felt more prepared for anything in my life. I was to court

an hour earlier than the scheduled hearing. I met up with her lawyer one final time, where we carefully went over the points for the case. As the time for the trial drew near, my lawyer and I walked into the courtroom, only to find Stefano, Alex Damien and others from the football team already there.

I walked past them, with my head held high, not bothering to spare them a glance. The news about what Stefano had done spread like wildfire and that resulted in him being suspended from the football team. Many persons tried to apologize to me, but I didn't take the bait.

The greatest surprise was Cara being in attendance. Cara sat, the epitome of support and strength. Her calm demeanour exuded confidence.

The trial lasted for hours. I was called to the stand, made to take an oath and asked questions that were sometimes irrelevant to the

situation at hand. As the trial progressed, I felt more and more drained, until it felt like all of my actions were incriminating me.

The court took a break as the jury deliberated the verdict. I felt uneasy. Stefano's lawyer wore a self-satisfied smirk. I looked over at my own lawyer and felt nervous as she saw him bent over sheets of paper, scribbling away on his tablet. When the court was called back into session after an hour, I felt butterflies in her stomach. Her sweaty palms clenched into fists as she sat down, awaiting the verdict.

The judges' clear voice rang out, bringing me out of my thoughts. "Court is now back in session. Trial A5620, Mora Aline VS Stefano Méndez has reached a verdict. The verdict of the accusations against Stefano Méndez is said to be NOT GUILTY. The accused is allowed to return to his normal activities, all charges against him will be dropped."

I had stopped listening after the judge declared Brooke and his accomplices as not guilty. After all the troubles I had been through, this was the conclusion? Stefano's lawyer had found a loophole and had used that to their advantage. They won an entire case because of technical difficulties.

I felt tears of rage burn my eyes, but I refused to cry. I gathered my papers and left. I was too upset to thank the lawyer.

Although I lost the trail. I still had pressed charges. Stefano was kicked out of the team after other victims started coming forward. My case had given many girls the confidence they needed to face Stefano.

Chapter 12

“Sonya! Sonya! Wait up!”

I roll my eyes as I wait for Sarah to catch up. “I thought you weren’t coming?”

“I wasn’t but I changed my mind.”

“Alright then, are you done drafting the Submissions?”

“Nope, but I’ll have it done by this afternoon”

I shake my head. Sarah is a bit of a procrastinator. She enjoys working under pressure but not me. Ever since I began my internship at LB’s Law Chambers, I’ve made sure to turn in my assignments and projects early. I don’t want my projects interfering with my schoolwork. I’d miraculously managed to get another scholarship and is currently attending New York law school

After my horrifying experience a year ago, I decided that I wanted to study law. The environment at New York Law School is a huge improvement compared to Barrington. Everyone seems to be happy here. It feels alive.

Sarah is my roommate and we've become great friends. I'm proud to say that I put effort into this friendship. I communicate I support, and I show real love. She always looks out for me and I do the same.

I'm heading to the cafeteria to grab to lunch before my shift tonight. Since moving to New York, I work part-time in a small café coincidentally called The Café. The Café is always busy, and I enjoy working there. My dad was worried about me working there as I already have an internship and a scholarship to focus on. I convinced him that I need the extra money. In fact, sometimes I can spend weeks without working in the café, I'm merely a glorified extra.

“Ou, ou, Sonya you coming to the protest this weekend?”

“Sure, why not?” I respond. The Justice Finders are hosting a protest to protest a racial profiling incident that happened last weekend.

The familiar doors of the cafeteria greet me. I can’t wait to get my food. I’m starving!!

fff

Once again, I’m late. I race through the crowds trying to get to the café. I’d spent so much time in the cafeteria.

I’m finding it hard to breathe but I release a sigh of relief when I recognize the cosy café. I burst through the doors running straight to the back.

“Sorry, I’m late guys! “

Mrs. Ross, the café owner, shoots me a dirty look. Right, grab your apron and get to work.

“Yes mam,” grabbing my apron I get to work.

The store is so busy and before I know it its closing time.

As I exit the café and figure emerge from the shadows.

“Hi, um, I,” he pauses and scratches his head nervously. “I’m Kody from your Laws of Torts class. We-we need a partner for our assignment, but I don’t have any.”

Kody. He usually sits in the back and doesn’t talk to anyone. This is a pleasant surprise.

“Want to be partners,” I ask helping him out?

Kody’s eyes lit up from exciting and something strange happens, he smiles. “Yes- Thank you so much.”

Kody is such I cutie, I would have never thought he was shy.

Kody like myself is quite average looking and we're about the same height. He has medium brown skin and dark wavy hair.

"I guess- guess I see you around Sonya." He turns to leave.

"See you in class and Kody-" He stops and turns to me. "Call me Mora."

A Note to My Readers

Thank you for reading Call Me Mora. This book was a draft for a published book. At that time, I had just begun writing fiction and I wasn't too comfortable with first-person storytelling. I also felt like I had way too much going on plot-wise. The draft that I chose to publish is very different from this story. When reading this draft, I realized that it sounded so different from the finished product and decided to share a chapter with my readers. Many of them wanted more. I decided to publish this book for them, and I honestly don't regret it. And yes, it's short because I never developed this draft further. This short story is enough to get the message across.

If you enjoyed this book, check out these other works by me:

- Set Me Free
- Ammora
- Stories Untold

And if you're into romance

- A Vision of love (by C. Etienne)

All titles are currently available for sale on my website. (www.cachlineetienne.weebly.com)

Non-Consensual Taping Of Sex Partners/ Revenge Porn

Revenge porn is defined as the intentional distribution of non-consensual porn. In simple terms, it is a type of online harassment that happens when one's partner, ex-partner or even a hacker post sexually explicit images or videos without one's permission/consent.

Revenge porn is a form of cyber sexual harassment and cyberbullying and should be taken very seriously. As of 2017, about 38 states and the District of Columbia had specific laws outlawing the distribution of revenge porn.

If one has been a victim of revenge porn, please seek out legal representation and press charges. It is a gross invasion of privacy.

Mora can be anyone, please speak out.

Heres a snippet of the first chapter of Ammora:

1. Let's go to a party.

The setting sun filled the entire sky with the deep colour of rubies, setting the clouds ablaze. Laughter and chatter rang as persons moved about. The wind blew softly causing the tree leaves to sway in harmony. Birds chirped melodiously creating a song that lifted everyone's spirit. Breathing in the fresh cool air, Ammora pushed her glasses up her nose. Her topaz eyes scrunched up in annoyance. It was the last Friday before finals week at Missouri State University and everyone was looking forward to the party later that evening. Ammora was trying to study and catch up on her assignments, but the incessant conversation behind her made that task difficult.

“Yeah, it’s at Brooke’s house. He’s so hot omg” Ammora overheard a girl say to her friend behind her.

“Literally. I can’t understand how he’s still single”, came her friends reply.

Ammora groaned and internally rolled her eyes at the depth of the conversation. Her life had become a living breathing cliché. Suddenly, everything around her went dark. She felt someone pressing the pads of their fingers into her eyes. The soft fragrance of lavender instantly gave her capturer away.

"Leona," Ammora said, her short answer betraying the smile in her voice.

"Hiiiiiiii Ammora," Leona replied, stretching out her greeting. Since they were in different classes and clubs, it was unusual for Leona to meet up with Ammora before the end of the day. They usually met late in the afternoon when classes were over for the day. They were also roommates so they often walked back from campus together. Ammora was curious as to why Leona had come to find her in the middle of the day, but she had a suspicious feeling that it had something to do with Leona's goal of helping Ammora become more social.

Leona was Ammora's best friend, and they were as opposite as two people could be. Ammora had long black braids that reached her waist, courtesy of her Aunt Neely gifted hands. She was dark, tall, thin, and extremely shy, which meant she stayed quiet more often

than she spoke. What was most surprising about Ammora was not her quietness or her shyness around people; but rather, her eyes. Her eyes were a shockingly bright shade of topaz; she was often asked if she was wearing contacts.

On the other hand, Leona had a mess of auburn hair that she had recently cut into a pixie cut and dyed a streak hot pink. She had piercings running up both ears and barely reached Ammora's shoulders. Her appearance was as bright as her personality.

Ammora decided she wouldn't be getting any work done in the library. She gathered up her stuff and made her way out of the ancient building alongside Leona. The duo had only been walking for a few minutes when Leona ran into a friend from class. They chatted amiably for a few minutes while Ammora stood quietly, nodding and smiling at the appropriate moments. Ammora knew walking with Leona would take twice as long as normal, only because she would meet people she knew every couple of feet. Leona gracefully ended the conversation and came back to Ammora's side to walk with her. Ammora admired Leona's ability to immediately make friends. She was always the most confident person in the room

and took life as it came. There was a pause in the conversation, which prompted Leona's next question,

"So, have you decided what you'll wear to Brooke's party this year?"

Ammora internally sighed, her suspicion was correct. Ever since her friend had gotten an invite to this party, she was determined to get Ammora to go with her. Even though Leona knew that Ammora hated parties and the superficial forced interaction between various members of the university, she still encouraged her to attend. Maybe if Ammora got out more and made more friends she would enjoy the full university experience.

"Leona, you know I can't. I have to find volunteers for entertainment in the retirement home and I have a physics test on Monday. I can't afford any distractions. I really can't..."

"Lose my scholarship" Leona completed Ammora's well-versed sentence with her.

"Yeah, that", Ammora sighed shaking her head, causing her long braids to swish to either side. Ammora had worked hard for years, often surviving on two to three hours of sleep to be

able to attend an Ivy League university. The only way she could do that was if she got a scholarship. Her years of hard work had paid off when she was awarded the dean's list scholarship in her senior year of high school.

"I understand that but come on its just one night. Not even a whole night, only a couple of hours. In exchange, I'll volunteer at the retirement home with you, every Saturday until spring break. Deal?" Leona proposed.

Ammora was quiet. Her friend drove a hard bargain. She would be free until Spring break and she supposed she could show up for a couple of hours. She even had a new dress she had brought a few weeks ago. She wanted to wear it for Thanksgiving, but she had been so swamped with assignments she had spent all of Thanksgiving on campus, catching up on her classes.

"Okay fine. I'll come, but on one condition" Ammora didn't want to cave in too easily. This was her first and last college frat party.

Leona let out a squeal and jumped a lot higher than expected from someone who swore they were allergic to exercise. "Anything!" she practically yelled.

“You’re not allowed to leave me alone the entire night. I don’t know anyone there except you. Promise?” Ammora said seriously, holding her friend by the shoulders to stop her jumping up and down.

“I promise. When have I ever let you down? I’ll be back by six so we can walk to the party together. I have to go complete an essay so I’ll meet you then” Leona promised as she turned and quickly made her way back to the library, bouncing the entire way.

Ammora watched in amusement, sometimes her best friend really was like a child, happiest at the smallest of things. ‘If I want to go to the party, I have a lot to do before then’, she thought to herself as she quickened the pace and made her way back to her room.

About the Author

Cachline Etienne is a Young Adult Author, and a Poet born in the Bahamas. She published her first poetry book *Stories Untold* early 2018 and followed up with the release of a young adult fiction, *Anmmora*. In 2019 Cachline published her bestselling novelette, *Set Me free*. Cachline expresses that she writes to draw awareness and that her stories are not always tales of happiness. The bad guy doesn't always lose, and the good guy doesn't always win. At any giving chance, Cachline advocates for love and equality. In her spare, Cachline prefers to read, write and paint. It is through reading; she discovered her love for Writing. Currently, Cachline Etienne is a Psychology major at the University of Bahamas. After University, Cachline plans to continue writing throughout her career.



