

~ Excerpt – Nothing But Drama ~

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Camille

If my mother caught me, it would be all over.

I could see it now. All my friends, crying their eyes out. Even the haters would come out, pretending the world wouldn't be the same without me in it. Everyone would talk about what a shame it was that I had to go so soon. Yep, I had played out all the possibilities in my mind.

I wiped the sweat that was trickling down the side of my face. I wasn't sure if it was the humidity from the hot Houston night air or my nerves working overtime, but I was sweating like I'd been dancing in a Nelly video.

I bit my lip and looked around my bedroom. I was sitting on the window sill, trying to decide whether I should climb back in and take my butt to bed like I was supposed to or do what my heart was telling me to do and go meet my man.

I looked at the picture of my boo on my nightstand and knew that it was a no-brainer. Love wins every time.

We'd taken that picture six months ago in one of those dollar booths at the mall. It was so cute and we both looked so happy. That was the last day we'd been together before Keith had gotten arrested.

But he was out now, and was begging me to come meet him.

Did I mention how cute he was?

I know my mother would not understand anything about me leaving the house at two in the morning. If she woke up, I'd just have to deal with it.

My baby is worth it.

I eased over the sill and lowered myself down, almost landing in the bushes right outside my bedroom window. I paused, brushing the leaves off my Baby Phat jeans and pink shirt before taking off down the street.

I was trying to sprint to Keith's car but my strappy sandals slowed me down. It would be just my luck that a neighbor noticed me running down the street. Lord knows I wished they'd be entrepreneurs and get their own business so they could stay out of mine.

I made it to the entrance to my neighborhood in less than five minutes. A big smile crossed my face when I spotted my boo standing at the corner, leaning against a blue Monte Carlo.

"I can't believe it's you," I said as I threw my arms around his neck.

"In the flesh, baby. I was beginning to think you weren't going to come." Keith smiled back at me, looking cuter than ever with his big Afro, signature Sean John jeans and big white T-shirt. His golden brown skin was smooth and his body seemed even more in shape than I remembered.

"I'm sorry, but you know I had to sneak out of the house." I tried my best to sound sweet, but I think my voice sounded like I'd been sucking helium or something. I took a deep breath, trying to calm myself down.

"Yeah, I'm sorry about that, but I just got out and I called you as soon as I did. You look good, girl." He fingered one of my shoulder-length, jet-black

spiral curls. I was glad I had made sure my hair was in place and my makeup was just right. I smiled at his compliment.

"Whoa." Keith leaned back and stared at me. "I knew something was different. You got your braces off."

I used to hate those stupid braces, but I was grateful now that my father had insisted that I get them. Not a day passed without someone telling me how pretty my smile was.

"You like?" I asked.

"Mm-hmm, but how could I have missed that? You know those things used to cut my lips all up," Keith joked.

I playfully hit him in the shoulder. He laughed as we climbed in the car and took off.

"So, why didn't you call me ahead of time, when you found out you were getting out?" I asked as we made our way onto the freeway.

"Man, I just found out. It was a big surprise. But I'm here now, baby. And with you, so that's all that matters." Keith looked over at me, squeezed my hand and smiled. "Girl, I missed you so much," he said.

I couldn't help but blush. Me and Keith had only been together four months before he went to jail, but I was madly in love with him and had no doubt he felt the same.

"So what happened? They caught the real carjackers?" I asked as I put my feet up on the dash.

"Baby, let's not talk about all that." Keith looked at my feet like they were the cutest things he'd ever seen. He shook himself out of the trance watching me seemed to be putting him in. "That place wasn't no joke. And I'm just happy to be out. You know I'm not a criminal." He took a deep breath, then stroked my cheek. "I missed you," he said again.

"I missed you, too." I leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. "Hey, whose car is this, anyway?" I asked as I pulled myself away.

"My cousin Jerome's. I told him I had to come see my baby and he let me use it." Keith flashed another smile. "Did you bring the key?"

I reached in my jeans pocket and pulled out a single key. "Got it right here." I grinned. If my mother didn't kill me for sneaking out, she sure 'nuff was going to wring my neck if she ever found out what I was about to do.

"Cool, just tell me exactly how to get there. I know you said it's in Third Ward."

I dropped the key back in my pocket and leaned back in the seat and gave him the directions to my grandmother's house.

"Don't worry about a thing," Keith said. His calm voice eased my fears and I closed my eyes.

"You're going to go down to the third stop sign," I said once we'd reached our exit. "It's the first house on the right after the stop sign."

"Are you sure no one is going to come to your grandma's house?" Keith asked as we made the turn.

"I told you, I'm sure. My grandmother is in a nursing home and no one is ever at her house. I come by twice a week after school to water her plants, check on the cat and make sure everything is okay."

"Why don't y'all just sell it if your grandmother isn't coming back to it?"

"My mom was raised in this house and she'd never even think about selling it." And she would die if she knew I had a boy up in there. *Stop thinking about your mother,* I snapped to myself. I turned my attention back to Keith as he flashed that lopsided smile that had captured my heart. "Well, I'm glad you didn't sell it, because it's the perfect place for us to spend some time together," he said as he played with my hair.

I giggled and squeezed his hand.

"I also know if I'm with you I won't have to deal with Peanut and 'nem. You know they're worried that I might snitch on them," Keith said.

The smile left my face at the mention of Peanut's name. Keith was a good guy when I met him a year ago. Six months after we met he told me he didn't want to be just friends anymore, he wanted to be my boyfriend.

At the time, Keith was a straight A and B student. Then, right after we got together, he started hanging around his no-good cousin, Peanut. Then all of a sudden Keith started doing things he didn't have no business doing, like skipping school and riding around in stolen cars.

I'd cried like crazy when Keith got arrested. My mom didn't want me talking to him anymore, so I had to sneak down to the jail to visit him. I wasn't sure what to think about the whole situation, but when Keith told me that wasn't him on the Wal-Mart surveillance tape carjacking a little old lady, I believed him. After all, despite what my mother said, it wasn't like he was some thug or something. We both went to a nice high school. We both got decent grades and he had never been in any real trouble. Keith tried to play the bad boy to be more like Peanut, but never in a million years would he resort to carjacking.

However, that's just what the police said he did. That seventy-eight-year-old lady had to be in the hospital for three weeks. The police caught Keith shortly after she was hospitalized. Someone had called Crime Stoppers and tipped them off.

"Right here." I pointed toward a huge yellow house on the right.

"Wow, that's tight," Keith said as he pulled the car into the driveway.

All that had happened three days ago. Since then I'd been coming by my grandmother's place after school every day. I'd even skipped school today, even though this was just the second week of school, and came straight here so we could spend all day together. It was days like today that I was thankful I had my own car. That way I could leave school with no problem and get home before my mother suspected a thing.

I'd surprised Keith by waking him up to the smell of frying bacon. I'd made a big breakfast, and even though I dropped shells in the scrambled eggs, Keith ate it like it was the best thing in the world.

We'd spent the day watching movies and just hanging out. After a long nap, I braided his hair while he played a PlayStation game his cousin had brought him.

"Baby, I like it." Keith rubbed his hand over his head as he checked out his hairstyle in the mirror. "I didn't know you could braid like this."

I smiled. Truth be told, I didn't like the braided hairstyle on him. But since he wanted that style . . . "Just one of my many talents," I joked.

"I don't know what I would do without you," Keith said, flashing a cute dimple at me. "Tell you what. I know you're tired of being stuck up in this

house. Let's roll out. I need to go by Sharpstown and pick up a couple of outfits. Then maybe we can grab something to eat or something."

I looked at my watch. It was after three and school was just about to get out, so nobody would ask questions about me being in the mall. But that meant I'd have to find another lie to tell my mother. Oh well, I'll just say I had tutorials after school or something. "That sounds like a good idea."

"Let me hit the bathroom, grab my shoes and we can head out," Keith said as he leaned in and kissed me on the forehead. I loved the way his lips felt against my skin.

I watched Keith walk off toward the bathroom. If you had told me a week ago I'd be as happy as I was at this very moment, I would've told you you were on some serious drugs.

I knew I was being all giddy and stuff, so I tried to shake it off. I looked around for my grandmother's cat because I knew it was time for the mangy thing to eat.

"Garfield, where are you?" I looked throughout the house before knocking on the bathroom door. "Hey, Keith, you seen Garfield?"

"Yeah, the cat kept rubbing against the front door like it wanted to go out, so I let it out," Keith called out from the bathroom.

I exhaled in frustration and stomped toward the front door. There was no telling where that stupid cat had gone. The last thing I wanted to be doing was running through the neighborhood looking for Garfield.

I swung the front door open. "Garfield!"

"Freeze! Don't move!"

Three policeman stood on my grandmother's front porch with their guns pointed at my head.

To say I almost had a heart attack would have been an understatement. I almost peed in my pants. And in these sixty-dollar Apple Bottoms, that wouldn't have been a pretty sight.

"Put your hands in the air so we can see them!" one of the policemen shouted.

"What's going on?" I slowly raised my hands. I was so scared I couldn't keep my arms from shaking.

"Are you Camille Harris?" the cop to my right shouted.

"Ummm, yes. B-but what did I do?" I looked around at the cops. No one replied. Instead, one cop motioned for another officer to go inside the house.

"Is there anyone inside?" the officer asked as he passed me.

"J-just my boyfriend."

In front of the house, more cops and the neighbors stared at me. My mother was going to kill me for sure.

"He took off!" The officer who had gone inside the house came back out yelling, "The bathroom window is open and he's gone."

The cop to my left yelled, "Spread out. He couldn't have gotten far." Into his walkie-talkie he said, "I want all patrols covering the area. Suspect fled on foot. He is in the area. Consider him armed and dangerous."

I shook my head. This had to be a bad dream. Armed and dangerous? What were they talking about? Who were they talking about? "Sir, could you please tell

me what's going on?" I still had my hands in the air and my arms were starting to get tired.

"Who owns this house?" the officer asked.

"It's my grandmother's house," I nervously responded. "But my mother is the one who takes care of it."

"Does your mother know you're here?"

I shook my head. She didn't know but judging from the look on the officer's face, it was just a matter of time before she found out.

"What's her name and phone number?" The officer took out a pen and piece of paper.

"Lydia Harris. 713-433-7020." Tears rolled down my cheeks as he wrote down the name and number. "Sir, can you please tell me what's happening?"

The officer ignored my question, took my arms, pulled them down and placed them behind my back. "Camille Harris, you have the right to remain silent . . ." I tuned out on the rest of his speech when he snapped handcuffs on my wrists. I was in full-fledged crying mode now as he walked me down the porch steps. "This must be some mistake. I didn't do anything!" I tried to tell him.

The officer finished reading me my rights as he placed me in the back of the patrol car.

"Please, officer. I didn't do anything."

"Didn't do anything?" The officer laughed. "Your boyfriend tried to choke a deputy before he broke out of jail last week. And you've been hiding him in your grandmother's house ever since. Harboring a fugitive is a pretty big crime." He slammed the car door.

Now, I was pretty sure he'd spoken plain English to me, but that mess he was talking sounded like a foreign language. Broke out of jail? Harboring a fugitive? In my grandmother's house?

But then I started thinking back over the last couple of days. How Keith didn't want to leave the house. How he was adamant that I didn't tell anyone he was there.

Oh. My. God. Maybe they would give me life in prison. Or the death penalty. Anything would be better than having to go home and face my mother.