

NO SISTER OF MINE

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*Dedicated to my sisters Mee-Mee, Carmita, Lisa, and, Cam.
Also to my brother, Marcell.
Love you all.*

CHAPTER ONE

Legacy

Dana steps up to the jets of warm water shooting from the shower head. She closes her eyes and allows her stress to wash away. She looks down at the drain and watches the blood rinse from her body. The pinkish mixture swirls and releases to the pipes below. She uses her hands to help the cleansing process rubbing her arms and chest. She turns and her back is facing the water now. She leans her head back to saturate her long black hair. A sob creeps from her lips followed by the flow of tears.

~

I feel sorry for my dear friend, Dana. The woman is beautiful for her age. At 57 she has the body of a 40 year old and only a few strands of gray hair. If only being pretty equated happiness. Then she would be complete. Her pretty appearance hides an ugly truth and that is why I feel for her.

There isn't enough water in the world to clean her dirty laundry.

Who am I? Well, let's just say I'm a very good friend of Dana's. No need to name names... To protect the innocent of course.

I'll be your eyes and ears behind the scenes as you navigate the

Cooper family saga.

~

Genie looks around the dining room table at her siblings and shakes her head. She hates every one of them. Always has. Always will. Just the mere mention of her brother and sisters makes her blood boil. She rubs her warm cheeks and blows out a frustrated breath.

Helayna, Henn, and Sparkle laugh and chat among one another as they wait for their mother to arrive. She called them to the family estate to make some emergency announcement.

Drama queen, Genie says to herself and sits there silently. She is not about to waste a breath entertaining these idiots.

Dana is the person Genie despises most in the world. She is less than human in her eyes. Nothing more than an egg donor. She pats her itchy wig and rolls her eyes at her brother Henry Junior whom everybody calls Henn. He is telling one of his regular stories about some random ratchet hoe he smashed that nobody wants to hear. His topic of conversation is another thing added to the list of reasons why she loathes him.

"Where is Honey," Genie asks with an attitude. Her face is a puzzle consisting of caramel and ivory colored pieces. An evil expression graces it. Dana's oldest daughter is a unique beauty because she's been blessed with Vitiligo. Whispers among the community say that she is the prettiest of the Cooper sisters despite her skin condition. She loves how jealous it makes them and her mother.

"Damn, you just gon' interrupt my conversation like that," Henn says. "She's late as usual. We know you can't live without your precious baby sister. She'll be here, Genie don't worry your patchy little face."

Sparkle chimes in. "You know that incest shit is nasty, right? Sucking your sister's twat on the low..."

Henn bursts out laughing and reaches across the cherry oak antique dining table for a fist pound. Sparkle chuckles along with him and gives him dap.

Helayana tries her best not to crack a smile. "Leave her alone, y'all."

"Shut up, Twin! You always tryna protect some damn body," Sparkle snaps at her. Helayna and Genie are nine months apart so the family nicknamed them The Twins. That is the only similarity though. Helayna is a chocolate girl with an invisible halo hanging above her head. She isn't that attractive in the face but her body is something exquisite.

"I don't need her to protect me, fuck y'all. Honey will always be my favorite. Deal with it."

"You need to watch your mouth when your sitting at my dining room table, Genie." Their mother walks up without them noticing and she is not happy. "Everybody at this table is well over 21 but y'all steady bickering like kids." Dana saunters over and takes her seat at the head of the table. The scent of her perfume lingers as she passes each of her children dressed in a silk gown with matching robe. She folds her

satin gloved hands on the table in front of her. She, too, has vitiligo but it only affects her hands.

Genie waves her hand unbothered. "Whatever. What's the emergency, Dana?"

"You're father's on his way down. As soon as he's here we'll get started." She looks around and frowns. "Where's Honey?"

~

Honey sits naked kneeling in front of Jeremy as he strokes his throbbing penis. She throws her head back and opens her mouth wide. A few seconds later, Jeremy grabs her by the hair and releases his load for her to taste. When the last drop falls Honey swallows it all and licks her lips.

Jeremy collapses on the bed breathing heavily. "You the coldest..."

"Yeah, whatever." Honey giggles and stands up. "I gotta go." Her plump, curvy frame is glistening with sweat as she gathers up her clothes that are thrown around the room.

~

Her smooth complexion matches her birth name. She may not be slim but Honey is a bad chick in every way possible. Beauty, brains, and

bankroll all wrapped in an amazing personality. I've tried to get my daughters to hang with her more so some of her aura could rub off on them. But them heffas too busy chasing niggas in the street to do the right thing.

~

"Why don't you stay? Come on, Honey, please. Spend the night with me for once. A nigga be lonely in this big ass house by his self all the time." Jeremy, better known to the streets as Jay Bandz, has been living in his house for two months now. He bought it with the advance money from his record deal with Interscope Records. With the recent success of Machine Gun Kelly, Jay knows he is going to be the next one to blow out of Cleveland.

"We haven't been kicking it long enough for that yet." She pulls out her cellphone to find that it is dead. She unplugs Jay's iPhone and plugs hers up. It powers on.

Jay throws up his hands. "Oh my God, man! Are you serious? It's been like a month now."

"I need a shower bad after all we just did so the sooner I can get home the better." She pulls her panties up over her pear shaped behind.

"I got water! Take a shower here and watch a movie with me."

"It's late, Jay."

"What's the difference between spending the night and staying 'til 3:00 in the morning?"

"Where I wake up at." Honey's cellphone buzzes and her voicemail icon pops up. All too eager to end the conversation she picks it up to check her messages.

"Can you put the phone down and talk to me please?"

"Shhh..." Honey put up her finger as she listens to the message of her mother saying to come to the house immediately for an emergency family meeting.

"Are you serious right now? I'm trying to tell you how I feel and you play me like that?" Jay folds his arms and shakes his head at her.

Honey taps End and picks up the pace. "That was my mother. I gotta go, it's an emergency." She puts the rest of her clothes on and grabs her purse. "I'll spend the night next time, I promise. I gotta see what's up with my mom."

Jeremy gets up from the bed and sighs. "I understand. Go handle your business. Just call me and let me know you're alright." He kisses Honey on the forehead before she rushes out the door.

~

The Cooper family sits at the dining room table in silence as they wait for Honey, the youngest of the five siblings, to arrive. Once their father Henry, Sr. joins them at the table the energy in the room changes. His scandalous actions as of late puts him in an awkward position in the family and everyone has mixed emotions when it comes to him.

Dana locks eyes with her husband. His salt and pepper dreadlocks are tied back in a low ponytail the way she likes. He smiles at her but she doesn't smile back. She gives him a nod and places a hand on his. Their love is a complicated one that spans thirty-five years.

Genie looks her mother over carefully for signs of illness. She has concern written all over her face but that's about it. *She can't be sick*, Genie concludes.

Dana is aging very gracefully. She is the product of a black mother and Native American father. She keeps her long, black hair up in a braided bun and is always dressed as if she's coming from church. Fly

two-piece suits with Chanel heels are her signature look. Tonight though, Dana is at home and relaxed. Her hair is down and she isn't wearing any makeup.

The tension in the room is eating Genie up inside. "Dana, why we gotta keep waiting for Honey?"

"I keep calling and her phone is going straight to voicemail. Just tell us. We can fill her in when she gets here," Sparkle says and tosses her phone on the table.

Dana sighs, "Call her again. If she don't answer then... Just call her."

Sparkle dials her younger sister one last time. It rolls over to voicemail. She taps the red button on the screen to hang up. "Go ahead, Ma. I got the voicemail again."

Dana pulls a rose from the large bouquet in the crystal vase before her. She puts the pink petals to her nose and inhales the sweet smell. "You know why I like to keep fresh roses in every room of the house?"

"I don't know," Henry says. "You've just always loved flowers."

"That's one reason. But I have a more symbolic reason."

Genie rolls her eyes. "No disrespect, but can you just say it. No need to try to sugarcoat the shit. We're all grown here remember?"

Dana looks surprised. "We've never liked each other. I accepted that a long time ago. But what you won't do is just blatantly disrespect me." She wants to reach for the small knife she keeps tucked in the garter belt on her thigh but she is on a peaceful mission. Her vile daughter is not about to take her out of her hookup.

"What's wrong with you," Henry asks disappointed in Genie's actions.

"It's late. We're all tired so we're cranky. Let's just calm down and get to the bottom of this so we can go home and get back in the bed." Helayna looks at her mom. "Ignore her, Ma. Finish what you were saying." Once again she plays referee.

"The reason I put flowers in every room is because they represent the many sides of us. Like this rose. It has some thorns that can prick you and draw blood. But they are also one of the best expressions of love of all time. Every time I see a rose it reminds me that I'm human and I make mistakes like everybody else. I want you guys to keep up that tradition from now on. Even when I'm not around I want

you to keep roses in every room of the mansion." Dana gasps and clutches her chest as she fights the urge to cry.

"Ma, what's wrong," Henn asks. "I don't like seeing you like this." He is really protective over the women in his family especially his mother. His sisters believe he is the spoiled, only boy child that only cares about himself. You would think his name is Selfish he's been called that so much over the years.

"The reason I called you all here is because-"

Dana is interrupted by the chime of the security system alerting that someone let themselves in the manor.

"Ma! Daddy!" Honey's voice is consumed by panic as she rushes inside.

"We're in the dining room," Dana calls out to her.

"I'm so sorry, Ma. I got here as soon as I could. I was working late on some stuff and fell asleep. I didn't even realize my phone died until I woke up to go to the bathroom." Honey waves at her siblings and goes over to her parents. She kisses her mother on the cheek then her father. "Sorry, y'all." She sits down next to Genie. "What's the emergency?"

"She was about to tell us when you finally walked in,"

Sparkle snaps.

Honey ignores her. "Anyway, Ma. What's going on?"

Tears fill Dana's eyes and her lips start to quiver. Everyone including Henry gets upset. "Hey now, I thought you said this news wasn't gonna be that bad."

"I know... I lied." She blinks and releases the tears in the corners of her eyes.

Genie pushes her chair back and stands up. "If you're going to sit here and cry I'm leaving. It can't be that much of an emergency if you don't want to tell us."

"Sit your hateful ass down somewhere, Genie!" Sparkle points her crystal studded stiletto fingernail at her.

"I'm going to prison! I leave in six weeks! You happy now?!" Dana yells in a way that nobody has heard her do in many moons. "I got a year in Federal prison! That's the damn emergency... Now get out." She gets up and leaves the room sprinkling a trail of confusion behind her.

~

Everyone was left at the table wide eyed with their mouths hanging open. Did they hear her right? Federal prison? What the hell could a damn near 60-year-old woman possibly do to deserve a year in the feds?

Over the years I've learned to ask what hasn't Dana done. They should be thanking God that she will only be gone for a year.

~

Henry stands up from his seat to address his children. "Y'all go on home and try to get some sleep. I'll get to the bottom of this and call you tomorrow."

CHAPTER TWO

Sister Secrets

~

You know you live a privileged life if you can have a sleepless night in a California king sized bed.

As the sun begins to peek up over the horizon it gives Dana a not so friendly reminder that she will have to face the reality of the turmoil she created for herself and her family. All of her wants to go to sleep and never wake back up but her faith in God won't allow that. She will follow her journey no matter where it leads. The 3 a.m. meeting left everyone devastated and perplexed. She's been locked in her room refusing to see or speak to anyone ever since. This silent approach is not like open, honest

Dana. Keeping the details of her situation from her family is hurting them.

*She wishes things didn't have to be this way but it's necessary so they
would just have to understand.*

~

She looks over at her husband's empty side of the bed. For the first time in three decades of marriage she doesn't miss Henry. Her heart isn't shattered into a million pieces. All that Dana has ever known is built around the love she has for Henry Cooper. Everything she is most proud of was either created with him or for him. Her beautiful family. Her multimillion-dollar beauty empire. Everything. To her that's what being a wife is all about. She believes that a woman should make her marriage and the love of her spouse the number one priority. Now that she is facing prison time alone, that love doesn't seem to mean much.

Henry doesn't get to the bottom of things like he promises his children. He asks no questions. He packs a suitcase and leaves the second he makes it to their bedroom. Henry wants to be there for her but he doesn't know how to. He is a man of few words. Supportive and handsome, he sets the perfect example for what a provider should be. Before he leaves, Henry tells his wife that he wants to take some time to

process the news she's given him. Dana knows better than that though. She shakes her head as she stares out of her bedroom window into the early morning sky. Instead of staying home to help his wife with the scariest moment she ever experienced he looks for comfort in the arms of a high paid prostitute.

There is a light tap at the door. "Come in."

"Good morning, Mrs. Cooper. Would you like your bed made and some breakfast?"

"No thank you, Emma. As a matter of fact tell the staff that everyone can take the day off," she tells her middle aged Caucasian handmaiden.

Emma looks confused. "You sure, Mrs. Cooper? Is there something wrong?"

"I'm fine. I just need a day to be alone. Recharge my battery a little bit."

"I understand, ma'am. I'll notify the staff and check on you before I go."

"That's fine. Thanks, Emma."

"You're very welcome." Emma looks at Dana and waits for more. She can tell that something was weighing heavily on Dana's mind. Her only response is a smile.

When Emma is gone Dana sits down in the large oak rocking chair she keeps by her window. She slides on her glasses and picks up her Bible from the side table. She turns to her favorite book, Job and starts reading. These are her go to scriptures when things get stressful for her. Job's undying faith through times of tragedy always puts things in perspective for Dana.

A few sentences in Dana's telephone rings. She ignores it and puts her attention back on her book. The caller eventually hangs up but a few seconds later her phone starts ringing again. She ignores it, too and continues reading.

~

"I don't know what your problem is but you need to get it together fast! You've always been a bitch but this?! I mean, this is just crazy! I swear to God you got ten minutes to call me back then I'm coming over there! No more hiding I'll be at your door!" Genie presses end and throws her cellphone on the bed.

"Oh, my God I hate her," she screams and paces back and forth. She is fed up with Dana. What type of mother just blurts out "I'm going to jail" and runs off? No explanation. No nothing.

"Give her time, Genie. You gotta calm down," Honey says.

Genie ignores her comment. "What the fuck did she do? Huh?! What did she do, Honey?!"

"I wish I could answer that. I'm just still in shock about it."

"She's unstable. That woman is incapable of running the salons. I have to do something."

"Something like what?"

"I don't know exactly but she won't be CEO of any Cooper business by the time she get back out of prison. I know that much!"

Honey studies her sister's face and recognizes the stare in her eyes. "You're serious aren't you?"

"As a heart attack. I'm gonna figure out a way to get that position from her. She can't handle it anymore."

"I don't think that's a good idea."

"Well, what do you suggest?"

"You know Helayna is going to step in for Mama."

"Fuck Helayna. She's so fucking soft I can push her right on out the way."

"You need to think about what you're saying. That will never, ever work out, Genie."

Genie looks up at the ceiling. "Why would she just drop this on us like this?"

Honey shrugs her shoulders. "I don't know but that's not important right now. What we need to be focused on is how we can be there and support her. Genie, think about how she's feeling."

"Ugh!" Genie throws her hands up in frustration and plops down on the bed next to her sister. She lets out a deep sigh. "How can we support somebody who won't even answer our damn phone calls?" Suddenly her voice is soft and childlike. She looks over at Honey and searches her eyes for an answer.

Honey is caught off guard at Genie's sudden vulnerability. She is the only person in the family other than their father that Genie is nice to but she's never opened up like this. It takes her a few seconds to respond. "I guess we just pray for her until she does."

To Honey's surprise Genie bows her head and extends her hands to her. Honey slowly reaches out and takes them. They close

their eyes and Honey prays. "Father, I come to you asking that you protect my family. I pray that you open mom's heart so she can talk to us..."

As Honey prays Genie gets more and more overwhelmed. Emotions that she's been keeping buried for years are bubbling to the surface. Love, sadness, fear. All of those were erased from her spirit when she was a little girl. Her mother's concerned face enters her mind then she pictures her snow white hands that she keeps covered at all times. The vitiligo that she passed on to Genie should have brought them together with a special bond. But the ailment has always been Dana's biggest embarrassment. She looks at her daughter as an embarrassment, too although she will never admit it. With all that Dana puts Genie through there is something that makes her heart ache for her mother.

Honey goes on to say, "We may not be perfect, Lord but we're yours. So please, please help us."

"Please," Genie says. Moisture forms in the tear ducts of her eyes. "Amen."

Honey's eyes jump open at the sound of her sniffles. "Oh my God! Genie, are you crying? Girl, I ain't never seen you cry before." She drops hands and rubs Genie's back.

"I don't know what's going on with me. This shit with Dana is driving me crazy," she sobs.

"Aw, Genie... Genie, Mama will be alright."

"I'm so pissed right now!"

Honey gives her sister's back one last rub then gets up from the bed. "Let me get you some tissue."

Genie jumps up and gets in Honey's face. "I don't need you to get nothing for me! Get out!" She shoves Honey with every bit of strength within her.

Honey falls backwards against the wall. "What the hell, Genie!"

Genie grabs Honey by the throat with one hand and a fist full of her hair in the other. She squeezes Honey's throat cutting off her airway. "If you tell anybody you saw me cry today the whole world will know about what happened in Detroit... And I'll kill you. You understand?"

Honey who is paralyzed in shock, nods as best she could while fighting to breathe.

Genie sustains her grip. "I'm not playing with you. You will die... I'll kill you. I've done the shit before."

Honey's eyes bulge. *She's lying!*

"You're my baby sister and you know how much I love you, but I won't let you make me look weak." She slowly releases Honey. "Go home before I hurt you."

Honey snatches up her purse and keys from the bed and runs out of the house.

Genie storms into her master bathroom and gets her Feel Good Pills from the medicine cabinet. She goes downstairs to the kitchen of her large ranch style home. As she fills a glass with water from the sink her doorbell rings. Genie places the glass on the counter and heads for the door. She swings it open ready to commit a homicide by tongue on the uninvited guest. A gasp escapes her lips at the sight of Dana.

"Hey, Genie," she says cheerfully. Dana's hair is pulled back in her trademark chignon. There is little makeup on her face. Just some mascara and a rosy pink gloss is all she wears. Her flawless skin is

the star of the show today. She is dressed in a pretty floral dress with pink pumps to match. Sunglasses with gold circular frames shield her eyes from the sun. In one hand she holds a brown paper bag from The Olive Garden and a bouquet of pink roses in the other.

"I guess I'll invite myself in," she says and steps inside.

Genie closes the door behind her. "I guess so..."

Dana sits the bag down and hands Genie the flowers.

"For you, my darling." She takes off her shades and keeps the beaming smile on her face.

"Thanks." Genie gives her a fake smile in return.

"I got your message," Dana says. She looks Genie dead in the eye. Suddenly her smile isn't so friendly.

Honey gets in her car and searches the glove compartment for some Kleenex. "This bitch is losing her goddamn mind!" She snatches a couple of tissues from the small, plastic package and wipes her face. The tears she dries are not from crying. The choking she just endured makes her eyes water.

Honey is upset as she drives away from Genie's house but she isn't angry. Seeing Genie cry for the first time breaks her heart.

She feels more sorry for her than anything. Honey now realizes how serious things are for her family. Her father is a dishonest pig, her mother was going to prison, and now her oldest sister is planning a hostile takeover of the family business.

~

Here is a female that believes the grass is greener on whichever side she is standing on. God spoils Honey on a regular basis. She is the baby of the family born with a silver spoon so she is extra privileged. Always the popular girl who is artistic and creative in many ways, Honey never thought that any harm would come to her family. Even through the few bad times they endured, the family always came out better in the end.

The baby Cooper sister almost fainted when she ran into her mother on the way out the house. She couldn't believe how fast God had answered her prayers. Her mother's heart was open and she was ready to talk. Not only that, the first place she came was to Genie's house. This was a miracle in itself. The only snag in the sweater was her father.

~

"Daddy said he would get back to us. What happened with that?"

"He left. He's been at the rental since that night." She gives her daughter "the look".

Honey knows what that means. "Fuck that, we need him here. He's the only one that can talk to Genie right now. She's messed up, Ma."

Dana gives Honey a tight hug. "I'll talk some sense into her. You're father will have to get his stuff together on his own."

"I can't just sit back and do nothing, Mama. He is getting out of hand. I'm going to get his ass!"

Dana shrugs. "If that's what you feel like you have to do, so be it." She kisses her on the cheek and lets her go.

Honey gets in her car and speeds off. She tries her best not to panic as she drives to her father's go-to place to take his hoes: The family rental home in Parma. "We gotta focus on the Coopers," she says aloud to herself. "He'll understand..."

For twenty minutes Honey drives in silence on the journey to her destination. She hits the brake and slows down to exit the highway. She notices a silver Chevy Tahoe in her rearview exit the freeway right behind her. She turns left and the truck turns left.

"Are they following me," she asks herself.

She continues on her way and the truck turns off. Honey lets out a sigh. She is extremely paranoid. Having the Feds in your business will do that.

Honey pulls into the circular driveway in front of her father's favorite property. The mini mansion is where he spends most of his alone time. She pops the trunk and gets out. She pulls out her brown leather shoulder holster and slips it on. She gets her pistol from its case. Honey looks the gun over and smiles. She has a beautiful love affair with pistols. It is such a pretty piece of hardware. The gold accents and Mother of Pearl grip match perfectly with Honey's personality and style. "Too bad such a pretty gun is about to start something so ugly."

Honey tucks the gun in the holster and puts on a denim blazer to cover it. After slamming the trunk of the car closed Honey says a prayer and approaches the front door.