Out to Get You

by demeter11

Summary

Everyone knows Michonne and Carl are super close. But what if he had a crush on her and things slowly escalated. Now Richonne still happens, (They are a forgone conclusion at this point) but what if it is a triangle instead of a straight line? What if she has to choose? Carl is sixteen here also so that adds a level of plausibility. And we never get to see him be hormonal.
Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Please Be Awful

Chapter Summary

Carl volunteers to help an ailing Michonne and forbidden feelings arise between the two.

One thing could be said about Alexandria, they had hot water and soap. Clean clothes and a way to clean them.

Something to eat that resembled actual food- okay several things could be said about it.

With all that in mind, Michonne thought a good soak, a little nosh and a good night's sleep would help her poor overused rotator's cuff. It did not.

It was morning. She had been struggling for the better part of an hour to grease her scalp. It was hard to lift her arm above her head and dreads are a lot more high maintenance than one thinks.

Down the hall, her surrogate son of sorts, Carl had woken up. With his kid sister, Judith on his hip, he decided to go bother Michonne.

He was going to rib her about fussing with her hair until he heard her hiss in pain.

"You all right?" He asked with concern.

"I am fine," she lied.

He put his sister down on the bed and stood behind her chair and asked,

"What are you doing?"

"Putting olive oil on my scalp and hair," she said.

He looked at her wryly and asked, "Why?"

She scoffed, "Don't all of us have luxurious and oily white people hair. My hair is naturally very dry so I have to add oil to it so it will not itch or fall out. You have no idea. I can be in the middle of killing walkers and if my head itches, it takes all I have not to scratch it. Besides, I usually do this in private. Don't want anybody have the wrong idea and think I am a diva."

"Perish the thought," he teased.

"Oh, hush. I can do it," she attempted it before whimpering a little in pain.

"What's hurting exactly?" He said reaching for the oil.

"My rotator cuff, I thought. But I think it is more than that."

"Let me see," he said.

"Denise looked at it. It is fine."

"You sure?"

"Never mind that for now. I can't reach the back on my head. Will you do it?"

"Sure," he paused with a quizzical expression. "What do I do?"

"Just put some on your fingertips then put it on my scalp row by row."

"Simple enough," he hunched.

He began gingerly as if the hair would detach at the slightest touch. Even though folk saw Michonne as a strictly warrior- she was- he knew there was more to here than sheer ferocity.

Carl saw her as soft and feminine just based of her treatment of him alone. Not to mention the special knowledge he had of her past. She helped him not miss Lori so much.

"You have a soft touch for a boy," she cooed appreciating his gentle effort.

"Thanks. I think."

"Are you serious? Ladies love a man with a slow hand and an easy touch," she laughed remembering the Pointer Sisters song she just paraphrased.

He was the most kind human contact she had received in years.
The softness of her hair surprised him. "Feels like cotton," he said finding the texture soothing. Then realized the potential implications of what he said. "That was not offensive, was it?"
"Hell, no. If the worst thing you can say about me is I got soft hair. I am cool."
"How long have you been growing it?"
"Since you were first grade probably."
"So, about eight, nine years ago?"
"I guess, Mister remind everyone I am sixteen every chance I get."
He chuckled.
"How old are you? Twenty-four, twenty-five?"
She guffawed and said, "Let's go with that."
Taking the hint, he changed topic.
"It looks bruised," he said lightly tossing her hair over her the opposite shoulder and lightly tugging the spaghetti string of her tank top asunder to get a better look at it.
"I don't bruise easily. Damn. It hurts."
"What happened to its fine?"
"I lied clearly."
"I can rub it," he volunteered.
"I will live with it. I don't want to put you out."
"It is no problem. I used to do it for mom when she was pregnant. She told me I was a natural. You are kind of like a mom to me," he said sweetly making eye contact with her in the mirror moving shaggy brown hair from his eyes.
She appreciated the sentiment. Felt honored even. However, she said with a smirk, "I like to think of myself as more of the bruiser older sister a la Jenny Bueller."
"Who?"
"Oh, you poor baby. You have no cultural heritage. Someone here is bound to have a copy of it. I bet Jesse does. We could watch it together. You could invite that little girl I saw you with. She is almost as pretty as you."
He blushed.
"Nah. She doesn't like me. Not really. Plus, she is Ron's girl," he said a little despondent than he meant to be.
"Psssh. Does she know that? That nig- boy gives me the creeps. With his beady eyes and greasy hair. And even if she is his girlfriend. So. Take her."
"I, I don't know. I could but we just moved here. They already think dad is axe crazy. I don't want to make things tougher for us than they currently are."
"How thoughtful. And a copout. You should go for it," she insisted.
"Maybe you are right. But, I know next to nothing about chicks-"
"Lesson one, do not call us chicks," she said.
"Ladies? Hot mamas, what?" He was joking now. Sort of.
"Surely, your dad has taught you something."
"Tab a goes into tab b. He literally said that to me. The little I do know my mom taught me. She was more descriptive. Like I know girls have three holes."
She laughed out of embarrassment then said, "You are already ahead of the curve. Most men do not know that."
"You think I am a man?" The presumption made him feel more manly than having a gun in his hands.
"In these times. Yes. You defend what you consider yours. That is like the definition."
"Thanks. I think you are awesome, too. I am glad I know you. And I do not think that would have ever happened if not for the apocalypse."
"I believe you are right. I am glad I know you, too."
They smiled at each other in the mirror.
Carl then said, "I do know most girls, hell most sane people like when you are nice to them. Only a special kind of asshole sees kindness as a weakness."
"Most people are asshole-ish then. So, that explains that," she said.
"You got a point."
"I will help you. Now, how bad is my bruise?"
"It is pretty small but it is swollen from here to here," he ran his nimble fingers from the back of her arm down to her shoulder blade to the middle of her back down inside her tank top.
The thought occurred to him, She is not wearing a bra.
For a moment, the thought warmed him but he shook it off.
This was Michonne, not of the many half fantasy naked girls he looked at every night in an old Sports Illustrated bikini issue he found in some rubble and in no way kept tucked away in a duffle bag under his bed. No way, no how except she was flesh. Actually live female flesh he was touching. He ran his hand slowly across her skin. He never let on but he thought she was beautiful. He was warmth- hot male hands moving curiously on her skin. A sensation she had not felt in ages. Carl for better or worse possessed a man's touch.
He moved the opposing strap aside revealing bare shoulders when he realized, "There is no way I can really get at the pain unless I pull your shirt up in the back and you straddle the chair."
Eager for relief, Michonne turned the chair around and obeyed with no question.
Carl lifted her tank up to the tops of her shoulders and rested it there.
There it was her bare back tense and sinewed and swollen but most of all host to a very small waist.
Something he had never noticed before but appreciated a way unbecoming a son.
He noticed her pants were hip huggers and if they dared to be just a half an inch lower, she would have been the sexiest plumber ever.
He took some the olive oil and poured it on his hands.
He rubbed them together and pursed his lips. It was either that or licked them when he eyed her breasts and said appendages were pancakes against the back of the chair. Her side boobs on full display. She did not know.
He made up his mind not to focus on them. He is resolve was flimsy at best.

Started at her shoulder just above the bruise.
It elicited a soft groan out her. Then another.
Her skin was goosebumps at his touch. This was involuntary of course but the skin to skin contact was nice.
He gently kneaded her with his thumbs. His long fingers stretched out touching her ribs perilously close to her breasts.
A fact not lost on him though it did pose a dilemma. Should he retreat or cop a feel? His male brain overrode his sense of propriety and he steadily moved his fingers closer under the guise of rubbing deeper which he actually was.
Again with the moaning, it took him to a place where he often did dwell on until it was dark and he was alone. He was hard as a rock. He hoped to hell she would not notice.
The one day I put on clothes that fit, he thought.
The oil gave her skin a velvety shine like a copper crayon. His favorite when he was little because it reminded of him his dad's badge.
She caught Carl's reflection in the mirror. They made eye contact which caused him to turn beet red and she wondered why; until she remembered he was a heterosexual teenager male touching a woman's bareskin as she made grunts of pleasure at his effort.
Then she became keenly aware of his fingers dancing their way up the sides of her breasts.
Michonne did not want to embarrass boy nor did she want him to go too far. She also realized her nipples were hard.
He is a child, she thought.
Two minutes passed.
His fingers were about to become introduced with her areolas when she said firmly, "Carl."
He snatched his hands away. He heard the condemnation in her voice. "I am sorry. So sorry," he was quick to say even though his right hand had only slipped to the small of her back. Lingering there, caressing almost unconscious circles to soothe her out of anger. "You know what? Your mom was right. You have the touch. I am all better." She pulled her shirt down. It was only then that he moved his hand. She stood up. He ran out the room hunched over and hands in front of him leaving his sister behind. Thirty minutes passed before she saw him again. She had Judith in the kitchen with her. She had made pancakes and eggs. "You okay?" She asked eyes concentrated on the messy eating toddler. She had more eggs in her hair than in her mouth.

He nodded. "I understand if you don't want to talk," she said. "I shook my head. I am fine. I guess." She decided to be pragmatic and began, "I have clearly never been a boy-" "Clearly," he agreed a little too eagerly. It was a flirt. She let out a nervous chuckle.

"I have been your age. Your hormones are out to get you. But, I understand. You don't have to be embarrassed around me. It happens and I know you can't necessarily control it. But, it is cool." "Thanks but I am not. Well, not now. I was earlier." "Good," she began to eat. He got up to get some water. She turned to watch him. First time, she had ever noticed he had an ass before. She laughed at herself and shook her head. He sat down beside her and looked at her instead of eating. "What?" She asked. "Um, there is something I kind of want to say." Feeling anxious now, she asked, "What?" He put his face close to hers. Usually, she would have backed away but for whatever reason, she didn't. "What did you have to say?" She asked feeling increasingly uneasy. He smiled then got up and took his pancakes to his room with him. She watched him walk away and said out loud, "What the fuck?" Which prompted Judith to say, "Fuck." "Don't say that. Why do y'all only pick up on the bad words?" "Fuck, fuck, fuck," Judith giggled. "I can't argue that," she knew something had just happened. She hoped it would pass. Two weeks drugged on. She avoided him like plague. It was evening and Rick was off somewhere in Jesse's face, Judith was with Carol. Michonne's shoulder still hurt but it was manageable. Regardless, she got Rosita to cover for her and laid down. Around the same time, Carl came in from helping dig up graves because well, you know. He saw her jacket draped across the back of their chair. She did not hear him come in. He took a shower. Threw on some sleep clothes and made both of them something to eat. He knocked on her door. "Go away," she said still dressed. "I made you a sandwich. You decent?" He asked. She sighed and said, "Yes. Not hungry." "Come on. Talk to me. You the one who said things were not going to be weird. This is weird. Even my dad noticed. Please, let me in," he begged. She sighed and got up. She opened door. She refused to look at him and laid back down. "Here," he passed her the sandwich. She accepted. "Thanks," she said putting it down.
"Welcome. So, how's your past two weeks avoiding me been? Good, I hope."
"I heard you were digging graves."
"Kinda like I am doing now?"
"Aren't you clever?"
"I know you are mad."
"I am not mad. I just don't want you to get the wrong idea. Why are you wearing your hat?"
"Because," it gave him confidence.
He continued, "I don't. I just," he quit talking and looked away.
"What were you going to say in the kitchen that day?"
He took his hat off and laid it on her nightstand. Carl scooted closer to her. He moved a stray dread from her face.
Oh, God, no, she thought knowing where this was going. But hoping to be wrong.
"I think I would do better to show you."
Before she could inquire, her space were invaded by big blue eyes and surprisingly soft lips. She did not kiss back.
He pulled away after a less then thirty seconds. His eyes never left her face. She sat there frozen. Her sangfroid apparently to in tact. However, something in her, clicked.
"I just made this worse," he frowned.
He went for his hat and she grabbed his wrist.
"This is as far as it goes. Okay?"
"Okay," he turned to walk away. Feeling rejected but not mad about it. After all, she gave him no signals.
Then he heard the bed springs jump behind him.
Soon, she was in front of him.
She put her back against the wall and a weird little smile crossed her heart shaped lips. She took his hat from him and put it on her head.
He stepped to her. He put his hand on her waist. He leaned in. He kissed her again. This time she kissed back.
It was pensive and little shy on both their parts at first. Actually, her more than him.
This is crazy, she thought.
They stopped and made eyes again. Silently, giving the other permission to continue.
This time, he placed his hands behind her head, knocking off the deputy hat and rubbed his nose against hers before his closing his peepers and going for her bottom lip causing her lips to part. He did not pucker up like so many novice kissers do. It was not too hard or too soft. And did use it as an excuse to molest her. Again.
In her heart of hearts, she was hoping he would suck and this would be easy to write off as a folly. Damn, he is actually good. Real good. Fuck, she angrily thought.
The former hope would have been too close to right.
Which told Michonne one thing- someone had taken the time to teach him.
She placed her arms around his neck. His straight- wavy dark brown hair was still a little damp and the clean but masculine scent of him was nice. She detected mint on his breath and tasted olive oil on his lips.
She knew then the food was a ploy. He planned this.
"Extra virgin," she giggled.
"Only kind of," he said with his mouth still touching hers.
"I am nearly afraid to ask you to explain."
"It is too much to get into right now anyway," they start kissing again.
This go around, he sucked on her bottom lip and she did the opposite to his top. This lasted nearly a minute as their damp body heats beckoned the other closer. She was still in uniform and he in shirt and pajama pants. Not the best choice of pant for a high natured teen.
She grinned sheepishly and laughed into his mouth feeling his hard on up against her.
He stopped and asked in sultry voice, "When you said this is as far as it goes, what does that mean?"
"That means you remain kind of a virgin."
Embracing his inner horndog and as well as real deep feelings for her, he said, "I felt something. I feel something."
"You need to take your sandwich and go to your room before this goes too far."
"So, if i were to stay put, something would happen. So you do feel something."
"Anger if you don't back up off me," she attempted to make her face go hard but his handsome earnestness would not let her.
"Fine," he began to back up but not without taking a hold of her arms and walking backwards onto her bed and threw himself on it with her on top of him.
"You told me to get off you," he said with a smart ass grin.
She wanted to slap him but alas he was restraining her.
"Carl, this is not funny. Damn, you are strong," she said struggling but not really.
"Kiss me and I will let you up. I promise."
"I am going get you for this," she was not playing now. She did not like feeling this vulnerable.
"I tried to leave. You stopped me, remember? One measly kiss," he pouted.
Pissed, she nodded.
She leaned down and he met her half way.
This time, she parted his lips with and met the tip of his tongue with hers. This was brief but an invitation.
He let her go and his curious hands went straight to her round well shaped ass. She let him.
About two minutes passed. They were still kissing. She began to hunch on him a little then a lot. The sheer exhilaration of the stimulation made eight inch him walkout on the show early. This embarrassed him.
"All I need is like fifteen minutes," he pleaded.
"Told you I would get you back," she kissed his cheek then ran her finger across his lips. She stood up.
"I am going to take a shower. I expect you not to be in here when I return. Understand?"
More cocky than she had ever seen Carl, he replied, "Yes. But, you have to admit that pretty, fucking awesome."
She black girl blushed which is she smiled very hard and looked away.
She said, "Good night, Carl."
Once in the privacy of her shower, she said aloud to herself, "That was fucking awesome."
Wide Awake

Chapter Summary

Carl wakes up after losing his eye asks to see Michonne first. He confesses all his insecurities to her in hopes of making leeway. No such luck.

Two months passed and the horror that was the Wolves and the walker horde had transpired ten days before. Also gone, Carl's right eye.

Denise, Rick and Michonne and a couple others had taken turns holding vigil for the young man to see when he would wake up. Usually, Rick slept in there but Michonne insisted he spend time with Judith and get a real night's sleep his bed.

It was early morning when Carl's left eye flew open.

His throat was super dry when he gravelly asked for, "Water."

Both Michonne and Denise were asleep in chairs and did not hear him.

So, he reached behind his head and threw his pillow at Denise.

"Oh, shit, Carl," she said picking up the glasses he inadvertently knocked off.

As soon as Michonne heard his name her eyes flew open.

"Carl? Oh, buddy," before Denise could reach him, she was on her feet.

"Water," he stated again.

She poured him a glass and held it to his mouth. He let her do this for him. He slurped.

Denise got a fresh pillow and in between Michonne giving him water she put it behind his head.

"Enough," he said with a clear voice. Still, he did not sound like himself.

Michonne held back tears, she had been crying a lot about him lately and said, "I am sorry, so, so sorry, baby, but-"

He gave her the blankest expression, tilted his head and asked, "Who are you?"

This caused her to weep uncontrollably.

Denise rolled her eyes and grunted.

"He is pranking you, Michonne. He did me the same way," she said.

"Wait, What?" Michonne was thrown for a loop.

His great, mischievous grin gave way to compunction.

Carl pleaded, "Hey, Michonne, I am joking. I am sorry. I thought it would be funny."

"Funny? What the hell is wrong with you? I, we almost lost you. Stupid, brave boy," she hugged him tight. He hugged her just as tight. After all, the left side of his face was right in her ample bosom.

The hug lasted more than three minutes and they did not want to let each other go. Denise noticed this but decided to think nothing of it.

"How do you feel?" Michonne asked.

"Like some murderous piece of shit shot my eye out during a walker horde," he folded his arms and turned his face away.

"How long have you-" Michonne turned to Denise and admonished, "How long has he been awake? And why didn't you say something?"

"Since this morning. He asked me not to. Carol was here, so she knows."

"Why would you listen to him? He has a head injury. Clearly, his decision making is not very sound at the moment."

"I am sitting right here," he said.

"Actually, he doesn't. Other than being an adolescent, his brain is fine. Which is lucky."

"Fuck lucky. It is a blessing from God," Michonne playing with his dark brown hair through her
fingers.
Carl scoffed.
"God hates me," he pouted while reaching to touch her fingers.
"Nonsense. If He hated you, Denise would not have been here. Or Ron would've been a better shot or any number of things that would have left you orphaned, dead, raped or whatever. In fact, He loves you more than most."
"If this is Love, remind me to never get on His bad side," he had been pissy since he woke up and rightfully so.
"I used to be mad at Him, too. Then want to know what happened?"
"What? You met Andrea?"
"No, I met you and your dad. You two gave me hope. Now I want to do the same for you. Relax. You hungry?"
He shook his head no.
Denise interjected, "Tried to feed him. The morphine makes him vomit. The antibiotics I got him on are appetite suppressive. Tomorrow, I am sending Daryl to find some anti-nausea meds at that abandoned pharmacy on Kirkland street so he can. For now, he is on sugar water and clear Gatorade basically."
"He is also really, really high. He does not have that much of a filter right now. So what comes up, come out. So, I try to keep him knocked out. Teenaged boy thoughts are no, just no."
Michonne asked, "Why doesn't Rick know?"
Carl replied, "I don't want him to know. I wanted you first," he grinned before grimacing. His eye was starting to pain.
"Time to change his bandage. It is kind of particular. I can show you."
He had a fit, "No. I don't want her to do it."
"Why not? You let me show Carol. She is around you more than both of us," Denise argued.
He motioned for his doctor to come closer. Which she did, he whispered something to her. His face looked beseeching and pitiful.
She pulled back with a face full of sympathy.
"I get it," she said.
"What is going on?" She was annoyed.
"Would you mind stepping out into the hall? Just for about five minutes?" Denise asked shaking her leg nervously.
She snorted and did as they asked.
She stood against the wall speculating what he said. Five minutes passed and Denise came out.
"Why did he not want me to change it?" She asked.
"He didn't want you to see him like that."
"But, I have already seen it. I saw it that night."
"Well, I do not know what to tell you other than maybe he has a thing for you."
Michonne shook her head and said, "Do not be silly. He just probably want somebody to talk to."
"I saw him staring at your ass awfully hard. So, just saying. Speaking of ass, I going to lay mine down. Just come get me if he needs anything."
"Of course," she said.
She walked back in there with a smile on her face.
"Hey," she said pulling the chair closer to his bed.
"Hey."
"You okay now?"
"I am since you are here. I dreamt about you a lot," he said smiling and rubbing his feet together. She knew he only done that to comfort himself.
"Did you now?"
"Yep. And my mom. My mom comforted me. Want to know what you did?"
"Not really."
"Made me pancakes. In a purple bikini."
"You are fucking with me. You just made that up," she could tell when was lying. He would unconsciously look at her under-eyed.
"Yep but not really. I would dream about you. It was always about what happened that night," he was truthful now.
"Nothing did. Not really," even she knew she was lying through her teeth.
"Somebody is in denial," he sometimes had a tendency to antagonize her because he felt ignored by her. They had made out rather vigorously after all. Plus, this was the longest they had been in a room together without her walking out.
"Yes. You. You do not feel about me the way you think you do. You will-"
"Do not do that. Do not tell me how I should feel because you think my feelings are invalid because I am not over eighteen. I know my own mind. Just as you do," he said.
"Fair enough. Getting all articulate on me and shit," she laughed.
Then there was a long stretch of silence.
They did not so much as make eye contact for an hour.
He got out the bed on wobbly legs holding his i.v.
"Let me help you," she said.
He shook his head no and walked. Each step stronger than the last. He made it to the mirror and stood there.
She heard him begin to breathe really hard. He took gasping breaths and started to sniff.
She turn to look at him. His face was tore in abject despair. He was trying not to cry.
"Carl, it is okay to let it out," she got up and put her hand on his shoulder.
"I know this is devastating. I am devastated for you. I can't imagine."
"You are right. You can't. I am disfigured. You are perfect."
It broke her heart to him say that.
"There is nothing wrong with you."
"Now you are just lying."
"No. Let me finish. Sure, your eye is gone. But, that still doesn't take away from what you look like it-"
"If you say it what's on the inside that counts, I apologize in advance but there is a good chance I might hit you."
"Aw, I would like to see you try. But, seriously, your injury does not take away from looks. You're still handsome. In fact, before you were too handsome. So this was nature's way of giving other young men your age a chance. What nature does not know is, that ladies dig an eye patch. Makes you look dangerous."
He turned around and smiled at her.
"This does fulfill a childhood dream of becoming a pirate like Long John Silver," he forced a laugh out. Then he got real quiet. Then came the deluge.
He crumbled to his knees and just wept.
She knelt down by him and put her arms around him.
She rocked him back and forth and kept telling him it was going to be okay.
Thirty minutes went by. He had quit crying but they both remained on the floor but were reclined against the wall.
He asked, "Where is my hat?"
"In your room. I went out there and found it and cleaned it."
"Thanks."
"De nada," she said.
"I have been shot twice," he said a matter of factly.
"But you did not die. You are the Highlander."
"What is a Highlander?"
She shook her head and clicked her tongue.
"I got to educate you. Immortal, the Highlander was immortal. Connor and Duncan McLeod of the Clan McLeod could only be killed permanently with decapitation. The former was one really good movie then a couple shitty ones and the latter a kickass tv show and then a bunch of shitty movies. Ooh, the soundtrack was Queen. You would dig it," she said.

"My mom used to listen to Queen. She would exercise to them. Probably saw the movie when I was too little to give a shit. Sounds cool, though," he said watching her. He could tell by her wistful expression she was reliving a good memory.

"You were a geek," he laughed.

"Yeah and you are Mister Cool.

"Hell, yeah. I got street cred. I am a gangsta," he said making faux gang signs.

"You really are," she nudged him.

"You are Amazonian Ninja goddess person," he nudged her back. She completely disregarded Amazonian and goddess.

In her most serious voice, Michonne could muster, she said, "What did you call me?"

"Nin-ja. Not that other word that people who look like me should not ever say," the last thing he ever wanted to do was offend her. He never wanted her to think low of him.

"I am messing with you so bad," she grinned.

"Of course, you are. Question?"

She nodded.

"If I looked the way I do now when we made out because, that is the only way to look at it. Would you have, I do not know, bothered with me?" He asked rather pitifully.

She looked at him like he was crazy.

"How superficial do you think I am? Hell, Yeah. In fact, it probably would have went further because I would've felt sorry for you," she teased.

"How about now? I do not mind pity. I heard pity was just the bestest thing ever. I will take all the pity you can give me. Pity sounds awesome."

"I bet," she sighed feeling a little dismayed.

"What?" He asked.

"What's happened to you since you turned sixteen? You have gotten all mannish on me. You are not my sweet, hardheaded, slightly annoying boy anymore. I miss you," she knew she was being a touch hypocritical after all, she had encouraged him.

That made him think.

"I am right here," he said quietly. He put his hand on her thigh. He squeezed it a little.

She put her hand on his. Then she removed it.

"My butt is asleep. Let's get up," she said.

He stood first and helped her up.

He laid down on his left side with his back against the railing.

"You look super uncomfortable," she said.

"I know this sounds weird or like a come on but it totally isn't. Will you get in the bed with me?"

"Yeah. No," she nodded.

"Since Judith's been born I have seldom slept alone. I used to having my arm around someone."

"Ooh. Seldom. That is a fifty cent world."

"Please do not make fun of me. I am serious. All you have to do is lie beside me. Please," he patted the empty space in front of him.

She hit her forehead in hands and said, "This is stupid."

She went to the next bed and took off the blanket and pillow. The pillow he threw at Denise was on a desk and she took that too.

She returned to his bedside. She lied one pillow beside his head the other in front of his middle for obvious reasons. Blanket in hand. She lied down with her back turned to him.

He scooted up to her and put his arm around her waist. His hand found her forearm and clutched it. She eased herself against the crotch pillow. He helped her with the blanket.

He rested his chin in the crook of her shoulder. He nuzzled her.
"What is that you have on? You smell really good," he cooed. "Ah, Palmer's Cocoa Butter. I used to swear by this stuff before everything. I found a whole case of it and I am not sharing except with Judith," she was surprised at how unsettlingly natural being this close to him felt. He chuckled. "Are you comfortable?" he asked. "Uh-huh. But, just so you know, as soon as I think you are asleep, I am getting up." Disappointed, he said, "I understand." "Good. I was expecting an argument." "Nah. Not up to it right now. Maybe later," he yawned. They both lied wide awake in the lantern lit darkness. Carl's hot, moist breath on her neck was giving Michonne feels she did not want or appreciate. To deflect, she remembered when she first met him. He was a cherubic-faced handful with sad blue eyes and dark chocolate brown hair and all of twelve years old. Every time her thoughts about him approached nudity, she remembered him like this. When his hand found hers all that flew out the window. Her mind drifted to the moment she realized he was becoming a man. It was six weeks give or take before the whole kissing fiasco. She came in for lunch and saw him sitting on the couch in front of a fan. She could tell by the smell of water and soap that he had just showered. His eyes were closed and his wet shoulder length hair was dampening up the couch. He was listening to earbuds. Something so teenager that he was hardly ever been able to do. His face looked serene. More astonishingly, she noticed all the baby was gone out his face just the pink, clean freshness of youth remained. Clad in only a towel around his hips, he had a broad shoulders and a wide chest, she knew it wouldn't take much for him to add muscle. All in all, she found him stunning. She told herself to get a grip then got his attention and told him to put some clothes on. Back to now, their fingers were laced together. She was determined not to turn around and kiss him. Him on the other hand, indulged. He tentatively pressed his lips against her neck. Waiting a moment, then did it again. When she did not elbow him, he sat up a little and did it again with more confidence. She let out a soft sigh. He was just grateful she had put the pillow between them. When he began to nimble on her shoulder, his hand broke free from hers, and went under her shirt and politely grabbed one breast. Every fiber of her being wanted to tell him to stop. So, she did. Carl stopped and retreated back into his fantasies. He thought about how easy it would be to roll on top of her, missing eye and i.v. in his arm be damned. Kiss her, pull their blankets aside, tug her pants somewhere down around her knees, do the same to himself and just dive into her. In a slightly less vulgar scenario, she gets on top of him and all their clothes were off. This went on another twenty minutes before his thoughts began to turn dark. "Are you asleep?" he asked. "Told you I wouldn't be," she replied. "May I ask you a question?" He said putting arm back around her. She did not mind. She said, "No." "Can I confess something then?" he asked. "Depends." "I try to take things in stride. Not complain and help. Just stay alive. Sometimes it all feels like a waste of time. Like why bother?" "You know why. There is always someone else who needs you to live so they can." "It is not like I was God's gift before this but I wasn't shield your eyes ugly either. Now, it seems almost vain to care but almost a quarter of my face is just gone." "It is not vain. It would be weird if you did not care." "People are going to treat me differently. They are going to start babying me again. I do not know if I
could stand for that."
"No, they are not. We know you are capable."
She did not realize she had walked straight into a verbal trap.
"So, explain you then?" He said.
"Oh, hell, I walked right into that one. There is nothing to explain."
"Isn't my age the primary reason why you are so weird about us?"
"Not entirely."
Then a lightbulb went off in his head.
"My dad. It is because of my dad."
She sat up, forcefully throwing his arm off her. She did not think anyone knew she loved Rick. But, hell she loved his son, too.
"Rick has nothing to do with this. There are some lines you do not cross and you are one of them. I am not a predator."
"Sure you are. We all are, otherwise we would all be dead by now. It is because you don't want to hurt my dad because you like him."
"First off, you are getting predator confused with warrior. Secondly, I do not like Rick like that."
"It is not obvious. It is little things. Like you still stayed with us after the others moved out."
"It makes sense for the three of us to stay together."
"I am not trying to embarrass you or be mean to you. He likes you, too. That is what makes it so godamned sad. You and him should have been together. Instead, he fixates on Jesse. I mean, really? On what planet did they make sense? Especially after he killed her husband. See, you and him make sense. That is why he is fighting it so hard. I think if things got easy for him, he throw himself off a roof to shake things up. He is so brave and honorable and certain about everything except being happy. I think he is stupid. Stupid to not see what is right in front of him. You. I have always seen you," he said frowning and sounding rather older than sixteen.
She sat there at the edge of the bed. Not sure what to say to him. She did not know how strongly he felt about her.
He put his hand on her shoulder. She shook him off.
It took all she had to turn around and make his latter fantasy come true. After all, if anybody ever needed an orgasm or twenty, it was him given all the pain had gone through. Plus, he might not feel so ugly anymore.
She also knew sex could possibly escalate his angst, might make him hurt himself. She saw a similar situation play out with her male cousin and that was exactly what happened.
Much to her fridge horror, she realized her behavior two months before and that very night had done just that.
"I am sorry. I am sorry I didn't bloody your nose and curse you out when you tried to kiss me. I got you all twisted up on the inside and I hate myself for it," she began to weep.
Feelings hurt even more now, he inquired barely above a whisper, "Was kissing me really that horrible?"
She turned around looked at him. She caressed his cheek then took his hand, "No, sweetheart, it was the opposite. It was, for the life of me, good. Especially, when you had put your hands in my hair and rubbed your nose against mine before you sucked my bottom lip. That was one of the single most hottest things that has ever happened to me. You are naturally sexy. You can't teach that. Real talk."
"Really? What about happened afterwards?" He was fishing.
"Uh-huh. We kissed a good five minutes. So answer your own question."
"It didn't suck," he declared.
"And do that nose thing to the next girl, you are going to have a girlfriend."
"It did not work the first time," he huffed.
"Once you get a girl your age, you are going to forget all about me. You are just lonely and projecting," she was speaking more about herself than him.
"No, I am not. I know how I feel about you is never just going away. I might push it down or ignore
it. I will not abandon it. I, I, love you. I really love you."
Not missing a beat, she said, "I love you with all my heart. I would die for you and I would kill for you. Murder the world if I had to but I can't love you the way you think you love me or the way you want. You have to learn just because you want to do something does not mean you should."
At this point, he wanted to say why not but he already knew the answer. His dad. Besides, he knew they would have to keep it a secret. Not out of shame but out of necessity until he was older. Or maybe they could just runaway. All this was irrational and he knew it but so.
"I only have one thing to say. My dad is terrible at relationships. Him and my mom were on the verge of divorce before everything happened. He was never there. He was all about work. When he was home, well, they argued. Mom was not even sure she loved him anymore. I doubt my dad and I would even be talking if the walkers never happened. We weren't close. I was closer to my Mom and Shane."
He told her about Shane previously.
"Why are you telling me this?"
"It was irrelevant until tonight. I just want you to know who he is. That is all I have to say to you. Get off my bed," he threw her blanket and pillows off his bed. She had supremely hurt his feelings. He laid down and covered his head.
Michonne sniffled but did what he asked. She moved the chair to the foot of his bed. She left the bedding on the floor.
Morning dawned.
Rick arrived in such a flurry, he was still in his pajamas. He had Judith by one hand and his hat in the other. Carol told him by walkie talkie, his son was awake.
Michonne had just fallen asleep when she heard the commotion.
"Carl, son!" Rick ran and hugged him tight and kissed him right on the mouth.
"Dad," he said accepting him.
As the two hugged and rocked each other, Judith was trying to climb onto the bed to get to her brother who she had cried for all the time.
Carl saw his sister and let his dad go and picked the babe up. He kissed her all over her face. She giggled and pulled his hair and nose. His dad put his hat on his head.
Meanwhile, Michonne watched the undisputed family bond. She had felt that low in ages. She made herself so small. It was like her son had had died all over again. She felt like an alien.
Then Carl of all people yelled, "Why are just standing there? Come here." His arms were opened to her.
She looked shocked and a little scared. She reluctantly came forward.
"Michonne, you okay?" Rick asked seeing she looked a little frazzled.
"Yes, Carl," she walked straight into his arms. He hugged her tightly. But, she could not help but notice his left hand was perilously close to her ass.
She pulled away from Carl and all her had was a big pretty smile for her.
"Do you remember yesterday?" Michonne asked remembering that Denise said he was very, very high.
"I remember waking up and seeing Carol and Denise the hero and asking for you, Michonne, but other than that, I recall nothing. Did you come?" He asked.
Michonne did not really know what Carl was playing at. But, she wanted to believe him. So, she did.
Four weeks passed.
Carl was back home and he and Michonne were spending time together again. He seemed like her old Carl again. Neither of them brought up the night they made out anymore.
On one particular afternoon, Michonne was within earshot of the sixteen year old because he had made sure of it- when he told and a couple kids close to his age, "Dude, Dude, didn't somebody tell you? See before, I was too handsome. So, this is just nature's way of evening the playing field so you ugoomces stand chance. See, thing nature does not realize ladies dig eyepatches."
Michonne realized Carl lied. He remembered the first night he woke up. She turned around slowly to face him. She felt like she was being studied.
The two of them made eye contact. She was shocked that he was capable of such deceit. He just looked wounded and walked away.
Michonne knew their drama was not over by long shot.
Kiss Your Booboos

Chapter Summary

Richonne happens and Carl doesn't deal so well.

The skies parted and the angels sang. Rick and Michonne became a couple. During the whole experience one thought going through Michonne's mind, well other than, here comes another orgasm was not Carl.

That is not entirely true either. Her first thought on the couch was Oh, shit. They taste the same. When Carl heard via Jesus, that I am waiting for your mom and dad. He frowned because surely this pretty homeless looking dude had to be mistaken.

Mere seconds later, the cavalry came in with guns ablazing, emerged topless in his drawers and Michonne was right behind in all her glory- dreads in high ponytail in a tight tank and boy shorts and surprisingly long bow legs. He had never seen that much of her before. That was awesome for all of one second. Next second, he smirked at her for the simple fact he was right about her feelings for his father and he wanted her to know. His smugness lasted until she turned away. Then his father's eyes met his, who looked at his son sheepishly and said, "Carl."

"Hey?" For the first time in his life he knew what it meant to be jealous. My God, it was an ugly feeling but he felt it. Hard core.

Then his mind turned back to that night in the infirmary and what she said to him. Jealousy and anger forged together and made a hurt baby.

Jesus saw the look on the boy's face and almost wanted to apologize. He was nothing if not an astute judge of character. He their dynamic figured out in seconds.

Rick said, "You said we need to talk. . ."

As the adults went downstairs, retreated back into his room. He went into his closet. Found a hollow spot in the wall and punched it several times. He pulled his hand back and saw it was bleeding a little. He did not care. He took a series of deep breaths. And just stood there for a while.

The sharp, acridly putrid stitch of shit wafted into his nose. He stepped out and saw Judith on the potty pooping with all her baby might.

He laughed a little when he saw her.

When she saw him towering over her, she threw her tiny hand up and declared, "Don't look, Budder." She could not pronounce brother.

He turned his head.

"Around," she managed to say. She wanted to see the back of his head.

Four more minutes of her grunting passed before she said, "Wipe me."

He shook his head in dread but went and got the wipes. Truth be told, he loved the responsibility. She was his to take care of. It had been that way since forever at least until, "Momma." Judith said. Be wiped her hard. He always tried to get it all one clean swipe.

"Better?" He asked wiping again and seeing it clean.

She nodded.

He tried to put a pull-up on her but she ran for the open door.

"I want Momma, Budder."

Getting as close to her level as he could, Carl begged, "Please, Judy, just go to sleep. I am begging you just go to sleep. Don't make me go down there right now."

"I want Momma, budder." She snuggled her face into his chest.

Knowing, Michonne was her momma, he took a deep breath and brought her downstairs.
They were side by side at the table looking every bit a couple. He literally threw up in his mouth a little bit.

He took a deep breath. With his southern manners in full tact, he said, "Excuse me."

It went unacknowledged.

So, he cleared his throat and said with all the teenaged indignance he could summon, he said, "I said excuse me."

"What is it, Carl?" Rick asked a little annoyed.

"Judith said she wanted Momma. So, I figured either she was talking about Michonne or I really need to cut my hair," he said passing the baby to Abraham to give to her. He did not want to chance touching her.

Jesus laughed.

"Kid's funny," he said.

Carl went back upstairs. He took the potty and put in his dad's room and closed the door. He knew it was immature and dumbass thing to do but it made him feel better. The smell of shit is enough to kill anyone's libido. He also went into Michonne's room and took her lotion.

He returned to his room, closed his door and went under his bed and pulled his duffle bag. One time in the woods, he found an unopen bottle of Marker's Mark. Every once in a while, when he could not sleep, he take a couple swigs and pass out. He had it for two months. He drank at least half a pint before he put it back.

He laid in bed and stared at the ceiling. His mind went back to how fit and just unadulterated fine she looked. He could not help it even though he wanted to. He grabbed the lotion. His hand travelled between his legs as it often did this time of night. He closed his eye and soft moans passed his lips as hands did their work.

During the fifteen minutes, he remembered the feel of her breast, her ass and bare skin of her back, the way she tasted, her smell, well the lotion helped with that. The sounds and soft sighs she made when they touched- he had it bad and he knew it. He felt anger behind all this.

After having the world's angriest orgasm, cleaned himself up and fumed. He left the white towel on the nightstand beside him.

If Rick and Michonne had hooked up hell, six months before he would have took it in stride. He almost would not have cared. But, this was different. He had tasted those lips first, grabbed that ass first. He knew his father deserved to be happy just not with her.

"Why me?" He asked out loud. He knew maybe he was being a little irrational. It is not like she promised him anything. She downright told him no. But, that was not the point. But as long as she was single, there was hope.

He turned on his side and tried to go to sleep.

Thirty minutes passed. He had very nearly succeeded when he heard his door open. He knew who it was without turning around.

"I hoping I would be asleep before you waltzed in here," he groaned.

She sat on the foot of his bed with her back to him with a sleeping Judith in her ams.

"Carl, I, you weren't supposed to find out like this. Tonight was the first time-"

"This may come to you as a shock but I really don't want to hear about you giving my dad some pussy."

Michonne's mouth flew open.

"Don't talk to me like that. You do not have the right."

"You want to talk about rights? You know how I feel and you do this. I had no idea you were so fucking selfish and callous. Live and learn, huh? All the swinging dicks here, you choose the one attached to my dad."

"We did not plan it. It just happened."

"That happens a lot with you, huh?"

Accusatory, she said, "No, you planned that night. You put olive oil on your mouth because Judith ate your chapstick. Why you think I commented on it?"

"So, what if I did? You always on my mind. Unlike you. You do not think very much of me at all.
My dad is a hero, I get it. And he has his whole face.
"Carl, you are still handsome."
"Spare me the pep talk. You know what. Most decent people would have let the other person stew in peace because they would have the, what's that word. You used it the other day talking about what a mouthy dick Abraham can be some times."
"Propriety," she said drolly.
"If you had left me alone, by morning I would have calmed down enough to pretend I am okay with it. I am raw right now. I don't want to talk to you or him."
Michonne knew there was not a whole lot she could say. After all if the tables were turned she would feel the same way.
"Carl, I am so sorry. But-"
Laughing mirthlessly, he said, "Really. Sorry? Why apologize?"
"I feel badly," she said.
"Aww. Is that before or after you came?" He said caustically.
"Carl," she said.
"Quit saying my name. I know my goddamned name. You are not sorry. You got what you wanted. How special does that make you? I never get what I want. Ever. What makes you so fucking special?"
"I am not," she said.
"Yes, you are. I was sport for you, I get it. An ego boost. It hurts very much but I was never what you wanted. I just want to go to bed. Go away. Wait. I lied," he said.
"About?" She noticed her lotion and put two and two together.
"I did get what I wanted once. When I thought Judith was dead, only thing I wanted was her alive again. Three months later there she was. So give her to me and leave."
She got up and leaned over him to give him the toddler. She smelled the whiskey on his breath.
"You have been drinking?"
"What? I got secrets. You are going to tell my dad? That would be the cherry on this cake of despair."
"I am not going to tell on you."
"Please go. I am begging you," he sounded more sad than angry.
"I never promised you anything. I told you that you and I can't happen. I thought you accepted that."
"Clearly, you were mistaken. Go away. You are not my mom. You are not anything to me right now. Go be in your boyfriend's face and fuck off," he wanted to call her a bitch but he could not bring himself to demean her like that out loud. However, you best believe he call her a bushel barrel of bitches in his head.
"I deserve that," she said walking away.
"Glad you approve," he said.
She gingerly picked up his come towel and put in the hamper on way her out. Last thing she wanted was Judith to get hold of it.
Michonne had never felt so monstrous about being happy. But, damn it, she was happy. She knew the elder Grimes was the right choice just from a logistical standpoint. She could be seen with him and not be judged harshly. She had never been confronted by this situation before. She had never been in love with two men or had them be in love with her.
She returned downstairs and was greeted with a big smile from Rick. She smiled back shyly and took her place beside him.
Meanwhile, upstairs, Carl was lying on his right side weeping rather loudly. The salty tears quickly wet his bandage causing his eye socket to burn. He did not care.
His sister woke up.
"I want Momma," she said rubbing her eyes.
"So, do I. That is the problem," he said.
Morning came.
He woke up feeling a little groggy. His sister had been awake for awhile staring at him. He ran his
hand over his face and realized his bandage was off. He had been terrified of anyone seeing him like that.
"Budder, you have a boooboos," she said before standing up on the bed and kissing it before he could stop her. She accepted him as he was.
"All better," she grinned. He always kissed her boooboos.
Touched, he swept her up and hugged her tightly.
"I love you so much."
"I love you, too."
"Come on. Let's get ready to enter the Thunderdome," he said.
He let her help him put the bandage on. He changed her clothes. Put her in the playpen and got changed in the bathroom.
Soon, they were downstairs.
His father, Michonne, Jesus and a couple others were talking. He could tell they had just woken up themselves.
He put her in her high chair and made her some farina a quarter of a banana. She could feed herself. Mostly.
The only open seat was naturally beside Michonne. He pulled out the chair and sat down.
She had been watching him on the sly trying to feel him out.
He smirked and gave her the side eye. Basically calling her a whore without words. She turned away. The shame was palpable.
Overnight, his attitude had not so much changed as it had evolved.
He waited about thirty minutes and pulled her aside.
"Look, last night I was out of line. I am sorry," he said.
"It is okay. Not really. I took credit for the potty. That was foul," she said.
"I was pissed."
"You aren't now?"
"I did not say that. I, uh, just understand. I guess. And I meant everything I said. I was not drunk. Still, I know this must be hard for you. I guess. But, if you want me to tell you not to feel rotten about it, that isn't happening."
"This is officially worst non apology ever."
"I am sorry I used blue language and that is honestly about it. So, yeah."
Michonne said with exasperation, "It would be a lot easier if you and I could come to an understanding."
"We did. You chose him. End of discussion. I will play nice but do not expect me to be happy for you. That is asking entirely too much of me," he said before turning away from her refraining from rolling his eye.
As much as she did not want it to, him being so angry with her really disturbed her. She cared about his feelings but even she had to admit her feelings for Rick meant she a little bit more.
Not too long after encountering Michonne, he came across his father. Lying to him was much simpler because he had not the faintest idea of what had transpired between them. He knew Rick was not out to hurt him. Just get laid. He was not admit his dad was in love with her too.
Eggplant

Chapter Summary

Carl and Enid become a couple while Rick go kill ppl in their sleep.

It was the evening before Rick, Michonne and several others were to go out and dispatch the Saviors.

As of late, Carl had been spending a lot outside the house with anyone who would take him lest he would hear them have sex or run the chance of being in the same room as either of them at the moment. He borderline hated them both. Just the total oblivion to his emotions is what did him in.

This particular night he had been with Enid and a couple other kids their age when he remembered he had left the Ferris Bueller DVD, he promised to share with them in his room.

Enid went with him.

"Do they know you are coming?" Enid asked.

"You don't have to call to come home," he said.

"They are a new couple. They are probably fucking. I wouldn't go in there right now. We can watch the movie tomorrow. Let's go back."

With all the disdain in the world, he grunted, "They are always fucking and they usually do it in his room. They think they are quiet but they are really, really not."

"Wow. You don't resent them at all."

"I don't."

"You should be glad for them," Enid had been watching him much more closely than he realized.

What she could not suss out was whether he was jealous because he was lonely or because he had a crush or both.

"I-I am," he almost choked on those words.

"Try saying that without wincing," she teased.

"What you are getting at?"

"I am right here," she said.

Not getting it, he asked,"Huh?"

"Damn, boys are stupid," she put her arms around his neck and got on her tiptoes and kissed him.

He had enough sense to kiss back.

One minute passed.

"This is what you need. Me," she kissed him again.

"I suddenly do not care about that tape anymore."

"Thought so. Let go make out in the pantry. This time of night no one's in there."

She had no argument from him.

He woke up the next day to something close to a good mood. Even catching Rick and Michonne making out could not ruin it. Okay. Maybe it did a little.

"I live here, too, you know," he said shielding his eye.

"You did not see nothing. Now, if you had came in here, ten minutes earlier then that would have been another story," Rick joked.

Michonne giggled. Giggled, "You are so bad. Pay your dad no mind."

"Eww. Both of you, just eww," he said getting himself and his sister something to eat.

Michonne grabbed his wrist. It made him goosebump. She noticed.

"I already fed her," she said still holding on to him.

"Did you now?" He asked looking her dead in the eyes.
They were totally having a moment.
Rick saw this and struck him as odd but what isn't as of late?
Feeling weirded out ever so slightly by it, he began to talk, "Speaking of eww, what is this I heard about you and Enid making out in the pantry contaminating the food with your passionate manhandling?" His father laughed.
His mouth flew open. Carol caught them and just in time, too. Hands were very nearly down in pants.
"She said she would not say anything," he complained.
Michonne scoffed and Rick asked wryly, "You believed her? Of course she told us. We do not want you doing anything stupid."
"Like grandbaby stupid," Michonne added.
Thoroughly insulted by her commenting, he replied, "Not that it is any of your business, it did not even approach going that far. Even if it did. So. I am good with little kids. I take care of Judy more than not. I would be a good dad one day that is not soon. I know what I am capable of."
They both looked at him. They could not argue his point per se. But, Rick could say this, "You say that about Judith because you can give her back and go on about your business. When they are yours there is no such luxury. Keep that in mind next you want to whip it out. And not in the pantry. That is just nasty. We have to eat that food. I don't want to eat a bowl of oatmeal wondering if you jizzed on it or not."
He just frowned at his father and walked away. His good mood had just been murdered.
He decided to go for a walk. He went to the far side of Alexandria. There is where basically all the dregs, losers and loners lived.
Despite, this he had hung out there a couple times and one of them, Timothy was not that bad or so he thought.
"Sup, dude?" He said seeing Carl.
"Nothing. Just had to get out that house."
"I hear you. So, what's this I hear about you and Enid?"
"I know this is a small community but damn. Really?"
"Joe saw you and her playing tonsil hockey," Timothy flipped greasy blond hair out his eyes.
"Well, I do like her and I assume she likes me."
"Dude, you got to be careful."
"Don't sound like my dad," Carl sighed.
"I am serious. He is not."
"Okay. What does that mean?"
"Isn't Enid a kike?"
"If you mean Jewish, yeah. So? Dude, you sound not good. What are you getting at?"
"The way the world is now. I think it is because people have lost their way, man."
"How so? Other than murder, cannibalism, rapists, dictators? What? He walkers are the least of our concern. And they are a pretty huge concern."
"The race mixing, the faggots. If it all stopped, I bet the walkers would stop."
Carl laughed mirthlessly, "You are joking, right?"
"No, man. Think about it. Why do you think all of a sudden you cannot stand being at home. You know deep down your dad fucking that nigger bitch is wrong. That is why you escape."
"You got me completely fucked up. I do not see Michonne as a race nor do I see Enid as a religion. I see two very beautiful, capable women. I thought you were cool."
"Carl, come on, man. Think about it. You know this shit is wrong," Timothy said.
Carl stood up and laughed.
He retrieved the gun from his back and began to pistol whip Timothy.
"If you ever refer to Michonne to anything other than her name or Enid the same, I will murder you. You understand?" He asked.
"You're fucking crazy," he coughed.
"Don't ever forget it," he said.
Two hours passed.
"We ought to be gone no more than four days tops. It going to take us about three days to get there," his father told him. So, Carl decided he was going to take advantage of that time.
He took a whore bath. Put on his best shirt and pants and by best one means the only set that were clean.
Combed his hair which turned into a moot point when he put on his hat.
He fed his sister lunch before dropping her off with Denise.
He went to Maggie and Glenn's place where he knew Enid would be outside on the porch playing solitaire.
"Hi," she said without looking up.
He sat beside her extra close.
"Dude, bubble," she said.
"You wasn't concerned about your bubble last night," he said touching the small of her back. She jumped. She was not used to being like that.
"I have to ask you a question," he was more nervous than he thought he would be.
"Okay," she said still playing cards pretending she could not care less. The key word was pretend.
He took her hand. Her heart skipped a beat but she did not let on.
"I need you to look at me," he said.
She looked him right in the eye. Her face was expressionless even though she had a feeling what he was about to ask. She had been waiting for him to man up and do it since they were inside the tree.
"Well?" She asked.
"I know from self experience that because you make out with somebody a couple times doesn't necessarily mean anything other than the fact you both a little horny."
"Whoa, dude. You are so deep. Point. Get to it. Now."
"Uh, wanna be my girlfriend?" He asked with a goofy grin.
"Finally. Yes, I will be your girlfriend," she almost smiled. She returned to her cards even though she was doing the hammer dance on the inside.
"Uh, that is it?" He had not expected it to be that easy.
"Yes. I mean what? You wanted me to say no? I mean why drag it out? Either one of us could be dead in the next ten minutes. So, I said yes. No games."
"Okay."
"What do you want to do?" She asked.
"Whatever you want to do," he had not quit smiling yet. It was incredibly nice not being rejected.
"Uh. Want to go walking?"
"Sure."
She went and got her backpack from inside.
"Let me," he said holding his hand out. She made an impressed grunt and handed it to him.
Thirty minutes passed. They held hands but did not say much.
"Do you want to know what I thought the first time I saw you?" Enid asked.
"You said I scared you," he said.
"That was not the first time I saw you. Besides, I am not ready to tell you why I said that. I thought you looked like a male Snow White."
He gave her a quizzical expression.
So, she explained, "You have light blue eyes, almost black hair and surprisingly pale skin and a really pretty face even with the bandage. Snow White," she said clutching his hand.
Carl had never blushed so hard in his life.
"I think, no, I know you are beautiful. So. There's that."
She blushed too.
"Funny you should say that. During Halloween in the second grade, me and my best friend, Jag crossdressed. I was Snow White and she was Prince Charming. I was in full make up and everything. She had a mustache.
Enid grinned.
"I wish there was a photograph of that somewhere. I would have loved to have seen that. I bet you were too cute."
"Dad thought it was funny, mom hated it. She asked me a bunch of questions. I was like mom, I like girls. Hell, I liked Jag."
"Did she like you or was she stupid?"
"Yes. As a matter of fact, we were kinda girlfriend/boyfriend but her dad said she was not allowed so we did not tell anyone. Well, our moms knew. And Jag's asshole older brother. He caught us holding hands so he blackmailed me. I had to give him a fifty cents day."
"What was Jag short for?"
"Jagadamba."
"What the hell type of name is that?"
"Indian. Dot, not feathers. She was Punjabi and black. Last name was Anthony."
"She must have been pretty. Most biracial people are. Ooh, what if Michonne and your dad had a kid? It would be super cute."
His reaction was a strong one.
"I hope not. I mean I just do not see that happening."
"It wouldn't be the worse thing. Maggie's having a kid."
"Well, that is different."
"The day we had to run. We were neighbors so ran together. Her mom and dad were doctors and they were doing that Doctors without Borders thing. They had been gone like a month. Her much older half sister came from England to watch them. They were in Sri Lanka or some shit. She was freaking out about her folks, I was freaking about my dad. We were basically pitiful together. It was actually her sister who knew about the camp. Jag wanted to go with me, my mom and Shane but her sister would not let her. So, they were in front of us. Something happened and some cars got between us. We could not see them. I begged for them to look around. They did. They were nowhere to be found. So, we looked for them at the camp. Nothing," the sadness on his face was fresh like it just happened.
"I am sorry," she put his head on his shoulder.
"I like to think, they are alive somewhere. I like to think she is alive somewhere. But, even if she is. I am not ever going to see her again. So," he hunched.
"Wow. I am so jealous of that girl right now. I can't even tell you. So, she was your first love."
"The day we had to run. We were neighbors so ran together. Her mom and dad were doctors and they were doing that Doctors without Borders thing. They had been gone like a month. Her much older half sister came from England to watch them. They were in Sri Lanka or some shit. She was freaking out about her folks, I was freaking about my dad. We were basically pitiful together. It was actually her sister who knew about the camp. Jag wanted to go with me, my mom and Shane but her sister would not let her. So, they were in front of us. Something happened and some cars got between us. We could not see them. I begged for them to look around. They did. They were nowhere to be found. So, we looked for them at the camp. Nothing," the sadness on his face was fresh like it just happened.
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"Wow. I am so jealous of that girl right now. I can't even tell you. So, she was your first love."
"He had not really thought about it like that. But, she was right."
"Damn. I guess so. But, who cares? I have you now. You are here in front of me," they had stopped walking. They were looking right at each other. They kissed.
She giggled.
"This is the first time I have ever heard you laugh," Carl said.
"I usually do not have a reason to."
"Hell, me neither. This is nice," he said.
"I know, right?"
"You hungry?" He asked.
"I can't cook for shit so that leaves you. I literally burn water much to Maggie's chagrin," she smiled.
"It is no problem. Let's go to my house," he said.
He stopped by Denise's and got his sister.
"Hi," she waved at Judith. The little one made a stink face at her.
"She doesn't like me," Enid pouted.
"Sure she does. She is just not used to you yet."
"I see her every day. She likes Denise."
"She likes you," he assured.
An hour or so later, they just finished some tuna and noodles.
"That was good," she said concealing a burp.
"I try," he said.
They started at each before leaning in to kiss. As they bussed, Judith climbed between them. She slapped Enid's face and said, "No. He is my budder."
"She thinks I am trying to steal you. I told you she did not like me. Damn, she hits hard," she left a red mark on her face.
"Judith, be nice. Say you are sorry."
"No," she said.
"Judith, say it or I will spank you," he said.
"Beat her. That'll make her like me. Give her here," she took Judith walked around with her. After about an hour of playing with her, the little girl quit being mean to her. He watched them play. His mind went to a place it rarely went to. Having a family of his own one day. He imagined what it would feel like to get someone pregnant and watch the baby grow and be born. To hold it for the first time. What it would feel like to love something so much that actually came from his body. He imagined Enid like this and it made him smile. The brain being a bitch, replaced Enid with Michonne. He smiled even harder.
"Carl, Carl," Enid called out.
"Huh?" He asked.
"Where were you just now?"
"Oh, I was thinking. It's getting late. Let's get her a bath and down for the night."
"Then you will walk me home," she said.
In the deepest register of his voice, he said, "I was thinking maybe you could stay the night."
"Ooh, Mister Grimes, what would the neighbors think."
"I personally could not give less than a shit."
"Her and her swear words," he laughed.
They bathed Judith and became sloppy wet in the process.
"You think Michonne would mind if I borrowed her clothes?"
"Or you could sleep naked," he said.
"I bet," she giggled.
She went in the bathroom. She grabbed t-shirt and shorts from Michonne's stuff. She looked at herself in mirror. She grinned. She was so happy. She made up her mind about something too. Before returning, she grabbed something out her bag.
He was rocking his sister asleep. Half talking, half singing. He had decent voice. Enid's womb quivered.
Soon, Judith was asleep. He put in her crib.
"Wanna make out?" He asked.
"I want to do a little more than that," she kissed him and put her arms around his neck.
"You mean the sex?" His eye was big as a saucer.
"Why go through the motions? People only couple for two reasons," she said rather defiantly.
"Such as?" He inquired.
"One, not be alone. And to, for lack of a better term, fuck. So, I figure we should do that," she was so matter of fact, she was terrifying.
"What you are suggesting is probably the best idea I have ever heard," he said smiling and turning red.
"Want to put Judith out into the hall. It would be kind of weird to do it in front of a baby."
"We could just throw a blanket over it. So, she will not see. I don't want to leave her alone. She will not know what she is hearing."
"Plan on being loud, do you?" She ribbed.
"I don't know. I have never done this before," he said rubbing the back of his neck.
"No one's tried to hit that? I find that hard to believe."
"I got a little experience. You are not virgin?"
"After my folks died, it was not an option. I had to do some things to survive," she sat down and got real quiet.
"I am sorry," he said sitting beside her and taking her hand.
"Doesn't matter now. We are here."
"Yes, we are," he put his hands in her hair, put his nose against hers and kissed her like he did Michonne.
When they pulled away, she swooned.
"Whoa. Dude, you don't kiss like a virgin. I will get a blanket."
"Linen closet at the end of the hall," he said.
"Okay. He kissed him again and almost skipped out the room.
Oh, my God, he thought, I am about to laid.
She came back quickly.
"Okay. Ta-da," she said.
She sat down and straddled him.
"Lie back," she said.
She laid down on top of him. They kissed rather deeply.
Moments later, she began to speak.
"When you say experience, what exactly do you mean?"
"Kissing obviously. I am good with my hands. Some head. Mostly giving."
"Really? No one's ever done that to me before."
"We have to see what we to do to change that," he said.
He rolled her on her back. They resumed kissing for a while until he asked could he undress her.
She sat up so he could pull the t-shirt over her head. She had a purple bra with the strap attached with
safety pins.
"Front or back clasp?" He asked.
"Front," she said.
He undid it with ease. Her breasts pouring out like sumptuous dough from a can. Her tiny pink nipples raised in excitement about was to transpire next.
He mouth on one and then other easing his hand down her flat but soft stomach and just at her
pudendum.
"These are awesome," he said lightly kissing one of them.
Feeling a little embarrassed, she said, Let's turn out the lights."
"I want to look at you," he said in a low growl.
She found this to be hot but still she insisted.
So, he obeyed.
In the dim darkness of pale, curtained moonlight, he could only make out shapes of her body. And
very nice shapes they were.
He slid down her body taking her shorts and panties with him. The sweet, musty smell of her
womanhood wafted up his nose. It intoxicated him. She became nervous when she felt his hot breath
close to her nethers.
He kissed right above her slit and she squealed.
"Wait. Let's just do it. I don't wanna do anything fancy just yet," she pushed his head away. Like a
lot of girls, she had the troublesome idea that sex was about the boy's pleasure and not her own.
"Are you sure? I mean I am good at it. At least that is what I have been told."
"What? Do you go around eating out chicks at random?" She laughed.
"No. It is only been three chicks."
"Still, let's just do it. Pass me my shorts and turn on the light," she said.
He obeyed.
She got under the covers before he could turn around and see all her nakedness.
Holy shit, there is a naked girl in my bed, he thought. He got the biggest smile on his face. So did she. He gave her the shorts. She reached into the pocket and out the three condoms.
"I am optimistic."
"I should probably get undressed," he said a little timidly.
"Come over here. I will do you like you did me."
He walked over to her and sat on the edge of his bed.
"You are too far away. My vagina's over here."
He was having second and third thoughts. What if he sucked and she never wanted to speak to him again. Or what if he hurt her.
"You are over thinking," she came up from behind him. She put her cool hands under his shirt and began to work it off him. It made him goosebump.
She began to kiss his neck and shoulders.
"Turn around and get under the covers," she said.
"Want me to take my pants off first?"
She shook her head no.
He got under the covers.
She mounted him and pressed her bare chest against his. They were crotch to crotch. They could feel the heat radiating off each other. It drove them both mad.
They began to work on his pants as they kissed as if they were being held at gunpoint.
They got his pants off easy.
Enid looked down at him and her eyes became large and she smiled lasciviously.
"I always knew you had balls but that thing is why you are kinda short. You cut four inches of this off you and attach it to your height, you would be six feet. I am calling you eggplant from now on," she reached for one of the condoms and opened it.
"Oh, don't joke about that. I have lost enough body parts to last me a lifetime. But seriously though. You thinks it's big," he twerked his eyebrow.
"Don't play coy. You know you are hung," she said.
He hunched nonchalantly as if to say I know.
Next, she grabbed ahold of his penis at the base with one hand and slid the rubber on with the other, careful to leave a reservoir at the tip. He leaned up to kiss her as his hands enjoyed her perky tits.
"I want you on top," she purred laying on her back spreading her legs apart. He rolled over on top of her.
"You ready?" He asked.
She nodded yes as she turned out the light.
Carl protested, "Turn it back on."
"Why?"
"I like looking at you."
"Aww," she still turned out the light.
He chuckled.
"All right. Here goes," he held himself and attempted to remain as calm as possible as he pressed his mushroom tip into entrance. He realized she was not that wet. He did not want to hurt her.
"Can I do something?" He asked.
"Such as?" Truth be told, Enid was not even that particular about sex. It was an ends to a means. Sometimes she used it for shelter or food or water or to hook a boy she really wanted. She is not even sure if she has even had an orgasm or not.
"You are a little dry. I don't want to make you bleed. Like you said I am hung. So," he took his hand and put it between her legs.
After about ten minutes, that was not an issue anymore.
"You could have kept doing that. That was good," she sighed.
"Well, hopefully, this ought to be better," he said sweetly.
"Most dudes do not care one way or another. This is nice so far. You are nice so far," she almost wanted to cry.
"This is nice so far. Thank you," he said. He needed something good to happen to him.
"Let's start," she said.
As he began to push into her slowly. The head was in when they both heard a rattling sound which preceded a squeaking and creaking noise.
"Oh, no. Not now," he said.
"I got to peepee," Judith implored.
"She usually sleeps through the night or at least a good four hours. It hasn't even been an hour yet," he was annoyed not mad.
"Well, go get her," Enid said.
"I am not going anywhere near my sister with an erection. I will go take care of this and you go get her."
"So, you get to go whack it and I get to child rear. Yay," she deadpanned.
He pulled out. He grabbed his clothes and went down the hall the other bathroom.
Enid threw her clothes back on and retrieved Judith.
"Aren't you the words cutest little cockblocker?"
"I peepeed. Uh-oh."
"It is okay, sweetie," she kissed her cheek and changed her pull up.
Twenty minutes passed before he returned. During this time, it was the first time in a while, the sole star of his masturbatory fantasies was not Michonne. Though she did make a cameo for some girl on girl towards the end.
When he came back, his sister was on her chest. She was almost asleep when sensed her brother and reached for him.
He took his sister from Enid.
They made fleetingly awkward eye contact and chuckled.
They stole a quick kiss.
"Wanna help me sing her to sleep?" He asked.
"Yes. What?"
"You pick. I trust you. But, happy songs kind of make her cry. She likes emo. It is like she can already sense life is pain," he joked.
"Do you know Only Happy When it Rains by Garbage?"
"I am familiar. But, I am a quick steady. I will follow you."
"I heard you earlier. What were you singing to her. What was it? Love Me Alone by Jason Downs? Awesome song. Mom was a producer and songwriter. She wrote that ditty."
"Really?" He asked rather amazed by her.
"Just shut the eff up and sing," she laid her head on his shoulder. His sister was on his chest.
As he sang the line, She'll always and never be mine, he thought of Michonne. Moreover, he thought about what she said about God liking him more than most. And in that moment, he felt like she may have been right.
Enid and Carl get closer. Michonne reveals how duplicitous she can be. At the end, a smart assed stranger comes looking for refuge.

It is the next morning.
"I wonder what Carl is doing right now," Michonne asked sitting beside Rick in the camper and adjusting the visor.
"Probably losing his finger virginity in the woods to that Gladys girl," Rick laughed.
"Rick! Her name is Enid, baby," she laughed.
"What? His nature is up. He is sixteen. I remember being that age. That was when I met Lori. Plus, I see how he looks at you sometimes. He could tear your clothes off with his teeth. He has the hots for you. I know that," Rick had known for awhile Carl was attracted to his surrogate mother. Michonne did her damnedest to convey ignorance. She was astonished he noticed Carl's crush.
"What are you talking about? Carl sees me as a mom or cool older sister."
"Naw. Like a milf."
Abraham was eavesdropping and agreed, "The boy wants to hit that ass like it owes him money."
"Mind your own, Abraham," Michonne rolled her pretty dark brown eyes.
"Just saying," he backed off.
"Based on his feelings for you, if you were anyone else I would be concerned with the amount of time you and him spend together. I know in my heart even if he made a pass at you that you would shut that shit down. Bar none."
"Damn right," she said lying through her fucking teeth. She felt like such shit. That is what she wished she had done.
Rick remembered that moment they had in the kitchen. It still bothered him. Though, she sounded convincing, he knew subconsciously something was up. He let it go.
"I will say this. Carl needs a girlfriend in the worst way. It would do wonders for his self-esteem. He feels ugly," she said.
"He shouldn't. He is not. He is still my beautiful, brave boy."
"Have you told him that? I do whatever chance I get."
"He knows," Rick was not always the most astute when it came to how to display his emotions. "No, he doesn't. It would mean the world to him if you, his handsome father said son, you are not ugly. Someone will want you. Just be your beautiful self."
"Did he tell you he felt ugly? That I make him feel ugly?" Rick pouted.
"No and yes. But if a fourth of your face had been blown off, you would not feel like Brad Pitt either."
Rick realized she was right.
"I will pull him aside when we get back. I don't want him to hate himself."
"Good."
"I hope that girl likes him," he said with concern.
"She does. I caught her crying like a baby by his bedside begging him to wake up. She told him she loved him the first time she lied eyes on him and it scared it her. That's why she is so mean, she said. She wanted to push him away because she didn't want the responsibility of mourning another loss when the inevitable happens. She saw me and begged me never to tell anyone especially him. So, yeah. She is just waiting on him to make a move."
"Whoa. At least, he will have someone once he mans up," he had a realization. "Carl has a tendency to be intense and doesn't always think things through. I hope they take their time having sex. I do not think he is ready for all that," Rick said. He was right. "I don't either. I don't either," she said.

Meanwhile, four hours earlier back in Alexandria, Carl and Enid had no such reservations. It was three in the morning when Enid snuck away from Carl and put cotton in little Judith's ears in case they became loud.

She then woke him up by kissing his neck and playing with his johnson. "Hi," she said.

"Hey," he said before hissing because he was getting hard. She reached for another condom and put it on him. Enid was wet this time. He fingered her anyway but stopped before she came. "Come on, come on," she said eagerly with her hands on his shoulders. His heart was beating so fast, he could feel it in his eyelashes. He took a deep breath and held himself as he slid in slowly. Immediately, the first thing he thought was how warm it was and how soft and snug.

He just lied inside her for a while. A little shocked to actually be inside a woman. "You know in order for this to work, you have to move," she said.

"Sorry. Here I go," he began to pump slowly. He grunted and she gasped. "Aw, man. Oh, shit," he said. His right hand had nothing on her.

Three minutes passed. "You are doing good but you could go a little faster. Harder maybe," she encouraged. This was the time she ever felt like she could tell the man what to do to her and he would listen and not be insulted.

He repositioned himself. He instinctively took one of her legs and put it on his shoulder. He let the other one stay at his waist. He then did what she suggested. "Holy crap. That feels awesome," she moving with him.

"I know, right? You are awesome," he leaned down and kissed her. Seven minutes passed. She was deeply impressed he was still hard especially since he was a virgin. "Oh, wow. Wow, I think I am going to come," she moaned grabbing his ass and feeling like she had to pee even though she didn't.

He quickened his pace finding some of his own sweet spots in the process. I am getting the hang of this, he thought.

Pretty soon, she went over. Loudly. The whole block heard her swearing and calling out his name. She was practically screaming. She realized in that moment, that she had in fact never had an orgasm until then.

Three minutes passed before it started to die down. "It was like it would not stop," she purred feeling little after shocks. This elicited a smug little chuckle out of him.

Another two minutes passed. He began to move erratically and breathed heavily. Even in the dark, she could his face tear up softly. "It's so good, Enid," he kissed her as he came.


Ever so enthusiastic, Enid replied, "You did not have to lie." He frowned and said, "I am not lying. You are the best girlfriend ever." "Well, duh. You lied about being a virgin."

"I was a virgin."

"No way a virgin would have have had your tricks. You have tricks, sir. Who taught you how to do
"I just know what to do. I guess. Nobody taught me anything about actual intercourse. Oral and fingers, yeah. But, sex sex, no one taught me anything," he reiterated. 
"Are you trying to tell me you are a natural at banging?" She laughed. 
"They say when you lose one ability, you gain another. So, it is possible," he said joking but not really. 
"Dude, you have no idea. My lady bits are smiling right now. I just hope it was not a fluke," she said. 
"Give me about ten, fifteen more minutes and we will found out. Come here, you," they leaned into each other and kissed. 
Fifteen minutes wooshed by and he was ready to go again. Twenty minutes after that, they surmised it was not a fluke. Except his time she had the presence of mind to put a pillow over her face when she hit her big finish. Which she did twice during that particular sesh. 
Still, he suggested they should go one more time to make sure. 
"When we wake up again. I don't want my cookie to get sore."
"Can't have that. No crumbling cookie."
"Water, I need water," she said. 
He simply reached under the bed and retrieved it. 
She was about to complain when she felt it was cold. 
"Are you a wizard? That would explain everything," she laughed. 
"I wish. I would have my eye, my mom and Shane would be alive and the walkers wouldn't exist. 
But, I freeze water during the day and let it melt while I sleep so I will always have the luxury of cold water. I have drank enough of hot, stale, brown water to last me a lifetime." 
"Tell me about," she said chugging down half. She gave him the rest. 
He took a few sips and passed it back. 
She laughed joyfully as she put her head on his chest. She ran her hand over the scar on his from when he shot the first time. 
"You are a miracle. You know that?" She wanted to say I love you but said that instead. She wanted him to say it first. 
"Naw. I am lucky. Know what? Fuck lucky. I am blessed. I am blessed to know you. Blessed to have my sister, very blessed to have met Michonne and the rest. Blessed to have my dad. Even when I hate his fucking guts, I am still grateful his alive for me to dislike." 
Enid noted what he said about katana woman. 
"I have a question and you have to promise not to be offended."
"Okay. Shoot, darling," all his southern accent came out on darling. 
She snuggled him and asked, "How long have you been in love with Michonne?" 
He sighed as decided whether or not he was going to tell his girlfriend the truth or not. 
"Huh?" He decided to play dumb to see if she would drop it. 
"You very clearly have a thing for Michonne." 
"What makes you think that?"
"You should hear how say her name. You remind me of West Side Story. Say it softly, it is almost like praying." 
"I just met a girl named Maria," he sang. 
She scoffed, "You know West Side Story?" 
"Jag was into fifties and sixties musical. She used to force me to sing along with her. That was her favorite. I hated it even though I pretended not to. I always thought Romeo and Juliet was stupid. That and Flower Drum Song. Everybody gets married at the end, really?" He grunted. 
Not her again, she thought. She knew it was crazy to be jealous over what was tantamount to a phantom but she was. 
Enid said, "Between Jagadumba-" 
"Jagadamba," he corrected. 
"Whatever. Between lady dumb name and Michonne, am I the only white chick you dated?"
"No. All those females I did stuff were white. Well, Kay was mostly white."
"Um. I don't want to know about them right now other than to ask, do any of them live here?"
"No."
"Good. So, about Michonne. Was she the one who taught you how to do sex stuff? I still don't believe you were a virgin. You are too good at it."
"I was a virgin. Michonne and I have never had sex," much to his chagrin.
"Okay, fine. Let's go with that. Do you at least admit that if she came to you right now and said 'Carl, you stud, give me some of that loving.' You that you wouldn't shove my ass out of bed and mount her like a jockey?"
With a mischievous grin on his face, he replied, "It would be more of a scoot over dealie."
"So, you do like her."
"No," he softly paused, "I love her."
That took all the air out her lungs.
I shouldn't have asked, she thought.
"Does she know?"
"Yes."
"Since when?"
"The night of the day I woke up."
"How did she respond?"
"She ultimately rejected me but she admitted that she loved me but she would not love me the way I wanted. But, the feelings were there, she refused to acknowledge them. Before that, like two months before, we kinda, sorta made out."
"Made out how?"
"My dad was macking on Jesse hardcore and Carol had sister so I knew we would be alone. So, I took a shower. Made us both and a sandwich and knocked on her door. She told me to go away. She had avoided me for two weeks.
You see two weeks before, we had a weird exchange. Her shoulder or rotator cuff was giving her shit fits. I offered to rub it for her. She was hesitant. But, she let me. She made all these noises like pleasure noises. Her skin was all soft and her waist all small. I could see her side boob. Things got perky. She noticed and I ran out he room. Later, she made breakfast. I went down. I almost kissed her then but I chickened out. . ."
He related everything from make out session to infirmary to the night Rick and Michonne hooked up to her in complete honesty.
Enid only had one thought after all this.
"After playing with your emotions like you did not have none, she up and fucks your dad? That is awful and I hate her now. Dirty bitch."
"Don't talk about her like that. You don't understand. I initiated it."
"So. She is older. It fell on her to not make it escalate. She kissed you back."
"Please. Do not make a bigger deal than it is. I am dealing with it."
"Not really. You still have feelings for her, that is borderline suicidal. Why didn't you tell your dad?"
"I don't want to hurt him or him hurting her. Even though, I am pissed at him."
"Because of he is with her."
"Not just that. He hesitated."
"Hesitated when?"
"That night this happened," he pointed his right eye.
"Don't make me pull teeth here. Spill it."
"Now I overheard most of this. I simply do not remember it. After Jesse saw stupid ass Sam get eaten -who calls out for their mom in the middle of a bunch of walkers? She quit caring about life. Thing is, she did not let go of my hand. I guess on some level, she blamed my dad and wanted to take me with her. Or maybe I am being paranoid. I doubt it though.
They were eating her, she had a literal death grip on me. I could not break free and they beginning to look at my ass like I was dinner. I called for him to help me and he fucking stood there mourning this
bitch he barely knew. My life was in danger. By the grace of God, he snapped out of it and cut her hand off setting me free. However, in the process, his gun fell from in back of him. Like some evil Peter Parker, Ron's spidey sense saw this and picked up the gun and the rest is history. The irony is dad taught him how to shoot after I asked him not to. I told him he and I were enemies. But, fucking his mom was more important than being loyal to me. If it had not been for Michonne running the fucker through, he and I would probably both be dead.

So, no, you do not understand why I feel how I feel about her. And I am begging you to let this stay between us."

"Fine. You are right. I don't understand. Love is deaf and dumb and retarded. This is in Jeremiah, your heart hates you and wants you dead. I am paraphrasing but it is still true. I won't tell."

Her heart was hurting now for him and for herself. She knew they were both doomed to be in love with someone who was on the fence about them."

"Thanks. I have question for you. Why do you care about how I feel about Michonne?"

"Well, you are my boyfriend. So, I have to care even when I don't. And I want to know what I am up against," she said.

"What do you, what do you mean?"

"The only way I can be here and in here," she touched his head and his chest where his heart was. She continued, "Is to know who was in there first so I know who I am competing with."

"You are not competing with anyone. I am all yours. Are you all mine?" He asked.

She bopped his nose and said, "Until the wheels fall off."

Back to now. They were in the middle of their third time when walkie talkie came on.

"Carl, do you copy?" It was Sasha.

"She is as bad as Judith. I copy, Sasha. What could you possibly want?"

"Damn, Carl, just because you got a little poontang last night does not mean you get the right to be a disrespectful prick or act like you are the shit. Yeah, we heard you all this morning. Everyone is fucking. Welcome to the club," she called herself putting Carl in his place.

However, he had a comeback.

"Enid is my girlfriend, so fuck off. Secondly, I am the shit when my dad is not here because I know what to do. Now it is clear to me that you don't otherwise you would not have bothered me. So, again. What could you possibly want?" He had confidence he had never had before.

Carl looked down at Enid with a brimming smile and kissed her. She was proud.

Tiffed, she just got schooled by what would've been sophomore in high school she remained silent for minute.

"Touche. But, seriously, there is a school bus of people here who are wanting to get in. They aren't Negan's. This I am positive of," Sasha assured.

"How so?"

"We aren't dead. Plus, I am sure they would not use black Buffy the Vampire Slayer as their mouth piece. Like you said she wants to speak to the leader. So pull out and bring your ass."

The impossibly clean looking and well dressed and downright coiffed young woman overheard her and yelled, "Just because it is the apocalypse, don't mean we all got to walk around looking like we Mad Max extras and runaway slaves. It is a called a hot comb, hooker. You can borrow mine."

"Carl, come on before I shoot this little cunt. Copy."

"Copy. Here I come," he had all but went soft anyway.

"Hold on. The kid and I are coming to," Enid said.

"No, you cannot. I don't know what I am walking into. Weapon up," still naked, he left her his gun and bullets on the nightstand.

"Make sure Judith doesn't come near it," he said.

"You sure? I heard loaded guns make for the best pacifiers. Of course, I am going to protect the baby," he grimaced.

"Babe, I know but she is quick. That's all."

As he finished dressing, Judith woke up scared. Between the cotton and the blanket, the poor dear
woke up deaf and blind.
Enid threw on his shirt and picked up his sister. She removed the cotton on the sly.
"Don't let her see me. She'll want me if she sees me," he said putting on shoes.
Flirting, Enid said, "I know exactly how she feels."
Walking with his hands in his pockets, he went to Enid and kissed. Then he whispered, "Enid, I love you."
If she could become weightless and float away she would have. She might well had if not holding Judith.
"I love you, too, eggplant."
On that note, he blew her a kiss and left her a second walkie talkie and he took the first.
"I will let you know if it is safe for you two to come out as soon as possible," he said.
She nodded.
He got his father's spare gun and left.
Immediately, Carl noticed stares and whispers, smirks and eyerolls.
He even heard someone shout, "Little Carl ain't so little no more."
He laughed. He felt like such a man.
He made it to the guard tower. Sasha could not help but shake her head when she saw him.
"There she is, Romeo," she pointed.
Her hands were up in surrender. She had on a black poplin blouse, short red plaid skirt and opaque black tights of all things topped off with red booties with red buttons on the sides. She was built like a pinup a la Betty Page. You could see this through her clothes.
She had on shades, Betsey Johnson ladybugs earrings and red lipstick. Her onyx hair was in mermaids curls all over her head. She was clearly beautiful.
"This is insulting. I asked to speak to your leader. Not some hillbilly, long-haired, cyclops, Zach Efron high school wannabe," her voice rang out obnoxious but familiar to his ears.
"First of all, I don't look goddamned thing like Zach Efron. Secondly, when my dad's not here, I am in charge. Thirdly, for someone who wants something from me, you are being awfully bitchy. And besides who dresses like that now?"
"Me evidently," she was a smart ass through and through. So was he.
"If anyone should be insulted it is me. I am assuming you are your people's leader's girlfriend. Where is he?"
She held up her right hand and then her left and said, "Right here. Luckily for me, I am ambidextrous."
Sasha laughed out loud.
"Wow. That was hot and gross all at once," Carl said.
"I try. But, seriously, I am in charge. Unlike you my power is through a forced marriage. I am a widow now. Not my pappy. You got lucky, left eye," she took off her shades.
She looked up at him with eyes so big brown and doll like. It was then it dawned on him.
He turned his back and literally shook his fist at the sky.
It was if time stopped for a minute.
"Really? The day after I get a girl, you throw her at me? Of all people. Come on, God, are you really this bored?" He lamented on one hand and wanted to do an Irish jig on the other.
"I take it you know her," Sasha said.
"Nothing gets past you," he deadpanned.
He ran out the tower and opened the gate.
As he approached her, he took off his hat moved his hair out his face.
"I know it has been a really long time. And I am obviously missing something. But, if you don't recognize me. I may have an heart attack like that old guy in the Notebook," he was serious.
All her bravado went away. She looked at him like she was afraid. But her eyes were also full of recognition.
"No. I mean yes but. I have really lucid dreams sometimes and you have no idea how often I dream about you. You have two blue eyes usually. Carl?" She squeaked out before her eyes rolled into the
back of her head. She fell forward and he caught before hit the ground. She had fainted. "Jag?" He asked.
Carl finds out it has been a dark five years for Jagadamba. However, their feelings are still in tact.

Bonus, she is related to one of the survivors.

Jagadamba's brother, Achilles had been watching and unlike his sister, he recognized him immediately.

"Not that little motherfucker," he sighed.

Jagadamba's sister, Priyanka or Priya nudged him and said, "Be nice, Chill."

Her posh English accent had over time become half southern twang.

"I can practically see his sperm hitting her egg," he said in disgust. Their humor had a tendency not lend itself to the profane.

"Like yours did mine?" She cracked.

They were Jagadamba's older sister and brother respectively but not each other's. She and her brother had the same gynecologist African-American father while she and her sister share the same plastic surgeon British Indian mother.

"I am not joking. You and I both know last thing she needs is to get pregnant a- oh, shit. She fainted," Achilles got off the bus to retrieve his sister.

Carl gathered her up into his arms and was walking towards the bus. She was light.

"Dude, give me Jagadamba," he brother demanded rudely.

"No. I got her. Move," Carl frowned. He discovered quickly her brother had not changed a bit.

Her brother threw up his hands and got back on the bus.

He was behind him.

Once onboard, Carl counted about thirty people. Most of them were children. One child in particular a pretty tow-headed girl sleeping on the seat behind the driver's caught his attention.

He sat her down on the seat across from the girl. He sat beside her with his arm around her and the other one running his fingers through her hair while asking her to wake up.

Heavily pregnant Priyanka came up to Carl and touched his shoulder.

"Hello, Carl. Aren't you handsome? I see you have retained some of your sweetness," she was always fond of the boy. She could tell he needed the reassurance. She was not lying. He was a cutie pie even with one eye.
Blushing, he said, "Hi, Priya. I am glad you guys made it. What happened that day?"

"And I you. We were corralled onto the off-ramp and could not back up. Had to go with the flow. We ended up in South Carolina. Nothing but bad happened there. Well, one good thing," she patted her stomach.

"How pregnant?"

"Eight months give or take. Chill and I so excited," she said. He came from behind and put his arm around her.

"How did that happen?" He wanted to say how on God's green and verdant earth, could you stoop low enough to fuck him but feared that would have sounded a bit harsh.

"One day I realized he was a man and that we were in love and had been for a while. I mean at the time, he was sixteen and I was twenty-seven. But, age be damned. When it is right, it is right. We have been going strong three years now," she said.

Natch, his thoughts went to Michonne. He compared them to Achilles and Priyanka. They had balls.

Coward, he thought of her.

"Congrats," he said unconvincingly. His second new best friend jealously reared it ugly head. One guess who his first new best friend is.

Vagina, it's vagina.

"How's your Momma? She was fly," Achilles asked.

He ignored his question for Jagadamba was awakening.

"I am sorry I passed out on you. Seeing you is just so overwhelming. Hi," she looked at him with love tinged with sadness. She slipped her arms around him tightly. He embraced her the same. Bittersweet tears followed.

"I assumed you were dead," she sniffled.

"I always hoped you weren't. Not even your brother," he said trying to crack a joke.

She humored him with a half smile.

"I am glad you are alive, Carl," she kissed his cheek then outlined the shape of his mouth with her finger. The same thing Michonne did.

"I am glad you are alive, too, Jagadamba," he cooed.

Their faces were close enough to kiss. They had discovered kissing together when they were eight; by the time they got twelve, it was second nature. It was also a closely guarded secret. Something they only dabbled in every time they were left alone which was often.

Both de facto and outright, the teens knew they were leaders of their respective groups and had to keep a level of respectability.

"I am sorry I said all that mean shit to you. I had to seem hard core."

"I understand," he could not quit looking at her. He could not quelch the joy he felt.
She looked at him with all the sympathy in the world, "The piece of shit who hurt you is roamer bait I hope."

"Fuck yeah. My dad's gf, Michonne saved me and apparently dad with me to the in-"

She grabbed his collar and asked, "Dreadlocks, skillet blonde?"

"What's a skillet blonde?" They were forehead to forehead.

"Antiquated term for a beautiful, dark skinned black woman."

"That's most certainly her. How do you know Michonne?" He said feeling mad irrational for still wanting her so much.

"She is my paternal aunt, my dad's baby sis."

Carl's looked like he had been there the day the Red Sea parted and he had been fishing on the other side. He was shocked. Even more than that, she was a part of Michonne. This amplified an already pretty deep feelings he had for the girl.

He managed to say, "The world is so small when it wants to be."

Jagadamba called out, "Achilles, we are not the only Anthonys left alive. Aunt Mic is still alive and fucking Carl's dad apparently. Wait. I thought your dad died at the hospital. What does your mom know? And how is little Andre?"

"Dad lived and he is our leader. My mom died after having my sister, Judith. She is Shane's. But, we need not discuss the fact. I had to, I h-h-had to take my mom out. Shane, too sometime before that. Don't tell Michonne I told you but her boy did not make it."

She began to cry again.

"I am sorry about your mom," she said.

"Me, too," Achilles and Priyanka said in unison.

"When did Andre happen?" Achilles asked visibly hurt.

"Before I met her. He was three."

He looked right at Achilles for a change. He was dark skinned like Michonne and they kinda had the same face. Achilles was handsome, sure. But, she just wore it a lot better. Whereas Jagadamba bore no physical resemblance to her aunt. Their spirits were similar.

"I can't. I can't imagine what I would do if that happened to her," she pointed at the blonde child he noticed before.

Carl deduced.

"You were married, right? Is she your stepdaughter? She is beautiful," he complimented.

"Isn't she just? But drop the step. Carly-Jayne is my daughter."

He looked at her then the girl. He could see it.

"You actually gave birth to her from your body and you named her after me?" He was touched by
the honor while simultaneously not liking the math he was doing in his head.

He knew for a fact she had her first period at age nine because it happened at his house and his mom helped her through it since her folks were out of town per usual. So, her getting pregnant at a very young age was not farfetched. The child was at least three.

Jagadamba was twelve at conception and thirteen at birth.

She continued, "I did name her after you and my mama. I wanted to be able to say your names everyday. I wanted to remember some of the good things that used to be in my life. You were one of those good things. Do you think about me?"

"That is by far the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me. And of course I do. How could I not? I recognized you first, remember?

I think about you everyday when I wake up and before I go to bed at night. I usually do not discuss it with anyone. It hurts too much.

There was this girl named Sophia. I had a rebound crush on her. She was a little older than us. It helped me not to worry so much about you. I projected. When she went missing, I over-identified. Felt like I had lost you all over again. Then she turned up a walker. I was done. I simply did not give a damn about anything for a minute. I had no idea what happened to you."

"Ambiguous loss is when a loved one disappears without a trace or warning. There can be no understanding or closure. That is what happened to us. What is still happening to me, Priya and Chill. We have no idea what became of our parents. The last we heard was an email we received some time after it all began. They said they had just made it out of Sri Lanka were about to board a flight at Charles De Gaulle that was on its way to Newark. They said they loved us. Stay strong and we will see you soon. We love you.

Then nothing. We don't know if the plane crashed or if they are in Jersey somewhere. You got closure for your mother. For better or worse, you know what happened to her. There is no doubt. And I believe in my heart if my parent's were here nothing that happened to me would have."

"What happened exactly?" He asked grabbing her hand almost unconsciously and playing with her fingers.

Carl saw the shame and anger stitch her brow when he asked the question. He knew instinctively Jagadamba must have conceived through sexual assault. And the asshole was clearly white. Other than being a little creamy in complexion, Carly-Jayne did not appear to have an Afro-Asiatic mother. She looked caucasian.

When she did not answer, he let it go.

"You have been through a lot, Jag. I am sorry," he felt for her.

She forced a smile and said, "No more than you, I am sure. Your face. You are as nice looking as I assumed you would be but still. You were shot, right?"

She had turned compartmentalization into an art form. She could bounce back and forth in conversation from all the tragedy in her life to another subject nonchalantly as if she were reading it from the CNN news ticker.

"Second time. I was shot at age twelve in the chest. See," he pulled his shirt up to show her.
Her eyes were instantly and inappropriately drawn to his happy trail. She was half tempted to hook her finger into his waist band and steal a look but refrained. If they had been alone she would have. She looked up at the scar.

"Have mercy," she touched him. He trembled.

Achilles saw this and shouted, "Eh, this ain't the Playboy Channel. There are children present. Some of which are your daughter and or future niece or nephew. I know the two of you are crushing hard. All you two see is the other. I get it. But, we are on a mission. You took the mantle are our leader. Be a teenager later and lead. That goes for you, too, little dude."

Carl turned rolled his eye at him. However, Achilles was the only person his little sister obeyed without question.

"Play nice, Chill. But, you're right. Excuse me, Carl," she took his hat and put it on her head and walked over to the driver's seat. Carl never let anyone else do that ever. Not even Enid or Judith.

"Shut the front door. You can drive a bus?" He asked following her.

"Yep," she said.

"You have to show me sometime," he said.

"Uh, duh. Now all bullshit aside, how safe is this place on a scale of one to ten?"

"Right now?"

"Naw, Carl, last week. Of course right now."

"Uh, I would say a solid five at the moment. Eight if you see the glass half-full. Right now, my dad, Michonne and some others are out making sure certain elements are no longer an issue," his tone was deadly serious but his expression screamed goddamn you are so beautiful.

"Let me guess, they call themselves the Saviors?" She asked.

"You had an encounter with them, too?"

"Yes and no. Ran into some asshole who goes around calling himself Jesus. He told us all about them. Then we followed him to the Hilltop.

We met Gregory. He made us shower. Who does that? I knew he was not going to take me seriously so I sent in Priya. She was a mediator, a cool operator. You have to get up and go to make her lose her temper. By the time they were done, she cursed him out and slapped him. He did not want to take in all the kids.

You see we have supplies. I mean an assload of you name it. Food, fresh food, we have a freezer truck with meat. We have meds, clothes, we even have eight baby pigs we found. Four girl and four boys. How lucky was that? Ten baby chickens. We disguise the trucks as something else. As you can see, only this schoolbus is here but we are all over this district. But, what we don't have is a place to put all this shit or our people. Once I make a deal with Mister Grimes, I will bring in the rest."

"Upon entering, you guys have to surrender your weapons and we have to check your luggage."

"Smart," she said.

He was curious about how she returned to him. So, he began to gently interrogate the girl.
"What happened that you had to leave South Carolina? I am glad you did but still."

"Ever heard of the Boudica's destruction horizon?"

He shook his head no.

"She was this Iceni queen back during double digit A.D. Their were Druids. British."

"I gathered they were British when you said Druid. The Iceni were English to be exact. I literally read about this two days ago. I guess I haven't got to that part of the book yet. I remember Boudica is your middle name. That was the only reason why I even bothered to read it."

"Yep. Long story short. Her husband, the king had basically made a deal with the devil. By devil, I mean the Roman Empire. For a couple years, it was milk and honey and gold and brew and bitches for everyone. Then her husband died. You see women had no rights under Roman law. They were property of their husbands and fathers. Women were currency, come receptacles, incubators and punching bags. Hell, it is not so different now.

Anyway, they took her land, raped her young daughters and beat her like a dog. So, she raised an army and killed seventy thousand Roman soldiers. During her next to last battle she created a fire that was so hot that till this day if you know where to look, you can dig seven layers below and see where the earth is still scorched after all this time. So that gave me an idea.

After I dispatched the people there and stripped it bare, we incinerated the place to kill the walkers. Incineration will destroy all things. The Pharoahs, the land they sat on, did not need to be. It did not need to exist anymore. Besides, my husband had a satellite location. We raided and disposed of their network, too."

She was not telling whole story by no means. It was far more complicated, insidious and heartbreaking than she let on. He knew she was leaving shit out. She always tendency to do that unless you pushed her hard enough or gave her a bribe.

At this point, Carl looked at her intrigued but also a little scared of her. He was tempted not to allow her to enter just yet. He recognized the look in her eye. He had seen in his father's eyes enough times since entering Alexandria. She wanted to rule.

"What are your intentions once you enter our gates? You do understand you will become a part of our group. Our family. You will have some say for sure especially if the idea is a good one. We work together or nothing. Your supplies become our supplies and vice versa or nothing. You fall in or nothing. You don't try to take over because I can tell you now that shit would not go over well. I can't protect you, hell, I may not even want to if you try something. We will kill you and anyone else in your group who can aim a weapon," he threatened her for two reasons.

One, meant every word he said. Secondly, he wanted to gauge if she was pragmatic and rational. He wanted to know if the first girl he ever loved was still there.

"Wow. You go from zero to hundred in the blink of an eye, huh?"

"Eye joke. Classy," he said.

"You just threatened me like we have never met before. Like we weren't family at one point. Your mom and dad called me the daughter they always wanted. It was even a forgone conclusion we would end up- let me put it this way. If I had gotten into the car with you instead of my siblings, Judith would be an aunt."
"Still might," he immediately put his hand over his mouth. He did not mean to say that out loud.

"Why, Mr. Grimes, this is all so sudden," she battled her impossibly long lashes for a girl.

He turned beet red.

"Please tell me I did not just that out loud?" He asked.

"You did, horny toad.

Anyway, you hurt my feelings so I wanted to hurt yours, too. When did you get so mean?"

"Probably around the same time you did."

"You have read me unfairly. I had no choice but to do what I did. I just want a safe place for my child to lie her head at night. I just want to be a mom who happens to be a teenager. I want to be around people my age. Maybe even find me somebody to be with so she will have a real family with a step dad or mom or both. Some siblings for her, I don't know. I haven't thought all this through. I sure as shit was not expecting to encounter you. I resolved long ago other than my brother and sister, I knew would never see anyone from my past again. Let along you. I cannot say that enough. Are you sure I am not sleep?"

"You are awake. My dreams are never this good," he kissed her hand.

They making eyes at each when Achille shouted from the back, "Why aren't we moving?"

"Because I am in charge and you are not. We will move when I say we move. I am not ten. I have a mind of my own. Frigging jerk. I am not in the mood," she said.

Just like he was the only person she would listen to, Jagadamba was the only one who could reprimand him once and he take heed. However, she usually did it when they were alone. Never in front of others.

Naturally, Achilles blamed Carl.

That boy, he thought. She never needed me when he was around.

Both Priya and Carl chortled at him. Priya loved him but she liked seeing him put in line. Carl just simply did not like him.

"Anyway," Carl began, "Now I heard you say your marriage was forced. I get that. Is that why you laid waste to your husband?"

"No. It was more than that."

"Okay. What?"

"I only want to tell my tale once. So, I would rather wait until Mr. Grimes and my aunt return and do it then. It is too much. You have to understand when I relive what happened to me, it takes a physical toll. Besides, I do not like to chew my cabbage twice."

Carl chuckled a little.

"I watch a lot of Andy Griffith dvds. Ernest T. Bass was my favorite."

"Can you give me a clue or a hint. I need something to tell my people so they won't think I am being
rash by letting you guys in."

"I understand. You got to constantly assert your authority. I will make it short and tell you half my truth. He threatened to make my daughter one of his wives when she got her first blood. So, I grew a pair finally and went all Beatrix Kiddo on their asses. You know Kill Bill?"

"Yeah. We saw it together. I would've killed his ass, too. That is demented and fuck ed up."

"I know. So, can we come in?"

"How many people do you have?"

"Seventy-three. Thirty-three of those are orphans between the ages of one and sixteen including myself. Can your people handle that?"

"More than," he said referring more go her than anything else.

She picked up on that and blushed.

"You sneaky snake. People never believed me when I told them you were not shy. Just stuck up. You little perv. Hell, I am the shy one. Which is hilarious considering," she said looking at him under eyed.

"Do you have skilled workers?" He asked smiling at her still.

"Yep. A heart surgeon, a couple nurses. A doctor who does reconstructive surgery. A couple chefs, mechanics, carpenters. Achilles is one-"

She was talking so fast, he barely understood,

"Reconstructive surgeon? Someone who can help with this," he pointed to his right eye.

"I hope so, handsome. Do not get your hopes up. I don't want you to be disappointed," she gently smiled.

"I always try to keep my hopes up. So should you. However, I have to ask why are there so many orphans?"

"Have you heard nothing I said? I killed their parents," she said a matter of factly.

"That'll do it," he said.

Jagadamba sincerely wanted to know, "You don't think I am a monster?"

World weary, he said, "We are all monsters."
High Concept

Chapter Summary

Enid finds out Jag is there. Carl left out something very important about Jagadamba. They spar and find out they have a lot in common. Eugene recognises somebody famous.

Jagadamba opened the window and pulled a whistle from somewhere and blew it. Ten people with guns and arrows came out of nowhere.

"What the fuck?" Carl asked.

"All I knew you all were a bunch of mad dog killers. I just left a mad dog killer. Had enough of those to last me a lifetime."

She opened the bus doors and all her snipers boarded. One in particular, a young strapping fellow a little older than them who was as blonde as the sleeping girl leaned over and whispered something to Jagadamba.

"You are so bad, Bigelow," she guffawed.

He looked at Carl like he knew him and patted his shoulder. He wanted to dislike the Viking looking dude but simply couldn't. He picked Carly-Jayne up and put the sleeping child in his arms.

The girl woke up and said, "Hey, Uncle Bigs."

"Hey, sweetness. Rest," he said in a heavy Southern Carolina accent.

"No. Mommy," she shot out his arms and ran to Jagadamba.

"Hey, sweetheart. You sleep good?" She asked embracing her child.

Carl watched her interact with her daughter and it found it remarkable that treated his sister much the same way.

"Yes," she had her momma's eyes and smile.

"Carl, head's up. I want you to meet someone. He is my brother from an evil mother," Jagadamba pointed towards the young man.

Bigelow was tall and muscular like an aryan Matt Damon.

He looked at Carl with a warm half smile.

"So, you are the infamous one, huh? I saw your photo in her album. I am Bigelow," he extended his hand.

Carl accepted it.

"Bigelow what?"
"Dalton. My Momma drank a lot of Bigelow mint tea when she was pregnant with me. Hence the name. Is Carl short for something. Like Carlton or Charles?"

"No. Just Carl."

"Family name?"

"No."

"Carlos? You look like you go for a white Hispanic. Dark, thick hair, one pretty gray-blue eye, nice pixie nose, full, pink lips, cleft chin. No homo but you are a good looking kid and don't you ever feel any differently. You are totally J.B.'s type. She likes them elfin," he laughed.

"Thanks. I guess," Carl frowned now.

"You know C.J. is partially named after you."

"Yes," he smiled.

"I hope you are worthy," he said devoid negativity. Bigelow loved Jagadamba just as much as her brother did. Maybe more. He did something for her most people could never bring themselves to do in order to save what amounted to a stranger's life at the time.

Not thinking of Enid at all, he replied, "I hope so, too."

Jagadamba drove into Alexandria while she used a walkie talkie to tell her people who weren't there to hang tight until she gave further word.

"Oh, damn, my girlfriend," Carl groaned seeing her walkie talkie.

"Of course, you got one of those. I thought a smelled a woman on you," Jagadamba disappointedly sighed out of earshot.

"Enid, do you copy?" He asked hoping to place some of his negligence on her.

"What is going on? It has been nearly an hour. Carl? Copy? Or whatever," she had spent the better part of an hour both feeding Judith and trying not to chase after Carl.

"Copy. Carl, can you hear me? Copy," Enid asked.

"Copy, Enid, I can hear you," he sighed.

"What the hell is going on? Why are you now just contacting me? I was scared."

"We had a lot of business to discuss. If things were bad, trust me you would have known."

"You said you were going to let me know what happened. How could you let me worry like that? I wouldn't do that to you. Anymore," she said.

Jagadamba had been listening. Once she parked, she came to Carl's rescue.

She snatched the walkie talkie from him.

"Copy. You are Enid, yes?"

"Yes. And you are?"
"I am the leader of the Pharaohs. It is my fault he did not contract you. I wanted his undivided. So, if you must take umbrage with anyone, please take it with me," Jagadamba made herself sound as grown as she could muster.

Enid sighed and was not quite sure how to feel. But, she noticed something.

"You sound awfully young to be in charge," it did not work.

"I am. I am sixteen. You?" Jagadamba asked.

"Me, too. I am dying to hear how did that happened," Enid was genuinely excited. There were no girls her age.

"Don't say that. Speak life to yourself. Death is all too ready to claim us, you know?"

"You are right. I should say I can't wait to hear your story."

"Cool. We ought to make quick friends. You know I have known Carl since we were two. I got some stories to tell you about him."

Enid laughed and said, "Tell me one now."

"Okay. This is a good'un. When we were in the second grade we crossdressed as Snow White and Prince Charming. I still have the album. He was the prettiest girl in class that day. I predict he is gonna father a pretty little baby girl someday," she said turning to see his reaction.

Jagadamba thought for sure she would see an expression of embarrassment. She was teasing him after all. Instead, Carl had a sly, inviting smirk as if she had set up a challenge to which his reply was I am game if you are.

She felt like she had put something out in the air that she couldn't take back. She turned back around. It felt more like a promise than a threat. It unsettled her.

Enid's heart sink. She realized it was his golden unicorn that shot rainbows and showtunes out her ass, Jagadamba. Her happiness for the first time in forever lasted only a scant twenty hours.

"You never said your name," Enid hid her mood change in her voice.

"J.B. as Jagadamba Boudica Chowdhury-Anthony. It is a lot of name, I know. You see my family has a long tradition of giving all their progeny unwieldy names practically guaranteeing we would have to learn to fight at some point. My papa's name is, was Bushrod. His sister's name sounds like my grandma picked up a handful of silverware and chucked it against the wall and noise it made- Michonne is what they named her. I wish my name was Enid. Sensible, sexy, easy to spell."

She waited for Enid to respond. Nothing.

So, unicorns run in the family, she surmised trying not to panic. It wasn't going too well.

"Enid? Enid, do you copy?"

"Yes. I got to go," she turned off the walkie talkie and debated what she should do.

She tried to calm herself down, You're his girlfriend and he is loyal. You took his virginity maybe. He said he loves you. Besides, you two had really, really fantastic sex this morning two and a half times. Don't panic. So what if lady dumb name is literally the woman of his dreams and is directly related to the other woman of his dreams. If he bangs Jag, he is also banging silverware sounds by
proxy, she thought.

She laughed out loud.

"Her name does sound like silverware sounds. Michonne," Enid said.

She told herself to stop overthinking. She got dressed.

Meanwhile, Jagadamba and her crew were about to depart.

"Everyone off," she said.

"Wait," Carl interjected.

"What now?" Achilles huffed.

"We should down play our history. At least for the first couple days anyway," he said.

Jagadamba pouted and all he wanted to do was attack her bottom lip.

She said, "I guess you want your hat back, huh?"

He nodded.

She walked up on him. She pressed her large bosoms against his chest. She put one hand on his shoulder and used the other to take off his hat.

Before she placed it on him, she decided to be naughty. She stole a quick peck on his lips and then put the hat on him. He absolutely kissed her back. She wiped the lipstick off his lips with her thumb. She crinkled her nose when she smiled at him.

"Your lips are soft and your breath smells good. But, they always were and it always did," she said.

He wanted to grab her by the waist, throw her tiny ass over his shoulder, take her to the nearest empty house and to do stuff to her.

I bet she would let me eat her out, he thought.

Twenty minutes passed.

Carl was waiting for Spencer to crawl out of bed as well a couple others to help him do the intake.

Jagadamba had her daughter by the hand and had been talking to a girl apart of her group named Tomeka. When she walked off, he decided to introduce himself to his namesake.

Carl knelt down.

"Hello, Carly-Jayne, my name is Carl. How are you?"

Instead of answering his question, Carly-Jayne inquired, "What happened to your eye?"

"C.J., don't be rude. Apologize to Mr. Grimes," she said.

"Sorry," She said bashfully.

"It is okay. It is also okay for her to call me by first name. Technically, we are both children."
"Make it Mr. Carl then we have a deal. She has to learn manners and stay in a child's place. That is important to me. I don't want to raise a little hooligan. But, I do want her to be a lady who can also straight murder a dude with her pinky. Is that too much to ask?"

He laughed but she was serious.

Thinking about his own mother, he advised the child, "You should always listen to your mom. She knows what is best for you because she loves you. Never forget that and do not be mean to her. It is too easy. It is harder being nice. You never know when you might not be able to be nice to her again. I wish I had I done that."

Jagadamba felt sorry for him.

"It's okay, Mister. I will be nice," she patted him on the arm.

"Want to know a secret?" He asked wanting to lighten the mood.

The girl nodded.

"I am a pirate."

"A pirate like Captain Jack 'parrow?" She asked excitedly.

"You see I lost my eye patch and that is why I have to wear this bandage."

She shook her head like she understood. Her mama stifled laughter and mouthed the words to him, "Really?"

"Why, why not just get another eye patch?" Carly-Jayne asked.

"The one I lost was one a kind. Special. I got from my dad at birth. It was blue," he referring to his actual blue eye.

The three and a half year old asked, "Why did you lose if it was so special?"

"Someone took it from me in such a way that I can never, ever get it back," he said gently tugging her sweater.

"Was it during a pirate attack? Did you win?"

"Yes. We did win in fact. You are smart girl as you are pretty."

"I know," she hunched.

He stood up and said, "She is definitely your kid."

"Child. I did not have a baby goat," she chided.

"She has to meet Judith. She could use a playmate closer to her age than me."

"Do not discount yourself. I always had fun playing with you. Wait, that did not come out right," Jagadamba laughed.

He gave her sweet half smile.

They resumed business. Spencer and a couple others finally joined him to help search them. He had
a less than professional reaction to seeing Jagadamba.

As she introduced herself, Spencer interrupted her.

"I am usually not so forward but holy Playboy woman, you are stunning. Hi, I am Spencer," he extended his hand to her.

She looked him up and down with askance. She did not appreciate being objectified in this instance.

She had the ability to make her raspy sweet voice project very loudly. She kind of sounded like Meg off Family Guy and she looked like Love Will Never Do Without You Janet Jackson and first season Buffy Sarah Michelle Gellar had a love child that Natalie Portman helped carry to term.

She had Jackson's overall angelic face and big almond shaped, deep brown eyes, Gellar's perfect Roman nose. She had the chanteuse's top lip, the ingenue's bottom. She had a cleft in her chin deeper than the one sported by her childhood sweetheart. She had a long elegant neck pretty much engineered for fashion spreads and for hickeys she had yet to receive. When it came to sex, she was equal parts rookie and vet.

She was short but really shapely like Portman but lithe like Gellar but athletic like Jackson. She stood a towering five feet, two inches tall. Seriously, something about the girl seemed much more than it was. She had a regal carriage.

With no immunity to her charms and feeling the urge to defend her honor, Carl interjected, "Dude, her kid is-"

More than able to defend herself, Jagadamba told him to, "Shut up, Carl. I have taken up myself pretty sufficiently without you. But, I am grateful you cared enough to try."

She kissed his cheek appreciatively and handed daughter off to Carl without looking in his direction or even asking. She knew he would do whatever she asked of him. She had known that since they were four. Other than Bigelow and Achilles, he was the only male she trusted her child with.

Then she continued, "I am acutely aware of what I look like and the effect is has on the menfolk. Hell, women, too. There is no doubt in my mind not only am I beautiful but shit in the right light, hair and make up and clothes I am down right ethereal. That means extremely delicate and light in a way that seems too perfect for this world."

"I know what it means," he replied annoyed.

"I also have a banging body. I work very hard on it to keep it strong. No one will ever be able to get the drop or capture me without a real fight again," she got in his face, well at his neck.

At this moment, Enid stepped out with Judith. She heard Jagadamba before she saw her. She was actually kind of impressed by what she was saying.

She then spotted her spanking new boyfriend deeply entrenched with the other woman. She walked toward him in a huff wanting to deflect any feelings between the former couple. She eventually slowed down to a saunter when she saw Carl smile at her. She smiled back.

Goddamn, she is stupid gorgeous and really articulate. Bitch, she thought.

Once beside him, she saw the red lipstick stain on his cheek. Anger flashed for a nanosecond in her eyes. Jagadamba saw this and smirked. She wanted to get under her skin.
Enid just as astute, took him by the collar and kissed him right on the mouth. Jagadamba saw out the corner of her eye. It made her pause, flare her nostrils and shift her feet. Enid had wiped off her rival's lipstick as they kissed.

The girls made eye contact and gave each teeth bearing smiles like hyenas before they attack one another.

Jagadamba continued to speak, "With that said. Looking this way has gotten me into more trouble than not. It is not an asset but a burden. Or that is until I learned to use it to my advantage. My real strength is my mind. People are always so surprised by that.

And hey, my homie here has point you spoke to me like this in front of my child. That is beyond disrespectful."

He could not make the connection between the caramel colored Jagadamba seemingly buttermilk complexioned Carly-Jayne. She saw the look of shock on his face.

Enid however saw the resemblance immediately.

"Why else would I be walking around with a little blonde white girl unless she is mine? We share similar bone structure and features. I am not baby sitting. That is testament to how ignorant you are. I don't want C.J. growing up thinking her body is all she has to offer. Or that she has to have a man to survive. Sure, no one can make it on their own even before the dead walked the Earth. We need each other to make it. We just do.

Anyway, do not get it twisted. I am not some militant feminist. If we had been alone or after we conducted our business and you said what you said, I would have been flattered. It might have even culminated in some premaritals. Because when I first saw you I thought, wow a handsome ass dude. It would take a Christmas miracle for me to like you again."

When she talked about screwing another dude, Carl totally gave Spencer the stink eye. Enid kicked him.

"What?" He asked.

Really?" She scoffed.

She looked around and saw that many of women had contempt for her while all the men basically had smiles for her.

She addressed this.

"And I can hear some of you women thinking who does this half jungle bunny, half thank you come again, high yellow, redbone bitch think she is? I am not ugly. I am not going to be modest about the fact to make you like me. It is not like I am only pretty woman here because I am not. The nappy-headed heifer at the guard tower, the chick with the glasses wearing the baseball tee, the girl off the Sun Maid raisins box to left of me. The original hot one not the stupid looking one they started using in two thousand nine. Enid, right?" She smiled.

She nodded.

"You either like me or you do not. Hell, that goes for anyone. And quite frankly, if you have that big of a problem with my appearance, it is not my fault I look this way. Take it up it with God," she said.

Enid sniggered. Funny is funny. She did not want to but she kind of liked Jagadamba.
Soon, she felt a tug on her on her pants leg. She looked down and it was Carly-Jayne. She smiled and waved when they made eye contact. She returned the same. She was clearly interested in the baby.

"Can I see your baby?" She asked.

"Shh. When your mommy is through talking," Enid whispered. She heard your as the.

"Okay," she said.

Meanwhile, Bigelow was watching Enid. He liked what he saw. He began to formulate a plan.

Meanwhile, Jagadamba put her hands on her hips. She was serious and close to finished, "Now, I am saying all that to say this. I am the leader of my group because everyone here is alive because they helped me keep them that way and I am alive because of them. I only want to help and protect people. Now you owe me an apology."

"I am sorry. That was rude of me. It is just that it has been a while since I have seen a woman who looked like you that was available."

"First of all, I am sixteen but you are right about me being a woman," she said.

"Sixteen? I thought you were a young looking twenty-five or something. You do not carry yourself like these two," he pointed at Carl and Enid.

They took issue.

Then Jagadamba clearly making eyes at Carl, she threw the verbal equivalent of a gauntlet at Enid's feet.

"Whoever said I was I was available?"

Enid could have shot laser eyes at that girl.

Jagadamba wanted to see what Enid was made out of. She could be a shit stirrer when the mood struck. This time ait had the propensity to be helpful or harmful.

Watching all this go down was Eugene. He had watched the new girl especially. He had seen her somewhere before.

"You are so pretty, Enid. I see you have good taste, Carl," she playfully hit his arm.

"I do," he said kissing her forehead.

Jagadamba rolled her eyes ever so slightly.

Enid kissed his chin and they made eyes at one another.

Shit stirrer or not, it still hurt her feelings to see him with someone else. She could not help but wonder why was he thrown back into her life if she could not have him.

As if I have not suffered enough, she thought.

Jagadamba turned away and saw Eugene looking at her. There was no lust there just pure curiosity with a smidgen of fascination.
"What do you want, Achy Breaky?" She asked.

"I have seen you before. But, you were a smaller human," he said.

"Okay? The word for that is child," she derided.

Eugene snapped his fingers then recalled, "I know where I have seen you before. There was this show on Disney. It was the best of what it was. Real high concept shit for a children's show. It used to film in Atlanta about an orphaned girl who could see the ghost of a female forties gumshoe and they would solve crimes. It was called, Mia Self and Ida like Me, myself and I. Cheesy word play at its best or worst depending on your worldview. You were Mia," Eugene said.

Enid scoffed, "I used to watch that show like it was my job. I like worshipped her. She had freckles and this ponytail she could make swing like a pendulum. I used to practice it. I could never do it. I am not ashamed to admit it. I had a total girl crush on her. Hell, after my parents died Mia Self was my go to. She was the one who said just survive somehow. That kept me alive," Enid's voice broke. She held back tears. Carl had never seen her so soft before.

Jagadamba teared up too.

She continued, "She did a couple movies, too. She could sing, too. Really well. I remember she did a cover of that song Easy to be Cold from Hair. Her name was Jacie Tony. She doesn't look a thing like her."

Carl was about to say something. Jagadamba implored him not to with her eyes.

Then she reached into her bag and took out a bunch of baby wipes and a hair tie. She turned around and wiped her makeup off. She then put her massive mane a high ponytail. She turned around and revealed a smattering of freckles across her cheeks and nose. She also looked about well, twelve in the face with her hair up. She looked better without make-up. Innocent and beautiful.

Carl thought, That is what ethereal looks like.

She really was.

Jagadamba explained, "Jacie as in the J in Jagadamba and the C In Chowdhury. Tony is short for Anthony. My real name is way too ethnic. Plus, it gave me anonymity. No one knew it was not my real name. No one ever saw my parents. Just my big sister. As for the ponytail, his mom taught me how to that. It is all how you put up your hair. I saved your life?"

Enid became starstruck. She put Judith down who walked over to Jag. She wanted to be picked up by her. She did so.

"What a pretty little thing. Looking like your daddy," she could see Shane in her face.

Enid put her hand over her mouth.

"The world is about this big. Come here," Jagadamba hugged Enid with her free arm who in turn snapped out of it and hugged her back. It was official, they were frenemies.

"Thank you for what you did on your show. You were, are awesome. You are leader of like a large group?"

"Seventy-three people. You are welcome. I thought what I did back then no longer mattered. If it ever did. My Amma, grandma always said always do your best because you never know who is
watching or whose life you are affecting. I feel so humble right now. I needed that. Thanks. And you," she said to Eugene, "No one has recognized me in ages. What is your name, mullet?"

"Eugene."

Eugene bowed.

Enid hit Carl's arm, "Why didn't you tell me she was a famous actress?"

Jagadamba was indeed famous. She absolutely A-list.

"It was not the most important thing about her to me," he said looking at Jagadamba with absolute love.

Enid swallowed hard. It was either that or scream or punch him the balls.

She decided to address Jag again. After all, it is not everyday, you meet a famous person, "You were, are so talented. Didn't you when an Emmy? It was one of the most popular shows on tv. You are Jacie," she almost could not get over it. Bitch trying to steal her boyfriend or not, someone she still admired.

"I won a Daytime Emmy. Youngest person to ever win one. I was nine. I used to be so proud of that. I was nominated for a Primetime Emmy for SVU when I was twelve. World fell apart a week before the Creative Emmy ceremony. Never knew if I won or not," Jagadamba would never admit it but she missed her former life. She was somebody, she was a star.

She also knew what it was to be the opposite of that. To be brought down to your knees by circumstances to be subjugated, disrespected, treated like nothing and to even think of yourself as such. So, yes, when the opportunity came to get some of her magic back, she pounced on it. Even with that, she always wanted the same thing. To be normal, successful to a degree and be with the boy next door. Despite everything she had not lost her innocence or her sense of self. That was the only way she still wanted Carl.

Eugene tilted his head and said, "Durga. Jagadamba is one of the nine manifestations of the Hindu mother goddess Durga. Jagadamba means mother of the universe. More specifically the goddess of victory of good against evil. You have a most excellent first name."

Jagadamba smiled big and hugged Eugene.

"You are literally the only non Indian person who has ever know the significance or the meaning of my name. I think we are going to be besties. Let's ambulate and conversate. And before any you correct my English, conversate was added to the dictionary in the year twenty aught nine. So, bah. Oh, Carl, would you mine watching Carly-Jayne for me until Chill or Priya or Bigs come get her? I going to get everybody situated with my new friend, here."

"She's safe with me," he reassured.

"C.J., you be nice to Mr. Carl and Ms. Enid, okay, baby?" She put Judith down and picked her daughter up and kissed her.

"I will, mommy," she said.

"Just when I thought today could not get any better. Nice meeting you, Enid. I am glad you were a
fan. It is always feels good to know I touched someone's life in a good way," she meant that.

As soon as Jagadamba was far enough away. Enid shook her head and scoffed.

"Look at that ponytail go. My boyfriend's first love is my literally my hero. The one person I have always wanted to meet. I want to hate her but can't. She is exactly what I hoped she would be and more. Fuck my life," Enid said.

"Ooh. You said a bad word," Carly-Jayne said.

"Sorry, Carly-Jayne. She named her baby girl after you? Seriously?"

"I know, right? I was taken aback but yeah."

"Jacie Tony is Jagadamba-"

"It is Jah-gad-um-bah. Jagadamba," he corrected.

Enid mispronounced her name on purpose and wanted to be smart assed but her Lady dumb name's child was right there.

"It is funny. I was only joking this morning when I said you were a wizard. But, now I am not so sure. It is like you summoned her here," she said.

"I am almost afraid to ask you what that means," he said running his hands through Carly-Jayne's cornsilk locks. She shook him off and indroduced herself to a shy Judith.

"Carl, it is self explanatory," she rolled her eyes.

Twenty minutes passed, Carl had been called away leaving Enid with two toddlers as she walked back to the Grimes house, Bigelow saw his opportunity.

"My, my. You have to tell me. What was it like living in a museum?" Bigelow asked looking her up and down.

Enid thought he was attractive but not enough to jeopardize her relationship.

"Okay. I will bite. Why?"

A jovially flirtatious grin passed his lips.

"You must have lived in a museum because you are a work of art. You are so beautiful. What is your name?"

She refused to give him what he wanted- a smile.

"Unavailable," she said.

Undaunted, he said, "Ooh, Unavailable. That is sexy as hell. Is that French?"

Enid despite herself, she giggled.

An hour passed.

Carl came to his house and was surprised when he was met with the smell of fried green tomatoes.

Before he made to the kitchen the walkie talkie clicked on.
"Copy, Carl, do you copy?" It was Enid.

He simply shouted out, "I am in the house."

She came out the kitchen to meet him.

"I was about tell you lunch was ready," Enid said.

"I thought you said you did not cook," he said.

"Uncle cooked for the president. Every Saturday, he would drop by and the teach me. I just wanted to see what you were willing to do for me," she batted her lashes. He could not be mad about that. She grabbed him by the wrist and led him to the kitchen.

He was delighted when he heard Carly-Jayne make Judith laugh harder than he ever had as they both sat in high chairs.

He downright confused and a little pissed when saw Bigelow at the stove.

"Sup, Carl," Bigelow throw a peace sign at him.

Enid wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed like they were the only ones in the house.

Bigelow looked over his shoulder and saw this. Instead of jealousy, he felt a since of victory. He knew this display of wanton affection was to prove a point to him. That she only had eyes for Carl. He knew he had gotten under her skin.

Meanwhile, Carl is lot more perspective than anyone gave him credit for. He sensed this and he hated competition.
I Want You

Chapter Summary

Carl has a twofer. He and Enid have a fight then make up. Then he and Jagadamba reconnect. Rick, Michonne and gang returned.

Three hours whizzed by. Everything had calmed down rather quickly. It was almost like they had always been there. It simply was not much trouble. Jagadamba made sure all the children were assigned guardians from her group. She herself took responsibility for three children not including her daughter. Twelve year old Tomeka was among them.

Carl was on his way back to his house when he saw the girl coming towards him.

"Excuse me, excuse me. Hey, you Carl, right?" She asked.

"Yes. What do you want?" He asked. She gave him an uneasy feelings. Something in her slanted dark brown eyes rung empty.

She deadpanned like a master, "Priya is about to make chicken vindaloo. She wants to invite you and your boo over for dinner. Or if you like, after it is done, we could bring it over to your place instead if that would be more convenient for you. We are technically guests until your pappy officially approves of us."

"We'll come. Which house? Priya's or Jag's?"

"No one calls her Jag but you. But, Priya's. But, J.B. has a room in her sister's house and vice versa. And there is something else," the girl looked her age for a moment, nearly bashful.

"What?" He asked adjusting his hat.

"Oh. Oh, everyone has been saying it all day. But they were too polite to say anything. But, I am not. Shower before you come. You smell like bodussy," she fanned her nose.

"What is that?"

She let out a mischevious chuckle.

"Just shower," she recommended.

"Seriously. What does that mean?" He insisted.

"I am trying to spare you. It is mean."

"I have been shot twice. I can take a vocal jab from a preteen," he scoffed.

She stopped in her tracks, "It is not so bad right now. But, whenever you get around J.B. you get straight musty. I noticed that earlier. I was sitting behind you guys on the bus. You totes got the hots for her."

"I knew I was obvious but damn."

"Yeah, kinda. She likes you, too. I can see why. You must have been like looking at the sun before. You're still not bad with one eye," she was not flirting but stating a fact.

"I have never had so many people who weren't my mom tell me I was attractive before. Not until three days ago. But no one ever called me ugly either. So. I don't know," he hunched.

"Maybe people see you need to hear it now. Whenever I catch you quiet, you either look pissed or like you want to cry. Be grateful anyone cares," Tomeka said.

He could not argue that point.

"What is your name again?" He asked.

"Tommie. Well, Tomeka but I prefer Tommie."

"Thanks, Tommie. Tell her we will be there. You did not tell me what bodussy means," he really
wanted to know.
"Booty, dick and pussy. Bo-d-ussy," she said walking away laughing.
He sniffed his underarm and winced.

About an hour passed. During which Enid and Carl discovered showering with another human being is the least sexiest thing you can do. There was also the added bonus of them being extra careful not to get his head wet because of his injury.
He usually used dry shampoo on his hair and soaked in the tub if he was particularly dirty.
Otherwise, he would give himself a whore bath.
"Aw, shit. My bandage is all wet. It is time to change it anyway," Carl said. The wetness and cool air was irritating him.
"Let me help," she said toweling off.
"I got it. I just need you to go to the bedroom and I will take care of it," he said wrapping the towel around his waist.
"Honey, I know you are self-conscious about it. But, I can help. Just tell me what to do," she pled.
"What are we right now?" He asked looking over his shoulder.
"What do you mean?"
"What state of dress are we in?"
"Naked. Duh and so?" She stretched.
"Trust me, you won't want to be with me in this state again if you see it. I look like a monster. I can't stand to look at myself. I know you couldn't. Please, go," he implored.
"Carl, swe-" she touched the back of his head to undo his bandage. This enraged him.
"I said fucking get out," he pushed her out the door and slammed it. She hit the floor.
Enid burst into tears. She did not know he could be that mean especially to her.
Immediately, he felt apologetic. He changed his bandage quickly and ran after her.
Enid had dressed and was in the living room trying to find her shoes.
"Enid, Enid, I am sorry. I shouldn't've lost my temper like that. I just can't be seen like that by someone I love. I just can't. I have not let my dad see it either or Michonne. It is not personal-"
"You swore at me and pushed me. Fuck you, asshole. Just get dressed and go be up in lady dumb name's face. She is a two for one. You get to fuck her and Michonne at the same time. She being her niece and all. You have been mean to me every since she re-entered your life. So, all day, she calls and you come running like a broke dick puppy."
"That is not true. I was doing my job. That is unfair. I love you. I meant and mean that. You should not have tried to take my bandage off without my permission. That was messed up."
She softened and confessed, "I just want to be apart of you. I want you to know I accept you. All of you. Injury and all. And FYI, I have seen your injury. I saw it when you were unconscious those three weeks. You basically have a hole in your head. There is some bone exposed. Baby, I don't care. I love you," she poked him in the chest before hugging him tightly.
He stood there a little terrified and relieved.
"You don't care?" He asked choking on the words.
"Nope. You are mine. That is all that matters to me," she cried on his shoulder.
"I love you, too," he said before kissing her.
Heat quickly overcame them. Soon, she was naked again and he threw his towel somewhere. With no preamble, he entered her. Neither of them brought up birth control.
It felt different not just because it was sans silver slip but because well, it was still daylight and they were looking right at one another. See in his bedroom, he put a black sheet over the curtain.
"Oh, shit," he gasped. Truth be told the danger of hitting it raw in combination with skin to skin contact raised excitement level for them both. At their core they were thrill seekers.
"Pull out before you come," she sighed.
He agreed.
Ten minutes passed.
He felt his balls tighten so he proceeded to pull out. She stopped him.
"I am really close, too," she panted.
"I thought you came already," he said.
"I did but it was a little one. This one is going to be huge. I can tell. Oh, good, goddamn, Carl," she went over and he was right after her. They laid in silence. He remained on top of her. He noticed he felt weak in a way he never had before. Like a bit of his essence had been transferred to her. They both knew something monumental had just happened.
"You are getting heavy," she said still flushed. He rolled over. He was out of breath.
"That was intense," he said feeling his sweaty skin chill in the air.
"Certainly made that shower a moot point," she sat up then jumped to her feet. She was the opposite of him. She was wired for sound. She felt extra alive.
Enid stretched and jumped hoping his DNA would run down her leg. It barely did. It mostly her own lubrication she saw.
"Would you mind doing that again but facing me this time? That was fantastic," he flirted.
"You are such a perv. I'm going to go and try to pee. I washed you some clothes. They are in the dryer," she said using his towel to wipe up with.
"Thanks."
He got up as soon as she left. Getting dressed as he walked to the bathroom door, he heard the water running. She was trying to coax her bladder into urination. It was not going so well.
"Are we going to talk about what potentially just happened or ignore it until becomes an actual issue?" Carl asked her through the door. As if she were not panicking enough.
Enid ignored him. She turned the water off and did not bother flushing the toilet. Nothing came out. She just sat there feeling scared and a lotta stupid.
I should have just left or let him pull out but it was going to feel awesome and I knew it. Stupid ho, she lamented slut shaming herself.
"Look, go without me, okay?" She said quietly coming up with a solution.
"I will stay until you are ready. I don't want to leave you," he said.
"Must you be stubborn about everything? We were invited to dinner. It is rude not to show up. Just go."
"Okay. Fine. I love you," he said departing.
"Huh-uh," she replied.
"Are you mad at me? I was going to pull out but you said not to so I didn't," he said. Incensed, she opened the door and said, "If you are putting this all on me, I swear I will cut you. You could've went and grabbed a rubber or ignored me. You have before. Many a time. You just wanted to bust a nut."
"Of course, I wanted to come. That is literally fifty percent of the point. But, I wanted you to come, too. I enjoy it when I know you are enjoying me enjoying you, I guess. I don't know. Just do not be mad. Whatever happens you got me. So, there's that."
"You really mean that?"
"Yes," he did. She walked up to him and kissed him. Poor girl loved the boy.
Still, she had a plan. 
"You go on ahead. I am going to stop by the infirmary. Get that prom night mistake pill. Plan B. The last thing either of us needs is a little one. Especially me. I don't think I have the patience."
"You handled Judith and C.J. like a pro until Jag took over," he said slightly encouraging.
"You can't talk me into anything."
"I am not trying to. I am just saying be prepared for the worst. And nine months from now, there'll be a little, squirmy, cute pink thing with my name on it," his flip tone betrayed how he actually felt. He was frightened out his goddamned mind.
"Glad you can be so la-di-da about this. I am going to Denise's," she said.
"She probably won't have it. When do good things happen to us?"
"I used to think we were a good thing. Now I am not so sure. You are a dick," she said still nude.
"Maybe I am being a little dick-ish. But, I admit I was more hopeful earlier but come on. We are probably overreacting. It was just once."
"All it takes is once. Go, Carl or I swear I am breaking up with you. Don't forget to spray on that body spray shit."
On that note, he tried to kiss her, she turned her head and rolled her eyes. She walked away.
"You have a great ass," he hollered out leaving.
She smiled then got dressed.
Fifteen minutes passed.
Denise answered her door.
"Enid, hi. Busy day, no? How are you?" Denise asked.
"Fine. Not fine. I sort of made a mistake," she said.
"Aww, I heard about you and Carl. Morning after pill?" She assumed correctly.
"Ugh. Was I really that loud?" Enid scoffed.
"Yes. I can almost give you a word by word of what you said but I would rather spare us both. Here. Take it before you go to bed. In case there is something in there. That way when your body aborts, you will have privacy. Be more careful. Honestly, I don't know how to birth no babies."
"Has to be easier that mending an eye," she said.
"There are more lives in danger. I would have to keep two people alive at least. Childbirth is dangerous."
This unsettled Enid.
"We'll be more careful from now on. We had a fight and it sort of happened."
"You owe me no explanation."
"I know it is not a hundred percent. What if it doesn't work? Will it hurt the baby if there is one?"
"I don't know. Probably not. Did the unprotected bonage happen when- yesterday, today."
"Like an hour ago. I tried to pee, I jumped up and down. His stuff is not coming out."
"Be patient. It'll liquify. Take the pill."
She put the pill bracket in her front pocket. Half way to her destination, she felt fluid run out of her.
"Eww. Even his spunk is contrary," she huffed running back inside his place to clean herself up.
Inside his bedroom, she became overwhelmed by his smell and began to weep.
A egregious thought occurred to her that occurred to many a lovestruck woman, What if a baby was the only way to keep him?
As soon as the rumination darkened her brain doorway, she knew that idea smacked of stupid. As much as she loved him and his eggplant, she loved herself more. If she did mess around and have a baby it would be cause she wanted someone to love and not to trap him.
After this realization, left Enid not feeling much like socializing. She grabbed one of his shirts and lied down. She fell asleep but she did not take the pill.

Warm sea foam green eyes met Carl after he knocked.
"'Allo, Carl, come in," Priyanka answered rubbing her baby bump. He started it buck-eyed. He knew there was a real possibility he had just put one of those into motion.
"Hey, Priya. Smells good," he said absent-mindedly.
"Where's the Sun Maid girl?" She asked.
"Oh, Enid is not coming. She had to take care of something," he said. He knew she was not coming when she did not come with him.
"Is she not feeling well?"
"You could say that," he frowned.
"Anything, me or mine could help with?"
"Fraid not," he said.
"You were so hopeful earlier. You and chickadee have a row?" She asked genuinely.
He nodded.
"It will pass. I am sure. Come sit."
"Where's Jag?"
"Jagadamba's upstairs with your sister and Carly-Jayne. She's bathing them if you want to visit. Food'll be ready soon."
"Okay. Thanks you for inviting us. For inviting me," he said.

Priyanka put her sandy brown hair behind her ear and gave him a nodded welcome.

He made his way upstairs and down her hall, he could hear her half singing Pocketful of Sunshine. Her daughter was singing with her. Even at fifty percent, her singing voice shot out like a bullet piercing anyone who heard it. She had a clear crystalline voice like Amy Lee or Anita Baker. The girl was just a big ball of beauty and talent. It was not her fault and nobody could take this from her. When he reached her she was bent over the tub. She had changed to a pair of heather gray cloth short shorts and a dingy white t-shirt. One could just see the round cupping of her well toned ass. Carl was staring hard and trying to feel compunction about it but could not.

Carly-Jayne and Judith saw Carl and let out a joyful squeals.
"Budder," Judith exclaimed.
"Hey, Judy," he said.
"Sing with us, Mister Carl," Carly-Jayne demanded.

Jagadamba turned around. She grinned.
"Only if your mom says it is okay," Carl said being pragmatic. He knew one has to gently but frequently remind children they were not in charge.
"Please, Momma. Please?" She asked.
"Sure. Why not?"

Carly-Jayne thanked her mom.
He knelt beside her. She turned and sat on the edge of the tub. They beamed at each other.
"Glad you and Sun Maid could make it," she unconsciously snarled when she brought up his girlfriend.

Carl did not notice. The front of her white t-shirt was wet and she braless.
"She is not coming. Wearing a white shirt and no bra and bathing children. Good choice," he grinned trying not to look but failing miserably.

Those things were bigger than Enid's and fuller. He liked his girlfriend's breasts but those were magnificent and almost looked too heavy for her frame. After all, she was shorter than Enid by at least three inches.

"Oh, shut up. I didn't know she would send you up here. Otherwise, I would look more presentable," she was happy Enid was not there.

"I am not complaining. You look fine, really," he said.
She blushed but covered her breasts with her arms.
He pouted.
"Do you know any pirate songs?" Carly-Jayne inquired wiping melting tear-free shampoo out her big brown eyes.
"Yes, as a matter of fact," he picked up a plastic cup floating in the water and turned on the faucet, "I do."

He took it upon himself to rinse the shampoo out her hair. She had already done so for his sister. Onlyest song he could think of the Spongebob Squarepants theme. And he sang the whole thing. Even did the whistling at the end.

Jagadamba watched this and fell a little harder for him. Her daughter looked so happy. She was usually such a solemn girl. Like deep down on molecular level she knew she was born of sadness and violence.
"You were always so good with children even when we were little. I was awful with them. Talk about irony. Now they follow me around like I got candy attached to my ass."

He craned his neck to glance at her seated backside.
"You are bad. You always were a flirt. With me anyway. You were shy with other girls."
"I didn't notice other girls," he smiled.
She blushed and turned away.
"Sing it again," Carly-Jayne implored pulling at his wrist with her hot, wet baby hands.
Ten minutes went by.
"Tommie, baby, come here," she hollered out.
"Sup?" She greeted.
"Would you mind getting little ones out the tub for me, dressing them and bring them down to dinner?"
"Of course not. You know I will do whatever you ask of me. Within reason," she added the caveat because she liked seeming hard.
"You know I would never ask anything of you I would not do myself."
Tomeka gave her a rare smile.
"I know."
Carl could not help but query what the hell did she do to get loyalty out of both children and adults. Even her older siblings obeyed her or at least let her be in charge. He knew he would have to be patient to find this out.
Jagadamba turned to Carl.
"I was going to wait for the right moment. But since Enid is not here. This is as good as any. I got to show you something. Follow," she motioned.
He followed. It was her bedroom.
"Close the door and lock it," she said.
He was not sure where this was going. But, he was a willing traveler.
"Turn around," she said.
He did.
Less than twenty seconds later, he felt something hit the back of his head. It landed on his shoulder. He picked it up. It was her shirt.
Nervous and excited, he froze. Also, pangs of guilt were hitting hard.
"It is okay to turn around. It is not what you think," she said.
He turned around. Her back was to him. She was leaning on the dresser. She still had the shorts on. Her long ebony hair hung in luxuriously thick waves and stopped just at her ass. It was like a Pantene commercial.
"So, you are not practically naked in front of me?" He asked nervously.
"I am. Come here. Behind me," she said quietly.
He took a deep breath and walked towards her. Getting a little too close. She felt his erection between the cleft of her behind. She giggled.
"Get your hard-on off my ass and throw my hair over my shoulder," she said.
He swept her hair up gently and placed it over her right shoulder.
"Oh, my God. Who did this to you?" He was horrified.
From her shoulders to her triceps down to her tiny waist and in a line down her spine- she bore the tell-tale scars of being severely scalded. The pattern made it clear it was deliberate.
"My ex did this to me. He referred to it as my scarlet letter. He did it when he found out I used to be an actress. He considered acting base and he wanted to purify me. Said only liars and whores did it. He used the fact I have a child against me. He called me damaged goods and that I should be grateful he could see past it and allow me to fuck him."
She paused and looked over her shoulder to see his reaction. He looked forlorn.
"So, I understand if this puts paid to you and me. I just wanted to get it out the way early. I don't want to drag it out. The longer we drag it out, the more it would hurt. I-" suddenly she felt his cool hands on her back then his lips on her shoulder then the other.
Carl knew he could not reject her nor did he even want to. It would have been cruel.
He knew when she was acting and when she was not. He knew she was acting at the gate when they first she spoke and when she told off Spencer and addressed Enid.
She was not acting when she recognized him and fainted or on the bus or in the bathroom or at that moment. She was completely serious. She was exposing herself to him in more ways than one.
Then he kissed all the way down her spine. He was on his knees. 
Jagadamba trembled and sobbed. She was the second girl he made cry that day. Only her tears were of joy, not anguish. Her knees knocked. She sincerely had not expected for him to react that way. She expected rejection. She had become accustomed to it. 
"What happened to you is not your fault. Fuck the asshole who did and said that shit to you. You are not any of those things. I know you are a good person. I take back what I said earlier. You are not a monster. You are just scarred from fighting them. You are not damaged goods. Only one of us who can wear that mantle is me. Not you. There is nothing wrong with you."
She turned around. She caressed his face.
"May I?" She touched his bandage. 
He clutched her hand, kissed it and shook his head no.
"You have seen me naked. I let nobody see my back except Bigelow and Boy."
He gave her a quizzical expression.
"Boy is short for Boyardee. She is Bigelow's little sister. She is apart of the number waiting to get in. She is one of the best marksman I have ever seen."
"Let me guess. His mom ate a lot of beeferoni when she was pregnant," he said.
"Something like that. I just think she was an evil, simple, country godless bitch with no couth or substance and I am glad she is dead."
As I was saying, Chill and Priya are aware of the burns but I don't let them see it. They feel bad enough about what happened to me. I did not want their guilt to be greater."
"I can relate."
"As I was saying, I have showed you my shame. I remember a time when we shared everything. It seemed appropriate to show you. You have have no idea how much I have missed you."
"I have missed you, too. I would talk about you all the time. But, I would never say your name though. It would hurt too much. I would say a girl I know then that became a girl once knew."
"Just show me. I have never judged you. Just like you have never judged me. Other than being shocked, you were not disgusted by the fact I have a child. You would be surprised how negatively people react. I just knew you would reject me. That is why I fainted."
"I would never. I have loved you almost my whole life. I love you," it came out his mouth easily. He felt it deep in his heart.
"I love you, too. Let me see you as you are now. Please," she begged.
He swallowed hard. He held his head down and unfastened his bandage. He held his hand up to give her the bandage. She placed it on her dresser. He kept his head down and let his hair fall into his face.
There was not room for her to kneel down. So only place for her to go was his lap. They closed their eyes and Eskimo kissed before gently pressing their lips against the others. This had their ritual since childhood. The kiss was chaste and short. It lasted less than thirty seconds. His hair was long enough to cover his right eye. They looked at each then a profusion of long simmering emotions and pheromones flooded them both. They then kind of attacked each other's faces. As they did, she used her hands to move his hair back. She placed it behind his ears. When she opened her eyes, she saw it.
"Baby," she was full of sympathy but not pity.
She kissed above what used to be his brow. Then another on what used to be the corner of his eye and underneath it. It was still healing and she did not want to infect it by kissing it directly.
"You are so beautiful," she said.
The most beautiful girl he had ever seen calling him beautiful left him speechless. The only thing he could think to do was kiss her neck. He sucked on it rather hard. He wanted to leave his mark on her. Her skin had the audacity to taste kind of sweet. His lips found hers again. His hands found her breasts and made a discovery. She was lactating. Embarrassed, she turned away from him.
"Talk about a mood killer," she said.
"No, not really," he tried to kiss her again but she stood up.
He saw Carly-Jayne eat earlier. She ate more than he did. So, he knew it was not her she was breastfeeding. He knew it meant one thing - she had a second kid.
Or maybe, she is a wet nurse, he thought.
He followed her. He pushed her down on the bed and got on top of her. He kissed her. She always liked the way he kissed her. She did not fight him. He made his way down in a straight line. He was back on his knees again.
"May I?" He asked facing her crotch tugging at her shorts.
"Depends on what you want to do," she said.
He looked at her all sexy like and growled, "The alphabet."

Thirty minutes passed.
Carl after spending several minutes on S, he decided to simply go rogue and suckled her little bundle of nerves while like it was the last little bit of his favorite soda through a straw while still working the tip of his tongue.
Only thing she managed to squeak out, "Holy shit. That feels stupid good. How in the fuck are you doing that?"
Unlike, Enid, Jagadamba was not a screamer. She was more of a soft moaner and agonized whisperer.
Her reactions were also a bit physical. She arched her back and actually tried to wiggle away from him from she hit orgasm. He put his hand her stomach and held her in place until she settled down.
He rose his head and gave her a proud smirk. He knew he had brought his A game. She closed her eyes and grinned with her finger in her mouth.
"You good?" His voice was full of bass.
"Good? Good is killing a roamer on the first try without getting bit. Nigga, that was like phenomenal. Yeah, I called you a nigga and in this instance, it is a compliment.
If oral were an Olympic sport, you would get the gold. Your tongue is just so agile. Who taught you how do that? I want to send that bitch a gift basket and eternal gratitude. I actually finished more than once," she gushed.

He slid back up her body. He asked her, "Is it alright if I kiss you or would you prefer I would wash-"

Jagadamba kissed him. She did not mind her own brand.
"I taste like cheddar bay biscuits," she laughed.
"You are nummy treat," he laughed, too.
They resumed snogging.
She then grinded against him and slid her hand between his legs. Quietly, impressed with the apparent size of him.
"Somebody ate all the Wheaties and drank all the milk. Damn, baby, you packing heat," she looking at him with complete admiration.
He bit her bottom lip gently and pulled on it.
"You're bad, Carl," she purred.
"You are good, Jag," he plunged his tongue in her mouth while going for his zipper.
She heard this and became reticent.
"What is wrong? You got protection, right? I can go get some if not," he said. Carl thought her grabbing him was an invitation.
She mirthlessly chuckled, "Why do you men always assume just because I have a child that I am dtf. I love my daughter with the very fiber of my being but she was not on purpose."
"I know that."
"As much as I want you inside me, no. What made you think poking was going to happen?"
"You grabbed my cock and rubbed on it. What was I supposed to think?" He exasperated.
"You ate me out. I can't touch your dick? I knew better. It was an accident this happened."
She knew it took next to nothing for her to hurt his feelings. That had not changed.
"Oh, I remember now. You tripped and I fell," he was incredulous and still on top of her. "I wasn't thinking when I invited you in here. This was a mistake. I should have told you to stop," she said pushing him off and onto the floor.
The first thing that popped into his mind was Michonne in the infirmary. "Stop it," he said. "Stop what?"
"Acting. I can tell."
"I am not," she was bollocks when it came feigning innocence. "You attempting to pretend like you don't care. You care. Or that you don't want to do it because I know you want to."
"I said I did. You can't lob facts at me like it's an insult. It just would not be wise for us to."
"Why not if you don't mind my asking."
"For starters, you have a girlfriend, Mr. Duplicity."
"You knew that when you invited me in here. And if you were anyone but you I would have let you down gently. I care about Enid. I love her but what the hell do I look like turning down an offer to be with you?"
"Honorale," she rolled her eyes at him. "That is funny. You did not say no, stop, please don't when my head was between your legs. You enthusiastic with the yeses- quiet moans of appreciation but still."
"It is my policy to never turn down head. Dudes offer dick all the time. I can get dicked when I can't a sip of water. But, head? That shit is like finding a four leaf clover or a perfect diamond. That shit is rare. You got to pick them when you see it. Let alone good head."
He had remained on the floor and just looked at her. Sheer I don't give a fuck was on his face. "What? Now you have nothing to say?" She asked.
"What? I am sorry I couldn't hear you over your face, breasts, vagina and legs," you have read the world's most passive aggressive flirt. She picked up one of her daughter block's and said, "I would throw this at your chest but I am afraid I would miss and it would get stuck in your eye hole and kill you. Yeah, I said it. Fuck it. Did you hear that, asshole? First time in my whole life I regretted an orgasm. Go away," she said. "I am sorry. It is just you reminded me of someone who really hurt me and I really don't want to go through that again. You forgive me?"
"I guess. You always were a big crybaby."
"I am not. Not anymore. You always played it close to the vest. You are your aunt have that in common."
"How well do you know auntie Mic?"
"Pretty damn. We are, were, are very close. She and I connected almost right away. Since I was twelve about to be thirteen. I saved her life, well me and my dad. She lives with us. Even before they hooked up."
"So, she was yours first. You never did like to share so I wonder why do you expect me and number one super fan to? So, no, I will not sleep with you. I don't care how hard or inordinately large that thing is. I would rather keep my pride. Besides, there is no guarantee I am staying. Which is why I said what I said. I should have left you alone. Now I feel nude and silly."
"Why wouldn't you be staying? Did I do something?" He reached out and touched her hand. "No. What if your dad or even his people reject us? I will have to leave and I will never see you again. The thought of failure did not occur to me until now. I don't want to be guilty of hubris."
"He knows you. You are not a stranger. He will let you all stay," he sounded desperate because he was. "See, hubris. You do not know that. What if I give in to you again and I am not. But, what if we make love, you go dump your girlfriend and we decide to be a couple and your dad gets here and throws me and mine out on our asses? Where does that leave me and you? I will tell you- tragic. Ain't you tired of tragic?"
"My dad is sensible. He will not throw you out. I couldn't bear lose you again. I don't know what I
would do. I really think I would lose it."
"I know I would."
"That is not going to happen. I will make sure of it," he said.
"How? It is bad enough this just happened. I didn't think for a moment when I showed you my back
you would get romantic on me. I didn't. I thought the opposite. Good things do not happen to me.
Not anymore."
"What about Carly-Jayne?"
"My daughter is three and a half. Of course, she is a joy now. But, she is a daddy's girl but she
doesn't have one. You saw strongly she reacts to you. I don't expose her to men who aren't my
brother or hers."
"Wait. I thought Bigelow was her uncle."
"No, he isn't. That is our cover story. His dead non existent brother and me went all Derek Reese
and Sarah Connor on each other. The roamers are terminator. Basically, we loved, he died. Truth is,
Bigelow and Boyardee are C.J.'s brother and sister. She needs never know how she actually got
here. Their father was an evil man. Handsome, though. He looked like John Schneider. You know
he played Bo Duke, Jonathan Kent on Smallville.
Anyway, point is, she is not a teenager yet and his blood runs through her veins. Her brother and
sister are excellent human beings. Loyal, caring, courageous, honest. They have integrity and they
speak their minds. They are kind usually in secret.
There is always one who is different and I fear she may be it. So, her being a good thing remains to
be seen.
With that said, I figure why should I get to keep you? So, please, go."
"You were always pessimistic."
"Said the person who does not know the meaning of lighten up. I am not pessimistic. I am a realist."
"I am not losing you again. That is all I know. It will work out. It has to."
"Let's say I get to stay. What about Enid? I mean it. I am not the other woman. Yeah, I know what
we just did. I don't mean to sound like Bill Clinton but you can't make a baby, it doesn't count."
"I don't agree but okay. That is your opinion. You are welcome to it."
"Damn right. But, seriously, I made up my mind. I am not going to be anybody's whore. Not even
yours. What was that you said earlier? You fall in or nothing. Well, that goes for you, too. I will be
your friend. I will even be cordial to your poontang. Hang out with your dad and my aunt. I always
liked your dad. He has a quiet dignity and a good heart. Plus, he is a good indicator of what you are
going to look like in twenty-five years. Your dad's hot if memory serves."
"He'll do. I look more like my mom than not."
"You have his pretty blue eyes."
"Had. Past tense."
"See, you never lighten up. You are sitting in front of a naked, beautiful female and you're sulking."
"What if we did it just once and agreed to be friends afterwards? That is basically why I am all
mopey. I promise you wouldn't be disappointed," he said very confidently.
Jagadamba chortled.
"Oh, really? You are that sure of your stroking abilities?"
"Yes. I am good at a lot of things," he said winking.
"You are definitely good at one thing. That will be the barometer from here on out. When did you
lose your virtue?" She turned around and on her stomach and rested her chin on her folded
arms.
"What time is it?" He asked.
"Skin thirty. I don't know. It is May. So, it feels like seven forty-five. Judging by the sky," she said.
"I lost my virginity about sixteen hours ago," he became embarrassed once he said it out loud. It
imagined how ridiculous it must have sounded to her.
"You are fucking with me. No way a first timer eats pussy as good as you do."
"I have been doing that since I was thirteen. But actual intercourse, that was not until earlier."
Jagadamba remembered hearing whispers about him and Enid that she promptly forgot on purpose.
"I heard you had that ho screaming a banshee."
"Don't call her that. She isn't a ho. She is a good girl. And she might be pregnant," his erection died when he said pregnant.

Jagadamba burst out laughing.

"Let me guess. You two had a fight and you had spontaneous, unprotected make up sex?"

"Yes. But, how you did guess that?"

"I recognize the panic. Not personally but Achilles and Priyanka. They had a scare about two years ago. It was hilarious," she laughed.

"How did they happen? It makes little to no sense to me. Him? No offense but your brother is a douche bag. Priya is sweet and funny and smart. And almost as beautiful as you. She has green eyes, what the hell does she want with him?"

"I know, right? But, truth be told, Achilles always loved my sister. She just caught up. He would be excited about her coming over than I would be. They just fit. He protected her when I was not around. I do not judge them. Neither should you."

"I am a little jealous, honestly."

"Why?"

"A similar situation presented itself but the other party was not game like your sister. She rejected me. Made out twice through."

"My aunt?"

He nodded.

"Yeah. That is her way. He lived with Mike and Terry because they were polyamorous. She was the meat in that sandwich. Ain't no telling which one was sweet Andre's dad."

Carl was thoroughly surprised by this.

"Michonne?"

"Yes. She has a lot of love to give. That was the main reason my dad kept me away from her. He saw her as immoral. My mom would sneak me to see her.

My dad was also a hypocrite. He met my mom, Jayne, when his ex-wife, Achilles' mom, Loveness, needed reconstructive breast surgery after surviving titty cancer and double mastectomy. My mom was his mistress. I was conceived out of wedlock. My parents were newlyweds when they met yours."

"I never knew that."

"Neither did I. Achilles told me a year or so ago. Priya reluctantly confirmed his story. They almost broke up after he revealed that," she looked weepy. That was the second time that day he saw shame on her face.

"Why would he tell you something so ugly? No matter how true."

"I needed to hear it," she pouted.

"I have always disliked your brother and I always will. I am never telling Judith the truth about her conception. It is none of her fucking business. It is not going to help her to know. It will give her a chip on her shoulder. All she needs to know is she is loved by me, Dad, Michonne, shit, Carol and that our Mom loved her enough to give her life for hers. Achilles is evil and I am sorry he is your brother. Priya is weak."

"Don't talk about them like that," her defense sounded half hearted. She knew he was telling the truth.

They sat silent for five minutes.

He asked, "You hungry?"

"Yes, no. I just kinda want to be secluded in here with you."

"Me, too. I know I should go home but I do not want to."

"This is nice. Us talking. I have to say. Your voice threw me at first. It is so deep. You sound like a man. It makes me wet," she giggled.

With that said he smiled widely and replied, "You know I have no qualms about going down on you again."

"I accept your challenge. But, before we do that. I should re-bandage your eye hole. It looks angry," she said.
"It hurts all the time. I am used to it. But, okay," he said.
"That makes me sad, darling," she pouted.

Five hours passed.
Rick, Michonne, Daryl and the rest of the gang returned. Needless to say, they were all shocked about recent developments once informed by Sasha who was accompanied by Bigelow. The two of them hit it off famously. So much so, Abraham was jealous upon sight.
When Carol heard everything, she was left to draw one conclusion.
"We did all this. I endured all this and while we are gone, all our prayers have been answered by a what would have been a tenth grader? All we had to do was wait. This was all for naught. All we had to do was wait. All we had to do was wait," she all but collapsed.
Rick could not contemplate that now. He held Michonne's hand for strength.
"This J.B., where is she? I want to meet her now," he demanded fighting exhaustion.
Bigelow said, "I will take you to her."
Daryl and Abraham followed them to back them up.
They made their way to Priyanka's house. Achilles answered he door.
Him and Michonne just stood there and looked at each other in shock.
Rick spoke first. He recognized him.
"Achilles Anthony, is that you?" Rick asked.
"Mister Grimes?" He asked.
"Yes," he hugged Achilles. The two of them always had a camaraderie.
Michonne finally said, "Please, please, please, tell me Jag is alive."
"She is," he said.
Rick turned to Michonne and asked, "You know Achilles and Jagadamba? I am glad she is alive. She was like a daughter to me."
Achilles answered before Michonne could.
"She is our aunt on our father's side," Achilles answered.
"What? You're the Bohemian that Rod always talked about?"
"My brother talked about me? I thought he hated me," Michonne said.
"Nawl, auntie Mic. He loved you in his own way," he opened his arms to hug her.
As they hugged, Daryl determined, "Is Jag-dagger also J.B.?"
Bigelow replied yes.
"Jagadamba is the leader? Carl and her are the same age. She always displayed promise but how did the fuck did that happen?" Rick asked.
"Carl is super capable. Why are you shocked at my niece?" Michonne felt pride.
"Just wow. Her organization is so sophisticated. That is all," Rick felt borderline confused.
"She has a genius I.Q. Like one hundred and sixty-five. She was in Mensa. So, not shocked," Michonne defended.
"All we Anthonys are geniuses, really," Achilles said.
That was no lie. They were.
"No doubt," Rick kissed Michonne's hand.
"She is upstairs," Achilles replied.
"Let's go," Michonne and Rick said in unison.
Three minutes passed and they stood outside her bedroom door.
Michonne listened for noise and heard nothing but light snores.
"I will open her door," Michonne said.
When she opened it they were met with a surprising sight.
The first thing one noticed when walking into the room was the smell. I reeked of chicken vindaloo which laid half eaten on the floor beside the bed. An open bottle of Irish whiskey on the nightstand and the musty scent of sweat and pheromones. Sex.
Second thing, the most important thing. There were two people in bed sleeping.
Jagadamba was on her stomach. Save a sheet strewn across her ass, she was still nude. Her head was
clearly on top of someone's bare chest. There was hand tucked away in her massive head of hair and hand hidden beneath the sheet. Her arms were around his neck.

Abraham erupted into laughter.

"Rick, you better make that like a daughter in law," he said.


Lori told him long ago that she would be amused and amazed if Jag and Carl hadn't made them grandparents by age sixteen.

"They have such easy chemistry," she said.

Rick kicked the bed.

"Carl!" He shouted in most upset and fatherly voice.

Both the teens were startled awake.

Jagadamba became shame-faced and hid hers.

Carl looked at them and smirked at Michonne especially.

She felt something she did not expect to ever feel about Carl. It put her stomach in knots. She felt, well, envious. It was her niece after all. If it had been any other girl, she wouldn't have cared as much. She would never admit it but she liked being his obsession. What woman, what human being does not want to be someone's special snowflake?

Carl recognized the envy that furrowed her brow.

He said to them all, "You guys are back a day early. What's up?"
Chapter Summary

Carl pours his heart out to his father. Drunk but still.

Rick had seen and led himself and his people through many a horrendous, terrifying and downright satanically fucked up situations but somehow witnessing his sixteen year old son in bed naked with a girl completely floored him. Achilles took this as a cue to step out into the hall. He did not like being apart of family quibbles. He knew his sister could handle herself. Though, still a little drunk but sober enough to protect Jagadamba's nudity, Carl replied, "It is not that big of a deal. It is. But not in the way you think."

Frustrated, Rick became incoherent and a touch tongue-tied. Michonne took over and said with motherly indignation, "I am giving y'all five minutes to get dressed. Any longer, I am coming in here with a hose and some rolled up newspaper."

During this time, downstairs, Rick lamented, "I was only gone three days. Three days. I comeback and he is drinking whiskey and fucking. What the hell? It is like he has decided to make his life's mission to frighten me with his decision making at all times." This was the only posible sentence he could string together.

"He is at that age. You can't be too mad at him," Michonne felt guilty. Did I push him into this? She thought. Rick put his head in his hands and said, "He is not ready for this. I preferred it when he was making out in the pantry."

"Maybe Carl is right. You told him yourself you considered him to be a man. Besides, this is probably his way of trying to feel better about himself. Maybe this is not that big of a deal," she said. "Not that big of a deal? I am a grown man and sex still throws me. This is not okay," Rick paused when he felt Michonne's hand on his shoulder.

"She is right," Daryl agreed. Rather insensitively, Rick retorted, "You have never been a father. You do not get it."

Insulted, Daryl said, "I do not have to put my hand in fire to know that it is hot. I do know this. You try to interfere, I guarantee you you will be a granddaddy before you know it. That is best case scenario. He and the girl might just runaway. You know how defiant and reckless and intense your son can be. He is you and his Momma for that matter. Do what you do best. Be kind. Be understanding. Most of all, be there for him. Be what you have always been- his dad."

Achilles said, "Tall, dark and greasy got a point. I know Carl and I have not ever been homies but I like you. You always try. That is more that can be said for a lot of people."

"Damn, that was deep. I think I might cry," Abraham teased.

"Fuck you both," Daryl half smiled letting them know he meant nothing by it. "But, all bullshit aside," Abraham began, "The year that boy's had? If anybody ever needed a little female refreshment it is him. Michonne, I know she is your niece and all so no disrespect but did you see that girl? Hell, if I was Carl and stone cold fox like that wanted to share her ass, I wouldn't've said no either."

"She is sixteen," Michonne frowned. "Chill out. I like women not women shaped children," Abraham rolled his eyes. Rick added, "Thanks for that, you guys. But, apart of me, the male part of me was is glad for him. But, the dad part is worried. What if we
don't let her stay here. Then what?"
Michonne scoffed, "Uh, she is staying, Rick. Her and Achilles are the only blood family I have left. There used to be a hundred of us. Now it is three. It is not even a question. Are you serious?"
"She used to live next door to us. Five months out the year, she lived with us. I helped raise that girl. Sometimes Lori would take her to auditions or drop her off at work. Go over her lines with her. I love that girl. But, people change. We have to be realistic about this. We have been burned too many times. We don't know where she is coming from or even how she got into power. We have to know these things."
"You let Morgan in. Hell, you let me in. Don't do this. Do even contemplate it. That is my blood, Rick," Michonne warned.
Rick agreed but admitted, "Fine. I just don't want his heart to be broken. I was always afraid one day she was going to do that to him."
Michonne made a face of guilt. Rick did not notice it.
Achilles explained, "We just want someplace safe to be. You see, I am about to be a father. And Jagadamba has a three and a half year old daughter. Bigelow's niece. We don't mean anyone any harm. The way the world is now, I am not that trusting either. But, I find rather fortuitous that not only are we reunited with our only living blood relative but with the man I considered my play uncle. We want to be apart of you guys."
"I am glad to hear it," Rick said.
"Wait. Jag has a child?" Michonne asked.
"She was assaulted when she was twelve. Had her at thirteen," her brother said.
"You murdered the baby-rape-thing that did it, right?" Rick asked.
"We were separated. I wasn't gifted that opportunity," Achilles said.
Bigelow interjected, "I was."
Fifteen minutes passed before either teen came down.
A sheepish looking Jagadamba came down first. She was clearly in afterglow.
They both squealed as they ran to each other and hugged.
"You are still so pretty. I prayed everyday you were alive somewhere," she said to Michonne.
"You, too. You are so big. Well, not big. You are a taller short. If that make any sense," she caressed her niece's face. She leaned into the embrace. Michonne had five inches on her.
"My Momma was short. So," she said liking the attention.
"You have Bush's eyes," Michonne said wistfully. She knew her brother was overseas when everything happened.
"Auntie, I am so sorry," she said about her cousin before whispering something else in her ear.
Michonne pulled from her and had the saddest expression on her face.
"I am sorry you can relate," she hugged her again.
They both wiped away stray tears.
"Is Priyanka alive?" She added.
"Yes. She is having Achilles' baby. They have been together three years," she said.
"What? How did that happen? She is eleven, twelve years older than him," Like Carl before her Michonne saw the parallels. Hell, that was their age difference, too.
However, unlike Priyanka and the theoretically orphaned Achilles, she had someone to answer to when it came to Carl.
Achilles said defensively, "Some of us do not care about that. Like do you care Mr. Grimes is white?"
"Clearly, I don't," she touching her paramour's hair.
"Same thing," Achilles said.
Rick chimed, "Call me Rick. It is fine."
"I do not know. It is personal. Goes against my southern upbringing calling you by your first name," Jagadamba smiled bashfully.
He wanted to smile back but couldn't.
As a parent, she knew why.
"Old lady name was his first, not me. We fooled around but no nookie. So, don't hate me? I am not the corrupter," she slowly approached him. Of course, she had just lied. They totally had sex. Hell, just had it a second time before she came down there. She could still feel he had been inside of her. He sighed in defeat, opened his arms and said, "Come on. Bring it in." He knew she was lying. No way they were that hugged up like that and not had been intimate. She squealed again and hugged him.

"I am so glad you guys have made it," he said hugging her tenderly. He did love her like a daughter. "What is taking Carl so long?" Michonne asked.

"Looking for his shoe. Collecting his sister," she said.

Soon, he appeared. The expression on his face was somewhere between smug and anxious. He knew he had to answer for his behavior and newfound promiscuity. He left his sister upstairs.

When the teens saw each other they almost ran to each other. They shared a quick peck. She turned her back to him slunk against him so he could put his arms around her waist. She placed her hands on top of his.

Rick grinned despite himself. His boy looked happy. That made him happy. Michonne frowned then turned away under the guise of speaking to Achilles. Carl noticed.

"Now she has a taste of how she used to make me feel, he thought. However, the thought left a bitter taste in his mouth. He did not want to see her hurt."

Before he could answer her question, Jagadamba announced, "Mr. Gri-Rick, I want you to know I do not expect to be treated any differently than any other stranger who waltzes into your kingdom-"

"I prefer the term community or safe-zone," Rick corrected.

Why did he go and correct her for?

Immediately, Carl noticed a shift in her body language. She put three inches between them and stood up straight. All the while keeping her hands on top of his. Let him know however subconsciously she was not going to let him go no matter what.

"Same difference. There are no longer cities or suburbs, states or towns or even countries anymore. Every group, community or kingdom or organization or fiefdom or the term I really think fits is city-state- is a world within themselves. Each and every one is just one bad day away from hunger, thirst, homelessness, invasion. Being pillaged and raped and last but not least eaten.

With that said, I cannot say this enough, we all need each other to survive. Always did even before things got shitty for us all not just a select few. I want you to doubt me and question me like I am a stranger. Because for all you know I am. For all you know I am the boogeywoman and I am here to take all your shit and turn this place into a structure fire. Talk straight crazy to my ass. I mean it."

"I had no planned on doing anything shy of that. Did Carl interrogate you any?"

Carl frowned and said, "You could have asked me."

"I want to hear it from her," he said.

Rick knew his son is responsible to a certain extent. He knows beyond a doubt he questioned her for at least an hour before letting her in. He wanted to know how she took it.

"You better believe it. Earlier, Carl here threatened the dogshit out of me. He was actually menacing. Only other time he looked at me like that was when we were eleven and he was on the last level of Call of Duty or some other shoot'em up nonsense. Anyway, he pissed me off and hurt my feelings. So, out of spite I accidentally on purpose unplugged it while it was saving."

He was tempted to let her go but went against it the urge and forcibly pulled her in closer. So much so, it pushed a cough out of her.

Carl recriminated, "I knew you did that on purpose. You denied it. You even cried when I yelled at you. You know I turn to jelly when you cry. It took me another ten days to beat it again," it clearly still rankled him.

"You should have thought about that before you let Nevaeh Schlottman kiss you and you never told me about it. You knew I hated her guts. You man whore," she said.

"Uh, that never happened. Because you were on location or whatever- Mrs. Finnegan made me partner up with her for that physical science project. Come on. She always smelled like American cheese and she sounded like Miss Piggy and Kermit when she talked And looked like a female
Yosemite Sam. How is that possible? She was a bossy jerk on top of that. Give me some credit. Who told you that shit?"
During all this, Rick whispered with laughter in his voice to Michonne, "It is like listening to an old married couple."
Michonne dryly replied, "Yes, it is."
Back to the young ones, Jagadamba sighed and looked right at her brother.
"Achilles told me. He said he saw you in the backyard. Made me promise not to tell you,"
Jagadamba said looking up at Carl. Her dark brown eyes were could not have been any sweeter or bigger.
"Dude, really? What the hell is a matter with you?" Carl grunted before kissing her forehead.
Achilles laughed.
"Look, I was an instigator."
"Was?" Jagadamba was accusatory in tone.
She continued, "Why didn't you knock? Nobody was supposed to know about him and I. I didn't want anybody thinking I was trying to get favor by messing around with the leader's son. You knew I was not alone, didn't you?"
Before Achilles could answer, Daryl said, "I knew you were an asshole."
"Took the words right out of my mouth," Carl agreed.
"That was messed up of you," Michonne shook her head.
Flustered, Achilles threw up his hands and said, "Goddamn. Pump the brakes. When did it become the attack Achilles power hour? First of all, I was fourteen and a bully. I admit that. I used to like picking on Carl. I am not like that anymore. I will be twenty and a father soon. Secondly, I saw homeboy go home. How was I supposed to know he circled back to smash my little sister?" Achilles explained.
Jagadamba grunted. She did not appreciate her brother talking like that about her that. It made her feel cheap.
Apparently, Carl did not like it either.
"I take responsibility. I did go home for about forty-five minutes. But, don't talk to her like that."
Jagadamba stuck her tongue out at her brother.
Achille grolled his eyes and said, "I am taking my black ass back to bed. I know when I am not wanted."
He walked away pouting. A minute or so passed.
"Why didn't you bring your sister down?" Michonne asked Carl. Her mood lighten up somewhat. She figured they had enough opposition with Achilles. They did not need it from her too.
"I didn't want to wake her. She is in bed with C.J. They looked so cute and peaceful. They were holding hands," he smiled.
"What does C.J. stand for?" Rick asked.
"Carly-Jayne. I am pathetic. I know," she laughed before snuggling close to him again.
"So, you named her after your mom and Carl," Michonne said.
Jagadamba nodded.
"How sweet," Rick teased.
"I know she is sleep but can I see her? I want to see my great-niece," Michonne asked almost jumping with excitement.
"Okay. Come on. I have told her about you. I have showed her some old photos I had of you. So, she will recognize you. I got to say though. Seeing you in pants blows my mind," Jagadamba said.
"What? I can't imagine you in a skirt," Carl said imagining her in a dress. It made him feel warm.
Michonne did a perfect curtsy while holding an imaginary dress.
"She was total debutante, AKA sorority sister, neo-soul, alternative rock loving, Ally McBeal short skirt suit, maxi dress wearing junior partner, fashionista and all-around bad-ass boss bitch. I idolize the crap out of you. You have no idea how much I have used you as an example. And what's this I hear about you being a ninja warrior?" Jagadamba gushed and giggled.
Michonne had next to no idea how much Jagadamba respected her.
All but licking his lips, Rick commented, "She does have fantastic legs. I can see that."
She had already told him the rest.
Usually, this would have made Carl fume but it only stung just a little.
"Hush," Michonne flirted.
She broke free from Carl and whipped around and kissed him hard. They rubbed their noses
together.
The ladies made their way upstairs.
Rick shot Abraham and Daryl a look imploring for them to leave. He wanted to talk to his son.
As soon as they bid them good night, the men left.
Carl sat down without being told. Rick sat beside him.
"Uh, son, who should speak first ? You or I?"
"How bout neither and we go to bed? You must be exhausted. I am," he said.
"Okay. I will go first. I want you to know I am not angry or disappointed. I knew it was bound to
happen. I was hoping you be a little bit older. Plus, the timing-"
"Couldn't possibly been better," the young man interrupted.
"I was going to say worse. You have already been through so much. Sex complicates things. It
doesn't make them better unless you are mature enough to handle it. I am concerned.
With that said. How long have you been sexually active? Be honest. You can tell me anything. You
don't have to be embarrassed. It is a natural thing," he patted his shoulder, left it there and rocked him
before caressing the back of his head. Carl smiled. This always disarmed him.
Carl turned beet red but decided to take him up on his offer. It had been awhile since they had a heart
to heart. He would never admit it but he craved attention from his father.
"Intercourse?"
"What? You have done other stuff?" His father was becoming a little horrified wishing he had not
asked him that question. He was not so sure he was ready for the answer.
What else does he do in secret? He thought.
Lips loosened by alcohol, he replied, "I was not completely inexperienced. I have been dabbling
with oral since the prison. Fingers, too. You remember when I would disappear sometimes?"
"Scaring the shit out of me, yes. With who? They had to be older."
"Not by much. It was Beth. She was not my first sexual experience but my first in depth one. The
first was actually Jag. The night before we got separated hands found their way into pants.
Anyway I was thirteen. She was fifteen. I got brave and I told her I liked her. I mean if you just have
to be blonde you might as well look like Beth did. She was so beautiful. She offered to kiss me so I
would get over it. She told me it would be like kissing her little brother. I said yeah if we lived in
Mississippi. She laughed. We kissed and she was surprised it did not suck. Then it kinda escalated
from there. Why do think I was so protective of her? We were having a fling."
Rick said darkly, "I knew on some level she was not as sweet as she pretended. How long did it go
on?"
"She was though. Sweet as sugar if sugar liked orgasms. We would take turns but I mostly did stuff
to her. I kind of preferred it that way. I was still shy."
"We have a different definition of shy. When I was thirteen I would have been scared to death. You
are way braver than I."
"Really? Me braver than you. Imagine that. Anyway, uh, it lasted about seven months. I wanted to
go all the way but she was a virgin and she wanted to keep it that way. It was actually getting kinda
borderline serious. We were on the verge of having the let's define our relationship conversation
before we got distracted by our hormones. Little did we know Maggie had suspected and had
followed us into the kitchen. I was eating her out when she caught us. We were in the pantry."
"What is it with you and pantries?" Rick shook his head.
"Certain times of the day, they are safe places to hide. Anyway, Maggie caught us. I begged her not
to tell you or her dad. Mom was gone by then. She agreed but shamed the shit of Beth and me. I feel
for her future kid. Maggie can lay on the guilt trip.
So, we were over for awhile. Just pitiful stares and the occasional conversation usually about Judith.
She was crazy about Judy. There were two chicks after her but they did not matter. Beth mattered. We avoided each other in that capacity. Well, except one time. Everybody was asleep. We managed to slip away. She told me she missed me. The next day, the showdown with the Governor went down. That was the last time I ever saw her alive," he left an aggrieved sigh.

"I am so sorry. I can't be mad about it. Sometimes us Grimes men have buzzard luck with the ladies. Other times, God gives with both hands. Finish telling me about Enid. Also, I am honored you are being so candid."

"Don't thank me, thank Mr. Daniels. I wouldn't be telling you have this shit if I wasn't a little drunk. Even with that. On some level, I guess I want you to know.

So anyway, about Enid. Almost as soon as you guys left, I asked her to be my girlfriend. Sex was her idea. Her reasoning was people only couple up to two reasons. The first one was not to be alone. The second reason is to fuck. She said fuck. I would have been content with second base. It happened yesterday at around threel. Who was I to say no?" Carl hunched.

"I cannot get mad at you for seizing an opportunity. So, she is aggressive. Makes sense. She beats to own drummer. I have happened upon some of y'all's conversations-"

"Don't you mean when I intentionally eavesdropped on your private conversations?" He laughed.

"Well. She is fatalistic. So, her attitude about sex is not surprising. However, is she nice to you?"

"Yes. Sometimes."

"Does she love you?"

"Yes."

"Do you love her?"

He took his time to answer.

"I thought I did this morning. I even told her so. I do have strong feelings for her for sure. I will fight for and protect her. She is funny and smart and kinda mean to me. I like that. I don't know what that says about me. And she is beautiful and looks good naked. And she is a survivor. Last night was so certain of me and her. Then this morning happened."

"And now you are confused."

"I am not confused. That is the problem. I know exactly who I want to be with and she wants to be with me, too. She named her child after me just so she could have an excuse to say my name everyday. Shit, she fainted when she recognized me."

"Did she fall forward or backward?"

"Forward. Why?"

"She did not fake it. So, you want Jagadamba? Tsk. This is a mess."

"I know. If I had my way, I would be with them both. But, there is no way in hell either of them would go for that. So, I have to choose."

"I am glad you said it and not me."

"Who would you choose?"

"Enid is a sure thing. Why mess that up? However, you have already cheated on her and you have not even been dating a day yet. I did not raise you like that."

"This is not an indictment on you or my upbringing. You don't get it. I hate to say it but you weren't around much four, five years ago because you were you would understand Jag and I are unfinished. We were torn apart at a time when we needed one another the most. We had just started to figure out and define what we wanted to be the other. We wanted to be a couple. We were twelve and we knew, know we are in love. I know how crazy that sounds but it is true. And don't try to minimize it by referring to it a puppy love either. It was and is real how we feel. She means the world to me. Seeing her this morning was my dizziest daydream come true. I had given up hope of ever seeing her again in life. I am not losing Jagadamba again. You got to get that. Besides, Enid knows."

"She knows you are with your ex? And she has no problem with it?" Rick found that hard to believe.

Where was a girl like her when I was his age? Rick wondered.
"I wouldn't go that far. Still, she gave me her permission when I went home. I did not even ask. She volunteered it. I thought she was pranking me. She wasn't. She said she wanted me to get her out my system. As if.

That said. Even she understands Jag and I need to spend time together. She is not my ex. Ex implies the separation was voluntary on somebody's part. It wasn't. I believe in my heart if she stayed with us, none of the bad shit she endured would have happened to her. We would've protected her. I would have protected her as I am more than ready to now. Her daughter, too. I know she is a package deal. Her little girl seems to like me so clearly her daughter has good taste," he laughed. It had been awhile since Rick had seen Carl so adamant about something.

"Have you considered the fact she may not be staying with us?" Rick wanted to gauge how deeply he loved the girl and realistic he was being.

"No. Now that I know Jag is alive, there is no way I go back to not knowing. And do you really hate me so much that you would do that to that to me? I know my feelings don't mean shit to you on a good day but let me have this. Please."

"I do nothing but care about how you feel. And by the way, you are still just as beautiful to me as the day I saw they splashed you on Lori's stomach. There is nothing wrong with you. I love you."

"I don't doubt your love for me, Dad. I love you, too. Why couldn't you say that two weeks ago before you left for the Hilltop. Remember I made a comment about how no one wants to see a kid with a hole in his head? I even pretended to be tickled by it. Basically giving you an opening to say something nice to me. I really, really needed somebody, you to say something nice to me. I felt so ugly and alone and utterly unwanted that morning. Know what you did? You said nothing which is practically the equivalent of agreeing with me. How could you do that to me?"

"Carl-"

"I am not finished talking, damnit."

Rick stood up and said, "This conversation is over. We will resume it later once you sober up. Because you are getting belligerent. You do not talk to me like that."

Carl stood up too.

He stomped and yelled, "I am not drunk. I am fed up. It is okay for you to have somebody but not me? That is bullshit. I thought you would at least pretend to be happy for me. I pretended to be happy for you."

"I thought you were okay with me and Mic," Rick looked disappointed and confused.

Carl made a buzzer noise and, "Wrong. I lied. I was devastated for a whole lot of reasons."

He was not about to incriminate Michonne by telling him the whole truth. He figured it was none of his business that not only did she know his feelings but she indulged them however temporarily. He wanted to protect her.

Carl also realized she never once said she was not attracted to him. Not once. So, he still had a shot in theory. But, even with that knowledge, it did not seem to matter so much at the moment. He had Enid and Jagadamba.

"Such as," Rick had a feeling he knew the answer. He knew his son had a crush. But, he didn't know he was in love with her. Why else would he not be happy for them?

"Even you can't be that oblivious. It is obvious. I loved her first. It is not just that. You should've chosen her a long time ago. Instead, you go for Jesse? Really? It is not until little miss pieface dies, you decide to go for Michonne. Like she is a consolation gift when she is actually the prize. I find it insulting and it did not even happen to me," he said.

"I assumed Michonne didn't feel that way about me. Not until she began living with us. I first thought she only hung around because of you and Judith," he explained.

"No disrespect but that's just stupid. And an excuse.

So, yeah seeing you two together used to hurt like hell. I know I never had a shot but that was so not the point. At least when she was single it was a faint possibility that maybe just maybe she would like me back. But, that will not happen. I accept that. She chose age before beauty," he half grinned fluttering his eyelashes.

Rick sat down beside his son and said jocularly, "Ass."
They both laughed. He had Jagadamba back. She loved her before he found out she was Michonne lite.

"It wasn't just that. I felt like no woman would ever love me. I thought I was doomed. Then Enid made her move. Then I made mine. Then Jagadamba comes around in a school bus of all things. I made a move then she made one. Here we are. I am actually kinda really happy. I have a girlfriend and a half. This time a week ago. I had no one," he smiled.

"I cannot remember the last time I heard you say you were happy. Wow," it brought tears to his father's eyes.

"So, you are happy for me?"

"Yes. Now. I was just shocked to see you naked with a girl. You are my baby. I hope you are ready for this."

"I think I am. I know one thing. I can't imagine life without it now. Why was I alive before? So many things are overrated. Pussy is not one them," Carl said fondly reminiscing about the two he has had so far.

"That may be the truest thing you have ever said," Rick agreed.

"I know, right? How old were you when you lost your virginity?" He asked his father.

"Seventeen with your mom. She wasn't a virgin, though," Rick admitted.

"T.M.I. But, Enid wasn't a virgin either," he said.

"So, how long has Jagadamba been here?"

"Since this morning."

"You waste no time. You had sex with two girls in the course of a day? Almost proud. Almost," he wanted to see if the teens told the same story.

"You know, Jag and I did not actually have sex per se. Mostly, I did stuff and things to her and we talked. I begged like a dog, too. But, the wizard was undeterred," he chortled. This of course was a lie.

At least their stories match, he thought. However, Rick knew he was lying for her. His father looked at him blankly then snapped his fingers in remembrance.

"New Looney Tunes episode when Daffy thought he was a wizard. I remember there was this whole musical number. Sounded like Black Sabbath. You and Jag played that video to death."

"You remember."

"Of course. I also recall how close the two of yourself used to be. When I asked you what happened to her years ago, you said did not talk about it. You shut down. So I asked your mom. She told me."

"So, you can imagine how I feel right now. She is back. The girl I wanted to marry since before I knew what that meant is back in my life. She is actually more beautiful than I remember and I didn't think that was possible. Her body is just, I don't even have the words. Words cannot do it justice."

"That must be an Anthony trait. That is how I would describe Michonne," he said with a goofy grin.

"Yeah. Don't want to hear about that," Carl said frowning.

"I am just as excited about my woman as you are. Boy, relax. It is not like I gave you details."

"Please don't ever," Carl shivered.

"Prude," Rick laughed.

Carl shook his head and said, "Anyway, we showed each other our scars. Somehow that felt more intimate than doing it does and that feels pretty personal. I kissed her scars. She kissed around mine. So that is what intimacy is. I guess?"

"Sounds pretty damn close."

"It is like she is still herself but not. I guess the same could be said about me."

"It can be. You have changed but you are still my son. And I love you. Do not ever forget that. I. Love. You," Rick smiled.

"I love you, too," he grabbed his dad's hand then let go.

Knowing his son had sex with two girls in two days, Rick next question was, "Are you using protection?"

"Yes. I am not trying to repopulate the Earth. Not just yet anyway," he knew Enid had the morning
"So is that is something you want? A family of your own," his father was surprised but delighted by this. It meant his boy really had hope.

"Why wouldn't I? However, to be honest, for a while there I thought it was off the table because of this," he pointed at his eye.

"You were wrong. Two girls in two days. Even I have never swung that. So, uh, who do you choose?"

"Well...

Up the steps, Michonne stood amazed.

"What a beautiful child," Michonne said wrapping her finger around one of Carly-Jayne's tight platinum spirals.

"Let's face it all children are beautiful asleep. They quiet. I have to say though my little lamb is exceptionally gorgeous. And smart. She is mine," Jagadamba clutched her heart.

"Is that Carl's hat?" Michonne asked.

"Yeah. C.J. was scared about falling asleep in a new place. She was crying and cutting up. I got dressed. He was never naked. Not then anyway."

"Why were you naked, darling, if you do not mind my asking?" She asked.

Jagadamba was light-skinned enough that one could see her blushing.

"I don't think you want to hear what I have to say about your boy. It is x-rated. And I know despite that little dalliance you two had, it is basically a mother and son, big sister, little brother thing going. I for one do not want to hear about Achilles prowess even though I have endured for my sister's sake."

Michonne's heart like to have jumped out her chest. She thought no one knew of her and Carl.

"I have no idea what you are talking about," she denied.

"It is fine. He is a pretty boy just like his daddy. So, no blame. Lips are sealed," she smiled.

"So, what did Carl do for the little one?"

"So, asked me did I have any Febreze. I did somewhere. I found it. He sprayed it down. He flew out the room to check on her. I was behind him. He gave her his hat and told her it would keep her safe. She asked how. She always wants hard facts. Earlier, he told her, he was a pirate when she asked about his eye. Plus, he used context clues. She had an anchor on her shirt and little boats on her shoes. She loves pirates and the ocean. I think she wants to be a sea captain.

Anyway, he said his daddy gave it to him so whenever he had moments of doubt or fear it would give him strength. So, he told her it was his during the day and hers at night. That clenched it. She hugged his neck. It touched me, too.

Then he read to them. When that did not work started to sing to them. I always told him he could sing. He was too shy to do it in front of anyone else but me.

Anyway, I left the room and cried. My sister caught me. And we talked about it as I helped her straighten up."

"Why did you cry?"

"Because he heard me. He heard what I said about Carly-Jayne which I am getting to. Then I came up here to check on them. The trio of them had fallen asleep. He had one in each arm," her voice cracked."

"What did you say to him?"

"That she was a daddy's girl sans the dad. That her uncles were not enough. I was making a statement. I was not asking anything of him," she began to cry again.

She went to comfort her niece.

"Stop. I am not sad. This is actually the most unsad I have been in years. You do not understand. I don't think anyone does when it comes to me and him. I love him very much. I know he feels the same way. But," she got quiet.

"But what?"

"Auntie, he wants something from me that I don't know if I am ready for especially after tonight. Even though I thought was."

"What?"
"He wants me to be his family."
"The way it sounds you already are."
"I know. I don't know. I am just scared it will not work out."
"That is a chance you take. But, if you love him, that is a chance you are willing to take."
"True. But, it scares me more than I realize. I should have kept my word and not slept with him. But, I wouldn't say I felt obligated but compelled. What he did for my little girl was something a dad would do. Granted, it is only night but he gave her his hat that his dad gave to him. I know how much it means to him. After that, I wanted to connect with him. I knew that if I slept with him there is no way I could leave this place without him. You have no idea but if I can't stay, I am straight kidnapping him, his sister, and you and maybe Eugene. He is awesome. We became quick friends. He actually knows what my first name means. How cool is that? Plus, he thinks Mia Self and Ida was impressive. And I love the way he talks and don't get me started on his hair. It is so ridiculous to the point of being stylish. He is cute a button."
"You are not serious. Are you?"
"Deadly. If Rick decides he wants to be a dick, what alternative do I have? Rick has an asshole bastard streak a mile long. I have seen it. Surely, you have seen it by now."
Michonne could not argue it. She remembers having to knock Rick out because he was raving.
"I mean, really. I am not living without you or him. I know how much his sister means to him. Look, I know I sound crazy and entitled. I have to check that. I am not entitled to have him or you in my life. Or a place to stay. I wish with my all heart to never go back to not having you or him in my life."
"You will not have to. I have already talked to him. You have a home here."
"He listens to you?"
"Yes."
"Okay. I believe you. I love you, Auntie," she said.
"I love you, too, freckles," she got up and hugged her.
"No one's called me that in ages. Oh, man," Jagadamba could not remember the last time she laughed and smiled so much.
She led Michonne to her room so they could talk a little more openly.
"So, Carl has a girlfriend. Enid. For a whole day. Then you came along. Wow. Carl is having a day, huh? Two girls. Damn. I am happy for him. I was scared for him before I left."
"Cause he was hurt about you. You really broke his heart. He was not putting on about that."
"I know he is still mad at me. He did not acknowledge me when he saw me. Not really. He used to always have a smile and a hug for me. I ruined everything."
"No, you didn't. You had to choose. You looked out for your best interest. It would be different if Carl was an orphan. Then you would be free and clear to mount him like Priyanka did Achilles. They never would have hooked up if my and her mother was here or if his and my dad were here. Never. See, you respect Rick and you love him. But, you love his baby, too. You know Rick would be the opposite of okay if the two of you hooked up. The first time Rick showed a real interest you jumped at it. Let's face it. Carl says he looks like Mrs. Grimes but I don't see it. He looks like his dad to me. Or maybe that is just my inner slut crushing on his dad, too. I don't know. You are attracted to him. Carl, I mean," she asked.
Michonne took a minute to answer.
"I am not blind. Even with one eye, he is still such a good-looking young man."
"I think he is beautiful. I saw his eye socket," Jagadamba gushed.
"Really? He shows no one."
"I showed him my shame and he showed me his. I love him. I really love him with all my heart."
Michonne was glad Carl had someone. Moreover, she was glad her niece was alive.
Some Kind of Way

Chapter Summary

It is all about Michonne and her feelings for Carl. She and Sasha talk while later, she has heart to heart with Rick about the depth of Carl's feelings for her.

Carl had made his choice. He knocked on Jagadamba's door. Michonne answered. When they made eye contact something she had been fighting for months clicked in Michonne. Carl seemed taller. Devoid of his hat, there were no reminders of his father or his juvenile status. His kind of virginity was no longer a deterrent. The desire he gave into so easily that she fought full bore had finally hit her like a ton of bricks. She had a crush on him. Michonne averted her eyes lest he see the lust. She was about to step aside when clutched her by her forearms.

Feeling generous, Carl took her by surprise and hugged her for the first time in weeks. Pressing their bodies together leaving no propriety of space between them like he used to. She half-heartedly tried to no prevail. Carl had one hand near her shoulder blade and the other perilously close to the small of her back. He liked the feel of her person against his and vice versa. "I am glad you made it back," he said into her ear in a low growl before rubbing his cheek against hers. He still had feelings for her despite everything.

Who says you can't be in love more than one person at a time? He thought. "Thank you," she had never been more grateful for a hug in her life. They lingered in the embrace a touch too long.

"If the two you of need some privacy," Jagadamba said not quite sure which one she feel more possessive of her aunt or her kinda, sorta not really boyfriend. Michonne scoffed but pulled away from him. He gave her a big smile. "I love that smile," she grinned.

He blushed. "I need to, uh, talk to Jag. It is important," his heart was beating out his chest.

"Okay. I am gone. I am beyond tired. I will catch up with y'all tomorrow. Jagadamba Boudica Chowdhury-Anthony, I am so glad you are alive. Ooh, that reminds me. What is Carly-Jayne's last name? What is her birthday?"

"Dalton like her aunt and uncle. You met Bigelow, right?"

"Yeah. Looks like a blond Matt Damon?" Michonne asked.

"Yeah. I had her June twenty-seventh," she said.

"That is my birthday," Carl said.

"I know. That is other reason I named her Carly-Jayne."

"Awesome. So, when I turn seventeen, she will be four. That is so cool. I need to start planning that. It has to be all about her, she is a baby. I like your daughter. She is sweet once you get to know her and like super smart. And funny. I have never met a child so little that was so funny. She has a dry humor," he smiled.

Jagadamba smiled and and felt dizzy. She swore she saw a halo around him. "I am glad. She is crazy about you. I guess she inherited that from me," she loved him so much, it kinda made her nauseous.

Michonne bid them farewell and left. Once outside, She saw a half-dressed Enid running past Sasha who had been waiting for her on her front porch. The women traded mischievous grins.
"Looks like she got surprised," Michonne laughed.
"Have you heard about her and Carl?" Sasha asked.
"Yes. I am glad he finally made a move. I told him to get with her months ago," she said before yawning.
"They got serious fast. Where is Carl now?" Sasha asked.
"Must not be. He is with my niece."
"I bet he is. She fainted when she saw him. Do you know he then picked her ass up dead weight and ran with her? I didn't know your boy was that strong."
"That is the thing about Carl. He is stronger than he looks," Michonne could not help but grin. Sasha shrugged neither agreeing or disagreeing.
"Pronounce her name for me again," she said.
"Juh-gad-äm-ba."
"Jagadamba, Achilles, Priyanka, Michonne. You all have the most interesting names. Achilles especially. That sounds like you are about to get the most spectacular ass-whooping on the eastern seaboard."
"Their dad, my big brother, Bushrod-"
"Bushrod? Really? That had to have been a family name," she deduced.
"Yeah. After an ancestor. Bushrod Washington. He was George Washington's brother."
"Whoa. I have heard of him. He had a bunch of babies with underage slaves. So, you are a Washington?"
Michonne hunched. It was no great matter to her. All she heard was rape and rejection whenever her lineage was brought up. "No big deal. It is not a point of pride for me."
"I hear you."
Michonne thought of her brother and laughed. "What?" Sasha asked.
"Rod used to call me silverware sounds," she recollected. "Why?"
"He said our mom threw silverware against the railing and the sound it made, Michonne was my name. I used to just hate when he said that. But now I would give up my katana to hear him say that one last time. I was crazy about my big brother. He was the best. Funny, handsome, charming and just supersmart. Jagadamba gets her most brains, her beautiful, big brown eyes and her personality and some of her coloring from her daddy. Jayne was not too shabby herself. Pretty ass woman. They were both doctors," Michonne said.
"Her mother must've been a, uh, light-skinned Indian. You can tell she has some black in her. She could pass for a red bone or an Indian. I can tell she identifies as black. So, that is something."
"You do not like my niece, do you?"
"Jury's out. She doesn't like me. She makes fun of my hair. Like what is wrong with it? Some of us are busy trying not to die, not getting our hair done. Plus, I have a lot of hair. She had on full make up and like the shortest skirt, hell, the only skirt on anyone in years. That is begging to be fucked with."
"Have you seen her without make-up?"
Sasha shook her head no. "I have. She looks even less threatening. She looks twelve. She was all hair, eyes and afterglow," she choked on afterglow.
"Goddamn. He fucked her, too? Carl is turning out to be a real cockhound. What type of head and dick is he throwing down? From what you have told me about his daddy- he got a big dick and he knows how to wield it. That shit must be genetic."
"Eww. Stop talking. I don't want to think about Carl like that. I can't," she said panicking a little. It made her feel a kind of way. She did not like it. It was regret she did not hit that first. It made her feel queasy. However, she was not surprised by any supposed prowess. After all, he was an excellent kisser so
she figured he would be good at the other stuff, too.
Plus, the way her starry-eyed niece was gushing about the young man, he done something she liked a helluva alot. She recognized the look because she had seen it in the mirror on her own face when it came to his dad.
Erstwhile, Sasha found her response a little odd but understandable. He was basically her son after all or so she thought.
"Look. I got a little carried away. I know he is your baby. I am sorry," Sasha sat down on the steps. Michonne sat beside her.
"It is okay. My Carl has had to grow up so much. He keeps so much bottled in. It is not healthy."
"I don't know. He has released the kraken at least twice now. But, I have to admit if he had five more years of mileage on him I would conduct an investigation on what bfd is."
"Oh, really?"
"You did not hear that girl. It sounded fun. Anyway, I wish you had heard what he said to Jagadamba. It was awfully romantic."
"What?"
"After a rousing game of the dirty dozens which they drew a stalemate- when he recognized her. He practically flew down the watchtower and slung it open with one arm. But, this was only after he fussed at God for waiting until he got a new woman to throw the old one in his face. Well, that is how I took it.
Anyway, he took off that goofy ass hat. He slicked back his hair. He then said and this is verbatim, "I know it has been a really long time. And I am obviously missing something. But, if you don't recognize me. I may have an heart attack like that old guy in the Notebook," I mean, he was dead serious. I could tell.
Then she recognized him, too. She said she thought she was dreaming then uttered his name and passed the hell out. He caught her before she hit the ground. Romantic ass shit."
Michonne sniffed. Her boy was not her boy anymore. He was her niece's. Enid was not even in the running at the moment.
"That Enid girl is in trouble. I hope she know Jody took her man and gone," Sasha laughed not looking at Michonne's face. If she would have she would saw envy and sadness ever so slightly furrow her brow.
Goddamn, I feel irrational, she thought.
Sasha continued, "Remember that song, uh, mid-nineties rhythm and blues, uh. You may have had him once but I got'im all the time. Girl group. Ring a bell?"
"He's Mine by MoKenStef. I always hated that fucking song. It is childish. And do not count out Enid. She is plucky. I am beat. Goodnight," Michonne intentionally let the hilt of her blade hit Sasha on the forehead.
"Ow," she said.
"Girl, please, we both know you have had worse things in your face and I am not talking about walkers," she said playfully to her hide her rue.
"Whatever. Goodnight, haint," Sasha took it in stride and returned to her post.
However, she did pick up on two things, Michonne's feelings for her fine ass boyfriend's getting there son were not so innocent and her admiration for her brother rung false. After all, she took no pride in his namesake nor is she rooting for her niece to have Carl. Not really.
Rick was awake at the kitchen table with Judith and doctoring a beer.
"At least we still got one baby," Rick said feeling his girlfriend's presence without turning around.
He continued, "All she cares about it is where the next meal, toy or cuddle is coming from. Momma, Da-da and Budder. She refuses to pronounce Carl."
Judith spit out her sippy cup and said, "Where Budder?"
"Asleep," Rick laughed refusing to imagine what he was actually doing.
Michonne scoffed and said, "He is asleep."
Judith pouted and closed her eyes again.
"Want me to take her?" Michonne asked sitting.
"Nah. I want to hold on to her as long as I can," he sighed.
"I hear you. So, I saw Enid running half-naked from the house. What happened?"
"I saw more of her than I ever wanted to. She thought I was him. I went into his room to get her binky and she turned on the light and yeah. I don't know who screamed louder me or her."
"That is terrible."
"She apologized profusely. She thought we were coming back later. She did not want to be the type of girlfriend who is disrespectful to her boyfriend's folks, she said."
"She knows where he is, right?"
"Yep. She gave him permission."
"How forward thinking of her," she said facetiously grabbing a beer of her own.
"Oh, my goodness. He is probably head deep between Jag's legs," he grimaced.
"Come on. If I have to hear about Carl's stroking or licking abilities one more time tonight, I am going to gauge my ears out."
"He, he told me things that I just never should have asked him. Between me and his Momma, my boy gets being freaky naturally but damn. Did you know him and Beth had a thing?"
"Really? Umph. When she died, he barely reacted. He just went outside and sat by the lake all day. Explains a lot though. I knew he had a crush on her. I used to tease him about it. They disappeared a lot. I just assumed they were friends not lovers."
"It is what it is. My son is a whore. I take it Jag told you the truth. The two of them interlocked?"
"Yes. Twice apparently. I would not call him a whore. It is probably the only time he does not hurt. His eye is still healing and it is an open wound."
"True. Why did they lie?"
"You heard her. She doesn't want to be labeled as a Jezebel seeking favor."
"I do not think of her that way. I know who she is or at least who she used to be. Jagadamba is one of those rare people where to know her is to love her. Unless you don't. Want to know the first thing Carl and Jagadamba did when they met at two?"
She nodded.
"They nearly jumped out of Lori and Jayne's arms reaching for one another. They set them down. Carl kissed her dead on the lips. I hurried up and got Carl. I thought Rod was going to punch him in the face. Get him away from my princess, he said. Your brother was a trip."
"He most certainly was or is. We do not know if he is dead or not."
"True. You Anthonys are clearly survivors."
A couple moments passed before Rick said with solemnity, "Found out something else, too."
Now Michonne could not tell which way this was going. So, she played it cool.
"What?"
"I knew Carl liked liked you but I did not know he was in love with you. I should've though. All the signs were there."
"I know he loves me. But, in love. I don't know. What signs?" She asked.
"Come on. You are intuitive. Surely, you have sensed something. I have. Now that I think of it. He has been especially pissy since we got together. The way he looks at you sometimes, if he were anyone else he would get punched. Right in the face. Hard. I can't blame him. I mean look at you. You are beautiful," he smiled.
She blushed and hid her face.
"Don't pretend you do not know. Want to know what he said about you?"
She nodded.
"He told me he loved you first. That I should've always chosen you. He felt like Jesse was a mistake. He stated correctly that you are a prize. Not a consolation. He said it insulted him that it took me so long basically. Is that how I made you feel? Did you say something to him or did he overhear something you told Sasha?" Rick asked pitifully.
"No. I never said that nor did it ever cross my mind. You are a hero. You saw Jesse as a damsel. You wanted to rescue her . . . with your penis," they both laughed.
Michonne finished, "I wasn't exactly throwing out signals. How were you to know?"
The thought had crossed her mind but in passing. She did not like to dwell. He hunched. Then a thought occurred to him. Why would Carl think he had a chance unless in some way no matter how small she must gave him some hope. "Has Carl ever told you how he felt?" Rick asked not accusing her of anything. He just wanted to know.

Her eyes became as big as saucers. She almost said huh? She knew that was the playing dumb equivalent of saying yes. "After he corralled Deanna so Spencer could dispatch her and bury her. He said she deserved to be put down by someone that loved her and that he would do the same for me. Does that count?"

"That is sweet, I guess. But, you know what I mean. Did he tell you he was in love with you or that he felt something other than friendship? Come on, babe, don't make me pull teeth."

She stood up and turned her back to Rick. She decided to tell a half truth. "Once. It was before he got shot. We weren't together then obviously. It was night. You were involved with Jesse. He tried to kiss me. I kicked him out my room. We avoided each other. Well, I avoided him. Sometime later, we talked about it. He told me how he felt was real. That he might be able to ignore it or push it down for a spell but he would never abandon it. He insisted."

"What did you say?" His face was starkly serious. She could hear it in his voice. "I told him I love you with all my heart. I would die for you and I would kill for you. Murder the world if I had to but I can't love you the way you think you love me or the way you want. You have to learn just because you want to do something does not mean you should.

I told him he would forget all about me when he met a girl his age. Looks like I was, uh, I was right. Yep," she said rolling her eyes. She was still not facing him. "Why didn't you say anything to me?"

"And what embarrass him and kill his trust? Hell, no. I handled it. And now he and I are cool again. He hugged me and told me he was glad I came back alive. So, no harm. No foul. This stays between us. Okay, Rick?"

Though, not entirely satisfied with the answer, Rick wanted to believe his dulcinea, so he did. He still had one question that asked jokingly but really wanting to know, "Carl said you chose age over beauty. Is that true?"

She scoffed and said, "You know Carl's drunk and little mean. I heard him holler at you."

"Yeah. He did."

"What else did you two talk about?" She knew it was high time to change that subject. "Other than you and his colorful sex life? Uh, Jagadamba and Enid. Which one he wants to be with."

"Is he confused?" She turned around. "No. He wants Jag."

"Sucks to be Enid."

"Yeah. You should hear the way he talks about your niece. He sits up taller. His chest swells and I can see all his manhood just come upon him. He is in love with her. I mean like totally since they were children. He is even willing to basically raise her child. I think he would marry her if it came down to it."

"She is love with him, too. You are right. He does want to raise her daughter. In passing she said something about how Carly-Jayne was a daddy's girl without a dad and that she was scared for her because of that. He gave her his hat, at night anyway. Aw, I can't wait until you see her. She is beautiful. She is Children of the Corn white. Her hair is platinum coils. She does not look like she has a brown momma.

Anyway, Jagadamba is a really smart girl. She realizes what you said. She doesn't know if she is ready for what he wants. She knows he wants a family. Even with that said, she feels as deeply as he does. She cries and smiles when talks about him. They showed each other their scars."

"He told me. He said it was intimate."

"I didn't even know he knew that word."

"You know, Lori always said that the two of them were teenaged parents waiting to happen. At least
I will be guaranteed beautiful grandchildren. I am pretty sure once they have the one, there will be others. The two of them will be like that old Pringles ad. Once you pop the fun don't stop."
"Won't stop. The fun won't stop," she gently corrected.
He laughed.
"I am scared," Rick admitted.
"For Carl?"
"Yes. I hope things work out the way he wants them to. I am not sure he would handle another disappointment well. He has so far. But, everyone has a limit. He deserves to get what he wants out this life whatever or whoever it may be."
Neither Rick nor Michonne wanted to really accept the fact one of the things he really wanted was still her.
There Are No Words

Chapter Summary

Carl tells Jagadamba how he feels about her and she freaks. She tells him about her life without him. There have lots of loud sex. Priyanka makes a confession to Achilles. Bigelow threatens Carl after meeting Morgan. Oh, Enid makes cupcakes.

Now alone, Carl's smile was so wide as to be infectious.

They looked at each other and laughed before kissing.

Her lips were touching his when she asked, "What do you want to talk to me about?"

"You and me," he said just as close.

"Uh-oh. Sounds foreboding," she chuckled.

"I promise you it is not," he took her by the hand.

They sat in silence for a minute.

"What do you do want to say?" She asked.

"I want to be with you."

"Carl-"

"I know what that means. You have a child. I am prepared to be there for her, too. No matter if we are together or not, I will be there for your little girl as long as you guys are around me. I hope that will be from now on. I am ready for you," the seriousness on his countenance scared her a little.

Terrible relationship or not, she did just murder her way out of one. She was not really ready for another one despite what she thought earlier.

She pulled away as she chuckled.

"Not the response I was hoping for," he said feeling self-conscious now.

"Oh, man. You are making this extraordinarily difficult," she sighed.

He huffed, "Making what difficult?"

"What about Enid?" She asked. She was officially her scapegoat.

"I thought about her. That is for me to worry about. Not you. I will handle it. I know it will be hard but I have to follow my heart and it just doesn't belong to you, it is you."

She hit her forehead with her hand, "Oh, goddamn it. We can't. Not just yet."

This threw Carl.
"Why not? Did I say something wrong?" He asked.

"No, baby, you are saying all the right things. Beautiful shit females dream about hearing. But, you know how we feel about each other?"

"Yes," he said.

"That is how Enid feels about you. The fact she is allowing you to spend the night with me is testament to how much you mean to her. She means to keep you. I can't blame her. But, I cannot be responsible for another girl's heart being broken. You shouldn't want to be either."

"I don't. But, I don't want to live a lie. That is not fair to anyone either."

"I also do not want everybody here to hate me or see me as home wrecker or boyfriend stealer. There is no quicker way to get a bunch of women to hate you forever than that. You could be the biggest humanitarian in the world and all they remember is you took Brad Pitt from Jennifer Aniston. I don't want that. Besides, I kind of like Enid in theory. She is a fan. Something I don't even remember saying kept another human being alive. It is like this is a test we have to pass in order to be happy one day.

If we do it this this way, we will be doomed. Karma is real. I feel like right now I am finally starting to shore up some good. Stay with Enid. Get her to dump you. Bigelow likes her. He told me so. Let him take her," she said.

Jealousy made his nostrils flare.

"That asshole can't have her."

"Bigelow's good people. He'll treat her right. You don't even like her anymore, right?"

"I never said I did not like her because I do. I like her a lot. If I had my way, I wouldn't choose at all. I would keep you both. But, I can't. So, I choose you."

"It just that I got out of a, guess you can call it a relationship where I wasn't the only woman. It blows not being special. When it is two or more women and a dude, the dude is specialiest snowflake and not the women. You are not the prize, Carl. She and I are. All women are. Even Sasha. I do not like Sasha."

"I gathered."

"Men just love forgetting that. We women make you men immortal. Like even when your mom was still here, when people referred to you, who were you the sheriff deputy's son or the cafe manager's son? Rick's son or Lori's?"

"Rick's son, the deputy's son. Even when my mom was standing right there, they would say that. I get it. I am not claiming to be special here. I am being honest. I know I am not special."

"You are special to me. That is not what I am saying. Being a man does not make you special or you entitled to treat women anyway you want. It would be different if you hadn't slept with her. But, you did. Sex complicates everything. I should've been stronger and not slept with you at all, let alone twice. That was stupid of me," she said turning away from him.

"Don't start with that again. It was not stupid at the time. It felt right at the time. Didn't it? You weren't faking it, were you? You seemed to have liked it. I really tried," he was becoming increasingly insecure.
"No. If you were horrible I would have told you. You were gentle and tender when you needed to be. Not so much when you needed to be. A little freaky. I came hard both times. You were amazing. It is not that. But, I am more attached to you than before and I was pretty attached. You did not seem any different."

"So, you assume because I am a guy I don't have feelings after sex?"

"Kinda," she said.

"You are wrong because I do. So, I know how you feel. Did you not hear what I said to you? So, what does this mean for you and me?"

"There is no you and me yet. We try to be friends again. Be cordial. Don't think about tonight. We should forget about it until time is right,

Carl let a mirthless chuckle and said, "I got to give you Anthony women credit. No one makes me feel more like a prize asshole than you two. Besides, you are acting. You do not give two shits about Enid's feelings or what people think about you."

"You are wrong. Actress, remember? What people think of me is hyper important to me."

"Okay. That may be true but it is me, isn't?"

"Uh?"

"It is me. I am coming on too strong, aren't I? You are lukewarm all of a sudden," then he spoke a fear.

"It was pity, wasn't it? You felt sorry for me and that is why you slept with me both times. Why else would someone like you be bothered."

"Carl, for the second time today. Pretend you know me. Do not be ridiculous. I feel for you. My heart hurts but I don't pity you. You say pity like it is a bad thing. I feel compassion as I am sure you do for me. It is just I am not ready for what you want right now. I don't know if you are ready for what you think you want from me."

"I am tired of people telling me how I should feel. What happened between now and when we were downstairs? Did Michonne say something to you?"

"No. She doesn't hate you, nimrod. Neither do I. This is me. I have already went against myself three times today because of you. I am not doing a fourth. You cannot always have your way."

"What the hell you mean? I never get my way," he said erroneously.

"That is not how I see it. You have literally had the best two days ever from what I can tell. And you are still whining. Lighten the fuck up. Quit being such a brat. Even you cannot be this selfish."

"Tell me what I am since you think you know so much. How am I the selfish one?" He growled.

"You are a spoilt brat. Look at it. Two hot girls voluntarily had intercourse with you. Two. You just got some of my really good pussy, what hour ago?"

Here you sit saying you never get what you want. If anybody should be saying that shit is me. My dad and mom never came back. I was not lucky enough to know where my dad was. Let alone have him wake up his sexy ass out of a coma. What? Your dad's attractive."
He hunched and motioned for her to continue.

"What happened to your mom was awful but damn it you know what happened. There is no doubt, no empty hope. I am a fucking orphan. Priyanka and Achilles try because I am the youngest but really? They were unfit at best. Especially after they started fucking and I had my own child. Bigelow and Boyardee are more parental towards me than they are.

An orphan is the last thing a girl child needs to be during the goddamned apocalypse. I was held hostage for seven months and raped almost everyday. I told you when were we younger what my aspirations were. Preteen mother was not even one of them. Or did you forget that? that escape your attention?

I am glad she is here but still.

I married a man I fucking hated so my brothers and sisters and my oldest child would not be murdered. I was currency at best, a whore at worst. My life has been hard, not to say yours isn't."

She did not realize her slip of the tongue. This was the third time.

"I know you are playing it close to the vest until you talk to me my dad but give me just a little more."

"What are you talking about? We have been talking all night. When we weren't otherwise preoccupied," she smiled.

"You said oldest child. And you are lactating. Carly-Jayne is too old to breastfeed and you aren't that weird. You are either a wet nurse or you had another child. Or both."

She tsked then said, "His name was Mohinder. He smiled a lot but I figure that was his way of compensating for not being able to hear. He looked just like me which was a blessing. His father was ugly, not handsome like C.J.'s dad. When he realized he was deaf, that was when he burned me. He blamed me. The men in my family on my mom's side are sometimes born without eardrums basically. I never told Cort that. Only Priya could have."

"It was probably Achilles. Priya would be more mindful, wouldn't she be?" He asked.

"No way. Achilles and Cort hated each other and were not on speaking terms. Priya and Cort on the other hand had a rapport which I used against him. I never understood why she could let that slip."

"It had to be a slip of tongue. I can't imagine her doing that on purpose."

"I don't know. I would like to think not but Chill is not as bad you think nor is Priya is not as good. I will leave it at that. So, anyway, my back gets so tight sometimes itbleeds. I have to keep it moisturized. Speaking of which," she took out a bottle of lotion and took off her shirt.

"Please?" She asked.

"You don't have to ask," he said softly.

When he touched her, she quivered and turned her head to kiss him. They did so. They were quiet as he rubbed it in.

"I love you," he said breaking the silence.

"I love you, too."
In a quiet voice, he asked, "What happened to your little boy?"

She turned to face him and held her tiny hand up to his face. She lightly put it over his nose and mouth, not to hurt him but to demonstrate.

"After I recovered, I was allowed to see my children. Allowed, mind that word. I saw C.J. first. Tomeka found me. She was crying. It takes a lot for her to cry. She kept saying, Momma, Mo is a used to be. She calls the roamers used to bes.

I pretended like I didn't understand what she was saying. I didn't want to know what she meant. With her in my arms, I, uh, went into my son's room. He was in his crib. But, I recognized the noise they make the rattle and I knew," she took her hand off his face sometime before.

Her head was down as she spoke and her voice was becoming hoarse. Other than this, she displayed so other emotions.

He on the other hand was crying silently. He was hurt and angry for her.

"What happened next?" He said through gritted teeth.

"I wanted to see him anyway. I wanted to scream but I held it.

I saw his little face, my face. He had must have struggled hard because he had to use a lot of force in order for his handprint to be that clear. That fucker slithered into the room. He said he never would have made it in this world. If you are deaf you are as one good as dead. I did him a favor. Maybe the next one will be whole. You gave that hillbilly a real child. Maybe I should just wait until she is old enough and get one from her.

Then he asked me what I thought. He expected me to go off so he could kill me. I had to think fast. Told him he made the right choice and that I would take care of the body myself. But, if he ever threatened my daughter again I would kill him.

I surprised him, he left me on my own. The fool had to began trusting me from that point forward. I did not kill my boy. I had Bigelow store him someplace dry. I-

"Stop. Just stop. I can fill in the rest. I will talk for you tomorrow. I will tell my dad the deal. Jag?"
She looked up at him. He noticed her eye looked swollen. He turned on the light. Her face, neck, chest, arms, stomach were covered in hives.

"I told you it takes a toll. I have an Epi-pen. Um, my airway is starting to close. My drawer. Now," she fell back on the bed gasping.

He hurried and got it. He knew where it went. Lori had a peanut allergy. Her breathing returned to normal after an hour or so.

Carl turned the light back out. He put his arms around her and laid her head on his chest. She put her arm around his waist and snuggled him as he covered them up.

"You smell the same," she said.

He had nothing to say other than to hug her tighter and kiss her for forehead.

Jagadamba was not about to say it but in that moment that was the safest she had felt in almost five years.
She almost wanted to say fuck Enid, I need you more but did not.

Two hours passed. She had been asleep most of it. Carl remained awake. He was a little too pissed to sleep. He wished he had been more adamant about Jagadamba riding with him, his mom and Shane. He knew she would have been safe with them. Priyanka was the one who insisted she not go with them.

Even Achilles did not mind her riding with them that day.

He thought, Priyanka does suck.

Out the silence, he heard Jagadamba say in most dulcet tone, "Lady's prerogative."

"To change your mind about what?"

"I will get to that. I have a couple things I need to say. Did you mean it when you said you would be my aegis?"

"What is that?"

"The shield or breastplate of Zeus or Athena. Basically, be my protector. No one's done that since Bigelow came home."

"What did Bigelow do?"

"He murdered his father after Boyardee told him what he was doing to me and my resulting condition and what he had planned on doing to me. She killed their mother in self-defense. So, will you be my aegis?"

"I agreed to it before I knew there was a word for it."

"You are something else," she caressed his cleft.

"Be with me," he said.

"I have never not been."

They kissed for several minutes during which she pulled out his pants and stroked him.

Ten minutes into it, she began talking again, "I had to do things, awful things in order to escape. It proved impossible to kill him outright. That would have certain death for me and my entire family."

"Why?" He said before hissing and moving slightly in her hand. She found a sweet sport.

"Piece of shit or not, he took very good care of a lot of people. They loved him and they were steadfastly loyal. He was worshiped."

"Sounds a lot like Negan," he observed.

"He was. The only way I could get away with ending him was by killing a lot of people. I have so much blood on my hands. It is not even funny. I knew all their names. Those children have no idea what happened to their parents. They just know they are dead. I know one day some of them will figure it out or hear something. I will cut that throat when I find it. So, don't complain to me about how hard or unfair your life is. I guarantee you whatever you say I could probably best it.

Now, do not get me wrong. I want you to tell me how you feel. I care. Just do not pule about your
problems like a child would. Come up with a solution," she said.

"Thing is some problems are impossible to fix. My eye is obliterated. I have no solution for that. Oh, god," he moaned as she quickened her pace.

"Baby, I am not talking about shit you have no control over. I am talking about-

He came. About which she said, "Oh shit. Won't you look at that? You are the very definition of young, not so dumb, and full of come. Ah, it's going everywhere. Good thing I made you wear a rubber those two times."

As she finished getting him off, his material landed all over his stomach, her hands. He was somewhat embarrassed by this.

She took her shirt and wiped her hands and then him off.

"That felt awesome. I do not think I have ever played it with that good and I play with it pretty damn good," he sighed happily.

"See, it is all about gratitude. I know this is a weird time to bring it up after whacking you off but I keep a journal about the good God has done for me. Trust me. It helps," she sniffled.

In a soft, effeminate voice, Carl said, "Dear God, today my girlfriend gave me the bestest handy j. That is not something you brag to the Lord about."

She playfully punched him and said, "You're are so stupid. But, I mean it. It really does help."

"You believe like that? I think there is a God maybe. I am more sure of it now than I think I ever been but I don't know. Why did God let this happen? The end of the world, I mean. None of the bad shit that has happened to us would have or wouldn't have been as likely if the world was the way it used to be."

"God didn't do this. God doesn't make bad things happen. Not after the Resurrection anyway. This whole thing reeks of Satan. But, the world has not changed in a lot of ways. It is just more of what it was. A harsh, cruel place that will not hesitate to eat you alive if you allow it to. I don't intend on allowing it to. How bout you?"

"I haven't so far."

"True. I meant what I said about Enid. I do not like hurting people. I prefer to help them. I just want something good to happen to me. And to you. But, I am a mess you don't want to clean up," she said.

Returning the favor, he slipped his hand into her shorts and said, "You quoting Fiona Apple on me now? Paper Bag, really?"

"I have baggage you simply don't have. Your first real relationship should be with someone simpler. Not so fast. Slower. That is it," she cooed.

"Jagadamba, you should think better of yourself. You are not a mess. Heartbroken and lonely and scared but most of all determined, hopeful and fierce. You were kind of always those things. Your parents left you all the time. You hated it. I remember the last time you begged them to stay home."

"They acted as if it was their responsibility to save the world. What about me? Me they couldn't save. Irony," she pouted.
"I remember you cried onto my chest and I held you. We were twelve and that was the time we-"

"Like big kid kissed. Like really, really kissed. I remember. Thing is," she straddled his lap turned to face him. He did not move his hand.

She reached over and grabbed one of the condoms her sister gave her.

"Move your hand," she scooted up and pulled his pants down around his thighs and put it on him. She mounted him.

She continued, "When I think of you even now at this moment, this is not what I see. How can it be? You are so man-shaped. And your voice. I can't get over your voice. It is so deep. You are such a man now. In my recollections of you, I see and hear you as a little boy. You are Carl Grimes, the man," she giggled kissing his surprisingly soft, full pink lips.

He smiled and said, "You have sort of had this body since you were nine so. You haven't changed much except you are taller and more beautiful which is kind of impossible but true. If I could just look at you for the rest of my life, I would be happy." He wanted to comment on how wet she was but kept it to himself.

Feeling a little awkward as she rode him, he asked, "What should I be doing?"

"Hump with me, kiss my chest, rub my rosebud. Flip me onto my back and take her over and pound me into the mattress. It is up to you. Hinty, hint, hint."

He sat up with her and in one fluid motion got onto her back. He slipped out in the process. He took off his bottoms.

She instructed him to give her pillows to put under her back. Her legs bent at the knee as she received him again.

More turned over than he thought possible, Carl began to move his hips such a way as to remind them both he was the one with the dick.

"Harder," she said regardless. Sometimes she liked just a little pain behind her pleasure.

He repositioned his arms and hips to had more power to thrusts. He had practiced enough times alone on his bed to get this right.

Seven minutes passed and pretty soon Carl caused Jagadamba to do something she had actually never done before- she cried out loudly during orgasm. He found her g-spot without trying to while intentionally stimulating her clitoris. He was right behind five minutes later and just as loud. She had as Richard Pryor put it- elusive snapping pussy.

They could be clearly heard outside. Abraham talking to Sasha overheard and said, "Goddamn, Carl is tearing that ass up."

"All that rage," Sasha laughed.

"What say you, we go inside and I make you scream your own little opera. Show Richie Cunningham how it's done?"

Sasha put her arms around his neck and said, "I have a feeling I am the conductor and you are going to the fat lady singing."
"Well, in that case, Mr. Holland," he bowed, "lead me to your opus."

They laughed and went inside.

Meanwhile, Achilles remained awake with hurt feelings Achilles and cringing as he listened to his sister and Carl.

Priyanka woke and saw he was crestfallen and asked, "Mera pi'ara, what is wrong?" She called him my love.

"Apparently, everyone here has agreed I am the neighborhood asshole," he said.

"Well, you do have that effect on people. I thought you were a gormless, egotistical little bastard for the longest time. Until, I saw you naked," she smirked.

"I am serious. Everybody was mean to me except Rick. And this funny looking red haired dude with a badass mustache."

"Is Carl still here?" Priyanka asked.

"You, too? Marcia, Marcia, Marcia. Carl, Carl, Carl. Goddamn. Did you not hear what I said?"

"I heard you. Look, I know who are. So fuck the rest of them. Wait, Jagadamba was mean, too?"

"Who you think instigated it? They call me a shit starter. That girl makes me so angry sometimes. She is quick to think the worst of me."

"You are being paranoid. Did it have to do with Carl?"

"Always," he grumbled.

"You have to keep in mind the thought, the memory of that boy kept her going. She loves him. He loves her. I don't see nothing wrong with it."

"SerIously? I saw that boy go home. I saw it. He comes back and she fucks him I don't know how many times. I think it was disrespectful of him to return. She ain't his ho."

"When he came back over, I was awake. I let him in. I interrogated him. He told me his girlfriend said it was okay if he spent the night. I walkie talked her. She confirmed it. Poor dear sounded embarrassed. So, I did not have shit else to say. I stepped aside."

Earlier, Jagadamba and I had already talked about him. He had fell asleep putting C.J. and his sister asleep. Jagadamba said did not want to sleep with him right away. But, I gave her a bunch of condoms just in case and told her go where the mood leads."

Achilles became incensed with her.

"You encouraged her to do him?"

"Them getting rumpy-pumpy is insurance," Priyanka said a matter of factly.

"Of what? She'd be considered a conniving boyfriend stealing slut?"

"No. You got to see the bigger got to get a foothold in this community. Literally get a leg up."

"So your belief is if they screw like bunny rabbits that he'll be so enthralled, what'll happen exactly?
"They will be bonded. Is he still here?"

"Yes. They were hugged up and could not take their hands off each other. Made me sick to my stomach. I could tell Michonne did not like it either. But, maybe you got a point."

"I also may have been a bit naughty."

He knew what that meant.

"What did you do?"

"Remember what you said in the bus when you saw Carl?"

"Not this little motherfucker," he said.

"After that," she said.

"I don't remember. Remind me."

"You could see his sperm hitting her egg?"

"I also said or was about to say the last thing she needs is another kid. So, what did you do?"

"I may have put the condoms in the dryer on low heat for ten minutes the first moment I had alone. Then I may or may not poked holes in them before I gave them to her."

"Does she know?"

"No."

Achilles sat there stunned. He knew Priyanka was ruthless even more so than Jagadamba. But, this was beyond the pale.

"So, we will know in three weeks if it worked or not. A child between the two would solidify our place here. Forge an alliance between the houses if you will."

"What if he doesn't want a child? Then what?"

"I thought about that. His father would make him."

"What if she doesn't?"

"We'll guilt her into it."

"You know this is probably the worst thing you have ever done? This is tantamount to rape. She'll figure it out. Even worse, Carl will figure it out and think she did it on purpose. I hate to say it but he is not stupid. You will kill their relationship, not strengthen it."

"What do you care? You hate Carl."

"But, I love my baby sister. I don't want her hurt but apparently you don't give a shit. I have heard of pregnancy brain but you got pregnancy psychosis. Really?"

"It will work out. Trust me," she said.

"Like the Pharaohs did? This will be another unmitigated disaster that you caused. Stop making decisions for other people," Achilles got out of bed. He grabbed his pillow. He wanted to sleep
"How was I to know it would turn out so horribly? We were starving and homeless. I had to do something."

"He was a forty year old who wanted to marry a thirteen, fourteen year old girl. That was red flag number one. We would've found food and shelter eventually."

"Just do not tell her. Let this play itself out. I beg of you," Priyanka pled.

"I will but know this. I am tired of cleaning up your messes," he said.

"Without my messy ass, we would have been dead ages ago."

"When you sold her to Cort-"

"When we sold her to Cort. You went along with it."

"How? You did not tell me until after the fact. I thought he wanted to kill us. I did not know it was theatre. Neither did she. You're can't keep playing with her life. My life," he grimaced.

"Our illustrious little sister always comes out on top. She is a regular Phoenix. Why should this be any different?" She said with more disdain and bitterness than she intended.

"What happens when she doesn't?"

Even at eight months pregnant, Priyanka still fancied herself as sexy. She was in all her sandy-haired, mossy green eyed half Teutonic glory. Her last name was Chowdhury-Richter.

She got up revealing her nudity to him, she walked over to him and pressed her body against his.

"Oh, Chill. Come on. You and I both know deep down this is what Carl and Jagadamba want even though they do not realize it yet. Them getting pregnant is inevitable. I am simply upping the timetable to our benefit. You know everything I do is basically for you. If she is safe then you are safe then I am safe," she slipped her hands between his legs. She kissed him and led him back to the bed.

Down the hall, the teenagers laid in afterglow. His head was her chest.

"I am so unsad right now," she sighed contentedly.

"I believe the word for that is happy. And I am unsad, too," he hugged her tightly.

"You know I did not finish telling you everything."

"I do not want you to. You literally almost died telling me what happened to you. Who in your group do you trust the most? They can finish it up."

"There is more than one. Achilles, Bigelow, Boyardee and Tomeka."

"No Priya?"

"She is sometimed. Cort told me some things as he was dying that I do not want to believe about her."

"Like what?"
"I would rather not," she said.

"I get it. No one wants to believe one of the people they love the most could betray them."

"No. I do not want to talk anymore. Let's switch places. It will be morning soon and Carly-Jayne will be awake. Let's sleep."

Six hours passed.

Enid had just taken a shower and gotten dressed. She then made two batches of blueberry muffins. One for Glenn and Maggie and the other for Michonne and Rick.

She realized they had to be asleep, so she took the hide a key and let herself in. She wanted to put them in the kitchen.

As soon as she sat foot in the house, she heard the most low-key sex song ever written- Miracles by Jefferson Starship blasting. Not wanting to see old people sex, she laid the muffins on the coffee table and quietly left. Upon putting the key back, she looked up and saw the last thing, she wanted to see, Carl in the distance looking happier than she had ever seen him. So much so he was damn skipping to his house.

Apart of her wanted to warn him while the other part liked the idea of his feelings being hurt. After all, she was fairly certain Carl's feelings for Michonne had not diminished. She felt his eagerness to fuck Michonne's niece was proof positive of that. Their history as childhood sweethearts be damned.

So, Enid went straight ahead walking between houses. Before she got to hers, she caught sight of Bigelow talking to Morgan. They were having a laugh.

She was going to keep walking until Bigelow said, "Unavailable, you can't say hi?"

Enid stopped in her tracks and refused to smile. However, she looked over shoulder to acknowledge him with a head nod then kept walking.

Explaining to Morgan, Bigelow said, "You see yesterday, I asked beautiful what was her name. She said Unavailable. So, that's what I am calling her."

"You know her name is Enid, right?"

"Uh, doy. I just like her. She is with that undeserving twerp, Carl. I do not know what hot girls see in him. For fuck's sake, he has one goddamned eye. He ain't ugly but still."

"Carl is a good kid. He shot me once," Morgan said taking a bite out his protein bar.

"You and I have very different definitions of a good kid."

"To protect his father from me."

Bigelow huffed, "I wish I had a father worth protecting."

During this time, Carl was not headed home at all but find to Bigelow per Jagadamba's request.

"Uh-oh, here comes goofy hat. It was nice meeting you, Morgan," Bigelow extended his hand.

Morgan shook it then said the same and left.

"What's up, white Nick Fury?" Bigelow said raising his hand to high five him. Carl looked at him
like he could pistol whip him.

"Dang, you don't have an ounce of a sense of humor, do you?"

"I wouldn't go that far. I am able to maintain a straight face when I look at you," Carl knew from the day before to talk to Bigelow was an exercise in verbally keeping up.

"Oh, so, squidboy got jokes, huh?"

Carl knew squid have one eye.

"That's cool. At least I know what Enid looks like naked. And your fearless leader has no problem with my eye. And who were you with last night?"

"You go for the jugular. I respect that. I assume Jagadamba wants me."

"Don't you wish?"

"Enough. Don't write a check your ass can't cash. You know nothing about J.B. and I."

"Enlighten me then."

"I did not even know her name when I murdered my father. All I knew he was holding a little girl hostage as a sex slave and had been for months. He offered me a go before he got rid of her. He was going to murder her because she was pregnant. My sister was too scared to do anything other sneak her food and water and occasionally company. Something she took multiple beatings for.

My own mother stood by and did nothing. In fact, she saw her as a rival instead of an innocent who needed saving.

After I shot my father, she tried to kill me so my sister ended up taking her out. Apparently, our daddy had always harbored a fantasy about having a preteen sex slave, preferably some sort of darkie excuse the language, it is his, not mine. He said dark girls have women's bodies but not the age. That motherfucker said that shit to me an United States Army corporal who risked it all to go AWOL to be with my family during what I was sure was going to be the end of the world. Only to find out that hell had already set up shop in my home."

"That was fucked up. There are no words," Carl said.

"Yeah. It was no easy thing. But, I did what I had to. She was half naked when I found her. She was heavily pregnant and so, so tiny. She was scared to death of me. Even dirty, bruised and scared, she was so beautiful. Like an angel almost. How could he hurt someone who looked like that? Which oddly enough brings me back to you."

"Okay?"

"I do not know what game you are playing. Nor do I really give a shit. But, she is not a toy. She has been hurt enough. If you break her heart, I will kill you. Your dad, too."

Carl just smiled and said, "Do you honestly think you're the first asshole to ever threaten my dad and me? You have no idea who the fuck you are talking to. Clearly, I am not easy to kill. You don't know shit about me and Jagadamba. I also know you want Enid. So, you have a vested interest in me and Jagadamba getting together. So, fuck you, dude. Seriously. You ever threaten name again, it will be the last you will ever do," Carl walked away livid.
He returned to Priyanka's house where he saw Achilles and Tomeka wrangling his niece and another little girl, Ana. She was about five and was with her eight year old brother, Marco. Carl had meant the girl in passing the night before. She was afraid of him.

When the little boy saw Carl, he stopped in his tracks and asked him, "What the hell happened to you, amigo?"

Carly-Jayne overheard and said, "He is a pirate."

Marco scoffed and said, "And I am a ninja turtle. You believe anything. He is a hillbilly. Nothing more."

"He is not. Mister Carl, tell him about your eye," Carly-Jayne walked up to Carl and hugged his leg.

He patted her on the head and smiled. Despite the light blonde hair and buttermilk complexion, she looked just like he remembered Jagadamba about that age. She looked up at him and smiled. She let go of him and held her arms up as to say pick me up.

He did so and she put her arms around his neck and lied her head on his shoulder as if she had known him forever.

The feeling was mutual. She felt like she was his as much as Judith.

Achilles observed this. He knew he needed a plan of action.

Before Carl could respond, Achilles said, "Hey, Mr. Carl is an adult. Unless he is touching your pee-pee or poo-poo or punching you the face, you don't question him. Ever. Get your little La Bamba ass in the kitchen and help Priyanka. Your scary self, too, Ana. Tommie, make sure they obey. Carl, I got you."

Tomeka annoyed by Marco grabbed him by the ear and said, "You heard the man."

Ana, afraid of Carl followed with no and argument.

Carl stood stunned that Jagadamba's brother took up for him.

"What?" Achilles asked smiling wide looking like his aunt but a boy.

Carl frowned.

"You took up for me. You okay? Are you like dying of cancer decided not to tell anybody?"

"Damn. You got a mouth on you. You know that? I figure there is no point in fighting with you. We are not children anymore. You made that point abundantly clear this morning when you made my sister sound like she was being murdered."

Carl said nothing just smirked and blushed.

"I just feel like we could both use a friend. We are both going through something huge. I have your back if you'll have mine. Truce?" Achilles asked.

Deep down, Carl always wanted to be his friend. So, he readily accepted.

They shook hands and hugged on it.

Achilles was certain the two of them would be blood soon. So, they might as well get along.
Apocalypse Thirty-Five

Chapter Summary

Rick and Michonne get it on and talk. Maggie and Glenn meet Jagadamba together and apart. Enid and Jagadamba have a confab about Carl.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rick and Michonne laid panting butt-naked in the hallway. He had walked her from the bedroom to the hall, planting her against the wall. She pushed him down to the floor and rode him like the beautiful Clydesdale she knew he was.

After five minutes, he flipped her onto her back. Like father like son.

Michonne had the ever elusive, snapping pussy and made senior Grimes tremble as he came. Like aunt, like niece.

Breathless, Michonne asked, "Do you ever wonder what took us so long?"

"To quote my drunk son, stupid, I guess," Rick replied.

Michonne laughed.

"How did that come about?"

"He told me I was stupid for not realizing you weren't just living with us because of him and Judith. That you liked me."

"He's right. That was stupid."

"I just assumed you wouldn't be attracted to someone like me," he said.

"What? An handsome, sexy, brave, intelligent hero of a man?"

"No. A country ass white boy. I thought you would want someone more sophisticated. And you are blatantly younger," he admitted.

"Your admission just told me what type of boy you were like in high school. You were the reserved athlete. Shy, not as overtly sexual or immature as the other ballers. Bookish, not a bully, you defended the kids that were bullied."

"Yeah. That was me. It is like you were there."

"No. I would've still been in elementary school. Blatantly younger, remember?" She smiled.

"You're funny. I can guess what type of teenager you were."

"Okay. Shoot," she said.
"You were a reluctant debutante. You only did it as to make your helicopter mother happy. You were the alternative, artistic type that still loved sports. You like using that fine body of yours. You liked being fit. You still do. You participated in track or soccer. You hung out with all cliques and races. You were definitely on the debate team. You were either a drama geek or a wrote for the school newspaper or both. Nice to everybody unless they were a jerk. Then you would put them in their place. And, ooh, you would've gotten best dressed if you were just a smidgen more popular. Am I close?"

"I did yearbook instead of newspaper but everything else is dead on. Kinda creepy. Damn, Rick. You got the Shining?"

"I do not like share it but yes, yes, I have the Shining. I am in the Dead Zone, too since we are bringing up Stephen King references. But, seriously. Your brother talked about you at length from time to time. I just put together all he said. Your brother was proud of you."

"Funny. He never told me," she pouted.

"Rod was, is complicated. I don't know what else to say."

"My brother is an ornery asshole. That is how I know wherever he is, he is alive. I know this because quite frankly he is too contrary to die. Just like I am too contrary to die. So is his son, daughter and stepdaughter. It is an Anthony family trait. Same goes for Jayne. Right now they are traversing the seas or the road or whatever to get back to their brood. And one day, I believe they will show up outside our gate. I just do. Especially now."

"That would be nice. They are good people. Speaking of people, we should probably go ahead and get the interview out the way," Rick said.

"Are we going to record it like, uh, Deanna did us?" Michonne asked.

"It wouldn't hurt. I will see if Maggie is up to it and go on from there," Rick said.

"Okay. Come on, lover, let's get dressed and check on Judith."

Twenty minutes passed. They dressed and went and got Judith who had been entertaining herself for the better part of an hour.

They made her lunch, kissing and smiling at each other he whole time.

On the way, out the door they noticed the blueberry muffins Enid had made them.

She left a note apologizing for the morning before.

It said:

Please do not think badly of me. I am sorry. I hope we will can still get along.

"When did she leave this?" Michonne wondered.

"More importantly, Carl has not talked to her yet," Rick's face was sympathetic.

"About?"

"He did not pick her. I told him to. Enid is a sure thing. Jag's not so much."

"What do you mean?"
"She is mostly a sweet, charming and very intelligent girl with a strong since of responsibility. But, sometimes, she is the definition of flighty. I also hate to sound shallow but she is better looking than Enid even though Enid is a cute as she wants to be. But, Jag is also very mature. She has a child, she was been married. I think Carl might be in over his head," he said.

Michonne did not agree internally.

He is way more devious and advanced than you think, she thought.

"At any rate, I hope she takes it well. That boy knows how to make a mess," Michonne said.

"He got that from Lori. I may fail miserably but I try to avoid trouble," he said.

Michonne scoffed.

"One word, Rick. Do you want me to say it?" She asked referring to Jesse.

Rick looked sheepish.

"Nawl," he said.

Yeah. I think he gets messy from both y'all. It is all right though. It makes for an interesting time. Never boring with a Grimes," she smiled.

Fifteen minutes passed.

Enid was sitting in her room at Glenn and Maggie's. She hadn't spoke to Carl yet. She refused to go to him. If he was going to dump her, she wasn't going make it easy for him.

Deep in thought, she heard a knock on the door. Her heart pounded in her throat. She hoped it was him.

"It's Glenn. You decent?" He asked.

"Yes. Come in," she wiped a stray tear in disappointment.

"Hey. Maggie is knocked out. I am wide awake and little lonely. I figured you were, too. You okay?" He said leaving the door open.

"No. Tell me about you. I heard you guys had a hard couple days," she held in sobs.

"Maybe later. I want to know about you. What's wrong?"

"You haven't heard?"

"Daryl said something about you and Carl then that girl in charge of those weirdos and Carl. What is going on?"

"The same day you guys left, he asked me to be his girlfriend."

"Finally?"

"I know, right? It was good. He was so nice and himself. We spent the day then the . . . night together," her eyes became wide as to suggest what had happened.

It took Glenn a second to catch on.
"Oh. So, you and he. Yeah," he frowned.

"He said it was his first time but I am not sure I believe him."

"I have known that boy since he was twelve. You are the first one he actually did the intercourse stuff with."

"Wait. So, you know about the oral stuff?"

"Only what Maggie told me. She caught him and her little sister doing that together once."

"Beth, right?"

"Yeah. So what made you think he had experience? Oh, my goodness, I can't believe I just asked you that."

"Well, it was . . . good. Like real good," she was sheepish.

"Yeah, let's move on. That is something you and Mags should talk about," he said turning red and rubbing the back of his neck uncomfortably.

"Yep. Anyway, stuff was going well. Could not have possibly been better. He told me he loved me and everything. I was happy. Then she shows up."

"J.B., right?"

"Jagadamba. Or as I prefer Lady Dumb Name. I had heard about her before. They grew up together. Next door neighbors. Childhood sweethearts who got separated apparently by apocalyptic circumstances. All sad and shit. Have you seen her?"

"I remember him mentioning some girl she used to know in passing but I have never seen her."

"I can guarantee you you have. Do you remember a show called Mia Self and Ida?"

"I hate to admit it but it was a guilty pleasure," he said pursuing his small but full lips.

"She was Mia. Yeah, he neglected to mention she used to an award-winning child actress. He said it was the least important thing about her to him. Really?"

Glenn could not help but make an impressed little smile.

He then said, "Yeah, I remember her. She was a talented kid. She was on the verge of being really big. She was like a triple threat. She could really sing."

"Yeah. Not making me feel any better," Enid said.

"Sorry. What happened?"

"He flips. He is obviously crazy in love with her. I am chop suey now. I just knew they were going to end up doing it. So, I gave him permission to spend the night with her. Stupid of me in retrospect. I just do not want him to go behind my back and fuck her. At least this way I would have some say, you know?"

"I get it. Very Sarah," he said.

She gave him a quizzical expression.
"In the Bible. Sarah gives her handmaiden, Hagar permission to sleep with Abraham so he can conceive a child."

"Ugh. Don't even joke about that. If she has his baby first- pshh, he is not letting her out his sight ever. She might as a well change her last name to Grimes on the spot. Almost makes me wish I hadn't took that Plan B pill. At least, I would have a leg up," Enid pouted.

"Don't talk like that. She is no better or worse than you."

With tears in her eyes, she inquired, "Then where is he?"

During this time and unbeknownst to her husband and surrogate sister, Maggie was awake and exploring the cupboard when she saw a shadow outside her window.

Still paranoid from earlier, she looked through the window with a glock in hand and saw a smiling Jagadamba waving at her. She laid down her weapon and opened the door.

"Good afternoon. Are you Maggie?" Jagadamba asked.

"Yes. You must be J.B.," Maggie did not want to like her at first glance. She was dressed in a sleeveless red and black striped hi-low top that displayed a midriff that never looked it housed two people at one point. She also wore a dark washed tight blue jean skirt and black leggings that led into her favorite red booties.

She is not the type of girl you leave around your husband, she thought feeling a little unattractive in her presence even though she just as beautiful.

"Yes. Come in and have a seat," Maggie stepped aside studying the young woman like a hawk.

"I heard tale that you were expecting a little one. So, I took the liberty of bringing you some ginger ale for the nausea and altogether ickiness being pregnant brings on. I added some extra ginger and chilled it. It helped a lot when I had mine."

"You have a kid? You look like a kid," Maggie said frowning.

Jagadamba cringed when she heard kid but she did not correct her. She knew Maggie as well as Glenn were basically two of Rick's lieutenants and did not want to piss them off. Plus, she had another reason for being there. She knew it was Enid's home.

"I am only a child chronologically speaking. But, in all the important ways I am a woman. My daughter is almost four. I will be seventeen in three weeks. I am a survivor."

"Gemini?"

"Child of God," she said proudly but without arrogance.

Maggie grinned at this.

"So, am I. My daddy taught us to never buy into any of that mumbo-jumbo. What is in the basket?"

"Oh, it is an Indian sweet. It is called soan papdi. It is like butter cookies and cotton candy had a flaky, sexy baby. Here. Try one," she pulled one out with a napkin and presented it to her.

Maggie graciously accepted. The classic beauty was about to take a bite, Jagadamba asked, "You don't have a nut allergy, right?"
"No," she said.

"Good. I am sure killing one of its most loved denizens on the first day won't go over too well," she joked.

Maggie took a bite and her eyes got wide then she closed them.

"Oh. My. God. This is so fucking good. It is like sex or love if you could eat it. You made these?"

"Yes," she had.

"Carol would flip for these. Have you meant her yet?"

"No. But, I am anxious to. She sounds formidable to say the least. Carl make her sound like Xena and Rambo in a sweater set."

"She kinda is."

"He speaks highly of you, too."

"Does he now?"

"Yep."

Up he steps, Glenn heard Maggie talking.

"Maggie's awake. I hear her speaking to someone. I got to go check on her. We will finish our talk but remember this. You are better than Carl and he is a real asshole for cheating on you whether you gave him the greenlight or not. You deserve better. I am truly surprised at him."

"It is Michonne," Enid said sniffing.

Looking like confused like George Bush in a Louisianan classroom moments after 9/11, Glenn asked, "What about Michonne?"

"She is Michonne's niece," Enid lamented.

Glenn did not get it.

"So? They were childhood sweethearts. That has nothing to do with Michonne," he regarded Michonne with highest esteem.

"Carl is love with Michonne. Come on, man. I know you have noticed."

"I know they have an unique bond that is truly very rare and heart touching but I think you are mistaken about it being sexual."

"He told me was in love with her," she stopped short of telling him the duo had made out twice. She did not want to implode the Grimes household. She knew they would do that all on their own.

"Come on, Glenn. What is there not to get? She is his proxy. He can't swing Michonne yet so he settling for the next best thing."

Glenn did not want to believe her. These were people had known since forever. He loved Rick like a brother and his son like a nephew. Michonne was the best friend he could ever ask for.
"Carl had to be pulling your leg. There is no way."

"Fine. Don't believe me then," Enid got out of bed stormed passed Glenn.

Halfway down, she became livid seeing the back of Jagadamba's head. Glenn was right behind her.

"Is that her?" Glenn whispered.

She rolled her eyes before nodding.

Maggie saw her husband and gave him a sexy little half smile. He all but ran to her.

Enid took a seat on the stairs.

Jagadamba glanced over her shoulder at her rival. Enid's face twisted with scorn. This caused Jagadamba to look back at her with full-on remorse.

This caused Enid to think, Don't you dare feel sorry for me, bitch.

Jagadamba turned her attention back to the couple.

She tilted her head looking at Glenn. She had not expected either one of them to be so beautiful.

She told Glenn in Korean, "I hope I am saying this correctly. You and your wife are such a beautiful pair like diamonds and platinum."

Glenn was immediately disarmed and charmed by this. He replied back, "Thank you."

"Huh?" Maggie asked only understanding the words beautiful and wife. Something he told her all the time.

"I said you two are pretty like perfect diamonds. He said thank you."

"How do you know Korean? You even spoke with an accent," Glenn said figuring her out.

"I am not bragging but I have an ear for language. I know Punjabi because of my mom. I learned Korean, Spanish and some Farsi during my spar time. Rosetta Stone. I am a quick study. So, that is another way I can be of service to Alexandria. You teach me something once, maybe twice and boom. It is mine forever. One benefit of being a former actor you got to have a good memory."

Maggie gasped when she recognized her.

"Mia Self and Ida. You were the little girl, Mia. Jacie Tony. Oh, my sister loved you. I used to smoke pot with my friends and watch it. Holy shit. Small world."

"My real name is Jagadamba Boudica Chowdhury-Anthony. I am biracial- Punjabi on my mother's side and African-American on my father's. My mom was English by nationality and my dad American. Michonne is my paternal aunt. . ."

They talked for almost an hour before Jagadamba excused herself to speak to Enid who was still sitting petulantly on the steps.

"We need to talk," the actress said.

The girlfriend replied, "Goddamned right we do."
Enid shut the door behind Jagadamba. They were both standing when Enid began, "Where is Carl?"

She was tempted to say in a come coma but digressed. She thought that sounded too mean. So, she
told the truth.

"Talking and laughing it up with my brother of all people. Now that is a sign of the apocalypse. Fuck the roamers. They hated each other growing up," she said.

"I don't care. Why hasn't he been my way?"

"You would have to ask him that. I am not his keeper," Jagadamba said rather calmly.

"You're just the kept," Enid cracked.

"Okay. You know what? I want to be pleasant. You are making this very difficult."

"He sent you to do his dirty work. So excuse me for being a little miffed at that."

"He doesn't even know I am here. I have a proposition that will work for us both."

"What? You pack up and leave?" Enid was not in the mood to attempt being cordial.

"Not happening. Ever."

"Then what do we have to talk about?"

"Putting the ball in our court and not his."

Enid frowned and asked, "What are you proposing?"

"You see, you gave me an idea last night."

"So, that is why I heard you screaming your head off at around four thirty this morning?"

Jagadamba looked embarrassed.

"Oh, damn. You heard me? See, I had never done that before with anybody until him," she hid her

face.

No one knew how deeply bashful she actually was. Her timidity and her looks is what prompted her

mother to get her into acting at age three. Her circumstances never allowed to show this part of

herself.

"You, too? It is so embarrassing. What the hell? I still doubt he was a virgin when we did it. I am

sorry but somebody taught him how to throw that thing," Enid laughed and so did Jagadamba.

"There is no way he is naturally good at pumping. I mean no one is except me of course,"

Jagadamba playfully threw her nose up in the air.

"I got to give you credit, Lady Dumb Name-"

She scoffed and said, "I call you Old Lady Name. So."

"As I was saying, it is impossible to stay pissed at you for long. You are so charming. I hate you."

"You are abrasive and a little bitchy but in an endearing way."
"So, what is it you propose we do about our well-endowed cyclops?"

"One eyed monster with a one eyed monster. Huh, well, it is simple as it is complicated. We share him."

"That is your big solution? How is he not the winner is that scenario?"

"You and me set the ground rules."

"Such as?"

"You should get him Thursday, Friday, alternating Saturdays and Sunday. I get him Monday through Wednesday and alternating Saturdays."

"You get him three days straight. How is that fair?"

"You get him on the weekends. Everybody knows weekends are for couples. Today's Thursday. So, it is fair."

"What about during the day?"

"We interact like normal. We never make out or kiss in front of the other out of respect."

"I don't know," Enid grunted.

"Look, his dad wanted him to pick one of us. Who is he to pick one of us? We are not apples. He either except our terms or he gets neither of us."

"Really? How do I know you won't go behind my back and be his girlfriend anyway if he doesn't agree?" Enid asked.

"How do I know you will not do the same?"

"I may be a lot of things but I am not a liar."

"Neither am I. So do we have an agreement?"

Enid remained silent for a second.

Then she said astutely, "He picked you. I know he did. That is why he is in no hurry to face me."

"If he had picked me, do you think for a moment I would have came up with this plan? I don't like being rejected. Plus, let's face it no matter which one of us he chose he would end up fucking the other behind one of our backs. He is not through with you nor me. What aren't done with him. So, no, he did not chose me. I don't lose. So, do we still have a deal or do you want to keep the spoils as it were to yourself?" Jagadamba lied, no she acted for Enid. She dis not enjoy being cruel for cruelty's sake.

"Fine. We have a deal," Enid reached out her hand to solidify the agreement.

They shook hands.

"We'll tag team him later," Enid said.

"Well, you are pretty. We could swing that if you're game," Jagadamba was only partially joking. She had been with other women a couple times before.
Enid blushed and said, "That did not come out right."

"Oh, come on, you never been with a girl?"

"No. I won't even let Carl go down on me."

"Oh, honey, I mean this in the nicest way possible but, you silly ho. You better let him next time he offers. Oh, my God," she giggled and fanned herself.

"Let me guess, you let him."

"Hell, yeah. He volunteered. I don't turn down head. He is like really, really good at it," Jagadamba hunched.

"Eww. That is a mental picture I didn't need."

"You are the one who brought it up."

"True. So, uh, we'll talk to him later."

"Or now."

"I can't now. I have to go be a mommy to four youngsters. Do you have a walkie talkie?"

"I can get one."

"Whoever comes in contact with him first radios the other," Jagadamba said.

"Okay."

She turned to leave.

Enid stopped her.

"Jacie, I want to thank you," she said.

She knew why she called her Jacie.

"For what?"

"For lying to me," she said tearing up again.

Jagadamba shot her the same look she gave her earlier when she was on the couch. She ran down the steps. Maggie and Glenn left. She saw a letter sitting on the table with her name on it. Her initials anyway.

It said:

Meet us at Rick's house at three.

It was half past noon. She crumpled it up and pouted. She was not looking forward to this at all even though Carl agreed to speak for her. It was painful and she was not proud of it.

Meanwhile, Carol was walking about observing their new residents. Going past the graves, she saw Bigelow digging one.

Carol pulled her gun on him and pressed it against the back of his head.
"Drop the shovel, fucker," she said.

Bigelow obeyed.

"Lady, really?"

"Why the hell you digging a grave? You don't live here."

"Yet. But, we will."

"Why are you so sure?"

"The same way you and your people were a year ago. Yeah, I have asked around. We never hurt those who do not deserve it. And we want to help. We want to contribute. J.B. especially. She was forced to take charge because no one could do it but her."

"Why?"

"Hell, you are going to find out soon enough so I might as well tell you. She was our former leader's third wife. Keep in in mind he was an evil human being and she was thirteen almost fourteen. She rose in the ranks and became first wife after she had his only son. Only thing was the boy, Mohinder was deaf. He punished her as if it she done it on purpose and he murdered the boy. Turning him into a roamer. She did not kill her son. Instead, she had me keep him in a portable kennel. She was seven months old. Beautiful child. When she had his father tied up, she set him lose on him. Mo has his two top front teeth and two bottom. Just enough to eat his daddy with. She keeps Mo alive so to speak."

"She uses her own flesh and blood as a weapon?"

"No. Just that once. After we killed Cort. It was a group effort. She couldn't stomach leaving her son alone in that inferno. She decided she was not going to lay him to rest until we were certain we were settled. She did not want him to be alone."

Carol wanted to soften. She knew the agony of losing a child- natural or surrogate. She did not relent.

"Why is she so certain you all have a home here?"

"This is not our first try by a long shot. More like our fifth."

"You did not answer my question. Also, are those other places still standing?"

"All but one. They trucked in child trafficking. Yeah. Pedophiles are thriving now more ever. Sad to say my dad was one. That is how Carly-Jayne, J.B.'s oldest child got here. But, there is no need to bring that up again ever. She thinks I am her uncle, not her brother."

Now, she is certain because she has come full circle and her aunt made Rick promise," he said.

"Michonne, right?"

"Yes. Plus, her and the pretty cyclops-"

"His name is Carl, asshole," she said.

"I called him pretty. I am straight but he is a good looking kid. I told him. He really loves Jag as he calls her and she loves him. I envy them. Not because I want her sexually. I want to keep her safe."
I was dedicated to her the moment I laid eyes on her. She was a baby big with baby. She was helpless. I am an Army Ranger. Even before that it is my nature to protect others. My father was not a bad man before it jumped off. Or maybe he was and just hid it. I never would have left my sister, Boy alone with him if I thought for a moment she was in danger.

Carol put the gun down.

"Does she know you are doing this?"

"Yes. However, I volunteered. She did not ask."

She tucked her weapon away asked, "Do you need any help?"

Right then, Rick and Michonne just made it back from the church when they caught sight of Priyanka waddling in the direction of their house with a large gift bag in her hand.

Achilles was behind her with Carl and the two kids he and his step sister agreed to take care of Jeremiah and Harmon.

Michonne hugged her niece in law. She hugged her back. This hug was a pretense. They never liked each other. They pulled away with forced smiles. Her and Rick shook hands. They were merely acquaintances.

"Black Forest gâteau," Priyanka said upon seeing them.

"Is that what's in the bag?" Rick asked.

Priyanka tittered and replied, "No. It is a chess pie. But, you two remind of the dessert. A beautiful confection of chocolate cake and shavings, vanilla whipped cream and cherries. Cherries cause the little one has on red. Jagadamba gave that to her, no?" Priyanka herself had on a red pair of pants.

Michonne nodded with her hands out to accept the bag. She handed it to Rick instead.

The ninja sniffed. Rick saw the slight. Peering coldly into Priyanka's conniving jade eyes and passed it to his lover.

She looked inside the heavy bag and a saw the magnum bottle of wine in addition to the pie.

"Ooh, Nigori. I have not seen this in forever. It is a type of rice wine that you got to shake up. Nigori means cloudy. I used to drink this in college. I was studying abroad in Japan. Wow," she laughed remembering good times.

He smiled watching her to do the same.

"The two of you are such a beautiful couple. I just love the fact it took the end of the world for the rest of the world to catch up with my mother's way of thinking. There is nothing more beautiful or natural than so called interracial relationships. If you believe what it says in Genesis, Noah is the father of us all. One third are your siblings, other two thirds your cousins. There are no races. Just pigmentation and excuses to be nasty to one another. Don't you agree?" She asked.

"I hate that fact that is what it took. But, you were always so heady," she cracked.

The three of them went inside while Carl and Achilles remained on the porch for a moment.

"Carl, can I ask you a question?"
"I already know what you are going to ask. Yes, they are real and they are spectacular," he said touching his chest and laughing.

Achilles chuckled and said, "Carl, you stupid."

"I have been watching a lot Seinfeld on DVD. That shit is funny."

"True dat. Seriously, though. I want to know something."

"What?"

"What would you if you found out you had fathered a child?"

"That is out of left field. Why?"

"You fucking. So, it is a possibility."

"True. I don't know. I guess, I 'll tell you like I told Enid. I just have a little, pink squirmy thing with my name on it. I am used to taking care of a child. It would be kinda neat to have one of my own but I am not in a hurry to have one. Are you ready for yours?"

"Yeah. I am."

"I am not judging but nineteen is kind of young," he said.

"No, it is not. I am apocalypse forty."

He laughed.

"What does apocalypse forty even mean?"

"Nowadays life expectancy is not very long. Pre-apocalypse, being a black man in the United States my chances to making to forty were all ready sketchy. Hell, if anything my days have increased since the roamers."

"How old am I? Apocalypse wise?"

"A hard thirty-three, a soft thirty-five. Hell, Jagadamba's older than us both. She is forty-five. She has been through some evil, dumb shit."

"That she has. But, she lived to tell it," he said quietly.

"She told you?"

"Yes. I know it sounds almost trite but I wish you guys had came with us that day."

"In a lot of ways, I do, too."

Twenty-five minutes passed.

Carl decided to go finally see Enid.

When she saw him, she turned away from him and hid her smile.

She remained silent.

"Are you mad at me?" He asked.
"Should I be?" She asked.

"No. I am glad to see you," he said.

He got up on her and wrapped his arms around her.

A part of her was pissed beyond words while the other wanted to turn around and kiss him. So, she faced him.

He tried to kiss her but she put her hand up.

"Go brush your teeth and wash your face."

"Okay. Why?"

"I talked to Jagadamba earlier," her tone could not help but be accusatory.

"Oh. Well, I took a shower," he explained.

"Go," she pushed.

"All right. Fine," he sighed.

She followed him into the bathroom and reclined against the jamb.

He watched her watching him in the mirror.

"What did you two talk about?"

Then with all the sarcasm in the world, she replied, "The secret geopolitical feminist agenda buried deep in the song catalog of Britney Spears while so called feminists Taylor Swift and Beyonce are really backdoor misogynists who wanted nothing more than for women to go back to being subservient and barefoot and pregnant.

You, stupid. We talked about you."

"Oh. Such as?"

"How we both want the same thing. I have to admit though I did not actually think you would go to her or at least I hoped you wouldn't. Let alone spend the night and make love to her all during. You even made her scream like you did me. You went down on her. I mean, come on. I thought when I suggested it that you would tell me you loved me too much to go back there and you would have climbed into your bed with me.

Last night, I was so hopeful that you would return shortly. The phone rang and that nasty, patronizing bitch Priyanka was on the other end. She was practically laughing at me. That was so humiliating. You told her."

"I am sor-"

"Save your breath. Then I get embarrassed again. I think it is you coming home so I sprung out of bed butt naked and your dad sees my everything. We both screamed like little girls. I am just lucky your dad is just a prick and not a creep. Otherwise, I could have gotten my ass tore up. It has happened to me before."

He turned around, "It has?"
"What? You thought the mold for sexual assault was broken after it happened to your precious? Rape is par for the course if you are a woman or girl in these times. Hell, you even almost got sodomized once. Don't act shocked."

"It pisses me off and saddens me that it happens so often."

"Imagine how I felt when it happened. So, anyway. Then I wait for you to come to me. I even made your folks muffins. I just knew you would have enough sense to come be with me before noon. No, not you. Your other girlfriend did. I have give her credit for one thing. She is so odd. On one hand, she is a spoiled brat and a little creepy and predatory. Then on the other, she has a strong sense of right and wrong and decency. She likes to help people. She proposed we share you during the week."

"Like, take turns?"

"I entertained the idea until you waltz your lame ass in here and did not so much as say thank you, l love you and I will not touch her again. I got out her out my system. Something to reassure me that you were my guy. But I knew the moment she told me her name that you and me were over. I can't compete with Jagadamba and Michonne, too. Quite frankly, I do not want to. I deserve better than being third choice."

"So, you are breaking up with me?" Carl asked frowning.

She dead panned, "Whoa, now, Carl, calm down. You are scaring me. You could at least pretend not to be relieved," stray tears quivered down her face.

"I am not. I still want you, Enid," this was true to a certain extent.

"What red blooded American male wouldn't want two girlfriends on tap?"

"I am not saying that," he said.

"You are not denying it either, asshole."

"I do not want to hurt you or-"

"Or lose an opportunity to come. You are probably hard right now."

"I am sixteen. My dick has been in some constant state of hard since I was twelve. I am used to it mostly. Do I enjoy sex, yes. Shit, I am just as surprised as you were when I turned out to be better than bad at. You gave me a chance to be with a girl I have wanted to be with since before I even knew desire was the word for it. I appreciate the fact you were understanding. I knew it was a one time deal.

Yes, I was afraid to face you. I respect you and I thought you wanted a little space."

"I want you. Not space."

"I want you, too," he walked up on her and took by the chin and he kissed her hard.

After a minute or so, he pulled back from her and said in a sultry tone, "We do not talk about it but we both know I took you from Ron."

"I wanted to be taken," she said.

"Do you actually think for a moment I would ditch you for someone I honestly know next to nothing..."
about anymore? Who obviously doesn't know me? Why would I agree to something so heinous? In her scenario, we all lose," he was serious. He had no idea she had planned anything like this especially all her talk about the girl being special and not the boy and it sucked not being the only girl.

However, he also realized one thing. Something, Jagadamba mentioned earlier. He makes her go against her better judgment all the time. He knew he had to break her from doing that. She did not want her to start resenting him.

Still, he did not want to be shared nor did he want to share either of them. Was Carl confused? Maybe. Was he a hypocrite? Definitely.

"I partially blame myself for what he did to you. We both know it was not about his dad. He hated Pete," Enid said.

"He was still his dad," Carl responded.

"It started over me. We both know that," she looked guilty.

He nodded.

"We couldn't help how we felt. I have never blamed you. Why would I?"

"Until two days ago, you were too chicken shit to make it official. Then when we do, she comes along. She is just a wrench thrown in our gears. She told me your dad wanted you to choose. She told me you chose me and not her. I didn't believe her. Now, I kind of do," she kissed him this time.

"Come on. I know it is the middle of the afternoon. But, let's be together," Enid finished.

Carl saw the time on the wall and said, "Oh, shit. I have to be in a meeting. It is mandatory."

"Skip it, baby," she said.

"I can't. I, uh, sort of made a commitment. I told her I would speak for her. She told me most of what happened. It made her breakout into hives. I had to use an Epi-pen on her. Her ex murdered their infant son because he was deaf. It hurt her so bad to speak of it, her throat started to close. She almost died. I have to go. Just come with."

"Let her down. She has people who were there actually, who I am certain can tell her story far better than you."

Carl clearly was conflicted.

"Don't be like that. You may be mean and I like that about you. But, you are not coldhearted. I made a promise. I can't break it no matter who I made it to. My word means everything to me. We will be together the rest of the day. I swear but I have to do this."

Enid rolled her eyes and walked ahead of him.

"You coming or what? Bring your tight, little ass, Carl," Enid waved impatiently for him to come on.

Chapter End Notes
Next chapter will move time along.
The Pharoahs finally have a sit down with Rick and his crew.

Once they made it to his house, Carl asked his father and Michonne aside to talk to him upstairs. He summarized what Jagadamba told him leaving Priyanka, Achilles and the children downstairs for a spell.

During this time, Carol, Daryl, Glenn, Maggie, Abraham, Sasha and Tara, they invited Priyanka and Achilles who were now with Bigelow upstairs to fill in whatever blanks and confirm. Like the number of people they actually killed and how many were waiting to get inside.

Later, Gabriel, Rosita, Morgan, Eugene, Aaron and Tomeka arrived. Every essential person on both sides was in attendance except Jagadamba.

Tomeka made it clear she was Cort's daughter and that she saw her father for what he was. "He saw me as a bargaining tool. Not his only surviving child. It was actually my wedding the day when we attacked. He was giving me to this creep in exchange for weapons and flour. The guy had a mill. It was my twelfth birthday. He also used to beat me. It was worse before J.B. showed up. She saved me from what happened to her when she was my age. So, yeah, I owe her my life and I love her. I know we are only four years apart but she is like a mom slash big sister to me. As for my father, no love lost. I am glad he is dead. He . . ."

Meanwhile, Jagadamba was nervous all as get out. The only time she clearly remember feeling this type of sweet anxiety was when she would go on an audition. She took it as a good omen. She only felt that queasy and uneasy when she knew she was about to clench the part.

It was two fifty. Soon, she stood outside the Grimes' house. She had her daughter in tow. Bigelow did not let on but her felt her approach. They were that connected.

He simply walked out the house without saying a word.

"Jagadamba, are you all right? They are waiting for you," Bigelow said gently.

"I know. Did he keep his word?" She asked of Carl.

"Yes."

She smiled proudly.

"I knew he would."

"He and I spoke earlier. Did he tell you?"

"No."

"I had to put him in his place about me and you. He had the wrong impression of our relationship. I told him about how we met. I threatened him and his dad."

"Why did you threaten him?" She huffed.

"Something about him is off. Broken. He is not who you think he is. I would rather you be with that Spencer guy or the Mullet than him. At least they aren't insane. And anyways, he unmans you. You forget yourself and you just melt."

"Bigs, I know you mean well. But, you don't know him like I do."

"He told me the same about you. You knew him two lifetimes ago. I just want you to be careful. He never said he wasn't going to hurt you."

"Stay out of my business. Even my brother is trying make nice with him. They used to couldn't stand each other. Don't ruin this for me."

"Well, when he rips your heart out and trust me he is. I will be there for you. But, I am warning you. He is unsettled."
"Who isn't?" She got up and went into the house.

Carol greeted her first. They shared a moment before Carol took Carly-Jayne to where the other children were.

Everyone's turned their attention to her.

Carl involuntarily gasped when he saw her. It was damn near a swoon. He tried to resist but he blushed as a great big grin found its way across his lips. His heart was so beating so fast.

Enid looked so miserable as she watched him get up to greet her and showed her wear to Across from his father but at the young man's right hand side. Enid was to his left. He never once quit staring at her. His desire for her was so apparent.

Jagadamba returned his stare.

She broke from it long enough to say to the group, "You all know who I am and also who I used to be. And I am sure by now you all know Michonne is my aunt and I used to live nextdoor to the Grimeses. They were, are like family. I hope none of you hold the fact against me or them," she clutched Carl's hand just for a moment. He clutched back.

She continued, "With that said. Believe it or not, I do not do well in front a live audience. I like to learn people's names and something about them so they will not be strangers anymore. I used to walked through the studio audience and get the names of all the people I could to put myself at ease. I know Glenn and Maggie are married and about to have the cutest, healthiest baby. Enid is a survivor. Sasha is a firefighter. Carol is Xena in a sweater set. Eugene is the bomb dot com. So, you must be, Daryl?" She asked point at Abraham.

Abraham scoffed, "Daryl cries himself asleep at night wishing he were me. Hell, I am cooler than a polar bear's toenails. I am Abraham, little lady."

"I believe you got me fucked up. That is the other way around, dude," Daryl replied.

"Anyway, before the interruptIon, I was a sergeant in the United States Army. Desert Storm, Afghanistan," Abraham finished.

Jagadamba's eyes lit up, "You may have known my dad. My dad was an Army captain. He served as a doctor during Desert Storm. They used to call him black Hawkeye or B.H.," She smiled revealing her deep dimples.

"Go fuck a baby duck. Bushrod Anthony was your pops?" Abraham slapped his knee.

"Yes, sir," she and Achilles said.

"Walt Disney had it right. What a small, small, small fucking world after all. See this scar?" He pulled up his shirt to show a deep scar on his left side.

The Anthony siblings nodded. Michonne took note that Priyanka looked more than annoyed hearing about her stepfather. She silently pointed it out to Rick.

Abraham shared, "I was shot by enemy fire. Three other men died. Have your daddy tell it, the Good Lord through him saved my life that day. His quick thinking staunched the bleeding and removed most of the shrapnel. Hell, he had a healing touch. Plus, he had a deep, booming voice and even bigger laugh. Nice looking dude. Chicks dug him. He got more ass than a toilet seat."

"Abe, I am pretty sure they don't want to hear about their daddy getting it in," Sasha said.

"It is fine. I know my father had an appetite," Jagadamba said knowing full well the scandalous origins of her conception as well as her father's rep for being a ladies' man.

"That is putting it lightly," Priyanka said a snidely knowing the same.

Instead of getting an attitude, Jagadamba gently commanded, "Priya, why don't you go and get dinner prepared for our hosts. Because surely getting the rest of our people in at this point, forty people, should only be a formality. Am I correct?" She said looking straight at Rick.

"That remains to be seen. I still have a couple questions," he said. Carl and Michonne rolled their eyes at him.

Sure, Rick wanted her there very badly. He really did love her like she was his but he had to make sure she was the same person plus Priyanka creeped him out as did his favorite Achilles by extension. Rick after all had been the first person to ever call him Chill (kill.)

"Fair enough. Priyanka, go. Take Marco with you. And get Suchin to help," she demanded.

Her sister defiantly got up and called for the eight year old.
"Achilles?" Priyanka asked. 
He turned to her and said, "I am needed here." He then turned back around. He did not appreciate her remark about his father or the implication about their little sister. 
She went away in a huff but knew better than too disobey. 
"Everyone in this house who is not a Pharoah is entitled to the fish slash chicken fry. Actual catfish and tilapia and real game hens. No one else except Denise and Spencer is to know. Ooh, and Tobin. He is so congenial. I am sure it has been ages since any one of y'all have had meat that was not wild like racoon or squirrel or dog even or in a can," Jagadamba said every bit like a leader looking dead at Rick as she said it. It was a challenge as if to say I am not afraid of you but I respect you and I want your approval. She wanted him to be hard on her like her father would have been. She wanted to show her mettle. 
"Really? Why so generous?" Rick feeling something very close to blessed at the moment. 
"You have something I need. I cannot afford not to be," she smiled. 
Rick smiled back. She had her father's smile and temperament. 
"You have things we need as well," he replied. 
She then said, " Let's carry on, then. So, you are Daryl. You remind me of a quote by Lisa Simpson concerning Nelson."
He gave her a quizzical side glance. 
She said doing a spot on Yeardley Smith impersonation, "He's not like anybody I've ever met. He's like a riddle wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a vest." 
Daryl almost smiled when he asked, "You think I am ugly?" He said knowing what episode of the Simpsons she was talking about and the whole quote. 
She smiled and they both said, "Lisa's Date with Density."
"You are a Simpsons woman. I used to love that show. Got through some hard times, Jagger-dagger," he said woefully mispronouncing her name on purpose. 
"Me, too. Just call me J.B.," she smiled. 
He smiled back for a millisecond. 
She doesn't take herself too seriously, Daryl thought. 
She resumed. 
A hour went by. During which time, Carl and Jagadamba resumed their ogle-fest was so intense and blatant even after her brother was done explaining something crucial he did during the siege and he called her name to confirm, she said nothing but instead she was smiling hard at Carl. Abraham saw this. He snapped his fingers at the teens and interjected, "If the two of you are done eye fucking one another, maybe, just maybe we can get through this in a timely fashion. I am getting hungry." 
Enid noticed it but tried to ignore it. Now her boyfriend exposed, she punched him in the arm. Hard. Now Carl and Jagadamba only shared passing glances. Shame took over. 
Over the next two hours, she filled in the blanks and reiterated things the other thought sounded suspect. She even had photographic proof on an old cell phone of the things she knew would beggar belief. 
During the middle of her interrogation, a thought occurred. 
Jagadamba asked, "When you guys were stabbing people in their heads while they slept-" 
"Don't say it like that," Rick corrected. Everyone who participated bristled at her comment. 
"Let's not put diamonds on doodo, people. I am responsible for the extinguishing of ninety-three human lives, five of those lives I took directly. They did nothing when he murdered my son. My beautiful, helpless eight month old little boy. He talked about it like he had drowned a cat or took out a runty piglet. Not like his son. And threatened to rape my daughter when comes of age. He threatened me with taking out my siblings which includes Bigelow and Boyardee. To top it off he married off his twelve year old daughter. I mean, come on. She barely has breasts," she said fighting
back debilitating sadness with righteous indignation.
"Hey!" Tomeka said covering her chest out of shame.
"Sorry, Tommie. I said it to prove a point.
Anyway, nothing I just said excuse what I did nor am I proud of it. But, I was justified as you were. All of them deserved it as I am sure the people you all massacred deserved it. So, I am not judging. I am observing. Now as you guys were at Negan's compound, did you see any toys or signs of children or families?"
"Why?" Daryl asked.
"Isn't it, obvious? If there were no signs of true domesticity- you were at a satellite location. Cort had one, too. You did not kill Negan at all. You guys just didn't poke the bear. Oh, no. You killed the bear's husband, you gangbanged it and made the cubs watch then made it bathe in bleach afterwards to get rid of the DNA evidence before setting its house on fire."
Abraham asked incredulous and a touch disrespectful do to her age and sex, "What makes you so sure? We went in there gangbusters. Even if we did not kill him. I wouldn't want to fuck with us."
Bigelow chuckled.
"You are kidding, right? No way any of you are this naive. If so, how have you all lived so long? Honestly. There is always somebody bigger and badder than you, Superman," Bigelow said scoffing.
"What he is saying is we got them first," Michonne added not liking his tone.
Jagadamba sighed.
"You are wrong. You see this is deja vu for us. We have been on the other side of this. Cort's satellite location had been attacked. Someone, the, I don't recall their moniker at the moment. It doesn't matter. You see to men like Cort and Negan, you guys are the mad dogs, troublemakers, the bad guys and you need to be brought to heel. I mean think about it. You just didn't kill a lot of them, you took their shit from the Hilltop. They are going to seek you out. They might even herd you on the road. Oh, this is so bad. If you guys were anyone else, I would say it has been real and we would leave and dare you to challenge it.
Let you all keep the food because we have so much more. Take our other shit and get the hell out of dodge. It is only a matter of hours, days, at best weeks before they come a callin'. When this happened to the Pharaohs, they were relentless. He was particularly cruel and fucked up with them because they quote killed more of his people than he was comfortable with. End quote. I am half tempted to more or less force everyone in this room by gunpoint if need be to get on my bus so we can at least try to get the fuck out of here. Screw the rest of them."
"We can't do that. We would never do that. You got to stand up to the assholes," Carl said.
"No, you don't. Sometimes, you just get fuck out their way and pray they don't notice you," she said.
Rick added, "Said the girl who just-"
"I am not a girl. I quit being a girl when the minute I figured out there was a baby inside me. I am a woman. I was born June twenty-fifth, nineteen ninety-nine. My age of sixteen almost seventeen is just a fact, math but I am not a girl. Hope that was not disrespectful but that is how I feel."
"The hell you ain't," Bigelow said angrily getting up from the table.
"What is that supposed to mean?" She asked.
"What do you think? I am not spelling it out in front of these strangers. Though it is fairly obvious your . . . investment in these people," he said looking at right at Carl.
"These people? My auntie is here. She is literally the only living blood family I probably have on Earth other my siblings and my daughter."
Then Bigelow rudely said,"So, we are going to over look the one eyed elephant in the room?"
Rick stood up and cocked his head to the left.
He then said, "Hey, fucker, I have to remind you of something. You are still guest in our community. If we want, we could easily keep Jag, her daughter, her siblings and that sumbitch's daughter and the other children. Take your supplies and kill the adults who won't cooperate. You are wrong. He are the bigger and the badder."
"Your certainty in your ability is going to get you and your people killed and or subjugated. Mark my words, you cocky wannabe Wyatt Earp. You and your people don't know shit," Bigelow looked him dead in the eye before storming off. 

Jagadamba could not believe Bigelow's behavior. She got up to go after him. Carl stood to go with but she stopped him, "This does not come before you."

Enid smirked when she put him in his place. He sat back down. Then Achilles asked Rick, "What did they do?"

"What did who do?" Rick asked. "The Saviors to warrant such retaliation? It must have been a humdinger as my daddy used to say," Achilles said very curious now. He wanted to know just how murderous they were. "We wanted their share of the Hilltop. Our people were on the verge of starving. We had to do something. I knew this would not be met without violence so we struck the first blow."

"So, I am trying to understand. They had not done anything to you. You attacked under the recommendation of some cracker who calls himself Jesus. Didn't you used to be a cop, Rick? And you, auntie, were a lawyer. I hear tale that what's your name, Tara, was a police cadet. Did it ever dawn on any of you to investigate? Cort did. That was how he was able to enslave and take them down so thoroughly. He did not go in there blind or by hearsay. He had a spy. Me."

Sasha rejoindered, "We didn't. Abraham, Daryl and I came across some of his men about eight or ten of them on the road. Without any provocation, they were said that everything we owned now belonged to Negan. Demanded to be taken back where we lived. Tried to kill us. One of them actually took Daryl to the back of the vehicle and tried to kill him. Daryl took him out and dispatched the rest with a rocket launcher. We know what they want. They want it all. And we cannot let those bastards have it."

"Fair enough. But what Jagadamba and Bigelow was saying was simply this. You guys are the bad guys the same way North was to the South after Civil War. It is irrational and evil but it is what it is. Now..."

Outside Jagadamba was pleading with Bigelow. Bigelow, stop it. Okay. I get it. Yes, I admit I am not being objective right now and it is not just all about him or my aunt. I don't know about you but I am tired of traveling. Plus, they are going to need us soon when things get shitty," Jagadamba pouted.

"I don't want to fight that asshole's war. You said yourself if it were anyone else we would get out of here. What if you are right? Those Saviors are out there roaming around looking for Prick and his people. What if they found ours instead. What if Boyardee is dead because of it?"

"Do not talk like that. She is a fighter and plus it is too soon to strike now. Unlike Rick, I am sure they are going to do a little research first," she said.

"Think of your daughter at least."

"That is all I do."

"Really? You are willing to put her life on the line for them? I know you two have some kind of childhood sweetheart thing going. It is all very Wonder Years-"

She said very quietly, "Don't make fun. You don't understand."

"There is nothing to understand. You are thinking with your heart and not your brain. I know he made you holler but is the dick really that good?"

Jagadamba punched him in the mouth. She made him bleed.

"You have never spoken to me like this before. Don't do it again. Ever," she said. He spat and replied, "I deserve that. That is what I get for teaching your little ass how to hit. You are not thinking of anyone but yourself. This is not like you."

Rather name off all the times she thought of others, she decided to appeal to his softer side.

"Admit it. If you were given a second chance with Martina, wouldn't you take it?"

"Of course I would. Enid is dead ringer for her. But, Jag-"

"No. Let's face it. My folks are dead. I thought for sure Carl and his folks were, too. I gave up hope of ever seeing him again. Then boom there he is. He still loves me, too. We swore we would never..."
loose each other again. Be torn apart again. We shared a lot this morning. Real loving shit. For the first time in years, I feel safe and not coerced or indebted."
By indebted she met him. It was bad enough she unsafe. But, indebted wounded him.
He addressed it by simply saying this, "We need to get our people in by nightfall. If something has happened to Boy. I am doing the same to Carl."
"The time we awasting debating, they could be in here by now. Come on. Let's get this shit show on the road," she said sweetly trying camouflge the harsh ass thing she had she said to him. He who murdered his father whom he loved and used to admire for her sake.
They went back inside. An hour later the remainder of the Pharaohs were within the walls of Alexandria.
Dare

Chapter Summary

Priyanka proves how awful she truly is. Carl suspects he and Jagadamba have buzzard luck. A first happens in Alexandria.

Two weeks ave passed. The Pharoahs thanks to the leadership and cooperation of stoic but approachable Bigelow, the surprisingly affable Achilles, the charismatic and pragmatic Jagadamba and the duplicitous pleasantries of Priyanka had fallen in and gotten along famously with Alexandrians. Of, course there were those who did not trust them such as Daryl, Sasha, Rosita. Also, Carol to certain extent.

She and Jagadamba had an exchange on the latter's second day there. She recognized her and remembered how much Sophia used to love that show and how they would watch it together. "You haven't changed that much. My Sophia had always wanted to meet you. I am so dreadfully sorry about your son," Carol whispered.

The girl let stray tears fall. Something about Carol touched her. She heard the past tense about Carol's daughter.

"I am so sorry, too," she looked down and wiped her eyes out smearing her mascara. "Oh, come here," she hugged the girl who proceeded to weep uncontrollably. She couldn't help it. Carol cried, too.

"You smell like my Momma and feel like her, too," she sniffled with her eyes closed for a minute there pretended she was in fact hugging her mother. They separated after a minute or two.

"Oh, look at her. She is precious. My name is Carol. What is your name?"

"Carly-Jayne. I like your hair," she said.

"Thank you. What a nice name. I like your hair, too. You are so very blonde. She is downright towheaded. My Sophia was a dirty blonde."

"Her being so damn blonde means she is going to get away with murder. But, on the same token, it also increases her chances of being murdered. So many people have a hate on for blondes," she with her hands in her daughter's curls and waves.

"I got to give you credit. You sure know how to throw a dead cat in a party room," Carol said. "I am half Indian, it is what we do. Always realistic."

Carol turned her attention back to the toddler, "What's in your hand?"

"My dolphin Joey. . ." And Carol could relate to her being an abused wife and a mourning mother. She also knew being abused at such a young age and for so long either made her sympathetic to the plight of others or raging sociopathic bully. She had not decided which yet.

Back to now.

As for Rick, he had his misgivings but largely ignored them because one- he helped raise Jagadamba, so he knew if there was a problem in her group it wouldn't be from her or Achilles for that matter.

His radar gun pinged at Priyanka. Particularly for the way she disregarded Michonne and especially for her poor behavior at Mohinder's funeral.

It took place their tenth day there. It was close to dusk. It took Michonne, Carol, Bigelow and Rick to talk her finally into laying her son to rest.

Boyardee kept the portable kennel covered with a blanket. She had cut a hole in it to put the handle
through. She laid it down in front of Jagadamba who was standing near the open grave. She was trying very hard not to be emotional about it because she knew her little boy had been dead a better part of a year. It was not going so well.

Boyardee had the foresight to put him in the kennel backwards so when she pulled him out, he would not bite her. And it would be easier to put him down if she did not see his face.

The weapon of choice was a nail file Tomeka had sharpened to a fine point. Her little brother was an infant and it would not take much to dispatch him in addition to the fact his mother would not want to use a big cumbersome blade on her baby. She knew Jagadamba could not, would not be able to go through with it with that. Nor would she be able to witness it.

She looked down at the reanimated shell of her son. She had the nail file in hand and had the weapon poised to do it.

She pierced him a little and dark green ooze that used to be blood seeped out.

She gasped loudly and she dropped the weapon.

She put her hand over her own mouth to try and mask her lamentations. It was no go. She turned to clearly be comforted by someone. Achilles and Carl were standing side by side. Both had their arms open to her. She chose Carl of course.

Her selection smarted Achilles' ego but it only did for moment. Especially once he heard her ask Carl this, "Will you do it? I don't think I can."

He took a deep breath and whispered, "I don't want you hating me forever. This is something only you can do. You love him, you should be the one to do it."

She looked up at him frowning and pouting.

"I won't be mad at you. You'd be my hero, really. Aegis, remember?"

"The first time you get angry with me," he widened his eye and gave her a come on now look.

"I hate the fact you know me. Okay. I will try again. Will you hold my other hand though? It will help, I think."

"Okay," he took her by the right hand. She was left handed.

She knelt down beside her son who was struggling to turn himself around.

As she readied herself, Tomeka exclaimed, "Wait."

"Why?" Carl asked.

"He is my brother. I just want to touch him one last time " she pouted.

Jagadamba motioned for her to come near.

She touched his desiccated skin. There was still some hair attached.

"I love you, Mo," she kissed the back of his head. Carl just looked at her. He did not know Tomeka had emotions.

"You okay?" Carl asked.

"You ask stupid questions. If this was Judith, would you be okay? Asshat," she grumbled.

"I did not mean to offend you. I can relate. I thought my sister was dead for months. It feels like shit because you feel like you let them down. You are the oldest it is your job to protect them. It hurts like hell when you don't."

"He did not mean anything by it. Don't be so mean about it," Jagadamba added.

"You know nothing, Carl. You got your baby back. I helped pull him out. Seeing him like this," she began to cry.

"So did I. I cut my mom open and pulled her out. Had to shoot my mom afterwards because she was not going to make it. I took care of when my sister when my dad was too distraught to. So, I know," he refrained from being angry. He was honest.

Tomeka softened and just continued to weep.

"I am so sorry," she sniffled.

"No, I am sorry. You did not let him down. Your father did. That goes for you, too, Jag. This is not your fault."

"Trust me. Once you become a parent, and you love that child. Everything that goes wrong with your child feels like your fault. It just does," she sighed.

"I can imagine," he said.
"No, you can't," she said quietly.
"I finally see what you see in him," Tomeka looked at Carl like she had just met him. She developed a new respect for him.
Tomeka got up.
She turned her back to the action but remained in the area. The only space available was the one near Rick. She blushed a little whenever she saw him. She had a crush.
He is such a good man and handsome, too, she thought.
"I am sorry. Anything we can do let us know," Rick said sympathetically to the awkward, skinny tween putting his hand on her shoulder.
She said nothing but nodded.
Michonne was of course on Rick's other side while Achilles and Priyanka were near her. Priyanka let out a loud sigh as if annoyed by her sister's hesitation. Rick and Michonne both made a note of it.
"You can do this. He is already gone. This is not him. You are doing his memory a favor," Carl whispered holding her hand tightly.
"I know. But, he is moving. After I do this, he won't be anymore. Then it will really be real. He is dead. My son is dead," she bawled.
Carl wanted to do it for her but he knew he couldn't.
Holding Carl's hand, Jagadamba picked up the blade and aimed.
She held it there for a couple minutes trembling.
Priyanka grunted and stomped her foot.
"Jagadamba, do the thing like we discussed. This is not healthy for anyone especially you," Priyanka groaned.
Carl turned and rolled his eye at Priyanka. Hell, everyone did.
"She doesn't need you hollering at her. What is your problem?" Carl scoffed at her.
"Carl, she is right. We did talk about it," Jagadamba was such a little sister when it came to her older siblings. This remained true despite her suspicions about Priyanka. They were literally stand-ins for her absentee parents.
She would do whatever they asked most of the time. She loved them and the were all she had left of her life before everything. That is until she came upon Michonne, Rick and Carl. The trio still had not won her complete loyalty yet.
She closed her eyes and drove the blade in wincing as she heard the squelching. When she opened her eyes and realized he was no longer moving, she broke away from Carl and ran to the edge of the cemetery, vomiting, gasping and weeping.
Carl and Achilles both went over to her with the instinct to comfort her. Bigelow, Tomeka and Boyardee knew to let her have her space.
"Don't touch me right now. You do not want me taking this out on either of you," she warned. They both backed away.
Seizing the opportunity, Priyanka grabbed the white linen blanket her sister had washed and perfumed especially for the burial. She wrapped him up.
Achilles grabbed her arm and asked, "What are you doing?"
She snatched away.
"Getting this over with. There is no need to drag this out any longer than we already have," she said coldly.
Rick interjected, "He is not yours to bury. Stop." Her pregnancy was the only reason he did not pull his weapon. Only why reason any of them did not.
She ignored them and proceeded to place him in the grave. She was about to throw dirt on him when Tomeka not caring about her pregnant status turned around and pushed her down and yelled, "Jagadamba, get your ass over here. Your bitch made sister has lost her fucking mind."
Jagadamba wiped her mouth and stood up.
She immediately saw what her sister had done and became incensed. As was Achilles but not for the same reasons.
He pulled Tomeka by the arm and slammed her to the ground.
Michonne and Carl reacted before anyone else could, "Get your goddamned hands off her." They said in unison to Achilles as they helping her off the ground. They gave her to Boyardee.

Achilles declared, "You do not touch the mother of my child. Ever. I don't care how crazy she is acting."

He cradled his step-sister slash girlfriend slash babymama who was fuming. Angrier than she had been in awhile, Jagadamba reached into the grave and retrieved her child's corpse. She put him up to her chest one last time.

"You have no right! Don't you ever come near either one my children without my permission. Who the fuck do you think you are, you heartless bitch?"

"I am not heartless. I am always the one who does what no else can."

"Do not flatter yourself. That mantle is mine. Leave," she said.

Then very poorly conveying remorse, she said, "I loved Mo. I did. I miss his beautiful, little face. I-"

"You loved him. Past tense. As in you don't anymore. Well, I do and I always will. And I hope and pray you never, ever know what it feels like to lose your child. If the tables were turned I would not be callous towards you. Leave before I have Bigelow drag you out."

"Are you threatening me? Huh? Are you threatening my baby," Priyanka pushed Achilles away and wobbled up on her own. Her cheese has fallen off its cracker.

"She is not threatening us, Priya. Stop it," Achilles said.

"Yes, she was. You can't be on my side and Jagadamba's side, too. You have to choose, Chill," she said forcing his hand on her stomach as a reminder of she was to him.

Achilles looked genuinely confused like a puppy trying to decide which person he should go home with.

"I will make it easy for you, Achilles," Jagadamba reached into the band of Carl's jeans and snatched his gun. She pointed the weapon at her sister and brother. The gun looked natural in her hands.

"Do you want me to tell you what Cort told me about your involvement in my son's death, Priyanka? Do you want Achilles to know? Let's see how he drinks your bathwater then," All of her righteous indignation came out.

"Cort was a liar. He couldn't be trusted."

"Oh and you can? You sold me to him. You think he did not bust his ass telling me that first chance he got? What stopped him? His undying love and devotion? I remember overhearing you say to someone, 'It is not like she is a virgin anyway. Like it was my fault I wasn't.'

To totally deflect any truth Jagadamba had about her, she decided to break her little sister's confidence.

"It was your fault to a certain extent and you know it. You chose to runaway. You are the one who hitchhiked. Unbecoming for somebody whose supposed to have a one hundred and seventy-five I.Q. A fact that you boast about at least once a week. You told me why as if I had not already figured it. You wanted to return to Georgia. To Atlanta. To that goddamned camp I told you about. You wanted to be with the boy next door," Priyanka pointed at Carl with a snarl and a smirk-snirk. Jagadamba lowered her weapon as shame and heartbreak fell upon her face for a moment. She then busted out laughing. Taking her sister and almost everyone else by surprise.

"I always suspected that you regarded what happened to me as my fault. How very old world of you. Always blame the female survivor and not the male perpetrator. Anyway, so what if I did to leave to catch up with him? Not just him though. His mom and Shane, too. They liked me. Hell, loved me even. I wanted to go somewhere I was wanted. You were a total bitch to me. Chill was so busy smelling your farts, he couldn't be bothered with me. Chill has been in love with you since we were children.

And you will never admit it but you intentionally got on the turnpike because you wanted to hurt me. You could not think of better way. Thinking I could trust my sister I told you everything about me and him. You used it against me. Fairly certain in someway I have yet to discover you probably still are because that is who you are. You don't know if you want to control or destroy me or some combo of. I guess the Nazi blood you could got from your dad and all that stuck up Indian caste system bullshit you get from our mom's side has you torn. You spent way more time with the
Chowdhurys than I did. Apparently, being fair and half white German is far more acceptable than being dusky and half black American. Think Grammy called me an uppity nigger in Punjabi once. What's so pathetic I look just like that old bitch from the nose down. My eyes are my dad's though. His dad's. Michonne's eyes, Achilles', Carly-Jayne's, Mohinder's, probably your baby's, too."

Annoyed, Priyanka said, "I will give you credit. You give good speech. You probably would probably have an Oscar by now. Our Amma was a racist old cunt and you Anthonys have big, black, beautiful starry skies for eyes. What does this have to do with anything?"

"So, what you said was no great revelation. You did not hurt me. Anybody who heard my story, knows he and I have a history and anyone with half a brain figured out that one. Hell, he came to that conclusion. When?" She turned to ask him.

"About five nights ago when we were in bed," Carl was a completely a matter of fact.

"Dude, really? Your dad and my aunt are standing right there and we are at my son's funeral. They know we are, you know. If they didn't, they do now. That is so embarrassing. Way more than what my cunt of a sister just tried to do. It is called decorum. Speaking of which, Priyanka, I have spent enough time on you. Not everything is about you. Leave or I swear I will shoot you in the shoulder. Pregnant or not, " she raised the gun again.

Priyanka had nothing else to say. She threw her hands up out of disgust as she headed out the cemetery. Achilles remained at least for a minute.

He took up for his woman. Kinda, "I know it was not your fault. It has been a while for her in many respects but she forgets how young twelve was. How young thirteen was. How young sixteen is. How young nineteen really is. We are children compared to her. Stupid ass children. That is how she regards us and knows how to treat us. She-"

Michonne chimed, "Except when she is fucking you of course. I bet she treats you like a man then."

He looked over at his aunt and grimaced.

"Don't be stupid, Chill. You know how vindictive she is. You will never see your baby. Go. I have people to look after me," Jagadamba encouraged.

Achilles grimaced. Before leaving, he told Mohinder bye and patted Mohinder's corpse then ran after Priyanka.

Michonne proudly looked at her niece. Carl was giving her the same glare. Their eyes caught one another's. They both smiled wider in agreement. They understood why all those people followed her so willingly. She was not afraid to stand up to bullies.

They kept on staring even after that moment passed. His hands were in his pockets bringing attention to his lankiness. Her arms were folded making her cleavage spill over a little more than it would naturally. As they looked at one another in a flurry of inappropriate thoughts, Tomeka being at the age where one noticed and was fascinated by everything the older kids and adults were doing and picked up on the duo.

"Hmmph," she said aloud.

This caught Michonne's attention.

"You say something, Tommie?" She asked.

"Nope. Just thinking."

An hour passed.

They buried the boy and followed her aunt and Rick back to her place. Enid was there with Judith, Carly-Jayne, Marco and Ana. She managed to make dinner.

"They had a screaming contest. C.J. won by a mile," Enid said refraining from kissing Carl in front of Jagadamba. It was her night and not Jag's. Jagadamba was truly there to be with Michonne who could relate.

"I bet," Carl said giving his hat to the child.

Drollly, Jagadamba said, "Tell Carl thank you. Don't say mister. Carl is fine. Right, Carl?"

"Yeah. It is fine, Carly-Jayne," he said.

"Okay. Thanks, Carl," she said smiling and hugging his leg.

"Welcome," he leaned down and patted her back.

Jagadamba turned to Enid and said, "Thank you for watching my eldest. And making Mo's
tombstone. It is nice as tombstone's... go."

"It was no problem," Enid said. She thought welcome would have sounded trite and insensitive. Jagadamba nodded.

Enid offered her hug and she accepted it.

"I made some saffron rice with peas and onions and some Dinty Moore. It is good," Enid offered her frenemy as they separated.

Clearly, she was not herself. She looked tired and her eyes swollen. Her nose was red. She looked lost.

"I am not hungry. I just wanna lie down and hold C.J. Aunt Michonne, is it okay if she eats in your room, more than likely your bed?" Jagadamba was going to stay in Michonne's old room.

"Sure," she replied hunching.

Carly-Jayne following the conversation declared, "Momma, I don't want to bed. I want to stay down here with Carl and Judy."

That was the first time Jagadamba ever looked at Carl with something close to hatred in her eyes. After all, her daughter chose a basically a stranger over her.

Seeing this, Carl made the three year old and his sister a plate of food apiece. He was not hungry. He picked up Judith and said, "Come on. Let's all go."

Jagadamba's eyes filled with love again. She smiled as she clutched her daughter's hand. As they ascended up the steps, a hush went over the kitchen among the adults and they all looked at Enid.

"I don't control him or her," Enid said with her face feeling red.

Ten minutes passed. She undressed into her night clothes in front of him. Jagadamba kissed his cheek and said about her sister's outburst at the funeral, "Thank you for pretending out there."

"No big deal. Bitch had to be put in her place."

"Ooh. You said a bad word," Carly-Jayne interjected with a mouth full of food.

"Do not talk with your mouthful, Ceej. Be an example for Judy," she said.

The almost four year old said okay.

Jagadamba turned back to Carl and asked frowning, "Did you have to add the part about us being in bed? Makes me sound whore-y."

"I was claiming you. You see how the other men look at you. We belong to each other," he sunnily said.

"Well, anyway. I am surprised she stooped so low. Today of all days," she plopped herself down on the bed fussingly adjusting the pillow.

"Selfish."

"It is more than that. She hates me. I have known to some extent my whole life, I guess. I just hoped I could convince her otherwise. But, she never made it so apparent and undeniable. She has never spoken to me like that in front of an audience before. I have to embrace the fact. I do not know what hurts more. Her or burying my son. I love them both so much. I don't know what to do," she began to cry again into the pillow.

Carl attempted to comfort her but she shook him off. She did not like being touched when she was angry and hurt. It hurt his feelings.

However, C.J. hugged her Momma and even Judith patted her leg and said, "It is okay. Shh." She didn't reject them. She was adamant about not being unnecessarily mean to children.

Another ten minutes later, ego already bruised, he gathered up enough gumption to ask her in a low, pitiful voice, "Is what she said true? Did you really runaway to find me? Is what happened to you my fault?"

Jagadamba sighed and said, "Do not make this about you, Carl." She lied down and covered her head.

He left her alone and entertained the children while they are eating.

Soon after, he made a quick trip downstairs and made them some Kool-Aid spiked with Benadryl to get the girls to sleep quicker. Carol had taught him that trick.

"They will be out like lights in twenty minutes flat," she said.
As soon as they were sound asleep, he woke up Jagadamba long enough to put her daughter in her arms.

He had Judith in his when she asked in the sweetest timbre of her voice, "Please stay. Enid can have my Monday. I need you."

Smiling from ear to ear, he said, "All right. I just got to give Judy to Dad and change."

"Hurry," she said.

He did just that.

And soon he laid down behind her and put his arm around her. Two hours passed before Enid was ready to retire for the evening. She got permission from Rick and Michonne to stay the night with Rick giving the proviso, "For the love of all that is Holy, do not be loud like last time. I know the two of you are active. I get it. I wanted to shoot my gun near my head to bust my eardrums out."

Carl respected Enid enough to tell her what was going on.

"I figured as much, Carl. She buried her baby today. I would be a raging bitch if I objected. It is okay. Tell her she can keep her Monday," Enid felt like she could be a little generous.

Carl had no idea but she and Bigelow had started making out three nights before. Unlike Carl and Jagadamba, they knew discretion was the better part of valor. Plus, it being secret made it more fun. Still, Enid could not resist the urge to hurt her own feelings and look in on them.

The door was open. Now they were sleeping face to face breathing the same air. Carly-Jayne was in between them on her back and their fingers were laced together on top her tiny belly. Her hands were in top of theirs.

They looked every bit like a family. Enid fought back tears as she turned around and was surprised to see Michonne behind her doing the same.

Compelled by self-pity, Enid said, "She has taken him from us."

"Most definitely," Michonne replied feeling a little resentful against her niece. She did not realize until right then how much she missed having his undivided.

Four hours passed.

Carly-Jayne woke up. She had to pee but was confused as to who she wanted to take her to the bathroom.

She looked at her Momma then she looked at Carl. She did this for two minutes before deciding to shake Carl awake.

"Stop, Ceej," he said softly mostly still sleep. She shook his shoulder again harder.

"Stop playing, Carly-Jayne. Go back to sleep," he said.

Jagadamba was starting to stir when Carly-Jayne stood up and jumped on Carl's stomach before slamming her thirty pound frame down on him and screeched, "Wake up, Papa, I got to go tinkle." Both he and Jagadamba sat up. They looked at each other dimly lit darkness.

"Carly-Jayne, what did you just say?" He asked gently as he held her little hands.

"I don't know," she lied hunching her shoulders. She felt embarrassed.

"Carly-Jayne, sweetheart, what did I tell you about fibbing?" Jagadamba asked.

"Only bad people tell lies," she pouted still sitting on Carl.

"Are you a bad person?"

She shook her head no.

"So, what did you say?" Her mother finished.

"I said, I said I had to go tinkle. And I wanted him to take me," like most children being evasive came natural.

"What did you call him, sweetheart? Don't be ashamed. It is okay."

"Papa," she then jumped off him and hid her face in her mother's bosom.

He sat there speechless letting in soak in for a second. He just called me papa, he thought. And I don't mind. I don't mind it at all. Hell, I kind of like it.

"Why?" Jagadamba inquired.

"Because."

"Carly-Jayne Dalton, because is not an answer."
"It is okay," he finally spoke up. "Shh. I want to know why. Did someone tell you to say it?" Jagadamba pressed her child gently. "No one told me. I said it because he is nice to me and he teaches me things and he protects me and he loves you and you love him. Tommie read to me that is what papas do. It made her cry. She said she wishes her papa was like that. I thought about it and I said Carl is like that. She told me I was blesseded then she's told me to go play with Marco and Ana. That is all."

Just as Jagadamba was about to suggest he do it, his intuition told him to scoop her up into his arms, sit her in his lap and say, "I do love your mommy. And because of that I love you, too."
"You do?" She half smiled, half frowned.

"I do. You can call me anything you want. If you want to call me Carl, that is fine. Or if you want to call me Papa or dad or whatever, I am fine with that, too."

Carly-Jayne nodded and hugged his neck ad tightly as she could. She grunted with effort.

Jagadamba looked at them. She was complete awe of Carl. She felt her ovaries bloom like a flower. She began to cry but this time it was happy tears. For the first time in what seemed like forever in her life and by extension the life of daughter everything was going to be something very close to resembling okay. Good, even.

Carl continued, "Let's get you to the bathroom before you have an accident."
He threw her over his shoulder went for the door.

She listened as their whispered voices trailed off.

She was elated about his relationship with her daughter for a couple seconds anyway.
"What if something bad happens to him? She would be devastated. I would be devastated. Oh, no," she knew Carl was a bit of a thrill seeker. She however actually was not. She rather be safe than reckless.

What she didn't realize as his very thrill seeking nature is what made her so appealing to him. She was very beautiful, not white, had a kid, killed a bunch of people and as far he was concerned out of his league. And of course, she was Michonne's niece.

She was now officially waiting for the other shoe to drop.
Five minutes later, Achilles came to the Grimes' house door hysterically.

Rick heard it. He thought about calling out for Carl to answer but decided against it. So mark his surprise when he saw Carl in the hall standing beside the bathroom door with a huge smile on his face.
"I know you hear that," Rick said.
"Of course. My hearing is better than ever actually," Carl said coolly with his arms crossed.
"Then answer the door."
"I can't. Carly-Jayne is in there. She told me to wait for her. The moment I leave then boom here she comes out terrified. Which makes her mom mad at me. Which means she is not going to want to have s-e-x with me for awhile. See, there is too much at stake here."
"Rick grunted then said, "I can't even get mad at that. Damnit, I understand. There is no agony greater than when a woman you want cutting you off. You never get more hard or horny than when that happens. It is torture."
"You stay awake at night thinking of different ways you can over share, don't you?" Carl smirked.

He chuckled as he ruffled Carl's thick, shoulder length dark chocolate brown hair and went to answer the door.

He ran down the stairs. With gun in hand, he looked out the window and saw a visibly upset Achilles.

When he opened the door, he blurted something intelligible at Rick.
"Achilles, slow down. What?" He asked feeling very groggy.
"I need Jag. Priya is in labor."
"What do you need Jag for?" Rick sneered.
"Oh, gee. I do not know. She has been studying midwifing for months. Plus, she has had two of them. I need her. I know what Priyanka did earlier was foul. My baby, my baby has not done anything to anybody. Please," Achilles begged.
"It is up to her. I will go get her," Rick sniffed. During their exchange, Michonne came out the bedroom in time to see Carly-Jayne and hear her say, "Papa, I need you help me up to the sink so I can wash my hands."
Michonne stopped in her tracks long enough for her and Carl to make eye contact. He gave her an awkward but kind of also proud grin.
"It is a long, short story," he said picking her up again.
"Hi, auntie Chonne," Carly-Jayne smiled.
"Hey, baby. Carl, you'll be sure to tell it to me later, right?"
He wanted to be petulant and insulted but decided against it. He had to be a good example. She did call him papa after all. Regardless, he still managed to roll his eye and said, "I do not think is necessary or your business really but okay. We will talk."
"You will always be my business. Same goes for Jag."
He shook his head and held Carly-Jayne up so she could wash her hands. Michonne was met with Rick on the middle step.
"What is going on?" Michonne asked.
"Evil-Lyn is labor and needs her sister's help."
"Doesn't just happens that way? You treat someone like shit and naturally you need their help. You stay here. I will get her," Michonne softly kissed his cheek before adding, "Oh and later we need to talk about Carl and Jagadamba. It is getting too serious too fast."
"I think she and he were past that point when they were twelve and I don't think it is our business but okay."
"Carly-Jayne just called him papa," Michonne said.
"Okay. We do need to have a conversation," Rick said.
Michonne gave him a told you so face and made her way to her old bedroom. There Carl had Carly-Jayne against this chest and he was rocking her asleep while whispering something to her mother. The teens felt her presence and looked up. They were both frowning. Jagadamba stood up and asked, "May I speak to you out in the hall?"
"Actually, I need to talk to you."
They went out into the hall. "Jagadamba, y-" Before Michonne could get a word out, Jagadamba interrupted, "I am sorry for interrupting you but I know what you are thinking. I put C.J. up to it but I did not. She is an Anthony, we make up our own minds. She decided she wants him to be her papa. She just blurted it out. And if you saw it happen. It literally just happened. Oh, my goodness. He handled so well. He handled it with grace. I feel so much love for him. I know if the day comes and we have one of our own, he is going to love it just as much. So, I am unsad. So, is he and most of all so is my C.J. She was such a sullen little thing until two weeks ago. She actually smiles and giggles. And she is not as rude anymore. Like I said, she is a daddy's girl. She has got one now. So, do not knock it. Please. And don't bring up our ages. It is a moot point."
Michonne sighed. She knew they were all happy and in love. And unrealistic. So, she asked, "Have you had your first fight? Not some petty argument. I mean you kinda want to straight murder his ass to point where have come up with different scenarios and ways to dispose of his body afterwards. Then you make up and do sexy things to each other neither one of have ever heard of before. You are not really a couple until that happens."
"No. Have you and Rick?"
"No. But, we are beyond that point."
"And you think us young and dumb," she scoffed.
"Anyway, Priyanka's in labor," Michonne hunched.
"Why didn't you lead with that?"
"You took over the conversation."
"Damnit, I knew there was something wrong with her to go off like that. Let him know I am on my way," she was eager to excuse her sister. She did not want to lose her. Michonne followed her niece. She wanted to help no matter how much she disliked Priyanka.

Four hours passed. Achilles had carried her to the infirmary. Priyanka was punking out when it came to pushing.

At one point, Michonne shouted at her, "You are a thirty year old woman. Three times ten. Jag was thirteen the first time she gave birth. That is ten plus three. I was in my early twenties. So, do you mean to tell us we are more woman than you or you going bare down and to do this thing?"

"I am more woman than you two gits put together," Priyanka panted.

"Then prove it and push. What do you want an embossed invitation?" Michonne asked.

An hour later, the baby was born.

Jagadamba looked despondent when she saw what was otherwise a beautiful baby.

"It is a boy," she said in a low whisper.

"A boy?" Priyanka's voice squeaked.

"There is still a fifty/fifty chance he will be fine," she wiped him off and gave him to her sister. She folded her arms and turned her head.

"I wanted a girl," Priyanka puled.

Michonne could not believe what she heard.

"This is your son, woman. He is beautiful. Hold him," she said looking at him.

"No. I wanted a girl. There is something wrong with him. I know it," she said. Priyanka was letting her guilt about her nephew manifest itself into rejection of her child.

"We'll protect him if he is. He has ten fingers and ten toes. Look at his eyes. He has your light green eyes. Maybe only I have the trait. You ever thought of that, sister?" Jagadamba implored.

She turned her back to them.

Denise had been there the whole time in an auxiliary capacity. Babies were not her forte.

"I will get her cleaned up. You guys go," Denise said refraining from looking at or treating Priyanka with the disdain she felt for her.

Both Michonne and Jagadamba were disquieted. Michonne carried her great nephew to her nephew.

"He is beautiful. I prayed he would have her eyes and be able to hear. I know in my heart he is not deaf. I just know it. How is Priyanka? He asked gushing.

Jagadamba was going to tell the truth but Michonne gently grabbed her shoulder and told Achilles, "She is resting. Come back with us."

"I should go to her."

"Let her rest."

He knew something was wrong but let it go. He was too happy about his toffee colored, sandy-haired son to let his temperamental girlfriend bring him down.

Two hours floated by. Most everybody heard about the new baby by now and was making their way over to see him. Achilles had not named him yet.

Jagadamba was wet nursing him while his father held his little hand when Denise swung by.

"He is hungry. Little greedy boy. He is so big. He is going to be tall. I am your aunt Jagadamba. Your cousin, my daughter, Carly-Jayne is still asleep. She is going to love you. I do. It is so nice to be holding a baby," Jagadamba cooed.

"Thank you for doing this. This means the world to me. You are already a better mother to him than his real Momma. You are best kid sister, no fuck that, you are a good woman. I love you."

"I love you, too."

Achilles kissed his sister's forehead.

"She will come around. Just needs rest is all," she said.

Michonne interjected, "He is right. She makes no sense. She should be celebrating this baby. We just buried one no more than twelve hours ago. She needs help. Something is wrong with her wiring."

Overhearing them, Denise said, "I am a psychiatrist by trade. Sounds like basic post partum. I gave her something to knock her out. Maybe I can talk to her. Give her something."

"Really? I would be grateful," he said.
"No problem. You know he is the first baby born in the Alexandrian Safe-Zone," Denise said. That gave Achilles an idea. "Dare as in Virginia Dare. She was the first person born in the new world. Dare Anthony, what do you think, auntie?"

"I like it. It is original and easy to spell. It implies I wish a motherfucker would," Michonne laughed. Achilles laughed with her. "Dare Mohinder Andre Anthony," he said. Michonne was touched. She hugged her nephew. As they embraced, he said, "She doesn't want him. I know her. She wanted a girl. I told her I did not care what we had as long as it was healthy. Why is she like this?"

"Just focus on him for now," Michonne said. Dare went to sleep. Jagadamba was grateful. She was hella nauseous. "I got to go lie down. You know how to burp him, right?" She asked passing her brother his child. Achilles nodded. "I am used to babies. I used to watch yours all the time. Go rest. You have been a supertrooper."

Jagadamba dragged herself upstairs. There she saw Carl standing outside her bedroom door. "Carly-Jayne is getting dressed. I told her I would wait. How you holding up?"

"I am not. My sister is an ungrateful, selfish bitch who loves no one. Not even her new baby. She wouldn't even look at him or hold him. I just breastfeed him. Poor Achilles. He is hiding it but his heart is broken. Mine, too. I would give anything to have my son back. Her rejecting him is adding insult to injury. Oh, God," she put her hand over her mouth and ran to the bathroom. Carl followed her. She was bent over the bowl puking her guts out. He grabbed her hair and comforted her. He waited five minutes and asked her, "It is okay. What is wrong?"

"Nerves. She rejected her live baby boy. Who the fuck does she think she is? He is alive. His name is Dare Mohinder Andre Anthony," she panted. "Dare?"

"Like Virginia Dare. He is the first baby born here in the Safe Zone like she was first baby in the new world."

"Oh. Social studies."

She laid her head in his lap and caressed hair. "Well, I'll be. The floor is heated," she noticed before leaping to vomit again. "Momma, Momma. Carl. Carl! Where are you guys?" Carly-Jayne screeched. "Damn, that girl can belt. In the bathroom," he said. "Good morning. Momma, what is wrong?"

"Momma's a little sick that is all," Jagadamba said resting her head on there toilet. "Like Miss Maggie?" Jagadamba and Maggie had been spending a lot of time in the garden together. Carly-Jayne had been around almost every time Maggie got morning sickness. Maggie told her it was because she had a baby in her. "No. Not like Maggie. Maggie is having a baby. I am not," Jagadamba said. "Are you sure? I would like a little sister with blue eyes and another little brother like Mo except he can hear so nobody would take him away," she said as if she were at a drive thru. Jagadamba looked up at Carl and he down at her. "Your cousin is downstairs," they said in unison. "The baby. Is it a girl?" She asked excitedly. "No. Dare is a boy."

"Oh," Carly-Jayne paused, "Can I pretend he is a girl?"

Carly-Jayne nodded. "I am a big girl. I am an older cousin now," with her nose in the air she turned away from them and walked with her hands on her hips.

"Fast ass little girl. She has a waist line. So did I at that age. She is going to develop early like me. I don't want her anything like me."

"You are wonderful. I was always amazed someone like you liked me especially after you became famous. I was a nobody."

"Never to me. To me, you-" she vomited again.

He held her hair as she puked. Then a thought occurred.

It was her fifteenth day there. He did the math. He read every baby book he could get his hands on when Judith was born.

If she got pregnant the first day they had sex, morning sickness was plausible. Yes, they wore condoms every time but those were not foolproof, they had a seven percent fail rate. And knew they both had buzzard luck.

He was around her twenty-four seven even on his days with Enid. So he knew she was not banging anybody but him.

To top things off, everything Carly-Jayne said haunted him. Did this tyke sense something they didn't? Her sibling request was real specific.

"A little sister with blue eyes and another little brother like Mo except he can hear so nobody would take him away," she said.

Clearly, she understood enough about babies and where they came from because she looked right at Carl when she said she wanted a blue eyed sister.

Seeing his girlfriend was weak, he picked her up and carried her back to Michonne's room.

He lied her down and got behind her. He put his arm around her, her stomach in particular. It was so flat. It was hard to imagine it being full to the brim twice let alone a potential third time.

He wondered out loud, "Am I alive in there?"

As he pondered, her hand suddenly clutched his.

"Cort told me before he died, well, before I murdered him. He told me Priyanka was secretly his lover. That she told him she was going to give him a proper son and to murder my defective one. He is one who told me she was pregnant and that it was his. I did not want to believe it. I wrote it off as his last ditch effort to gaslight me.

Maybe he was not lying. Maybe she is that evil. If it is true. She deserves to die. I don't want to kill my sister. I know my mother and Achilles would never forgive me. Hell, I wouldn't forgive myself either. But, that bitch is a threat to everything and everyone I hold dear. You and I are going to watch her. We will clue in Rick, Michonne, Carol and Daryl, too. We'll decide together if she is fit to live," she said resolutely.

"I hope he was lying," he said clutching her stomach.

"Me, too. In the meantime, close the door and take off your clothes. An orgasm or two and nap will make me feel a lot better."

He smiled at her before kissing her and did as she asked. His back was turned and he was about to take off his drawers when he heard her retching in the trashcan. She was butt naked.

"I don't know what's wrong," she said moments later.

"I think I might," he said rubbing her back.

She looked at him and shook her head no.

"I think I should take that nap first. We'll come later. Stay with me," she hugged him.

"What else would I do?"

They rubbed their noses together. He picked her up and they went to sleep.
Carl and Jagadamba are closer than ever. Both Rick and Michonne suspect the same thing. Or know rather. Enid has news of her own.

Twenty days passed. All was relatively quiet. Lulling some in Alexandria into a false sense of calm or hubris if one was apart of Rick's group. Not the Pharoahs though. Most of them were paranoid as all get out. With Jagadamba's insistence, they began hoarding and hiding supplies from guns to clothes to especially food. They were pickling and canning. Taping things to the under sides of furniture, making false walls, prying up floors and even digging graves late at night and waterproofing and hiding shit there. She figured the least they knew the better.

"This way if someone gets captured, the info cannot be tortured out of them," she said.

In the meantime, her relationship with Carl had deepened since the funeral. After the new member party Maggie organized for them the first of the month, Carl and Jagadamba made each other a promise and became inseparable even the days he was Enid. Who no matter how diminished or disregarded she felt, she not letting go. She was too stubborn to concede. On this morning, he had been staring at Jagadamba so hard, she woke up.

He said with a smile, "You have a hundred and fifty-three freckles. And a half one right above your lip here."

He kissed that part of her mouth.

"Aww. You are so sweepy," she kissed him back but full on his lips.

"Sweepy?"

"Sweet and creepy."

He looked sad when she said creepy. He did not have on his bandage. As of late, he did not wear it when alone with her. He did not feel judged or disfigured around her. Usually.

"Don't you dare. You know how I see you. Beautiful man, you. Come here again," she pulled him by his chin.

They kissed longer this time. He gently rolled on top of her. Naked from earlier, his amorous intentions were easily felt returned by her. They had sex.

Fifteen minutes later, he said out of breath, "I am never going to love anyone as much as I love you right now in this moment. I am so happy. Like really happy."

She did not respond. She instead ran her finger along his eye socket and down to his chin and up his sideburns. She found it fascinating. She often wondered how the hell was alive given the depth of his wound.

"You are a miracle," she said.

They kissed again. Three minutes later.

"Look who's getting his big boy hair on their face," she pulled at a whisker.

Carl's first patchy beard sporadically sprouted out like weeds through sidewalks. He had a near pathological refusal to shave off those precious first hairs.

He pouted, "Don't make fun. I am proud of it. It makes me in a man in full."

"Naw. Your heart does," she said.

"Well, thanks. You are the bravest and strongest woman I have ever meant," he grinned.
Jagadamba did not reply. She did not always feel so positively about herself. It was one of those
days.
So, she changed the subject.
"You are getting heavy," she grunted.
"Sorry," he rolled off her.
He grabbed her hand and held on to it.
"You are not going to grow a beard, are you? Cort had a beard. Eww," she took her hand away and
turned on her side.
He could feel her mood souring but kept talking.
"My dad had an axe murderer beard before coming here. It had a life all its own. I do not want a
beard per se but I just would just like to have the option. You know?"
"Until recently, I almost forgotten what it was like to have choices other than do as I say or die. Or I
had to earn favor with Cort. I have done some terrible things. Had terrible things done to me. If I told
you half the shit, the real shit. The shit that keeps me awake at night, you wouldn't want me. Nobody
would."
"I got an imagination and I have read articles about he type of things that happened to you. And
some pretty violent graphic novels. I have pretty good and by good I mean terrible idea of what
happened to you. I don't care.
Nothing could make me not love you. This reminds me of something Denise said to me. You aren't
the bad things that happen to you. But, you are the response. You fought those men. You did not lie
down and die. You defended what is yours. You way stronger than you give yourself credit for."
"It wasn't me. I have my faith in God and Jesus and He sent me people who are willing to fight for
me and with me. I am blessed. It was never me. I wanted to die everyday down in that basement. I
wanted him to die. I was so terrified and sad. No, sorrowful. I felt anguish. Desperate for my old life
back. I was so whiny before. All my supposed problems back then seem so petty and stupid now. I
used to complain about the lack of privacy I had. How I felt so violated. Shit, there is nothing more
violating than being raped or more painful than losing a child. Both of those acts are so unnatural,"
she began to weep loudly and uncontrollably.
He grabbed her and held her despite knowing she did not like that when upset. She tried to break
away. He wouldn't let her.
"It is not okay. What those pieces of shit did to you. It was never your fault," he was rocking her.
"Sometimes, I believe that. Sometimes I don't.
I did runaway to be with you. I missed you more than money. I really liked money. I was a multi-
millionaire by the time I was ten. You could buy stuff with it. Now it is bullets, food, shelter, pussy.
Hell, pussy was always currency.
I told Chill my intentions and asked him to come with me. He had begged me to stay put. He told me
you weren't worth the risk.""
"He was right," Carl said.
"Never.
Galens, J.C.'s blood type, that is all he is to her, offered me a ride. He seemed kind enough. You see, I
knew him. He was the musical director on Mia Self and Ida. He was so nice to me. How was I to
know he hated me? Rape is hatred."
Now Carl was crying. He felt such guilt about her.
"I am so sorry. I should've insisted or gotten into the car with you or told Priyanka to fuck off. I
should have saved you. I promise I will always protect you and Carly-Jayne. You two are just as
much my family as Dad, Judith and Michonne. You are apart of me."
"You are apart of me, too."
They kissed through their tears then both slung the others hair on their shoulders revealing large
gauze bandages. Their tears ceased.
She gently peeleed his off.
"The ink is nice and dark. Suchin did a good job. I love the lettering. You are so pale. I like pale. My
daddy always called me colorstruck. Which is a touch hypocritical since he was married to a light-
skinned Indian woman. And Loveness, Achilles' mom was half Kenyan and Scottish," she sniffled lightly running her finger along the lines of his tattoo.

"What does that mean? Colorstruck. I heard Michonne use it once with Sasha and Heath. Sasha and her were denying it while Heath was adamant they were."

"It means a darker skinned person who prefers lighter skinned people. I am here to tell I do not give three fucks about you being you being white. I liked you even when you were goofy looking."

He scoffed.

"I was not goofy looking. I was going through a phase."

"You were goofy looking, babe, from like nine to eleven. Then all of a sudden like two minutes after midnight on your twelfth birthday, the sky opened and you grew four inches, your lips got pink and full. Eyes looked bluer. Your face became girl pretty. You are a rare case. Puberty likes you," she smiled. She did not realize she talking about when she fell in love with him. He had always been with her.

He fluttered his eye and blushed.

"When do think we should tell people?" He asked.

"When we are willing to put up with Rick and Michonne's mouths. Probably Carol, too. I like the fact only we know. For now, this is just ours," she smiled.

"I love you so much, it is kinda stupid. I just want everyone to know," he smiled. She half smiled then slipped into a pout.

"What's wrong?" He asked.

"I just always get a little sad when Carly-Jayne's b-day rolls around. Does that make me an bad mom?"

"No. But, why?"

"Don't get me wrong. I am glad she's here. But, my pregnancy, her birth were the most traumatic things that ever happened to me until Mo.

I did not want her. I had made up my mind to bash her brains in upon sight. I did not want to honor my tormenter with a child. I had a weapon picked out and everything. Bigs and Boy understood. My water broke on my birthday. It was a hard labor. It was like I was being torn apart.

Then I saw her. She did not cry. Instead, she made grunting noises like she was annoyed. I laughed. She was already like me.

Even though, I no longer wanted her dead. I did not want to hold her. Then a day later, we had to flee because roamers were over running the neighborhood and she wouldn't stop crying. She did not want formula. She wanted me. Bigelow shoved he'd her my arms and told me I had to either feed her or end her. But, either way shut her up or we were all going to die.

She quit crying the moment we touched. I realized she wanted me. This barely perceptible smile crossed her lips and I was done for. I fell in love with her so completely. She was this beautiful little pink, blonde helpless thing who no more asked to be here than I did. She needed me. The thought of leaving her the way my parents did me is unthinkable to me. How could they leave all the time? What's so wrong with me? Why can't I be enough?"

"My dad used to make feel that way, too. I don't give a shit anymore," he said.

"Liar. I know it is selfish of me to feel this way. I hide it in front of her. Everyone. I have only told you this. I just wish I was older and begot her under better circumstances like this time."

She bucked her eyes and hoped he caught her drift.

Nope.

He replied, "C.J.'s. birthday is in four days. I do have w-"

She was about to explain when the door burst open. It was Marco and Tomeka.

"What the hell?" He asked.

Jagadamba pulled the sheet over her chest. Marco had been trying to see her breasts for the longest.

"Why were you little perverts against the door?" She asked.

"I thought I saw a spider and we were looking for it. It is not like we were trying to listen to you two-basically our foster mom and step dad doing it or anything. That would be weird," Marco said.

Tomeka pulled him by the ear and said, "Ignore him. He is stupid."
"Well, we were," he said exasperatedly being pulled away.
Both of them glossed over to the parent comment.
"Who does that? Seriously?" Carl said.
"Us, when we were eight to your parents because they were young. My parents are, were older. No one wants to hear old people do it. Not when we were twelve so much," she said putting on a bra, his shirt and looking for a belt and some tights to put on with it.
"Well, that was different," he said whining.
"It is always different when it is you, right?"
"We were curious. They are weirdly. Plus, when we're twelve we were getting in our own mischief."
"True. Let's face it. I was destined to be a teen mom one way or another. That would have been a scandal. I probably wouldn't have kept it. Morality clause and all. Those things were iron clad. I would not want to have been another Jaime Lynn Spears."
"I would've understood. I never wanted to get in your way."
"No, you wouldn't've. You would have pretended to but you would have secretly resented me. You would have felt I chose my career over you and you would have been right. That would broke us up. I guess we don't have to worry about. Point one for the apocalypse," she laughed hinting at what she wanted to him to know.
He watched her and remained in bed. He had a warm feeling in his chest about her hint.
"Why aren't you getting dressed?" She asked putting a dot of red lipstick on her forehead.
"I like watching you," he said.
"Ahh, so you really did woke up creepy this morning. Awesome."
"If enjoying the way your old lady looks is creepy then guilty as charged."
She walked over to him and kissed him.
"I like the way you look, too, old man," Jagadamba said.
"I prefer intense to creepy," he said still face to face.
"To-may-to. To-mah-to. I got to go. And so do you. You are supposed to see Denise today."
"I know. I love you, Jagadamba," he said very softly like he was praying.
"I love you, too, Carl," they kissed again.
"That's called a bindi, right?"
She nodded.
"I thought you wanted to keep it between us for now," he said knowing what the red dot meant.
"I do. I know a lot of these assholes are not going to know what this means," she hunched.
"You would be surprised. Our people are not as stupid as you hope they would be. One of them or even a couple of them will know what that means," Carl explained.
"Will your dad know?"
"Probably."
"Good. He has been not so nice to me lately. It would feel good to get his goat."
"Yeah. I talked to him about it. I told him and her what you mean to me. I think she heard me. I showed them my eye. She looked at me the same way you do."
Jagadamba's first thought was why was her aunt's opinion so important to him that he had to comment on it.
But, instead of giving into jealousy, she said, "Good taste. Thanks. But, seriously, about the bindi. I feel extra Indian today. I think I might put on my mother's sari before dinner time and I even found one little enough for her to wear," she put her forehead against his.
"Like the one you wore our night that had all your belly button out and the sexy chain around it?"
He said almost salivating at the memory.
"Yes. But, my back though. Carly-Jayne has never seen it. You have. Bigelow, Boyardee, Glenn and Maggie have."
"Father Gabriel," he hunched.
"Oh, yeah. It was worth it but it was still embarrassing," she replied.
"Your hair hides most of it. You shouldn't be ashamed of it. That is what he wanted."
"I know. It is hard. People treat you different when they see proof you have been abused. Like you
don't know how to read or something."
"Look, if you wear the sari. I will take this off. And just cover it with my hair. Some shades maybe.
Get a Phantom of the Opera mask," he joked.
"That is not funny. But, you are willing to do that for me?" She was touched.
"I will do anything for the people I love. We'll go out there naked as a team."
"I have done absolutely nothing to deserve you," she gushed.
"Nope," he laughed.
She hit him in the arm and playfully growled at him before kissing him again.
He fell back pulling her on top of him.
"Stay. Don't go. I don't like missing you. It hurts more than this does," he pleaded.
"It is kind of early. I guess I could stay a wee bit longer. Good Lord. That thing stays hard, huh?"
She said.
He said nothing and instead put his hands down the sides of her tights indicating he wanted them off.
She acquiesced gladly.
An hour passed. She redressed to leave for real this time.
As she walked away, he asked her, "What were you going to say earlier before they came in?"
She unconsciously cradled her belly and said, "We'll talk later."
Meanwhile, Bigelow saw Enid sitting by the lake pouting and skipping rocks.
Bigelow sighed as he sat.
"Beautiful day. Breathe in that air. Today it is only vaguely corpse-y. One can almost detect apples
downwind," he said in hopes of at least coaxing a smirk.
She was not in the mood.
"It is unseasonably cold for June. It is barely sixty-five degrees," she said now holding herself.
"That is it. But, we both know it is not the barometer that has you down."
"Look, I get it. She is smarter than she is beautiful. And she is crazy beautiful with or without
makeup. She is like scary smart. You know the other day, literally caught her doing calculus for fun?
Who does that?"
"I taught it to her. Good way to pass time. It is simply the study of how things change. I could teach
you," he massaged the small of her back.
"No, thanks. I was good at school but I do not miss it."
"Speaking of which, we are starting one soon. I have seen you with the under five crowd. You are a
natural. Want to help with the preschool?"
"Sure. I have nothing else to do. And, uh, I wasn't finished."
"Sorry, babe," he apologized.
"Anyway. He was finally mine for all twenty hours. He already told me about her like a day or so
before. It was kind of creepy in retrospect. I be damned if she did not show up at the gate over a day
later. I told him her summoned here. I was joking of course but still. I mean, of all the places in all the
South, you guys arrived here. I was jealous from the jump. I told him so. She just killed her husband
and has a kid for crying out loud. That sends most dudes running for the hills."
"Careful. That little kid is my kin."
"Oh, hush. I am crazy about Carly-Jayne. She is a cool and smart little girl. And she is so beautiful.
Like a little angel. All she needs is wings."
"She is something else. And isn't obvious why he is the way he is about her?"
She shook her head no.
"She is his dream girl. Most men will put up with anything to have her. Like take me for example. I
am content with us groping in the dark and listening to you whine about that one eyed asshole as
long as I get to spend time with you."
"I am your dream girl? Me?" She found this hard to believe. She did not think of herself as passable
not pretty. Especially in comparison to Jagadamba.
"Yes. You are. Why is that so shocking?"
"You say that now. As soon as a new pretty thing wiggles her little ass in front of you. You will
"Forget all about little old me," she pouted. "A, I will not. Unlike your lothario, when I tell a girl I like her I mean it. All I want is you. B, How can I look into those pretty blue-green eyes of yours and not be intrigued? And besides, aren't you tired of being fourth choice—"

"It's not that bad. When we have our days together, it is just us. Usually," she said. "That is just plain denial. It is J.B. and C.J. count as one. Michonne, Judy and then you. Dump him. Then it'll just be me and you."

"J.B. is your girl. If she needed you, you wouldn't think twice about choosing her over me," he said. "She has Carl and Achilles. Rick, too. Eugene. Whoever else she bats her eyelashes at. She don't need me like she used to. I can devote my time, my life to you. Dump him."

"You are mad at her," she said.

"Not mad. Thoroughly annoyed. I do not like what they are doing. Or how fast it is moving. You have to understand. He is really her first real relationship. Those other two things do not qualify. She was never on equal footing. They always had the power. She was nothing to them. Just a warm body, a womb, a hole.

Now, I do not excuse how they are doing you. You may think you two are sharing him. But, they are sharing you. I know about last week," he said.

"Who told you?"

"No one. The three of you slept in the same bed. I am certain it wasn't because you guys had tea the night before."

"It was nice that night but awkward the next day. To me anyway. They were fine with it."

"Cause they planned it."

"I am not stupid. They want me to dump him, especially her. Do you really think I am going to make it that easy for them to ride off in the sunset? Hell, no. It is the principle of the thing. He was mine first."

"Actually, he wasn't. He has been hers since they were two. You can't compete with their history or their idealized visions of each other. The memory of him and the hope she would find him again is one of the main things that kept her going all this time. And what got her into trouble. She named her child after him. She yearned for him so tough even her body on a subconscious level—she had Carly-Jayne on his birthday. I mean, really? She won't see reason. He isn't the same boy. I know it is a matter of time before he hurts her down to her core. He is already doing that to you. Fuck your pride. Utilize your self respect and dump his scrawny ass. You are too good for him."

"It is not that simple. I am late. Since you and I are not sleeping together. . ."

Bigelow let out a rueful laugh.

"Glaring, she asked, "How is that funny? He and I use condoms. I am two and a half, three weeks late."

"She said the same thing. Except she is about five weeks. She is getting an ultrasound today she at the Hilltop with Rick and them when they go for supplies. I am going with them. You took a positive test?"

She nodded.

"She is pregnant, too?" Enid choked on the words.

"Yeah. She has been puking everyday. Only thing she wants is pancakes. Irish twins."

"Quit making a joke out of this. It is not funny."

"Kinda. Sounds like a really bad Lifetime Movie my grams used to love. A Daddy Twice at Seventeen. Daddy Two Times. A Boy and Two Girls."

"Stop it. I do not even know if I want this baby. I don't. I mean, I kinda do. I love him. The first time I saw him. I loved him."

"That I can relate to, Unavailable. I feel that way about you. Therefore, I will stand by you whatever you decide. I will there. So, do not fret."

"For real?"

"Yes," he caressed her face before placing a peck on her lips. She scooted closer to him and held his
hand as she lied her head on his shoulder.
Back at the Grimes house, Michonne knew something was up with her niece.
She noticed the girl ate no breakfast. Instead, she left her daughter with Rick and Judy to go rambling
inside of Carl's room.
Michonne walked into the room. She startled her.
"Hey, auntie Chonne. I am looking for his mp3. You seen it?" She asked.
"He left it in the bathroom downstairs. I just let stay where it was."
"Oh. Good. You okay this morning? You haven't said much," Jagadamba observed closing the
drawers she had opened.
"I am fine. A little reflective and inquisitive."
"About?"
"Why is Rick so insistent on you going to the Hilltop? Why didn't you eat breakfast?"
"Not hungry. And he wants me to go because well, I am one of you guys now," she patted the
bottom of her stomach when she said that. Again, this was unconsciously done.
"You are always hungry. You are like a hummingbird. I noticed the other day you were green. You
stay nauseous."
"How do you know that?"
"You make the same expression you did when you were a baby and were sick. Your beautiful little
face has not changed a tap. You just got a woman's body now," she gently clutched her chin.
"Aunt Michonne, what are you getting at?"
"You know you can tell me the truth about anything. I am here for you," she held her hand.
Jagadamba took a deep breath and said, "Since becoming a mom, I have discovered what that means
when an adult says that to anyone especially someone they perceive as a child. You already know
the answer to the question you are asking. You want to know if I respect you enough to tell the truth
or at least come up with a believable lie. So, shoot."
"Okay, then, smarty pants. Are you pregnant by Carl?"
Jagadamba casted her eyes downward. She looked back up full of guilt which changed into
impassivity.
"If I am, it is his. I get why Rick cares. Why do you care? He is not your blood. I am. Your concern
should be with me."
"It is."
"No, it isn't. You think he didn't tell me about the little intervention you two staged because you guys
are afraid of me taking him away. That is what it boils down to. That was very hurtful and insulting
especially coming from you. Like, I am the worst thing can or has happened to him. My first night
here, I told you I was not ready for what he wanted. You encouraged me."
"To be his girlfriend. That he is ready for. Not to get pregnant. He isn't ready for that," she said.
"He takes care of his sister. I can count the times I have seen her with Rick. Hell, I see Carol with her
more often than I do him. As far as I am concerned Carl already has a kid in Judith. Deny it. You are
a liar if you do."
"He is a most excellent older brother. No one can deny that. I am just surprised at your
irresponsibility. You should know better. You know how hard it is being a teen parent."
"Is being a parent somehow magically easier if you are out your teens? No. Not all the rules that used
to apply to society apply now."
"So, in twelve years if C.J. comes up pregnant-"
"Bite your fucking tongue," she frowned looking like she wanted to hit her.
"My point exactly. You can't possibly thinking having a child right now is the best idea."
Wanting to annoy her aunt, she said, "I did not become this way intentionally. I mean, yeah, I have
him pussy on purpose but the rubbers are clearly faulty. I make him wrap that monster up every time.
It looks like it's fertile. It is thick and long is all I am saying. He also looks a lot better naked than you
think judging by the way his clothes fit him. Which is not at all."
"I get it. Damn," Michonne shuddered while doing her best not to imagine it.
Jagadamba smirked at her reaction decided to add more detail.
"And also, it is kind of pretty as far as dicks go. It is not all crooked or bent in one direction because he plays with it all the time. Same color as him -pink- except the head which is a little darker around the tip. Circumcised, almost nine inches, about five and a quarter thick. And he is not even through growing yet so it is go to get larger. Softest pubes. Most -"
"Girl, I am going to slap the Indian out of you. Shut the hell up," she said wrestling with the imagery and wishing brain bleach was a thing.
"All the mean-spirited things you just said to me and about me behind my back? I could have said have said more provocative things about your boy. Like Carl has a killer stroke and eats pussy like lesbian and that I cannot think about him without getting wet," she could not help but giggle mischeviously.

Michonne had had enough of her mouth. She punched her arm.
Jagadamba held her arm while still laughing at her own mischief. She liked getting on her aunt's nerves. Always did.
"I get it. He makes you come. Which is good for you and good on him but you are purposefully changing the topic. Damn. You are not slick."
"Sometimes. But, this potential baby is not one of those times. I know condoms aren't foolproof. And I catch babies like some people catch colds. Every man I have ever been with has knocked me up at least twice."
"Who got you big twice?"
"Galen did. He beat the first baby out of me. Then C.J. happened. Cort did. It was three times with him. I miscarried the first one. The third one I got rid of. He did not deserve another child. Not after the way he treated the two he had."
Michonne shook her head at the relentlessly trite evil which kept befalling her niece.
"So, this is your sixth pregnancy. Sweetheart, I do not know what to say," he said.
"There is nothing for you to say. You did not do it nor can you undo it."
"I admit attacking him about you was the wrong move. You are not some big bad. You are a girl in love with a boy."
"No. I am a woman in love with a man," she corrected.
"To-may-to, to-mah-to," Michonne hunched.

Plaintive, Jagadamba whined, "Auntie, do not chalk this up to puppy love. It is real. I know it is. Isn't it?"
"Yes. I believe you and him about one another."
"Good. I love you, auntie," she said.
"I love you, too," They hugged.
Jagadamba added, "I am under enough pressure. I know Carl is special to you. He has that effect on people once they get passed the spoiled, angry brat and see who he really is. I just cannot have you against me. I am going to need someone if and when this all falls apart. What if this baby is a boy and he is deaf like his big brother? Will he quit loving me like Cort did? Will I become disposable? I don't think I am as strong enough to go through that again especially if it is him. I don't."
She let stray tears fall but fought full on sobbing.
"He would never do you like that. We would protect the shit out that baby boy. It would be fine."
"I never told anyone this but when I was pregnant with Mo, I grew to kind of love Cort. He was so kind to me. When I had a boy. Oh, man, he went full on Lion King. He raised him to the sky. Then when he found out that he was not perfect. So, the evil, lazy, trifling piece of shit murdered him, disfigured me and threatened my daughter and the rest of my family. What was I to do?"
"I can relate. I hated Mike and Terry after what after what happened to Andre. I kind of still do. But, I forgave them."
"I can't. Not yet."
"Why not?"
"I did terrible things to him before I finished him. Monstrous, really. Ever heard Bring the Pain by Method Man?"
"I am a black woman who was alive in the nineties, I have heard Bring the Pain."
"Well, when he said cut off your eyelids and feed you sleeping pills. I did that to him."
"He deserved worse. It is not him you cannot forgive. It is yourself. You blame yourself for your son. You can’t do that. You love him. Your right to protect him was snatched from you."
"I thought revenge would make me feel better. It did for a spell. Like ten minutes. Afterwards, I felt hollow. Icky. Every time, Carl or anyone calls me brave or a good woman. I cringe. In all reality, I used my son’s death as a catalyst to overrun the Pharoahs. As a way to finally free myself and some say over my life again. How could I do that with his memory? I am a monster."
"No, you are not. You are survivor. Wanna know something else?"
She nodded.
"You and Carl may very well be soulmates. We had an identical conversation about two years ago. He said the same about himself."
"If soulmates is a thing, I would like to think he was the main one."
"Who else?"
"Carly-Jayne and Bigelow. C.J. is me if I were a little white blonde girl. Sometimes, I can feel Bigelow approach. He saved my life at a time no one have a damn. He has taught me so much. He is like an uncle, brother, father, hell, mother."
"Has he ever been a lover?"
"Never. We don't go there. I mean, we kissed once and it was hot and we almost went too far. But, we decided it would be too messy. He is my daughter's brother. Uh-uhh. That would be Bible bad if we hooked up."
"I hear you. Some lines you do not cross."
"Carl is that line for you, yes?"
"He is."
"Not was?"
"Do not over think it. Nothing happened between me and him. Not really."
"You ought to tell him that. He has not full on said so but you scarred him just as surely as those two bullets did. Except no one can see what you did to him."
"I did nothing. It went no further than a couple kisses. Never more than that. And I regret it very much."
"Nice to know."
During this time, Carl after basking in afterglow about the fact that he and Jagadamba had had sex six times in less than a twenty-four hour period (not including stuff they did with their mouths and hands,) he finally decided to get off his duff and dress. Looking for his shoe, he went searching under the bed. He discovered her stash of supplies. "She has always been a hoarder. At least now it is coming in handy," he laughed remembering. He and her mother would would go behind her back and sort out her room. They would then deny having any knowledge of the purge. She always had a difficult time letting things go. He found his shoe. Stuck to it was a row of about six condoms. He remembered them from their first night together. He smiled at the memory. Then he noticed something. Several little holes in one of the wrappers. Then he noticed they all had them. His mind went numb for a minute. He his did not want to believe this girl he had loved as long as he could remember could do something so out of character and underhanded to him. Jagadamba had always been a bit ruthless and downright aggressive when she wanted something. But, she had never been a liar or thief or manipulative. She had always been an open book especially to him. She was an actress, not a phony or a pretender. Then the thought occurred what if Dad and Michonne were right? What if he did not know her anymore? Four days before, they had pulled him aside and told the two of them were moving too fast. He was none too pleased to be lectured. "Really? What, is seeing me something resembling happy that unsettling for you two? Just because I am not y'all's beck and call anymore doesn't mean we are moving too fast."
Rick scoffed, "You were never at our beck and call. Shit, I would spend a good part of my time hunting your disobedient ass down. I get it. I been your age. I know how exciting and addictive and obsessive that first love is. When you touch her you feel electricity pump your veins. All you want to do is live inside of her because this girl is your home. I felt that way about your mom. That got you here. That feeling is all encompassing. But, it doesn't last. A lasting relationship has to be built on stronger stuff. You have to be older, mature before you can truly have a lasting love that can stand all life's battles and challenges. Especially this life's. Not lust based purely on looks and daydreams. You need someone who is willing lay their life down for yours and vice versa. More importantly someone who is willing to live for you and you them," he grabbed Michonne's hand.

Carl cocked his head and decided to do something he had not since he thought Judith was dead. "You know, I kinda hate you, right? I kinda hate you, Dad. A lot. I try to contain it. I succeed usually. One thing about us Grimes, we can do whatever we set our minds to. It is unfair. You are unfair. You basically just told me you did not love my mom. Not really-"

"I never said that," he said.

"You don't have to. You were cold to her at best. You two fought like dogs. Jag can attest to that. She was there half the time. You couldn't even be cordial during company. I never saw her parents fight or even raise their voices. I saw the Anthonys kiss and hold hands more than not. It was nice. They liked but most importantly respected each other. You weren't even interested in her until Shane had her. They thought you were dead. It was not cheating. You were a dog in a manger. You should have been grateful to have my mom. She was hotter than you deserved. Just as Michonne is now. Not because you are unattractive because I look like you more than not. I hate to admit it. But, because even when you are selfless, you are selfish and arrogant."

"You have it all wrong. I never considered your mom a cheater. I never held it against her. I am not arrogant. Or selfish."

Carl looked at his father incredulously.

Michonne interjected, "It is bad enough you have two girlfriends and all that drama. But, now my great-niece is calling you papa. That is not fair to you and her. What if you two break up? Then what? She will feel abandoned by you."

"I told Jag like the first day she was here. I will be for her kid regardless of what does and doesn't happen between me and her."

"That is rainbows and lollipops. I know Jag. She is too much like her daddy. She is sweet and charming when shit is going well. First, sign of trouble she will change on you. She is petty and contrary and selfish. She is not going to want her around you anymore just to hurt you. Think ahead. Slow this down. Get to know each other again. Spend a little time apart," she said.

"She is not like that. Usually. She wouldn't hurt her kid to hurt me."

"Shiiiiit. I used to be the one who kept Jagadamba when she was a baby. My brother got mad at me. I barely saw my niece after that. I am telling you. They are similar," Michonne warned.

"Want to know why I am really mad? Other than than the fact you are hating on my woman whom I actually love for no reason other than you can? You shove Judith at me like she is a sack of potatoes. That is the real reason why you don't want me getting close to C.J. You might have to actually raise your own kid. Or it Shane's. Who can tell?"

Rick was taken aback. He had never seen be so disrespectful. Not that made his statements any less true.

"Wait, just a goddamn minute, boy. Just because you have been getting your dick wet for the past month does not mean you are too old for me to knock the shit out of. What the hell has gotten into you? You always showed your ass when she was around."

"You do not know half of what she has been through. All she wants is a safe place her child to be. Everyone else is incidental. You are talking like she has contributed nothing. When was the last time we had real meat? Not dog, raccoon or squirrel. You had actual chicken last night. On top of the that, you are acting like these are normal times. Like back in the Stone Ages when you
were my age. My life makes yours look like something I used to watch on Noggin. What was your biggest worry? Getting allowance? Getting an B in algebra ruining your perfect straight A average? Hoping Mom would let you smell it?"

Rick stood up like he was going to charge after him. Carl laughed and did not move a muscle.

Michonne intervened.

"Eh! Rick, sit down. Carl, apologize to your father right now."

"Why should I? Every since Jagadamba did not cosign his brilliant plan of wait and see when it comes to the Saviors, he has been a total jerk towards her. Earlier, she said good morning and you acted like she said nothing."

"No, the fuck I have not been. I did not hear her."

"Rick, he is not lying. You ignore her now. It really hurts her feelings especially since she considers you a second father," Michonne agreed.

"You make my girl cry. I do not that. She is as tough as she is sensitive. Always has been."

"I love Jagadamba. I do," Rick said truthfully.

"Yeah, right. You treat her like competition," Carl scoffed.

"She is. Do you two know how easy it be for her to try and take this place over? She has more loyal men than I do. She even has children who are willing to kill for her. Let's say you and her have a following out. I mean War of the Roses, My Super Ex-Girlfriend bad. Who is to say out of vengeance, she stages a coup and wins?"

"She wouldn't do that. You are paranoid about the wrong person. We should get a bunch of us together. Get out there and kill some more Saviors before they kill some more of us," Carl said.

"I agree. But, never mind. Maybe we jumped the gun letting her in so freely," he was talking more about the effect she had on his son than anything else. He knew something about her Carl and Michonne did not yet.

Carl took a deep breath. He undid his bandage revealing his gnarly wound.

This father winced and averted his eyes. He never really said plainly but he felt such guilt. His son had lost so much, he felt unfairly spared.

But, Michonne looked dead at him full of sympathy just like her niece did. That was the first time he ever thought they favored.

"I knew you would react that way, Dad. She doesn't. She treats me like there is nothing wrong with me. Enid does, too in a way. But, not like Jagadamba. She prefers me this way. And she means it. I feel, I don't know, not ugly or like a freak or pitied when she looks me. Dad, you make me feel bad about myself."

Back to know, confusion then anger followed. Then sadness tinged his anger. He felt betrayed and played.

He found his shoe and put the condoms in his pocket. He had to decide what to do.

Downstairs, he saw Tomeka and Boyardee were eating in the kitchen. Tomeka was also making flashcards for Carly-Jayne while Boyardee was listening to music and writing in her journal.

"Sup?" Tomeka asked not looking up.

"Where's Jagadamba?" He asked gruffly.

"She and Bigelow are going to the Hilltop with your fine ass daddy and them. I swear if had been born forty years ago, I would have been your momma. Your dad is so hot," Boyardee said taking one earbud out.

Tomeka let out an awkward little chuckle. She agreed in her head.

"Any goddamn way, have they left yet?" Carl asked with a sneer.

"Not as far as I know. You could probably still catch her," Tomeka said.

"Where's C.J.? Have you seen my hat?"

"They went to your house for breakfast. Something about she can only keep down her aunt's pancakes," Tomeka said.

"I noticed that is all she eats lately," Carl said frowning.

"Don't you wonder why?" Boyardee asked.

Tomeka gave her a disapproving glare as if to say shut up.
"Well, don't you wonder?" Boyardee needles.
"No. I know. She has not said anything, so neither am I," he replied.
"So, you know she is pregnant?" Tomeka asked.
"Pregnant? Uh, no. Every since we were younger when she really likes a food, that is all she eats until she gets tired of it. Then she moves on to something else.
One time all she ate nothing but my mom's maple and brown sugar oatmeal that she made from scratch. She begged her to make it for her lunch and dinner. It was really good but why? She had to stop eating it because she got so constipated that it made her stomach hurt and she had to be rushed from the set to the emergency room. So, she is a little eccentric. That is her way. On second thought, I should probably talk to her about that," he said.
"They say de Nile is just a river in Egypt. Tell me, is she warmer to the touch? Like she has a fever, you ask her about it and she says she feels fine?"
"You listened in on us this morning like when it was still dark. What the hell, Tommie? Don't you sleep?"
"Of course. Unlike Marco who is a nasty little perv trying to hear you two bang, I listen for info. I am twelve. No one tells me anything. I have to stay in the know. It is not just y'all I listen to. So, do not feel special," Tomeka rolled her eyes.
"If you want to know something about me, just fucking ask. Do not spy on us. That is creepy and weird. Makes me not trust you even more. We deserve privacy."
"Compared to what? But, okay," Tomeka hunched. Boyardee interjected, "Does her pussy taste any different?"
Tomeka let out an embarrassed chuckle.
"What the hell is a matter with you? You will say just anything. I am not answering that question," he thought about it. She did taste differently. Sweet instead of savory. He just chalked that up to the pancakes syrup.
"It is a real thing. I saw it in a movie and I looked it up. Some women taste like fruit when knocked up. She thinks no one notice but she always gets depressed before C.J.'s birthday. I can't blame her. I was there. I saw what she went through. I saw what my father did. He was a monster. It was always in him. I saw how he would look at my friends sometimes. Like they were meat especially the darker skinned ones. I even had a couple friends who refused to speak to me after spending the night," Boyardee was serious.
"My dad was horrible to her, too. Only time he was nice to her was when she was pregnant. And a couple months after Mo was born. You know the rest."
"You should've seen her this morning when she came down. She was floating. She had an absolute glow. Not just because of she just got through riding you like a jockey in the Kentucky Derby or that baby you both in deep denial about but the fact she is how she puts it. Unsad. You make her feel that way. She actually looks and acts her age with you. We used to call her the old lady. She was always so sullen. Just mean. She rarely smiled. Let alone giggled. You make her giggle. I admit when I first met you, I wrote you off as a damaged, unstable little boy. Altogether dangerous. But, seeing the change in my sisters- you know C.J. is really my sister and not my niece, right?"
"It is to protect her from the truth of her conception. I know."
"They are happy. I am saying all that to say this, be careful with them. Keep doing what you are doing. Because if you don't, well, for the sake of us all keep it up," Boyardee finished.
With that sweet threat ringing in his ears, he set out to find her. He also heard she was in denial. Maybe she did not do this after all, he thought.
Carl began to speculate who would benefit the most if he and she had a child together.
They were all crowded by his house.
"Hey, Michonne," he smiled. She blushed a little and averted his eyes. The girl-child she used to be was caught up on what her niece had said about his sexual prowess earlier. Certain phrases were on repeat.
She hugged him instead of speaking.
When they separated, Michonne offered, "She is upstairs. We will be going soon. You are catching her just right."
"Thanks," he patted her bicep and ran up the stairs. She watched him walk away and chuckled to herself.
Jagadamba was coming out the bathroom wiping her mouth with her sleeve. She had a washcloth in her hand and an automatic rifle almost big as her strapped to her back and the red handled machete attached to her leg. She also had on his hat.
"You look hot," he said half smiling.
"Well, duh," she hunched.
He noticed her lipstick was gone.
He kissed her to see if she brushed her teeth. She had.
"Minty fresh," he laughed.
He suspected she had not stopped puking since Mohinder's funeral but he could never catch her in the act.
He wanted to tell her he knew they were expecting. But, this came out instead, "If, if you really wanted something from me, you know all you have to do is ask me. I would give it to you freely," he could not have said it any sweeter.
Jagadamba grimaced and glanced up at his hat.
She took it off and put it on his head.
"I know it is important to you. I did not think you would mind. I just wanted to take some part of you with me. Other than your shirt," and she thought, And your baby.
He took the hat off and put it back on her. She still wore the bindi.
"I don't give a damn about you taking the hat."
"Then what are you talking about, lover?" She asked wrapping her arms around his neck.
He really wanted to be angry with her. But, he was finding it very hard in more ways than one.
"I found something under your bed."
"Oh. You mean the jars of vegetables and guns taped to the baseboard? I am doing that to protect us from the inevitable. When Negan comes because he is coming, boo. He just is."
"Maybe he really is dead. Maybe you are panicking for no reason."
"I get it. If I had a dad who also happened to be the leader of my group, I would be more apt to believe him than the person I am screwing-"
"You are more to me than that. Do not talk to me like that about you," he frowned.
"Well, anyway. You have to remember that I am a leader of a group, too. Bigger than yours. I still have to look after them and by extension for all of you. Do not get me wrong I consider us apart of this community. We're aren't Pharoahs anymore but Alexandrians but we are not immune to getting fucked with. You all are not as big and bad as you all think. No one is. You guys are way too sure of yourselves. It scares me. Besides, never hurts to have a surplus. You know, in case shit."
"I will protect you. I meant that."
"I believe you will try. You would be able to if you believe me. How many times do I have to say this? I have lived through this. Negan is just like Cort. It is kind of creepy. Like I said satellite location. No children? There are always children. Just trust me. Won't you? I trust you implicitly. If I didn't, I would not leave you, another human being with a penis nonetheless alone with the most precious thing I have in your care?"
"Where is Carly-Jayne?"
"With Denise. I knew that was the only way you would go see her if I or your dad or my aunt were not here to coerce you."
"Yeah. Why are you going? You did not tell me a thing," his arms were around her waist.
"Rick's making me. He told me over breakfast," she huffed.
"Why?"
"Cause he is a a controlling dick of a cunt who needs to mind his own fucking business and listen to a voice other than his own. And, yes, Rick, I know you are right behind me. I can repeat myself if need be," she said feeling his presence and giving him the best Shenehneh turkey neck eye roll that a
discreetly old money rich girl from the suburbs could muster.
"You can call me whatever you want. You are still coming with us," he said.
"Dad, why? Why can't she just stay here with me?" He asked drawing her closer.
"As a sign of loyalty and out of solidarity. She is one of us now. Since she is the leader or was the
leader of her group and I remember when she was the spitting image of her daughter- blatant
differences be damned. Your little girl uncannily reminds me of you at that age. So sweet and
pleasant when she wants to be. And whip smart. Precocious as fuck. You automatically are up there
with the oldest members of the group. This makes you one of the people whose opinion I will take
into consideration. I trust you," he was sincere.
"Really?" She did not believe him.
"Yes."
"Hell, I should call you out your name more often, you dumb bitch," she teased.
Carl wanted to laugh but held it.
"Jag, come on. You cannot talk to my dad like that," he said wanting his father to know he was still
loyal.
"Eh, you get one. Watch yourself. Badass or not, I am still your elder and your leader. I deserve your
respect," Rick said.
"Sorry, sir. It won't happen again unless I am drunk and feel a little surly. Or you piss me off beyond
all levels of pisstivity or hurt him. In that case, what comes up, comes out. But, other than that, I will
be a total Girl Scout, cheerleader person. I always wanted to be a cheerleader."
At that, Carl imagined her in one those teeny little uniforms.
Rick turned to leave.
Carl blurted out, "How about I come with then? It would be nice to get out."
"Not this time, Carl. I need you to stay here. I need to see how she handles herself without you," he
said.
"She has already done that for almost five years. It did not turn out so well," Carl said.
Insulted, "Well enough. I am alive, aren't I?" She let him go to follow after behind Rick.
"Wait up," he said.
"Carl, we got to get going," his father said.
"I will not interfere unless I have to. I swear," the young man promised.
"I will be fine. I will see you later," she concurred.
"What aren't you guys telling me? Is it about my birthday? That can be the only explanation for this
weirdness," he said.
"Yes. You hit it right on the head," Rick said imploring Jagadamba to agree with his tone.
"Yep. You got us pegged."
Five days earlier, Rick decided to swing by to see how Jagadamba was and to ask her if she would
mind letting his daughter spend the night since Judith was so crazy about her. He knew Carl was
going to be there, too so that meant him and Michonne would have the whole house to themselves.
Ahh, naked times, he thought.
Tomeka answered the door. Judith jumped into her arms when she saw her.
"Hey, pretty girl," Tomeka said snuggling Judith.
"She likes you. How are you?" Rick asked the girl.
She blushed.
Upstairs, she was in the midst of taking her third pregnancy test in so many hours when Carly-Jayne
busted in wanting to play.
She startled her mother causing her to drop the test on the floor. It landed at her daughter's feet. The
little girl took it as a cue. She giggled as she picked up the stick and ran with it.
"C.J., come back. Momma ain't playing," she said pulling her pants up and stashing the other two
tests in her bra.
"Momma, come catch me," she laughed barreling down the steps.
Jagadamba was hot on her heels when she saw the last person she wanted to know.
"Hi, Uncle Rick," Carly-Jayne said hugging his leg.
He lifted her up.
He saw the pregnancy test and grabbed it before Jagadamba could.
In her most pitiful but sincere voice, she implored, "Please don't be mad at me, Rick."
The test was positive. She took the others out of her bra and showed him. They were positive too.
Rick was silent at first. Soaking it in.
He put Carly-Jayne down and her mother instructed her to go upstairs with Tomeka.
"Does he know?" Rick asked.
"Not for sure. I know he suspects. I keep denying it. So, it is not what you think," she said.
"So, you expect me to believe you and Carl haven't been irresponsible?"
"No, haven't. We always use condoms. I do not know if I even want this child. So, please do not say anything to him."
"I have to ask. Is it his?"
"Yes. He is the only man I been with in the past ten months. It is his child. It is your grandbaby."
"My grandchild. Damn," He almost wanted to cry. It almost made him happy.
He took a hard line with her despite this.
"You have a week to tell him or I will. In fact, We are going to the Hilltop. You are coming with. I want to see how it is and how far along you are."
"Fine. But, when I tell him and if I tell him is up to me and between me and him. It has nothing to do with you."
"You know are a parent so you that is shit. It has everything to do with me. He is under eighteen and he is my business."
Back to now.
Carl had no more questions. He followed them out to the RV. He kissed her bye. She ran up the RV steps.
Just as Rick was about to crank up the vehicle, Jagadamba screeched, "Wait. I totally forgot something."
Rick grunted.
"Make it quick."
She nodded and jumped off the RV. Carl was standing there. She ran over to him and kissed him.
Everyone in the trailer was watching.
Abraham came from behind and whispered to Rick, "So, have you decided?"
"Decided what?"
"On being called Gramps, Pops, Grim or Grandpa? Because that baby is like Prego, it is in there. She is so pregnant."
Rick sighed, "Really, Abe?"
"Teenagers," Maggie laughed.
"It is going to suck so hard to be around either one of them when all that passion implodes into resentment and rage. Or worst yet indifference," Bigelow said shaking his head.
"Pshaw. Maybe, just maybe they'll be that super sweet, annoyingly perfect couple who have been together since childhood and makes everyone else's relationship seem inadequate or downright stupid and shitty in comparison. I think that is more likely," Maggie said. She really liked the two of them together. This is not the first time she had vouched for them.
"Said the woman who is already half of that super sweet, annoyingly perfect couple who makes people feel really shitty," Daryl almost grinned.
Glenn blew a raspberry at him. While both Rick and Bigelow were both annoyed Jagadamba and Carl were still practically making out in front of everyone.
Rick got up and stuck his head out the door and said, "Jag, we're burning daylight. Come on."
They separated. He followed her to the steps. They kissed again.
He asked his dad, "Are you sure I can't go? We have pretty much been together everyday since she arrived almost six weeks ago. I just want to come."
Abraham chimed, "The two of you were well on your way by the looks of it.
Both of them rolled their eyes. Bigelow and Rick both sniffed.
"Not this time. Next time," Rick said.
Aggravated, Carl quit arguing. They kissed again and and she went to her seat pouting and doing her best to refrain from crying. Rick started her up and sped toward the gate.
Carl watched the RV until it was out of sight. Jagadamba had watched him the same.
She turned around in her seat. She felt like all eyes were on her.
"What? Like you all haven't seen people kiss before," she hunched.
Nobody said anything. Jagadamba got into a ball in the chair. She had crept his mp3 player and left him hers. She put her ear buds in and cranked it up high. She knew listening to another's music was great way to check their head space. She put his hat over her face and closed her eyes.
Rick was watching his son's paramour like a hawk.
The baby must want sleep, Rick thought.
Then she looked over at Michonne who was suspiciously quiet. He knew she knew something.
"This is the fourth positive pregnancy test this week. You breeders are not fucking around," Denise said reading the blood results.
Deadpan, Enid said, "I believe you got that backwards. We breeders are fucking around."
"True. A baby. You and Carl think are you ready for that?"
"I can't speak for him. But, I might as well be. I do not want to be all alone in this world. Maybe this is my only opportunity. I wasted the first one."
"Are you having this baby for yourself or so can keep him or compete with her or both?"
"Me. I lost him the moment Mia Self in the flesh waltzed herself through those gates. But, I am too proud to let go. But, this is mine."
"I am going to tell you like my grandma always told me, it is easier to run on two feet than four. Are you sure you want to do this?"
"If Jagadamba can do it, how hard can it be? She was a middle schooler basically. I am at least a junior."
"She has the luxury of a lot of help. Hell, I watched her kid earlier. Her aunt has her now."
"Michonne?"
"No. She left. Priya."
"Oh, her aunt. How is that cow?"
"Better. She had Dare with her."
"Shocking."
"He has crying his head off."
"He must can sense evil is all."
Both of them laughed.
"That is just mean. Seriously, though. She has post partum. That could happen to you, too."
"My mom did not believe it was real. Just an excuse society gave lazy, privileged white women when they had buyer's remorse."
"Oh, that is where you get your mean from," Denise said.
Denise silently instructed for Enid to lie down so she can examine her stomach. She frowned when she felt something odd.
"What? Is there something wrong with my baby?" Enid asked panicking.
"You think it happened when?"
"About three weeks ago maybe. It was right was when he, you know, and I felt a burst of wetness at the end. I thought I was being paranoid because he wore a rubber."
"I think you are mistaken. Your womb feels a bit bigger than that. Hold on," Denise went into the drawer and pulled out the stethoscope. She put it on her stomach.
"Oh, wow. Just wow. Listen," she handed Enid the earpiece. She put it in.
"Is that my baby's heartbeat?" She held back tears.
"Yeah. You are at least six to nine weeks. When did you have your last period?"
"I thought two weeks ago. But, uh, about three weeks before we had sex the first time."
"So, that night you wanted that pill is your conception date plus those three weeks equals nine weeks. May tenth, eleventh, blah, blah, carry the one, uh, January twenty-fourth-ish. It may be later because this is your first baby. They like staying up in there."

"Oh, God. Do you think the pill hurt my baby?"

"No," she was uncertain but did not want to upset her.

"My baby is real. How cool is that?" She beamed.

"Oh, my goodness. You have teeth. I have never seen you smile. It is pretty. You should do it more often."

"I will. I am dumping Carl. He has done all he can do for me," she said rubbing her belly.

"Are you sure? He is going to want his kid."

"I don't doubt it. He will be apart of its life. But, I hear Jagadamba is pregnant, too. And if so, who you think is coming first? At least with Bigelow, I will be first. I still love him but I want to be the specialiest snowflake for a change."

"Nothing wrong with that."

Meanwhile, back on the trailer, Rick looked over at Michonne and asked her gently, "What has she told you?"

"About?" Michonne did not even try to fake innocence.

"Come on, you know."

"It was not on purpose. She is scared."

"Oh. I don't know if I believe her. She could have easily put holes in the rubbers. What better way to make sure we keep her than having a Grimes?" Rick asked after really thinking things through.

"Baby, I got to give you credit. You sure do think a lot of yourself. After what just happened to her, do you really think she is in a hurry to potentially go through that again?"

"I don't know. She is allover the place on a good day."

"She is holding it together the best she can. It is a wonder she has not snapped yet. This is the sixth time. She has not been here seventeen years yet. So, do not be so cross with her. Try to understand unless you just want to lose Carl forever. It that is the case, be cruel to her. Reject the kid."

"You know I do not want that. I will never want that."

With that said, Jagadamba began to stir then darted up.

"Pull over. Pull over now" she demanded.

Rick pulled over and opened the door.

She ran so fast that the hat flew off revealing the red dot. She puked by a tree for at least six minutes. Michonne followed and picked up the hat.

"Oh, man. I don't even recall eating anything purple."

"Grape Kool-Aid," Michonne said.

"Oh, yeah," she giggled.

"Come on," she said staring at the dot.

Jagadamba held her hand out for the hat. Michonne gave it to her.

She took a sniff before putting it on.

"I like how he smells," Jagadamba blushed.

"Me, too," Michonne grinned.

"It hasn't changed since we were younger. His voice though. I still freak out when I haven't heard him speak for a minute. It is all breathless and manly. He always speaks like it is urgent. He means everything to me. You think you could get his dad to understand that?"

"You heard?" Michonne frowned.

"I read his lips. Why does think I am the enemy now?" Jagadamba asked.

"You are taking his baby away from him."

"Why can't he just see it as gaining a daughter?" She whined.

"Is that why you have the dot?"

"Just an Indian thing," she hunched.

"That wives wear," Michonne grumbled.

During this time back in Alexandria, Enid was long gone when Carl finally showed up for his check
"It is healing way better than I could have hoped. How is your physical therapy going? I am not talking about those two girls you have been going between," Denise joked.

Carl flatly chuckled, "Ha. Ha. But, yes. I have been taking it very seriously."

"The girls. Or the p.t.," she smiled.

"Shit. Both."

"One in particular? Rhymes with Flagadamba," she said.

"I am not that blatant. Am I?" He simpered.

"A little and by a little, I mean a lot. You should see how you look at her and how you are when are around her. My fingers are on your pulse. Your heart is beating so fast all of a sudden. I actually see something very close to fireworks in your eye at the mere mention of her. I would pay money if that were still a thing for someone to look at me like that."

As soon as she left, his mind filled with doubts again. Eager not to talk about Jagadamba, he commented, "Tara does. She is crazy about you."

He was upset with her again.

"I don't know."

"Sure, you do. Plus, Tara is so cute. She has a flawless complexion. Like, uh, cream."

"Your girl does, too. Like caramel. She is so beautiful, it is kinda stupid. I want to hate her but can't. I hate it," she sniggered.

"She's always had that ability. Like, I want to be furious with her right now but something makes me stop short. But, I know I should be," his voice pouted but his face didn't. He looked not so much angry as did stoically annoyed.

"I sure whatever it is will blow over. You love her and she loves you. The two of will be obnoxiously lovy-dovy and annoying everyone who crosses your path in no time. Enid is a beautiful girl, too."

"I know. If anyone told me six months ago that I would have one woman in my life, let along two, I might've shot them. Or at least hit him in the face. Cause I would have considered it an insult. It is amazing. My dizziest daydream is alive. They both are. They are both out of my league. Jagadamba has never acted like it. But, Enid does sometimes."

"Jagadamba talks down to everyone but you and Eugene and Michonne," Denise said.

"She is smart and wants everyone to know it. It is because of what she looks like. A lot of people automatically assume she is stupid or a slut because she is so beautiful. Being an actress did not help with that."

"You are mad at her but you are taking up for her."

"Habit. I used to have to defend her a lot. Kids were jealous and hateful. The bullying got so bad that her parents took her out of school. Homeschooling her. Well, Priyanka came to the States to homeschool her. She had a double major in education and pre-law."

"Sounds like a good sister."

"She used to be. Now, I don't know," the idea occurred that she could have easily poked holes in those condoms.

He knew Enid had no reason to. Why would she help effectively help her rival? So, the question was- did Jagadamba know?

"Why are you still with Enid?"

"Why are you with Tara?"

"Touche."

"What? You have heard something?"

"No. But, you should choose. It is not fair what you do to Enid."

"I know. But, it is not so simple. I try. I do. Enid and I were together first. But, Jag is."

"That special one? The one that returned."

He nodded.

"It is not fair to deny her what you have. So, if she dumps you. Do not confuse her by protesting it."
"So, you do know something."
"Maybe."
"Why does everything have to be so hard? Can anything ever just be simple?"
Denise scoffed.
"Things quit being simple when Adam bit the Apple. Best you can hope for is hope and someone or ones to share it with. People that give a damn and have morals. Otherwise, fuck it."
"I do love them both."
"I believe you."
Then they got quiet for a minute.
She asked, "You got something on your mind? I used to be a psychiatrist."
He nodded.
She continued, "Jagadamba and I have sessions. We talk on the days you aren't with her. Sometimes twice. Enid and I talk, too. It is every other day with her, though. They didn't tell you?"
"No. Neither."
"I wish you would come and talk to me. I assume you must have issues and feelings you need to get out."
"I am good. I cope on my own. I haven't failed me so far."
"Who has?"
"What?" He asked playing dumb. He knew what she meant.
"Failed you."
"What do they talk to you about?" He ignored her question.
"You know damn well I cannot tell you that. I will say this. Both those of those girls have been through, I believe the clinical term is, uh, stupid shit. Especially J.B."
"I know."
"You don't," her eyes conveyed a bit of terror at the memory of some of the things Jagadamba had told her.
He bristled at the thought of what those men did to her.
He added, "I know she is going through a lot. So, I am patient. She was kind of depressed this morning. She seemed better before she left."
"Carl, you got to understand. Everything that has happened to her falls under the umbrella of slavery. Kidnapped and raped everyday and then a forced marriage equates to sex slavery. What she wanted did not matter. No one gave her any say even over her own body. Not to mention the fact she stayed knocked up. Her kids were barely a year apart."
He nodded. He felt like a brat now. He knew now there was no way in hell if she put holes in those condoms. He felt like an asshole for ever thinking it.
She wrapped his eye back up in silence.
"Thanks. You have made some things clear for me," he said.
He was getting up to leave when she said, "I want your opinion."
"Sup?"
"You have a depth of experience scouting, right?"
"Hell, yeah. Why?"
"You were how old the first time?"
"Thirteen. What? You want to go on one?"
"Yes. I have been training and there is an apothecary shop."
"Like in Romeo and Juliet. Bleh. Hate that drivel. Meds?"
"Yes. We are running almost low. I heard Daryl was going. I figure I could tag along."
Carl made a concerned face then said, "He is going to fight you on it. But, go. Test yourself. You are strong enough. You will make it. You saved me. You can do anything."
Denise hugged Carl and kissed his cheek.
"You are such a cool, young dude. I can see why you got two girls. Speaking of which, remember what I said about money not being a thing?"
He nodded.
She went over to her desk and passed him a plastic bag. He looked inside and took out two of its contents. "Rubbers?" He frowned. "Babies and stds are still a thing. Be careful," she said very seriously despite the mischief in her eyes and the smirk on her lips. He shook his head. "Thanks. I think. I will see you around," he said. "Later," she waved. On his way out, he saw the bed he had been in while comatose. "On second thought, can I stay in here for a while? I need to think. I figure no one will bother me here."
"Sure."
He laid down and curled his body into the fetal position. Denise had a question for him. "Real quick question then I will leave you be," she said.
"What?"
"Why does J.B. always wear something red? I asked her once. She got pissy and avoided answering."
"You noticed that, too?"
"Do you know what it means?"
"It is a tribute to her mom. She always wore red, too. The reason being, the color red comes from these special beetles that only can be cultivated in India. Her mom's family raises or raised rather those beetles. That is where their wealth came from. But, her mom wanted to make her own way in the world. She said she did not want to be another bubbleheaded, trophy wife heiress. She never flaunted it. Mrs. Anthony only spent the money when she had to. Mrs. Anthony inherited like a bazillion dollars when her dad died."
Denise could not help but be impressed.
"Damn. She has pedigree. Plus, she is a natural leader. But, hell, so are you. Your dad's a badass, too. I am ready to check out if I get a papercut. I can't imagine being shot twice. Hell, the two of you together make a lot of sense. Can you imagine if one day the two of you had a kid? Shit, the world would be in trouble. In a good way," she said purposefully. That statement piqued his interest.
His back was turned away from her when he asked, "She denied it the one time I asked. Has she said anything to . . . You?" He realized Denise was gone. He stayed in that ball for about an hour. He was floored by the very real possibility he was probably a father. Angry about the fact it was put on him but happy to a degree because after all, it was her. He had no idea about Enid. He had no reason to. She showed no signs of pregnancy unlike Jagadamba. But, he kind of wanted to pistol whip Priyanka but knew that would not go over well with anyone. Especially, Actually. Then he remembered the odd question Achilles asked him on the second day and his sudden urge to make peace with him. He knew about it.
"That son of a bitch," he exclaimed getting up to go find him. At the same time, Rick and them just made it to the Hilltop.
"I hate mud," Jagadamba grumbled.
"Tell me about it," Michonne sighed.
Rick announced his presence and they let them in. Gregory recognized Bigelow and Jagadamba. He said to Rick, "I see you took in Buffy and her potentials."
Before Rick could say anything, Jagadamba said, "You would be familiar with a show with young girls in tight clothes."
"I have you know my niece and I used to watch it together every Tuesday at seven. It was her
favorite. Don't presume to know anything about me," he said.
She mocked him before saying, "Go gargle glass."
She walked away.
To which, Gregory said sarcastically, "What a sweet girl. At least, she is pleasant to look at. I know
they say children are the future. I would have taken her in but there are too many rugrats to feed."
"That is why is why we let them in. That and I have known her since she was a child," Rick said.
Gregory motioned for Rick to come near. He did with but with hesitation.
"Man to man. That had nothing to do with it. She is beautiful. Though, got to give you credit, Rich.
Looks like she knows her way around a dick or two. What other reason could there possibly be to
take her in?"
Rick hit him in the mouth.
Rick replied, "I love her like she is mine and she is my girlfriend's niece and my son's girlfriend,
asshole."
Ever inappropriate and disrespectful, Gregory looked at an agitated Michonne and said, "Oh. You
two look nothing alike."
Maggie took over the conversation while Jagadamba was making her way to the pantry. Daryl and
Bigelow was behind her. She gave them the slip. She wanted to walk by herself.
She was not looking up when she ran right into Jesus.
"How nice to see you again. I see you have found a home with the Alexandrians. And Rick's son," he said very congenially.
"Who have you been talking to?" Jagadamba frowned.
"Your hat. I saw him and his too cute kid sister playing around with it. You must be his girlfriend or
at least his massive crush for him to part with it."
"Oh. So?" She hunched.
"You don't like me."
"Nothing gets passed you, huh?"
"No more than it does you except when it comes to me. Why is that? Have I offended you in
someway? If I did apologize."
"What do you care if I do or don't like you?"
"I like you. You are sort of amazing. You are so young. Not that youth is an indicator of intelligence
or capability. But, who wouldn't want you as an ally? You are formidable. I like my women strong."
"No offense. But, I was under the impression you liked dudes."
He looked at her sideways. Studying her before he said, "I do. How could you tell that? I am not
ashamed nor am I flamboyant."
"I spent a lot of time around a lot of different types of gay people. I used to be an act-"
"Actress. I recognized you from the jump. That episode of Law and Order: Special Victims Unit.
You were so good in that. I did not suspect it was you until the end."
"Oh, thanks. Anyway, I am bisexual. I do not disclose that to everyone. So. Takes one to know
one."
"Cool. Like I said, formidable."
"I just try is all."
"Humble suits you much better that bravado you bombasted us with when we first met or just now.
You are actually very shy but very brave. Aren't you? You fake it until you make it."
She nodded.
"Tell me about me," he said.
"You are good actor. You will do whatever it takes to ensure the safety of your people even if that
means sacrificing a bunch of murderous noobs to get the Saviors off your scent if only for a minute.
Yeah. If they have succeeded which I doubt, you win, if they lose you win. Because at least then the
full burden to produce would no longer fall squarely on the Hilltop. I believe you set the
Alexandrians up. I just do. This is why I will never like you."
"I am glad we had this talk but I am sorry you feel that way. I sincerely hope you will change your
mind about me. I am a friendly. Regardless, of your opinion of me, I am your friend. I truly hope the
Saviors are gone," he said before walking away.  
She smirked before rolling her eyes.  
She continued on.  She saw a barn that caught her attention.  
She entered alone. It was used a storage area for all types of miscellaneous- including bins with clothes in them, auto parts, children's toys. Something in particular caught her attention.  
"Ooh, Carly-Jayne would love these for her birthday," she said picking up a stuffed Spongebob doll and and Lego pirate playset still in the box.  
She was turning around to leave when she saw two men standing behind her.  
Jagadamba said nothing to either one and tried to pass. They did not let her.  
She backed up all the way and dropped the toys and pulled the rifle.  
"I am just a mom looking for some gifts to give her little girl for her fourth birthday in four days. I am not your problem. Just let me pass."
"You got to pay the toll," said the tall man in a lascivious grunt.  
"Just go away. I am not the one. I mean it. Fuck off," she said.  
With a voice that came out southern and thicker than tar the short man said, "I saw you last time you were here. I remember thinking to myself, goddamn, I have seen her pretty ass somewhere before. I couldn't place you. But, seeing you now without all that whore paint shit on your face, I know exactly who you are."  
"Who? An irritated woman who needs you to move your homely self before she kills you and your dumbass friend?"  
"You were a child actor. My little girl, Markey used to worship you. Your name is Jamie, Janet, Janee or something," he said.  
"I have no idea what the fuck you are talking about. I am not that person. Just leave," she insisted.  
The tall one began talking, "Uh-uh. I don't know about my buddy here but I have always wanted to bang me a celebrity."
"There is no such thing anymore. Don't make me kill you. I will," she warned.  
The tall man teased, "Naw. Pretty-ass little thing like you? You don't have the stomach for it. You would've done it by n-"  
She shot him in the gut.  
Not used to firing an assault rifle in a while and a little more than dizzy in general, she lost her balance.  
"You crazy bitch," he yelled out cradling his now gargling friend.  
The dizziness became worse as she tried to regain her footing.  
Before she could overcome it, then he charged after her knocking the weapon out of her grasp.  
With one hand around her throat, he squeezed while hitting her square in the face.  
She tried to reach for the machete. Then she remembered she had given it to Abraham so he could pry open a crate orwhatever.  
She scratched and hit him drawing blood.  
Just as she was trying to put his eyes out, he reached down and got his gun. He put it up to her head. The temple to be exact.  
"Make one more move, you towel nigger bitch and it is lights out."
She obeyed.  
He took the other hand from around her throat and went for his fly.  
She knew panicking was not going to do her a bit of good. She was helpless. Something she hoped she would never be again.  
She resigned herself to being sexually assaulted for the umpteenth time.  
Still, she hoped someone would miss her and save before he could take her life. Despite this, she couldn't help but weep silently and think, Goddamn it, not again.  
Less than a minute passed. He tore her tights and pushed aside the crotch of her panties. He put his hand between her legs. He shoved three of his rough fingers inside of her violently rutted them inside of her.  
Causing her squeal, "Stop please. You do not want to do this. My people will kill you. Ow!"
Fat man hissed, "Oh, I am going to enjoy this fucking."
Before he could penetrate her with rotten member she saw a blade come down on his gun hand and then o through his mouth.
It was Michonne.
The corpse fell on Jagadamba.
She sheathed her sword and was about pull him off Jagadamba when the girl mustered enough strength to push him off herself.
Now bloody and still woozy, Jagadamba had made it to her feet when she weakly said, "Auntie, look out behind you."
Michonne turned around in time to kill the newly undead tall guy but not in time to see Jagadamba faint.
During this time, Carl made his way to the Anthony house almost ablaze in anger.
He was surprised to see Enid on the couch with newborn Dare who was happy and rooting in her arms.
He saw Carly-Jayne and Judith were napping on the floor. He grabbed two pillows off the couch and put out under their head. He caressed their hair before standing up again.
With armful of baby looking like a young Queen Victoria, Enid said, more deplored, "Carl, we need to talk."
"Enid, can it please wait? I need to find his dad. That asshole owes me an explanation," he said going up the steps.
"Fairly certain, he's banging his babymama right now. Yeah, apparently, they are back together. So. We got time."
"Why?"
"They want to make it work because they have a beautiful, healthy little baby boy who can hear. But, fuck them. We need to talk about us."
Internally, he said, uh-oh. Even though apart of him wanted her to dump him, another part did not.
Having two girlfriends was a heady trip.
"What's up, Enid? Have I done something? The other night when we alone, you did not seem into it."
"Sex. Sex. Sex. Is that all you think about?"
"That and not getting eaten alive."
"I like being eaten alive," Enid cracked. She had finally let him go down on her about three weeks before.
"And you talk about me," he scoffed looking her up and down and unconsciously pursing his pink, full lips.
"Quit it," she smiled.
"What?"
"Looking at me like that. Like you like me," she said.
"I more than like you. I love you," he said.
"No, you don't," her expression was between a wince and grin.
"Enid. Of course, I do. You are my girl. I show it. Don't I?"
"If you had to choose right now. Me or Jacie?"
"That person does not exist," he never appreciated it when people called by her stage name.
"So, you are going to be an asshole about it. Fine, Jagadamba, J.B, Jag. Whoever the hell. If you had to choose. Me or her?"
"You."
"Why?"
"You are here in all your glory right in front of me."
"Okay. If she was here, me or her?"
Trying to conceal his growing irritation with her, he inquired, "Why are you asking me this?"
"I want to know how you feel about me. I need to know how important I am to you."
"Enid, we are getting along as far as I knew. I thought we are solid."
"Stop it, Carl. We are friends with benefits at best. Jag, too. Our threesome, remember?"
"Enid, what is up? Seriously," he asked.
"Carl, her first night here. Who did you pick?"
"I p-"
"Respect me enough to admit you love her more than me. The first night you chose her. Not me. Admit it to me," she plead.
"E-"
"If Negan or somebody made you choose between her and me. I am talking about gun to our heads choose. Who?"
"Enid, this is unnecessary. It is like you are trying to get pissed at me."
"Respect me enough to tell me the truth. You would pick her over me. Admit it.
Is it because she prettier than me? Is because she hotter than me? Freakier than me? What? I really wanna know where I stand and why. Tell me why," she was begging. He had never seen her so vulnerable.
Carl felt put into a corner. He knew he had to say something. The truth.
"It has nothing to do with looks. You're beautiful. It has more to do with. Uh, I thought she was dead or at the least I would never, ever see her again. That she had forgotten all about me. And like, magic or fate or whatever, here she is in the flesh. And she still wants me after everything she has been through. She named her kid after me. Had her on my birthday. I can't pretend I don't love her or that she isn't here. I can't, I do not want to live without her."
"But, you did. You did for almost five years. You lived just fine without her."
"Not really. Neither did she. Why are you asking me these things? Because how I feel about her has nothing to do with my feelings for you. It is two different things. What can I do to make you feel better or put you at ease? Was it last week when we all hooked up? You have been a little distant every since. It came out of left field but it was the direct opposite of awful."
"As if you two had not planned that out?" She scoffed.
"No. I assumed you two did."
"No. Can you imagine that conversation?" Enid shook her head.
Mischievous, he replied, "Yes. Yes, I can."
"So, you actually expect me to believe that the three of us randomly decided to have sex together? No one, me, planned anything. Likewise, I didn't know she was bisexual," Enid said half smiling remembering.
"I did not either. I mean not really. She never really talks about that. Her regular sex life. Just the sexual assault stuff and even that is not great detail. Not that I want details. I hate it happened."
"Hell, she initiated the whole the thing. The threesome, not the bad stuff. She did," she said.
"Kind of. Yes, she did."
"You still did not answer my question."
"It is unanswerable," he said.
"Okay. Fine. Her first night here, who did you choose?"
He said very quietly, "Her."
"I fucking knew it. You always put her first," she said refraining from crying.
"I explained why."
"So? What do I care about why? You want to know why I said you scared me?"
"Yes."
She said in a stilted voice, "I knew the moment I laid eyes on you that you were trouble. I loved you from the jump."
Seeing an opportunity to deflect, he countered, "You sure as shit did not act like it. You used to make me feel like crap on a good day."
"So, this is revenge then? The moment I show you I care you all but bolt. I knew she felt sorry for me. I let the two of you use me last week. Oh, God." she felt disgusted by her own actions. All she could hear was Bigelow's voice in her head.
"We did more stuff to you than not. You weren't complaining then."
"I knew you were an asshole. I even kind of liked that about you. But, you are a cad. The two of you deserve each other."
"Okay. Enid, seriously. I am not doing anything differently," he was not about let on he had been warned by Denise nor was he going to follow her advice.
"I am tired of this. You and me are a sick joke. No, I am the sick joke. And you know what? I am tired of being laughed at. Forget her, forget you. I want out," she said passing the baby to him and standing up.
"You want out? No one is holding you hostage. Besides, you think I don't know about you and Bigelow? At least, I never snuck around. You are the hypocrite. Not me."
"You know nothing about Big and me. We kiss and I bitch about you and Lady Dumb Name."
"Don't call her that."
"There are so many worse things I could call her. You, too. You think I do not know? You think I am blind on top of stupid?" She stood up.
"I know you aren't stupid. But, what are you talking about?"
"What is under that bandage on your neck. I know she has one, too in the same place. Benefit of seeing you both naked. Tattoo?"
"Yes."
"Why? Why wasn't I clued in? Why all the secrecy?"
Deflecting again, he said, "So, all you two do is talk about me and kiss? You honestly expect me to believe that? We had sex the first night. Why should you treat him any differently?"
"I hate you. So, now I am the slut, Mr. Two Girlfriends, who secretly wants to bang the woman who is basically his stepmom? Really?"
"I told you about Michonne in confidence. Besides, us sharing was not my idea. You two approached me about that," he grimaced at her.
"You went along with it."
"It was that or have neither of you. So, I made my choice. Like I said, no one is forcing you to be with me. Although, I would be sad if you left."
"Yeah, right."
He softened and tried to back pedal.
"No. I shouldn't have said half of what I said. I am sorry. But, still. I don't even care about you and Bigelow. I want you to be okay about me and Jagadamba. I thought you were."
"Never. And sad part is. I like her. I do. She is someone I have admired since I was a kid. I used to want to be her. Now she has taken away from me one of the things I want most. That is irony. Or close to it. What does the tattoo say?"
"Her initials, May tenth, twenty sixteen and an infinity symbol. She has my initials and the same."
"The day she arrived. Why?"
"I know you hate tattoos. So, that's is why I didn't invite you to get one."
"So, it is my fault you lied to me by omission. Classy, Carl. Bravo."
"I am not saying that. This is something private between her and I. I can't just blabber this out. She has to agree."
Enid sneered before saying, "Goddamn, you make it sound like the two of you are married or something."
Carl's face became grimly serious and guilty.
Enid heartbreakingly realized, "They are on the left sides of y'all's necks. The two of you have been extra affectionate and into one another like finish each's sentences annoying. C.J. calls you papa now more than not. Even Marco is slightly more respectful of you. You fucking married her. She is your wife?"
He nodded.
"Open your goddamned mouth, you jerk. Say it."
"The night of the party. It seemed right. Gabriel owed me a favor," he said looking down.
"So, I am your goddamned mistress? I told you my dad used to cheat on my mom. And how I hated it. You have no respect for me at all," Enid began to cry angry, bitter tears.
"I do. What we have is not the same as what Jag and me have but it doesn't make it less real."
"You are right. We, you and me really have nothing."
"I-"

Enid said defiantly through her tears, "The morning after pill did not work. I am nine weeks pregnant. It is yours and we do not need you. Save your breath for your wifey."
At the Hilltop, Jagadamba woke in the infirmary. She still felt dizzy like she was hungover. She saw Rick and Michonne by her bedside. Jesus was standing against the wall.
"Hi, I am Doctor Carson. Ja-gad-am-ba? I am saying it right?"
"Yes."
"How do you feel?"
"Like I am being beat up by my kid who doesn't even have fists yet. Is it okay? I feel like I drank all the Crown Royal."
"Well, that is your hormones causing your blood vessels to relax and widen. Making room."
"This isn't my first pregnancy. It is my sixth. I feel like shit. Weak."
"How many came to term?"
"Two."
"How old?"
"She's almost four. And he would have been three in two months."
"I am so sorry."
"Me, too."
"How long have you had symptoms?"
"The throwing up has been going on for like a month. The lightheadedness is new. Like a week or so. It is especially bad today."
"Were you ever baby sick during the other pregnancies?"
"Not this severely. I almost died because of the dizziness. Those pieces of shit were going to rape and pretty sure murder me. I killed one. As soon as I did, the dizziness hit me so hard I lost my balance. Before I could regain my footing he attacked me. My aunt saved my life. Thank you, Auntie," she declared truly grateful.
"It was nothing. Jesus and I were together when we heard the shot. He pointed me in the right direction. He carried you," Michonne was also teary.
Jesus gave the pregnant teen a bashful nod. She nodded back.
Maybe he is not so bad, she thought.
"I hope you aren't offended but while you slept, we were concerned for the fetus and we, well, I took a look," he paused and grinned big.
They all did except Rick and poor Jagadamba.
"All of you look like crazy people. What? Do not keep the pregnant chick in suspense," she whined.
"They are fine."
"Who's they exactly?" She asked.
Carson flipped on the machine. He lifted up her shirt to expose her tummy. He smeared KY on it and ran the wand on her belly.
"See that little blip. That is baby A. And baby B is right beside it. They are identical."
"Twins. I am fucking having twins?"
"Yes. Judging by their heartbeats and size. You are about seven weeks. When did you have your last cycle?"
She had zoned out.
"What?"
"Last menstrual period."
"It stopped the day before I had sex with my pati," she used the many Indians used for husband. There was no official word for it in Punjabi.
"You are due sometime before or around Valentine's."
She looked despondent. No one was expecting this response from her.
"Can I talk to Rick alone?" She sniffled.
They left quickly.
Rick took a seat.
"You hate me now. Don't you?" She asked.
He very nearly said yes. But, he considered the fact she had been attacked and said, "No. Just in shock. My son is going to be a father. To me that is more of a what the fuck statement than the dead walking the Earth. I am going to be a grandpa."
"Maybe. I am not sure I want to be pregnant right now."
"I respect your right to choose. I do. But, there are two of them. You will get all the help you can stand. I personally plan on kidnapping them as soon as they come out. I can't imagine them not being just beautiful between the two of you," he laughed kind of warming up to the idea.
"It is not funny. This totally takes away all my credibility," she had panic in her voice.
"How so?"
"No one is going to believe this was an accident. You know the Pharoahs or at least Cort believed in peerage. Do you know what that is?"
"Jagadamba, this may come to you a shock but you aren't the only person who knows stuff," he said frowning.
She looked at him incredulously having seen Carl make that same poker face on several occasions and asked, "You don't know, do you?"
Rick smiled, "Hell nawl."
She said using air quotes, "Royal titles like king, queen, princess, prince, shit like that. Cort considered himself well, a Pharoah. I got rid of that pompous, pretentious nonsense but they used to call me queen because I was married to the pharoah. It felt weird but it got the job done. They are going to think I got pregnant by the king's son, the prince, on purpose to cement my place in Alexandria. I am not in charge in more. I do not want to be. You understand that, right?"
He nodded.
"I didn't do this on purpose But, they will assume I did."
"Not necessarily."
"Hell, you think it. I read your lips earlier. Just cause I closed my eyes doesn't mean I was asleep. I was squinting and reading your lips in the rearview."
"I prefer not to. I want I believe this was a happy accident."
"These babies are my kicking my natural ass. I feel like shit most the time lately. I admit I feel better when I am around Carl. I do. I really dig the way he smells right now. I have no idea why. With that said, I want them but not just yet. I wanted to have some I don't know. Time with him as just me and him. Maybe be a teenager sometimes. Whatever that means.
C.J., Marco, Tomeka and Ana are enough. I technically have four children. I am scared, Rick."
"Me, too. But, you are not alone," he wanted to heed Michonne's warning about losing his son reverberated through his head. He wanted to make nice.
"I know shit is happening quickly."
"You are putting it lightly."
"My Momma had a twin brother. He was deaf. What if these are boys? Priyanka was blessed with a son that can hear. Being deaf in this world is a death sentence one way or another."
"If you decide to do this, you have a whole community of people who will keep these children alive. They would never be left alone."
She wanted to feel reassured. She wanted to feel happy. Something would not let her.
"How do you think he is going to react?"
"He will be cautiously happy but scared shitless on the inside. He will not show it in front of you. And if you think he is protective of you now. He might follow you into the bathroom once he finds out," he laughed.
"Oh, God, I hope not," she laughed too before pausing and saying, "I really did not plan this."
"I believe you."
"Good."
"When are you going to tell him?"
"When I have made a decision one way or another."
"He has a right to know. Maybe you explain it to him. He would be good about it either way."
"My decision. I have to be the one who decides. Not you, not him. Not anyone else. I am tired of
other people trying to inflict their wills on me.
Seriously. I am not in the mood to explain to you why your opinion doesn't mean anything to me
about this. I decide if I want to bring two more innocent, helpless tiny people into this dumbass
world. Not you or your son."
"Fair enough. You still only have one day left."
"You are such a prick," she pouted.
"I am chalking up all your outbursts to hormones. Just mean."
"Where is Carl's hat?"
"In the trailer. Along with a Lego Pirate set and a Spongebob doll. Michonne picked it up. She
thought C.J. would like it."
Jagadamba snorted.
"I picked up those same things. It is like she and I are related or something," Jagadamba said
facetiously.
"Lori always said it was going to be you who gave us grandbabies. She said we are going to be
brown from this point forward. Sounds a little racist out loud."
"Nah. Sounds like her. She was a queen bee and spoke her mind. No one can fault her for that. I
liked your wife. She liked me."
"That she did."
"My eye. It feels head heavy. He hit me in the face. How bad is it?"
"You have a shiner."
"Oh, crap. You know we are both going to hear his mouth about how he should have come and
none of this would have happened?"
"Yep."
"And also he might be mad at you because you saw his babies before he did?"
Then Rick said something that hit Jagadamba's beserker button.
"Carl will get over it. He will be all right."
She sniffed and a dark cloud hung above her head.
"You say that a lot when it comes to Carl, don't you?" Her parents would say this to her before
leaving for whatever adventure.
"It is no reason to get upset. Just making a statement," he said.
"You do that to him a lot too. Telling him how he should feel."
"Has Carl said something to you?"
"His music did. Carl and you should have a conversation. Going by his playlist. He doesn't like you
much."
"Why do you say that?"
"Lots of fuck the police music. Songs about parents ignoring their children. Fade, For You by
Staind. Youth of the Nation, Hell is For Children. Cats in the Cradle, Better Man by Pearl Jam. The
Fry Song."
"What is the Fry Song?"
"Adventure Time. It used to come on Cartoon Network. Anyway, Marceline the Vampire sang it
about how she was upset about her father eating her french fries. But, it was really about how she felt
unloved by him. He would intentionally watch it in front of you sometimes. Of course, you did not
notice."
"Hold up a minute," he said.
"Do not get all up in arms. My folks did not notice when I did it either."
"You don't like me every much. You never did," Rick said resolutely.
"Not true. I thought you were a cold fish. A fuddy-duddy but I did not dislike you. I just figured you
were shy like me but never overcame it."
"I think you are reading too much into it. Carl and I get along fine. I know what is going on with my
"I am trying to tell you something. I am not judging."
"I find it really hard to take you seriously about this. I remember when you wore diapers and couldn't pronounce your name. And now you are giving me parenting advice? Your daughter is four. You know nothing. I have to draw the line somewhere. Carl is it."

She was deep down insulted but did not reply in kind.

"Other than your sweet ass and Carl's pretty face twenty-seventh years from now, I have know what my aunt sees in you. I know what most people see in you. They see a hero. A leader. Other than being shot once.

I know what have you been through. He told me all about the camp, Maggie's dad's farm, the Governor, the prison, the Claimers, those dudes who wanted to eat y'all, the husband of the pie faced bitch you banged. You fell outta a window. You treated my hot, sexy aunt like second choice. I know how you trained Carl's sworn enemy how to shoot.

And you can't take friendly advice from someone who loves you. I don't hate you. You made Carl. These babies have your blood in their veins. They are Grimeses."

He did not say a word. He just sat trying to figure her out.

Feeling this, she pulled up her hair and removed the bandage.

"Come look," she said.

He did.

"C.G. May tenth, twenty sixteen. An infinity symbol. What does this mean? He has one, too?" Rick got a sinking feeling.

"Yes with my initials. The night of the party. We got married. We just felt this undeniable thing. A force that pushed us together. We used to make believe we're married when we were four. It seemed inevitable. I-"

"Please quit talking."

"Rick-"

"Do not speak," he stormed out the room.

He informed the others that he would be waiting in the trailer.

"I need to be alone for a moment," he said.

Michonne and a couple others had been eavesdropping. She rolled her eyes at Rick and went to her sobbing pregnant niece.
Momma and Daddy

Chapter Summary

Rick copes with the news his son is a husband and father.
Jagadamba tells Jesus her fears.
Enid and Carl bond and fight.
He confronts Achilles.
Gabriel gets punched in face.
Michonne and Carol clash.
Father and son talk.

Rick sat seething in the RV.
Just when I thought I could trust that collar wearing piece of shit, Rick thought of Father Gabriel.
He put his head in his hands and took a series of deep breaths. He couldn't believe this was happening. How his son's life and by extension his had changed so dramatically in the course of seven weeks. More than that, the Grimeses were multiplying.
Now he believed they were his son's. He did not doubt her veracity about that. And clearly she got pregnant her first day there. Using the process of elimination, he figured something or someone had to have sabotaged their protection.
Only one saboteur came to mind. Her older sister was the only one devious enough to think exploiting Carl and Jagadamba's desperate, hot, teenaged, I cannot live without youness would be a good thing. Or maybe the condoms were just plain old. It was not like anyone was making more.
As his thoughts grew deeper, the door popped open. There stood Bigelow as handsome and as mischievous Matt Damon in the Brothers Grimm.
"If you are here to take up for Jagadamba, do not bother," Rick grumbled.
"Shows what you know, Earp. We need decide what we are going to do about our dumbass babies terrible decision-making and the fallout of such. I had no idea those sweet idiots had tied the knot."
Rick said teasingly, "I thought she ran everything by you. Don't call me Earp."
"Not when it has to do her lady in the canoe. According to both Jagadamba and Enid your son is magician with his mouth and a downright swordsman with his dick. Does it dance? Do tricks? Is his come liquid diamonds? I mean shit. They act like his dick is the antidote to whatever poison stuck deep within their sugar walls. Honestly, it is ridiculous how they gush about your boy."
Rick was two parts manly proud because he was sexually satisfying two females. It impressed him. It also disturbed him as a parent. He did want to imagine him like that.
"It may not have the antidote but it does twin making capabilities. Two of my son's sperms entered into one of Jagadamba's eggs- boom. He is not ready for this. For better or for worse, she has been in a serious relationship.Carl hasn't."
"Neither has she. She has been in abuse situations. Situations where she never hoped to be an equal. It is not like that with Carl. He is her first real bf like she is his first gf. And that is where it quits being sweet.
We both know this is a disaster waiting to happen."
"True. It really is. We have to stop it," Rick knowing full well how impossible it was for teenagers to listen to their parents about their romantic partners before the apocalypse.
"That ship sank ages ago. We can't stop them but we can slow them down."
"How?"
"Easy but before I divulge that. You need to know there is a great possibility that Enid is the family
way, too. Three grandchildren. Irish triplets."
Rick wanted to be shocked.
Instead, he laughed mirthlessly and replied, "He is definitely my and Lori's son. This is so messy.
 Barely been fucking two months and he is already the father of three. I hope he knows I am not
raising three babies. I am going to play with them, spoil the shit out of them and give them back."
"Four. You can't leave out his spiritual daughter Carly-Jayne. Hell, she is technically a junior. She is
acting more like him every day. It is annoying."
"C.J. sure as shit is," he slapped his knee at the realization.
"I just thought of something funny. Jagadamba is Michonne's niece. Carl is your son. Who scares me
by the way. Sin-
Still teasing, he asked, "Why does my beautiful boy scare you?"
"I can't really put my finger on it but just beneath the surface there is a psycho just hiding its time to
get out. Like one more bad break is all it would take. Surely, you have noticed."
"Impetuous, yes. Disobedient, fuck yeah. Sneaky, clever, hell yeah. He is not a psycho. He is
courageous. Loyal. Responsible and loving. I know they are stupid in love. I know that. But, to
marry the way they did was underhanded. Dirty. Unfair. I would have liked to have seen it. See him
take that step into manhood. I have daydreamed about it since he was a boy."
"I wanted to give her away or fight Achilles for the right. She is my baby girl. I love her like I made
her. Hell, in some ways I have."
"She sees you as a brother."
"I know. Lately, I feel more paternal towards her. I think I always have. When I discovered her, she
was like a bird with both wings broken and a cracked beak. My father had beaten this girl down in
every way imaginable. She was a shell. She was a case book victim of sexual, verbal, physical and
psychological abuse. All her self confidence, worth and respect were just gone or dormant. I would
like to think of it as dormant.
With tears in his eyes, he recalled, "She offered to blow me once just because I gave her a full bottle
of water. My father used to do that to her.
I built her back up little by little. Me and Boy and Achilles once they were reunited. Only to have
nearly all my hard work undone by that dragon Priyanka when she sold her to Cort. And it broke her
for minute. Through no help of Priyanka's. Our time with the Pharoahs saved her life in a lot of
ways. It put her back together. She remembered who she was and who she could be. It put her back
in the powerseat. Where she belongs. I know this sounds off topic but it isn't. Do you know what her
name means? First and middle?"
"Something to do with a goddess and a queen. Her father talked about it. I know Anthony means
power. We had almost named Carl that. I wanted wanted an excuse to call him Tony. I always liked
that name. Wonder if I could convince them to name of the twins that? It works for a girl or a boy."
"I see where gets his awkward charm from. Anyway, Jagadamba means the goddess of victory of
good against evil. Boudica just means victory. Her brother told me their parents would remind her of
this whenever she became scared or nervous which was fairly often. So, he and I would, uh, what is
the word? Din this into her everyday to remind her her parents gave to her. It was hers to use.
She tries her best too hide it but she is needy, clingy even. And she has serious abandonment issues.
She keeps people at arms length because of this. Even Carl."
"She said Enid was her idea. I didn't believe Carl the first time he told me that. I told him it their idea.
They would hatch out little schemes like how to get extra cookies or money or whatever all the time.
That arrangement makes a whole lot more sense now."
"You have to understand that she literally has a shred of dignity. That is it. If he, your son hurts her. I
am not talking about some petty argument. I am talking about that deep down hurt. I am afraid she'll
unravel. At the least it will make her bitter and angry. Despite it all, she is neither of those things. No
way she would love your son still after all this time if she was. At the most, she might kill herself.
She almost did twice already."
"I see you and she hit off so well. You certainly have a flair for the dramatic. It will be ugly, sure. All
break ups are to some degree. But, suicide. Come on. She's stronger than that. And besides who is to
say she doesn't break his heart? Maybe she is that last bad break you talk about. Is she supposed to be dispatched, too?"
"Well, if she hurts his feelings that bad then you have my condolences. But, I hope so for your sake. She is stronger than that. But, if she isn't. I, uh, couldn't leave Carl or you or Michonne or Daryl or Carol alive if that happened. I know if I kill one I better kill you all. What right would he have to life if he is the reason she no longer has hers?
Rick wanted to shoot him but refrained. After all, this was a man talking about protecting his adopted daughter. He had one of those so he couldn't fault him for that. Instead, he pulled Bigelow by the collar and warned, "Do not ever threaten my child, my woman or my brother or sister or me ever again, fuckface, you get that? I will not hesitate to beat you down and shoot out your brains out. You get that?"
"Loud and clear, Ricky. But, I need you to help him not hurt her."
"Don't call me Ricky. And I have taught my son how he is supposed to treat a woman."
"Keeping Enid is not something he should have agreed to. So now, he has a wife and a mistress. That is your doing? He treats her like shit."
"I don't approve of him having two girlfriends. I never cheated on his mom. Ever. I had ample opportunity and offers. Some women would offer sex just to get out of tickets. Anyway, I do love Jagadamba. But, I love my son more. I do see how unstable she is. Absolutely. But, she seems to even out when his around. It is like what my grandma used to say. When a man and woman sleep together, he siphons some her sanity while the woman gets a big, fat dose of his crazy. So, it will all work out the wash. But for now, they need to be punished. What they did getting married all secretly and shit was not cool. I can't say that enough."
"I got a plan like I said. But, I got to finish telling you what I figured out."
"O...Kay."
"Okay. Carl and J.B.'s babies are going to your grandchildren and her great-nieces or nephews respectively. Since you are battle married, that literally makes you Uncle Grandpa and her Aunt Grandma," Bigelow laughed.
Rick gave him the stink eye and hit on the arm with the but of his gun.
"Ow. But, totally worth it," Bigelow was still laughing.
"Now tell me this supposed plan for our dumbass babies."
Speaking of dumbass, Carl head felt like it spun around like that of a cartoon. With baby Dare still in his arms, he called for, "Tomeka, I know you have heard everything. Come get your baby play cousin."
Tomeka came on down and took the baby. She grinned because someone was taking an interest in getting to know her. He even used her words. Then she cracked on him, "Damn, dude. Pretty soon, you are going to be known as the baby daddy of Alexandria."
Carl turned and flipped off a chuckling Tomeka before leaving to pursue Enid.
Enid was nothing if not stealthy and quick. She ducked and dodged into the one house she knew he would come to last.
She was at his house.
It was forty minutes before he figured it.
"Took you long enough," she said on the stove making something that smelled like either rice and beans or tacos depending on your perspective.
"How long have you known?" He asked directly behind her.
"You are too close. Back up," she said feeling his moist breath on her neck. Liking it but not him. He tried to touch her waist. She elbowed him in the stomach.
"I told your ass to back up. I mean it. Do not fucking touch me," she said angrily. Still in pain, He grunted out. "How long have you known? When are you due?"
"A couple hours but suspected the question a week ago. My boobs are sore and swollen. My body just feels different. January twenty-fourth thereabouts."
"I noticed they looked more awesome. So, the pill did not work evidently."
"No. This child was conceived after that stupid fight we had about your bandage."
"The sex was so intense. It felt we had made a pink, cute, little squirmy thing. So, I am game if you are. I want to be in my child's life. I will be."
"I do not know."
"What the hell, Enid? I know are you are pissed-".
"I was pissed when took your sweet time coming home after her first night here. Pissed when you agreed to sharing you. You got married on me, you insensitive, cockhungry, hillbilly assclown. We never even broached the topic of marriage.
You married her. She officially comes first now as she should. You broke my heart. I can't have you doing the same to my kid. You are always going to put her over everyone. She is your bae. I heard a rumor she is pregnant, too. So, I know my baby will lose."
"Never. That is my son or daughter in there. That baby is a Grimes. There will be no favoritism. Just love. You cannot keep me from my child. I swear I will tie you to a bed before I let that happen," he was half serious.
"Whoa, Carl, that was not creepy at all threatening to kidnap and hold me hostage. Fairly certain your kidnapping survivor wifey and your sheriff dad will support your endeavor. Not!"
"Look. I want my child. Hell, I want you. But,-" She threw a ladle full of what she had been making at him. It was rice and beans. And it was hot.
"Fuck you, Carl. You do not get to say that to me anymore. You want me to babysit. You want me to cook for you. You want me to fuck you. Suck you off because J.B. does not like to. But, she had no qualms eating me out last week. I mean none. Go figure. And she is better at it than you and that is saying something. Or maybe it felt better because it was taboo. I don't know. At any rate, you do not want me for me. I am an outlet. Something you can use."
Carl took one step towards her and determined, "If you thought that why are you in my house cooking us lunch as opposed to not being here. What are you doing? Do you even know, baby?"
She burst into tears and took the food off the aisle.
In a torrent of anger and anguish, "Why did she have to come here? You and me were on the verge of something truly special. We would have been so golden together. Unstoppable. Those woods were ours. When was the last we were out there?"
"You said you did not want to anymore. And they are ours. I have not taken her out there ever," he hadn't.
"So. Girls say all types of stupid shit we don't mean to test guys or get our way. Shit like Valentine's so not at big deal. But, walk your stupid male self through that door with no gifts and see what type of crazy bitch she can truly be."
"My mom did that once. My dad came home with only fast food. Yeah, she threw a hot cup of tea at him and we went and stayed at gramma's for a week."
"See. When I told you could spend the night with her, I did not think you would. When we suggested that we share you you were supposed to reject her and tell her all you wanted was me. You didn't. You had so many opportunities to let it be just us and you pissed on every single one when it came to me. But, when it came to her, you did not miss a beat. You were Johnny on the spot. Her first and second day here. Her son's funeral and the days that followed. The welcoming party come to find out. When Carly-Jayne had a summer cold. That time J.B. farted- you were the definition of there. You loved her wholly. When she comes into the room, you gasp. She she touches you, you close your eye and smile. You savor the moment. You do not do that for me. Bigelow does though."
Completely envious, he said, "Does he now? So, are you claiming we have nothing? That's a lie. You cannot rewrite our history because you're angry."
"I. I. I. I feel so stupid talking to you. Exposed. Naked and not in the good way. You make me feel like shit. I am not rewriting anything."
He took a deep breath and said, "I didn't know, Enid. I thought I was being fair. I am sorry. I am so sorry. I was going to tell you eventually. I was."
"Who else knows?"
"Father Gabriel. Uh, Glenn by accident. Begged him not to tell you or Maggie. He was angry with me."

"No wonder Maggie's been giving me puppy dog eyes like she feels sorry for me. You know he told her. They actually tell each other everything. Why didn't you man up and dump me? I would have handled it. Let me guess. She did not want you to."

"No. Tomeka knows. So does Marco. We haven't told Carly-Jayne yet. She would let it slip. That is it."

"You punk ass. I never thought I would say that about you."

"Enid, please, reconsider. We can work something out. I want my baby."

"So, do I. That is the only common ground we still have."

"I do not expect you to forgive meet right away," he said.

"Thank you for giving me permission. I needed that," she said sardonically.

Telling the truth and playing the only card he had left, he said, "I gave you my virginity. People think that doesn't matter to most guys. It does to me."

"If it mattered so much then why did you have sex with another girl no less than twenty-four hours later?"

"She is not some random girl. If she had been anyone else I wouldn't have been tempted at all to-"

"Cheat on me. Just call it what is was."

In an almost whisper, he said, "Cheat. You said so yourself that she was, is my first love. And we were ripped out of each other's lives. It does not excuse how I made you feel. Make you feel. I know that."

"Go ahead. Say but. Come on. Lay it on me," she said

He decided not to take the bait. Instead, he asked, "May I feel your belly?"

She pouted and thought about it.

"Why? You playing a game?" She said holding her stomach.

"I have never played games with you. I have went behind your back once. I am straight to the point like you. I just want to see if I can feel my kid," he said very pitifully.

She believed him.

Enid took a deep breath and lifted her blouse.

He walked over to her and dropped to his knees.

He gasped when he put his hand on her belly. Other than being hot to the touch, there were no blatant signs of new life yet.

She looked up at the ceiling. She feared if she looked at him, she change her mind about dumping him. Like her rival, she truly found the junior Grimes beautiful despite his injury. Neither girl was blind after all.

Full of reverence, the young man proclaimed, "Hi. My name is Carl and I am your dad. I am going to keep you safe and protect you from the world even when you do not want me to. I know you are only a heartbeat and brain as of now and not much else but I love you already and will kill and die for you right this instant You, son or daughter are like the proof the world is not over. I want you. I can't wait until we meet on your birthday," when said that they both began to cry.

She looked down at him and he looked up at her.

"We're going to be parents. Holy shit," she ran her fingers through his hair.

"I know. Your stomach is so hot. And your eyes are more blue than usual. Like, there is more light in them," he smiled reaching to touch her pretty face. She nuzzled into his hand. She couldn't help it.

"I am scowling for two. I know what people say about me," she laughed.

"I don't care what people think about me or you. Fuck'em."

"Your dad. He is not going to take this well."

Carl scoffed, "He is going to have to. My dad is going to have to accept the fact I am a dad now, too," Carl chocked it down but he wanted to puke.

He felt more scared than the times he was almost sexually assaulted slaughtered like cattle within a twelve hour period respectively.
"Nauseous?" She asked.
"Only a little. I do love you, Enid. I never set out to hurt you. I regret that I have."
She sighed, "I believe you. And we love you, too."

Two hours passed.
Rick and most of the gang had returned.
Gabriel was the only one on guard duty.
He walked up to Rick all smiles to give him the report. Rick listened like nothing was wrong.
As they were about separate, Rick said, "Oh, Gabriel, I almost forgot."
He punched him right in the mouth.
Gabriel spat out the blood and asked, "Which one told you?"
"It doesn't matter. You should have came to me before you did anything."
Nonplussed, Gabriel asked, "Why?"
"What the fuck you mean why? He is my sixteen year old son."
"Who made an adult decision all on his own. They were so sincere. A very much in love couple as I have ever seen. I asked them all the right questions together and apart. He convinced me more than she did. He quoted Ephesians 5:22-33 to me. Do you know it?"
"The Bible most come in graphic novel form now? I never even seen him pick one up. But, I know the gist."
"And?"
"How wives should submit to their husbands or something. It is about marriage. That I know."
"It is. Why am I not surprised that is the part you remember?"
"What the hell you saying? This may not be the best time to antagonize me."
"You see, that verse has been abused so many times. It is really about how a man should treat his wife. It goes:
Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing a her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.
In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
He knew that by heart. He said he wanted that for her and him. It moved me to tears. There he stood basically a child before me saying something, feeling something many men never understand or feel about their woman. He loves that impressive young woman. They are both so impressive. Such a beautiful couple.
You know he is the reason she is still alive. Just the fleeting hope that one day she might see him again stopped her from giving up.
So, I know it is a lot to swallow but how they feel is real. I couldn't stand in the way of that or let anyone else. She is a Grimes now. Your daughter now. Deal with it. And do not ever put your hands on me again. Use your words. I have earned that respect. I think."
"Whatever," Rick said walking away.
Gabriel chuckled and looked for Jagadamba to step off the RV. She was one of his favorite people.
He was surprised when she didn't.
Down at the Hilltop, Abraham and Jagadamba remained behind.
He had volunteered to stay with her because, "I know for a fact after what almost happened to her today if I left, shit, her pappy would come back from the dead to face fuck me to death. Because that is the only way B.H. is not with his baby girl."
At the moment, he was guarding the entrance while Jagadamba remained in the examination room. She was fighting depression the best she could.

Jesus came in and sat down in the chair beside her. He also wanted to protect her.

"You feel like talking about it?" Jesus asked.
"Yes. No. He hates me. They hate me."
"Rick doesn't hate you. Neither does Big. They want you two to cool off."
"Cool off? Hmmph. Rick is just mad Carl isn't just his anymore and the same goes for Bigelow about me. It is not fair. Especially the day I had. I can't believe this shit. I hate this," she whined huffing.
"Abraham and I promised to protect you so we will. It is only two days. We'll keep each other company," Jesus saw this an opportunity to get Jagadamba to like him.

For whatever reason, he wanted a camaraderie with her. She reminded him of someone he had lost.

"You heard the day I had. Why are you threatening me?" She let out a laugh.

He laughed too.
"Why did you agree to stay?"
"I wanted to appease Rick. He is my father in law and my leader. So disobeying him was out the question. He refuses to understand. I love him, too. I want to be his daughter in law. That is a part of the reason why I said yes to Carl's proposal; I miss being a daughter. I am not an orphan anymore."
"Just tell him that. It is bound to soften him."

"I don't know. Rick can be a real, live asshole sometimes. Stubborn."
"Look, he loves you like daughter. You should have seen him when he discovered you had been attacked. His first response was to gather you in his arms and kiss your forehead. He told doc you were precious to him and that you were carrying his grandchild and to make sure you two were going to be okay. Then he set his attention to find the assholes who done it. He was proud when he heard you had killed one and Michonne had gotten the other."

"Oh. He was? Cool.
I still do not know why he thinks this is a good idea. What does he think two days apart is going to accomplish? Other than to piss Carl off when he finds out what happened to me today. This reeks of Bigelow," then she smiled and chuckled.

"What am I missing?"
"I know what Bigelow is up to now. This is not about me and at all. Well, it is. This is a test for Carl."

Jesus being quick on his feet replied, "To see if he comes and gets you on his own before the two days is up."

During this time, Carl walked Enid back to her house. They did not know the others were back yet.

"So, um, when do you want to tell people that we are expecting?"
"I kind want it to be a secret. I figure everyone will figure it out when I call am emergency town meeting at the church and give birth on top of the altar like a boss," Enid said throwing up her hands up.

Carl laughed as did she. Then they looked at each other bashfully.

"We are really doing this, " he said.
"Yes. I hope it is healthy. And beautiful," she said.
"What else could it be? You're its mom."

"Not too bad yourself," they were holding each other's hands. Swinging their arms back and forward.

"I, uh, we have to go the Hilltop. You know, get an x-ray?"

"Ultrasound."

"You know what I meant," he said looking sheepish.

"Why didn't you go with J.B.? Clearly, she is getting one done."

Carl hit his forehead in realization.

"That was why my dad was so adamant about Jag going to the Hilltop. To get an ultrasound. Why wouldn't they let me go to see my kid? That makes no sense," he said pouting.

"What does? Not this," she simpered.
"Yes, it does," he put his hand on her belly and smiled his warm closed mouth smile at her. Her favorite one of his. That and his smug half grin that followed that always preceded a kiss. This time was no exception.

His hands found their way into her hair. She did not mind. She forgot she was mad at him for a mo. Then they slid down her back and grabbed her ass. That reminded her. Before it went any further, she pulled away from him and said, "You don't get to go there with me anymore. Especially with her not here. Unlike you and her, I mind going behind the back of someone I say care about. And despite everything I do care about her. I couldn't care for her kid if I didn't. And f.y.i., I can taste her on your lips. Brush your teeth, nasty," she slammed the door in his face.

He stood there for a minute feeling awfully shitty and hella confused. On the other side of the door, she slid down against it, weeping.

After a couple minutes, he saw Achilles come outside from across the street.

He moved off the Rhee front porch as he seethed in his direction.

Achilles noticed when he got up on him.

"You all right? You look like Bill Clinton getting turned away from a Mickey D's," Achilles ribbed.

"First of all, Clinton was a vegan before the world ended. Number two, what are you, forty? No one our age jokes about Clinton," he said wanting to punch him in the face.

"Okay. Did Enid lock you out of heaven? That is the only time a man gets this pissy," Achilles was doing his damnedest to disarm Carl.

"None of that will ever be your business."

"What's crawled up your ass? Just the other day we compared notes about our women. What is wrong?"

"As if you don't know."

"I don't. Enlighten me," he said.

Carl pulled the condoms out his pocket and shoved them into Achilles' chest.

"Oh, shit. I thought I had thrown all these away," Achilles sighed examining the evidence.

"This shit is low even for you. What the fuck, Achilles? I thought you were my friend. Hell, more than that. My brother. She is your sister. And you do this to me and Jag. Why?"

"I did nothing. Priya did. When I found out, the next day I threw them all away. I thought."

"You could have warned us."

"Yeah. Okay. I can imagine that convo. Hey, Jagadamba, hey, Carl, remember last night when y'all was fucking like loud, obnoxious bunny rabbits? Well, my batshit crazy pregnant, power hungry, control freak girlfriend tampered with your rubbers. Pass the syrup. Besides, I did warn you the second day."

"Okay. I will give you that one but neither of us was actively trying to make a baby. We were trying to be responsible. Your babymama took that choice away. Dude, that is so, so rapey. Imagine how my wife is going to react to that."

Looking gobsmacked, Achilles asked, "Your who?"

At the Hilltop, Jagadamba had fallen asleep in a middle of a conversation an hour before. Jesus laughed at that. Not because it was funny because mankind was still in motion.

Do not go gently into that good night, he thought

Fifteen minutes passed. He had decided to catch a nap himself when he was awoken by the sound of her singing the first verse of Message In a Bottle.

He said made no physical indicator he was conscious. Instead, he listened to her sing the whole song. "Goddamn, girl," Jesus startled the girl.

You can really sing. You have such a big, clear, wonderful voice. Kinda mournful. There's a definite longing there. You actually made that song sound like it is a desperate cry for help and companionship."

"I love to sing. Ultimately, that is what I wanted to be when I grew up. I had this big idea. I would be as big or bigger than all my idols."

Who were?"
"Michael, of course."
"Duh."
"Natch."
"Mariah, Lady Gags, Amy Lee."
"Evanesence was the shit. But, I always hated Born This Way. Bah."
"I know, right. Why make a big deal?"
"Exactly."
They both snickered.
She continued, "Dixie Chicks. Garth Brooks, Jamie O'Neal. There is-
They said in unison, " No Arizona."
"I love that song. Reminds me of twelfth grade and my first boyfriend. He was my english lit teacher.
He lied a lot. He was married to a woman. He had the most beautiful eyes. They were actually
violet."
"Like Elizabeth Taylor? I met her once when I was seven. So awesome. She told me, she the most
gorgeous creature in the world, told me I was beautiful. I was like can't nobody tell me shit like a
month."
"Your life has been an eventful one. You have loved more life at sixteen than most ever do."
"I don't know. I did not ask for it. Everybody has an eventful one. Tell me about you and your first
boyfriend. Did he take your virginity?"
Jesus blushed, "Yes. He was chubby and had a huge c-o-c-k."
"Did you just really spell out cock? That is adorable," she laughed.
"I have always hated the sound of that word. Just say penis. But, who goes around calling it a
penis?"
"Only those who are too pussy to say cock. What about dick? Or schlorg. Or one eyed monster?"
"I take it you got one of those with Carl. He?" Made a motion indicating a large penis with his
hands.
"Hell, yeah. He got one of those."
"Makes sense. He is kinda short and has huge feet."
"So, am I. Short, I mean."
"Those babies are going to be tiny and gorgeous. Biracial kids are so spectacular looking. Plus, the
two of you are a good looking."
"I hope if I decide to have them, I hope they are girls and have his blue eyes. And his nose. And his
lips and his cheeks and chin. And his hair or his dad's. I love their hair. My hair hates humidity and is
a bitch to detangle. I guess that is my dad's genes kicking in. Their hair doesn't do that."
"I hear you. So, basically you want your babies to look like him."
"He'd be a pretty girl or girls as it were. I hope they have some of my coloring so their eyes will look
even bluer like Vanessa Williams. Make them exotic like me."
"She played your mom, didn't she?"
"A couple times. She was cool. I hope she is alive."
For whatever reason this caused Jagadamba to burst into tears.
"He is not going to come for me," she wept.
"Well, the impetus for the direction my life has taken started when I ran away to find him. I almost
made it. I was in Georgia. I was with this creepy looking but ultimately very sweet trucker dude. He
was willing to take me all the way outside Atlanta. He protected me. But what when I saw Galen,
C.J.'s father, I left with him because I knew him. I had since I was seven. How was I to know he
wanted to do what he did to me?
I even got brave once and asked Carl did he ever venture out to find me. He said every time he tried
Shane or his mom was always find him before he got too far. And the day we separated he made them maneuver through traffic to find me. So, I pretended to be satisfied with the answer but I was very quietly devastated. You see I have suspected and feared for a while now is I love him more than he does me."

His expression asked her why.
"Well, starting with my first day at Alexandria. I recognized him first but I did not let on. As soon as I saw his knock kneed and pigeon toed ass, I knew it was him. His face had not changed all that much. I had on shades. So, I will give him that. When I took them off, he recognized me. I fainted. I just knew once he found out about me, all my hopes for us would be dashed. That maybe we would be friends at best. I never thought in a bazillion years he would want to actually marry me. Wanna know what he said when he realized it was me? He said . . ."

She related their whole story to Jesus from them showing each other their battle scars all the way down to their threesome all their sex marathon the day and morning before.

Jesus couldn't remember the last time he blushed so much.
"The first time I met Carl was after I had broke out the cell and into their house. He put a gun to my head. He said what the hell are you doing in my house? So, I know he is loyal and protective. Those are good qualities to have if you are a husband and father. Quick and observant.

If nothing else he'll miss you. I remember how sad and lonely he was when I first met him. He did not voice it but it was allover him. It was around the time your aunt and his father began intimacy. I think he used to be in crush with her. I saw his heartbreak when he realized it. But, by the tale you weave and context clues. He is over that. He will show up. He will not want to risk losing you. I can guarantee you he doesn't ever want to feel that low again.

So, your fear of him not loving you like you do him is a touch unfounded. However, I get it. You want someone to seek you out. You look out for people all the time, you want someone to look out for you."

"Almost but no cigar. I feel so alone right now. Only one person stayed here with me. Not even Bigelow wanted to stay. It hurts. Nobody ever stays by my side for long."

"Are Abraham and I chopped liver?"

"No, Jesus. Paul. Your name is Paul, right?"

"Yes."

"I would prefer to call you Paul. But, I love Jesus and God. I take it very seriously. So, I ma gonna call ya Paul."

"It is my name, Jagadamba. You know you are not my first Jagadamba. I spent a year and a half in India. She was delightful, wise and delicate older lady. Just had such poise and grace. Epithet for Durga? The goddess of motherhood and victory. And something else."

"Hmmph. Maybe that is why I stay pregnant. Thanks, mom."

"Name's fortuitous. I think it is beautiful."

Jagadamba scoffed, "I used to hate my name. No one could pronounce it. Now. It is my shield."

"Was your mother Hindu?"

"At first then she converted when she married her first husband. He was a German Catholic. A world class lawyer. Priyanka's dad. With all the saints and shit mom said it was an easy transition. Like same difference.

Then she became nondenominational with my dad."

"Interesting woman."

"She was, is a plastic surgeon. I always miss her but today it is real strong. I keep dreaming about her. Hearing her voice in my head. She keeps telling me to stay still and to have faith it will all work out. That I am loved. But, me, my mind is saying run. That other shoe will drop any day now. People only want you can give them not about you. Not ever you."

"Listen to your mom. She has the right idea. Faith got you this fair. You basically beat the devil twice. You were led back to the love of your life. Your husband now no less and you got two precious babies in your belly. You found what very well be your last blood relative, your connection to your father, his sister. Who loves you. She sensed something terrible was up with you. She did.
She saved your life.
You have an archangel in Bigelow. Your brother, your sister for better or worse. Your wonderful little girl. That Tommie girl. And your are gorgeous and fine as hell, too. You make a guy want to change his mind.
You have so much. There are people here who give anything to have an iota of what you got. Cheer up. Be grateful."
She sniffled and sighed.
"You are right. I usually am grateful. I even keep a journal if it. I feel joy for the first time in forever and I am so scared of losing it all. Now a days, it only takes one bad day to lose it all."
Jesus clutched her hand and said, "Little Durga, it has always been like that."
Back in Alexandria, Michonne just told Sasha and Carol about Carl and her niece.
Sasha was shocked. Carol guffawed.
"This isn't funny, Carol. This is deadly serious," Michonne said.
"Duh. I am laughing because it is better laugh than to cry about all the shit that will go wrong. I feel sorry for them. I do. If something else happens to her because of her pregnancy. Shit, you are going to have to catch Carl with a net. There is no telling how he will react," she said really very concerned for Carl's mental health.
"Jagadamba will be fine. She and those twins will make it to term."
"God knows I wish that to be true. I want that. But, we should all know to be prepared for the worst," Carol said frowning.
Michonne mean mugged Carol and. "Go to hell, Carol."
She turned to walk away. Sasha made an expression of disapproval at Carol and followed Michonne.
"I don't know what the hell her problem is lately. She has been uncommonly life is pain lately," Sasha said.
"Since the outpost. She was captured and had to murder her way out of there," Michonne understood. That did not mean she agreed.
"So, did Maggie. She is not bitching out."
"True. Look," she said pointing ahead seeing Rick going in Carl's and Achilles' direction.
Rick felt his heart beat in his ears as he approached his son. He did not know quite he should feel.
He did not know whether he should be proud or pissed.
When Carl saw his father, he felt nervous and guilty. All his remaining little boy came out. He was afraid.
There was so much he knew they needed to discuss. He needed support and advice but was certain he would receive condemnation and admonishment instead.
Achilles wanted to further question his new brother in law but was mostly hurt that Jagadamba kept it from him. He knew their relationship was becoming a bit strained due the fact he was getting back with Priyanka and her involvement with Carl but he did not know it devolved to the point she no longer trusted him.
When Rick got close enough to Carl to see his half almost not really beard, he felt the overwhelming urge to bear hug him.
Carl gladly hugged him back.
Rick couldn't get what Gabriel said to him out of his mind. Nor could be quit thinking about those twins in his daughter in law's belly. He imagined them as golden, baby girl copies of Carl. To him, Enid's alleged pregnancy was not real to him yet.
When Rick pulled back, his crystal blue eyes were full of tears.
"Dad, I am sorry," Carl knew by his father's outpouring of affection and the stricken look on his face that he knew.
"I knew when I saw the red dot on her head when I let her in. But, I pushed it down. I hoped she was being dramatical," Rick said caressing his son's face.
"We didn't do it to hurt anyone. We just really, really want to be together until we die," he said just as teary.
"I know. I wish you had told me first. I would've liked to have been present. I would not have tried
to stop you per se—"
"No offense. But, you could not have stopped it anyway. We would have figured out something else. Even if it meant doing it Cold Mountain style and saying I marry you three times. Which is what she wanted to do. It was my idea to actually go in front of a preacher. Gabriel owed me a favor. So. Don't be mad at him. He was being a friend."
"I already punched him in the mouth. He told me about that Bible verse you recited. That was, uh, pretty adult of you to even want to find it let alone memorize it. I am almost proud of you. Well, I am proud of you. You are taking responsibility and stepping up to all the plates. You always have been though. It is who you are. I get that, love that about you. However, like I said you kept it from me and deserve better than that."
"You do."
"You are about to be in my shoes. Kinda already are. Imagine, twelve, fifteen years down the road one of your brood did this to you. How would you feel?"
"The other day I asked C.J. not to color without me cause I had to go pee. When I came back, she already started. It hurt my feelings. So, I get it. I am sorry. Please don't be mad. This would be so much easier if you aren't angry. How is Jag? Is she a they?"
Rick laughed, "I have never heard it put quite like that before but yes. She is a they. A trio actually."
He looked at his daddy with head cocked to the left. Achilles was still there listening. Feeling a little better about not knowing. "Twins? Baby girl is having twins," Achilles laughed.
Carl was still speechless.
"Identical," Rick said to him.
He then reached into his back pocket and handed Carl the ultrasound.
He looked at it. Frowned then smiled then some weird combination of each. Then his knees gave out. He fell to them. He wept and laughed but mostly wept.
After a couple minutes, Carl composed himself and he asked, "Where is she? Still in the RV? I need to see her. Oh, my God. Identical twins. Kids our age can make twins?"
"Her mom is a twin," Achilles said.
"Oh, yeah," Carl remembered.
"So was my dad. I was born with an identical twin that died. Like Elvis," Rick said.
"Really?"
"Yes."
"I never knew that."
"I never told you."
"Wow. So, twins, huh. I have three babies on the way. Enid's—"
"Pregnant, too. I know."
Rick nodded.
"That guy is such an asshole," Carl sighed.
"He may be but at least he is forthcoming," Rick said.
"Touche. Is that is the word?" Carl asked awkwardly.
"Yes," his father could not be angry with Carl no matter how hard he tried. He knew, recognized tacitly that his son was a man. An actually three children on the way. Three grandchildren on the way. Hope. Real live hope. With more than healthy dollop of dread
Rick said aloud, "Carly-Jayne is my step-granddaughter. I am a grandpa already."
Rick's got weak and and he fell to them. Like son, like father.
Carl knew he needed to talk to his wife. So, he asked again, "Where is Jag?"
Rick took a deep breath and coolly drawled, "About that . . ."
Chapter 17b- No Place She Isn't

Chapter Summary

Rick and Carl have a much needed argument.

Abraham tells Jagadamba something she never needed to know.

Boyardee confronts Bigelow.
We meet two of the Pharoahs.

Enid shows how mature she is.
Glenn and Maggie have a conversation about the name on everyone's lips.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After Rick explained where Jagadamba was and why, Carl looked at him like he could punch him in the face but instead walked away from him and headed towards the house.
He did not follow him. He wanted to give his son some space.
Michonne walked up beside Rick and asked, "Is this what Bigelow and you discussed?"
Rick nodded.
"You had to have known this was a bad idea. I don't know why she agreed given the condition she is in. She clearly was not thinking clearly. I literally had to kill a man to get him off of her. He had his hands jammed inside her pants. You think because Jagadamba has been violated before that this was a no never mind to her? She played it off but I saw the fear and trepidation on her face. She was terrified. You must have seen it."
Rick wanted to ask if you are so concerned then why didn't you insist she come home.
So, he asked, "Why didn't you protest more?"
"I was hoping my man would have enough basic sense and human decency to bring home my niece who also happens to be his pregnant daughter in law when she obviously needs to be coddled and babied at the moment."
"I left her with Abraham and Jesus. She is safe. You trust me, don't you?"
"You know I do. But, did you see the look on Carl's face. He is deep down hurt. I know what he did and has done was fucked up. You want to punish him for it. But, we are beyond that point. He has to learn for himself the folly of what he has done. You cannot ground him or nothing else. We have no recourse. We have to watch him fall and be there to catch him. That is all we can do."
"I don't except that," Rick said.
"Well," she hunched.
"She is not even sure she wants these babies. I wanted to keep him from that reality for at least a couple more days. All she really wants right now is him and to be something close to a teenager and mom to the little one she already has. I want that for them, too. It is just, why now? Why all of this now?"
"Maybe this is supposed to be."
"We'll see," Rick said with a glimmer of acuity in his eyes.
She knew then Rick had a plan.
"This is a test for Carl. I get it. You want to see he if will obey or rebel. Go get his wife like a man or pout and mope like a child and wait for you to go get her. If he rebels he is ready. If he obeys, he is
not."
"I want you to keep an eye on him. If he goes, I want you to go with him. I trust you to keep him alive when I can't. I got a feeling he sort of hates me at the moment."
"I will do."
"I know," he said.
Michonne and Rick kissed. She still did not agree with his methods. She would have rather had her niece home.
It was a couple hours before dusk was fast approaching. Which only meant one thing- Jagadamba was bent over porcelain and retching.
Abraham decided to give the girl a visit. Jesus led the way.
Seeing her, he could not help but think of her father.
Bushrod had been one of few men in his life he ever respected or admired. Not only because he saved his life but because he was the first person other than his mother and wife to ever really embrace him and celebrate and encourage his Abraham-ness so to speak. The two men spoke alike, thought alike. Bushrod had been the brother he always wanted but never could convince his mother to get him.
"Baby, you are enough," she always said.
Having been a father of three, two of which were girls, he looked around the cabinet and found a rubberband big enough to contain her thick locks.
Abraham gathered her hair up and put it in a high bun. He then began to shush and rub soothing circles on her upper back. He definitely had not lost his fatherly touch.
"You want some saltine crackers, B.H. junior? Some ginger?" He asked.
She nodded no.
"I am slightly allergic to ginger. It makes me sneeze and my tongue itch. Indian food is full of it. So, I have to take benadryl before I could eat it easily. I am allergic to a lot of things. That is why I like bland food so much."
"So, saltines is a yes. B.H. junior?"
She laughed before coughing and nodding.
"Your brother is nothing like your father. But, you are just like him. Your attitude, how you think and survive, the way you speak, your eyes is all Bushrod. As super pretty as you blatantly are, you are so masculine."
She chuckled before puking some more. She took a strange pride in being called masculine. She heard it as not a victim.
Twenty minutes passed. He stayed with her for a while longer before scooping her up and putting her in Jesus's room to lie down.
Jesus said, "No pregnant woman should be exposed to those fumes in the FEMA trailers. My bed is crazy comfy. Perfect for a pregnant lady."
Abraham covered her up and moved a stray tuft of raven hair out her face. He caressed her cheek with the back of his hand and sighed sorrowfully.
"My baby girl would have been your age," he said wanting to die a little from the memory.
Very sweetly, she inquired, "What was her name?"
"Tallulah Jean Ford. My mama was Jean."
"If these twins are girls. The last one out is Tallulah Jean. Jean goes with Jayne. I like that name. Tallulah Jean Anthony-Grimes. I might let Carl name the first one."
He gasped hard but refrained from crying. She clutched his hand.
He kissed it then let it go.
He said, "I, uh, gonna go get those saltines. You rest now, sugar shack."
She smiled her dimpled smile and closed her eyes. He left.
She was sleep when he returned.
Seeing her all knocked out suffering because the babies made him question did he really want more
children. I mean truly.

He knew if this happened to Sasha that she could take it like a champ. Little Kentucky Fried Chicken hued redheads running around sounded appealing.

He never thought of Rosita this way. He did not think she would have the patience or the maturity. Plus, the Latina was about ten years younger than the fetching firefighter; thus half his age. He figured she had more wild oats to sow. He was ready to settle down.

Jagadamba woke up an hour later to the sound of crunching.

"Did you save me any?" She yawned.

"Here. There are a fuck ton left," he said passing them to her.

Examining a misshapen slightly burnt cracker, she asked, "Do they taste any good?"

"A step or two above hardtack. Needs a little soup or some pot liquor. It would be fine. Delightful, even," he said.

"Mmm. I haven't thought about pot liquor in ages. That was always my dad and I's favorite part of eating greens. That and neckbones. My mom had gotten good at it. I would love some greens."

"With Turkey necks or oxtails or neckbones. Hell, I would settle for chicken legs," he said.

"Chicken legs? Never tried it," she said.

"Trick I learned from my sainted ma. She would get chicken legs and liquid smoke and some greens from our neighbor's garden. She would then boil those drumsticks down. Season their ass to perfection. Throw in the greens. Voila. Tasted just like smoked meat. It would be tender because you know chicken legs are fatty. I miss her. I miss everyone. Even the people I hated."

"That's life now. It sucks."

"Not entirely. Not really. Not now. It has gotten so much better. Yours, too, little miss pessimism."

"For now."

"Your daddy was an optimistic. Your Momma not so much."

"You knew them both?"

"Yeah. We were long distance friends. The last time I saw them they were heavily pregnant with you."

Looking guilty like Judas when they threw the thirty pieces at him, she said, "So, you know how I was conceived then."

Abraham knowing what she was getting at decided to diffuse her.

"The same way I imagine you and the junior Grimes put them there buns in your oven. In fact, I was up late that night. Hell, I heard you two mixing the dough."

She slapped her forehead. Jagadamba's light brown skin made it easy to see the blush kiss her high cheeks.

"I was that loud? I had never been loud before," she half smirked. She was kinda proud about the fact he made her scream in a good way.

"You both were that loud. I don't know what y'all put on each other that night but it was something else. You two were sex clarions."

"To be honest, I think it happened that first night, too. The babies. We always used protection except for this morning. Twice in a row. But somehow they happened. The third time my first day.

I am used to it, used to him now mostly but I don't know. He hit something that night that hadn't been hit in me before. My g-spot, I guess. It felt momentous."

"Really? Carl? I am surprised he knew where to put it. Let alone know what the fuck to do with it. So, I gather, he is a regular Rain Man when when it comes to the pussy."

Jagadamba choked on the saltines she was laughing so hard.

"You say some of the craziest, rudest, most hilariously wrong but somehow always the truth shit. Rain Man when it comes to the pussy," she said trying to catch her breath.

"I don't even have to try. What comes up comes out. I am like my ma in that regard. Red hair, too."

"Dude. Your hair is beyond red. When the wind blows it looks like your flipping head is on fire."

"Now, that is just plain creepy. Your Daddy told me the same thing once."

She gestured at her left temple and said, "Well, great minds."

"Your father would be so proud of you," he said softly.
Her whole face dropped again.
"I doubt it. I am everything he never wanted me to be. He never wanted me to run away or be sexually assaulted or a teenaged mother let alone have babies out of wedlock-"
"You have survived some pretty insurmountable shit for a baby. I know you hate to be reminded about your age. You see it a setback or as an impediment. Your age makes your survival instinct and leadership skills and your capacity to love even more impressive. You forget Alexander the Great and Cleopatra were teenagers, too."
She nodded but looked embarrassed.
He continued, "You and Rick's son are married, right?"
"Yes. But-"
"No buts. Those babies are legitimate. Your boy, that died-"
"Murdered," she low growled.
"Baby, there is nothing I or anyone can say to you that will remedy your pain. I know I have it in triplicate.
However, you and that piece of shit were married. Your son was not a bastard. Now, your oldest even her, when Carl married you, he more or less adopted her. I have seen him with her. He treats her like he does Judith. He loves his sister very, very much. He treats them both like he fucked and got them.
Your babies are set. He is a real decent kid. You are absolutely the most selfish I have ever seen that boy be. He wants you."
"Really?" She was almost incredulous.
"Yes."
"Oh. So, I bring out the worst in him?" She pouted.
Flustered now, Abraham sighed, "There is no pleasing you, is there?"
"It is not that. In all reality, Carl is the only childhood dream or aspiration or whatever of mine since the world decided to tell everyone a collective fuck you that has ever became true. He and I have loved each other every since I could remember.
It is just that, I know it is going to end one day. I know it is. Why should something this good, this real last for me? Good things do not happen to me. Not for long. Not since my folks left that last time. They were in London the last time I heard from them."
Abraham breathed hard. He had been wanting to tell her this for awhile now.
Then he solemnly said, "You don't know. Do you?"
"Know what?"
"Your parents returned to the States. To Georgia. To outside Atlanta. Your father and I pulled a couple strings the day before. We served with the dude who ended up being in charge of airspace. He owed us a favor. First time we spoke in forever. Your Momma literally chartered the last flight from Europe to the United States to get back to you and your brother and sister. Your folks made it back. He had emailed before the system went down.
"No," she said in tears looking like a lost doe.
"They did. September seventh."
She remembered what a rush Priyanka had been to leave that morning. It was so out of character. Priyanka usually slow dragged everywhere.
"We had to be gone before or ten a.m., no later than eleven," she insisted.
Jagadamba recalled Shane finding it odd, "We ought to be able to hold on until noon because traffic will flow easier then. Because right now people are leaving early assuming they are being smart and avoiding traffic. We talked about this last night."
Determined to be in denial, she sat up and slammed her fists in the nightstand, "No. They never made it. Priyanka said they never made it. They never made it out of London. She is a crazy, sometimes, conniving, devious, manipulative bitch but she wouldn't take my parents from me. Our mother. They fought sometimes but what mother and daughter don't? Me and C.J. fight and she is only four almost. You are being cruel."
With all the sympathy in the world, he said very reverently, "I may be without tact but I am never
Forty minutes passed. Rick entered his house with baby Judith. He was reheating macaroni and cheese, Jagadamba had saved him the night before when he heard a lot of noise coming from above him. He was used to Carl being noisy. He was a teen after all and still easing into his adult body. Not to mention his lack of depth perception. He did not always realize when he was stomping.

Then he saw a duffle bag fly down the stairs. Then another. Then he saw Carl walk a box down.

"What are you doing?" Rick asked.

"I don't want to be anywhere she isn't," he told his father as he made his way upstairs. He followed and grabbed Carl by his forearm. He looked at his father like he had shit on his hands.

"Son, I know you are pissed. I get it," Rick's poor attempt to sympathize hit a thud.

Looking more like his father than ever, he cocked his head and asked, "So, your dad left your pregnant wife behind at the very place she was almost raped and murdered, too? Under the so called protection of Captain Mustache and musty, ninja Jesus? That happened to you?"

"Carl-"

Carl clucked his tongue, "Yeah. I didn't think so. Please, let go of me."

Oblivious, Judith reached out for Carl to take her from Rick. He did.

"What is wrong, Budder?" She knew he was upset. Maybe not so oblivious.

Carl replayed, "Nothing, Judy. You look pretty in your dress."

She blushed, "Thank you. Jaggy give to me. I love Jaggy."

Jaggy is how she heard J.B.

Carl wanted to say something catty like our dad doesn't but kept it to himself. Instead, he answered sincerely, "And I do, too. Guess what?"

"What, Boy?"

"Jaggy is your sister now."

Rick cringed and Judith asked, "Sister?"

"You are going to understand when you are older but I married her. That means we want to be with each other until one of us goes to Heaven."

"Where mom Lori is. Heaven," she took her finger out her mouth and pointed up.

"So, Carly is your niece now. She going to start calling you Aunt Judy. So, just let her."

"Aunt? Like Jaggy she does Momma?"

"Yes. Just like that."

"I am aunt Judy."

"Yes."

"Jaggy is my sister like you are my Budder?"

He nodded.

"Good. I like her. I like C.J. and Big and Kill and Daddy and Momma. I like Kill's baby. I don't like Priya."

"No one does," he hunched.

He kissed his sister's forehead and sat her on the floor. Carl rolled his eyes at his dad and returned to his room to gather more of his things. He was surprised he had amassed so much so quickly.

Rick fed Judith and put her in her room.

Rick stepped into Carl's soon to be vacant room.

His son was sitting on the bed thinking.

"It is not as cut and dried as you think. She agreed to stay. No one made her," Rick explained.

"She did that because for some stupid reason she cares if you like her or not. So, of course she agreed. She loves you. You say you love her-"

"I do. I always did. I loved her whole family. Bush and Shane were my best friends. My brothers. I never was as close to your Uncle Jeff the way I know was with them."

"If you say so. I just wonder why you feel the need to try to keep us apart? We are not hurting you nor anymore else by being husband and wife."

"So, Enid is just a no never mind to you?"
"I am not saying that. Besides, you have no idea what is going on between us. Not that it is any of your business. It is mine."
Sarcastically, Rick replied, "Oh, you are handling it so well. You are so responsible."
"I am. I know what I signed up for."
"Do you? Just because you quoted a Bible passage doesn't mean you are ready for fatherhood or marriage. It is obvious to me why the two of you got married. A pregnancy is not a good reason," he said.
After all, Lori's pregnancy with Carl was the reason why they finally got married after dating six years.
"Is that what you think?"
"Why else?"
"Oh, my God. You don't know me at all. I had no idea she was pregnant when I asked her. Not really. I am not you. I will never be you."
"What is that supposed to mean?"
"I can count. I know why you got married," he said pouring a drawer into a sack.
"You have no reason to be this angry. I have reason to be but I am not. Slow your roll," he said firmly.
"Or what? I am grounded? Seriously? That is weak sauce even for you," Carl had disrespectful before. But, never like this.
"You think this is a game? You think this is easy? Weak sauce is not being man enough to sit me down and tell you want to get married to a very dangerous woman for all accounts."
"And we're not dangerous? Everyone is dangerous now."
"Weak sauce is laying pipe in two girls without protection."
Carl was seething. He did not say a word.
Rick insisted her answer him.
Carl replied in a snarl, "Priyanka poked holes in our protection. You are punishing us for something that is only seventy percent our fault. Enid told me she was having a baby today then she dumped me in the same breath. Yes, we had unprotected sex once. She took a morning after pill. Clearly, it did not work."
"You found out all that today?"
"Yes. Then you come home with this shit. Was this your plan all along? To take her from me?" She wanted to say like you did with Michonne but refrained.
"I am not taking anything from you. I just want the reality to set in."
"What reality?"
"You are responsible for six lives now. Do you understand that? It is up to you to keep Jag, Enid, C.J. and those three babies alive. Hell, you are responsible for her the three kids you... wife adopted, too. That is nine people you cannot fail. Ever. If you do, they will get hurt or die. I am responsible for every survivor, Alexandrian and Pharoah. Learn that from me. Don't make my mistakes and learn from the victories."
"Why is she such a threat to you?"
"I do not want you hurt. I know you think I am being hard on you or unreasonable. I am not. You about to be in my shoes waaaay earlier than I wanted you to be."
Carl growled, "I will never be in your shoes. You are such a-" he bit his tongue and turned away from his father.
"Such a what? You think this shit is easy? Seeing my child make horrible decision after horrible decision about some girl he hasn't seen in five years? She is a stranger. She is not the same little girl you knew all your life."
"I am not the same little boy either. She is not a stranger. Not to me. Just like her aunt is not a stranger to you."
"It's not the same thing. Speaking of Michonne, what if you and Jagadamba break up and it is nasty. Michonne going to pick sides. That is not fair to her. And I told you along time ago, you can't just put them on the head and give them back."
"So, I am responsible enough to raise your kid but too dumb to take care of my own? I can't just be a kid when it suits you. Or only be a man when you need back up. This is my life. And you have no right to keep me from it. She is my life now. Just deal with it."

Rick saw his sincerity and softened.

"You and Judith are my life, Carl. I just want the best for you," he said.

"If that were true, Jagadamba would be home. You are punishing her because you are mad at me."

"I am not punishing her. If she had said no, I want t to come home. Then she would've be here. I dried not force her."

"Did you ask her or did you order her?"

"I would not call it an order per se. But, I told her that I wanted her to stay."

"I know I did not make it pass the sixth grade but telling someone you want to do something instead of asking is like the definition of order. You are our leader. So, she obeyed you. She meant it when she said she wasn't in charge anymore. She has fallen in line since day one."

"This is not a question of her obedience or loyalty. She pulls her weight more than most. She works in the garden, she cooks for people. Makes sure the Pharaohs do their part. The barns her brother and Tobin have put up."

"It is just that I believe I should have been there. She would have never gotten hurt if I had been there. I would have kept her safe. I promised her. I let her down. So did you. I guess I am mad at me and you. I should have gotten my ass in that trailer."

"If you had maybe you would both be dead. They would have taken you out to get to her. Besides, she is a lot like you. She wonders off to do her own thing. Maggie complains about it. They are in the middle of a conversation and she will get up and go do something else as soon as there is a silence."

"I haven't done that in forever. And besides. Maybe. Who knows? Those pieces of shit were clearly cowards. She is tiny. She might weigh ninety-five pounds, maybe one hundred. She says she is five two," her snorted as to say as if.

"More like five foot even," Rick agreed.

"Exactly. There is nothing she could do with two men who want to hurt her without a weapon. She had one and still got hurt. And is all my fault," he blamed the pregnancy on himself more than he did Priyanka or even Jagadamba. After all, no one made them. And like Enid said, he did well, cheat. He did make the first move.

"How? I feel awful she was almost died. I do. I am sorry. I should have told you sorry from the jump. I know sometimes I have a tendency to make things about me. I figure everything falls on me."

"You're doing it now," Carl pouted.

"Fact of the matter is, she is not dead. Michonne found her. Abraham and Jesus are watching after her. It is only two days. She is safe."

"How can you be so, ugh? I am hurting and sad and scared. But, I want this. I want her."

"I know you feel a need to prove yourself as a man. Rebuild your confidence. I get that."

"No, you don't. Confidence is not my problem. You have a whole face. You have two eyes. You do not have a gaping wound. You have no idea what it is like to be me. I am not doing this to prove myself. I didn't do this on purpose. Well, all right. I had sex on purpose but it wasn't with the intention of making other people. I know that is what you are mad about."

"I am not mad at you. I am disappointed. As if there is not enough going on. Six of those nine people were already my responsibility. Now the babies, they are my responsibility, too."

"So, you see everyone as a burden?"

"I did not say that. Do not put words in my mouth. I just wish you an her would have taken things slowly with both girls. You aren't ready. But, I will help you. I will be there for you. But, I am not doing it for you," he sighed.

"Were you ready for me?"

"I am still not but I try. I try to figure out what you all of what you need and most of what you want."

"I need for you to accept this. Please accept her or you lose me. You lose us."

It annoyed Rick that Carl had on rose colored glasses when it came to his wife.
So, he decided to lay a bit of reality on him, "I have been debating whether or not to tell you this. But, you need all the facts if you are going to go get Jag."
"Like what?"
"She is on the fence."
"About us?"
"No. She is certain of you. She is in love with you. I do not doubt it. She is not sure-
"She wants the twins?" Carl wasn't sure he wanted this one hundred percent. But, he definitely a solid ninety.
"Yeah."
"I am not shocked. They're unplanned. It is two of them. I mean two babies at once. It is a lot."
"Just don't get your hopes up. Next time will be on on purpose," he said.
He looked at his dad. All he heard was I hope they are not born. He hit a one hundred and fifty percent. The idea of them existing took his breath away.
Chuckled mirthlessly before getting up. He left his bedroom and walked past his packed bags and out the front door.
He kept walking.
Rick decided to give him some space. He felt helpless about how to approach Carl. He began to stress cry.

Enid happened to be looking at the window and saw him walking. She knew where he was going. As she approached the front door, Maggie said, "Dinner's ready. I made your favorite. Tuna sandwiches."
"Maggie, no offense. Tuna is no one's favorite. But, I do like yours. But, I got to go."
"Why? Screw Carl," Maggie hunched. She knew it could only be about him.
"Screwing Carl got me in this mess. I got to save said asshole. He is about to do something stupid. Like me and Jagadamba's kids will be fatherless stupid," she said walking out.
Then it occurred to Maggie what she said, "What? You're pregnant, too?"
Enid did not hear her.
Glenn came downstairs.
"Who's else is pregnant today?" He asked drying his hair.
"Enid," she shuddered as she closed the door.
"She is a child. Carl or Bigelow?"
"Bigelow? I know he as the hots for her but when did that happen? He is my age," she said with marked disapproval.
"Yeah, cause you are so old," he said putting his hand on his back and pretending to use a cane.
"He is, what? Twenty-five at least. She is only sixteen."
"Who is going to stop them dating. Me or you? Plus, he is a good guy. I saw them kissing once. Maybe it meant nothing."
"It is Carl's," Maggie sat on the couch.
"She said?" He sat beside her.
"Yeah and because that boy has shit luck," Maggie said.
Glenn hunched and said sunnily, "Look on the bright side. At least we won't be doing this new parent thing alone. Our kid will have plenty of playmates. She or he will always have friends. Hopefully."
"We are most certainly not alone."
"Still think it was fucked up to leave Jagadamba," he said.
"Rick had his reasons."
"Dumbass reasons. Underneath all her bravado, she is a scared, lonely, sad and above all his pregnant daughter in law. She needs to be around people that love her or at least know her. Abraham is good people but he isn't the most gentle spirit. I find Paul annoying."
"Abused. Don't forget abused. The other day I asked her to go down to the basement. She tried but she couldn't make it past the first step. She froze and started to hyperventilate. I thought she was
going to pass out. So, I grabbed her and pulled her into the kitchen. I slapped her to snap her out of it. She asked me, what had just happened. She did not remember. I pointed. She looked startled. Then she said, I don't do basements. She asked me not to tell Carl or anyone. I asked her was she held in a basement. She nodded then began to weep. I tried to comfort her but she shimmied out my arms. Said she doesn't like to be touched when she's is upset. She said she tries not to dwell but it is hard. That loving her daughter makes it easier. At least something good came from it. That and the other two Daltons."

"Given what almost happened to her today. Did you see the look on her face when Rick told her she could not come home?"

"No."

"I do not think he did either. If he did, he would have let her come along. She looked lost. She looked her kid's age. It was awful. I asked him why. I even said, 'Dude, just tell her to come on. She is your family now. Whether you like it or not.' It was stupid to make her stay. That it would not solve a thing. He told me I would understand one day. I told him I hope not."

"I don't know. She is a bit of a threat. She did pretty much call him a dangerous idiot at the last town meeting."

"True. But, still. I like her. Do I agree with everything she says or does? No. Does she know everything we been through together? No. But, she is what she is. She is helpful more than not. She is a good person."

"Well, I wouldn't call her good. Just not evil."

Glenn felt the need to defend her. She had a little sister quality to her that he wanted to protect. "Let's face it. She could have killed us all. Easily. Her second day there. It would have been too easy. She had us all in one place. She had the manpower and the know how. If not bullets, poison if nothing else. Remember she said that was how they subdued the wedding party? She didn't. That alone, hell, I trust her. Someone should remind Rick of that. Besides, Carl needs to catch a break. He has not gotten one since his sister and Michonne."

Maggie readily agreed then smirked, "Admit it. Sometimes when you see J.B., you get a little starstruck."

"I got you. How can I possibly see her?" He was serious. "Oh," she cooed before kissing him.

Meanwhile, rumors were flying among the Pharaohs. The most popular one was, "I was think they killed her," Jonathan said sitting down for dinner. Suchin the tattoo artist replied, "You are an idiot. She isn't dead. Do you really think our fearless leader is that easy to kill? Ye of little faith. Rick is naively idealistic and stabby but not evil or stupid."

"Rick is jerk. I saw how he gave her to the stink eye at the meeting. Who kills people in their sleep? Even Cort would look a motherfucker in the eye."

"I doubt Rick would smother his hearing impaired nine month old in its take crib and and threaten to rape a toddler."

"True. But, shitty is shitty. She is pregnant with his grandchildren. It is two of them, right?"

"That is what Glenn said. He seemed none too pleased with him either."

"Is he the hillbilly in love with Rick?"

She chortled which caused her to spit out her vegetable soup, "That is Daryl. Glenn is the only other Korean here. Natch, he's married to a white bitch. No imagination. I am surprised she isn't blonde."

"The hell you say. Maggie is fine as fuck. I would hit that in a minute. He is an inspiration to geeks like me everywhere. Maybe I can bag you," he grinned.

"As if I would waste all this on a man."

"My point about Glenn exactly. Besides, since when do you care about dick?"

"I don't. It is the principle of the thing. What if we are the last of our kind? I am willing take one for the team."

"There is like, a whole country of Koreans. There are bound to be some left," he scoffed looking at her like she was the dumbest thing living.
"I meant in the area. And there are two countries of Koreans, mosquito balls."
"So. Doesn't take away from the fact you jealous," he said in singsong.
"Not this shit again. I want J.B. happy. Carl makes her happy. For now. He looks like a pretty girl. So, I still got hope."
"As hot and heavy as you two were before we got here. Come on, Su. You can't lie to me. You love her."
"I do. That is why I want her happy. She deserves it. She made it clear from the jump I was just sex to her. I accepted those terms. Plus, we weren't as hot and heavy as you think. She is not a whore. She is so beautiful and strong and smart. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?"
"Really? You just wanted to bang some, hot black-ish teenaged tail."
"Well, yeah, that, too," she laughed.
She added, "It is not like I was her only lover."
"I thought you just said she was not a slut."
"I said she wasn't a whore. She is a total slut. Heard about her and that Enid girl . . . Now her. I am jealous of, Johnny."
Speaking of which, Enid was out in the woods. She did not see Carl. She had never known him to move so quickly.
She wanted to call out his name but last thing she wanted was to attract any walkers to either of them. One can never tell how many there are usually until it is too late.
It took ten minutes but she found him. He was intentionally goading a walker over a large log so it would trip. He stabbed it in the head then proceeded to stomp it after it was clearly dead.
Old blood and brain matter splattered all over him.
Then she watched him go look for another. She followed behind him.
Five minutes passed.
He stopped in his tracks.
A callback to the first time they were out there together, "You are not quiet as you think you are."
"Ha. Ha. What the hell was that back there?" She asked.
"Me losing my temper. I can't believe him," he stomped it again.
"I heard what your dad did. Bigelow told me."
"He did not stay with her either. So fuck him, too. Fuck them both."
"I did not know you were capable of getting pissed at your dad."
"I usually swallow it. But, this is beyond. I am sorry. I know you don't care about this. Why are you out here in your condition?"
"My condition? I am fine. You are the one who got three babies on the way and you are the one having a temper tantrum in the woods. Your dad is a dick. But, he is a well meaning dick.
"No. He is not."
"Look, Carl. You hurt me badly. But, I love you. And despite everything I am your friend. Just about your only real one who is here. Believe it or not. Big is your friend, too."
Carl smiled condescendingly and said, "Yeah. Sure. Up is down. East is west. Babies come from the stork," he said bitingly.
"Makes sense you call your cock that now. Since you got two girls pregnant in the same day. I did the math and Tommie told me what Priyanka did. Who does that to their little sister?"
"You and Tommie talk?"
"Sure do, babydaddy of Alexandria. I was the one who called you back that first. If she said it to you, she copycatted me."
"Why are you acting so normal? Earlier, you threw hot food at me, now you are calm? Like nothing has happened."
"It is called maturity. There are so many ways I can get you back. Maybe I will. Maybe I won't. Regardless, we are in this together. You need to pull it together and go get our girl."
"Our girl?" He quirked his eyebrow.
"Yeah. I told you I do not hate her. I am incapable. I love her. I do. I think she is amazing and strong," she paused and very quietly said, "I get why you married her."
Ignoring what she said, "Like in a gay sort of way?" He asked.
"Just because we had sex once does mean I am a dyke now. I like penis. It was an experience. Pussy is great and kinda fun. But, not my cup of tea. Anyway, she saved my life."
"I know Just Survive Somehow," he sighed.
"No, stupid. Well, yeah but before that. I used to go by Grace. My middle name. She probably doesn't remember. I was bald and frail. And I made a wish. The foundation."
"I gathered."
"Ask her when you see her. She may not remember it was me but she has to remember it period."
"I never knew you were sick."
"I just don't go around telling people I used to have leukemia. I figured you had the right to know since we have combined our DNA. Oh, and alcoholism, eczema and overall fabulous-ness runs in my family. We are also intelligent. The women in my family also have a tendency to fall for men who don't deserve them."
She rolled her eyes.
He looked guilty.
"So, you want to pretend kill your dad some more or go wash your ass, feed C.J. And go with your second unicorn to go get your first unicorn?"
"Unicorns?"
"Who have show tunes and katanas falling out their respective asses."
Carl took this a chance to throw a compliment at her,
"If they are unicorns then you must be a phoenix. No matter how bad things get you always rise above it. You defeated cancer. That is huge. I know you are strong but that is monumental."
Enid rose her shoulders and batted her lashes in coquettish gratitude.
"Well, you got shot twice in two usually fatal places. You are a phoenix, too," she smiled loving him a lot in that moment.
"Our babies will be magical creatures," he laughed. He loved her too.
She pressed her body against his and kissed his chin. She wanted to do more than that but she had a point to prove at least today anyway.
"Come on. It will be getting dark in a couple hours. You got to get a move on," she grabbed his hand and led him back.
During this time, Carol went and knocked on Rick's door. After Daryl told her what happened, she came to an astute conclusion.
Ten minutes before Rick ceased weeping. He was amidst doing his damnedest to warm up to the idea of being a grandpa because the idea of losing Carl was too much to process.
He wanted his son more than he desired to keep his own life. He knew of all the people in all the world that boy, no, young man was his only tether to still wanting to survive.
He had love for Judith but Carl was his life- the breathing proof he still had a soul and a care in the world. Without Carl he had nothing. Which meant those babies are his son, too. They were pieces of himself.
"Goddamn it. I want them," he said aloud.
He answered the door.
"What's up?" He asked walking away from the door.
"Why are you so stupid?" She asked point blankly.
"Excuse me? I-"
"Bigelow set you up. Why did you fall for it?" Carol walking past him and sitting down.
"Set me up how?"
"You think this is about your son and his wife but it isn't. It is about you."
Rick looked at her quizzically.
"How?"
"Well . . ."
At the same time, Boyardee knocked on her big brother's door.
"Boy, hey-"

"Then why aren't you with our sister? You know she needs us even when she doesn't realize it," in her mind's eye, Boyardee could not help but to picture Jagadamba as that bruised and battered twelve year old girl chained like a dog in her basement that she desperately wanted to save but could not on her own.

"She is safe. Her and her aunt took care of the threat against her. I do not fear for her life. However, Rick is a selfish asshole."

"What? You leave him out of this. I know this was your idea."

"It was. I wanted to see what Rick would do. I was hoping he would shut me down but he didn't. I just knew he would think about his son's or girlfriend's feelings. He didn't. I thought he at least had some real love for Jagadamba like he insists he does. He doesn't. He knows J.B. has abandonment issues. She almost died today. She was violated-"

"I thought she wasn't raped."

"No force on Earth could have made her stay if he had raped her. Fingers."

"FYI, that is still incredibly rape. Why did she agree to stay?"

"To prove her loyalty and obedience. She sees Rick as some sort of surrogate father figure. You know how she wishes she were still a daughter. Rick pretends like he cares about people. He doesn't. He hasn't even admitted this to himself but he only cares about power and the having of it. He is addicted to it. J.B. is not. She doesn't mind following."

"You are wrong. She reminds of the first verse of that Flaming Lips song. She submits as she dominates. She learned how to that to survive Cort. She is being smart. Why do you think she is with Carl? It is not his charm or his rapier wit," She was not his biggest fan. Like her brother, she missed having Jagadamba's undivided attention. "She loves him. I guess."

And anyway back on Rick, whether it is over his son or this community- he wants to be top motherfucking dog. Jagadamba's very presence interferes with both. Maybe nostalgia is what got us in here. But, it is not going to keep us here."

"I think you have a point, sure. But, Rick is not as cut and dried as you think. She married his son. He can't just kick us out. We haven't done anything. It is not up to him."

"He thinks it is."

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter will be about Carl and Michonne.
Catnip Kryptonite

Chapter Summary

Carl and Michonne flirting. Carly-Jayne makes a demand and a declaration only a child can; causing him to make a realization.
Three teen boys seek advice from Carl.

Michonne saw Carl and Jagadamba’s front door.
Ana, Boyardee and Carly-Jayne were eating.
"Hey, aunt Michonne," she got up and hugged her.
"Hey, baby. What are you eating?" She asked.
"Veggie Mac and cheese. Papa made it for us. Want some of mine?" She asked.
"No but thank you. Where is he?"
Boyardee interjected, "Upstairs. He is unpacking."
"Unpacking?" She frowned.
"What? You have not been home? Homeboy moved out. Tomeka helped him. She still is. Marco is up there, too. Wherever Tommie goes, he goes.
When they turn sixteen and twenty, they going to be banging like rabbits."
She ignored her and went upstairs. She heard laughing coming from the bathroom.
She saw hazel eyed, red haired Tomeka sitting on the closed toilet. Marco was against the wall.
Clearly, Carl was talking in the shower. He was telling them about how he and Jagadamba were as kindergartners and how he beat up a girl who took her crayons- and how much trouble he got in for it.
"It was bad enough she made fun of her name and how she spoke. Jag used to talk really fast and stutter sometimes. You would not think it since she was an actress. And she had picked up some of her mom's English accent to boot. She went through a lot of vocal training and singing lessons. I guess I picked on it because I don’t sounds like my country ass sounding dad. I don't really have a southern accent. Sometimes, his is embarrassing," he said. His anger was real.
Tomeka said, "I like how your daddy talks. Sounds like an episode of Andy Griffith. But, you really don't have one. I sound more southern than you do. And trust when she is angry, it comes out."
Tomeka looked up and saw Michonne. She did not like her. After all, she was her crush's girlfriend. She couldn't like her if she wanted to.
Before anyone could say Michonne was there, Carl stuck his head out in such a way to hide his eyes and said, "Hey, Michonne. I smelled you."
Michonne sniffed herself. Tomeka smirked.
"I don't stink," she pouted.
"I know. My sense of smell is better. You smell like outside and cocoa butter. That is like, signature you. It is nice," he smiled and pulled his head back behind the shower curtain.
Grinning, she said, "I need to talk to you. I can wait until you are decent."
"No, it is cool. We can talk here," he said.
"In that case, I need to speak to you alone," she looked at Tomeka. She didn't like her either. She saw her as a busybody.
As a show of irreverence to Michonne and one of respect to Carl, the twelve year old asked Carl, "Do you want us to leave?"
"Yes. Go and make Enid a plate and bring it to her. After that, go see if Chill wants anything," he instructed wanting her out the house so she could not eavesdrop. Tomeka rolled her eyes but obeyed.
Marco followed.
Michonne sat on the toilet seat top. She only thing separating her from the pink, freshness of his flesh was less than a centimeter of polyurethane and a basic sense of propriety.
Her mind however wandered. Jagadamba’s glowing recommendations about the finer points of his nudity whet her curiosity concerning it even more.
"Michonne, did you hear me? I said I owe you one. You saved my wife’s life and by extension, my children’s lives. I can’t ever thank you enough. That said, if you are here to defend him. Please do not waste your time."
"I'm not. I do however think—"
"Can you hold that thought? I need to rinse off. I just got some soap in a bad place. Shit, that burns," he said.
"Meatus. Your dick hole is called a meatus," she said remembering when she felt it pressed against her two of the three times they made out. And not to mention all those times she caught him sporting wood no matter how he attempted to conceal it. She knew he was not small down there.
"Okay? That was out of leftfield. I was talking about my socket. Got soap in it."
"Oh. Sorry," she felt more weird than embarrassed.
He stuck his head out again. He was careful to make sure his wet hair hid his shame and with a mischievous grin, he said, "Kudos, though. You were totally thinking about my johnson. Awesome."
She swatted at him. He quickly went back behind the curtain laughing.
"I am so getting you back for that."
He laughed harder.
He turned the water off and said with glee still in his voice, "Pass me the towel. It is the red one."
She did so.
As dried off behind the curtain, he asked, "So, what do you want?"
"For me and you to go get her first thing," she said resisting the urge to pull the curtain back and take a peek.
"I want to do it today. Alone," he was defiantly definite in tone.
"Why alone?"
"If anyone could have made sure she came home, it was you. I am upset with you. Not as upset with you as I am with him but why didn't you do something? Why did you let this happen?"
"I didn’t. I tried. They were both resolute. That is why they can’t get along. They are too much the fuck alike. When they get an idea or a feeling or whatever caught in their craw. Ooh-wee. Can’t let it go. They convince others to feel the same way with success usually. They are stubborn and hard headed. Think they know every goddamned thing and do not hesitate to let you know it. And what is so scary. They are right mostly."
"Until they are not."
"Hence the mostly. People are drawn to them. Good or bad. They have cult of personality. Accept they deserve it because they deliver. They are not like Negan or the Governor or Cort- they don't want to be worshipped. They want a better world for everyone, not just themselves."
"True. Since they are the leaders, what are we?"
"Uh, we are vice president, speaker of the house? Percival, Galahad?" She honestly felt that poetically about it.
"More like inconsequential," Carl said.
"I know you are upset but we are important to him."
"He took neither of us into consideration when he left her. She is some of the only blood you got left, she is my wife. He hunched his shoulders because his feelings were hurt and he felt undermined. I get that. But, we could have a conversation. Not this."
"She did it in such a public way. She could have pulled him aside. It was rude."
"But, she has. Her first day here she said this shit was not over. I took up for him earlier with her. Now I feel stupid. What if she is right?"
"For our sakes, I hope she isn't."
"Yeah, me, too. But, still Dad needs to get over the fact I am not only his anymore. I have a family of my own now. And he needs to recognize that means he has more people to love him, too. This is not a bad thing."

"Carl, he just needs a little time to adjust. I will talk to him. Okay?"

In all reality, she was sore about it both ways. She was upset Rick was slow to accept her niece. After all, Jagadamba was still her blood and she did remind her of her big brother in attitude. On the other hand, her little niecy poo had Carl free and clear. She could not help but feel just a tad bit envious. But, like Carl, Michonne had a tendency to swallow her emotions. One of many things they truly had in common.

"Yeah. I don't think he finds us the most objective when it comes to her. He will not listen. I tried," Carl replied.

"Why do you say that?"

"A couple days ago, I overheard him tell Daryl, 'Carl and Michonne are not the most objective when it comes to Jagadamba,'" he imitated his father perfectly. Goddamn, I didn't know he could get his voice that deep, she thought.

Carl continued, "And he is? Deep down, I have always known he does not like her. Why should he start now? She and my mom were the ones with the real relationship. They really and truly got along. They understood one other. She would be upset but she would've never abandoned her."

"She wasn't abandoned. We know where she is and who she is with. We can go get her. Rick wants you to go get her. There. I was not supposed to tell you that."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Oh. Well. Fact still remains. Will you pass me my bottoms?" He asked.

She passed the blue plaid pajama pants over the rail. She noted the absence of underwear.

He put them on and came out.

This was not that big of a deal. She had seen him without his shirt on before. But, he looked different. He definitely was not scrawny but neither was he muscular in a defined sort of way. At least not yet anyhow.

However, he was on his way. His chest was wider, shoulders were broader. He was still hairless for the most part except his happy trail.

He smiled at her as he towel dried his mane. He exposed his eye in the process. She smiled, too.

He walked in front of the mirror and reclined on it with one hand and passing her the towel with the other asking, "Do you mind?" He wanted her to dry his back.

Noticing and appreciating the way the bottoms suggestively hugged his hips. She nodded and stood up.

She took the towel and slid it down. She saw the scratches and bruises. Judging by their placement, she had a good idea how he got them.

"She plays rough," he blushed at the memory of Jagadamba's nails trailing down his back as she moaned his name while wrapping her legs tightly around him when he hit the right spot.

"Anthony trait," she was coquettish.

"Clearly. I stay sore. In good way," he said a little coyly imagining her doing the same to him. She moved his hair and looked at the tattoo.

She ran her hot, soft fingers over it. She stood very close to him. So close in fact, she could feel her nipples stress and harden through the flimsy material of her shirt on his back.

"It is really beautiful work," she said.

Looking right at Michonne's reflection, he said, half smiling with adoration, "Yeah, real beautiful work. Tattoo's good, too."

Their eyes met. She grinned shyly while he did not take his eye off her.

Carl finished, "She's used to be a celebrity tattoo artist. She was on that reality show on TLC."

"I knew I had seen her little ass before," she was still touching him. Her hands were slowly migrating down his spine.
He was beginning to have a very physical reaction to her touch. Michonne's hand made it down to his ass. She gave his pert left cheek a good squeeze before letting go with a sweeping caress. It was a no go for Carl. His penis had a mind of its own. It became hard so fast it almost sprang out his pants. He grabbed the towel and sat on the toilet and put it over his crotch. She smirked on the sly. Told him I was going to get him back, she thought. "I am going to give you two some time alone. I will be downstairs," she was blushing. "Good idea," he grimaced secretly annoyed they weren't alone. He liked seeing how far she would let him go with her. He gave her a nod of embarrassed thanks. She closed the door behind her. Twenty-five minutes passed. During this time, he blew dry his hair while willing his erection away. Now clad in a shirt and sporting his bouncy, wavy-straight luxurious marvelously dark hair and a bandage, Carl galloped down the stairs. Boyardee and Michonne were talking but both stopped cold when they saw him. He had shaved those precious scraggly hairs off. He knew his wife hated it. His hair fell into his face in such a way it made them both gasp. He really is pretty, Michonne thought. Carl noticed their reaction and feeling himself, he smiled at them slyly and sat down beside Michonne on the couch. Carly-Jayne leapt off the floor with bowl in hand, she ran to Carl and asked, "Can I sit in your lap?" "It is may I, not can. And yes," he reached for her. As he sat her down, the two women watching him like hawks. "Aww," Boyardee began, "That is your mommy's favorite place to sit, too." He rolled his eye as she plopped herself onto his lap. Carly-Jayne saw his expression and mirrored it. Michonne said, "Wow. She is definitely a daddy's girl." "Chicks dig me. What can I say?" He kissed her forehead. Michonne agreed while Boyardee feeling angry at anyone named Grimes or associated with one in general at the moment, said, "No. Women with the last name Anthony dig you. You and your hot dad are like, their catnip kryptonite for some reason. Jagadamba would be home right now if not for her involvement with you."
"Her involvement with me is why you guys are not a, uh, what's the term you used earlier?" He asked Michonne. "A caravan of fancy vagabonds," she snarled at the girl. "Yeah, you guys would still be that or Negan's," he put his hands over Carly-Jayne's ears and said, "Bitches. Or dead. You ought to be grateful she ran into family. That she finally caught a break. I know I am." Seriously considering herself more her family than him just based on the fact her and Bigelow killed their parents to save her life, "You are not family. She, Bigelow and I, we are family. We have been through awful shit together. Shit your peanut brain can't possibly imagine. We are bonded in a way you can't comprehend."
"I get it. I know what you two did for her. I am grateful. I owe you. I do. Your a-s-s hole brother, too. She and I go way back. We have loved each since we were two. The first thing we ever did when we met was try to hug each other while our mom's were still holding us. Our moms even understood that one day we were going to make it official. What we have is real." Boyardee scoffed, "What you are, is that last tangible piece of her girlhood. The last gasp of a thousand fantasies she has all but given up on. If not for the end of the world, do you really thing she would have kept in touch with you once she made it big?"
"She did make it big," Carl corrected with a growl.
"You know what I meant, asshole."
Michonne interjected, "You don't talk to him like that especially in front of them. We understand each other?"
Boyardee rolled her eyes at Michonne but gave a slight nod of acquiescence.
"She was about to enter the stratosphere. I know that for a fact. She was going to be one of the biggest stars ever. She was laying the groundwork for her adult career. But, she was going to have to move away to L.A. to do it. She could have had any man or boy or chick she wanted. I am talking Bieber, Diggy, she could have broken up a couple marriages. She would have forgotten all about you, the scrappy, goofy, broke ass boy next door."
Jagadamba told him in tears she was moving to Hollywood with her sister all those years ago.
Hours later, his dad was shot. He had an horrible day that day. Both his girlfriend and father were leaving him one way or another.
Deep down, Carl carried that fear that she would dispose of him like a shitty diaper forgotten in a hot car. But, he knew better than that.
Carl thought about what she said. He laughed.
"Thank you," he replied.
She scoffed.
He continued, "Since you feel this threatened and jealous of our relationship, clearly, she and I are doing something right. You don't have what we have and it's eating you alive on the inside."
"Me, jealous of you? As if!"
"This is like the umpteenth time today you have tried to convince me I am not shit. Who are you trying to convince?"
Boyardee flipped him off and stormed out the house.
Michonne sat there smiling. She was proud he so astutely took up for himself.
Carly-Jayne shook her head.
"Aunt Boy is a meanie and a big baby sometimes," she said to him.
"Not the b word I had in mind but yeah, big baby will do. I am so not in the mood for a bunch of crap right now," he said.
"When is my Momma coming home? I miss her," Carly-Jayne said pouting.
"Your . . . Papa and I are going to get her later," Michonne shuddered.
She remembered his offer to give her a baby a couple weeks before. Now finding out, he had three on the way. She felt deep down left out.
"Where is she? Uncle Bigelow wouldn't tell me when I asked him. Miss Enid, either. I asked Uncle Chill and Tomeka and they said ask you, Auntie."
"They wouldn't tell me either," Ana chimed.
She scooted closer to Michonne. She liked her. She was a mama's girl.
She invited the girl to sit her lap by patting it. She accepted. She laid her head on her chest and started to play with her hair.
Carl half smiled. He liked seeing Michonne with a kid. Then he looked wistful remembering the rejection.
"So, what's the plan?" He asked her.
"You tell me," she smiled.
"Mmm. Later. We need to get the little ones situated. Will you help me?" He asked.
"Always," she said.
Forty-five minutes passed. He explained to Michonne that Ana hated taking baths and how every night, Jagadamba would have to damn near threaten to kill Marco to get her in the tub and even then the obstinate child would have to think about it.
She would not let Carl anywhere near her. She was afraid of him.
"She does have a cute, little kitten face," Michonne laughed.
Carl gave her a funny face.
"Cats hate water," she explained.
"She's Cuban. You think she wouldn't mind water," Carl said flippantly and frowning at the child. He could not understand why it was taking her so long to warm up to him. Then again, he figured it was his eye. He did not want it to but it hurt his feelings. Michonne let out a snort of a laugh. Then said, "Don't say that in mixed company. Makes you sound prejudiced."
"I won't. Made you laugh though. So totally worth it."
They smiled at one another and stared a touch too long. The moment was broken by the doorbell.
"You answer the door. I'll watch them and start the baths," she smiled.
"Okay. Do Ana first. She seems to like you. But, Hell. Most people do," he grinned back. Ana willingly went with Michonne.
Carl answered the door.
It was three young Pharaohs at the door.
"You Carl, right?" Asked the young man with spiky red hair. Two other teenaged boys flanked him.
"That is what my folks told me. Who is asking?"
"I am Whedon. This is Jason and Dean. We heard about what you did. We want to know how you did it," he said.
"Okay. What the hell are you talking you about?" He reached behind him. He had a gun tucked in his pants.
"Dude, chill. We want to know how you got two girls," he said.
Dean added, "I would be happy to know how you got the one."
"Wait? What?" Carl was taken aback.
Whedon said, "You are like the man. Seriously. You got two fine ass bitches-"
"Two what?" Carl gave him serious stink eye.
"Women. One white, one black. They both smart and look good. J.B. is, was my leader. But, she is so gorgeous. Who wouldn't follow her into Hell? So, is Enid. She has pretty blue eyes. I can't even get my mom to talk to me, let along a girl to talk to me," Whedon said trying to be clever. He was one four children who were not orphaned.
Carl just frowned at him.
Jason said, "I told you that joke is lame."
"Shut up. Anyway. Just how did you get them to want to be with you at the same time? They don't catfight. They really seem to get along," Whedon said.
Dean noted, "I heard you got them both pregnant."
Carl blushed.
"That is just a rumor," Carl said.
"An awesome rumor," Jason truly admired Carl.
He knew it was bad luck to claim your babies during the first trimester. Plus, he knew there was no guarantee Jagadamba was going to keep their babies.
"Rumor or not, you got two quality girls in love with you. What did you do?" Whedon asked.
"Yeah, man. Advice. You are like our hero. M-"
Dean interrupted Jason and said, "Man. I am going to keep it real. You have one eye and wear a stupid, ratty fucking hat, you need a haircut in the worst way and yet somehow, by the grace of God, I am guessing, you catch more meow, meow than animal control. Your game must be tight. What's your secret?"
At this moment, Carl realized something that he did not know before. Something he assumed would never happen for him even if the end of the world had not happened. He was basically the most popular dude in high school. Moreover, it occurred to him he was viewed as an alpha male, a stud. Shit, a bad boy even. The discovery made his decision to leave his father's home even more poignant. Two alphas can't live in the same household.
Carl cracked his neck and half smiled. Feeling more confident than he had been, well, ever- he decided to tell the young men his secret to success.
Fifteen minutes in, Carly-Jayne snuck away from Michonne and Ana to go get Carl.
She heard him talking through the ajar front door and stuck her head out.
He turned around and knelt.
"What is wrong, Ceej?" He asked kneeling.
As opened her mouth to speak, a burp can out instead right in his face. He laughed.
"I am sorry. Excuse me," she said.
"It is fine. What is it?" He asked lightly pulling at the hem of her dress.
"My Joey misses you," she put it on her toy dolphin but she missed Carl.
She usually was not so clingy. She was compensating for the absence of her mother.
Carl became putty when she said that. He knew what she was up to.
"I will be right there. Okay?" He caressed her cheek and kissed her forehead.
She smiled and nodded then went back inside.
"Duty calls but I say this, quickest way to girl's heart is, well respect her. Listen to what she has to say. I don't care how petty or stupid it may sound to you. I guarantee your shit sounds even dumber to her. Be there for her. Offer something other than just your dick. Like give her head if the opportunity presents itself."
"You mean go down on her?" Dean asked rather intrigued.
"Yeah," he hunched smugly with memories of coochies past and present.
"Dude, that's nasty. I am not doing that," Whedon grimaced.
Carl shook his head then snorted, "And that is why you are going to remain a virgin with a wicked case of carpal tunnel and a chaffed dick. While mine will have its pick of tight, hot, soft, snug, moist, did I say tight and soft? Oh, I did- pussy. I will be getting my choice of pussy because I am not complete asshole. They try to pretend otherwise but girls really, really hate that. All the ones with self respect anyway.
Go down on a girl and make her come, she is going to began to like you whether she wants to or not. Then most will talk, brag even. Tell other girls unless she is savvy. Then she will make you a mystery which is just as hot to some girls. Either way you will start to get a rep. You want it to be a good one, right?"
Then Carl left them wanting more info. It felt good. Stupid good.
Carl went back inside. He was smiling. He was really feeling his cheerios.
"Papa?" Carly-Jayne asked.
"Yeah?"
"I want to see your eye," she asked pointing at it.
Carly-Jayne brought him crashing back down to Earth.
This was not her first time asking or demanding as it were.
"No," he said plaintively.
"Why not? Tomeka said she saw it this morning and it was only half as bad as she thought it would be. Judith told me she saw your eye. She said you had a booboo. So, can I see it?"
"No. I don't want you to be afraid of me like Ana is."
"Ana is afraid because Marco told her a monster that eats little kids lives under your Band-Aid. I am not dumb like Ana. I know you are a pirate," she pulled his hair then playfully slapped him.
She was little girl flirting with who she perceived as her father.
He and her uncle Achilles served as her male archetypes of handsome, decent and kind. Lets also throw in Bigelow, too for good measure.
She also had increasingly vague recollections of Cort. She only really recalled that he made her Momma cry a lot.
Before he said anything in response, she laid the doozy on him, "Papa. I could never be afraid of you. I love you," she was so matter of fact about it that she took off her shoes to air out her little toes and stretched out on him like he was a sofa.
Carl felt something in his heart that he had never felt before.
A real, true paternal love for her as his child. A Grimes. His first born. Hey finally understood how his father felt about him. To a certain extent.
No longer someone he had to be nice to in order to get in her mother's pants. She was her own separate entity now. His little girl, the first of many stakes in his future. More than that, she was going to be his legacy.

He held her little cherubic face in his hands and leaned his face close to hers. "I love you, too. And I promise to always be here for you and keep you safe. I will always have time for you. I won't discount how you feel just because you are a kid. Child. You are not a baby goat," he laughed remembering what Jagadamba said.

"Momma says that," she giggled.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes."

She got real quiet and looked away.

"Do you promise not to leave me?" She asked quietly streaming tears.

"Your Momma didn't leave you. She had to stay behind."

Angry or not, he was not going badmouth his father to her. It didn't feel right.

"Okay. But, still. Mo left and never came back. Cort, too. And Sandy. People always go away and don't come back. Will you stay? Please?"

In this world, even toddlers had to acquire a basic understanding of death even if they don't yet know the actual word for it yet – to survive. The realization broke his heart a little.

"Yes. I will always stay."

Full on sobbing, she said, "Promise."

"I promise.

But, your Momma is coming back. She is. Okay?"

"Okay. I believe you." She nuzzled her head into his chest.

She looked up at him and asked, "Can you show me now?"

He took a deep breath and reached back to unite it. His heartbeat thundered in his ears. This three foot two inch tall, thirty-three pound baby girl had him under her thumb.

"Promise, you will not freak out or run out the room crying. Promise," he said.

She nodded.

He took it off. She looked dead at him.

The look on her face was indecipherable.

She hopped out his lap and turned to him and said, "Let's get some juice. I want purple."

She didn't care.

Not knowing how to respond, he followed her into the kitchen.

She flung the refrigerator open. She dragged a chair over.

When he had tried to help her, "Stop it, Papa. I can do it. I am a big girl. I am almost four."

She got the juice out the fridge and climbed down. She spilled a little on herself.

"Oops," she giggled.

"Get cups," she added.

"Get cups what?" He asked.

"Now." She laughed.

He gave her a you know better look and she said playfully, "I know it's please."

He got them and sat them down.

Carly-Jayne dragged the chair to the table. She climbed it and stood on her knees.

She tried to pour it herself but it proved too heavy.

He gently took it from her.

"I could have done it," she fussed.

"I know. That is why there is Kool-Aid everywhere," he teased.

She blew a raspberry.

He waited a couple more minutes. She was coloring when he asked a little shyly, "Well?"

"What?" She was concentrating on her artwork.

"How do you feel about this?" He pointed at his eye socket.

She hunched and said a matter of factly, "You don't look any different to me."
Carl did not know how to respond except to pour her a second glass of purple stuff. "Momma only lets me have one after dinner."

"I know," he tousled her hair.

They smiled at one another and giggled.

Two hours passed. The sun had been down for about an hour. All the children were bathed and in bed.

Carly-Jayne had fallen asleep on his chest. He felt so at peace with her in his arms, he fell asleep, too.

Michonne saw them and smiled brightly.

She walked over to Carl after ten minutes and rocked him awake.

He opened his eye, bandage still off and covered by his hair. He smiled at Michonne. He gingerly put Carly-Jayne down and got up from her.

She let out a loud sigh and tried to reach for him.

"Papa, come back," she whined.

He let out a soft sigh and returned to her. She lied her little self back into his arms and went to sleep but not before kissing his cheek. It actually made him blush from appreciation.

She really loves me, he thought.

They both heard the doorbell ring. Michonne went to answer but Tomeka had beat her to it.

"Hi, Rick," she greeted him with a big smile despite herself.

He smiled back. He had Judith with him.

"Hey," he walked passed the girl and gave Michonne a kiss. Tomeka averted her eyes lest someone notice the hate bullets her eyes shot at Michonne.

Lucky bitch, she thought.

"Hey, baby. This is a nice surprise. What’s up?" Michonne asked.

"Nothing. That’s a lie. I wanted to talk to Carl. Leave Judith here so we could take advantage of having the house to ourselves."

Michonne gave him you naughty boy type of smile.

"He’s up there with C.J. If you want to talk to him."

He kissed Michonne again before passing her Judith.

He went up the stairs. Carl had heard his father’s voice. He pretended to be sleep.

Rick knew he was playing possum but he decided to let it go.

When he went downstairs Michonne informed him she was "Why? Are you still mad?" He asked.

"No. He hasn’t told me what his plan yet. Don’t want him stealing away on his own. Especially at night. We both know he is bold enough to try."

"He is. I am glad Carl has someone like you to look out for him. We would both be lost without you. I love you, Michonne."

She smiled and said, "I love you, too."

He left Judith with her and went to see about Enid under the guise of checking on Maggie.

Three hours passed.

Michonne was asleep on the couch with Judith when Carl woke her up. He was dressed in the same outfit he wore the night of party.

She couldn’t help but look at him like he was meat.

More aware of himself as a sexual human being and as a man in general, he noticed.

“She likes me in this. So,” he hunched.

“I get it. You look good. Did you get hitched in that?"

“No. She had a suit. It fit so I wore it. She changed, too. She wore this really beautiful sari. It was red, gold and blue. Apparently, it was her mom’s."

“How?"

"Uh, she knew about a storage unit her parents had. They were back in Georgia before they came here. It was somehow untouched."

“That bit of kismet, huh?” She said.

“What does that mean?"

“Fate.”
“Fate. Hmmph. I am starting to think it is real thing. Guess what Ceej said to me earlier.”
“Whatever it was, made you show her your eye. What did she say?”
“She asked to see it. I said no. She gave me all these reasons why I should. She said I could never be
afraid of you. I love you. How awesome is that? I already am a daddy. And she’s basically a
junior,” he beamed with pride.
“She has been your kid. She became your daughter the moment you shared your hat with her. It is an
heirloom now.”
“I know. I have a daughter. And she deserves to have both her parents here when she wakes up. So,
I want to go get her tonight. How long does it take to get there?”
“About two hours. And there’s mud.”
“You told me last time. I remember,” he gave her gentle smile and took Judith upstairs.
He put her in the same bed as Carly-Jayne.
The two little girls- best friends for life- cuddled together.
He went back down. She was no longer in the living room but in the kitchen.
She was putting food in a Tupperware bowl.
He followed her lead and began putting water bottles in a bag.
She bent over and stopped dead in his tracks looking at her. Imaging the heaven under those tight,
faded black Levi’s she rocked. He still wanted his wife but hell, he wasn’t blind.
She has a nice ass, he thought.
She felt his eyes. When she turned around, he was smiling at her again.
She smiled back.
He tilted his head looking at her. He was flirting.
“Are you absolutely sure you don’t want to wait until morning? We can bring more people with us.
It would be safer,” she was not sure them being alone was the best idea.
“If it were me, she would hitchhike in a thunderstorm during the end of the world wearing an
antenna hat and catch a ride with the devil and his brother in order to get to me. I can’t go at night
with her aunt? It is basically down the street. She crossed state lines. I want to go. I have to. I owe
her. We all do. That is another reason why I don’t understand Dad. She came to us during a time of
need. We actually have a surplus because of her. She freely gave us her supplies. That was before he
told her she could stay. She has been fair. Why is he not?”
“Look. Put yourself in his shoes. Think how you would feel if this was Carly-Jayne. Sixteen and
pregnant or Judith for that matter.”
“I killing those fuckers.”
“Now you know how your dad feels about her.”
“But, I am a boy. Well, a son. I am supposed to go out and make a family of my own. It is his name
that is being carried on. These babies are Grimeses. Plus, it is different with daughters. You got to
protect them more.”
“I hope Enid has a son. Then you will find out that your babies' genitalia won’t make a bit of
difference in your wanting, no, needing to protect it. I don’t care how old that baby gets, when it is
danger. All you see is the bloody, howling newborn. Or that almost four year old who matter of
factly declared her undying when you really needed to hear it. I was at the top of the stairwell.”
He thought about what she said. Then asked, “What do you think of when you think of me,
Michonne?”
She sniffed and said. “We are taking one of the sedans. Less conspicuous. Don’t you think?”
“I believe the word you are looking for is invasive,” he seethed at her as he grabbed the bag of
bottled water, threw in the bowls and headed for the front door.
She waited a moment before joining him.
He was becoming a man right in front of her.
Not just a man but a bold, loyal, brave, intelligent, kind, downright sexy man.
But, he was also impulsive, obsessive, sneaky, angry, violent, a little murderous.
With that said, she knew what the most dangerous thing about him was this- Carl was irrevocably,
unconditionally, irrationally, madly, truly and utterly from the first time he laid eyes on her dark
cocoa frame in love with her.
Even more dangerous than that, she was in love with him, too.
Carl and Michonne bicker until resolves finally break and left shoes come up missing.

Rick expresses his fears to Daryl.

We learn more about Tomeka when she goes looking to make a friend at the dead of night.

When Michonne finally went outside, she saw Carl standing under the porch light longingly looking at the ultrasound.

“I really hope I get to meet you guys,” he said imagining what it would feel like to watch Jagadamba’s belly grow.

He heard his Mom's voice and what she would always say, “If you two make it to eighteen and no baby- I will buy the underage booze myself. Otherwise, Rick and Rod owe me a pink Cadillac with silver trim and spinning gold rims. Big enough for a baby seat in the back. That baby is going to be adorable.

Oh, Jagadamba. I can’t wait until you two get hitched and you are legally my little girl.”

Lori loved Jagadamba. This was another reason that she held a special place in Carl’s heart. His Momma ordained her as his.

He knew if there was a Heaven, his Mom was smiling hard at recent developments. And if anybody guided the newly minted Mrs. Grimes his way it had to be her. For all Lori's faults, she loved her son dearly.

Carl imagined what it would be like to see them and hold them for the first time.

He also thought of Enid in this way. Difference was, he knew Enid and his baby was going to be born unless something horrible happened.

The twins were a question at this point. A dream really. One he hoped by showing up tonight that he could make a reality.

Before she could speak to him, Bigelow came into view.

He put his hand on Carl’s shoulder and said, “I am glad you are doing this. Maybe I am wrong about you.”

“There’s no maybe. You are.”

Bigelow gave him a mirthless laugh and said, “We will see, babydaddy.”

He then told Michonne hi and went into the house. Locking the door behind him.

“Got him watching the kids. Smart,” she said.

He turned and looked at her as if to say, why are you talking to me then walked off the porch.

Knowing what he wanted, she said loudly walking behind him, “It depends.”

He stopped and turned around.

“Sometimes, you’re the boy I showed how to eat cheese whiz and played on the train tracks with. Sometimes, you’re the boy who was afraid he was a monster. Other times, you’re the best big brother, the boy with the olive oil, the young man who had no reason other than sheer will to still be alive. The one who cracked a joke about the worst thing that had ever happened to you. Well, one of the worst things then broke down crying in my arms. The young man who makes my world weary niece and her little girl, your namesake, smile. I see you as you are right now. In all black. Begging me to help you get over whatever this . . . is because after all, I am your best friend. Above all, I see an intelligent, brave, dedicated, loving young man. A child soldier, a warrior. Someone whom I am
proud to know. Someone I love. Satisfied?"
He absolutely blushed.
Then he said, “Wanna know what I think when I think of you? Or Jagadamba or Enid for the
matter?” He was walking backwards still facing her.
“What?” She almost skipped towards him.
He walked to her and got up in her face and said, “Mine.”
Forty minutes passed.
They were about fifteen minutes down the road from Alexandria.
Carl was going through Jagadamba’s mp3 player.
“Want to hear Viva La Vida?” He sunnily asked.
“Granted that is their best song. But, nah.”
“I love Coldplay. We were eight. We both really liked that song.”
“So, the two of you really did do everything together?”
“Totally. We had heard it in that iPod commercial. So, we went to Circuit City the day it came out.
We were so excited. We played that c.d. to death. We went to the concert. Well, she took me to it. In
Trafalgar Square.”
“You have been to England?”
“Yes. My parents let me go with her and her big sister for a whole three weeks. It was so awesome.
So much fun. Priyanka used to be an okay person. My parents trusted her with me.
I admit may have had a little, teeny, tiny, huge crush on her. I never tried to see her in her undies or
the shower or anything. God, she was so hot. Between the two them, I didn’t know if I was coming
or going.”
“Naughty boy.”
“You know it.”
“Don’t I?
But, I can see that. Your crush on her. She is a beauty. She is charming and very smart when she
wants to be. But, mostly, she is a manipulative, coldhearted wrongdoing, selfish bitch. We have
known each other since she was fourteen and I was twelve. She was my math tutor. That is how she
met my cousin, Nimrod.”
“You got a cousin named Nimrod? That is just mean.”
“He went by Nim. Plus, Nimrod was the world’s first king. He was a genius. He and Simon built the
first spacecraft trying to cheat their way into Heaven. They heard the angels sing they had gotten so
close. He is the reason why the continents were divided and there are so many languages.”
“Why were the languages changed again. I never understood that.”
“All of mankind understood the other and agreed. Imagine how easy it would be if we all agreed
without violence or ulterior motives to share resources and take out the walkers. Damn.”
“We don’t have to imagine it. The Pharaohs came in peacefully. They have not given us any
problems. Except Priyanka. What did she do to your cousin?”
“They hooked up. She dumped him as brutally as possible. He was already fragile. It drove him to
suicide.”
“What? How?”
“He lost his arm in an accident. He felt-“
“Ugly, deformed. Unlovable. I can relate.”
“You got to let that go.”
“What?”
“You have a wife, a girlfriend-“
“Ex-girlfriend.”
“Please, she is going to be under you screaming your name before the weekend comes.”
“I don’t know.”
“Dude, she is in love with you. It is not a hard thing to do,” she looked over at him. He looked
absent.
Carl zoned out for a moment. His mind had meandered to Jagadamba and him in bed. He was
reliving what she had said to him.

“Carl, you heard me?”

“What did you say?”

“Nothing for you to worry about,” she was glad he had not heard her.

“Sorry. I was thinking about, something Jag said to me this morning,” he said.

“Care to share or is it private?”

“It is private.

However, it struck me what if this morning had been the last one we shared?

It was such a beautiful morning. She seems to be good at those. Even when she confides some of her horrors to me. I feel special because she trusts me. The way she looks at me. Same goes for Carly-Jayne. Other than the fact I truly see how big of a bag of dicks my dad is, I wouldn’t trade today for anything. I have a family, a wife, a girlfriend or second wife, really. A daughter, three babies, another sister, Tomeka. She was there for me today. A big brother, Chill. A little one, too with Marco. Ana may be a lost cause.”

“She’s not. She’s a survivor.”

“How can you tell?”

“I asked her point blank why didn’t she like you. She said because boys like you used to hurt her down there until Achilles and J.B. hurt them back.”

“She is five for fuck sakes. She has been raped?”

Teary, Michonne nodded.

“I would be afraid of me, too. Do you think they found her at that at child farm pedophile zoo. That is what it sounded like to me.”

“I think so. Why else would she take in Ana and Marco?”

They said in unison, “She can identify.”

“Same thing goes for Tomeka. She was almost was a child bride. Remember she went all Beatrix Kiddo on Tommie’s wedding day? She relates to her, too,” Michonne said.

“Her life compared to ours is night and day. I thought our shit was awful and it was but her life. What happened to her is almost unthinkable. It makes our shit look like Sesame Street. Her life has been a bad episode of Special Victims Unit. Except there was no Stabler and Benson to save her.”

“You could have just said Special Victims Unit. That show suuuucked. I liked her guest appearance on it but it was so unrealistic.”

“My point exactly. Her life has been the lapitome? Epitome?”

“Epitome. And it is evasive not invasive. You said I was being invasive.”

“Sixth grade education. Doing the best I can,” he didn’t like being criticized by her.

“No need to get defensive.”

“Sorry. I am a little on edge. I am nervous. It is like, I about to see her again for the first time. Anyway, her life, it was like the epitome of fucked. It is like all the bad things happened to her and only her. My Dad saved me from being raped. She had no one to save her from that. Until today. I know Bigelow killed his own dad to save her. I get it. But, the damage had been done. You saved her before an attack. That must have meant the world to her,” he was grateful.

“I sensed something was up. So, I found her.”

“Her first husband murdered her son. He threatened our daughter.”

“Wow. You said our. That is so huge.”

“She is. I married her mom.”

“You don’t have to mention that every time. I get it. You guys are hitched.”

It came out cattier than she meant for to.

Apart of her was elated the teens found refuge in each other. She wanted Carl to move on from her so she could ultimately move on from him.

Then again she missed him. Spending time and how they used to joke together. The way he looked at her in those quiet moments.

No one else looked at her with such sheer affection other than Rick. But, that was only lately. Carl
had always seen her like that. He heard her and it hurt his feelings. Michonne collected herself.

“You said your wife and you had a beautiful morning. What?”

“Oh, I don’t want to talk about it anymore. It'll make me more upset.”

“Okay.”

After this, they were quiet for a spell. Meanwhile, Rick was sitting on his front porch on the steps thinking about everything mistake he had ever made as a father. He felt like this was all his fault; a symptom of something he had done or neglected to do. Daryl saw him through his window and decided to go talk to him.

“I could hear you thinking all the way to my house,” Daryl said.

“I am going to be a grandfather,” Rick’s feelings fell between forlorn and elation. Daryl held up three fingers.

“At one moment, the idea of holding my son's children or child, it fills me with a type of pride I can’t even put words to.”

“It means you aren’t over. You literally have a future in the flesh.”

“I could not have said it better. Then on the other hand, I am scared to death for my boy. What if childbirth is a death sentence for either girl? Or both. What if the baby dies? Miscarriage, anything can happen. What if he dies? Will I be strong enough to raise his kids? Would I want to? Will me and these young ladies even get along? I barely know Enid. And me and Jagadamba's relationship is shaky at best. Will they keep them from me?”

“Goddamn, Debbie Downer. I have a what if for you. What if all this shit turns out well? It could happen. Stranger things, right?” Daryl wanted this for Rick. Even though, he knew it was something close to a pipe dream.

“Daryl, we are both subscribers to Murphy’s Law. Something shitty is going to happen. I just hope the something shitty is tolerable. I want my grandchildren. Most of all, I want my son. I want him happy. If Jag makes him happy, I will suck it up.

I just wish he would have trusted me enough to tell me he wanted to marry her.”

“What's done is done. On the bright side, at least both girls are beautiful and whip smart. Those babies are going to be forces of nature. They and Maggie and Glenn’s kid, Judith and Dare are going to be the ones to keep this place going. Carl is going to be in charge one day. This is the perfect time to start training him now. That boy loves you, Rick. I have talked to Jagger dagger.”

Rick laughed at his intentionally mispronouncing her name.

“Believe it or not, that girl loves you, too. And her head is firmly on her shoulders. You have a general in that girl. I like her. I did not think I would but I do. I believe between the two of you, Michonne, Carol, Abraham, Aaron, myself and that Bigelow dude, we are ready for anything.”

Rick was taken aback by Daryl's confidence in who he considered to be a rank amateur in so many ways.

“When did you develop so much faith in her?”

“I am not going to lie, today. She stayed behind because you asked her to. No more, no less. ”

Rick could not help but think, Goddamnit, she has gotten to you, too.

“You think so?”

“Yes. Don’t get me wrong what she and Carl did was wrong and they knew it. That is why they snuck around. This whole baby business. You heard what her sister did?”

“Yes.”

“We going to do anything about it? We all agreed to watch her ass. Carl and Jagger Dagger banged like horny, under age bunnies making up for lost time, sure. But, they wrapped it up. She sabotaged them.”

“True. But, she is not ours to fuck with. But, uh, I plan on putting her on notice tomorrow.”
“Why do that to her? Who pokes holes in someone else’s rubbers? That is low “
“It is clear to me she hates her baby sister.”
“That is a shame. Merle had his faults but he loved me. I feel sorry for her. I do. That girl tries. I hope
this doesn’t break them up. I don’t know how well Carl will take it. What if this is the last straw? He
can only take so much in stride.”
“He won’t break.”
Meanwhile, Carl and Michonne were silent save Chris Martin's warbling.
He picked up and her mp3 and changed it to Meredith Brooks.
“My Mom used to listen to her. Paula Cole, Shawn Colvin, Luscious Jackson. India Aire. Jill Scott. I
always knew she and Dad had a fight whenever she played this song. That and Sting. Solo. Not with
the Police.”
“Your mom and share a similar taste.”
“I should say so.”
Michonne scoffed.
“What is the name of this song? I don’t recognize it.”
Singing half heartedly with the chorus, he said, “What Would Happen if we kissed?
Would your tongue slip past my lips?
Would you run away? Would you stay?
Or would I melt into you?
Mouth to mouth, lust to lust
Spontaneously combust?”
Uncomfortable because she knew why he chose that particular song, she said, “Turn it off.”
“No. I mean if there were ever a song about me and you. This is it.”
Frustrated, she reached to turn it off herself. He slapped her hand away.
“We are going to get your wife. Do not drudge this up.”
“I married her because of you. I committed like you said to,” he whined.
“I wanted you to be her boyfriend. I didn’t expect for you to go all out.”
“Are you mad?”
“No. Shocked but then again. Not really.”
“I know you and Dad don’t think so but I am ready. Have been for awhile. All my life. I actually
used to daydream about marrying Jagadamba. I imagined her father giving her away to me wearing
the same sari her mom wore.
Once I understood enough about her Indian side, I knew she would want a fusion of all three
cultures. Traditional American wedding, all the Punjabi rituals and she told me wanted to jump
broom. She wanted everyone to be honored. No one knows this about me but you and her and my
Dad maybe but I am sensitive. I am. I admit my Dad is, too. That is why being hardcore does not
come natural. We have to be. We make ourselves. We fight the good fight. We have to fight.
My Mom was not sensitive but she was not a fighter either not until the last moments of her life.
I am also a romantic. I think too much. I love too hard. I come on strong. I don’t know how to give
up.”
“Okay. Sounds like lyrics. Why you saying this to me?”
“I have always loved my wife. But, when I found out, she was part you- the same blood you have,
she does, too. I didn’t hesitate. Ordinarily, I wouldn’t have gotten with her so quickly if she was not
apart of you. I would have been too intimidated. Hell, it took me almost year to hook up with Enid. I
guess what I am saying is. I need you to stop pretending you have nothing to do with this. You can’t
get offended if I call her wife. That is who she is to me.”
“I wasn’t offended. I just, it is like what you told Boyardee earlier. Who are you trying to convince?”
He said with a smirk, “You, you jealous?”
“Not at all. Not ever.”
“You are totally jealous,” he teased.
That is awesome, he thought.
He changed the song to the Vitamin Street Quartet cover of The Distance by Cake.
The mood in the car changed from cozy to awkward to uneasy.
Carl turned off the music and asked.
“What do you think would have happened that night if I had still been there when you got out the
shower?”
She exhaled loudly. Cleared her throat.
She stopped the car and turned off the engine.
During this time, Tomeka couldn’t sleep.
So, she grabbed her favorite DVD set and decided to go find some other lonely soul to go watch it
with.
Usually, she went and woke up Jagadamba or even Priyanka. She was angry with the latter.
As she wandered Alexandria in the dead of night until she heard a voice call her name.
She looked all around until she saw Rick coming from the left.
“What are you doing out this time of night, little lady?” He asked with a couple stray coils of copper
colored hair in his face.
Tomeka swooned a little. He just thought she was cold. It was unseasonably cool for June.
He invited her in.
“You want something to eat or drink?” He asked. He was eager for the company. After all, his
woman and children were away.
“Got any Ovaltine or cocoa? Shoot, I will settle for Taster’s Choice. Got any cookies?”
“Doughnuts. What’s her name, uh, Su made them. Got coffee.”
“Perfect. I got Twin Peaks. Both seasons,” she smiled and gave him a thumbs up and a goofy grin a
la Dale Bartholomew Cooper.
Rick gave her a funny face.
“I was in high school when it came out. Lori liked it, I couldn’t get in to it. So, I would distract her
when it, when it was on.”
Tomeka read between the lines.
He wonders why Carl is such a slut muffin, she thought.
“Well, I think you will like it. It is basically about good and evil. Cops and robbers. Upstanding men,
incestuous rapist, wife beaters, teenagers, murder, bad business dealings, arson, the Log Lady, Fox
Mulder in drag. It has everything.”
“I love the X-Files. Gillian Anderson didn’t know it but we were engaged,” he laughed his hyena
laugh and poor Tomeka thought it was adorkable.
“I know the feeling,” she said smiling.
“You make it sound intriguing. I will go put a pot on and you pop that tape in,” he smiled warmly at
her and left.
Tomeka’s heart was beating so fast.
Three minutes passed.
He called her into the kitchen.
“I have cocoa. I didn’t know. Are you okay with that?” He asked.
She nodded.
“We have to go to bed sometime. Coffee will just keep us up.”
“Who needs coffee? We have life to keep us awake.”
She asked pouring some milk into a saucepan.
She knew exactly what he was referring to.
“Yes, I, Marco, Glenn, Suchin and Maggie by accident were their witnesses.”
“What Glenn and Maggie knew and told me nothing?” Rick was wounded by this.
“They, we had all been sworn to secrecy.”
“Okay. Why?”
“She promised them a favor no questions asked.”
“Must be a hell of a favor,” Rick grimaced.
“Please, you know they are good people better than I do.
Anyway, it was a beautiful ceremony. They looked really good together. What they have is nice. And I doubt it will ever happen for me,” she sighed feeling for herself.

She continued, “Jagadamba is so gorgeous and interesting. And smart. So lovable. Good or bad, men and women flock to her.

Let’s face it, she is the head cheerleader and Carl is wide receiver masquerading as a quarterback.”

“Okay. Don’t quite get your analogy. But, you will find someone one day. You are a pretty girl.”

Tomeka could have died from happiness right then, right there. Rick unaware and his back turned was still talking, “. . . okay. So, you don’t agree?” He added cinnamon, sugar, four packets of sucrose and vanilla extract to the boiling milk before adding the cocoa.

She knew what he meant even though, she had quit listening, “Yes and no.”

“How so?”

“I told you. Pretty girl and for all purposes even with the one eye, you have a pretty boy. Carl is cute.”

“He is a perfect combination of Lori and I. He has all our good features. My bright blue eyes. His Momma's beautiful face.”

“I have seen pics of her in J.B.’s photo album. She was very pretty. She wants to give it to Carl as a birthday gift. That is why she will not let him see it.”

“I heard him complain about to Mic.”

“Like I was saying, they are a good-looking couple so that’s a plus. But, they moving so fast. They are so young. They don’t think so or even realize it but they’re not much older than Carly-Jayne. They are babies. I can’t imagine wanting to be married and pregnant four years from now.”

Unless it is with you. As if that would ever happen, she thought pouting.

“You have your head on right.”

He took the cocoa off the aisle.

“Four months ago, Carl was reading comic books, walking his sister, making goo-goo eyes at Enid. Yeah, he was mopey and brooding. I knew he was unhappy and lonely. I encouraged him to hang out more. There was really no one here his age but Enid. I knew they were going to happen eventually. Now, just four months later, he is juggling a wife, a girlfriend, a stepdaughter and three foster children. I don’t, I can’t reconcile it. I am trying. He has had to play the grown-up because of this world so many times that thinks he is one but he is not. Jagadamba is the same way. I wish they could just be children together. Do all the regularly stupid teenaged shit. I wish the world was the way it used to be. I got a chance to be a kid. My son doesn’t. Jagadamba neither. They were robbed. I am not letting that happen with Judith, Carly-Jayne and goddamnit not you either. I heard that bullshit your father tried to pull. Marrying off his pubescent daughter for what? Flour. Really?” Rick filled with righteous indignation.

“I think it is great you want to make sure I stay a kid as long as possible. I do. But, that ship sailed a long time ago.”

Rick looked disheartened, “When?”

“My father had been in jail since I was eight months. Ever heard of the Almighty Conservative Vice Lords?”

“I am a cop. So, yes.”

“My father was in charge of the Memphis sect, set. Whatever.”

“Tennessee. Pharaohs. I get it.”

“My hometown. Where I met Jagadamba. We met on the river boat. She was so close to my age and I remembered her from my favorite movie growing up. The Polka Dot Princess and Mia Self and Ida. I always loved her. I always felt better after I watched her.

Anyway.

Anyway, before everything. He was in jail deep. He had four consecutive life sentences. His homeboys and him saw an opportunity to bust out due to the whole dead walking the Earth situation. He knew where my family lived because of his bitch mom. So, he came for me. You my blood, he said. That really meant nothing to him. I was a tool.

I was six when I saw my Dad blow my stepfather's head clean off with a double barrel shotgun. He
beat my Mom to death. She was nine months pregnant. She reanimated. He killed her again. I hated my father. Then he killed Mo. He took everything from me. Everything but Jagadamba. He almost took her, too.”

“That is seriously fucked up. I am sorry. I wish I had been the one to kill him,” he was sincere.

“She let me and Mo finish him off. Like I said, I am glad he is dead.”

“No, you are not. You wish he had been someone better. You are glad who was is gone. Not him.”

“So. You see through me. I was afraid of him. But, I loved him. I wish he had been like Dale. A good guy through and through. Like you. You are a good man. I knew that the first time we met.”

He blushed and said, “I am okay.”

“And even though I helped Carl earlier, it was not about him. It was about Jagadamba and you. You deserve to be respected. He was disrespectful and as far as I am concerned, he doesn’t deserve to live under your roof anymore. I did it for J.B. because she and her husband should be under the same roof.”

Rick didn’t know quite what to say to her other than, “Come on, kid. Let’s go see who killed Laura Palmer.”

During this time, Michonne and Carl just sat there quiet for a moment.

She got out the car.

“Okay. That just happened,” he got out the car and followed her.

“What is your deal?” He asked.

“My deal? I am not the one asking questions that should not be answered.”

“Ugh. This is second time I asked you a simple question tonight and you act like I threw acid on you.”

“I think I would prefer the acid. At least, it would be quick.”

“Now. You are being overdramatic.”

“I am going to do you a favor and give you a word of advice. Don’t ever tell a woman, not even your daughter or little sister or some random bitch on the street to their face they are being overdramatic or hysterical or above all crazy. You haven’t seen any of those things until you call us that.”

Impassioned, he grabbed her by the forearms.

This was the first time she noticed he was taller than her.

“Little boy, if you don’t let me go,” she said barely fighting him.

“Or what? I am tired of you ignoring me. Or pretending nothing is going on with me or you.”

“There isn’t. We are going to get your pregnant wife. Remember her?”

He let her go and reclined against a tree. She stayed in the middle of the road for a moment.

He began to speak, “It was fun and exciting at first. Having two hot girls at my disposal. For lack of a better word, it was the shit. I felt like this must be what winning the World Series and the Super bowl felt like.

I tried to hide how I felt. I did not want to seem cocky. It was just so fucking nice not being rejected. Then secretly getting married was fun because well, it was a secret. And now in the course of an afternoon, I can’t undo it. It is real. It is not fun anymore. I made people,” he began to weep.

She walked over to where he was and put her hand on his shoulder.

“I understand. This is a lot to take in. I get it.”

“I never should have listened to you,” he said throwing his head back as he lamented.

“I know I told you to commit.”

“Not that. I got them both pregnant the day you guys returned. I know that’s when it happened. And we three were in denial about it. I am taking about before Jagadamba even got here and when Ron was still in Enid’s face all the time. I still had two eyes. I should have never left your bedroom. I should have stripped down to my boxers and waited for you.”

“And you would have had your feelings hurt,” she said.

“I doubt that. You would have came in there wearing that impossibly slinky white cotton robe with your hair wrapped up and that one bottom leg hanging out as if it were my name. You would faked being mad. And one thing would have led to another. And I would probably be holding a baby right
pretending I am not it’s papa so people wouldn’t judge us, you in particular. People are so stupid. They are quick to judge about shit they know nothing about.”

Michonne snorted then said, “What you just said is impossible. My tubes are tied.”

“What? I overheard you and my Dad arguing about wanting more kids. You did. He didn’t.”

“You heard it wrong. He wants babies. I don’t because can’t. I did not tell him about the tubal ligation. Only you know. You and my brother. I had it done at his practice by a colleague of his.”

“Why not tell him?”

“I don’t want him to see me as lesser than. If I gleaned anything from his relationship with Jessie is he is a lie shallow.” Michonne never said so aloud but Rick’s dalliance with the late Mrs. Anderson hurt her feelings immensely.

Noticing some blonde bimbo instead of me. Asshat, she thought.

“Really?” Carl said intrigued.

But, he thought, So, I can hit it raw then.

Even though, he had only had unprotected sex four times thus far, he knew he liked that better. Then he said aloud, “Do you even realize I have plotted my whole life around you? One way or another.

Even my p.t. schedule. Every morning at eight sharp, I would wait for you to get out the shower and ask for my toothpaste? I got to a point where I quit using it. I brushed my teeth with just baking soda. I wanted to be the one who gave you what you wanted. I figured in even such a small way I could prove to you that I could provide for you, you would notice me. Choose me. All Dad did was present you with old, sticky mints, he probably found in a sweltering glove compartment and You let him into heaven. Jagadamba told me. He did not give you what you asked for.”

“Carl, congratulations. You just made your first guilt trip rant. Your dadness kicking in full force.”

“I was not. I was making valid point. If I had stayed that night. This-”

Partially annoyed with Carl’s rambling and really digging his top lip, she rammed him against the tree and kissed him.

This was her time ever kissing him first. He absolutely kissed back.

When they care up for air. The full moon shined down on then like a spotlight. Neither one had seen the other look so beautiful before.

They began to laugh before kissing again.

Two minutes in, he flipped her back against the smooth bark of the Eastern Redbud tree. He slid down her body on and was soon as he was on his knees, he went for her left shoe.

She thought this was odd but decided to go with it.

She lifted her foot up compliantly. He then concentrated on her belt buckle, fly.

This was the moment when her brain began to go into overdrive.

“Carl, wait, I-“

He shot back up her body and did her the same way she did him in order to shut him up. He kissed her hard. Slipping his tongue into her mouth as he placed his hands into the sides of her pants touching her bare round hips.

He slid back down taking her panties and jeans with him.

The phrase like a lesbian rung her ears as she felt his soft, mouth on her belly.

She lifted her left leg. He slipped it out her pants and panties and put it over his right shoulder.

Her breath hitched and her head felt light. Her voice quavered as his tongue slowly worked its way down to her flower of femininity. He felt her become fully aroused against the flatness of his tongue.

“Holy shit,” she moaned. She, herself not quite sure why she was letting this happen. Other than the fact, she had been fantasizing about the fact all day.

He chuckled.

Four minutes passed. During said four minutes, she came to the realization oral must have been what he meant months ago when he said he only kinda virgin.

Because quite frankly, he was preternaturally good at it. Especially for someone so well, young, he had a basic understanding of the female anatomy that a lot of men twice his age refused to.

Then she remembered he grew up around a gynecologist. So.
She quit being shy and held the back of his head and guided it where she needed. He gratefully followed direction. As always, he was an apt pupil.

As Carl wrapped his full pink lips around her tiny yet very responsive and now very sensitive pearl tongue.

“You keep doing that, you’re going to make me come quickly. Use your thumb,” she instructed. He gently pulled at it before obeying. She almost came.

Using his thumb, gave him the opportunity to look at her. He focused on her lips. He stood up and kissed her, more accurately suckled her bottom lip as he moved his opposable up and down and round and round.

Like her niece, she was not a screamer. “Feels good,” she moaned.

“So fucking wet. Come for me,” he growled in her ear.

“Get back on your knees. Suck it like you did before you got up,” she demanded making sure not to look at him.

“Aye, aye,” he said happily.

He did three times in rapid succession. She lost it. Thrashing semi-silently against the tree. It felt so good, it almost hurt.

While he was on his knees, he plotted his next move.

He pulled himself out his pants. He had never saw himself so hard or oozing so much precum. Unlike, last time, he didn’t ask her thing. He stood up. Kissed so her with so much force, she couldn’t breathe. He didn’t want to give her the opportunity to say no. He then entered her.

Michonne was a little shocked he didn’t ask. It didn’t last for long. She grabbed his tight little ass and began to rock with him haphazardly.

He was still kissing her when he slipped out. He popped it back in. This time managing to inquire if he was hurting her as he felt her body yielding to the weight of his against the tree. She shook her head no.

He had wanted this for so long. For the first time in his whole life, Carl had nearly everything he wanted.

“You feel so, oh, fuck,” he found a sweet spot that distracted the shit out of him.

She giggled.

It was not the best she had ever had or the worst. She rather chose to enjoy the simple pleasure of filling full as he rutted inside of her. It was a feeling she was used to by way of his father.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs tight around him. She was finally into it. He was clumsy but earnest. He wanted to please her.

She giggled.

Since this was a dream come true for him, Carl grunted, “I love you, Michonne.” He came quicker than usual.

She said nothing. She opted to go limp. His declaration of love left her reeling. She wanted to say it back. The admission would be too little to late. It was bad enough they were cheaters.

Carl took a step back, putting himself back into his jeans. She stood there half dressed when she burst into tears. She felt like the worst person ever.

He walked up to her, “Michonne.”

“Don’t.”

“I don’t feel bad about it. Neither should you. It was bound to happen. It should have always been us.”

“Carl, shut up,” she said looking alarmed.

“No. I know you now. You can’t talk to me like I am a little boy anymore. You know I am not.”

“Okay, then, asshole. There are three walkers not that far behind you,” she grabbed him and weaponless, they ran for the car.

He took the machete and jumped in front of her taking them out before she could.

“You all right?” He asked.

“No. However, we should get our tacky asses back in the car and go,” she said seeing three more of them.
He tacitly agreed.
Thirty passed in tense silence.
Carl looked down and saw her left shoe was missing. He wanted to say something but opted not to.
So, she did.
“When we get there, I am staying in the car. You, however should probably wash up before seeing her. Pretty sure, I am all over you.”
“You don’t know the half,” he sighed feeling more empty than ever.
Try Like Stank

Chapter Summary

Carl is greeted with unpleasant surprises when he goes to get Jagadamba.

Chapter Notes

Next chapter will feature a small time jump and a death or two.

Jagadamba laid awake in the dark. Clutching Carl’s hat for comfort that just wasn’t there. Pondering. No, agonizing about how different, how much better her and Achilles’ lives would have been if her mother and their father had been there. For starters, Priyanka never would have sank her claws into her brother. No way in hell would her parents ever have allowed that nonsense to happen. Lori would probably still be alive. Her father was an obstetrician. And he was in Special Forces and did a spell on a SWAT team before becoming a doctor. He would have killed the Governor when they met in the basement despite protests from Rick. Simply put, they would have stuck together. More than that, she and Carl never would have been separated. Which meant if their relationship had continue to escalate, Carly-Jayne probably would have been a blue eyed brunette instead if a brown eyed blonde and two years younger. This also means she never met Bigelow and Boyardee because she never caught a ride with Galen. She was never raped and further denigrated everyday for ten months. Nor would she have to had bury a son. Cortez Fury never would have crossed her path. Which also means no Tomeka or Marco or Ana. She loved her adopted kids but she would have been quite fine if she had never met them at all. “You can’t miss what you can’t measure,” her grandmother, Charlesetta used to say about love you never had. All the responsibility that had been forced upon her. She never had anytime time to herself. She had to always be on. Survivor, mother, leader, actress, widow, wife. The thing she wanted to be more than anything was a daughter. She hated being an orphan. To her that word meant unwanted, abandoned, alien, apart, utterly alone. To top it off, the only person who she could even remotely be a daughter to more or less hated her guts. Why else would Rick command me to stay behind, she thought. Then there was the matter of her aunt. She knew Michonne could have taken up for her or at least stay. She expected her to. She was shocked when she didn’t. Then again. No, she wasn’t. The adults in her life even before the apocalypse had the tendency to disappoint. Even amidst her pity party she had to admit the Grimeses, Lori especially, were always there. She was grateful to Abraham. He did stay after all. And told her the truth about her sister. Granted, she thanked him by pouncing on him like a squirrel on an acorn. Hitting him all about the face and head and calling him everything kind of liar in the book before she broke down and cried.
on his chest. He wrapped his arms around her.
He said, “Oh, darling. I am not going to serve you a side of nutty shit and tell you everything is going to be alright because it is not. But, I will say this. You have my sympathy.”
Immediately, after this, she began to puke nonstop.
During this time, even Gregory felt sorry for her.
He said, “My brother was a lying son of a bitch, too. He was always a total ass to me.”
To which, she said, “But, I don’t deserve it, though,” she wept before returning to the porcelain. By hour six, she was dry heaving and blood vessels around her eyes burst from the strain. Her throat was so raw, she couldn’t eat if she wanted to. And she didn’t want to. She took so ill, that Dr. Carson hooked her up to two i.v.s- one for her dehydration and another for her crippling nausea.
So, again Jagadamba was alone in the dark when the door to the infirmary opened.
Her heart began to beat fast. Her breath became short. She was scared.
She knew if it were Abraham who had stepped out to get something to eat; Jesus, the Doctor or even Gregory, they would have knocked.
The mindful redhead left her a Baretta.
She reached for it while thinking, Is today International Let’s Attempt to Rape and Murder or at the very least break Jagadamba’s heart Day?
She fired.
“Goddamnit, baby. It’s me. It’s Carl,” he said presently on the floor.
Jagadamba liked to have died. She threw the gun down, ripped out her i.v. and ran to him.
“Carl, did I hurt you, love?” She asked.
“I will be fine. I am concerned about you,” he said pumping adrenaline. Not feeling his the blood seep from his left arm.
Abraham, Jesus and a couple others came running.
Jesus flipped on the light.
When Carl saw her right eye. He became incensed.
It was a dark, sickeningly bloody purple and nearly swollen shut. The bruise extended to the high peak her cheek underneath. It was coupled with petechia.
Carl saw this clutched her sweet face.
“He saw this and still left you? Really?” He could not hide his anger.
Before she could answer, Abraham asked, “Who let a shot off?”
“I did. I thought he was someone coming to get me. I knew you would have knocked. I didn’t mean to shoot at my husband. Oh, fuck my life. Your arm,” she said tearfully.
“Oh, shit, I am bleeding,” Carl noticed seeing his shoulder.
“Oh, no,” Jagadamba jumped up and got a whole roll of paper towels.
“I will go get Doc Carson,” Jesus said.
“No. I will clean him up and give him stitches if he needs it. I did this to my man. I will fix him,” she said putting her forehead against his.
He rubbed his nose against hers before stealing a kiss.
“Minty fresh,” she laughed remembering what he said earlier.
He did like Michonne said and gave himself a whore bath and brushed his teeth.
“Sorry, if my kiss was a little puke-y,” she finished wincing.
“Tastes fine,” he kissed her again.
Both Jesus and Abraham smiled and shook their heads. They both knew those kids deserved to be happy.
“How’s Carly-Jayne?” She asked.
“Our girl’s fine.”
Jesus interjected, “Jagadamba, I will pass you what you need.”
She nodded then said to Carl, “Aww. You never called her ours before.”
“She told me loved me for the first time. Asked me to show her my eye. I did.”
“Well, how did she reply? Did she freak out?”
“No. She acted as if nothing was out the ordinary. I asked her and she said I looked the same.”

Jagadamba’s whole face dropped for a second. Then her nostrils flared and she rolled her eyes at him.

She was jealous.

Here’s why, “She freaked when she saw my back. She told me it scared her. Remember that night she insisted on going home with you and Enid. That is why.”

“I thought you had done that to cockblock us . . .”

While they continued to discuss this, Jesus said to Abraham, “Why don’t you call it a night?”

Abraham agreed.

He patted Jagadamba on the head like was a puppy. So much so, she barked.

Abraham laughed and said, “Damn, that sounded real. I miss dogs.”

Carl chimed to Jagadamba, “I ate some dog once. Wasn’t too bad but definitely wouldn’t be my first or third or nineteenth choice but something is better than nothing.”

“True dat. You came for me and I almost killed you. Oh, God,” she lamented having gotten over her bitter feelings. Seemingly.

He grabbed her and crushed her into his body.

For the first time, Carl felt pangs of guilt.

He knew if she had an inkling about what transpired an hour before- she would have aimed for his head. Or worst yet his dick. Even worse than that, Michonne.

She guided him to the bed across from hers.

As she cleaned his wound, she said, “It grazed down to the white meat. It is pretty bad. Maybe I should get Doc.”

“Nah. I trust you. Then again. Maybe you should. I want to hear it,” he smiled.

Jagadamba knew as soon as she asked Rick not to tell that he was going to bust his ass telling. She knew from childhood how contrary he could be.

“He told you I was spermy, didn’t he?” She asked.

“There are so many less graphic ways to say that but yeah. How long have you known and how the hell did my dad know?” Carl pulled out the sonogram.

Jagadamba sighed.

“Last week, Carly-Jayne walked in on me taking my third test. I became startled and dropped it. She picked it up and ran with it. Rick happened to be downstairs. He got to her first. Told me I had a week to tell you.”

“Sounds like an episode of Friends. The One With the Tattle-Tale Toddler.”

“I have known since Dare’s birthday. I was in denial. Until our wedding night. It felt right. Too right. So, I have to doubt it. Too good to be true.”

“Or maybe you could be happy. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I tried to this morning. After Steve and Haley Smith burst through the door, I lost my nerve.”

“You know you can tell me anything. American Dad,” he laughed.

If only, she thought.

“In that case, my morning sickness is no joke. It is getting worse every week and today has been hell for me. I literally vomited nonstop for six hours. I feel so weak. Doc called it hyperemesis gravidarum. I think it is latin for this is what you get for having hot sex, you whore.”

She laughed, he did not find it funny. He hated she was sick because of him.

He stilled her hand and commanded more than he asked, Jesus to go get Carson.

Jesus hunched then left.

He led his wife back to bed with one hand and held on to his bleeding arm with the other.

He picked up the bloody and abandoned needles. He looked up at the intravenous bags. They were nearly empty. They were in her system.

“Jag, I am so sorry. I did this to you,” he said feeling guilty about everything.

“We decided to have sex. This is our doing.”

He reached to touch her belly. She grabbed his wrist.

“Don’t. I have to decide. That is why I wanted Rick to keep his mouth shut. I don’t want to hurt
you,” she began to weep as she saw blood sleep through his fingers.

“I am fine. After the doctor stitches me up. Uh, we go home. Get you better there. I know it is your
choice. But, I can at least hear their hearts? I just want to share that moment with you.”

“No. It’ll bond us four. I am not ready. Not ready to go home either.”

“Okay. In the morning then. After, he sews me up, I will go tell Michonne and come back to you.”

“Michonne is here?” She lit up.

She loves me after all, she thought.

“Yeah. She came. She drove me,” Carl smirked when he said came.

“Cool. I still don’t want to go home.”

Before, he could ask why, Carson and Jesus returned.

During this time, Michonne sat quietly in the car reliving every aspect of what just happened
between her and Carl.

She was somewhere between remorseful, over the moon, disgusted, ashamed and torn.

Just as she looked up and saw Abraham. She felt a rush of fluid splash out of her.

His shit stayed up in there, that long? Damn, I better get that pill just in case, she thought shifting
feeling uncomfortably wet.

Abraham motioned for her to unlock the door.

He got in with two beers in hand.

“I don’t want one. But, thanks,” Michonne said.

“Trust after what I am about to tell you. You will,” he said.

“What happened to your face?”

“What happened to your shoe?” He laughed.

“Lost it when I got pinned against a tree.”

“Hmph. Your niece is stronger than she looks.”

“She hit you?”

He nodded.

“Bushrod and Jayne made it back to Atlanta in time. Priya knew this and lied about it.”

She took the beer, opened it and drank it down in damn near one gulp.

“What? Why didn’t you say something before?”

“I didn’t know that she didn’t know. We were talking and boom. It came out. She was on my ass
faster than HPV on a warty dick. Then she collapsed on top of me. She asked why did you tell me?

Why did she lie? Some sad ass shit.”

Michonne shook her head and let out a frustrated yell.

“Her day is about to get shittier.”

“How so?”

“Priyanka poked holes in their condoms.”

“What is wrong with that bitch? Who does that? Rick knows?”

“Yes. Carl figured it.”

“That boy is smarter than he looks,” Abraham said.

“You’re telling me,” she scoffed before adding, “Enid is pregnant, too.”

“So, Carl has made up his mind to singlehandedly, well, single-dickedly repopulate the earth. That
boy is a regular Maury Povich guest. You are the father, shit.”

At this point, Michonne felt increasingly uneasy. Tubes tied or not, she knew she needed that Plan B
pill just in case.


Michonne screeched and smacked Abraham upside the head.

“You could have opened with that,” Michonne jumped out the car.

Abraham was behind and said, “You Anthony broads hit like dudes. It only grazed his left or right
arm. It was an accident.”

“Why did she shoot in the first place?”

“Day she’s had, anybody would be paranoid.”

Michonne sniffed. She was more upset about Carl being shot than she was about learning Priyanka
lied about her brother and his wife returning home. He was been hurt enough, she thought.

“Where are they?”

Abraham led the way.

Once in there, she saw Dr. Carson stitching up his wound while Jagadamba sat beside him holding his hand and apologizing profusely. The i.v. was back in her arm.

“Jag, it is fine. There is nothing to be sorry about. Shit happens,” he said a loving tone gently squeezing her hand.

Michonne overheard, “The Hell. She could have killed you. You could have killed him. Frankly, I don’t know how I would have responded to that,” Michonne said rolling her eyes.

Jagadamba’s feelings were hurt yet again. I knew she didn’t give a shit about me, she thought. While Carl smirked.

I knew she loved me, he thought.

Jagadamba replied, “I know I could have killed him but thankfully I didn’t. I thank God, I didn’t. Cause, Auntie, I would have beaten you to the punch and turned that gun on myself.”

Michonne took a deep breath and collected her thoughts.

“I have been responsible for him for so long it seems. I see him as mine. Just as I see you as mine,” Michonne said feeling like she deserved a bullet at the moment.

She realized she cared a great deal more about Carl than her niece. She felt something close to compunction about it but not quite.

The almost seventeen years olds shared a quick liplock.

Michonne literally threw up a little bit in her mouth. A twinge of envy hit her hard. She swallowed it. Turned it into cooperative tone, saying, “So, uh, whenever you guys are ready. We can head out but it might be better if we leave in the a.m.”

“I am not leaving. Period,” Jagadamba said.

“Priyanka?” Michonne asked.

Jagadamba nodded.

Carl looked at the two of them with shock.

Before he could ask why for a second time, Carson said, “All done. I need to speak with you out in the hall.”

Carl nodded and led his wife back to bed before leaving with the doctor.

Carson spoke first.

“Your wife is a lot sicker than she is leading on.”

“She told me she threw up for six hours. Felt really dizzy. But, I thought that was normal.”

“No. She is very dehydrated. Has been for awhile. Her vitamin B is low. She’s anemic. Quite frankly, I don’t know how she made it out of bed this morning to get here. Let alone just now.”

“Could some of it be stress of the day? She was assaulted,” he said grasping for straws.

“I doubt that. She told me her symptoms have become worse in the last week. Have you noticed anything?”

“Off and on. She is good at hiding things. Like, I suspected the morning sickness.”

“It is beyond baby sickness. It is hyperemesis gravidarum. You ever been hungover like puking. Cannot stand the smell of food?”

“No. But, I have had morphine and have been shot twice. I felt weak, nauseous. It was not fun.”

“H.G. occurs commonly with multiples. It usually clears up between the twelfth and twentieth weeks.

Now, I have not told Jagadamba this but sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes, the misery lasts the whole pregnancy. You love your wife and want what is best for her, yes?”

“Uh, duh. What type of question is that to ask me?”

“If her condition persists, I don’t have enough supplies to help her.”

“Our infirmary is fully stocked. We may have it. Just write it down.”
“I am going to cut the chase here. These times are trying enough. A pregnancy is a risky proposition as is but with these complications, a therapeutic abortion may be her only option for relief.”

Carl sniffed and looked at Carson like he offered to shit down his throat.

“Because you have no imagination, your big solution is killing my kids?”

“You didn’t see how bad she was. She couldn’t even keep down saltines and water. Even when she tried to speak, she would wretch. I gave her a sedative to knock her out, all it did was make her still. I have seen patients with this condition before. In rare cases, it can cause kidney damage. Starvation, throwing up blood, constipation. Death. It killed one of the Bronte sisters.

And besides, she is already leaning towards abortion in general. This is unplanned pregnancy, correct?”

“I thought doctors were about saving lives?”

“She is my patient. Not them. Not until she makes a decision.”

“I don’t want to talk to you anymore,” Carl went back inside. All he heard one more old man telling him how he was a stupid child who didn’t deserve

As he walked in, he heard Abraham say, "Goddamn. Those babies have made you mean." Jagadamba looked pissed red but she softened and managed to smile at Carl.

He gave her a half-hearted grin. He hated the fact she was so ill. However, he felt hella selfish but he wanted those twins. Badly.

But, he knew firsthand both Jagadamba and Enid playing Russian roulette with their lives having babies. His babies.

He refused to give credence to the possibility either or both could die.

He walked up to Jagadamba and kissed her.

Michonne averted her eyes.

Why am I tripping? She asked herself. Then she remembered that thing he did with his lips earlier.

Oh, yeah, she smiled to herself.

"We need to talk,” Carl said touching her face.

She closed her eyes when he touched her and nuzzled into it.

"Not right now. I am really very tired and a little mad. A lot mad and hurting. I am so glad you are here. I feel a little better. If I scoot over, will you get in bed and hold me?”

“I thought that was a given.”

"That is our cue to leave," Abraham said.

Michonne said, "Good night, Carl. Jagadamba.”

Carl became something very similar to putty when she bid him adieu.

He replied with a huge grin, "You take it easy, Michonne. Good night to you, too."

"You, too," she smiled.

Jagadamba said nothing to her aunt.

Carl noticed but kept mum for now.

Michonne, Abraham and Jesus left them alone.

Carl undressed to his t-shirt and boxers and climbed in bed with her.

“How’s your shoulder?” She asked sniffing.

“I don’t feel it. I feel very little pain when I am next to you," he said. Just because it was a line, doesn't mean he did not mean it.

"Aww. You snake charmer, you. I feel better when you are around, too." He kissed her cheek.

"So much happened today. Today has been the most wonderful, horrible day of my life," he said.

"Shitty as this day has been, it still doesn't rank in my top ten worst days. Doesn't come close,” she said.

"What did Michonne mean by Priyanka?”

"I don't want to talk about it. Not until morning. So, she declared her undying?” She changed the subject.

"Yeah. She asked to see my eye. I told her I didn't want her afraid of me like Ana is. She said I could never be afraid of you. I love you."

"I thought doctors were about saving lives?”

“She is my patient. Not them. Not until she makes a decision.”

“I don’t want to talk to you anymore,” Carl went back inside. All he heard one more old man telling him how he was a stupid child who didn’t deserve

As he walked in, he heard Abraham say, "Goddamn. Those babies have made you mean." Jagadamba looked pissed red but she softened and managed to smile at Carl.

He gave her a half-hearted grin. He hated the fact she was so ill. However, he felt hella selfish but he wanted those twins. Badly.

But, he knew firsthand both Jagadamba and Enid playing Russian roulette with their lives having babies. His babies.

He refused to give credence to the possibility either or both could die.

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"Yeah. She asked to see my eye. I told her I didn't want her afraid of me like Ana is. She said I could never be afraid of you. I love you."
"Oh. How sweet. How did you respond?"
"I said it back. Told her I would always be there for her. Would listen, that I would not discount how she feels just because she is a child."

Almost afraid of the answer, she inquired, "Did she ask about me?"
"Of course. She loves you. She was scared she would never see you again. She cried for you. I had to assure her you were coming home."
Jagadamba literally took a sigh of relief.
Carl continued, "She loves you a lot. Which is probably why she freaked when she saw your back. She doesn't like seeing you hurt."
She scoffed. He changed the subject.
"You said undying."
"So?" She was getting moody.
"Michonne said the same thing."
"Ugh. That bitch."
"Okay? What the hell happened in when I was out in the hall?"
"She cleaned up your blood. Rolled her eyes at me the whole time. Then said, I should never shoot unless I know there is a threat. You could have killed him. That could have started a war between us and your people. I said I thought I was your people."
She said..
"You know what I mean. The Pharaohs are not the most stable bunch," Michonne said way bitchier than she should have.
Jagadamba replied in kind, "And you guys are? I have never killed a bunch of people in their sleep on the word of a stranger. That is crazy stupid. No offense, Paul."
He hunched.
Michonne replied, "Then she said nor have we ever poisoned ninety-something people and sat half a state on fire."
Jagadamba said, "I told her to,
"Kiss my ass."
Michonne felt childish. She apologized.
"I was childish. What Priyanka did was unforgivable."
"I flipped her off. Abraham told me don't disrespect my aunt. I told him fuck off and to mind his own. You came in looking none too pleased yourself. What did Doc tell you?"
"Nothing important. Same shit my dad said basically. She apologized. Why didn't you accept her apology? She was concerned about me. That is all."
"Look, I am ecstatic she loves you. I am. How can she not? You're a prince. Quite literally. Anyway. She said nothing about what Priyanka did. No condolence or sympathy. She doesn't like me. After she saw you were alive, her attention should have shifted to my problem."
Carl felt deeply touched that Michonne showed how much she cared about him. Though, he hated his wife's already frayed feelings were hurt.
"I get it. What Priya did to us was foul. But, M-"
"You knew?" She sat up.
"I figured it out after you were gone. She poked holes in our condoms the first night you arrived. I found like six of them stuck to my shoe. I saw the holes. My heart knew you would never do a thing like that. My brain is an idiot, though."
"Wait. Earlier in the hall, you said that all I had to do was ask if I really wanted something from you. Please tell me you weren't talking about your sperms."
In a tone not to be believed, he replied. "Of course not?"
She said with exasperation, "What? Et tu, Carl? You of all people should know me better than that. Everything I told you this morning? You think I would deceive you like that?"
"Jag, you're missing the point. I said I know it wasn't you nor did you have any knowledge of it. She sabotaged us. She told Achilles. He threw them away the next day. He assumed he did."
Jagadamba relented.
“Nothing that bitch does shocks me anymore. What you just told me was downright benevolent considering what Abe told me.”
“What did he tell you?”
“I don’t want to talk about it.”
“I found out something today.”
“Can it wait?”
“Probably. But, I really like to get this off my chest.”
“Will it keep me up, piss me off? If so, you need to keep it.”
“It might. But, I will say this. Everybody knows we are married.”
“Oh. Carly-Jayne knows?”
“No. I figure we tell her together tomorrow. About the twins, too. She’ll be so super stoked,” he used his most hopeful voice.
She sighed loudly and asked, “How’s did Enid take it?”
“As well as can be expected,” he hunched.
“So, she either dumped you or she wants to be our third. Which is it?”
“She dumped me.”
“Oh. I am not as happy as I thought I would be. I have really grown to like her.”
“Last Thursday was testament to that,” he cracked.
“Oh, shut up. You know you liked it. Watching me with her.”
“Believe it or not, I didn’t.”
“Your seeping hard on said otherwise. I asked you if you were game. You said yes. So did she. Most guys would be grateful for having wife as open-minded as me.”
“I am. I am like eternally grateful for you. You rock. That is why I need you home. We need you home. I just didn’t like seeing you with someone else.”
“You sound super hypocritical. Like the definition,” she grumbled.
“Well, maybe. I went without you for so long. And I don’t like sharing. You are the first person I have ever loved who wasn’t my parents or grandparents. You are what I know. You are apart of me-”
“You can’t let go. I have heard the song by Chicago, too.”
Carl snapped his fingers and said, “Damn.”
She chuckled a little.
“Enid told me something else,” he said cautiously.
“She’s pregnant,” she sighed.
“Yeah. How do you know that?”
“I didn’t. I figured everything else that could go wrong today, has. So, of course, she is preggers. Irish triplets. They are due Valentine’s. If I have them. When is she due?”
“January twenty-fourth.”
“Does she want the baby?”
“Yes.”
“Naturally.”
“Wait. What? We have Valentine’s Day babies? That’s my mom’s birthday. Valentine’s.”
“Duh.”
“Look, I know it is a lot to process. I am not having such an easy time of it myself. It went from fun to not so much quickly.”
“Fun? The word I use would not be fun. This is my life. There is nothing fun about it.”
“You know what I mean.”
“I don’t actually. You know what? No more talking. I am pissed enough. I love you. Goodnight,” she said trying her goddamned best not to be angry about Enid’s pregnancy.
“I love you, too. ‘Night,” he said.
About twenty minutes passed.
Jagadamba was almost asleep until she felt something poking in her back.
“You’re joking right?” She said feeling his erection.
Faking embarrassment, he said, “Sorry. It couldn’t be helped. You are so warm, soft and pretty.”
Now Carl could’ve just stopped there leaving his wife feeling flattered and maybe a little annoyed.
He continued, “You know I would do all the work. It might make you feel better,” he squeezed between her legs.
“What the fuck makes you think I want sex right now? My fucking you got me in this mess. You should not be all that horny either. Three babies,” she scoffed.
I am seventeen year old man. I stay horny, he thought.
“I apologize,” he said.
“Okay, cooze hound.”
Ten minutes passed.
“Do you really love me?” She asked.
“With all my heart. Do you love me?”
“Don’t make this about you, Rick junior.”
He scoffed.
“Never mind,” she pouted.
“Why did you ask me that?”
“No reason.”
“If I didn’t love you. I wouldn’t be here.”
“True. I guess. Maybe you just feel obligated.”
“Nothing wrong with obligations. But, I am here because I want to be. I need you near me. And I know the five of us are going to make it just fine. We are going to beat this world,” he put his hand on her stomach.
She elbowed him so hard if not for the railing he would have fallen out the bed.
“I told you not to do that.”
“Why not? They are just as much mine as you are. More because they have my blood and my name.”
“So, we are your property now?”
“No. You know what I mean.”
“Massa, us po’ niggers can’t understand what white folk know. Zippedy- do- dah-”
“Really? You are going there with me? You know I was raised not to see color. That is one of the few things my folks agreed on.
And goddamn it. You do belong to me and I to you. I want our twins. I want you. I want Carly-Jayne, Enid and our baby and even Tomeka, Marco and Ana. I am willing to put up with Riff Raff and Magenta if that makes you happy,” he hoped Rocky Horror reference would appease her.
“I admit Big and Boy can be a bit much.”
“Gee, Mrs. Grimes, you think so?” He snuggling up to her.
She smiled wistfully and said, “That’s me. I wish I wasn’t the only one. I miss your mom.”
“Me, too. I dream about her a lot.”
“Me, too. Not my folks though. Very seldom. I think I am too angry to dream about them.”
She paused for a moment then changed the subject.
“I thought you hated Rocky Horror Picture Show.”
“You love it. The least I can do is like it,” he said.
She giggled.
“Truce?” He asked.
“I don’t know. What I am about to say will hurt you. But, I need to say it.”
“I can take it.”
“I do not think I am ready for this.”
“Twins is going to be difficult. But on the bright side, we will have each other. And everyone will be ready to help.”
“There is no guarantee of that. Negan’s coming. Being pregnant during wartime isn’t the best idea.”
“We will defeat him. We win.”
“Eventually. And that’s best case scenario. It takes months to plan a proper coup. I know. Impulsive gets you killed. And you know what else?”
“What?”
“Hubris.”
“Now is not the best time. I admit. We will figure it out. Once we go home—"
“Am I speaking a foreign language? No, I am not coming home.”
“If nothing else, your birthday is tomorrow. You should be around people who love you.”
“Nobody loves me.”
“I do.”
“Nah. I am a distraction. A warm body. You refuse to hear me. We are in so much trouble. No one believes me. Not you or your people anyway. If the tables were turnt, I would believe you.”
“I do. But, Glenn and Maggie are brave enough to try. We can be, too.”
“Easy for you to say. You aren’t famished right now and too afraid to eat because you know it is coming right back up.
You are not going to get fat or stretch marked or have to pee all the time or stay constipated.
You are not going to be squeezing two screaming footballs out your vagina. I could die like your mom did. Could you live with that?”
“That was a low blow.”
“It was. I apologize.”
“Cool.”
“No, not cool. I am not ready. Neither are you. This is too much too fast.”
“The way I see it we’re just making up for lost time.”
“Now see that is just plain dumb. We were sabotaged. You just told me so. What Priya did was tantamount to rape.
I mean, fuck. Do I have please rape me tattooed on my forehead? She violated you, too”
“I know that. What she did doesn’t take away from what we have created. Our love made new life,” He was sincere and pleading.
Jagadamba sat up, pulled down the railing and threw her legs the side of the bed.
He followed suit beside her. He tried to hold her hand. She snatched it and crossed her arms.
He said, “You’re letting her win. Acting this way with me. What she did is unacceptable.
No, they are not planned. But, they’re ours. You and me all commingled together. Every since we were little and found out, sex was a thing and babies happened that way- we agreed we were gonna make a family together when we were old enough. We are old enough,” his hand was on her thigh.
She let him.
“Dude, that was two live births, two miscarriages and one abortion ago. A whole life time ago. I am not the same. I gave up on my childhood dreams. So, should you.”
“So, when I proposed to you that is why you squealed like a schoolgirl and said yes. That is why your first night in The ASZ, we slept together three times. Making them in the process. The fact you love me.
We wouldn’t be together if that were true.”
“My first night there, my instincts told me not to be alone with you. Not to sleep with you. I should have known it was a dumb idea when Priya gave me the box of condoms. Be careful, she said. What a dope.
Between the two of you, I felt obligated.”
“O . . . kay. Talk to me like I am five. I don’t get you feeling obligated when it comes to sex. I thought you wanted to.”
She shook her head no.
Feeling horrified, Carl said, “What? Do you feel like I violated you? Please tell me that I am misunderstanding.”
“You didn’t rape me. You took advantage but not against my will.”
“How is that any different?”
“It is. I need you to understand.”
“I am trying to.”
“You make me stupid. That’s how much I love you. Idiot.
You make me go against myself.”
He knew she wasn’t lying.
So, he nodded.
“And I know if you touch my belly or if we hear their hearts together. I won’t be able to say no. I
just need to make a decision on my own about my body.
Not what is going to please some man but what is best for me.”
Carl wanted to be insulted but recalled what Denise had said about her having been a slave.
“I understand,” he said.
This took her by surprise.
“Really? You are not going to be a brat about this?”
“If the tables were turned, I would want the same consideration. I took a vow. You’re my wife and I
want the best for you. I love you.”
Jagadamba burst into tears.
“What?” He asked.
“Am I asleep? I swear. You are just too good to be true. I don’t deserve you.”
Carl's heart sank and never in his life had he felt like such a piece of utter shit. Not since his mom
and Dale anyway.
The reality of the grievous act he had just committed with Michonne hit him like hot grits.
She was Jagadamba’s aunt who also happened be his dad’s girlfriend.
He had betrayed his father and wife in one fell swoop.
“I am sorry. You are the one who is special. Not me. I am simply not who you think I am,” he said
taking his arm off her hip and lying down.
Jagadamba laid on her back and turned her head in his direction.
“No one is what it says on the tin; we all have different facets. I am not who you think I am either.
Even with that said, you are a good man. You come from a good man. So, they’ll be good people,
too.”
Carl perked up. His guilty buried just like that.
“You’re having them?”
“I didn’t say that. But, I could be swayed that way. Maybe,” she smiled.
“Let me sway you,” he leaned in and they kissed.
After about twenty minutes of making out, Jagadamba breathlessly pulled away.
“Screw it. I need food. I know was a total bitch to her but will you ask her to make me some
pancakes?
I figure since you are one of her boys, she won’t deny you.”
“I will ask her. The usual?”
“And some blueberries if they have them. And some beef. I heard there was stew.”
“You want pancakes, blueberries, beef stew.”
“And some mustard sauce. Warm syrup and a gallon of water.”
“A gallon of water?”
“For when the inevitable happens. That way, it will come back up easy. I used to be bulimic. Trust
me water helps.”
“Ever seen any pics of your dad as a child?”
“When he was a teenager. He told me they were destroyed in a fire.”
“Yeah. Nawl. He used to be fat. He got desperate the summer before junior high. He was bulimic.
He shared that with me. He told me not to tell anybody. So, I kept his confidence. Until now. Oops,”
she laughed.
“He is a finicky eater when he has a choice.”
They talked for a little while longer before he departed.
He found out by some random that Michonne was asleep in one of the portables.
Learning from last time, he knocked.
Groggy, she answered the door with sword in hand. She looked cautiously threw the peephole.
He saw the shadow and waved goofily.
Her heart quickened as she let him in.
“Hey,” he said shifting uncomfortably trying to ignore the physical effect she was having on him.
She had changed into boy shorts and a tank. The strap was hanging off her shoulder. She had on no bra; not that her perky low B- cups needed them.
Her hair was up in a lazy top knot. This made her youth easy to see.
At first, neither said a word. Only looked at each other hesitantly lest the other see the lust and give in to it again.
Michonne spoke first.
“She wants pancakes,” she said.
He nodded. He shielded his disappointment. He wanted her to bring up what they did.
“How did you guess?” He asked.
“I am a good educated guesser. You all right? Does it hurt? It must hurt,” she went to touch him.
When she did, he quivered and touched her hand.
He felt so confused. He loved the Anthony women almost equally.
“I know you do not want to talk about it,” he said.
“This is not the time or the place. But, we will. We need to get your, uh, wife home.”
“What else did Priya do?”
Michonne threw on some pants and mismatched shoes.
As they walked to the main house towards the kitchen, she told him what Abe had told her.
After which, Carl and Michonne silently spent the most awkward forty minutes of either of their lives thus far. The only words either of them uttered were about Jagadamba.
In the process of setting up the tray, their hands touched.
Their eyes met.
At that moment, they both unspokenly decided to try like stank to fight the urge to kiss.
“She is probably growing real impatient. We should, uh, go,” Michonne said.
“Yeah, we should,” he said looking at her like he could lay her out on a tray and eat her like so much smoked charcuterie.
They arrived with everything she had asked for.
Jagadamba was so pleased. She felt loved.
Michonne didn’t linger.
It hurt her throat to eat but she was too hungry to care.
Carl watched her eat. He liked how she ate with her hands.
Even the soup. She would drink off the broth first then eat the contents.
Once, she finished her meal, she noticed Carl was still eating his sandwich.
She snatched the uneaten half and declared, “Too slow.” And scarfed it down. It was chicken salad sandwich.
He had another so he did not care. He thought it was funny.
He caressed her hair and kissed her cheek.
She blushed.
“I know why you don’t want to come home,” he said softly.
Jagadamba held in sobs.
“I knew she would tell you. I don’t think I can repeat it aloud.”
“I am so sorry. I don’t understand why she would do such a thing.”
“I do. She hates me.”
“So be it.”
“So be it? She is my big sister, Carl. I used to worship her. She was my rock for so long. She was more my mom than my mom. She was always there. She potty trained me. Taught me how to read. How to write.
She told my mom I should be an actress. She was there when you guys weren’t. She came to all my
premieres and award shows and photo shoots. She made sure no one took advantage of me.
I don’t get it. The change in her. So be it. You are such a callous jerk sometimes.”
“I am trying to understand why can’t you come home. I have your back. Asshole or not, my dad has
your back, too. Daryl. Michonne, Carol. Bigelow and Boyardee. Tomeka. You think no one loves
you. But, you are wrong. Everyone does.”
“You don’t get it. If what Abe said is true. It is all true. I forgive her for what she did. She must have
had her reasons.
But, if she did do this, she is behind my son’s murder. That is unforgivable.
If I see her, I am going to kill that monster.
If I kill her, I am going to have to kill my brother, too. My brother for all his faults, he loves me but
the pull of my sister’s pussy is greater to him. He is so in love with her.
You got to understand they are all I have left of my parents. I can’t return to Alexandria. I don’t want
Priyanka Brunhilda Chowdhury- Richter's blood on my hands. I can’t.”
“Who says we kill her? We can always banish her.”
“That is more cruel than killing her outright. And kinda dumb. Because I am telling you now she
would go straight to Negan. If I would, too if I were an evil bitch. This isn’t about you.”
“I know that. Quit saying that. I love you. I just want you home. You’re safe there.”
“No one is safe anywhere. What is wrong with us, you and me and Carly-Jayne and the rest of the
children live here for awhile? There is nothing holding us to ASZ as you call it.
Our folks, the ones who matter can visit us. I need this, Carl. A respite,” she let out a cough.
Then another. She knew this was a precursor to vomiting. Her body would make her cough until she
got nauseous.
Carl felt frustrated. The very thought of not seeing Michonne at some point during the day unsettled
him.
“This is not where we belong. I love you, Jag,” he pled sounding insincere.
Angry, she threw the plate against the wall and screamed.
“Why won’t you hear me? I know you have a dick and by definition that makes you a little stupid.
But, I just told you something huge. My so-called mother's daughter because she is not a sister, is
behind my son’s death. Wrap your brain around that.”
“I get that. I understand. We move here—”
“Thank you—”
“Then what? All we would be doing is delaying the inevitable. If she is the reason Mohinder is gone,
what right does she still have to live?”
“She doesn’t—cough-. That is why I can’t leave. I can’t murder some of the last remaining kin -cough-
I have left,” the nausea was rising in her throat like some evil sponge feeling up with water.
“It wouldn’t be murder. It would be justice.”
Before she could reply, she leaned over and heaved mightily into the thirty gallon trashcan.
With her hair still up from earlier, Carl didn’t know what to do with his hands other than try to rub
circles at the small of her back. She shook him off.
“You’ve touched me enough,” she managed to say between spews.
“Jagadamba, I just want you home. We all do. The Pharaohs were on high alert when they didn’t see
you. Some of them even suspect you are dead. Last thing needs to happen is skirmish. We don’t
need to be divided when shit gets real.”
Weak and gasping, she said, “I have been manipulated by the best. And you aren’t even close so
stop trying to handle me.”
Defensive and out of ideas, Carl griped, “So, only you get to do that?”
“What the fuck? I have never manipulated you.”
“Really? When you used to cry all the time to get your way with me? When you unplugged the
Xbox?”
“So? I am a girl. That’s we do when we can. You need to get over that. That was ages ago.”
“Okay. This is recently. The whole sharing me nonsense.”
“I did that for you. You weren’t done with each other.”
“I would believe you if the threesome hadn’t happened. You were on Enid like white on rice. You said you were bisexual. I heard about you and Su. And that other chick you were with. She was always your endgame.”

Jagadamba puked again before responding.

She said with hurt feelings, “No. I hated her at first. She had what I wanted. You. I have never stopped wanting you. Don’t you get it. I have built my whole life around you. You got me sounding like Landslide. Fleetwood Mac. Not the Dixie Chicks.

But, it is true. Now, for the first time since I became your wife, I am asking you, my husband, my pati,” she paused.

He knew what the word meant in Punjabi because Jayne called Bushrod that.

She continued, “Do this one thing just for me and only me. Don’t make me go home right now. Let’s stay here.”

Remembering the Punjabi word for wife, he said, “You are my patni, my wife. I know that. And I want you to be happy.”

Seeing what he thought was a window of opportunity. He continued.

“I will move here on one condition. You agree to keep the twins.”
Rick finally accepts his grandfather status by getting to know Enid and Carly Jayne better. Carl and Michonne come home.

New ally is introduced and Enid demands the truth.

Thirty hours ticked away. The Sergeant left by himself a day before, leaving Michonne, Jagadamba and Carl behind.
A, he missed Sasha something fierce.
B, Rick needed to know the situation they had on their hands with Priyanka and why the other three had not returned. Both Carl and Jagadamba asked Abraham to stay mum about the shooting.
This of course sent Rick seething but he knew he had to smart about it.

Relations with the Pharaohs was already tense because they are expecting and preparing for a war with Negan while the Alexandrians were not.
Add what some believed to be their leader’s suspicious absence and her supposed marriage and pregnancy by his son, many Pharaohs were looking to Priyanka and Bigelow, Achilles, Boyardee and even young Tomeka for guidance. Rick knew they took Jagadamba seriously but now he knows much.

On top of that, he found himself missing her. He didn’t think he would. But, she reminded him so much of his dear friend. Despite it all, he did love her and his son chose her. He needed to convince his newly minted daughter to come home.

However, it was important to him to wait out those three days. He still had a point to prove.

So, he took this time to better know Tomeka, Ana and Marco but especially Carly-Jayne and Enid. He invited them to spend the night.

Maggie, Glenn and Daryl were also there.
So far, it had been slow going.

“So, what about that freak wind storm yesterday? It made a mess up the road,” Glenn said attacking his sloppy Joe.

“It was tornado. It missed us somehow. I hope J.B. And Carl are okay,” Tomeka said purposely not acknowledging Michonne.
“I am sure they are fine. Tomorrow if they aren’t back by midday, I am going to get them,” Rick said picking at his food.

“Tomorrow is her birthday, right?” Maggie asked more or less done with her sandwich and eyeballing Rick’s and Glenn’s. She was seated between them.

Rick nodded.

“Tomorrow is Momma’s birthday? My birthday is June two-seven. Papa has my birthday, too. He said I was his gift. So, I said he was my present.”

“Ah. How sweet,” Glenn said smiling.

“Who knew Carl was sentimental? Corny-ass,” Maggie giggled.
“I know he is,” Rick almost lamented.

Rick quickly snapped out of it.

He asked Enid, “Where are you from originally?”

“Nashville. I was born there. When I was nine, we moved to Memphis to be closer to the hospital. I got sick. Leukemia.”

Rick frowned and asked “St. Jude?”
“And Ronald McDonald House.”
“When did you get better?” Rick asked.
“At eleven.”
Feeling left out and more than a little dejected about not having him all to herself anymore Tomeka interjected, “I am from Memphis.”
The night before she spent the night in Carl’s old room.
All the while fantasizing the elder Grimes was younger or she older and how great they would be together. After all, they shared the same sense of humor, casted a dark eye at the same bullshit. Both discovered they had an unnatural love for Glen Campbell.
“Only thing I liked about my father was his taste in music. He listened to everything. And he knew how to keep people happy when he wanted to. And he was smart. Truth is the truth. And you know what else?” she said.
His face asked what.
She said, “Glen Campbell is alive somewhere.”
“He most certainly is,” Rick laughed.
Most of all he spent time with her. Watching the whole first season and half the second with her in one sitting.
He said, “I fear I have known far too many Killer Bobs and Jacques Renaulds in my day. Just violent for the sake of violence. Not defending themselves or anyone else. No rhyme. No reason. Just cause. Stupid, arbitrary evil.”
“The Claimers, the Governor. The Vatos. Uh, the cannibals at Terminus. Galen the music director. I eavesdrop on Carl and J.B.”
“You do that a lot. Eavesdrop?”
“Not to you,” Tomeka said grabbing his wrist before shyly letting it go.
“I would never do anything against you,” she finished.
Back to dinner.
“So, Enid, when is your birthday?” Rick asked.
“September eleventh,” she winced.
“Oh, damn. Sorry,” he replied.
Tomeka asked, “What bad happened on September eleventh?”
Rick commented, “You are truly brand new.” After explaining to the twelve year old what it was, she dryly replied, “Most people would give their left butt cheek for that to be their biggest problem.”
“Don’t be flip. 9/11 was a nightmare. A precursor to this if anything,” Rick said.
“Sorry. I was only six when the world did what it is doing. I am doing the best I can with the little information I got. Until two years ago. I couldn’t even read or write that well. I was in kindergarten when it happened. Jagadamba and Priyanka took the time to teach me,” she did not want him to think badly of her.
Twenty minutes passed. As they cleared the plates, Rick took four shots of whiskey to loosen up and not be shy.
He pulled Enid aside and inquired, “Why do you want this child?”
“It is mine. I don’t care if your son wants it or not.”
Rick grinned at her and said softly, “I see why he loves you. You are strong. I am glad it is you. And I look forward to getting to know you.
And I am sorry about this whole Jagadamha business. You deserve better than how my son has treated you. I didn’t raise him to be like this.”
“Carl does what he wants bar none. And you are wrong. Carl doesn’t love me.”
“Sure, he does. He told me so.”
“Trust me. He saves his love for his two unicorns,” Enid felt a little abandoned and a little bitter at the moment.
Rick felt badly for her and assumed she meant mother and daughter. Not niece and aunt.
Determined not to be the bad guy, “I know things seem shitty and unfair. How about this? We help each other get through it. I am here for you. You here for me?”
“Yes, sir,” she nodded before bursting into tears. He hugged her. Which made her cry harder because, “You smell like him and feel like him, too.” He sat her down. She said, “I know this is hard on you, too. I can imagine how hard it was to hear about me and her.” “It is what it is. I am going to the Hilltop tomorrow. I want you to come with. See how its doing.” “Okay.” Enid had came in there angry and a little reluctant. She expected him to be gruff, judgmental and stubborn based off past behavior and Carl’s reaction to him a couple days before. She was surprised to find him generous and kind if not a little sad. “Thanks, Mr. Grimes, for not being a dick about this. It is hard enough.” “I have never been in the business of making shit worse. Except when I do.” They shared an awkward laugh. “You are so much like Carl. Or he is so much like you. When he isn’t being a flaming asshole.” Rick said with a smirk, “He gets his never satisfied, curiosity, flaming assholism-I love the way you phrased that by the way- from his mom. And his hair and his nose and pretty pink lips, his cleft from her, too. His whole body except for his eyes and the obvious. He gets that from me,” he said making a sly dick joke. Catching on, Enid said, “A huge ego? Definitely got that from you. I remember Jesse and Pete.” “Whoa. You are savage, Ms. Savage. Carl likes the fact you are mean. Now, he definitely gets that from me. Something about a mean, pretty woman.” Enid blushed. Relaxed, Rick was an effortless flirt. He would flirt with a lamppost if the light hit him just right. Nobody ever discussed it but they knew Rick was handsome borderline beautiful even when he had the axe murderer beard. Nobody follows a tree frog. Even Charlie Manson wasn’t hideous. They talked awhile longer before she parted for the night. parting for the night Glenn, in big brother mode followed Enid while Maggie, in little sister mode remained with Rick. She asked Rick, “Are you all right?” “I will be.” “Carl has three kids on the way. Mind,” she made an explosion mouth noise then finished, “Blown.” “I definitely got one. From what Abraham told me, Jagadamba is in bad shape. The twins may not make it.” “Her morning sickness? She tried to hide it by saying she had irritable bowel but I know resting puke face when I see it. Besides. She is putting on. She wants those babies. She is crazy in love with Carl.” “I don’t know. Carl claims he is ready. Which is testament to how ready he ain’t. He is out to prove something to me, himself, everyone. He is overcompensating.” “His eye?” “That is only a small part of it. It runs much deeper. I can’t quite figure what. Or maybe I don’t want to. I don’t know,” Rick pouted. “Michonne,” Maggie paused before taking a long sip of water. Rick replied, “I have thought about that but.“ “What are you talking about? I was going say I wonder what she thinks of all this?” “Same as me mostly. But, she supports them. Tells me I should, too. I am trying. I am. I just want my little boy back. I know I told him I saw him as a man but I never meant it. I just wanted him to know I trusted him.” “In that case, trust him now. Are they young? Yes. But, things aren’t like before. How old is seventeen really? He has almost died twice. If anything, he is feeling his mortality. He is having sex with two girls. Married one. He just doesn’t want to be alone. You have someone. Whatever you do, Carl wants to do it, too. He loves you and you are all he has to go on.” “He is more like Lori than not.”
“He is defiant. All over the place.”
“Selfish.”
“Of course, he is. Teenaged boy. But, up until now, he has kinda been a saint all things considered.”
“What about him and your sister?”
“I only cared because. Hell. I don’t know why I cared now. I was doing worst than that when I was their age.”
“I can imagine you being a little hellcat,” Rick half smiled.
Glenn had long told him how Maggie seduced him.
“Let me put it to you this way. This is not my first pregnancy. Just the first one I decided to keep.”
Rick had no judgement.
“Abe told me Jagadamba is on the fence,” Rick said.
“Can’t blame her. Priyanka does not deserve to be called sister. So fucked up. What are we going to do about Priyanka?”
“I want to throw her out on her ass. But, Achilles would probably be right behind her. And she’d go right to Negan if you believe Jagadamba. So, no there. Besides, it would have to be her who punishes her sister. The Pharaohs still respect Priyanka. We have enough problems. No need for division.”
“True. We could throw her in the jail. Put the mouth out on her. Turn them against her. Does Tomeka know? That girl could get the word out. All you got to do is tell her to.”
“True.”
“She likes you, you know.”
“Tomeka? Nah. She’s looking for a father figure.”
“That may be true to certain extent. I bet Carl was looking for a mother figure with Michonne but that doesn’t stop him from crushing on her. Is that what you were talking about?”
“Yes. What if all this is some backhanded attempt to impress her and show her that he is a man?”
“That would explain why he is so gung ho about Jagadamba. She is Michonne lite. Same eyes. Both wear pain I hope never to know.
But, I thought Carl knew J.B. first. Childhood sweethearts and all.”
“They were.”
“Then why do you think this is about Michonne?”
“He confessed to being in love with her last month. Said it broke his heart when we got together. I asked Michonne did she know. Said he tried to kiss her almost a year ago. She shut him down. That is one of things I love about her. She loves Carl and Judith like she birthed them. I trust no one the way I trust her. No offense.”
“None taken. You have a lot on your plate. Trying to cope with something huge. You are about to be a grandpa. You are just looking for all the reasons why. No matter how ridiculously paranoid. Like you said, she shut that shit down.”
“Yeah. But, he doesn’t know how to take no for answer,” Rick said feeling a bit touched in the head for even considering this scenario.
“He gets that from you. And besides if you are that concerned, why send them off alone? Where they going to fuck? The backseat, in an open field, up against a tree? They wouldn’t hurt you or J.B. like that.”
“You are right.”
“Damn right. You need some sleep and then you will be right as rain and whatever other cliché I can’t think of right now.”
“Aye, aye,” he laughed.
Ten hours passed.
Rick did indeed wake up in better spirits.
Wanting to try it on for size, at breakfast, he told the little blonde to, “Call me Grandpa,” he said.
Carly-Jayne asked, “Why, Mr. Rick?”
He replied, “You know how Carl is your Papa?”
She nodded.
“See, I am Carl’s papa. So, that makes me Grandpa.”

Carly-Jayne hit her hand to her forehead and gave him an incredulous face.

“I knew that. I wanted to see if you knew that, grandpa,” she said smiling.

Rick guffawed.

“You are your mommy’s child. I knew her when she was your age.”

“Now you are telling a story. My Momma was never my age. She has always been a big girl,” she shook her head at Rick like he was a dumb puppy.

“Yep. Definitely her child,” he recalled having an almost identical conversation with Jagadamba when she was that age about her parents.

Rick, Aaron, Tomeka, Enid and Carly-Jayne were preparing to head out to the Hilltop while Denise, Rosita and Daryl were getting preparing to go the pharmacy.

Eugene and Abraham were already out on their own mission to the armory.

Rick had his step- granddaughter on his hip. He had left his own toddler with Olivia.

He was putting her in her car seat when he saw a brown sedan come through the gate. It was Carl and Michonne.

He was relieved for a millisecond thinking he could put the hassle of going to the Hilltop off for a couple days until he realized it was not Jagadamba in the back. It was someone he never seen before.

Goddamn it. Always some shit, Rick thought.

Carl had been driving. He stepped out first. He rolled his eye at his father and slammed the door.

“Carl, where is Jagadamba?” Rick asked.

Feeling particularly nasty, “What the hell do you care? You are the reason why she is still there in the first place. Where’s C.J.?”

Rick looked around then said, “You must be speaking to the guy behind me. There is no fucking way my son would talk to me like that. Slow your roll or I will do it for you.”

“You gonna send me to my room? I don’t live there anymore. Tell me I can’t see my girlfriend? She dumped me. My wife hates me at the moment and more determined than ever to kill my babies. And don’t even get me started on Michonne. So, there is like literally nothing you can do to me right now other than kick me in the balls, shoot my other eye out or maybe chop off my arm. Or not let me see Carly-Jayne. Where is she?”

Inside the trailer, Carly-Jayne heard his voice and looked out her window and saw Carl. She climbed out backwards and ran to him.

“Papa,” she exclaimed happy to see him for first time in two days.

He was just as happy to see her.

“Hey, gift,” he kissed her cheek.

“Hey, present,” she kissed his cheek.

When he gave her a bath two days before, he said, “You know since we have the same birthday and since I am older- that makes you the best gift I ever got?”

She blushed so hard, she hid her faces in her hands.

Muffled, she said, “I am?”

“Yes.”

She removed her hands and said, “Momma said a gift is a present. So, that makes you a present.”

Back to now, the little girl asked frowning, “Where’s Momma? Grandpa said we were coming to get you guys. But, you are here. You tolded me you would bring her back.”

Carl told an old fashioned half truth, “Momma felt too sick to come home. But, she wanted to see you. We were coming to get you.”

“Oh. I want my Momma. I miss my Momma. I want my Momma, not you,” she jumped out his arms and to the next best thing her great aunt.

She didn’t like his answer and she really wanted her mother.

This made Carl feel like a liar and a little rejected but he caught on to something.

“She said Grandpa. Dad, she called you grandpa,” he looked shocked.

“She calls you papa. Since you gave Jagadamba my, our last name, her calling me Mister Rick is downright inappropriate. Don’t you think?” Rick said proudly feeling like the bigger person.
“So, you accept her as my wife?”
He involuntarily shuddered but said, “Yes.”
They hugged tightly.
“I love you, son. I want you to be happy,” this he meant with all his being.
“I wish. Even C.J. hates me right now.”
“No one hates you. What happened?”
“I don’t want to talk about it,” Carl pulled away.
Rick respected his wishes then said, “I was coming to get you three. Abe told me what happened.”
“I figured. We left about an hour or two after him and would have been back yesterday but that freak tornado stranded us. We spent the night together in what we thought was an abandoned house until Sister Elliott came in at dawn.”
Rick ignoring the phrase, ‘We spent the night together,’ asked, “Sister Elliott? That’s the woman in the car with Michonne? She used to be a nun?”
Carl laughed.
“Uh, no. Sister is as far from a nun as one gets. But, yes. Jesus was with, him, her. I am not sure what pronoun Elliot goes by. But, Jesus went home first or wherever the hell creepy, ninja dudes go. Jesus is a great big homo by the way. Elliot used to be a dude apparently and he and Michonne went to school together. Used to be besties or some shit,” Carl said showing his nuanced teenaged boy sensitivity.
“I figured that out the first day I met him. And gay would have sufficed. Don’t talk like that in mixed company.”
“My bad. Chill,” he yawned.
“What did you and Michonne argue about?”
Deciding to use the most loaded words he could muster, he said, “Our positions. On Jag, you. Why I got married in the first place. How our relationship has changed. She took Jag's side instead of mine. Shit like that.”
Everything out of Carl’s mouth and not mention his body language, it was as if his whole body was smirking about Michonne and him. It gave him the wiggins.
However, his mind nor his heart wanted to take the time to suss that shit out.
Carl continued, “So, needless to say, I didn’t get much sleep last. Neither did she. I am going to sleep. I know it is Jag’s birthday but I doubt she wants to see me at the moment. Besides, I already gave her a gift.”
Rick thought, I hope to God, he is not talking about his sperm. I know raised him better than that.
Carl explained, “One afternoon, I was out in the woods and low and behold I found this dark blue duffle. I opened it. It was full of jewelry. Daryl was with me. Apparently, he used to fence jewelry among other things. It was all real. Worth hundreds of thousands of bucks. There was a platinum wedding ring set that happened to fit us both. I got mine on. See,” Carl had it around a silver chain around his neck. He wasn’t going to put it around his finger until she did.
“I gave her hers and this three karat ruby and pearl ring. Ruby because her family and pearl because it is her, our birthstone. I was going to do it today over dinner but that is not going to happen,” Carl looked like he wanted to die a little.
“When did you find the jewelry?”
“About three weeks ago. And so what? Is that all you got from the conversation, Dad?”
Rick grabbed him by the shoulder and said sincerely, “I am sorry about you and Jag. This is just your first grown up fight. It will work out. You will see,” he said.
Rick could not understand why Carl was being so sour with him as if to accuse him of it being his fault.
Carl hunched and said, “I know she calls you grandpa now but I still find it hard to believe you care. I know on some level you are pleased she dumped me. That she’s getting the abortion. This is exactly what you wanted to happen. So, smile, Dad, you win. Like always,” he said looking pointedly right at Michonne then back at his father.
“Carl-"
“I am taking a nap.”
Fed up with his son’s petulance, he stepped in front of Carl and said, “You can take a nap on the way to the Hilltop. You going to go see your wife and we are bringing her home.”
“But—
“No buts. You thought this marriage thing was easy? You saw me and your mom. You know it is not.
You married her. And it’s her birthday. You don’t get to be mad at her on her birthday. You can be pissed all you want once that clock strikes midnight. You got more jewelry, right?”
Carl nodded.
“Go pick her something or five of something. Women like shiny things. Enid, too.”
“You don’t understand. She is so-
“Let me guess. Unreasonable?”
“Yes! There is no middle ground with her. She is unreasonable.”
“First of all, please tell me you did not call your pregnant, seventeen year old wife unreasonable out loud. Where she could hear you. Son, really?” Rick was genuinely disgusted with Carl.
Michonne interjected, “He did. I overheard him.”
He rolled his eyes at Michonne but admitted, “I may have let it slip. But, Dad.”
“But, nothing. You married that girl. You owe her. Just like she owes you. It is her birthday. Without this day, she literally would not be in your life. I am not going to be the type of in law that allows his son to treat someone’s baby girl like shit. And you never call a woman unreasonable, I don’t care how wrong she is.
Speaking of which, remember Enid? You haven’t even asked about her and you know she’s having your baby. I invited her over for dinner last night. She thinks you don’t love her. Said you saved all your love for your unicorns. I figured you would know what that meant. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. The way you have treated her.”
Carl's basic good nature took over for a minute. He felt beyond guilty.
“Where’s she?”
“The RV.”
“Before I forget, did Carol make Jagadamba's cake. I asked her to. Last week.”
“Has Carol ever let you down?”
“No.”
“She not going to start now. She brought it over this morning.”
With tears on his eye, Carl said, “Jagadamba really dislikes herself and I don’t know what to do about it. She actually thinks I am ... better than her. I am not. I am so not. She’s broken and I don’t know how to fix her.”
Rick wanted to say, you are too but instead said, “You can’t think that about her. See her as a car that just got a little dinged. With a little tlc, she will be all right,” Rick said.
Michonne added, “It is like I said to you earlier. You would not exactly be on Team Self if you found out your sister, someone you deeply admired not only orphaned you, basically raped you and murdered your child. That is so unnatural and horrific, there is no word for losing a child.”
Carl wanted to sneer at Michonne but refrained. He was deeply frustrated with her at the moment. She avoided looking at him.
Rick looked at them both and felt the tension. He knew something between his girlfriend and son had fundamentally changed. He damn near wanted to point blank ask them but decided against it. His mother had always told him never ask a question if you aren’t ready for the answer.
Instead, Rick took a deep breath and told Carl, “Go get yourself cleaned up. You smell like a bear.”
Carl scoffed but obeyed.
Meanwhile, Rick walked over to Michonne who still had a forlorn Carly-Jayne in her arms. She reached out for Rick. He accepted her. He kissed her forehead.
“I want my Momma, Grandpa. Let’s go get her,” she said lying her head on his shoulder.
“We will, baby. Hey,” he said smiling at Michonne softly and reaching for her with his free arm. They hugged and shared a deep but tongueless kiss.
When they separated, there stood Elliot blushing and grinning. She held out her hand to Rick. He took it. “You must be Rick. Goddamn. Homegirl did not elaborate on the extent of your handsomeness. All blue-eyed, curly haired and bowlegged and shit. You rocking that beard,” she batted her lashes. Rick blushed. Elliot was very attractive. She also bore a striking resemblance to fallen friend. She looked around and saw Glenn, Aaron, Bigelow, Achilles, Tobin and especially Daryl - all spread out and said, “Shiiiiti. So, this is where the handsome men are. Even the sullen one eyed boy is a hottie when he manages not to scowl.” “He is my son,” Rick said with a weary sort of pride. Elliot rolled her eyes at Michonne and said, “Carl is the fruit of your looms? Michie did not tell me that.” “Yes, I did. You were too busy living in the mirror to hear what I had to say.” “It is not my fault God made this perfection. I am Sister Elliot or Ellie. Just don’t call me by my slave name Derwin. Or it or lady boy or faggot and we will no problems. Oh, I can stand he-she in certain instances.” “I will call you, Elliott, Elliott. A friend of Michonne’s, is a friend of mine,” Rick smiled. Elliot smiled back and said, “I need to ask Michonne a quick question in private. The baby girl is gorge by the way. She yours?” She asked Rick. “Yes. Carly-Jayne is my step-granddaughter. I also have a little girl of my own. A little younger. Her name is Judith.” “She is my great-niece. My niece married his son. They were childhood sweethearts. Got separated for five years. Got back together.” “Married. To. Your. Niece? How quaint. So, Carl is your nephew,” Elliot said bucking her green eyes at Michonne. “In-law. We had a mother son thing,” had was a Freudian slip. “So, did Oedipus and Jocasta,” Elliott said under her breath keenly aware of Michonne and Carl's status as lovers. Rick didn’t hear but interjected, “Carl and his wife had their first real fight. He is projecting. They have the same beautiful dark eyes and basic attitude. Same built. Except Jagadamba is short and more buxom like Jayanthi, her mother.” Jayne was short for Jayanthi which meant victory. Jagadamba was an offhanded junior. Elliot liked Rick immediately and did not want to burst his bubble. Taking the opportunity to flirt, Elliot said, “That’s it. I just love being set. . . straight. Goddang, you fine. If things don’t work out. I am a woman in full if you catch my drift.” “And airless room would catch your drift. I got all the woman I need right here,” he kissed Michonne again. During this time, Enid left the RV. She was in it by herself. “What is going on? Are we going to the Hilltop or not? Where is Carl? And who the hell are you?” Enid asked feeling pissy. Rick answered, “Yes. He’s at his house showering. This is Sister Elliot.” Elliot held up her hand to shake hers. Enid scoffed and went toward Carl’s house. “Nice girl,” Elliot said frowning. Enid knew about the spare key under the gnome. She let herself in. She went up the stairs and opened his bedroom door. He was there wet and naked. She startled him. He is so hot, she thought. He was clearly thinking the same thing when she noticed him getting at an erection as he looked at her. “You look good,” Carl said not trying to hide it. “I don’t know whether to be insulted or flattered. Cover that thang up. I am mad at you. You didn’t even come see me when you returned. Asshole.”
“I didn’t think you would want to see me. No one else does. Even C.J. is mad at me,” he pouted. “She misses her mom. Don’t make it about you.”

“Why does everyone keep saying that?” He said zipping up his pants. “Because you have turned into a real selfish jerk. You think no one but yourself lately. Why is that?”

“I don’t know. I believed my hype, I guess. I had two beautiful girls vying for my attention. Three if you include my daughter. It is an ego thing. For a minute there. I had everything most people want- a family of my own. And now it’s all shot to shit. I am alone again.”

Enid wanted to feel sorry for him. However, she couldn’t quite arrive there. She laughed.

“Enid, I am serious. I know I am not your boyfriend anymore but damn.”

“You really believe that? You are my boyfriend but so is Bigelow. And you don’t have the right to say boo about it.”

Carl sucked his teeth and said, “Fine. How is our little one doing? Giving you any trouble?”

“Fuck you. You don’t get to deflect. Let alone use our child to do it. I heard about your wife. Tommie heard Abraham tell Rick. Who is really a nice guy by the way.”

“Abe?” Carl asked yawning.

“Your dad, dipsh-”

“I know who you meant. He’s ah-ight in small doses.”

“You are even talking like her. I overheard you being too harsh on your dad. Not his fault you can’t deal. What happened between you and Lady Dumb Name Grimes?”

“Her sister is what happened. She ruined everything. Jagadamba wants to abort our babies cause she poked holes in our rubbers. She said she slept with me the first night because she felt obligated. Not because she wanted to. She says I took advantage of her.”

“You did. You took advantage of both us that night. You could have stayed home and thus respected both our wishes. She told me she told you that she didn’t want to fuck you that night even though she wanted to.”

“Oh, come on. Really? It was your idea.”

“Again, fuck you. Don’t blame your sluttiness on me.”

“We both have other people. I never kept it a secret from you. Okay. I know I got married on you. I am sorry.”

“You are only sorry because it is not working out for you at the moment.”

“No. I am sorry cause I already had someone I loved who loved me back and I shit allover it, you, for something, someone who died a long time. She is not the same girl. Just like I am not the same boy. Boyardee was right. She was that last piece of my life before. But, it is dead and done. We were fools to think anything else. Maybe Jagadamba and I can be friends for Carly-Jayne’s sake. I made that little girl a promise. I can’t break it. Plus, she is that one slither of who her mother used to be. I can’t abandon her. She calls me papa and told me she loves me. That would fuck her up forever if I rejected her.”

“All that is noble and fair about C.J. You forget her mom is kinda a bitch on a good day. She’ll make C.J. hate you. But, I don’t think your fight is as bad as you think. The two of you will see each other and melt. You will angry sex and be just fine. We both know who you are really mad at. The reason why you so dead set on hooking up with Jagadamba and having her obey you in the first place after so much time.”

“Obey me? You got that twisted.”

“You gave your pregnant wife, an ultimatum about her body and sanity.”

“Abraham heard that?”

“Apparently.”

“It wasn’t an ultimatum. I told her I would stay with her at the Hilltop if she agreed to have the twins.”

“That’s the definition. And,” she walked up to him and slapped him. Hard.

“I know I deserve it. But, what for?”

“It is not my fault or Jagadamba’s that we aren’t Michonne. You punish us for it. You do.”
“I do not. That is bullshit. I am so over M-m-m-ich,” he choked on the words. He couldn’t even get her name out. Carl got up and went to the window to hide his tears. Instead, he ran into the last thing he wanted or needed to see. Enid was right behind him. Michonne and Rick were talking and kissing. He was audibly weeping. “Go ahead. Make fun of me. I am so stupid.”

“I saw you when you pulled up. I heard how you spoke to your dad. How angry you are. How hurt. That is how I feel about you and your wife. Betrayed. You and Michonne had sex.”

Carl didn’t say a word. “You gave her your name but I want something you can never give her and that is the truth. You owe me it,” Enid demanded.

Reluctantly, Carl told her tearfully, “After the third time, she told me we needed get it of our system and not to over think it. That we, uh, were lonely and vulnerable. And that we should leave it at that. Maybe now we can go back to being normal. Never in my life have I wanted to knock sense into another human being so badly.

Normal. How could she say that to me like nothing happened? Like it meant nothing to her. Like, I mean nothing to her. I was just a way to pass the time until we able to leave. I thought she-“

“I just wanted to know if you two horny goats crossed the Rubicon. I didn’t ask you to write me a Taylor Swift, John Mayor song. She hurt your feelings. Made you feel like she only wanted you for your eggplant. Can’t blame her since that is the only likable thing about you at the moment.”

“Enid. I know you hate me right now.”

“I don’t hate you, fool. I am angry. I am hurt. You misled me. You had no right to do that. And if it is sympathy you want, you are barking up the wrong tree. I am glad she used you. Glad. Sucks doesn’t?”

Carl could do nothing but pout and feel guilty. “We’re going to the RV. I don’t care if you join us or not. I want this kid for me. Not to keep you,” Enid walked away feeling better than she had in weeks.

Meanwhile, as Elliott pulled Michonne aside, Maggie got a good look at her. One could have knocked her over with a feather. Teary-eyed, she said, “She looks an awful lot like-"

“Beth,” Glenn said.

Elliott felt eyes on her and turned to catch the them. She harrumphed. When she saw Daryl, she smiled. The little boy in him frowned and shyly returned to his house. Satisfied with their distance, Elliott said, “Girl, I am going to tell you like you told me during every away game in soccer. Dicks are not Pokémon. You don’t have to catch them all. I mean gotdang. Father and son? Have to lost your mind? Are you really that bored?”

“I am not bored. I love them both. I know could have stopped it from happening. I didn’t want to. I won’t let it happen again.”

“Young, virile cock you can train. Okay, sure. I remember being his age. I could go all night if I wanted to. Admit it, you turned him out.”

She turned her head to conceal a coy smile. She then said, "I am not going to excuse myself. It is wrong. But-"

“You know everything before but is bullshit, right?”

“I told you that. I am just asking you to keep your promise,” she turned back around.

“We have kept each other’s secrets since forever. I am still your best friend. Nothing on Meryl Streep's green is going to stop that now.”

“Meryl Streep?”

“How many times I got to tell Meryl is God? Can’t no mere mortal be that awesome.”

They laughed.

I just want you to be careful. This shit isn’t just bad, it is Bold and the Beautiful Brooke fucking Eric
and Ridge bad, it is old Testament Bible bad. Fine ass needs not know about you and his son. Neither does your niece.
I gotta admit. I do miss soap operas. This is definitely that. I am curious about how this going to turn out.”
“This is my life. Not entertainment for you. I know how badly this can go, Elliott.”
Elliott shook her head and said, “I don’t think you do.”
The Kids Are Not Alright

Chapter Summary

The group continues to press Priyanka.
Carl confronts Rick and makes no apologies.
Jagadamba has a run in with the Saviors.

Carl stood there and processed what he had heard.
He said to his mother in law, “You know this changes nothing. You are still a horrible, miserable bitch. Th-”
“Carl!” Rick didn’t like his language.
“Dad, seriously? I am a married man with children. I can say whatever as long it is not directed at you. Everything she did is foul.
And, Priya, this makes you the worst. You are her bio mom. You just didn’t drop the ball, you went skeet shooting with it, set it on fire and raped it with glass afterwards.”
“You don’t understand,” she insisted.
“Then make me,” Carl said.
“I was going to tell her the day she ran. Really. I have had this box ever since. I thought I was never going to see her again.
That was the worst thirteen months of my life. Then one day out of the blue while Achilles and I were walking down the road. Half dead, starving,” she said.
“Quit being dramatic and just get on with it,” Michonne said.
“She saw us on the road. The car stopped in front of us. She got out with C.J. in her arms. She was a little tiny thing then.
We were so glad to see her. I dropped to my knees and thank God. I am not very religious. Anyway, we get in the car. They introduce themselves. But, I had met the Daltons before at a cast wrap party years ago. I immediately remembered their father. That flaming piece of shit. I thank them for taking care of her. I tell Boyardee she has a lovely daughter.
Boy says she is not mine. She is my niece. So, I look at Bigelow. He shook his head no.
Then my tween says, she’s mine.
I am like, your what? 'Did you find her? Is she an orphan?'
Being a consummate smart aleck, she said, 'I found her in my womb. I had a baby,'
I broke down. I saw her blonde hair and I looked at Bigelow. Assumed the worst. I hit him and cursed him because she was only a child. She is still a child. He told me the situation. Jagadamba was too ashamed to tell me. She only said he hurt her and the baby was the result and that she felt stupid for running away. She has only recently been comfortable enough to talk about it freely.”
“She never told me any of this not even when I asked. But, it still doesn’t answer the question. Why haven’t you told her?” Rick asked.
“After everything she had already been through at the time, I thought it would have been too much to hear, bear. So, I kept my mouth shut.”
“It probably would have given her comfort. Not hurt her. She is not weak. She never has been. You don’t know her at all,” Carl sneered.
“You really don’t,” Michonne said.
“Fuck you,” Priyanka said.
Undeterred, Carl continued, “I know you know how she feels about being an orphan. She’s wounded by it. And you sit there, her so called mother and you let her suffer? Every time I think my
Dad is heartless bastard-"

“Carl, you got one more time to disrespect me today. I mean it. I do too much for you. I don’t deserve it.”

The young man turned his attention to his father and said with every ounce of righteous indignation he had, he said, “I really have tried to come to terms with it. The fact still remains you left my pregnant, battered wife to fend for herself at the very place where she was almost raped and murdered. Abraham was the only one of you willing to stay and try to protect her. You saw how beat up she was.

On top of that, you saw them and heard their heartbeats before I did. Shit, I still haven’t. How fair is that?”

“It was on her to tell you,” Rick said.

“But, she didn’t. You did, Dad. You never gave her the chance. I begged to go with you guys. You lied to me and said it was about my birthday. Which we have not celebrated in years by the way. It is absolutely your fault she found out, Dad. She could have lived her whole life and not known the truth.”

“I admit that I told her to stay. I did. I had my reasons. But, sooner or later this was going to come out. That’s not on me.”

Carl scoffed and clenched his fists.

He took a deep breath and said, “She was sadder and angrier than I ever seen her. Granted, I didn’t make it much better. I cop to that.

She was so paranoid when I opened the door without announcing myself that she grazed my shoulder.”

“She shot you?” Is all Rick heard.

Carl emphasized, “She only grazed me. It was an accident. If she had been a better shot, I could have died and that would have been your fault.

She could have been home with me celebrating the fact we made two people. Not hooked up to an iv hoping she were dead. That’s on you, too.

So, yeah. I see you as a heartless, selfish bastard.”

Rick angrily boarded the RV while Carl turned his attention back to Priyanka.

“And he is still better than you. At least, he didn’t rob me of my identity. Or put me off on my grandparents. No wonder they left all the time and made you look after her. They wanted you to raise your own kid. More than that, they didn’t pimp her out. That is what you did when you sold her Cort.”

“That is a misnomer. I didn’t sell her to him per se. I thought I was doing the right thing. And retrospect, if I hadn’t he would have murdered everyone who wasn’t her and made her marry him anyway. We were hungry and homeless when he found us. We had no real choices. So, I traded the most precious thing I have for the good of the whole.”

“For you. You did it for you. Don’t pretend to be all generous l with someone else’s ass. Why not sell yourself?”

She looked at him under eyed said, “I was not what he wanted.”

Carl sniffed, “So, you offered up your fourteen year old daughter instead? I would rather I die before I let that happen to Carly-Jayne or Judith. Better yet, kill the asshole who tried.”

“We did.”

“One forced marriage, a dead baby and a disfigured back later. And just like my Dad, you don’t have a scratch on you. It’s us kids that suffer for your horrible decision making. I take it back. You two do have a lot in common.”

On the verge of seventeen, this was the first time, he let himself feel anger, real wrath towards Rick. He realized his dad was not his end all, be all anymore. And mistakes were made.

He left her there and boarded the RV. Rick ignored Carl but his son rolled his eye at him.

Carly-Jayne walked up to Carl and apologized. Rick had told her to.

“I am sorry, Papa. I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings. I just want my Momma, too,” she said.

Carl quickly forgave her. She hugged his neck. He kissed her forehead.
“It’s okay, darling. You are free to have an opinion that doesn’t necessarily jive with mine as long as it will not hurt you. I know you are a person, too. You have feelings, too. And they matter to me,” Carl said looking right at Rick.
The elder Grimes scoffed and said, “You are gonna learn better.”
“Whatever,” Carl huffed.
Priyanka took a deep breath and followed her son in law.
Carl has always been such a little man. Since he was three. Old soul, she thought.
She was impressed by the fact that he stood up to her. She never had any ill will towards Carl.
As she boarded, Michonne stopped her with a tirade.
“You make me sick. I literally feel nauseous looking at you. She deserves so much better than you. She had it with my brother. You took it from her. And Achilles. He doesn’t know. Oh, god. He has no clue.” She realized.
“It is not as cut and dried as you make it out to be,” Priyanka groaned.
“It kind of is. You have lied to her whole life. Literally, her whole life. I want to know why. And none of your long-winded bullshit or British-isms. Why did you dump Nim so cruelly? Did he know about Jagadamba?” Michonne asked.
“I don’t owe you an explanation. I owe her one. I said all I am going to say about it until we get there.”
Rick chimed, “That was not going to fly. You are not going anywhere near her until you answer some questions.”
Priyanka knew she could not talk her way out of this one. She had to comply.
“This is private. I want to be the one who tells her the truth,” she had to try anyway.
Rick asked, “Why did you lie?”
“I wanted my daughter all to myself. I was fed up with sharing,” that was true.
“So, you thought about what you wanted and not what she needed. Typical,” Michonne said.
“I only thought of her.”
“Explain Cort,” Rick said.
Priyanka let out a frustrated yell.
“It was the biggest mistake I ever made. Okay? I can’t undo it. I can’t bring my grandbaby back. It is my fault. I gave her the shitty genes and that is why she had a deaf son. So in that sense, I killed Mohinder.
Nimrod’s death is my fault, too. Only way, I could keep my baby was if I dumped him. My mum made me. I had never seen her so angry and it was directed towards me. I was fourteen and I was terrified. Told me I was a disgrace and an embarrassment. And a stupid whore. All the while, she, a married woman fucking a patient’s husband. That is how they met. Loveness survived breast cancer and double mastectomy. Needed corrective surgery. They fell in love, they said,” she said mockingly before resuming.
“So, yes, he knew about her. Mum made me tell him I had miscarried. It was too much rejection. He hung himself.”
Michonne said bitterly, “I found him the next day.”
“I found out later that it was Bushrod’s idea for us to break up. As you recall, Bush was his legal guardian. Said he didn’t want Nim to ruin his future with a baby. So, imagine his dismay at his death. They were going to give my baby away until that happened. Then my mother decided to hide my pregnancy by sending me to live my Muslim aunt and uncle. in California.”
“Muslim?” Rick asked trying to recall if he ever remembered Jayne talking about that. He did. He snapped his fingers.
“Her deaf twin brother converted,” he said.
“Her changed his name from Sandeep to Rami. He and aunt Khadijah were hard on me. Like you are going to hell and Allah hates you hard. They constantly punished me. While in the meantime, my mother fakes a pregnancy. She claimed she did it to protect me and my inheritance. It was all about her reputation and ego.
She leaves my father and he commits suicide in front of her. My papa didn’t know I was pregnant. I was too ashamed to tell him. He worshipped me.”
Priyanka scanned the crowd to see if the audience was softening.
Everyone was pretty stoic.
She took a deep breath and resumed speaking, “My only soft place was cousin Siddiq. He was a little older by a few months. Treated me like human being. Another teenager. He gave me hope. Even named Jagadamba. He said her being born out of so much adversity is the victory of good against evil. That is what her name means. It’s a lot of name. But, I like it. Sid said, it wasn’t so much a name as a snide remark against our folks.
So, Michonne, I understand why you hate me if that is what Nimrod did for you; I am really, really sorry for the part I played in his death. I know that means next to nothing to you.”
“Means more than you think. I never thought you cared.”
Priyanka hunched.
“Anyway, her birth was daunting. Took a day and half. She didn’t cry. She looked annoyed. Sweetest little face. Beautiful little biter. She hasn’t really changed in the face. She’s a little taller, has teeth, big tits and all that black hair. Same face. She even makes the same expression when she farts.
So, anyway, they adopted Jagadamba out of guilt. Bushrod’s said the least he do was see after his cousin’s child.
So, yes, I wanted my daughter. I still do. And yes, I am a selfish coward.”
Rick said, “There is no arguing with you there. That doesn’t explain the condoms. Or how you reacted to Dare.”
“First of all, it’s called post-partum depression, Tom Cruise.
And I sabotaged those condoms for two reasons- I wanted to ensure my children and granddaughter had a permanent residence.
I knew Jagadamba would not agree to it outright because she is well, not evil or conniving as me. I have no delusions about who I am. I am the villain. Rick, I know even preachy yet coldhearted and gullible you won’t throw away the mother of your grandchild.”
“You don’t know me. What I have done or sacrificed, what we have done or sacrificed. You-"
“We have all made sacrifices. What do want a cookie?
Lori cried about you to me many a time. You are just as much a villain as I am. You are in denial about it.”
Carl smirked. It was nice to hear someone not kiss his dad’s ass. Even Jagadamba was more complimentary of Rick than not.
“Now who’s doesn’t know shit? Rick will never be like you. He actually cares about other people,”
Michonne grumbled not willing to deal with Priyanka's truth about her brother’s role in her cousin’s death.
“I tell you all the truth and all you can do is make fun of me because you don’t like me. Pathetic. The whole lot of you. Except Carl. I get his anger at me. His family is at stake. If I hadn’t done what I did, they never would have ever been apart. I didn’t realize it then but he’s her Nimrod. Her perfect imperfect boy.
“I still love Nim. She has his eyes. His cleft. And smile and goofy ass laugh really. He sounded like a tiny Japanese princess. Hell, she even has his ginger allergy. She talks and thinks like him. Not Bushrod. Granted, he did raise Nim. So, she is like Bushrod, I guess,” she was thinking out loud more than talking to them at this point.
She digressed.
She continued, “That’s the second reason why. I wanted her to have what I didn’t have with her father. A chance to be a real family with the man she loves,” Priyanka’s voice broke and tears as large as pears poured from her eyes.
Even Michonne could see the resemblance between mother and daughter.
Priyanka finished, “And if you judgmental, warmongering, idiot tyrants don’t understand that then you all can go the way of the dodo. I am too sad to be clever.”
She saw the bed in the back. She gave Enid her son and laid down in the fetal position. She wept.
Still, Rick did not start the vehicle. He half believed her, half thought she was acting. Jag got her talent from someone, he pondered. Carl grunted. She mourned the same way Jagadamba did. It touched him. He didn’t think she was acting. And he knew how much his wife hated being an orphan. “Dad, let’s go. It’s okay. She needs to know. It might make help fill that hole in her heart.” “Or it might make it bigger. Some things should stay a secret,” Michonne said talking about more than just the obvious. Carl shook his head and said, “Not if it will help. You don’t know how hurt she is. Not really. I do.” Michonne replied, “I know you hurt her. And you are doing this out of guilt.” “Carl, what did you do?” Rick asked. Carl a deep breath, “We had an argument over Priya and not wanting to come home and not wanting our children. She talked bad about my eye. I said all the wrong things. I was angry and so was she. She said run home to daddy and I said. And I s-s-said. At least, at least I have one.” He had all the shame in the world on his face. Enid winced while the Rhees frowned at him. Tomeka rolled her eyes. Aaron didn’t react outwardly one way or another. He thought, She started it. He finished it. What’s the problem? Rick sucked his teeth and said, “I didn’t raise you to be like that. That was cruel what you said.” “I know. I tried to apologize before I left. She did not want to hear it,” Carl responded. “Can you blame her?” Rick asked. “Dad, you do not understand. I am not saying I was right. But, uh. You know what? That’s literally none of your business,” he said defiantly. “Excuse me?” Rick asked. “I got to pull rank here. She is my wife. She is my responsibility. She deserves to know who her mother is. We, you have no right to decide what her life is. Men have been doing that to her whole existence come to find out. Starting with Mr. Anthony. And for better and worse, much worse, Priya is her mother. So, Dad, I am coming to you man to man, please. And I am not apologizing. It would be a lie,” Carl’s civil tone betrayed the dead seriousness of his words. Rick did not move a muscle. Michonne laced her long, elegant fingers between his. They made eye contact and she silently told him to go. So, they went once again Rick proves his love and that he cares about what she thinks. And once again, she proved to be Carl’s sly dulcinea as they went their unmerry way. Meanwhile, Jagadamba had made a departure of their own. She woke up that morning feeling slightly less sick than usual. She missed Carly-Jayne something fierce. To boot she was also concerned for her oldest’s welfare since the tornado the day before. She also remembered Carl’s caveat promising to not bringing her daughter to see her. She believed him. Regardless, she had on her engagement and wedding rings. Jesus had offered to drive her but she insisted on doing it herself. “I have a lot to think about. And I need the time alone. Clear my head. Talk to my twinsies,” she rubbed her belly. Jagadamba had no real intention on getting an abortion. She just wanted to see if he would stand by her decision. She felt like he hadn’t. Jesus wished her a happy birthday. “How did you know?” She asked. “You were featured in the last issue ever of People Magazine. I read your profile over and over. As I did the whole magazine. It was all I had to read for awhile. June twenty-fifth, nineteen ninety-nine. You are seventeen. And you are one of the bravest women, I have ever met.” Jagadamba blushed then scoffed. “I am going to tell you like I told my husband. I am not brave. I am angry.”
Jesus shook his head and said, “You think Martin Luther King Jr wasn’t angry? Joan of Arc? Madonna? The actual Jesus. It is called righteous indignation. I have it, you have it in spades. Can’t change shit without it. You should give yourself credit. You and Carl have that bad. Neither of you have no idea how strong you are. You deserve each other. You are good kids. Well, adults.”
“I don’t know what to say. Thanks. I guess.”
“Are you sure you don’t want me to drive you? I don’t mind,” Jesus insisted.
Jagadamba reassured him.
“Doc Harlan gave me meds to take home. I am fine. Trust me, handsome.”
Jesus blushed. He would never admit it out loud but he was absolutely starstruck around who he secretly referred to as Jacie Tony in his head. He had always followed her career. His little sister was crazy about Mia Self and Ida. She died in his arms.
An hour down the road, she spotted an utility van on the path. There were four armed men. She knew right away they were a few of the Saviors.
She reprimanded herself, “When are you going to learn to stop wandering off by yourself, stupid woman?”
She intuitively and slowly drove a little further before taking the key out the ignition. She lied them on the dashboard. Her weapons were already in the passenger seat beside her. She said a little prayer. A verse from Deuteronomy, another three from Romans. She held her hands up and her head down. She believed God heard every syllable. Seconds seemed like an eternity as the men approached her vehicle. A young, ruddy man with a goatee and long chestnut brown hair opened her car door. She had on shades to cover her eye. He looked her up and down before instructing her to get out the car. She kept her hands up. The older bearded man who looked even more world-weary than most approached her. He looked inside the car and saw she had her weapons in plain view. He slightly smiled at this.
“You are smart. Negan likes smart. Remove your shades. I want to look in your eyes. See who you are. Windows and all,” he said sincerely.
She took her shades off revealing her still swollen eye. It was more open but still was deep shades of blue-green, purple. The man winced. The long-haired asshole saw it and said with a chuckle, “What happened? He punched you and it felt like a kiss?” Jagadamba did not respond. She the asshole wanted a response. She refused to give it to him. “I gotta search her,” he said wanting to touch her. “Jared, be gentle,” he said almost turning away.
“Come on. Look at her. She’s hot. Like even with a black eye. Those lips and tits alone,” Jared said grabbing at her hips and gyrating. Gavin pushed Jared away from her. “None of that shit on my watch. Besides, you know once Negan sees her, he will court her. Make her an offer that she can’t refuse. You don’t stand a chance. She will be wife number thirteen easy.” When Jagadamba heard this, she quietly went into panic mode. I am not going to be another man’s ego boost, she thought bitterly. Gavin patted her down. He went through her pocket and found the ultrasound. He knew how to read it. “Twins?” He asked. She nodded.
“I had twins before,” he looked melancholy for a moment. Then added, “Girls. Now all I have is him.” Jared replied, “Gee, Dad, I love you, too.”
“Boy, you know I do. I just wish you weren’t such an asshole.”
“I am not an asshole. I am Negan.”

She could tell by Gavin’s face he wanted to say, what’s the difference?

But, he instead spotted the rings on her left ring finger and declared, “I going to need to take those. In fact, I am going to need take everything you have. It belongs to Negan now.”

“Please, sir, take everything I have. Except my rings. My husband gave them to me for my birthday.”

Gavin took a deep breath then exhaled.

“I will let you keep them on one condition. Tell me the name of your community. I have never seen you as the Kingdom. You would be hard to miss.”

“I can’t tell you that,” she said.

Jared interrupted, “Let’s just take her back. She’s obviously an Alexandrian. We can rough her up and get the info.”

Gavin now exasperated with his crass son. Made a decision.

“I am not beating up a woman. Let alone a pregnant one. Go ahead go home.”

Jagadamba didn’t hesitate to get back into her car. She rolled the window down and told Gavin, “Thank you your mercy.”

Gavin leaned his head into her car and said, “My twins were crazy about you. They even had the dolls. And what I am showing you, isn’t mercy. I am simply delaying the inevitable. Way things are going, we will meet again soon enough. Now go.”

She sped away.
Carl decided to do all the things he knew Jagadamba liked. He shaved. Dressed in a red block plaid John Varvatos shirt that he tucked in. A black undershirt and jeans that actually fit. Put on a belt with a silver buckle. He put on the Kenneth Cole boots Jagadamba stole, sorry, commandeered from Jonathan. Reopened that pierced right ear with one of his wife’s real diamond earrings. Splashed on some Old Spice because she loved how it smelled for some reason. The smell always reminded him of the taste eggnog. He hated eggnog. Last but not least, he put his long, thick hair into a topknot. The one other time he done that the result was a twenty-four marathon of sex stuff. The whole time she insisted he looked like that. He looked at himself and smiled then began to scowl again. He was in no hurry to leave. And he knew Rick wasn't going anywhere without him. Carl did something he seldom ever did and that was feel sorry for himself. As he moped, the last person he needed to see slithered her ass outside. He saw Priyanka. She had her son in her arms. He honestly blamed her for Jagadamba's indecision and willingness to give up and be unhappy. He leapt from his chair, grabbed his weapon and decided to do something about it. When she saw Carl, she gave him a one thousand kilowatt smile. He had forgotten how very gorgeous Priyanka was. How much she looked like an older, fair Jagadamba. It almost disarmed him. “Allo, Carl. Are you okay?” He hunched. He wanted to see if she were capable of groveling. “You look so handsome. I can see your impending fatherhood laying on you. It suits you.” “I look like a hipster nightmare. I already have a daughter. What’s that in your hand?” He asked noticing the old caboodle box and running out of patience. She observed him cautiously. She knew he knew about the condoms. Achilles told her. Everyone who knew what Priyanka did to her mother and stepfather kept the information to themselves. They didn’t know that the night before feeling the tension and unable to sleep as a result, the Britisher went to Abraham and asked him about the state of Jagadamba. She replied, “It is a gift of sorts for her birthday.” “Hand it here. I will give it to her.” “I have to decline. This is something I should have done ages ago. Today being her birthday is a but of kismet actually. I am coming with.” Carl scoffed. “You don’t really think I am letting you anywhere near my wife? The shit you did. Seriously? The only reason why I have not pulled my revolver on you is because you have Dare in your arms. That is literally it.” “What I have done? Clearly, you hurt her, too. Because where is she? Seems to me we are in the same boat. And you are right. You do look like a hipster nightmare. Undo your hair and untuck your
He obeyed.
“Better?” He asked.

“Much. Now back our standoff. I am coming.”
“I wouldn’t. She is afraid she may have to kill you. I agree.”

“Why? What have I done to merit death? I poked holes in the condoms. True. You should be grateful. It was going to happen anyway. I upped the timetable.”

“You know goddamn well I’m not talking about that. Which by the way was a supremely shitty thing to do.

You lied about her parents, your mother making it back to Atlanta. Why? Why do you hate your sister so much?”

“Is that what she thinks? I could never hate her. I love her. I love her and I admit I am not the best at showing it. But, I would die for her in an instant. Live for her, too. Your dad and I have that in common.”

“My dad is nothing like you . . .”

As Carl and Priyanka went back and forth, near the gazebo, Abraham and Sasha informed Rick of the conversation they had with the ladder.

After ten minutes, Rick emerged from that flurry of information flabbergasted, disgusted but sympathetic towards . . . Priyanka.

His whole view of her changed. Mostly. He still saw her as calculating, just not malicious.

During this time, Michonne overheard Carl and her. She jumped in the conversation.

“Look, Priya, I know you think the whole world revolves around you. But, Jagadamba does not need to see you right now,” Michonne reprimanded.

“You have never liked me, Michonne. And I have never liked you. You always think you know it all. You don’t know shit.”

“I know you are the reason Nimrod killed himself. You’re the reason Mohinder is dead. You are poison.”

Priyanka reared at her and roared,

“What did you say to me, you stupid, Predator looking bitch?”

Before Michonne could speak up for herself, Carl got in her face and said, “You don’t fucking talk to her like that.”

And like that, he snatched her baby from her and pulled his gun on her. Dare began to wail.

Some stray Pharaohs saw this and were ready to jump to her aid. Priyanka told them to stand down.

“Give me back my baby. You have no idea who you are fucking with. I will hurt you, one eyed twat.”

“Neither do you,” Michonne warned.

“As that I am wide awake, it may be a touch more difficult to stab me in the head. Fucking cowards.”

“At least, I don’t let my sixteen year old sister do all the heavy lifting while I sit back in the cut macking on my stepbrother.”

Carl shuddered but Michonne did not flinch at her own hypocrisy.

“If you think Jagadamba executed or even came up with the idea to take down Cort all on her fifteen year old own at the time, you are even stupider than I previously imagined. And that’s a pretty daunting task. And testament to God’s Grace. Because that is the only reason why you assholes are still alive. . .”

Rick and Abraham noticed the commotion. They ran over.

“Carl, Michonne, stop,” Rick said.

Carl protested, “Dad, you heard what she did.”

“True. But, she may have had her reasons. Selfish, stupid, off the cuff, ungrateful reasons but reasons nonetheless. Give her back her son.”

Carl almost threw the baby at her.

She comforted him.
“Show Rick what you showed me,” Abraham said.
Priyanka passed him the caboodle box.
“I asked you for that first,” Carl said sounding more petulant than he meant to.
“I am not some little girl inexplicably enamored with you. I don’t answer to you, sunshine. I answer to him. For now,” she paused to see Rick’s what the fuck you mean expression.
She smirked then said, “Negan’s coming and he is going to wear your face as a hat.”
“I am glad I have your vote of confidence. What makes you so sure of your survival?”
“I have breasts and an accent and can suck the chrome off a bumper. I will be fine. Plus, I am something that you will never be.”
“What’s that?”
“Cautious. And smart.”
Rick sniffed at her. He opened the box.
Abraham said, “You were so humble this morning, Priya. You made me feel for you. What’s up?”
“I just got accosted by a child who I helped potty train and someone who thinks they know what’s up and severely does not. How in the hell would you feel if you were me, Abraham?”
“Fuck a baby duck. Not copasetic. That is for sure.”
“Abraham,” Priyanka began, “I love your sheer refusal to speak like a normal human being. I do. And I also dig how coiffed you are. Just because it is the end of the world does not mean we have to go around looking like a Mad Max extra or a runaway slave,” she giggled.
Abraham cracked a smile.
Knowing what he was after, Rick took the piece of paper and examined it carefully.
“Holy shit,” he proclaimed.
Priyanka turned to face Rick.
He asked, “Why have you waited so long?”
“Nerve. Or lack thereof. Fear of rejection. I feel such shame for ever agreeing to be apart of the ruse,” she replied honestly.
Rick handed the piece of paper to Carl.
He read it. He looked at her then the piece of paper then back at her.
Carl let out a mirthless chuckle.
“Am I being punked right now? This has to be a joke. No way this is true,” he passed the paper to Michonne.
Michonne exhaled and said in utter shock, “The birth certificate is real. My cousin Nimrod was the father and she is Jagadamba’s mother.”
Guttural

Chapter Summary

Carl and Rick have a verbal spat after the young man was rude to everyone in the RV.

Rick and Jagadamba make up. She also finds out about Priyanka.

Meanwhile an hour or so later, in the RV, Carl had taken possession of the caboodle box. He had been going through it and looking at photos of a pregnant fifteen year old Priyanka and subsequent ones with her in the hospital holding who he recognized to be a newborn Jagadamba. Her face really had not changed much. She still had an angelic thing going with her round eyes, full cheeks and lips. Her mother and stepfather had no clue she enlisted Siddiq to take pics as proof. He had kept them. It was only before he left with Jayne and Bushrod on their Doctors Without Borders mission that he gave them back to her.

Priyanka told him she was ready to tell her twelve year old daughter at the time the truth.

Next, a picture of a young, dark skinned black man with one arm and a big, exuberant, downright beautiful smile caught his attention.

It was the same as Jagadamba’s and Michonne's, C.J.’s, Achilles. Let’s just called it the Anthony grin- half smirk, half cheese, all easy charm. He knew it had to be his father in law, Nimrod. He bore and uncanny resemblance to Achilles. They looked so much alike it was creepy.

So, that is why Priyanka fell for him. It wasn’t with him at all. It’s all about Nimrod, Carl thought while he audibly said, “Hmmph.”

Carl turned his attention back to her birth certificate. He read her parents' names over and over.

Then he went back up to the name of the child.

“Alice? Jagadamba's a middle name?” Carl said in utter shock.

Priyanka spoke up, “Alice Jagadamba Boudica Richter. My mother wanted her to have a traditional Indian name. Alec was my Dad’s name; it was a dedication. It also means nobility in German. She dropped Alice when she adopted her. I think she did it just to be cruel.”

Maggie chimed, “She doesn’t even know her real fucking name?”

“I got to tell you, Priyanka,” Michonne began, “I never really liked your mom. There was always so totalitarian, unyielding about her. Phony. She was beautiful and smart. I see why Rod liked her. Sure all that money did not hurt.”

“I am sure it didn’t. But, for what it’s worth, I believe they loved each other. As much as two selfish, conceited assholes can.”

“You should know,” Michonne grunted as she and Carl made eye contact in the rearview. He pouted looking at her. His heart was visibly broken to anyone looking.

Tomeka noticed forlorn Carl and asked, “Are you okay?”

“What do you care? Boyardee said that. Not me. I thought it was mean.”

Carl grunted, “I am supposed to believe you why? Jagadamba told me everything. How the two of you laugh behind my back during my p.t.”

“She lied, short bus. She leaves the room so you won’t be discouraged by her crying.”

“Crying?”

“It breaks her heart to see you struggle.”

“It does?” He softened momentarily.
“Yes. You know she goes out her way to hurt your feelings if you hurt hers. I figured that out about her the first day we met. I was nine. And you have known her for how long?” Tomeka scoffed.

Rick chimed, “That’s true. I said something admittedly thoughtless to her. Hell, she made me cry when she retorted. She was ten. I am not ashamed.”

Michonne laughed.

“She gets that from me. Sorry,” Priyanka sniffled.

“So, everything negative about Jagadamba came from you. Figures,” Carl said.

“Just like you when it comes to Rick,” she replied.

“You got me there,” Carl said.

Rick rolled his eyes in the rearview. His son saw and smirked.

Glenn said to Carl, “You are being a little hard on your dad, don’t you think? You have put a lot on him these past two months. Imagine if this was you. The rate you are going it will be sooner than later. Three kids and step-kid. Dude, that’s a lot.”

Carl let out an dry chuckle then replied, “How can I say this politely? Uh, let’s see. Ooh, I got it. How ‘bout you mind your own fucking business and stay out of mine?”

“You can’t talk to my husband like that, you little brat. He cares about your dad. Why don’t you?” Maggie had wanted to call Carl out for awhile.

“Maggie, I have been wanting to say this to you since you caught me and Beth that time and the way you snubbed my wife the other day. Go to hell, Maggie.”

“Not cool. Apologize to my wife,” Glenn said.

Carl scoffed, “No. I am not some little kid who has to kiss your asses anymore. I am a man, too. I got pubes just like the rest of you do.”

Everybody was taken aback by Carl’s disrespectfulness. Except Priyanka. She thought it was kinda funny.

Rick stopped the RV.

“Carl, outside now,” Rick said in his not fucking around voice.

Carl obeyed.

Rick followed him.

“I don’t know what has gotten into you. But, it stops now. Enough is enough, young man.”

“I tired of you and everyone else making this about you. I want something to belong to just me for a change. I get Priyanka more than I should. Sometimes, you get sick of sharing.”

Rick scoffed, “That’s fundamentally all life is.”

Carl snickered, “Are you serious? If people liked sharing, war wouldn’t even need to be a word. Divorce either. Hell, we wouldn’t have taken over Alexandria or went and killed that outpost if sharing were a thing people were down for. Shit, the Governor and the prison. I could go on.”

“All right. I will give you that. Still doesn’t explain your nastiness. This is not like you.”

“What? Everyone can gets to be angry but me?”

“I was willing to let that bastard comment go. Because you got a point. I should have brought her home. We are going to get her now. But, you need to check your attitude.”

“But, what if I don’t? Then what?” He got in his father's face.

“I remember when you were nothing more a than a busted nut. You challenging me?” Rick smirked.

“Take it anyway you want. And fucking eww.”

Rick sniffed. He realized Carl thought he was unpunishable because he moved out and was starting a family of his own.

Rick cracked his neck then his knuckles.

He had a solution.

“I wonder how long it takes to get to the Hilltop by foot?” Rick asked.

Carl frowned and wondered what he meant.

Rick swiftly boarded the RV and closed the door behind him. Leaving Carl outside.

Carl beat on the door.

“Dad, come on,” Carl knew an apology no matter how half ass would have gained him passage. His ego was like fuck that.
Rick proclaimed, “You are a man now. You figure it out. Why would you want a heartless bastard to drive you anyway?”
“Don’t forget selfish,” Carl exclaimed.
Then Rick drove off. Carly-Jayne had a shit fit.
“I want my papa. I want my papa, Grick,” she was trying to say grandpa Rick but in her distress, it came out as Grick.
She undid her booster seat and ran for the door.
Priyanka jumped to her feet and caught her.
Rick said, “Papa has to walk. You will see him soon.”
“I hate you. I want my Papa and my Momma. I hate you. You stupid,” she growled channeling both her parents.
Carl saw them stop half a block down the road.
Glenn volunteered to take Carly-Jayne to Carl.
Rick, Michonne and Priyanka objected.
“We aren’t far. We will likely find some transpo along the way. He doesn’t need to be alone. And she is starting to get abandonment issues. That is not fair. We either let Carl back on or I will walk with him,” Glenn wanted to take a stand even though the teen had been so belligerent towards him and his wife.
He wished he had done the same for Jagadamba.
“He needs to remember who’s boss.”
Priyanka also got out. She left Dare behind with Enid. Only a month old, she did not want him out in the elements.
She had the caboodle box with her.
Rick let them out and kept driving.
Rick wanted to teach his son a lesson or at least give him a real reason to be angry.
Michonne didn’t approve of any of this.
A mile away, she said, “I think he has learned his lesson. Let’s go get him.”
“No, he has to learn. I can’t tolerate him acting like a little shit. I don’t care how many babies and wives and girlfriends he got.
Besides, this path is relatively clear. And there are lots of open fields. He and Glenn are weaponed up. They are fine. Carly-Jayne is safe.”
He needs to respect me. Respect us. He is still a child.”
“Only that he isn’t,” Michonne said.
“Since when?”
She had an invasion of dirty thoughts and memories about the younger Grimes that screamed man in full. She had to be pragmatic.
“Okay. He is not grown but he isn’t a little kid either. There has to be a happy medium.”
“How about him not being a complete and total dick?” Enid chimed sneering at Michonne.
She really did not like her but she saw a twisted sort of value to Michonne.
She was the only force capable of putting her and Jagadamba on equal footing.
“I couldn’t have said it better, Enid. Besides, I thought you and Carl had a fight,” Rick said turning to Michonne.
“Disagreement. I hurt his feelings but he’ll cope eventually.”
Aaron added, “Seems to me, all he does is cope.”
Meanwhile, Carl, Carly-Jayne, Glenn and Priyanka were walking in silence.
Carl was carrying his spiritual toddler while Glenn had her supply bag.
Mister Rhee broke the silence.
“We are actually going through the same thing. First time fatherhood and relatively new wives. There is no reason why we shouldn’t be besties going into this.”
Carl felt compunction.
“I am sorry I went off on you like that. You just have to understand what a p-r-i-c-k my Dad is. He left my wife behind. He did it out of spite. Pure and simple. You thirsty?” He asked his stepdaughter.
Carly-Jayne nodded.
Glenn passed him the water.
“I didn’t agree with it. All I saw was a scared pregnant teenaged girl. I said as much.
But, this is a lot for Rick.”
“So? He never expected that I would have my own family one day? I thought this is what he wanted
for me one day. What he’s been fighting for? Me to have a life? I finally got one. And he goes out
his way to try and sabotage it. That’s what it is. It’s not fair. I didn’t sabotage him. And I could have
made it hard for him.”
A perplexed Glenn asked, “What do you mean?”
“When he and Michonne began their whatever it is that they have-”
“They are in a relationship.”
“Whatever. I could have been a total s-h-i-t about it. I could’ve cockblocked and not gave him my
approval. But, I did. Despite how I felt on the inside about it,” Carl said not realizing he had spoken
too much in front of the wrong person.
Glenn read between the lines while remembering what Enid told him weeks before. That Carl was in
love with Michonne. He almost couldn’t believe it even though hearing it from the horse’s mouth.
“Heart wants what it wants. Besides, You got two beautiful girls in love with you. One even married
you. The other is a like a sister to me.”
Carly-Jayne had recently learned what married was from watching the Little Mermaid.
She asked excitedly, “Did you marry my Momma?”
“Yes, I did.” he said proudly.
“Yay!” She kissed his cheek and hugged his neck.
He smiled. She genuinely made him happy and proud.
“Not so loud, little one,” Glenn tweaked her nose.
“Okay, Mr. Glenn. Are you married to Ms. Maggie?” She hit at him. She thought he was cute.
“You can call him Uncle Glenn. And her Aunt Maggie,” Carl looked at his friend with reverent
acknowledgment of all they had been through together.
Glenn was honored.
Priyanka threw her two cents in.
“I guess you can call me Grams. I am your Momma's momma. Like Rick is your Papa’s papa.”
Carly-Jayne looked at her confused.
“Nuh-uh. You are her mean big sister. You are my auntie.”
Carl told CJ to cover her ears, “You have no fucking right to tell her that. What is wrong with you?”
“I am tired of lying,” she said.
“As if,” Carl mocked.
Carly-Jayne said nearly in a panic, “Everybody’s telling me to call them by a new name.”
During this time, Jagadamba is merely half a mile down the road. She was putting the pedal to the
metal. She even changed cars in case they decided to double back and snatch her up anyway.
Five minutes passed before she saw them on the road.
She came to a screeching halt.
Glenn recognized her first.
“Dude, it is your wife,” her said.
“Well, if it ain’t? I wonder if she is still mad?” Carl smiled despite how they left things.
Jagadamba saw him and flipped him off. However, she purposely did it with it with her wedding
band hand.
He blushed and took his wedding ring from the necklace and put it on.
Carly-Jayne squealed for joy when she saw her mother.
“Momma!” She jumped out of Carl’s arms and ran to the car. Jagadamba got out and met her oldest.
“Momma is so glad to see you. I love you,” she cried kneeling to pick her daughter up and hug her.
“I love you, too, Momma. I can’t breathe,” she coughed.
“Sorry, baby. You are so beautiful,” Jagadamba eskimo kissed her daughter.
Carly-Jayne took off her momma’s glasses.
She gasped.
“What happened to your eye, Momma?” She had tears in her eyes.
“Nothing. I had a little accident,” she looked at Carl. She realized he was bringing her daughter to see her.
She mouthed thank you.
“Happy birthday, Jagadamba,” Carl chimed.
“Yeah. Happy birthday, Momma.”
“Happy birthday,” Glenn added.
Priyanka was about to say it, Jagadamba said, “Don’t you dare. Not you, bitch.”
“Oh, bad word,” Carly-Jayne said.
Jagadamba gave C.J. back to Carl and said, “We need get out of here. The Saviors are on the road. They stopped me.”
“And they let you go?” Glenn asked.
“Not because anything I did. I prayed to God. Why are you guys on the road all exposed anyway? You have my daughter with you for crying out loud.”
“My Dad kicked me out the RV. We were coming to get you.”
“Douchery?” Jagadamba asked.
“Yeah. My Dad’s.”
“True. But, I meant you. Anyway, uh, let’s catch up with them. We need to go home and plan our next move. They are gunning for us. Big time.”
Both Glenn and Carl gave each other weary glances as they piled into the car.
Jagadamba instructed Glenn to take the wheel. She was not feeling well.
She got in the back of the car with her daughter. She lied her head down in her mom’s lap.
Carl wanted to get in the back with her.
“Uh-uh. You get your ass upfront. I don’t want to be next you,” she said.
Carl obeyed.
Now Priyanka was another matter.
“That bitch walks,” Jagadamba growled.
Priyanka overheard and was visibly hurt by this.
She wanted to blurt it out but couldn’t.
She realized the gravity of her actions. All of them. And she knew I am sorry was not going to cut it.
Carl and Glenn both gave each other a foreboding glare. What to do about the damage Priyanka had wrought.
Before either could present their case, little Carly-Jayne pouted, “Aunt Priyanka told me to call her Grams. She said she was your momma like you are my Momma. What does that mean, Momma?”
Jagadamba looked at her daughter like she was mistaken.
“What? Do y’all know what my little girl is talking about?”
Carl and Glenn looked at each other.
“She’s your bio mom. I saw your birth certificate and the adoption papers. And she had pictures. Polaroids. Can’t fake those,” Carl said.
Jagadamba sat back in her seat. She had no idea how to react to this.
She settled on anger.
“Pop the trunk,” Jagadamba growled again.
“Jagadamba, come on. Let her ride in the car,” Glenn begged.
“No.”
“It is a little hot today. She might get heat stroke. You don’t want to kill her. Think about your brother.”
Jagadamba hadn’t thought that far yet but yeah, Dare was and had always been her younger half brother, her daughter’s uncle.
“She’s a cold blooded snake. She’ll thrive in the heat.”
Then Carl who was probably overidentifying with Priyanka took up for her.
“I have no idea how you feel, Jagadamba. Nor I am going to pretend like I do. But, you make her get
in that trunk, anything could happen to her. And the very thing you don’t want—her blood on your hands is what will happen.”

“She has Mo’s on hers.”

“No. She doesn’t. He knew she was your mom. Of course, he wanted you against your mom. You were murdering him. He wanted to ruin your life from beyond the grave. Destroy your family. Are going to let that piece of shit to do that? Laugh at you in hell? Or let your fondest wish get in? You’re not an orphan, Jag. What better birthday gift could you possibly ask for? I would give almost anything to be with my Mom on my birthday. Any day,” Carl said sincerely.

Jagadamba grunted and resisted the urge to cry. She was so tired of crying.

“Fine. She can get in the front. It’s your lucky day, Carl,” she patted the empty space beside her.

Carl got out the car. Priyanka had been listening and she whispered thanks in Carl’s ear.

He nodded. Then whispered back, “I said it for her. Not you.”

“Still,” Priyanka said.

Twenty minutes passed.

Carl tried to touch Jagadamba’s hand. She snatched it away.

“I am sorry, Jagadamba,” Carl said.

“So.”

“I went too far. I know.”

“Yes, you did. But, I did, too.”

“Yeah. But—”

“I am not talking about the garbage fire that is our relationship in front mixed company.”

“It’s not that bad,” Carl said.

“It’s bad. How could you say those things to me? Treat me like that? I ask you to do me one favor and you refuse.”

“I didn’t refuse. I just wanted you to see we can get through anything together.”

“Is that why you brought creature along?” She said pointed at Priyanka.

“He didn’t. I insisted, daughter,” Priyanka said.

“I didn’t ask you. And don’t call me that,” she kicked her seat.

Undeterred, “I want you to have this,” she passed Jagadamba the box. She accepted it.

And didn’t say another word to anyone. Nor did she open the box. She sat it in Carl’s lap and clutched Carly-Jayne like a teddy bear.

Five minutes later, they came upon the RV. Glenn honked the horn.

Rick saw him and stopped.

“Told you,” Rick said.

Michonne looked closer and saw her newly confirmed second cousin.

“Jagadamba's in the backseat,” she said.

“Well, shit if she ain’t,” Rick smiled.

Rick got out the RV and walked to Jagadamba’s side of the car.

He half smiled and batted his lashes at her. This was a flirt just as much as it was a nervous habit. He knew it disarmed people. Especially female people starting with his mother.

Rick reached into his back pocket. It was clearly a deck of Uno cards.

He knew this was one of a few good memories he and she actually shared.

In 2009, Carl, Lori and Achilles got the chicken pox. He, Shane, Priyanka and Jagadamba didn’t. To while the time away they played Uno, drank red pop and ate grilled Johnsonville Better Cheddar franks.

Jagadamba let out a laugh.

“Happy birthday, baby girl,” Rick said grasping her hand.

“Thank you.”

“No. Thank you. You have given my son a sense of purpose I never anticipated to see in him. Especially this soon. There is no doubt in my mind, hell, in my heart how my young man feels about
you and your little one. He refers to her as his first child. That makes her my oldest grandchild. Or is she my only?” He looked at her stomach.

Almost moved to tears, she replied, “First. Not only,” letting them both know she was still pregnant. Carl exhaled loudly. He did not realize he had been holding his breath until that moment. Rick had been, too.

For all his bluster, Rick wanted his grandchildren.

“I hope they are girls. Carl would be a pretty little girl or girls. As it is,” Rick said.

“I know, right?” Jagadamba agreed.

“All in all, I only want to apologize to you for leaving you behind. I took the news you and my son getting married hard. The news of the babies even harder. I only wanted Carl to regain some semblance, a modicum of his childhood. Or teenagehood. But, that is not what he wants.

He wants to be a man. Your man. I accept that. I promise you, Jagadamba and you, too, Carl, for the matter, that I will not interfere with y’all's relationship unless one of you asks me to. I want my family. And thanks to you and Enid- I got more family than I could ever asked for. Grandbabies are a blessing from God. Every time, I doubt Him, God shows up and shows out.

So, again, I am sorry. Do you forgive me?” Rick was so sincere that butter would not have melted in his not mouth.

She opened the deck of cards and said to Rick, “Okay, Dad. Is it okay if I call you that?”

“Yes, I would be honored if you did,” he teared up.

So did she. They hugged.

At that moment, both Priyanka and Carl could barely conceal their jealousy. They wanted her forgiveness, too.

But, more than that, Carl was surprised by his father’s words. He knew he meant them. It almost made him feel like a shit for how he had spoken to him earlier.

However, he was still wounded by his father’s relationship with Michonne and his lack thereof.

Back to Rick and Jagadamba.

When they separated, she told him about the Saviors.

Rick was concerned but reticent. He didn’t want to believe her.

He related the news to the rest of the gang.

“We should turn back,” Enid said. In spite the fact her personal life said differently, she liked to avoid trouble.

Maggie was incredulous like Rick.

“Is she sure?” Maggie asked.

“They took her weapons, her meds, Carl's iPod apparently. But, the guy saw her sonogram and took mercy on her. On us,” Rick said.

“I doubt very seriously all the Saviors share that sentiment. Especially after we did. We killed a lot of them,” Maggie said a matter of factly not realizing the gravity of what she just spoken.

Rick sighed wearily.

“Why is there always so much going on?” He asked.

“We show up,” Maggie said.

Jagadamba, Carl, Glenn and Carly-Jayne all piled into the RV. Priyanka stayed behind. She was to follow them in the sedan.

Enid and Jagadamba made eye contact. Jagadamba felt guilty about keeping the marriage from her. Enid became angrier than she wanted to be when saw them together.

If she could have snatched their souls out their bodies with a glare she would’ve.

She shot up and stormed past them. She almost knocked Jagadamba down.

The couple went after her.

“Enid, we three need to have a conversation. I know-”

“Go bite a dick, you backstabbing cunt. She really is your mom. But, at least she is straight forward about her villainy. That I can respect.”

With that said, Enid got into the car with Priyanka. She got into the back with Dare nested against
her chest. She was crying.
Priyanka said, “I remember the first time you met my daughter. My daughter, I am not used to saying it out loud. It’s guttural.”
“Do you have a point? At least now I know where she her longwindedness from.”
“You went by Grace then. You were a Make A Wish child. And was at Ronald McDonald house. Meeting her was potentially your dying wish.
My point is. I know how much she means to you even if she doesn’t. And I am sorry she hurt you.”
“You are terrible at comforting people. But, A for effort. You get it. Never meet your heroes, right?”
She sniffled.
Back in the RV, Tomeka was taken aback when she saw Jagadamba's eye.
“I hoped I would never see you with another one of those,” she said touching Jagadamba’s face.
“Another?” Carl asked with concern.
Jagadamba turned and looked at him like he was the stupidest thing that ever lived and snarled, “Cort scalded my back with a mixture of salt, oil and water. Because why not? When I tell you I am cursed, that is not something I say lightly. My life with Cort was in many ways worse than it was with her father. It was pretty fucking awful!”
Carly-Jayne whined in her mother’s arms.
“Sorry, baby. Momma didn’t mean to scare you,” she paused and kissed her daughter on the lips.
She cooed, “I love you, Momma.”
“I love you more, baby. I love you more,” at that moment Jagadamba felt overcome with the truth of her parentage.
“Take Carly-Jayne,” she said on the verge of hyperventilating.
As soon as Carl took her. She fainted.
Properly Gutted

Chapter Summary

We find out what led Rick to get up the courage to confront Michonne about her and Carl.
Why Priyanka is the way she is. There is backstory on Negan. And Enid and Jagadamba finally have a heart to heart.

Chapter Notes

Author’s Note- I know this is an incredibly long chapter.
I will be writing the next installment soon.
I might call it Out to Get Me. Not sure.

Rick and Priyanka- Do You Own a Mirror?

Eighteen hours earlier.
It was nearly one in the morning when Rick awoke for the third time in so many hours.
He glanced down at his beautiful step-granddaughter and thought, She doesn’t look like Jagadamba.
They both look like Priyanka who in turn looks a little like Jayne and her first husband. So, they look like Jayne. Huh. Well, I’ll be. They are all so good-looking, he thought willing to think about anything than what was really on his mind.
He kissed Carly-Jayne's forehead when he caught sight of Judith staring right at him. She was lying on Michonne’s chest.
She smiled at him and went back to sleep without stirring Michonne much to his relief. He didn’t really feel up to dealing with her at the moment.
Regardless, he found himself transfixed by her. He stared hard at his paramour, wondering what secrets swirled in her brain.
His own brain gripping with the fact his son may biblically know his woman.
I hope I am wrong. The two people I love more than anyone- again. This. I have already been through this with Lori and Shane. What is it about me? What is it about me that make those closet to me betray me? Am I that unlovable?
Ultimately, Michonne is replaceable. Carl isn’t. I could have a hundred more sons and not a one could even come close to filling that hole.
He is the only thing, my only excuse, the one permissible right I have for existence. Without him, I got nothing.
He is my past, present and future. I have everything riding on him and he refuses to see that.
I get it. He loved Michonne first. She was his first.
I understand. But, she’s mine now. More than that, Carl got Jagadamba back in his life. What the fuck he needs with Michonne?
And she wouldn’t? Would she? She sees him as a son. Maybe she wasn’t lying earlier. She just felt sorry for him. They are not in sexual relationship. They are not. Are not.
Then Rick thought back to the kitchen. And seeing Carl embrace Michonne. How he rocked with her. How his hands clutched her.
Yeah, they are boning, he took a deep breath.

Then Rick began thinking about the unlikeliest person. The only person who possibly relate to having a wayward, angry, stupid teen.

He got out of bed carefully. He decided he needed to talk to Priyanka.

“Hey, Rick,” Achilles yawned.

“I need to talk to Priya,” Rick said.


“I will be quiet and I won’t be long,” Rick said plowing past him.

“Sure, come on in,” Achilles said sarcastically.

Rick found her in the kitchen. She was sitting there looking rather despondent while drinking a beer.

I didn’t know she could express emotions. Damn, she’s pretty even when sad, Rick thought.

Usually, he wouldn’t have let himself have these thoughts about Priyanka but his suspicions about Michonne freed his conscience.

“Help yourself to a beer,” Priyanka offered.

Rick turned to retrieve one and she couldn’t help but notice how his pajama pants clung to his ass.

“You alright?” Rick asked after taking a long sip as he sat down.

“My seventeen year old hates me. So, I am living my second worst fear at the moment,” she replied.

“What’s your first?”

“Her being a teen mom like me.”

“Funny you should mention that considering you all but laid them down. What you did was a crime.”

“I know. I felt like I owed it to them. It was my fault they weren’t together. Plus, I had selfish reasons. I knew you wouldn’t arbitrarily throw away the mother of your grandbaby.”

“So, you used your own child as leverage?” Rick said rolling his eyes.

“What parent doesn’t? When couples divorce. Child support. When you want to curry sympathy or favor from other adults. Get time off work. Use children as an excuse to keep a shitty marriage together. Sounds familiar? So, don’t stand there and judge me. Not you. I know too much about you.”

Rick cleared his throat and took a seat.

“Fair enough. I have a question. Well, a statement then a question.”

“What is it, mate? Don’t keep me in suspense,” she said.

“Our children are husband and wife and that makes us family. So, in the spirit of that, I need you to lend me your ear. There is no one else who can or is willing to understand what I am going through.

My seventeen year old son, my baby boy is going to be a father of three no less by two different girls. He got married behind my back. His whole attitude is just stank now. He’s grown up so fast these past five years. I wanted him to be a teen at least. Not go straight into manhood. I wanted more for him or least not this so soon. Not this fucking soon,” Rick began to weep.

Priyanka knew exactly what he meant.

She got up and put her arms around him.

“You think it is your fault. You feel like maybe I should have gave another compliment or another punishment. You feel like maybe if I had raised him better or been there more, then he-“

“He would have turned out better. Exactly. Everyone tells me I should just accept this. And I do mostly. I am crazy about Carly-Jayne. She told me she loved me.”

“She called me Grandma earlier. Oh, I cried. It gave me hope. Through telling her daughter to call me Grandma, she is acknowledging me as her mother. So, that’s a step in the right direction. Right?”

“Or maybe she is displaying a sense of fair play.”

“I thought you said were speaking in the spirit of family,” she said still holding him. She liked the feel of him.

“You are right. That was rude. That’s exactly what she was doing. And she doesn’t hate you. She’s just angry and confused. Things will work themselves out,” Rick wanted this to be true for him and Carl as well.

“Since when? I know you have a tendency to lean towards the naïve but come on.”
“Sorry if I am not as jaded as you. But, without hope. What is the point?”
“I suppose. And I am not jaded. I am half German,” they both shared a laugh. She sat down.
“Seriously. How did you feel the first time you found out your baby had a baby?”
“I was properly gutted. Devastated.”
“I like that. Gutted. I have been gutted many a time.”
“Such is life. When she told me Carly-Jayne was hers. I,” she began to weep.
Now Rick comforted her.
“I felt like the biggest failure that ever failed. There is no other way to describe it. My little one was
repeatedly raped and had a child as a result.”
Rick cringed as he always did upon hearing what happened to her. All he could remember was her at
twelve and how she was even tinier and more defenseless than she was currently.
He never understood why an adult would want to violate a child or anyone for the matter.
Priyanka continued, “All I had to do was let Alice get in the car with Carl. She would have remained
safe and cared for. She never would have had the need to run away.”
Rick realized something.
“That’s why Carl wondered off all the time especially in the early days. He was looking for her,
too,” this made Rick tear up again.
“I am not surprised. They do love each other. I always knew that. I thought by separating them I
could prevent a teen pregnancy from happening. That is why I wanted to move her to L.A. It wasn’t
just for her career but to put some distance between them.”
“Did you catch them doing something?”
“I caught them snogging, like really snogging on more than one occasion. The last time being the
day before we had to evacuate.”
“Kissing, right?”
“Yes.
I could practically see the eventuality of his sperm hitting her egg. I didn’t want to be a twenty or
thirty-something year old grandma. Oh, well. Best laid plans.”
“I wanted to be at least be fifty before Carl gave me a grandchild. He would be the age I was when
he was born. I was ready. Sort of. I knew what I wanted out of life. Mostly. I had lived a little. Had
fun.”
“World was different then. Even more different than I was a child in the nineties. We had the
opportunity to be children. Go to school, graduate. I always wanted to see her get her high school
diploma. College. Get a couple Grammys. Win her first Oscar. My little girl was that good.”
“She was. My aspirations for Carl weren’t anything as grandiose as that. I would have settled for
eighth grade graduation. See him off to prom. One milestone at a time.”
“Debutant ball. I remember when Michonne had hers. I was visiting my daughter. She was so
excited. Michonne, I mean. I had lent her my white satin Versace gown. She looked stunning. The
contrast of her dark skin against the dress. Pretty girl.”
“That’s the first time I have ever heard you say anything nice about Michonne.”
“Someone overheard her taking up for me in the church. So,” she hunched.
Rick knew he probably shouldn’t but since Priyanka had been so forthcoming, he decided he should
be too.
“Exactly how long have you known Michonne?” Rick asked.
“Since I was thirteen and she ten.”
“What was she like? Her brother, her cousin. Your daughter. What’s your take on the Anthonys.
You know them better than I.”
“Quiet, reserved. Standoffish. Cool headed until you anger them by taking something from them then
all bets are off. Ruthless. All Anthonys are scary intelligent. They are usually the smartest one in the
room and will not hesitate to let you know it. They’re charming, disarming. Curious. Like being in
charge but they don’t want to be braggarts about it. Selfish, stuck up. Funny. Patronizing. Violent.
Suicidal. Strong. Weak. What Nimrod did was weak. I am still pissed at him. My father, too. They
just left me. Anyway, they are honorable. Decisive, usually. Instigators. Loyal even when it doesn’t
suit them to be. Duplicitous. Basically, they are hypocritical assholes as well all are to some extent. Why? Trouble in paradise? Looking for a reason not to throw her ass off the watchtower.”
“Something like that.”
“You know all my business. Spill.”
“This evening. I saw Carl be inappropriate with her. Too familiar. You know?”
“Oh, you mean his hideous crush? Yeah, I know.”
“Who told you?”
“No one. I have a pair of eyes and a set of ears. The way he looks at her when he thinks no one is
watching. What he said a couple days ago when you kicked him out the RV.”
Rick nodded with his head and motioned with his hand for her to continue.
“He talked about how difficult you had made his life with my daughter and how he could’ve made
your life with Michonne the same but didn’t.”
“What did he say exactly?”
“He said, I could have been a total shit about it. I could've cockblocked and not gave him my
approval. But, I did. Despite how I felt on the inside about it.'
I found that an odd thing to say.”
“He told me a couple months ago, the night you guys showed up actually that he was in love with
her. And I should have chosen her instead of the last chick I dated.”
“Jesse, right?”
“Yes. How do you possibly know that?”
“You and I kiki. I like Carl as a person. Always have. Reminds me of his mum. I was crazy
about her.”
“You two were queen bees in a pod,” Rick said derisively.
“Lori told me you didn’t like her. Was that so?”
“I loved her. You don’t have to like somebody to love them.”
“True but it helps.”
“Why am I talking to you so freely? We were never close.”
“We share a past. I am the only adult here that knows you from before. I know who you are in a way
that no one else does. Same thing goes for me. You know me, Rick. The question is why don’t we
speak more?”
“You intimidate me,” Rick admitted with a twinkle in his bright blue eyes. The beer was going
straight to his head. It loosened his tongue.
“I intimidate you, Mr. Sheriff of Kings County? Leader, let’s face it, king of Alexandria?”
“King. That sounds ridiculous. King Rick. Ugh. Only a delusional halfwit goes around calling
themselves king.”
“When you get too old or die, do you have designs for Carl to pick up your mantle? Takeover?”
“I do.”
“A dynasty. So, he is your heir presumptive. A prince. There is no other way to look at it.”
“Your daughter said something similar about a week ago.”
“Where do you think she heard it? How do think a fifteen year old girl came up with the plan to take
down a tyrant?”
“Not by herself,” Rick replied.
“Exactly. My Alice, I call her by that name in my head. It’s takes effort to call her Jagadamba.
Anyway, my child takes direction well. She’s a people pleaser to certain extent. She can adapt to any
situation. One of the reasons why she was such a good actress. Again. How do I intimidate you?”
“You own a mirror, right?”
She asked quizzically, “Yes?”
“You were, are the most beautiful woman I have seen in real life. That’s why your daughter and
granddaughter are so gorgeous, they basically look like you.”
Priyanka blushed.
“Why, thank you, Mr. Grimes. I think Carl looks you more than not. That’s why he is pretty. Even
with the one eye. I thought Lori was a little mousy. Like a hot Olive Oyl. Carl is definitely not that.
He has your intensity and his mom’s personality.”
“Well, thank you. He is intense. That is what worries me.”
“Do you think something is going on between her and Carl? I do sense something clandestine about them. And he looks at her the same way he looks at my daughter- like he could eat her. He looks at no one else like that. Not even Enid.”
“I hate how he treats her.”
“Yeah, well. She lets him. And better her than my daughter. He’s sweet with Alice. No one else makes her smile like does.”
“I don’t know.”
“No, he does.”
“l believe you. Carl and Michonne. I can’t shake what I saw earlier. You’re going to tell Jagadamba, aren’t you?”
“No.”
“Why not? I am thinking about telling her.”
“You better not. She’s pregnant. And she’s been hurt enough. This would devastate her. Down to her core. Bad enough, she knows about me now. If there is something inappropriate going on between them, I can guarantee you she has already figured it out. That girl doesn’t miss a beat. She just is not ready to deal yet. Let her come to you with it. If they are having an affair, it’s and epic betrayal.”
Defensive again, Rick replied, “You know a thing or two about those.”
“Look, asshole, you came to my house to talk to me. Not my fault your whore girlfriend and idiot son are fucking. Don’t take it out on me. Go confront that slag about her indiscriminate quim. I am not your problem.”
Rick knew she had a point.
“You talked to Jagadamba?”
“I am not telling her shit.”
“I understand that. Respect it even. But, if I confront Michonne. You got to let your daughter confront you. Or more accurately put yourself in a position where she can.”
“How? She purposely never alone.”
“She might be now. The kids are at my house. Carl and Jagadamba are alone. He wouldn’t stand in your way. He would encourage her to speak to you. He’s all about family. The hypocritical asshole.”
“I have heard from Abraham that he always had a crush on her. He could see it. Why couldn’t you?”
“I did. I just didn’t know he was in love with her.”
“You have always been a little oblivious to other people’s feelings. Did it ever occur to you that dating her would hurt him? Break his heart?”
“Did it ever occur to you that giving your daughter away not once but twice may have broken her heart?”
“Touche, douchbag.”
“We suck as parents. Don’t we?” Rick lamented.
She said with outstretched arms, “A little.”
“Thank goodness for younger children. May we not fuck them up as badly as the first ones,” Rick said.
“Not to worry. We’ll just ruin them in new and exciting ways,” Priyanka said.
They shared a laugh.
They finished their beers got up to leave.
Achilles came downstairs.
“Priya, where you going?”
“To talk to her.”
“It’s almost two in the morning. She’s not going to appreciate you waking her up.”
“It’ll be fine.”
Achilles was too tired to care.
He hunched and turned to lie back down.
They were about to leave and he was almost upstairs when Dare began to cry.
“It’s your turn, hotness. My black ass is going to sleep,” Achilles said.
After Priyanka retrieved their son, they left.
Ten minutes passed.
Jagadamba woke up to knocking on the bedroom door.
She tried to rouse Carl to answer it. However, between the alcohol he drank and all the sex they just had, he was out like a light.
She threw on one of Carl’s shirts and answered the door.
It was Priyanka.
“I let meself in,” she said making it a point to sound extra English. She knew Jagadamba always liked that.
She stepped outside the door.
“Give me my key,” she said looking at her with disdain.
“No. What if there’s an emergency? I will keep it.”
“Fine. Whatever. What do you want, Priyanka? It is three in the morning. I just lied down.”
“I wanted to thank you.”
“For what? Avoiding you like Daryl does water? And Rick does reality? What?”
“You told Carly-Jayne to address me as grandma. You have no idea how much that meant to me. I didn’t even realize how badly I needed to hear it. How many can say they were called grandma before they were called Momma?”
Rather pointedly, Jagadamba said, “Unlike you, some of us actually have tact and respect for others. Besides, I didn’t do it for you. I did it for me. The more people she has to answer to, the better. She will be less prone to make terrible choices if she’s afraid of disappointing more than just me and her papa.
Anyways, you had all day to tell me this. What do you really want?”
“I miss you, baby.”
“And?” She wanted to say it back but refused.
“I know you get this hard act from me but its okay. You don’t have to keep your wall up.”
“It was up long before I found out I slipped out of you.”
“It was a twenty five hour labor. Your father was my first. No need to be disrespectful.”
“Me disrespectful? You tried to bury my son. Who rushes a child’s funeral? And now armed with the knowledge that Mo was your grandson, double how could you? That really hurt me. That’s how I know you hate me. If you loved me you could have never done that to me.”
Priyanka wanted to explain to her that she felt like she had the right and she only wanted to help because she knew how painful the loss of a child was thanks to that year and some change that Jagadamba was missing.
Instead, she said, “I am sorry. I had no right. None.”
“No, you didn’t. That’s a start. Thank you. First time, you apologized to me about anything really. Ever,” Jagadamba said softening a little.
“Would you like a nosh? I could make some egg drop soup? I know it’s the only way you can stand eggs.”
“Something hot would be nice. Okay,” Jagadamba smiled.
As they made their way to the kitchen, she saw her baby brother Dare in his carrier sound asleep.
She rolled her eyes at him.
Twenty minutes passed.
Neither said much as she made the soup and even made wonton dough and fried them in strips to sprinkle on top.
“Do you like it? Is it too thick? I might got a little heavy handed with the cornflour?”
“I like it. It’s perfect. You used just the whites. Thanks,” she said.
Priyanka smiled coyly and said, “I couldn’t help but notice how radiant you are. Not all that’s baby either. You’re afterglow-y.”

“I always wanted us to have an open and honest relationship.”

Jagadamba couldn’t hide her contempt, “You are less self aware than poor white trash and gays that voted republican. Open and honest. If I didn’t have proof you birthed me, bitch, I would throw this hot soup in your vapid face.”

Priyanka folded her arms. “I am more insulted by you calling me vapid than I am you calling me a bitch. Which I also really don’t appreciate FYI.”

“I don’t appreciate being lied to for seventeen years. So, there’s that.”

“I am sorry, I-”

“Don’t send your soul to Hell anymore than you already have on account of me.”

Priyanka understood her oldest had every reason to be angry and hateful. However, her disrespect was standing to chafe. Another stretch of silence.

In the midst of their silence, Dare began to wail.

Usually, it would have been a race to get the baby but Jagadamba stayed planted while her mother went and got him.

He went from being her sweet little nephew she helped deliver to her snot nosed brat little brother she couldn’t stand. The competition. The one who got kept.

Priyanka was shocked to see Carl awake and holding the baby. “I woke up when I realized my wife wasn’t there. I missed her. So, I came down here to find her and saw little man was awake. He looked right at me and smiled. He is too pretty of a baby to ignore. I swear if I didn’t know any better I would think he was a girl. He looks so much like you, Priya. Anyway, I was telling him how he was going to be a good uncle and he just started to wail.”

“Doesn’t want the competition. Give him here,” she reached for her son.

Carl handed him over.

“Oh, little my little Dare bear. It’s okay,” he quit crying.

“My Mom used to call me her blue eyed boy or her sunshine. What did you call Jagadamba?” Carl asked seeing his wife crack the door open to listen better.

“Alley-cat. Cause you know, her real name is Alice. She hated it when I called her that. So, I stopped.”

“I remember you called her that.

I think Alice suits her. It’s classy. Sounds smart. It rolls off the tongue. But, knowing her she probably thinks it sounds old-fashioned. I like old-fashioned-“

Jagadamba entered and chimed, “Of course you do, Carl. Alice and Carl sound like they ought next door to Ozzie and Harriet or Al and Peggy. Jagadamba and Carl sound like-“

“One them needs a green card,” Priyanka joked.

Carl laughed and his wife rolled her eyes at him. He stopped laughing.

“We’re going back to bed. See yourself out,” Jagadamba said turning to walk away grabbing Carl by the hand dragging him behind her.

“Babe, talk to her,” he said softly.

“No. I tried.”

“You didn’t. You called her a vapid bitch.”

“You were listening?”

“Duh. Dare told on me. Little snitch.”

“It’s the middle of the night. Who does this?”

“Someone who wants to have a relationship with you. You have every reason to be angry.”

“Gee, you think?”

“Seriously, talk to her.”
“It won’t change anything.”
“You are the bravest woman I know. You survived captivity and childbirth. What’s this?”
“Escape isn’t an option. She is fifty percent of me. I got her mitochondria. Just like got your mom’s. Mitochondria is the thing that makes us live. Powerhouse of the cells, remember?”
“I do. And you’re that, too. Carly-Jayne, Mohinder, Jeanette and Carla,” Carl said touching her belly.
“What the hell did my babies ever do you? And besides, I told Abraham that we would named our youngest twin out Tallulah Jean after his baby girl, if they’re girls.”
“You better be glad I think Tallulah Jean is an awesome name or I would be insulted. Don’t I get a say?”
“Maybe if you can come up with something better than Jeanette or Carla. Carly-Jayne is the only junior you get. She’s not your blood and that is going to be stigma enough. I have thought about it. Our babies are going to be brunettes with your blue eyes. Your face hopefully and my coloring. While C.J. will remain all dark-eyed, blonde and white looking. They are not going to look like sisters. I can’t let you take that from her. Her first name proves she’s yours. Gives her a certain amount of legitimacy despite the different last name.”
“Honey, I was kidding. She is my junior and I couldn’t ask for a better one. And way to get off topic. Just hear what Priyanka has to say. Ask her questions. The hard ones.”
“Tomorrow. I am tired. I can’t deal with her right now. I don’t want to spend the rest of the night pissed. You shouldn’t want me to either.”
“Baby, you know I don’t.”
“So, get rid of her. I will talk to her or let her talk to me tomorrow. Or later today rather.”
“Are you sure? Tomorrow might not come. Now is good.”
“Overdramatic, much? Trust me I know that better than you ever will. Later,” she went upstairs.
He remained on the steps for a moment shaking his head at her.
Priyanka came up behind him and sighed.
“You tried,” she said touching his shoulder.
“I get it. She’s mad and hurt. But, fact still remains, she’s not an orphan like she thought. I am not saying what you did was right but I think I get it. I just think she would be a lot happier if she forgave you. I want her to be happy. And my reasons are a little bit selfish.”
“How?”
“I want a mom just like she wants a dad. Together we are a whole family. You know?” He restrained from crying.
Priyanka smiled and replied, “I’ll be your mom if you will be my son.”
“Deal.”
He opened his arms to hug her.
“I love you. I always have,” Priyanka said touching his face. He nuzzled his face into the touch and said, “I love you, too.”
Jagadamba heard.
She came bounding downstairs to them embracing.
She wanted to tell Priyanka she loved her and that she forgave her. Like a teething toddler, her emotions were itching to get out. Right there on the tip of her tongue but couldn’t bring herself to do it. Instead, she ran back upstairs in tears.
Carl followed her. He turned around briefly and saw the same hesitation in Priyanka. She left.
Carl thought, They are the same person.
When she went back to her house, she was surprised to see Rick on the front porch. He was sitting in the swing.
She said, “I will be back. I gotta get him out of this night air.”
She returned some ten minutes later.
Upon view, Rick said, “I liberated some whiskey from your cupboard. I expected when you
emerged you would want something stronger than beer. How did it go?"
"Not as bad as I expected and not as good as I had hoped."
"Here you had me thinking you were above having hope," Rick gently teased.
"I guess yours is infectious."
"Did Carl encourage it?"
"Yes. But, she wasn’t having it. Said she we would talk more later."
"She is a little coldhearted."
"Who can blame her? I taught her how to be."
"Jayne was like that, too. And Michonne has the capacity. She gets being a hard ass honestly."
"Michonne. Hmmph. I knew when she was a child- a scrawny, four-eyed little cute chocolate drop. I knew even then that she had dirty bitch potential. I am sorry."
"What if I am wrong? What if I am just being paranoid?"
"Maybe but I doubt it. Carl is complicated. He has a lot of love to give and doesn’t have a real clue to give it to. He must be confused. Dreadfully so. It must suck to be him."
"To have a gorgeous wife, a girlfriend and probably my girlfriend. My heart bleeds for him,” Rick said sarcastically.
He continued, “Even before the apocalypse, most men would have given their right nut to be him right now.”
"That boy of yours- he has your heart. He is a sweet boy at his core. Understanding, kind, compassionate. I confuse those things with naivete but I shouldn’t. I am a bad person."
"Nah. You are an obedient daughter just like yours is. You obeyed Jayne and Bushrod until you couldn’t.
I was sitting here thinking; I put myself in your shoes. I can’t imagine the steel you had to have had in your spine and how you had to sangfroid yourself to not physically become ill every time you had to endure your daughter calling someone else Momma. And you by your given name.
If no one else remembers I do. You raised your daughter. Hell, you potty trained her, Carl, too. He would only listen to you. Taught her ABCs, numbers. Tying her shoes. It was your idea to get her into acting do she quit being so painfully fucking shy.”
Feeling validated, she said, “Yes. Yes. No one ever considers any of that.”
"Well, apparently, I do. I always assumed you were an excellent older sister, I didn’t know you weren’t actually being a good mother.”
Priyanka wept.
Just be acknowledged as a human being and not some evil creature heartened her.
Rick got up and wrapped his arms around her.
He whispered in her ear, “Let’s go for a walk.”
They walked and talked for about thirty minutes straight before taking a seat on the pier.
During this time, they had also been passing the whiskey back and forward drinking it straight out the bottle.
“... What’s the worst thing you ever done before the apocalypse?” Rick asked.
“Let’s see. That’s easy. My high school guidance counselor slash gym coach.”
“How old were you? How old was he?”
“I was sixteen when it got physical. I had graduated by then. He knew all about my pregnancy and my daughter. I talked to him on a regular basis even when I was in California and across the pond.
One day, I went to go visit him. He invited me out to lunch and it escalated from there.
He told me he wanted to take care of me and her. Told me he had always been in love with me since I was fourteen. He was young. About fifteen years older than me.”
“Young? He was an old man. Sick, manipulative asshole. And what he did to you was no less than statutory rape. I knew you at the time. If I had known about that predator, I would have busted his ass.”
“And I would have hated your ass forever. I loved him. But, you are right. I realized as I got older, he was a total R. Kelly. So, hot though. Nick, not R. Kelly. I always thought he was gross.”
“Nick what?”
“Egan. He had big eyes. Tight, little body. Kinda like you.”
Rick blushed.
“What happened? What broke you up?”
“His wife got cancer everywhere and he dumped me. We were together nine years. I was twenty-five. I was devastated. I mean, he wasn’t my only bf but he was the most important one. But, I was willing to have him be my only. I think he wanted that with me. Maybe I am silly. But, he was actually in the process of getting a visa to visit me in England. I was in the States helping him. I was going to take her away then and the three of us were going to live there until it was time for her to return to the set. We were going to be a family.”
“They always promise to leave their wives. I am sorry.”
“But, he was. He really was.”
“He was the one in the wrong. Not you.”
“I handled well. By then I was accustomed to pushing down disappointments. I am used to losing. His wife however found out about us. She didn’t handle it well. She called and harassed me for a couple months. Nick could have stopped it but I think he enjoyed the attention. All the while, he was still sleeping with me. I loved him. I couldn’t get enough of him. I found myself pregnant. I told him. I knew how badly he wanted a child. Neither one of them were that fertile. He told me my timing was horrible. That he was committed to her and I was interfering with her getting better. Then his wife called me back. She was out of her mind angry. Called me all kinds of hoes and bitches. Told me she hoped my baby died and she hung up. Still, I wasn’t angry. I took in stride. I tried to call Nick. His number had been changed that quickly. I cried and cried. I would have went over there but last thing I needed to do was land in jail. I fell asleep.
I woke up in so much pain. All I saw was blood. I miscarried.”
“Lori had four of those before we had Carl.”
“I was fifteen weeks. I was starting to show. I really wanted that baby.
Later, I cleaned myself up. I waited a couple days and I went down to the school. I found out he had me banned from the school. Last fucking straw. So, I rented a car and I followed them for a week. I waited until nightfall. He liked shortcuts so I knew he would be on a side street. So, I ran them off the road into a ditch. The car landed upside down. I got out. I thought I would be happy to see them suffer. I wasn’t. I saw him bleeding and my mind went to our baby I lost. I couldn’t murder him. This man put a life in me. I called 911 and fled the scene. That’s the worst thing I ever done b.a. Before apocalypse,” she delivered that story so a matter of factly, that if Rick didn’t know better he would have thought she was talking about someone else.
“I admit what you did was fucked up. But, you were driven to that point. That motherfucker betrayed the fuck out of you.”
Priyanka scoffed.
“You have no idea. Nick was not some random. He made me feel good about myself. Dealing with my mom did the opposite. I thought he was a soft place to fall. She would rub it in my face how I signed my rights away. About how she was doing me a favor and I should be more grateful.”
“I knew Jayne was a bitch but I didn’t know she was a bitch. I am sorry.”
“Enough about me. Tell me what’s the worst thing you have done.”
“When Shane and I were rookies, we caught one of our commanders on the take and we said nothing. Old timer was due for retirement and we said nothing. Old timer was due for retirement and we didn’t want to ruin his pension.”
Priyanka scoffed.
“That’s it? You cut an old man a break? You were the youngest sheriff I have heard of. You must done something underhanded to get there.”
“One thing. I framed a guilty man once. He was a drug dealer. He was known for cutting his cocaine with Comet or, uh, drywall. He was purposefully making poison more poisonous. I acquired the drugs and Shane got an informant to plan it.
thing is, the cruel bastard was a young, single father of six. His mother kept his children. He was a good son and father. I found that out later.

Once in prison, he was murdered for mouthing off to the wrong one. I knew I had put him there. He was only twenty-five. I would help the family out. Mother always talked about what a comfort the children were.

I have been thinking about her a lot lately.

Maybe it’s a good thing my son is having all these children now. Because sometimes he is so hardheaded. He hates listening to me. I fear one of these days that he will not heed my voice and it’s going to cost him his life or the life of someone he loves. Either way I am going to lose him. Cause let’s say the unsayable and Jagadamba dies because something he failed to do. Carl is going right behind her. I know him. I know if I can get him to twenty, twenty-one, he’ll have a long life.

That’s my greatest fear is physically losing him. I don’t want him to die on me. If he did, I would survive it but every breath would be a struggle. But, I would have his children. He wouldn’t be completely lost to me. At least that is how I would hope to feel about them. Or maybe they would be little reminders of how he was gone. You know?"

“If this is what you think about, no wonder you don’t sleep. But, I get it. After I met my grandbaby, it took me months to quit seeing her as a breathing assault against my child.

And much to my shame, I still do from time to time. Especially when she has a tantrum or gets mouthy.”

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“I totally get that. Like you know Judith isn’t mine. It took me a minute to warm up to her. I admit in a lot of ways, Carl is more her dad than me. He took care of her in a way that simply went beyond brother.”

“Lori would have been proud. You ever tell Carl any of that?"

“No.”

“Why not?”

“I am not the most expressive guy. Plus, he knows how I feel about him.”

“I can’t judge you too harshly. Tonight was the first time I ever apologized to her about anything.

My family wasn’t big on apologizing. Especially to children. Neither side.”

“Mine either.”

A moment of silence passed.

Rick resumed.

“Anyway, about Judith, it took me thinking she was dead to realize and really separate her from Shane’s betrayal. She’s just an innocent child. My wife’s orphan and she needed me.

Going back to your daughter, I sometimes wonder how can she even stand to look at Carly-Jayne? Let alone love her. She must tell herself something similar.”

“I asked Alice that same question. She gave me the most brilliant answer.

‘God have her to me to let me know that no matter how horrible a situation may seem, something good can come from it. God does not give you anything you can’t handle. It is my job as her mom to make sure what happened to me never happens to her. And Priya, she is such good thing.’

You think I got steel, shit, she’s the fucking Terminator. From that point forward I saw her as a woman to a certain extent. A part of me will always see her as that baby I pulled out of me.”

Impressed, Rick said, “You got to explain. Where were the doctors?”

“My first labor happened very quickly all things considered. I was alone except for Siddiq. He was there holding my hand.

The doctor said I had a ways to go. I was seven centimeters dilated. As soon as that judgmental bitch left, I absolutely felt my cervix open up. Worst pain, I have ever felt until that morning I woke up and realized she had ran away.

Goddamn, I can still feel it. Anyway, I began to push and her head and the top of her shoulders came right out.

So, I kept pushing and she was stuck.

Siddiq wanted to go get the doctor but I wanted to do it myself.

So I took both my pointing fingers and I slipped them under her arms and I bared down as I pulled.
Low and behold, there she was. Head full of black hair and she was covered in well, me. Sweet, little angel face. She did not cry. She looked annoyed. And I just smiled and laughed and wailed. I pulled my gown down and held her little body against mine. I wanted her so badly. I didn’t know I could love someone so quickly. So much. I didn’t want to give her away.”
“I did something similar when Carl was born. I took my shirt off and pressed him against my chest. I wanted to be his first human contact.

That rush of love, there is nothing like it. Nothing like it.”
“You know what makes me sadder than anything about our children?” She asked.
Simpatico with Priyanka at the moment, he replied, “They have no idea how much we truly and deeply love them.”
Priyanka scoffed.
“Of course they do. That’s what makes me sad. Why else do you think they go out their way to be such little shits? They know.

I never knew. Other than my teen pregnancy, I didn’t give my mum much trouble. She was always so cold and clinical. Cruel to me. I can count the times she hugged me.
My dad was different. He spoiled and indulged me or so I thought. In hindsight, his kindness towards me was just him being passive aggressive to me mum.
I can’t say enough that she was always, always so cruel or indifferent to me. I was scared of her. Not physically scared but of disappointing her. Having my daughter was the first time I ever stood up to her.

Our children may be a lot of things but they are not afraid of us.”
“Of losing us. I think they are afraid of that.”
“If we’re lucky. At the moment, I don’t think mine would particularly care.”
“Don’t be so dour. She’ll come around, Priyanka,” Rick reassured.
They talked for another hour.
“...It is so late. We ought to at least try to get a couple hours of sleep in,” Priyanka said yawning.
“I am wired,” he said stretching.
“I remember you were always a bit of an insomniac. Lori hated that.”
“Know what Lori didn’t hate?”
“What?”
“Shane’s dick.”
“Rick. You naughty boy.”
Rick felt a combo of frisky and manful when he replied, “Well, it’s true. I am naughty damnit. I always wanted to do this.”
He leaned over and gently kissed Priyanka. She gladly kissed him back.

It morphed into a wet, sloppy spit streaming passionate kiss.

After five minutes, they separated.
“Whoa. That was a nice way to end the day,” Priyanka purred.
“I can think of an even nicer way. Got thirty minutes?” Rick flirted.
She inquired, “What you got in mind, playa?”
Rick fueled by the alcohol and the knowledge his girlfriend and son were more than likely fucking, he wanted to do something wrong for all the right reasons.
“This. I wanted to do this since the first time we met fifteen years ago,” Rick kissed her again.

He was on top of her. Quickly after that, he asked between kisses, “Are you able? You just had a baby.”
“Yeah.”

“Good,” he said pulling up her nightgown and tugging her panties aside while she tugged at pajama pants.

No later than that, they were going at it in plain view of anyone who dares look that way.

Luckily for them, there was no one save Gabriel and Boyardee with him, who spotted them from the watchtower but who the hell was they going to tell?
After twelve minutes, he came harder than he had in a while.
“Did you orgasm? I am more than willing to suck your pussy.”
“I did. But, I will take a raincheck on the latter.”
“Cool by me.”
Priya,” he said softly.
“Rick,” she said just as softly.
“We should have done this years ago. Why didn’t we?” Rick asked gripping her hand.
“We didn’t need the comfort,” she replied.
He kissed her hand.
“I was wrong about you,” Rick said.
“And I you. Homies?”
“Homies,” they shook on it.
“We got babies in common. Our houses have no need to be divided. We got to be in this together,”
Priyanka said.
“I agree. We got to keep them alive.”
Soon they went their respective houses.
Rick washed up real quick and brushed his teeth. He then ate something to hide the mint. He did not
want to raise suspicion.
Rick was surprised to see Michonne awake in bed alone.
“Where were you?” Michonne asked coquettishly.
“I went to talk to Priya.”
Michonne sat up revealing her bare breasts and asked, “Why?”
“Why not? I mean, she’s family,” Rick said.
“Since when?” She asked.
“Since my son impregnated her daughter then married her.”
Michonne fought the urge to be insulted by his tone and asked, “What did y’all talk about?”
“Our children. How they hurt us. How they need us whether they want to admit it or not. We even
talked about you.”
“Really?”
“How you borrowed her white Versace gown and how beautiful you looked.”
“That was a good night. She even did my hair and makeup for me. Sometimes, I forget she isn’t so bad. I will play nice since the two of you are besties now.”
“I wouldn’t go that far. We have an understanding now. Where are the children?”
“Carl came by and got them. Judith included.”
“He came alone?” Rick asked concerned.
“Yes. He said Jag was too distraught to come herself. She talked to your new best friend apparently. Made her sad. She wanted baby love to cheer her up.”
“I hate to hear that. But, she brought it on herself. Her mother wanted to talk to. She sent her packing.”
“It is what it is. She wanted her babies, so I unassed them.
Though, I think Tommie stayed behind. I think she has a crush.”
“On Carl?”
“Maybe. But, definitely you. Who can blame her? Curly hair, bright blue eyes, full pink lips. Ya smell so good. Tight, little ass, bow legged. But, most of all, you are good, kind, gentle, fair and loving man.
You and me and her watched Twin Peaks together because it was her thing. You did that because you knew it would make her happy.
That’s the type of man you are. Come here,” she threw the cover off revealing herself to him.
Rick thought, This must be what my son feels like. I have never had two beautiful women want me in one night. A black woman and a half Indian woman with an English accent. Hell, yeah. My grandpa is rolling in his grave.
Rick undressed and soon was making love a second time in so many hours. Shit, he was impressed
with his own self that he get a proud, extra stiff hard on again so quickly at his age. After they were done, she snuggled Rick and drifted back to sleep. It was five on the morning now.

Rick remained awake and plagued by his thoughts once again. The alcohol had long wore off. Today is going to be a shit day. I can tell, Rick thought as he sighed. He had made up in his mind that he was going to confront Michonne and get an answer one way or another.

If he gleaned one thing from talking to Priyanka it was living a lie makes you bitter and poisonous.

Seven hours later, he was surprised to see Miss Richter with Dare in tow.

“Priyanka, you may want to sit this one out. It could be dangerous,” Rick said touching her shoulder. “So, could his cough. And I want his ears checked out. Just to be safe,” she said kissing his little forehead.

Rick grabbed his little hand and smiled.

“Such a beautiful boy. He’s so alert. Hop on. Let me watch him later? I love babies.” Priyanka nodded.

Over the next seven hours, they were herded and psychologically terrorized by the Saviors. Priyanka’s mind raced as she, Dare, Sasha, Tomeka and Rosita followed with weapons drawn behind Carl, Aaron, Abraham and Rick who carried an infirm Maggie on the mattress they used as a stretcher as Eugene played hero and drove the RV solo.

After twenty minutes, Priyanka jogged along side Rick and said, “You know they are toying with us. There’s no way in Hell, they aren’t hot on our heels.”

“Maybe. We have to try anyway. Maggie’s too important. She’s family,” Rick said.

Not mine, Priyanka thought.

Soon, the whistling began.

Oh, fuck me, Priyanka thought right before the spotlights clicked on.

Exposed, Rick stopped right in their tracks.

In that horrible instant, Rick never recalled feeling quite so powerless. Priyanka however had when she signed her parental rights away.

More time passed.

The RV door flung open.

Negan- Nick Egan

Negan had been inside psyching himself up. He regarded his brand of terrorism as a bit of theater. It was a remnant of his administrator days. He was a guidance counselor doubled as the girls' soccer coach.

“All right, Nick. You got this. These fuckwads have went entirely too far and stayed way to goddamn long,” he turned his attention to sweet but deadly Lucille.

“Rick the prick and his gaggle of assholes killed fifty-five of our men. Good soldiers, invaluable workers. People we can’t not easily be replaced. I can’t abide,” he said aloud almost obscenely rubbing circles into the grip of the bat.

Negan got up and jumped up and down to abolish any remaining nerves he may have had. You can’t establish a fear with a case of the jitters. You have won. You got this, he cracked his neck and kissed Lucille and opened the door.

“Well, well, well . . .” Negan went on for about ten minutes. Going up and down the line-up as he did so.

Priyanka recognized his voice before she saw his face. She let her hair down as to hide her face. She didn’t not want him to see her.

To her horror, his attention turned to Tomeka.

“Kid, how old are you? Ten?” Negan asked.

“Twelve,” she scoffed.

Turning to his men, Negan said, “Fuckers, what did I tell you guys about children? This is a child.
She doesn’t need to see this shit.

Kid, what’s your name?”

Tomeka didn’t want to say at first but she figured it was best not to piss off the bear.

“Tomeka, sir,” she replied.

“Sir? Well, hot damn. Somebody raised you right. Nothing worse than an ill-mannered brat. Sir. Little lady, I want you to get up and go wait in the RV and don’t come out until nice uncle Negan tells you to.”

No sooner than Tomeka got up, Dare began to wail.

With a gun pointing at her head, Priyanka knew she that was her son’s bored cry not hungry or wet cry. Besides, she knew he would not stand for a child being hurt.

Negan sighed and again addressed his men.

“Why didn’t any of you assholes tell me there is a baby? Rick, why didn’t you kill these feckless fucktwats? You would’ve been doing me a favor. Shit, I might’ve even threw you a parade. Who the fuck does this baby belong to?”

Rick said nothing while rolling his eyes defiantly.

“I am going to ask you one last time whose baby that is or that one is losing a thumb,” he said pointing at Carl.

He figured he was Rick’s son because he could see the resemblance and how he kept looking down at him.

Priyanka was sitting beside her son in law. She threw her hair back and said, “The boy is mine.”

Negan-realized it was Priyanka straight away.

He motioned for Arat, who had the baby to come near.

He told Priyanka to stand. She did.

“Well, fuuuuuuck me. Richter, you are sight for sore eyes. I was just thinking about you earlier. Look at you. As hot as ever. Aww, fuck it. You all have waited this long. Why not a little bit longer? So, what’s his name?”

“Dare. As in Virginia Dare.”

“Born into the new world. You look great. You can’t even tell you were knocked up.

How’s your sister? Still with us I hope?”

“Yes. I am a grandma,” she quickly regretted the admission but a part of her was glad to see him.

“No shit? She likes dick. She takes after you.”

Priyanka cringed when he said that but she knew this wasn’t the proper moment to set him straight.

“Well, take your son, he’s precious by the way and board the RV. After Lucille and I teach these thunceruncuts what happens when assholes take what’s mine, we need to catch up.”

Arat handed her her son.

Priyanka was about to obey but figured she had to tie a loose end.

Looking down at Carl, she asked Negan, “The young man, can he come too?”

“You just said it. He’s a man. He stays. Besides, you’re Rick’s, aren’t you, future serial killer?”

Negan put Lucille right in his face.

The young man didn’t flinch.

“Damn straight,” he said rearing up at him with pride. He and Rick had their differences and a bush of barrel of problems but at the end of the day he was still proud to carry the name Grimes especially since it wasn’t just theirs anymore.

“Come on, kid. Cry or something. What’s wrong with you? Yeah, serial killer.”

“Listen, this boy is just as much my son as my baby is. He had nothing to do with the bullshit that happened at your outpost. That was fucked. Neither did my people, the Pharaohs. We arrived in Alexandria while they were gone. He was the one who let us in. Please, let him come with me. Please. I have known him since he was two. He is a good boy,” she wanted to call Negan by his true name and out him but she resisted.

She knew this would be considered disrespectful and last thing she wanted was to make a bad situation escalate because she emasculated him.

Negan figured out quickly that Carl was her son in law or something close to it for her to claim him
so vehemently.
“Baby girl, you just simultaneously sold them out and took up for Donny Darko. You’re such a
Loki. I have always dug that about you. But, he stays. He has to see what happens when you fuck
with what’s mine. One of you fuckers is going to get the ever loving shit beat out of you.
But, you darling, you get to go to the RV. Sit this shit out.”
At that point, Priyanka made a decision. She motioned for Tomeka. She handed her Dare and got
back down on her knees.
“If he stays, I stay. He is the first child of mine to ever called me Mom. I ain’t leaving him,” Priyanka
said literally the most sincere she had been in her whole life.
Negan was impressed by this but he knew he couldn’t let it stand.
He understood that he basically encouraged his people to be wild animals out for blood. Last thing,
he needed to do was appear weak, especially to a woman.
So, he said, “Priyanka Richter, I got to give you credit. You are almost as much woman as my
Lucille. You have always had huge beach ball lady nuts,” he whispered in her ear, “I know it was
you that night. I saw you walk away.” His face looked stern when he pulled from her. It frightened
her.
Negan continued, “Nobody else here has the testicular fortitude to even address me the way you just
have.
That said, Gavin, Simon, grab her well shaped ass and Arat get the baby from the girl. Take her and
the boy to my vehicle. Tomeka, is it? Go to the camper.”
Priyanka protested and tried to break away.
Soon her voice faded into the background as Negan threatened Maggie and Glenn reacted.
“... No more outbursts. I will shut that shit down...” After Priyanka no one else was allowed to
speak out of turn.
An hour passed. They sat there horrified, angry and oddly enough humiliated as they observed the
headless corpses of Abraham then Glenn. Negan was still working on Glenn whose body was still
twitching. He wanted to live so badly.

Carl- I Hope They Know
Carl was so angry and hurt, he was shaking. He had looked forward to going through first time
fatherhood together with him. Raising their children together.
More than that, he felt guilty about Priyanka. If Negan didn’t give her back, which he doubted he
would since they blatantly had a past- how the fuck was he supposed to explain this to his wife?
More than that, he wondered how she was holding up. He hoped she was being strong and not
panicking.
He knew her enough to know that right now, she was the voice of reason. The calm one. If everyone
else was having a shit fit, she would be the one saying it was going to be okay.
That is if they returned that night. He knew that was unlikely.
Now, when she woke up and they still weren’t there, that was going to be a different story. He
remembered how she was when her parents had showed up yet before they had to evacuate. She
fucking lost it. Onliest thing that calmed her down was Priyanka.
Carl began to weep for his wife, Enid, for Carly-Jayne, for Judith, Ana and Marco- what if these
were his last moments? Did they know how much he loved them? How his life was pointless before
they came into it?
He hoped they did but most everyone he spoke of was too young to know.
Under his breath, Carl pleaded with God, “Please let me live. I have a wife and an exe and three
babies in between them that I need to meet. I have my four year old and my three fosters. My sister
needs me. My Dad needs me. Michonne needs me. God, please protect my Dad and Michonne.
Please protect Michonne. And Jagadamba and Enid and my children and my sister. I can’t say that
enough.
Even Achilles, Bigelow and Boyardee, too. They are good people. And protect Daryl. He was taking up for my Dad he wasn’t trying to get Glenn killed. And finally protect my mom, Priyanka and my kid brother, Dare. She may not be an innocent but he is. Just protect them. Protect everyone I love in Jesus’s name, Amen.”

Enid and Jagadamba- You Need a Sister

Seven hours earlier.

Jagadamba awoke from her nap feeling content with her life. She felt downright happy. She should have known then that it would be all downhill from there. Upon leaving her bedroom, she discovered her home was quiet. Too quiet. Vacated. First agenda, find her kids.

Jagadamba automatically went next door. The front door was ajar. The sound of children screeching in play was the first thing she heard.

“Hey, Momma,” Carly-Jayne ran and hugged her mother.

“Where’s your Papa?” She asked sensing something was amiss.

Achilles overheard and replied, “He left. So, did your mother and brother,” he said wanting to see her reaction.

She looked alarmed for a moment but played it cool.

“Don’t call them that. Is something wrong with the baby?”

“Don’t you realize I would be gone, too if there was? No. She needed a change of scenery. You hurt her feelings a lot.”

“Feeling. She only has the one.”

“This is a lot. I know.”

“You don’t. Your parents were actually your parents. Where is everyone else? You know what? I am taking my children and go ask Tommie. If anyone knows she does.”

“Good luck with that. She went, too.”

Exasperated, she asked, “What the f-u-c-k is going on? All I did was take a nap.”

Achilles explained to her what was happening.

“Poor Maggie. I hope the baby makes it. As for rest of them, why leave? Why take the risk? Why would Michonne and Glenn do something so stupid? Same thing goes for Carol, Rosita and Daryl. Why did Tommie go again?”

“Her crush on Rick,” Achilles said.

“You noticed, too?”

“Have to be Rick not to. I swear that man is captain oblivious.”

“I don’t know. I think you have that wrong. If anything he notices too much. Plays it close to the vest,” Jagadamba said.

Achilles scoffed, “Jagadamba, don’t overidentify. He isn’t you. No one could ever be you,” he smiled.

Despite herself, she returned the same smile.

“Mind keeping the children for me? I have to go investigate.”

Achilles motioned for the kiddies to come on back. They had no fear of him and did so readily.

“I love you, big brother,” Jagadamba said sweetly.

Touched, he replied, “I love you, too baby sister.”

“If you see Priya before I do when she returns tell her that I am ready to talk. Really talk.”

He agreed and she left.

She could feel the fear in the air. It was tangible.

She spotted Bigelow on the guard tower.

She was halfway up the stairs when Bigelow met her and said, “You are not allowed up here.”

“Allowed? Next thing you’re going to tell me is to surrender my shoes and go wait in the kitchen while the menfolk talk.”

Bigelow shook his head then said, “Your pappy in law put me, you and Gabriel in charge. The
general consensus is we are about to be under siege. And if so, ipso facto that makes you the most important person here. Well, you, Enid and the children. Judith and Carly-Jayne especially. If the unthinkable happens. You’re the last official Grimes alive.”

“Fuck you and that noise. They’re coming back,” she jabbed him his chest with her bony pointing finger to punctuate each word.

“Those were Rick’s words. Don’t shoot the messenger. You’re the MVP. Enid, too,” he said.

“The babies. Goddamn. Why does Maggie’s womb have such bad timing? Baby Rhee is already a histrionic attention seeker.”

“Don’t you think it is a little unwise to make fun of her in your condition?”

“I am not. That baby is not going anywhere. Plus, she was nasty to me this morning,” she said.

“She’s probably just upset with you about Enid.”

“Are you?” She asked sensing something was off in their relationship.

“You slept with my girlfriend before I did. I still haven’t. So what do you think?” Bigelow scoffed.

“You talked my idiot father in law into leaving me behind after I had been brutally accosted and sexually assaulted. So, we’re even.”

“Fair enough. You seen Enid? I know she didn’t leave with them. Have you seen her?”

“No. Carl told me she used to run off a lot. Maybe she did this time.”

“I doubt it. She would never risk the baby. She’s here.”

“Okay. I will look out. I will get her to walkie you when I find her.”

“Thanks. In the meantime, would you mind doing inventory and then hide the ledger. Just in case they invade. They don’t need to know exactly what we have.”

Jagadamba agreed.

As she walked away, he yelled, “We will always do the original plan. Take their shit and go back to Richmond.”

Jagadamba stopped and turned around.

“You know that quit being an option when-“

“When you discovered your future babydaddy and auntie were here.”

“Not just that, smart ass. But, I am not going anywhere without them, Tommie, my brother and my . . . mother.”

“I am still flabbergasted but not really. It explains a lot. It explains the liberties she took with you. Why she always demanded your respect. Same nose, lips, cheekbones. You are the same, exact irritating. You-“

“I get it. We’re related. I gotta go.”

She went to the storeroom and immediately noticed the chair against the door. Not knowing who it was or why she did not remove it.

She pulled her gun out and announced, “Whoever you are in there, I have a weapon and lots of people with me. We will not hesitate to fuck up your shit,” Jagadamba bullied.

Enid groaned as she woke up. The last person she wanted to hear from was her.

“It’s me, betrayer,” Enid grunted sitting up in the dark.

“I deserve that,” Jagadamba said.

“I am glad you think so, she-Carl. Because you both think I need your permission to feel my feelings. Let me out,” she demanded.

Jagadamba was about to but then she thought better of it.

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“E, you and I really need to talk.”

“No, we do not. I have nothing to say to you. Open this fucking door, you cunt.”

“You and me, we need to cope with it but we are family now. Our babies are siblings. They have to be apart of each other.”

“Well, we have some time to go before that matters. Neither of us are even showing yet.”

“Speak for yourself,” Jagadamba scoffed rubbing her slightly protruding belly.

“This is like your gazillionth pregnancy. I have been reading up on it. You are supposed to show quicker than me.”

“My sixth. And don’t be an asshole about it.”
“I forgot. Only you and Carl are allowed asshole privileges. Rick, too. And Michonne, too. Must be a Grimes thing. Dirty is right there in the name. You Grimeses make things worse.”

“Last name is Savage for a reason, huh? You bark and bark and to what end? You end up doing what is expected of you anyway. 

Now, I am not letting you out until we come to an accord. A parley if you will.”

“You have watched the Pirates of the Caribbean trilogy with Carly-Jayne too many times.”

“That is what happens when you have a kid as you will soon find out. All bullshit aside, Enid, I want you to be apart of my life.”

“You know what. Fuck you. I am not putting up with this. Let me out!”

“No. I need you. Enid, please. We got. We got to make up. You are one of my only friends.”

“Really? Friends don’t do what you did. You pretended to like me. I was stupid enough to think we were cool. I am so as ashamed. 

Jagadamba kicked the door hard enough to dent it. This was one of her berserker buttons. It brought out every ounce of her mean girl cruelty. It brought out her inner Priyanka. “I can guarantee you that I am not the pathetic one. I am the wife. Remember? I have power. I have a say. I was being polite before when I said we were family. You are just a vessel. A container. That baby is important. Not you. 

You were just a placeholder. He was waiting for me all along. He was mine first. He chose me that first night. He wanted to dispose of you. I pitied you. Made him throw you a bone. Literally and figuratively. So, if you want to be nasty, I can out nasty you, bitch. I am Black, Indian, German and English- I am the definition of a stiff upper lip. You can’t hurt me.”

Enid knew categorically she could Hiroshima Jagadamba’s whole world by simply telling her the truth about her precious Carl and blessed Michonne’s illicit relationship. She knew that Jagadamba held both of them up on a really high pedestal. Enid considered this. Imagined what it would feel like to divulge the world shattering info. And just like that, the damn near saintly Miss Savage took a deep breath and confessed, “I loved you way before I did Carl. Since I was six years old when I watched you in The Polka Dot Princess. You were magical in that movie. Barely older than Carly-Jayne. You were a figure of hope for me. That’s ten years of my life. 

When I was sick with leukemia, Mia Self and Ida and your music, kept me going. You are going to pretend like you don’t remember-”

“You called yourself Grace then. I stayed longer than I was supposed to. They wanted it to be a photo op but I didn’t want to use you like that.”

“You have no problem with it now. My, Carl’s right. You are not the same person you used to be.”

“He talks about me to you?”

“Among other things.”

“Like wh-?”

“Anyway, you saved my life in so many ways. Just survive somehow. You know your asshole husband said that to me after he trapped me in here? I swear he doesn’t get anything unless it’s directly about him,” Enid said.

“Why did he leave again? Why would Rick let him? That’s just irresponsible parenting. And don’t get me started on Priyanka. Who brings a newborn baby along knowing there is imminent danger? I-“

“Shut. Up. I am going to finish. I want you to imagine my delight when we became friends to a certain extent. I used to daydream about that. You were a dream come true,” Enid was in tears now. Jagadamba was to. She didn’t know she loved her like that.

“Sharing Carl was just as much an excuse to be around you as anything else. I mean, yeah, my ego would not allow me to just dump him but I wanted to be around you, too. And I love your daughter, too. She’s a cool little lady. 

And then the threesome happened. I knew it was bad idea but it was you and him. I think, no, I
know I am in love with you both. I wanted to make both of you happy. So, I did. Then I found out a week later the two of you are married. It crushed me. You made me a mistress, a whore without my permission and I find that hard to forgive. But, I am willing to. Because it is the right thing to do. I don’t want to fight with you or him. It’s exhausting. And being pregnant is draining enough. So, ask.”

Jagadamba removed the chair from the door. Enid squinted as she adjusted her eyes to the light. “I am sorry I got married behind your back,” Jagadamba said contritely putting out her hand out to help her up. Enid accepted, “I forgive you.” She then slapped her. “I deserve that. And you deserve this,” she pushed her against a wall and planted one on her. Enid didn’t fight her. After a minute, they separated. “Wanna be my girlfriend?” Jagadamba asked. Enid mulled over it. “No. You don’t need a lover. You need something you don’t have. You need a sister.” Jagadamba began to boohoo. Enid embraced her. “I am so scared. What if they don’t come back?” Jagadamba asked. Enid clutched her face and said, “Don’t talk like that. They will be home tonight. You’ll see. You’ll see.”

Three hours passed. It was dusk. Jagadamba was bent over a commode. Enid was with her holding her hair. After twenty minutes or so, it stopped. Too weak to get up, she lied her head in Enid's lap. “E?” “Yes.” “What is it about him?” She said in reference to Carl as Enid caressed her hair. “I can answer that. When he isn’t being the worst, he’s kind. Smart, funny. Kinda deep, sensitive, passionate. Sexy. Hung like a horse. Noticed how I said the most important thing last?” “It’s not the most important thing but helps. Boy does have good dick. Good head, too.” “True. I have never told him this but he is the first man that ever made me come. That first one blew my mind.

Also, that night. That night he spoke of you and your love of sixties musicals. How he hated West Side Story. Thinks Romeo and Juliet is the stupidest and Flower Drum Song, too,” she said. “I knew it. I knew he hated it. He always denied it. He squints when he lies like when a baby puts forth effort to poop.” “Said he pretended to like it to make you happy. I told him that he must be a warlock after you showed up the next day. I was happy for twenty measly hours.” “I am s-” “Please don’t insult me by apologizing.” “What do you need from me?” Jagadamba asked. “What do you mean?” “I don’t know. My mind is going a mile a minute. Seemed like the thing to ask.” “I need us to remain calm for what might come next. We can’t lose our shit. I want my baby and I want your babies, too. If we panic or become hysterical, we lose. I don’t know about you but I am tired of losing. Losing can suck my dick!” “I concur,” Jagadamba almost laughed then she started to weep again. “It’s all right, J.B. It’s all right. I will stay strong for you and stay strong for me.” “Easy for you to say. You only have Carl out there.” “And Maggie and Glenn. And Tomeka. I like her. I would be really sad if I never saw them again.” “Yeah. I got Carl, Michonne, Rick, Tommie, My mom. My little brother. I feel so bad about my brother.”
“Why?”
“This morning I was so, so jealous of him. When I thought he was just my nephew, I was crazy about him. Pitied him because she was his mom and she acted like she didn’t want him at first. I gave him his first meal. My body even made colostrum for him.”
“What’s that? Milk?”
“Yes but is special. It’s different than regular titty milk. It is more yellow. Thicker. Supposed to be full of antibodies and whatnot.
The first week of his life, I was his caregiver. I loved him, I love him. When I found out he was my brother, my feelings changed to envy.”
“Why?”
“Because he would always know that he was wanted. His life won’t be a lie. Plus, she holds him, sings to him. Plays with him, I can’t help but to wonder did she ever do that with me? She ever kissed my little face like that? It sounds so petty out loud.”
“A little. But, I get it.”
“Everyone keeps saying that. You don’t. I don’t have an identity anymore. Other than being a Grimes. If my husband dies where does that leave me? If Priyanka dies or Dare dies? If Rick dies. Or Michonne. Even Abraham for that matter, all my links to my past except Achilles and you will be gone.
You people keep forgetting I thought I had a sister. I lost her when I found out she was really my mom. Priyanka Richter is my mother. My birth name is Alice Richter-Anthony. I am Alice Richter. Jagadamba is my middle name. I am Alice. And I have spent my life living on the other side of the looking glass.”
Annoyed and not afraid to show it, Enid asked, “Are you done feeling sorry for yourself?”
“I am not,” she pouted.
“But you are though. Just a little. This isn’t helping.”
“You don’t understand.”
“Then explain it to me. Since you decided your pain matters more than anyone else’s.”
“I would never say that. Pain is pain. I know Carl is yours, too. He is literally alive in both of us.”
“You really need to stay on topic.”
Jagadamba sat up and looked her dead in the eyes.
“Please don’t become insulted by what I am about to say. But, you don’t love him like I do. I love him the way you say you love me.
During the past five years, my feelings for him was the, uh, impetus that caused the trajectory of my life since I was twelve. I ran away to be with him. Therefore I was captured by Galen. My daughter exists because of that decision. When I came across Priyanka and Achilles again, I insisted we go to Georgia so I could find Carl and Lori. That how we ran into Cortez. All of it has to do with him. When I gave up ever seeing him again, is the exact moment I stumbled across him. I recognized him as soon as I saw him. I played it cool because I was insulted he didn’t recognize me right off.”
“He did. He didn’t want to believe it. He told me he saw you everywhere sometimes,” Enid told the truth.
“That’s nice to know. Thanks for telling me that.
Anyway, I am saying all that to say this, there’s something he said to me my first night here that sums up how I feel.
He said, you, we are only sixteen and we have been out of each other’s lives for five years. I can’t speak for you; but that means I have spent over a quarter of my life missing you. I don’t want to do that anymore.’ Then he kissed me. You know them rest.”
Enid wasn’t quite sure how to feel. She didn’t know rather to be angry at or feel sorry for Jagadamba.
She knew was this one thing- she did want to be Carl’s dirty drawers when his wife discovers or quits being in denial about him and Michonne. There was no doubt in her mind, someone was going to turn up dead.
Enid stood.
“I will be right back,” she said.
Jagadamba nodded.
Enid went down to the kitchen and found the sharpest knife she could find.
She went back upstairs with it.
Jagadamba was puking ass again when she felt Enid return.
Out the corner of her eye, she saw the knife.
Jagadamba still dry heaving and having left her weapons in her bedroom began to plead for her life and that of her children’s.
Enid laughed, “You fucking adorable idiot. Have you heard nothing I said to you today? You need a sister, a person who will never betray you or lie to you or be unfair to you. I am going to be your friend until the day I die.”
Enid slid the knife over the palm of her hand. She cried out as the blood began to trickle out.
Jagadamba reached out for the knife and did the same.
She threw the knife in the sink. Then both girls joined hands and said in unison, “Sisters.”
An hour or so lumbered by.
The very young women continued to talk. They talked about their parents, exes. Their hopes for their children.
“I hope my baby doesn’t inherit my bad. That’s all leukemia is essentially,” Enid said.
“I hope if I do mess around and have little boys that they have their dad’s hearing. Almost have the men in my maternal family have prelingual hearing loss. Some were worse than others. My uncle Rami, great-uncle. He had cochlear implants. So he could hear some shit. That said, I hope I have daughters. Won’t have to be concerned with it at all. Despite this, it would be nice to give my husband a son eventually.”
“I don’t care what I have as long as it is healthy and happy,” Enid said.
“True dat.”
The girls were silent for a mo.
Jagadamba began thinking about Carl and Michonne.
How after their argument, his sexual technique utterly changed. It was for the better but still. And Michonne didn’t take up for her much. In fact, she threw shade every chance she got.
“E, will you be honest with me about something?”
“Depends.”
“It’s about Carl and Michonne.”
Enid took a deep breath.
“What about them?”
“I know she broke his heart. He told me so my first night here. And she told me that they kissed once.”
“And?”
“After they came back, they were different towards each other me. Hell, at the Hilltop, she was different towards me and him, too.
I think they had sex before they came to get me. And after.”
“Why do you assume that?”
“My nightmares have the uncanny tendency to come true. People are constantly betraying me.”
“You that is ironic you saying that to me, right?”
“Sorry. I try to forget about it.”
“How you hurt other people?” Enid asked.
“Alright. I walked into that.”
“A little.”
“But, what if they are sleeping together? I can’t wrap my mind around it. They wouldn’t me and Rick like that. Would they? This could tear our family a part. And we are a family. What do you think? Am I being paranoid?”
Another opportunity to destroy Jagadamba presented itself once more.
Enid took a deep breath and said, “It was me.”
“Huh?”
“All Carl's new sex stuff. It was me. Bigelow taught me some stuff and I taught it to Carl. Michonne would not hurt you like that,” Enid lied through her teeth. And Jagadamba knew it because she had just confessed to being upset that she slept with her and that he still hadn’t. She almost asked Enid what she taught him but decided better off of it. Why antagonize somebody trying to protect my feelings? Jagadamba thought.
“Well, all righty then. On that note, I should probably go see what Gabriel is up to. You can hang here if you want. And, ooh walkie talkie Bigs. He's really concerned about you.”
“I will do him one better and go to him.”
Both got up. Altogether glad they had mended fences with each other.
As they descended off the front porch, Jagadamba remembered what Enid had told her during her second day in Alexandria after they agreed to share him.
“Enid, thank you.”
“For what? Lying to me.”
Enid didn’t confirm it or deny. She went after Bigelow.
Eenie, Meeny, Miney, Mo

Chapter Summary

Rick confronts Michonne about her and Carl's relationship.

Glenn and Maggie have a tender moment as do Sasha and Abraham.

Later, they get caught by the Saviors and Negan makes his appearance.

Rick and Michonne- Denial Wasn't an Option

It was six in the morning when Michonne awakened to Rick looking at her quizzically as if he didn't know her.

Regardless, Rick mustered up the wherewithal to crack an awkward smile and low growl, "Good morning, gorgeous."

Rick then kissed her.

After a minute, she said, "What's on your mind? How'd you sleep?"

"Kept dreaming about Carl. I don't know what to do about him."

She asked, "In what regard?"

"Any of it. Especially you. I don't like how he is around you. Not lately. I am certain after last night that his crush on you has not dissipated. If anything, it's the reason why he dove headlong into his relationship with Jag."

Michonne had known for a while that deep down it was only a matter of time before Rick put the pieces together.

She knew Carl's handsy display and her weak argument were key contributing factors in his determination.

Times like this I wish you were an idiot, she thought.

Still Michonne knew the importance of feigning innocence.

She asked, "How so?"

"Because she's your niece and since he can't have you, she's the next best thing despite the fact they grew up in love.

So, I am going to be blunt. Did anything inappropriate happen between the two of you when you were alone a couple days ago?""

Michonne knew she had a decision to make and complete denial wasn't an option.

However, giving in to human nature, she had to try.
"I don't understand. Why are you saying this to me?" She asked.

Aware of what she didn't say- her non denial, Rick pressed in with a promise.

"I consider myself a reasonable man. So, this is a one time offer.

So, tell me what happened or didn't between my son and you. No matter how salacious and I will forgive you, won't hold it against you nor will I ever bring it up again. No side eyeing, no snide remarks. Nothing. I did it for Lori once. I will do it for you," he said fearing the worst.

They have fucked. I know they have. Please let her tell me the truth. I will keep my promise if she just doesn't lie to me, he begged in his mind.

How stupid does he think I am? THIS sounds like some shit his mother must've told him to say to catch a bitch off guard, she thought going into overdrive thinking about exactly what she was going to say.

With real tears in her eyes, she replied, "As we both told you, Carl and I got swept up in the vortex of the tornado. But, before that, there was the waiting. And in the waiting, Carl took a chance and he kissed me. I indulged him and I kissed him back. I am sorry. I thought we were going to die," she genuinely began to boohoo while simultaneously looking at Rick's response.

He naturally was not pleased.

He took a deep breath.

He knew there was more. He pressed on.

"What happened afterwards?" He asked now sitting up.

"I already told you that," she said.

"No. He is too familiar with you. And he is waay too disrespectful of me."

"He is still mad about his wife."

"She's home and they have made up. He doesn't dwell like that. Unless, he feels like something been taken away that something is you. So, what else happened?"

"I woke up with stitches and in different clothes? Which means he saw me naked. Maybe that is why he is odd."

Rick turned grim and he asked, "Do you think he molested you while you were unconscious? That maybe he sexually assaulted you. I saw your face last night. You looked a little terrified," Rick would rather believe it rape than to deal with the reality that Michonne wanted to fuck Carl.

Rick, really? Oh, I should kick Carl's ass for last night. Whispering all that dumb, sexy shit in my ear, Michonne thought.

"I wasn't terrified. I was annoyed. I knew he meant nothing by it so I endured. He was sad and drunk."

"Why do you always take up for him and his awful behavior?"

"I don't. I just think it is absurd to accuse him of rape. You raised him better than that."
"I did. I also raised him to respect women but yet and still he had two girlfriends, married one in secret and impregnated them both. He cheated on Enid literally the first chance he got. Not to mention how he speaks to me lately. Smartass is one thing but he downright hates my guts. He can't hide it. So, don't protect him if he did something to violate you. Tell me. It would break my heart if he turned out like my piece of shit, good for nothing, little brother but I need to know," Rick said.

"Tell your heart to rest assured, he is not a rapist. After that initial kiss, he tried again. I told him no. He understood. I thought."

"He told me you all had a falling out. Is that what caused it?"

"We did. About his behavior and Jagadamba. How I feel obligated to side with her because, well, she is one of the only remaining relatives I know I got left and what he said to her was wrong. You and Judith and Carl are my family but blood is blood. He was upset I mostly agree with you. I figured he would get over it.

What did your brother do? Jeff?"

"Yeah. He and a cohort got accused of assaulting an unconscious freshman girl. They were seniors. In high school. They were acquitted because our uncle happened to be a badass lawyer but I always believed he did it."

"Why?"

"Because he told me so in so many words," Rick hunched.

"That'll do it.

You and Carl are going to get it together. You have to."

"The babies. Grampy and Papa do need to get it together. Last thing they need is the tension of us being at each others throats. I can't show them how to respect him if he doesn't me. It's that simple."

"True. Are we okay? It was just a kiss."

"We started with a kiss. Whole dynasties have started with a kiss. You know what a kiss is. Pros fuck but they don't kiss. There's a reason for that. A kiss is intimate. I would rather the two of you have fucked. That's such a lie. I would prefer neither."

"I know that. And I am sorry. I wasn't trying to hurt you. Neither one of us were. I guess he just want to get it out his system," she said hoping he was buying her line of bullshit.

"Good. You gotten it out if yours?" Rick said knowing for her to kiss him back she clearly had some type of feelings for him.

Now she became offended, "What is that supposed to mean?"

"I know the two of you have been exceptionally close for a while now. You have seen him blossom like a flower. I know I should tell him more often or at all -that he is a beautiful man. I love him and I am proud of him. Mostly.

And he made a point about me not seeing you when I should have. He always has and I know that carries weight. I am sorry, too. It's my fault the two of you are drawn to each other.

By not bringing Jagadamba home, I put you and him together. One way or another.
So, if there is something you are not telling me, it's my fault it happened. But, whatever happened or didn't- make damn sure, it doesn't happen again. I fucking mean it. I will not and I can't emphasize this enough, if there's a next time, I will not be so forgiving of either of you. And I will draw Jag into it if it happens again. Because it is her life, too. No one deserves to live a lie. So. Honesty. Have you and Carl had relations?"

A naked Michonne got out of bed and reclined against the dresser.

She took a deep breath and said, "Rick . . ."

Glenn and Maggie- Now

Glenn watched adoringly as Maggie undressed for the shower.

Sure, he had seen her nude countless times. Each occurrence was a joyous panel in the patchwork quilt of his mind. Well, except that one time with the Governor.

However, he held this instance as particularly potent.

As if overnight and like a rainbow after a storm- his dear wife, Maggie was ever so petitely showing.

He entered the shower behind her. He kissed her swan like neck that always tasted sweet and sour like buttermilk and honey.

My farm girl, Glenn thought.

Maggie goosebumped and cooed as she felt her husband encapsulate her in his embrace.

As his hand slipped between her legs- not to finger her exactly but just to feel the place where their future started; somehow she understood this.

They simply breathe each other in. Both enjoyed the hot, wet, heat that radiated off the other.

She turned to face him. They kissed.

Neither one of them wanted to let go. They knew they won the lottery when they found each other.

"Each day with you is better than the last. I love you, Maggie," Glenn grinned.

"Ditto. Three against the world," she said before kissing him again.

"May we always win," he said.

"Damn straight," she said.

He gripped her stomach and said, "Us."

She nodded.

They preceded to enjoy each other. Deep down, they knew a reckoning was coming. But, that didn't matter.

"I am glad we have now," he said clutching her close.

"I am glad I have you," she said looking over her shoulder at him.

They kissed and got to the business of bathing.
Abraham and Sasha- Hair and Ass

Sasha drinking Ovaltine in her front porch when she noticed Jagadamba and Carl come out their house. The young marrieds were holding hands, kissing and talking amongst themselves. He had Carly-Jayne by the hand. She was swinging and skipping. A grimacing Tomeka had Ana by the hand. Marco stayed behind to play video games by himself.

They looked so happy together that it brought a tears to her eyes.

I want that, Sasha thought.

She didn't know Abraham was looking at the same thing albeit from their upstairs bedroom.

He took note of Jagadamba's appearance.

Her wavy and curly black hair was all over her head. She had on a blue plaid shirt that was blatantly Carl's- buttoned half way and tied around her waist displaying her belly button and her slightly protruding belly. Looked like she ate biggish breakfast even though she hadn't dared take a bite yet due to the fact it would be coming back up momentarily.

The showstopper was the homemade jean booty shorts. Her butt cheeks were just one false move away from saying hello to the world.

Carl thought she looked hot. However, he still didn't want half of Alexandria eye fucking his voluptuous wife.

Her reply was, "It's just a matter of time before I start looking like what I am. A well appointed two bedroom apartment with a full kitchen, two baths. This is probably the last time I am going to look like this. You better enjoy it, too."

Abraham shook his head and said, "That little lady ain't nothing but hair and ass. How puny ass Carl can handle all that woman is beyond me. Maybe he got a big, ol' donkey dick or something," Abraham laughed out loud before heading downstairs.

Both Abraham and Sasha got butterflies when they saw each other.

They hugged and shared a quick peck.

"Out here people watching?" He asked still holding on to her.

She nodded.

"That girl is so short. All her height went to her hair and ass," Sasha said smiling.

Abraham laughed.

"Great minds. I just said something similar to myself upstairs. She's short but shapely. That's a lot of woman for an absolute beginner like Carl. I was thinking he must be packing some serious heat for her to even want to be bothered."

"Michonne says his daddy does. I doubt the huge cock apple has fallen too far from the tree."

"Cock apple. You been hanging around me too much," Abraham said.

"Mmm. Never."
They kissed again before spotting Elliott leaving Daryl's place.

He followed her to the door. He waved and almost smiled at her as she turned to do the same.

"Is that a walk of shame?" Sasha asked.

"Fuck that. Did he wash his ass? I thought he was some kin of the Wicked Witch of the West. That he would literally melt if water hit him."

"Or like on Supernatural. The Leviathans only weakness was soap."

They laughed so hard and so loudly, Carl heard them halfway up the street.

He turned around threw a head nodded at them. They returned it.

They saw the Grimeses approaching Rick's house.

Before Carl could retrieve the hide a key, the door flung open. Michonne stepped out.

Carly-Jayne greeted her aunt before doing the peepee dance. Her mother swept her up and took her inside. Tomeka and Ana were behind. Leaving Carl and Michonne alone. He began to speak first.

Sasha read her lips, she told him to shut up. She then grabbed him by the forearm and dragged him off the front porch to the side of the house.

"Okay?" Abraham said.

They emerged five minutes later. Michonne angrily stormed back into the house. Carl came out looking stricken.

He had his hat in hands. He walked up the steps to his old house. He wanted to go inside. He thought better of it when he looked up and toward the guard tower and saw his father talking to Gabriel.

He left the hat on the porch and returned to his own house.

At this point, Sasha decided she needed to go be nosy and talk to Michonne. Abraham decided to do the same with Carl.

He knocked on the young man's front door.

"Come in. It's unlocked because despite everything I still have the sheer audacity to be trusting," Carl said fussing.

Abraham let himself in. He immediately became concerned.

"Oh, hell nawl. Let's nip this shit now," He saw an open pint of liquor on the coffee table. He grabbed the bottle and dumped it in the sink.

Carl was behind him.

"Dude, what the fuck? You can't just come into my house and tell me what to do. I-"

Abraham hemmed Carl up against the wall and growled, "I am not your pappy. I don't love you. I don't care about you. Well, that's a lie, I do. But, I love that little lady you are ball and chained to. She's my godbaby. I owe her adoptive daddy my life. I am not going let you crawl into a bottle."
"I am not. It's the hair if the dog. I am hungover."

"It is one thing to get drunk on your birthday. That was yesterday. It's only nine in the morning. You got three babies on the way. And that four-year-old. I am not going to let you check out. You don't have the right. You want to be a man? You got to stand up, so them balls will drop."

"I am a man. But, I hear you," Carl said.

"I just want you to understand just because she is an orphan- I don't count Priyanka. She may be her mother but she isn't her momma.

Anyway, like I was saying, don't go thinking just because she is an orphan doesn't mean that you get to treat her anyway you want scot free. You answer to me. Got that?"

"Yes, sir. I know that. Way better than you do."

"Seriously, if you hurt her, I will kill you like a chicken.

That said. This aint like you. You are super responsible. Creepily so. What's up?"

Carl wanted to blurt out his problem but he knew better.

"I am a little upset. Michonne told me something."

"What?" Abraham asked.

"Nothing I can't handle. I just need a little time to digest it. And you're right. I am not checking out."

"Good. But, are you sure you don't want to tell me? I know I talk a lot of shit but I am really good at listening," Abraham turned sympathetic and placed a caring hand on his back.

Carl declined and Abraham departed upset to be in the dark.

Meanwhile, Michonne, Sasha, Maggie, Judith, Boyardee, Elliott, Jagadamba, Carly-Jayne, Ana and Tomeka were all having breakfast of pancakes and eggs that Michonne had prepared. Cooking was a nice distraction.

All the menfolk were off doing whatever.

Maggie in full bitchy pregnant lady mode, asked Jagadamba, "Girl, you look like ten miles of bad road. Is your morning sickness not getting any better? Do you need to go back to the Hilltop?"

Jagadamba wanted to insult her back but resisted.

"It's actually better. Instead, of puking for an hour this morning. It was twenty minutes. Progress. So, what's your excuse?" Jagadamba asked. She changed her mind.

"Ooh, sassy," Sasha said teasingly.

"Touche. I haven't really had morning sickness per se. But, I have been cramping and a bleeding a little. Glenn says I should go see Doc."

"He's right. Spotting is never a good thing. I should know. I almost lost Andre because of it," Michonne said grabbing her hand.

Maggie took her hand away and said, "I am a farm girl. I am good stock. I will be fine."
Maggie moved her attention back to Jagadamba and asked, "Does she know about?"

She nodded her head at Carly-Jayne and made a cradling motion with her hands.

"No. We are going to tell her when I start to really show. She has no real concept of time yet. She'll expect to see them right away. But, I am showing a little."

"No way," Michonne said.

She sat up straight revealing her belly.

"Right here. Give me your hand," she put her hand on the bottom of her belly.

"Whoa. That's hard and round. B-a-b-i-e-s!" Michonne kissed her cheek. She was honestly excited. As well as guilty.

I don't want to disrupt her home more than I already have. I am so sorry, she kissed her cheek again. Jagadamba blushed.

Carly-Jayne was paying attention.

"Momma, you have a tummy ache? I will rub it."

She proceeded to put her cold sticky hands on her mother's belly to soothe it.

Touched, she lifted the four year old up and put her in her lap.

"I love you, too, baby," she kissed her daughter's forehead.

"You're so sweet with her. I can't wait to be that way with mine. Five and half more months," Maggie said twerking Carly-Jayne's nose.

"I know, right? Baby love. There is nothing like it." She cradled her daughter harder.

Michonne sighed with longing before picking up Judith.

"There really isn't," Michonne added doing the same.

Thirty minutes later, Tomeka decided she wanted to leave. As the de facto older sister of Carly-Jayne, Ana and now Judith, they all wanted to go where she went.

She gladly albeit stoically took the girls. She secretly loved being looked up to.

With the children gone, the talk turned blue.

". . . Girl, one night, Abraham was hitting it just right. It felt so good I had to tell him to stop," Sasha said playing with her earlobe.

"Oh, hell nawl. Did he?" Michonne asked.

Sasha replied, "He'd better not had. Nigga' would have gotten punched in the face. Hard."

"I hear that," Jagadamba interjected.

"Really? What about Carl?" Sasha asked with a stinkface.
She almost did not want to know. She remembered him as a little boy in her brain.

"When it's really good like my first night here when I let him go down on me and when we were making up the other day and a couple times last night, I call him the n word, too," Jagadamba offered grinning. Surprised her and Sasha had anything in common.

"I don't call Glenn racial epithets but I call him Pookie or Goku. He calls me ChiChi," Maggie offered feeling a little lame.

Boyardee laughed, "Like in Dragonball Z?"

Elliott asked, "How about you, Michonne? What you call Rick?"

"Rick. I am not into pet names. And I rather detest the n word. No one should be called that ever. Complimentary or not. It is a disgusting word," Michonne honestly felt this way despite the fact it simultaneously shaded Jagadamba and Sasha.

In unison. Sasha and Jagadamba said, "Party pooper."

They giggled.

"I was wrong about you, Black Buffy," Sasha said.

"I was wrong about you, too, Hot Comb," she smiled.

Sasha, a little annoyed with Michonne's response and her lack of participation, said, "Tell them what you told me about the heat Rick's packing."

"I can't talk about that in front of her. I doubt very seriously she wants to hear about her father in law's dick."

Just like I don't want to hear about Carl's dick. That I kind of miss, she thought.

Elliott said, "This is no offense to you, Boo," she said to Jagadamba then turned to Michonne and said, "Fuck her. I need and want and deserve deets. Spill."

Jagadamba chimed, "I don't care. To be honest, I want to know what I got to look forward to when Carl gets older. Are we talking Skipper, Barbie or Ken. Right now, Carl is a solid Skipper becoming a Barbie. He's due for another growth spurt. That thing is only going to get bigger," she said smiling lasciviously.

Michonne frowned and said, "I was never one to play with dolls. You got to specify."

Sasha replied, "Skipper was anywhere between eight to nine and a half inches long. Barbie was eleven and a half inches and Ken was twelve solid inches. I loved dolls as a girl. My brother, Tyrese used to bribe me with them. I had a collection that I kept in a storage unit in Atlanta. Didn't want any of my fellow firefighters to catch wind of it. I never would have lived it down."

"Had you pegged as a tomboy," Maggie said.

"I am a conundrum. And in the spirit of good sportsmanship, I would say Abe is a thick Skipper."

"Mmm. Thick definitely has its advantages. I prefer that to long and skinny any day. It's like getting poked by a stick in the cooch. It hurts. Mike, Andre's dad was long and skinny. Ugh," Michonne said reliving him and some other college boyfriends in her head.
Maggie added, "Ooh, like those guys who have watched a porn too many and they enthusiastically just drill the shit out of you, no rhyme, no reason. Basically-"

"Masturbating inside you," Sasha said.

"Exactly. I had to quickly unteach Glenn that. He'll never cop to it but I know he was a virgin when we hooked up. He was too cute not to deflower. He used to wear a baseball cap. Made him look like a grown up Short Round," Maggie laughed.

"Who's Short Round?" Boyardee asked.

"You're old enough to know who Indiana Jones is, Boy. Aren't you twenty something?" Michonne scoffed.

"I am nineteen. And I never liked those movies. I can tolerate the first and third ones. The other two, hell no. They even start out shitty. That bimbo butchers one of my favorite Cole Porter songs in another language no less. If she isn't a clear case of I am fucking the director then I don't know what is. Plus, my dad loved those movies. I don't want to like anything he liked," Boyardee said.

They dropped the issue.

The women took a moment to let it die.

Elliott spoke first.

"Michonne, you still didn't answer the question. Skipper, Barbie or Ken?"

Michonne clicked her tongue and a proud grin crossed her lips.

"Unlike Ken, he is not junkless. First time I saw him naked, I was like oh, okay. It had been such a long time since I had been with a man, shit, I was afraid it might hurt. It did a little. I got over it. Rick knows how to wield a sword just as well if not better than I do. That man is something else. They both are. So tell us about last night. Was it nice having the house all to your grown selves?"

Michonne turned to her niece.

She had had a slip of the tongue. But, no one noticed but her. She hoped.

"Yes," she said coyly.

Sasha said, "Come on. You can do better than that."

Boyardee teased, "So, tell them what you told me about Mr. Jolly Rancher?" Boyardee asked with a goofy, how you doing grin.

Sasha thought about it and said, "Eww."

Maggie said, "I don't get it."

Boyardee rapped, "Girls call me Jolly Rancher cause I stay so hard. You can suck me for a long time. Oh, my God."

"Shut up, Boyardee. I told you that shit in confidence," Jagadamba said.

"Don't be shy now, Jambalaya. Talk," Elliott said intentionally being rude. She wanted to see if Jagadamba had a temper.
Jagadamba sighed.


"Jag, okay?" Elliott asked.

"Only Carl, Michonne, Achilles, his woman, maybe Rick gets to call me that. It's personal," she said.

"I hear you. So, what did you and Rick jr. do last night? Elliott insisted looking at Michonne.

Jagadamba blushed.

"I will tell you later. I'm fairly certain Auntie doesn't want to hear about me and his sex life," she said taking a page from her aunt's playbook.

Michonne looked relieved. She really hoped her kinswoman would show a little decorum for a change. She didn't want to know.

Yeah, right.

"So, Anthonys like making people pull teeth. What happened?" Maggie asked.

"Well, I will say this. You know how when most men get drunk, they can't maintain or get an erection- he had the opposite problem. I mean for like five hours. It just wouldn't quit. And we did everything. Like everything . . ." Jagadamba's eyes bucked and a quirky little grin crossed her lips as she detailed their exploits.

All the women leaned in except Michonne. She was looking for an escape route.

" . . . Usually when it comes to oral. I have no problem receiving it. My first consensual sex act was that. I have reservations about reciprocating because it was always forced on me or some type of coercion was used. But, this morning, I wanted to that to my husband. You know. I even enjoyed doing it to him. I like giving my husband pleasure because I know he likes giving it to me. It's nice not feeling shame."

Half listening, Michonne asked, "Why do think that is?"

"It's legal," Jagadamba smiled.

All the women looked at her oddly except Maggie. She smiled, too.

"Hebrews chapter thirteen, verse four. About the marriage bed. That a husband and wife can't defile their wedding bed. As long as they're both consenting, let your freak flag fly. It's when one of you go behind one another's back with a third party that things get real shitty."

"Exactly. I mean he belongs to me and I to him. He loves my child in a healthy and appropriate way. He is building a relationship with my foster children. It is nice to be apart of something that I chose. To have something no one can take away from me. It's the most wonderful feeling," Jagadamba said almost in tears.

Michonne felt like Jolene in the song of the same name by Dolly Parton.

Only Jagadamba didn't know she was pleading to keep her man. No idea whatsoever.

Michonne felt the need to flee. She knew she was an interloper, the third party in their bed.
She excused herself with some flimsy excuse to go to one of the barns and weep.

She felt like a, well, sinner.

Now alone, Michonne she said in singsong.

"God is going to get you if Negan doesn't get us first."

Meanwhile, Sasha wanted to follow Michonne but enjoying the company of the other women too much to.

I will catch her later, Sasha thought.

Carl and Marco- Approval

During this time, Carl was with Marco by the lake. He was teaching him to skip rocks.

"Carl, what's it like having a mom and dad? Is it like this?"

Carl looked over at Marco and smiled.

"I guess. I mean. When I was your age, they and Jagadamba for the matter were my world. It was not always rainbows and sunshine but it was better than this. I am grateful for my father but I really miss my Mom."

Marco teared up and said, "My parents traded me and my sister for a place to stay.

Those men and women did gross, bad things to us. Bad things that hurt. Since I got here, I have waited for you, your Dad, that creepy hillbilly dude with the arrows. We have waited for one of you to hurt us the way they did. But, you people haven't. All of you have been nice to us. Ana told me about the cupcakes. You were all alone with her and didn't hurt her.

So, I guess. Is it okay if sometimes call you Papa? We call Jagadamba Momma sometimes. You two are the only real parents we know."

Carl didn't know what to say. He was beyond flattered.

"Uh, sure. Do or say whatever you want. Marco. I mean that much to you?"

"I guess. I don't know.

So, show me how to throw these again. I don't think I am getting it," Marco said changing the subject.

At a loss for words, Carl stood him behind him, gently took his arm to mold into proper form- just as Shane had taught him- and lunged the smooth sandstone into the murky green water.

"You want to try now?" Carl asked.

Marco nodded.

He threw it.

He turned and looked at Carl for approval.

"That was a damn, fine rock skip, son," he put his hand on his shoulder.
Marco brimmed with joy. He had never been called son before.

Glenn and Michonne- I Remember You

Glenn had just found out not only was Carol was gone but so were Rick and Morgan in search of her. Then he found out, Rosita and Daryl had left to go avenge Denise because you know that's smart.

Glenn couldn't sit idly by and do nothing as his idiot friends risked their lives. He knew he had a responsibility to wrangle them all back home so they come up with a plan that didn't scream suicide mission.

He told Maggie of his plan and she thought nothing of it; sensing it would be a snap.

Ten minutes later, he spotted an angry Michonne walking out one of the barns away from a seemingly beseeching Carl.

He clearly overheard Carl say, "I am not ashamed of what happened. I am glad he figured it out. He actually used his brain for something other than being superior and me, me, me for once."

Michonne turned to Carl said, "This is the first time in my knowing you that I have ever thought of you as a fool."

Then Carl said very calmly, "I am when it comes to you."

Michonne scoffed before stomping and storming away from him.

In her anger haze, she noticed Glenn looking dead at her with bewilderment.

"What?" She screeched at him.

"Everything all right with you and Carl? Want to talk about it?" Glenn asked.

"Fuck no. You look like you got a lot on your mind," she said.

"Well..." Glenn explained to her what was up and they were off.

No more than forty minutes later, they were captured by the Saviors. Ten minutes after that, they were joined by Daryl and Rosita.

Soon, they were bound and gagged and loaded up to be carried out to another location. The fear among the four was so material, so palpable that it hung like a miasma in the air.

An hour later it became a living thing when they overheard the RV had been spotted on the road.

Fuck, fuck, fuuuuuuck. I hope to Hell Mags is not on that RV, Glenn thought.

Meanwhile, there was no doubt in Michonne's mind that Rick and Carl certainly were.

Oh, God have mercy. I can't lose them both. I love both of them. They are probably looking for us. What have I done?

Michonne held in tears.

Rosita almost didn't care about being captured. She was clinically depressed at the time. She either wanted to kill or be killed.
Having been shot in the shoulder, Daryl still managed to be the calmest one in the bunch. Even before the apocalypse, Daryl was used to a fair amount of catastrophe.

Plus, no one knew this about Daryl but he had happy places he would go to in times like these. And his happy place had a new resident- Elliott. More about that later.

When they arrived to the site, they let free with multiple weapons pointed at them.

"One false move or one unsolicited word uttered and your friends, not you will pay the consequences. You hear me, fuckwads?"

The quartet nodded.

One by one, they took identifying items off them to put on walkers in order to mindfuck Rick and his unmerry band of assholes.

They took Herschel's watch off Glenn. Rosita's cap, Daryl's vest.

When they got to Michonne, they cut off seven of her dreads.

The bastard grabbed Michonne by the chin and said, "Darkie, I remember you. A couple nights ago, I saw you get dicked by some long haired girl-boy against a tree.

Only reason why my home fry and me didn't snatch your asses up then was because it had been ages since either of us had seen an honest to goodness porn."

He let her face go and continued talking.

"I thought you were two dykes at first. The white one being so pretty and all. Flat chested and butch but still hot. You ain't so bad yourself.

You two argued then kissed under the bright, bright moonlight. Aww.

Next thing I know, white bitch drops to its knees and just starts to eat that pussy like she ain't had a meal in days.

Next thing, I knew the white chick we saw jumps her ass up and whips out a fucking cock and precedes to fuck you with it. That was a real cock, right? Or was it a strap-on? You got permission to speak, predatorette."

Michonne knew her friends figured out the voyeur Savior was speaking of her and Carl. She felt the eyes without looking up.

Afraid to meet their eyes, she met her accusers instead.

She rose up and said, "Fuck you, motherfucka'. That wasn't me."

He grabbed her by the hair and punched her right in her solar plexus. Which was fine because she felt like she deserved it. She didn't even scream. She grunted.

Michonne was still gasping for breath when her captor grabbed her face again, harder this time and snarled, "Since you clearly have a taste for white cock, I ought to fuck you right here and have that spic bitch suck me clean."

Unbeknownst to him, fairly moralistic Savior, Gavin overheard.
"Davey, cut that fucking shit out. You know how Negan feels about sexual assault. He don’t stand for that shit."

Davey let Michonne go then scoffed, "Tell that to his twelve wives."

They then rebound everyone but left them ungagged.

Five minutes passed before Michonne got the balls to look up.

First person that she made eye contact with was Glenn.

His eyes were rife with condemnation.

Quietly angry, he said, "You of all people. I expect more of you. I thought you were upstanding. Rick’s son? Really, Michonne?"

Before Michonne could reply, Rosita added, "Dude, get over yourself. Like you are perfect. Look, Mich, I, too have dabbled in father-son loving. Shit happens. It's all just dick and pussy. All of us are brothers and sisters and first cousins anyway in varying degrees. I say go for it. Just don't get caught by daddy. Trust me, that ends in black eyes and dental work- and possibly ruining a family but at least you got a nut."

Rosita paused and said, "You know I am being facetious, right?"

Michonne replied, "I gathered."

Rosita finished, "What you did to Rick is totally fucked. He is a bit off and a know-it-all asshole but even he doesn't deserve such disloyalty."

Michonne weakly rebutted, "Oh, so now I am the criminal while that Savior fart-knocker's mouth is suddenly cut like the Bible?"

Glenn chuckled and scoffed before saying, "For someone who used to be a lawyer, you are an awful liar. Did you ever win a case?"

Michonne snarled, "Never lost a one."

Daryl's face was unreadable.

Glenn asked him, "What do you have to say about this?"

"Well, I am trying to figure out why anyone's shocked. I always saw something there that wasn't quite mother/son. I figured when little dude got to be about eighteen, twenty, that they would realize what they felt. What I was surprised about was when Rick and you became a thing.

That said, just because I understand doesn't mean I respect it."

"Damn right," Glenn chimed.

"I am not done. I figure you and Carl cool it. Rick is like a brother to me. He is a brother to me. And I am not in the game of hurting my brother. I am not telling him shit. None of us are. If he don't know, he doesn't need to know. You made a mistake. Shit happens. I am not going to hold it against you."

Michonne observed him and knew him to be true blue.
Both Rosita and Glenn made faces but agreed to stay mute.

Hours passed. Day had long gave way to night.

Daryl, Rosita, Michonne, Glenn and Eugene were all seated in a lineup.

The only time Michonne recalled being more frightened is when she had to approach her son's bloody crib.

When the Saviors began doing that creepy whistling thing they were so found of, the Alexandrians knew they were mere moments away from being unfortunately reunited with their friends and family.

Michonne and Glenn braced themselves when they spotted Rick, Carl, Maggie, Tomeka, Aaron, Abraham, Sasha, Priyanka and newborn Dare. Their hearts sank all the way out their shoes.

Right away, Michonne sought eye contact with Rick. He gave it to her. His eyes screamed I am sorry.

Seeing Tomeka, Dare and most importantly Carl in attendance, Michonne didn't feel so forgiving. How could he let them come knowing the danger? And infant, a twelve year old girl and his son. He's fucking irresponsible sometimes.

Glenn saw the condition his wife was in. All her wanted to do was the impossible—hold her.

Thirty minutes seemed like an eternity until Negan stepped out the RV. It was as if time said fuck all and just stopped.

Negan prattled on menacingly. He managed to break it up a little but engaging both Tomeka and Priyanka. There was a whole back and forward between the three. In the end, Tomeka and Dare were told to reboard the RV.

"Little kid eyes don't need to see the fucking justice I am about to mete out one of you assholes. To put it frankly, you fuckers killed more of my people than I am comfortable with. . . ."

As Negan or white trash Javier Bardem, Michonne thought, began psychologically terrorizing them with seemingly random usage of Eeny, Meeny, Miney, Mo, another thought occurred to her. This piece of shit used to be a teacher. Of children. No wonder the world ended.

Negan chose his human effigy.

With each wet thwack, they all knew this was the end to their freedom. For awhile anyway.
Chapter Summary

Everyone is made aware of Denise's death, well murder. Bigelow makes Enid a proposition.

After chewing out Rick and Achilles, Jagadamba goes and seeks Michonne's advice about what to do about Priyanka and Carl. The one eyed wonder and the Pharaohs leader make up violently but ultimately have a heart to heart. And get closer.
And Daryl and Elliot become friends.

Jagadamba regained consciousness in Carl’s arms. He smiled at her and touched her face. She grimaced and slapped at him and said, “Get off me.” She pushed him away. It hurt his feelings but he kept it to himself.

A couple of them offered to spill the tea but after hearing Bushrod was her cousin, Jagadamba decided she was not ready to hear it or read it. It devastated her.

Soon, they returned to Alexandria. With tail tucked and metaphorical hat in hand, Abraham grimly announced, “The good doc is donezo. Arrow through her noggin.”

Head in hand and reeling at the realization he could have lost three family members today if Jagadamba had met that rabid gaggle of Saviors instead the merciful one, Rick said, “Negan.” “Most definitely,” Rosita confirmed. Jagadamba overheard and was floored. I have no one to talk to now, she thought. She became inconsolable.

Rick still tried anyway.

Instead of pushing him away like she usually would have done, she held on tightly and buried her face in his chest as she wept.

Carl overheard and his devastation was quiet. The woman who saved his life was dead. I encouraged her to go. This is my fault, Carl thought feeling irrational guilt.

He reached out and put his hand on his wife’s back to let her know he was there. She shook him off. She knew him touch.

Carl took off to go help Daryl dig Denise's grave. During that time, Jagadamba had her daughter in tow when she went to go speak to Achilles.

Rick was with her.

When she stepped in front of his house, she had expected to see all Priyanka's shit strewn about out of rage. When she did not see that, she knew he had known for years.

Aware of the hideaway key, she allowed herself in. She could hear them arguing loudly. Dare was wailing. He was a sensitive sort. He hated tension. This will one day change.

Jagadamba called out, “Achilles. Get down here now.”

He had been dreading this moment since he discovered she knew. He sheepishly and humbly came down the steps. He knew how fearsome the pint size sister could be when she was angry. She was a force of nature.

“Jagadamba,” he began before being interrupted.

“Did you know she was my birth whatever and that she lied about our parents not making back home?”
“Jagadamba. You have to-"
“Did you know about her?”
“You have to understand. I love you. You are my sister no matter what. I remember the day I met you. It is my first complete memory.
But, I also love your mom. I just do. Just like you love Carl. You can’t explain it. You just do.”
“Don’t you dare compare us to you. It’s not the same thing.”
“Fine. When you ran away, she had a major breakdown. She tried to kill herself. She almost succeeded.
I saved her. She told me you were her child. I didn’t believe it at first. Then she explained it and all the pieces fell in place. I know you are hurting and the world doesn’t make a lot sense-”
“No. What doesn’t make sense is that you had some life altering info but you were too busy thinking with your dick to divulge it to me.”
“She asked me not to. Plus, I didn’t think you would react well to the news. I didn’t want to lose you. Like I said, I am your big brother and nothing changes that.”
“A big brother protects you. Puts you first even if it hurts. Bigelow is a big brother to Boy. To,” she silently nodded to Carly-Jayne.
She continued, “To me. Carl is a big brother to Judy. You are not my brother. You are selfish and a bully. You are nothing more than my third cousin. We are barely related at all,” she turned and walked away.
Rick lingered. Achilles didn’t argue or go after her. He felt guilty and knew she was right. Rick sympathetically patted him on the shoulder.
Once outside, Rick asked, “You think maybe you were a little harsh on him?”
“No. I take it you do?”
“He was in a precarious position. He toed the line and fell off the side but the fault doesn’t rest on him. It was her secret to tell. Not his.”
“I know you have always had a soft spot for Achilles. I get it. Maybe I am being too hard on him. But, so? Everything and everyone is hard on me always even before the apocalypse.
I am pregnant with twins that I didn’t plan for who are making me so sick it’s abusive. I got pulled over by murderers today. Almost died three days ago. Got beat up. Sexually battered. Everybody abandoned me. Found out my parents made it home and that my sister lied about it. Oh, wait. My sister is actually my female parent. And I am the product of two horny teenagers. Not two adulterers. So, upside.
My mother is really my grandmother. My dad is actually my second cousin. I find all this out on my birthday.
I found out my whole life has been a great, big fucking, disgusting, ugly, unnecessary lie up until this point.
Me and my husband, your spoilt brat, my ain true love, my asshole nightmare are not getting along.
I have to deal with his hormonal, pregnant, who has every right to hate me and does ex. My psychiatrist was mowed down. I got to put the Pharaohs at ease. And to top it off. I am forced to do all this sober when all I want right now is down a fifth of Smirnoff 100, couple joints and maybe a bump or three of coke. And I can’t stop thinking of my son. Or your wife. She wouldn’t have let you leave me there.
So, excuse me for being a bit irrational and little harsh. I think I am coping pretty well, asshole nightmare, Sr,” she threw the Uno cards at his feet and stormed off.
Rick wanted to but he didn’t care enough to follow her. He had had enough of being disrespected for one day. Plus, it wasn’t like she has lying.
Meanwhile, Michonne had lingered behind in the infirmary under the guise of wanting to look after Eugene.
However, she was actually after the morning after pill. So far finding it was a no go.
Eugene, never the dummy said to Michonne, “In all my time knowing you we have scant said a paragraph to each other. Now you want to be personal Mary Seacole?”
Which leads me to enquire why did you dally? What are you really looking for?"
“I don’t think you would know.”
“I used to help her with inventory.”
“The morning after pill,” she sighed.
“We are out of ECPs. Besides, you have not been around and its already been three days. Unless,
you have had congress with someone else. In which case I don’t care but just stating a fact. Have
you?”
She scoffed at Eugene.
Then left out in a small panic. She knew tubal ligations weren’t always complete. There could be a
space in one of her fallopions. She could still be releasing eggs. And voila a baby.
And since she and Rick have yet to have unprotected sex. She knew any potential baby would
definitely be Carl's.
The idea terrified yet intrigued her. She knew there was no way Carl would be willing to keep it
secret. He would claim his child consequences be damned. Plus, she knew it would be gorgeous to
boot.
She thought, You are getting ahead of yourself. You are not pregnant. Your tubes are still tied. True,
we had lots of unprotected sex. Hot, awesome sex. No. No. We fucking. But, I am not pregnant. I am
not. It’s too early to tell anyway.
Michonne was still deep in thought when Jagadamba came up to her and bear hugged her.
“Auntie, I don’t care what the shit in the box may or may not say. You are my aunt. And you are the
only person in my family who has never betrayed me or lied to me. As such, I need your advice,”
she said on the verge of tears again. Her damned hormones kept her crying.
Jagadamba’s words made Michonne feel base and unnecessary like fame for a Kardashian.
My God, she can never find out. It would destroy her, Michonne thought.
“About?” Michonne asked.
“In private,” Jagadamba motioned for Michonne to follow her into the church.
She did.
In clipped tones, Jagadamba asked, “Should I forgive Carl without a fight?”
“Yes. He is really tore up about what he said to you. And angry about the fact Rick left you there in
the first place. You’re basically what Carl and everyone fought about earlier,” Michonne knew she
really was at least half the reason.
“I get that feeling but I am afraid if I forgive him, I am gonna have to forgive Priyanka, too. Achilles,
too. And frankly I don’t want to.”
“Then don’t. Just forgive your husband, the father of your ch-children,” she almost choked on the
word.
Michonne added, “What did Achilles do?”
“He knew,” she pouted.
Michonne thought about it and replied, “I am not shocked. Explains why he was so tolerant of her.
He felt sorry for her.”
“Why would he feel sorry for that bitch?”
“First of all, we are in a church. Don’t swear. Secondly, Priyanka endured a lot when she was
pregnant with you.”
“No more than I did. Or am now.”
“I don’t know. Her mother made her tell your father that she miscarried and that she didn’t love him
anymore. Or else she would lose her inheritance and you would never have one.
She sent Priyanka away to California. They made her life miserable.”
“With uncle Rami and aunt Khadijah lived. They were always so cold and nasty towards me.
Especially that tired old bitch. Biddy. I mean biddy. That explains everything. Well, I take that back,
their son, cousin Siddiq was cool. And so handsome. He made me feel safe.”
“Jayne pretended to be pregnant to protect you both and her reputation. If you were her child, her
parents could not disown Priyanka or you. Jayne’s inheritance was her own.”
“They lied to me because of money? That’s what my life meant to them?”
“Uh, it’s not an unsound reason. During that time, without money, how were they supposed to care for you? Magic?”

“Okay. Point taken. My father. Who was he? I know he was your cousin. What’s my real last name?”

“Anthony. Same grandfather. His dad was Bushrod's and I’s uncle,” she said.

“So. That hasn’t changed. Good. At least that much about me is still true. What happened to him? His name.”

“Nimrod.”

“I know he was the first king but that is an awful name. What happened to him? I have seen pictures but no one has ever talked about what happened to him. I just know he died.”

“I, uh, I was twelve when I found him. I was visiting my brother. Bushrod fostered him after his folks died in a car accident. He lost his right arm. He was left-handed. That doesn’t make it any better.”

“Like Carl lost his right eye. We like our toys broken. Gives them character. I am left-handed, too,” Jagadamba sniffled.

“He didn’t let his handicap stop him. He was popular and handsome. So, fricking intelligent. He was like a brown Ferris Bueller. He even played soccer. I am guessing your mother—”


“She must have been his dream girl. She is uncommonly attractive. Like you are.”

“She'll do. I know enough about her. I want to know about my father.”

“He was always there for me. Kids used to torture me in middle school. I was skinny, dark-skinned, nappy headed. Nerd. He always made me feel special. You got that gift. You feel make people feel like they matter. To this day if I feel low, it’s his voice I hear when I want to feel better. His middle name was Andre.”

“You named your son after my father. Wow. But, still you are beating around the bush. How did he die? You said you found him. Found him how?”

This was a very painful memory for Michonne. This was the moment she knew was capable of becoming detached. Hard.

So, in the spirit of that she decided to get right to it, “He had been gone awhile. He hung himself. The night before I heard him and Priyanka arguing. He begged her to take him back. That he could never love anybody but her.”

“So, she killed my dad by proxy.”

“No. She was a scared fourteen year old obeying her mother because she wanted to keep you. Today made me see her a little differently. She didn’t make Nimrod do anything. He autonomously elected to end his own life. No one can make another person do that. Because if so- you and me would have been dead such a long time ago. Been dead. So dead.”

“I tried to die after I avenged Mohinder. The same way my black half succeeded. I am half black. I always embraced my Punjabi side more. But, I realize that is only a quarter of me. Not half. I am a black woman. To be honest, I have never fully accepted my blackness until this very moment. Regardless, I always thought of myself as an other with pride. Nobody was my combination. But, to discover I am partially European- German is disheartening. Especially given what I know about Priyanka’s family. Ever hear of Ilse Koch?”

“Nazi war criminal?”

“To say the least. She had people turned into lampshades. Their skin.”

“I figured. Well, I read.”

“When she was called the bitch of Buchenwald. She is her granddaughter. She found out at school doing a project. Her father had changed his last name to Richter. He was a geologist. Hence the Richter Scale. So, she says anyway. Who can believe her anymore?”

“You know her dad committed suicide, too. Like a month after Nim did.”

“Because Jayne left him? How vindictive.”

“You shouldn’t judge him. You are named for him.”

“How? I have an Hindu name.”
“Not originally. Jagadamba is your first middle name. You were born Alice Jagadamba Boudica Richter. Alice Richter.”

Jagadamba let out a mirthless chuckle.

“Because of course I don’t know my real name. Makes sense because my life is great big cosmic joke with no punchline,” she got up and walked away.

Michonne followed.

“I can’t imagine how this is for you,” This was the only thing Michonne could think to say.

“My life was ruined from the word go. I hate her. I hate them all.”

Michonne knew she couldn’t let this stand.

“She’s still your mom. And my brother and his wife. Your grandma raised you. They all loved you and protected you. Even Priyanka. Especially Priyanka. Imagine what sacrifice it must have been to hand you over. You were the prettiest and sweetest baby. Come to think about it, she was always possessive of you. I know you are angry with her about your son-“

Jagadamba so sarcastically interrupted, “And you are so, so crazy about Mike and Terry?”

Michonne resisted the urge to bloody her nose and instead said, “It all boils down to this. Do you want to be Bobby Darin or Jack Nicholson?”

She looked confused.

Michonne continued, “Like you, their mothers were actually their grandmothers and their sisters their teenaged mothers.

Now Nicholson took it as an act of love and dedication. He didn’t let it turn him into a victim. Darrin however, let it destroy him. Put him in an early grave. So, are you Jack or Bobby?”

Jagadamba took a deep breath and softened. But, didn’t say anything.

Michonne gently said, “You don’t have to like or even love her but you have to respect her. Because if you don’t, how can you possibly have any respect for yourself? You can’t hate her. If you do, you hate yourself.”

“I don’t hate her at all. I have always loved her with all my heart. My first word was not momma or dada. It was Priya. To me, she is the most beautiful, funniest, smartest and awesomest woman I know, other than you.

I used to think the world of her. But, starting the day she took a detour away from Shane and Lori-she has been breaking my heart every since.

She doesn’t respect me. Carl doesn’t either for that matter.”

“Why do you say that?”

“At least I got one. Who says that to an orphan? Let alone their pregnant wife?”

“I heard he gave as good as he got.”

“I mean, yeah. I said some regrettable things to him. But, he called me a slave. Said girls like you. You’ll get over it. He tried to use my child against me. He pressed all my berserker buttons.”

“How did he try to use C.J. against you?”

“Told me he wasn’t going to bring her to the Hilltop to see me. That if I wanted to be around her, I would have to come home.”

“He told me you wanted to stay.”

Jagadamba was growing a little frustrated with Michonne being so diplomatic. But, she remained respectful.

“I know Carl is important to you. I know the two of you and went through some bad shit together and you are so bonded as a result. But, I need you on my side. I am your kin.”

“Why is it necessary to pick a side? All I see is a young couple in love who rushed headlong into a marriage and parenthood without understanding one another first. There was bound to be some friction. But, I know Carl and you are going to work it out. You two need to be patient with each other.”

“He never let me down before. Carl was always my rock. I could count on him no matter what. I just wanted him to be there for me. Sympathize. I just need him to be there for me even when it’s inconvenient for him. I just want my husband to feel like home. Is that so lame?”

“That is the direct opposite of lame. I understand,” Michonne paused for a moment then said, “Come
on. Are you hungry? Want some pancakes. . ."
Meanwhile, Bigelow was with Enid.
“I can’t believe Denise is gone,” she said mournfully.
“I didn’t know her too well. Other than the fact she was helping you and Jagadamba.”
Enid had an audible reaction to hearing her name.
“You’re angry with her. I get it,” Bigelow said taking her hand.
She laid her head on his shoulder and said, “No, you don’t.”
He kissed the top of her head and said, “Explain it to me then.”
Enid cleared her throat.
“Well. I had leukemia when I was eleven. They thought I was terminal so one of the nurses with my parents permission signed me up for Make A Wish. And my wish was to meet Jacie Tony.
A month went by. Then another. I had sorta given up on ever meeting her.
Then one Friday as I was returning back from chemo, there she was waiting for me. Seeing her made me so happy. Elated. I had been crazy about her all my life. She was my girl crush since the first time I saw The Polka Dot Princess. I had all the posters, dvds, shirts, socks, magazines, cds, dolls and what have you. She said in one episode just survive somehow. That kept me alive even during the apocalypse. After my parents died, that dumbass saying is all I had to fuel me. I so desperate I ate a raw fucking turtle.
Anyway, I was going by Grace then and she made me feel like I could do anything. That maybe I could live. So, I did. I improved after her visit dramatically. She corresponded with me for about a year. Until the world ended. I was in remission by then. She never brings it up. But, I know she remembers. It is the way she looks at me sometimes. Like I am the broken wing bird and not her.”
“No. God did. He just used her as a catalyst. All I am saying is I loved her way, waaaay before I loved Carl. She told me we were in this together. Sharing him I mean. Next thing I know she marries him. Mar-ries him. I thought like an idiot she was my friend. I was never her friend. I was just a tool she used to get at him. It was all about him. Carl was her endgame. I was collateral. Even back in the day, I was a publicity. A tax write off. It hurts. It hurts so bad. And now we have children in common. So, there is no escaping her or him. I mean could die or they could, I guess but screw that. I don’t want that. I don’t know what to do or how to feel.”
“I think you are handling it as you can all things considered. If it were me, I would’ve punched her in the face. Pregnant or not. You feel betrayed. And you should.”
“And unloved. So, unloved. Maybe one day my kid will love me. But, I know there is no guarantee. My luck, he or she will love her more than me or be a daddy’s little whatever.”
“I love you,” Bigelow said.
She scoffed, “You barely know me.”
“That’s not true. I know who you are. You’re a young woman with a good heart who cares way more than you should about people who don’t care about you as much as you do them. You have been hurt. You have lost.”
“That’s everyone,” she said.
“No. A lot of people don’t come through to the other side. They give up or become evil which is another type of giving up. My father did that. He clearly always harbored dark, disgusting, pathetic and violent fantasies about J.B.
Anyway, you keep going even when have no reason and you are loyal. You’re funny. Sweet. Kind. Mean in a sexy way. You didn’t have to make Mohinder's headstone but you did. You could have made Jagadamba’s life hell but you didn’t. You are a real woman. You are a survivor. And I love you. So there.”
Enid blushed. Though, flattered, she had to be honest.
“I like you a lot. I really do. You’re a good man. You’re a bonafied hero. But, I don’t love you yet. I am on my way to. You’re awesome. I am sorry.”
“Don’t apologize. I would find you disingenuous if you said you loved me. Especially since you are blatantly in love with another man and heavy with his child.
That said, do you respect me?"
“Very much. Why?”
“Well, that is all that’s required of a wife in the Bible. A man is required to love her but she only has to respect him.”
“Husband and wife? What are you saying?”
“Marry me.”
Enid was gobsmacked.
“I don’t know what to say.”
“Say yes,” he said.
“I-I- I need time.”
“Understood.”
“We haven’t even had sex yet. I just need a little time.”
“If you want we could change that right now. I am game if you are.”
“I bet.”
“Seriously, I will give you the time you need whether it’s a week or next year. I want to be your husband. And I need you to be my wife,” he kissed her hand and left.
Enid sat astonished, honored and confused. She wanted to say yes but her feelings for Carl were right there on her skin. She wanted to see his reaction as well as Glenn and Maggie’s before she said yes.
An hour later, Carl saw Jagadamba leaving Rick’s house and followed her to what was unbeknownst to her- their house. Nobody had told her that Carl moved all his belongings into her place.
She noticed a plethora of baked goods and poorly wrapped boxes, piles of baby stuff and homemade cards of congratulation and birthday felicitations in her dining room. It had mostly came from the Pharaohs.
When she got up to the bedroom, she exclaimed, “Why is all your stupid shit in my room?”
“I moved in the afternoon he didn’t bring you back. I didn’t want to be anyplace you weren’t.”
“Oh, and so when you came back yesterday, you decided you were going to what? Continue to impose your will on me? What makes you think I want to be around you?” Though, Jagadamba had calmed down considerably, she kept up pretenses to see where his head was.
“You wearing my ring. You kept the twins. You were on your way home.”
“To be with my child. You told me this was the only way I could see her. And after the tornado yesterday, I was scared for her. And Tommie. Marco. Ana. And maybe even you. Given your lack of depth perception, you might not have known how close it was or wasn’t,” she cracked.
Carl decided to take the high road and instead said, “I was swept up in it. So, was Michonne. It was like an evil rollercoaster. We were stranded. Didn’t make it home until this morning.”
Genuinely concerned, she asked, “Her stitches?”
“Yes. I did them,” he was proud of his handiwork.
“I taught you how,” she grinned suggestively to him.
“You did.”
They stared at each other for a minute. Their sexual tension was palpable. They stepped to each other.
They kissed fervently before she pulled away and screamed at him.
“You let me down and you judged me. I need a partner who will listen to me. Take my pain seriously. Who won’t threaten or emotionally blackmail me. You accused me of not loving my daughter.”
“I said you didn’t like her. You don’t turn a compound and two outposts into structure fires to protect someone you don’t love.”
“My point exactly.”
Carl said, “I also need things from you. A partner that trusts me. Who won’t go for the jugular every time I don’t agree. I am not those other guys. I don’t deserve to be treated that way.”
“You told me fuck you. And said at least I got one. You knew that would hurt me down to my
“You told me repeatedly that you wanted to murder my children. If that wasn’t bad enough you wanted to leave me and move away. You wanted to basically annul our marriage. That’s worse than divorce. Annulment is like saying we mattered so little to each other that it shouldn’t exists. And you made fun of, no. You were vicious about my eye. The thing that almost killed me. Apart of my body is gone. I feel like the Phantom of the Opera on a good day, babe. This is my face, Jagadamba.

Before two nights ago, during the past two months, you had made me feel so good about myself. You are literally the most gorgeous human being I have even seen and by extension you made me feel like I was too.

I was actually starting to believe you. Then you snatched it all away. I feel so ugly and paranoid. That’s not fair. That’s how I felt before you and Enid,” he said tearing up.

“You tore me down, too. You made me feel like used goods. I don’t want you to see me as merely a victim of rape. You called me a slave. That is a mighty strong word.”

“I know. What happened to you angers me in a way I can’t express. I wish I could murder those two motherfuckers. Wear their faces as hats. I hate what happened to you.

You are strong. And wonderful and you don’t give up. You blow my mind. I know I could not have endured what you have and still be sane. Alive. But sane? That would be asking too much. I would be so crazy.”

“I get it, Carl.”

“You are everything I wish I could be. And everything I want our children to be.”

“Really? I am actually batshit. I just hide it really well,” she said.

“No, you are not crazy. The other day, I was simply telling you I understood some of what you have endured in this life and you acted as if I peed on your cereal and told you it was milk. I wasn’t trying to hurt you intentionally not until that last thing I said. But, you were trying to hurt me. And you succeeded,” he pouted.

“So, did you. Now what?” She asked.

“We can either forgive each or-“

“Move on,” she said reaching out to touch his hands.

“I am not ready to move on. I don’t think I ever will be,” Carl said placing her hair behind ear. She ruffled his hair with both hands. She said, “Me neither.”

He put his arms around her waist and pressed her body against his.

He broke one hand free and put in the back of her hair. He pulled it tightly, not at the roots but someplace in the middle as not to hurt her. She liked the playful roughness just like her aunt did.

He brought her face close to his and kissed her in a way he never had before.

It was not a sweet buss by no stretch of the imagination. It was angry, lustful and just a bit hungry. She liked it.

She squealed when he threw her down on the bed. Soon, he was on her ass like white on rice. In between kisses, she hauled off and punched him. Hard. Hard enough she made his lip bleed. To his surprise, he liked being hit. She licked off the blood.

This sent them into a frenzy. They didn’t even bother getting completely undressed. Carl pulled his pants down around his knees and his wife’s around her ankles. Soon, they were one flesh.

She dug her nails in while he used a different stroke then usual. He kept his movements short and snug. Pounding. Not somewhat gentle and long and quick strokes that she was used to. He was definitely more seasoned pro than lucky amateur.

She honestly didn’t mind. It felt good. And who doesn’t want to get beast fucked on their birthday? Seven minutes passed. She had came already. He was damn near there. He began to breathe heavily. He attempted to soldier through it and breath through his orgasm. She felt so good to him that he knew that wasn’t going to happen.

So, he pulled out and squeezed the head of his member so he wouldn’t ejaculate just yet. A dry orgasm. Something Michonne had taught him how to do.
“What are you doing? Looks painful,” She asked.

“Something I read. It doesn’t hurt. I don’t want to come yet. It is like holding in a sneeze but in my dick. I have been practicing.”

“With who?” She said kicking him playfully. But meaning it.

“Myself. Just hold on a sec.”

Her husband’s new way of being intimate was beginning to alarm her.

Like her, Carl was a quick study. By benefit of being a thespian, she could read something and retain it straight away. He, however was more of a visual learner. Physical. He had to see something done in order to do it himself. She knew he had been intimate with someone else excluding Enid. This meant one thing to her—someone had taught him his new technique. And she knew from his own admission that he had only been alone with one other person during the past twenty-four hours. She was about to name the other Miss Anthony in her mind but he began to kiss her and about five minutes later a second orgasm took her mind right off it. She chose to stay off it.

Minutes later, he let himself finish and he screamed like someone had fire under his balls. It felt intense.

Jagadamba said as she caught her breath, “F-u-u-uck. Goddamn. That was unreal. Nigga’. That was so good I swear as I was climaxing I saw a title card that said directed by Joss Whedon float by. What got into you?”

“I don’t know. So, that’s angry sex? Huh. Cause if so. Maybe we should fight more often,” He had a goofy smile on his face.

“Yes. I guess. I saw it as make up sex. I am not mad at you anymore. Are you mad at me?”

“I was hurt. I was never angry.”

“You shook me like a newborn. You were angry, boo.”

“Okay. Fine, maybe a little. Okay, a lot. I am over it.

I love you and I don’t want to fight. It is stupid to fight. I almost lost you three times this week. Those two woman hating assholes, I almost ran you off and the Saviors today. Denise’s dead.” He said snatching her up and laying her on his chest. They were still half dressed.

Jagadamba began to weep again and cough.

Carl knew what the coughing meant. She was about to be sick.

“She was my friend. I told her so much. I have nobody to talk things out with anymore.”

“Before our hormones got in the way, we used to be best friends. Told each other everything. I told you things I never told anyone at the Hilltop. Not even Michonne. I trust you more than anyone alive in this world.”

She sniffed him and snuggled.

Not addressing what he said, she replied, “I like your stink. But, you’re a little dirty. You got to wash your ass. Wanna shower together,” she did not want to talk about her feelings, she knew sex or at least nudity was a great distraction.

He whispered no and said gently, “Tell me something deep down. No matter how dark.”

With her sable, soul piercing peepers as wide as saucers, the beauty seriously inquired, “Are sure about this?”

“You told me what happened to your son. I can’t imagine anything being harder than that.”

She couldn’t really argue with his point.

Jagadamba took a deep breath—sucking the air in hard with her diaphragm as if going against Phelps for the gold.

She cracked her neck and fingers and spoke with a tone heavy laden with everything that was and is wrong with the world. “Okay, then. I will tell you in full Technicolor, sticky, detail about the first time I met Bigelow . . .”

During this time, Elliot caught sight of Daryl brooding on his front porch as cleaned his weapons. She sashayed her way over to him.

She reclined against the railing and stood with one bare well tanned leg on a step. She had on tight white shorts and a matching halter top.

“Sorry for your lost. I heard about that doctor lady,” Elliot said.
“Why are you sorry? You didn’t know Denise,” he said not looking up at her.
“I know. You just look like you could use a little company.”
“I’m fine.”
“I’m Elliot Kinsella,” she extended her hand.
He finally looked up at her. She gave him a shy, half smile.
She looks like an older Beth. Goddamn. Just got bigger tits. Even kinda sounds like her, he thought.
He took a deep breath and half-heartedly gave her his hand to shake.
“Oh, come now, Bubba. I know one could do better than that. My daddy always said nothing says more about a man’s character than his handshake. My Michonne is crazy about you. So, you got character. Show it.”
He gave her a firm handshake, almost too hard.
“There you go, tiger,” she sniggered at him.
He grinned back however momentarily despite himself.
Old habits, He thought. They continued to talk.
Meanwhile, after vomiting for thirty minutes or so, she told him that and then some.
Shit so terrible he knew whenever he managed to fall asleep there would be nightmares about it.
Still, he did not show her his distress or disapproval for some of the things. He showed her understanding and support.
After nearly two hours of confession, there was a knock on Carl and Jagadamba’s bedroom door.
Oh, thank God, Carl thought as the knock became more aggressive.
“Jag, I will answer it,” he said hiding relief.
It was Boyardee. It was the first time he had ever been glad to see her.
“I need to talk to your babymama,” she said rudely.
“She’s my wife and I say you can’t talk to her like that.”
“I was talking to you like that. Not her.”
“She’s my wife and I am her husband. You have to respect that whether you want to or not. No babymama or babydaddy bullshit. It’s hella disrespectful. And I know for a fact. You are better than that. She told me what you did. What you risked sneaking her food and water. You are not a bitch. So, stop pretending.”
Looking mortified, Boyardee turned to Jagadamba and asked, “You told him ev-er-y-thing?”
“Yes.”
“Wow. And you didn’t run out the room stark, raving mad? Maybe there is something to you after all, Opie.
Anyway, the Pharaohs what to see you. They are taking about congregating in the church. They want to hear what our next move is.”
“Our next move is whatever Rick’s next move is. I am not in charge anymore.”
“I tried telling them that. They didn’t want to hear it. Especially Suchin and her faction. Probably something to do with the fact you told us to prepare,” Boyardee hunched.
“I did so, so when they inevitably find us in the next couple days. Hopefully weeks- when they take half our shit that we still have some usable shit left. I didn’t roar and rampage through three states to lose everything. My livestock. Our crops. The instruments, the state of the art sound equipment. My Gucci thigh high boots. They have real gemstones and gold thread in them. Oh, man,” Jagadamba pouted. She did not want to lose everything she had worked so hard for. Again.
She continued with head in hand, “I am not, I am not up to speechifying right now. I literally have my own problems. Tell them we will meet tomorrow or two days from tomorrow. After my daughter and husband’s dual b-days. Maybe. I just want to be alone with Carl and the rest of my family for awhile. I am so tired of doing stuff for other people all the time. Never anything just for me. Just by benefit of being a mom, it’s not about me. Plus, it’s my birthday. Fuck those guys. They can wait.”
“My sentiments exactly,” Boyardee said.
“Thanks.”
“Oh, what do you want for dinner? You know we are throwing you one at Rick’s place. Damn, he’s hot. I just can’t say that enough. That hair, those eyes, that ass and them legs. They’re so bow, they
make Jensen Ackles look straight legged.”
Carl asked, “Who?”
“Only ever watched it those seven times Jag was on it. She played an evil archangel. Bartholomew? Right after her contract with Disney was up,” Carl said.
“That’s acceptable. I guess,” Boyardee laughed.
“It was fun. Those guys were so super nice. Jsquared had both been teenaged actors themselves so they had a lot of good advice. Especially Jared. He loved to talk and laugh. Jensen was more introverted. Mischa was the shit. So kind and handsome. I am a sucker for blue eyes. Most of my scenes were with him. They even gave me their personal phone numbers. We got so do tight, I told them my real name,” a flash of regret about the life she would never get to lead hit her hard. She swallowed it and said, ”Anyway. Yeah, we will be at dinner. It would be rude not to show up at my own birthday party.”
“Oh, before I forget. I heard about Priyanka. I don’t what to say. It makes sense in a way. I guess. I am sorry,” Boyardee said.
“I, uh, I don’t want to talk about it.”
“Fair. I see you later.”

Jagadamba said nothing and stared down at the floor.
Boyardee left.
Jagadamba's bottom lip began to quiver.
“I am sorry tired of crying,” she whimpered.
“It’s okay to cry. Sometimes, it’s all you can do.”
“I thought I knew who I was. Daughter of two doctors who left a lot. Had a brother and a sis-”
She sat on the floor and looked every bit like a wilted daisy. He sat beside her. He had the caboodle box. He opened it and gave her the picture of the day she was born.
“Seventeen years ago today,” he said before kissing her cheek.
She took it.
She examined the photo.
She recognized her infant self and the woman she thought her sibling her whole life.
She saw the way Priyanka looked at her. Like she loved her.
Jagadamba said in a voice barely audible, “Priyanka is my mother.”
He said almost as softly, “You are not an orphan.”
“She looks so young. Younger than me. She is so beautiful.”
“You look her. But, you also look like him,” he gave her the picture of Nimrod, too.
She cried when she saw him.
“I have seen this picture before. It’s in my album. The one I won’t let you see. I am duplicating it for your birthday. Sorry to spoil it.”
“I got you and C.J. and the twins. Nothing is spoiled.”
She half-smiled. She was still skeptical of his affections for her. She doubted everyone’s.
“He was a cuter Achilles. His face is sweet. He looks Michonne. He even had dreads.”
Carl shook like someone had walked over his grave when she said her name.
“He did,” he said.
“When I see this picture and I think about everything. I can’t put it together. When did she change? I felt loved by her. I did. I don’t anymore. Not for sometime. Not since she took me away from you,” she turned and put her arm around his neck.
“People make mistakes. Our parents made them and we will too.”
“I killed a lot of people to protect C.J. I didn’t tell you everything. He was already grooming her. He wanted to take advantage of the fact she craves male attention. You see how quickly she has taken to you.”
“Yeah. I see the need like he did. I want to protect her and love her. Not perv out on her. I want her to know men are supposed to treat her the way I do with respect and kindness and love. I will never understand why do that to a child when there are so many willing adults? How evil and empty do you have to be to want to fuck a little kid? It’s beyond sick. It’s demonic.”

“As someone who has experienced it twice. Very. And that’s my quarrel, my real quarrel with Priyanka. She stopped protecting me. She counted on me to protect her instead. That is categorically unfair. I think about how she behaved during my son’s funeral. After she gave birth. It like she was mocking me.”

“I don’t think she was. She feels guilty about Mohinder.”

“She should.”

“She said her shitty genes is the reason he was murdered. Since you inherited that from her side of the family.”

“Seriously? So, she made it about her. Great.”

“It is about her. You are her daughter.”

“Hypocrite.”

“How?”

“You’re Rick’s son. And you’re constantly complaining about how everyone’s making it about him. Going by what you just said to me, you owe your dad an huge apology.”

Feeling a little a sentimental, Carl said, “Maybe I do.”

“I don’t owe her shit. Michonne said I shouldn’t be angry. What the hell does she know?”

“What good will it do you? Nothing can be undone. Besides, she had no choice with Cort. He threatened to kill everyone but you. Even Carly-Jayne. And he was going to pass you around because I figure he figured he would have no one to answer to. For the second time in her life she was forced to give you away. I mean in a way, it kinda sucks being her. Somebody was always taking you away from her.”

Jagadamba hadn’t thought about that.

With a frog in her throat, she asked, “Why do you keep taking up for her? Did she blow you behind my back? I caught her doing that to Achilles once. She’s a deep throater.”

“Oh, God. Eww. Fuck, that is burned in my brain now. She’s sort of my mom now. She’s beautiful as all get out but hell, no. That is like accusing you of wanting my dad.”

“He is downright pretty sometimes but I’d sooner cut my crotch out with a shard of glass. I have had enough middle aged dick to last me a lifetime. Well, until you get that old. Then all bets are off,” she flicked his pierced ear. He winced.

“I am beginning to think you like hitting me.”

“You know it makes you rock hard.”

“So,” he said smirking.

After a couple minutes in silence, she lied her head on his lap. He caressed her hair and hummed how old are you?

She tapped his leg and said, “You still have not explained it to me. Why you are taking up for her.”

“Because if I had your opportunity, I would seize it with both hands. And maybe my feet. Yes, she’s a selfish, demanding, shady bitch. But, she is your selfish, demanding, shady bitch. And for all purposes, she does love you. I mean think about it. She was always there. Never missed a birthday or a Christmas or a Valentine’s as far as I know.”

“No, she hasn’t.”

“Like, you said before, she always attended your award shows. Your recitals. She even moved here permanently to homeschool you when other kids made attending normal school impossible. Imagine how homesick she must get sometimes. She’s English.”

“She is extra British sometimes. Her accent gets so thick, I can barely understand what she is saying. Still, though. Why?”

“I am grateful to her. Your father, too. They made you. Since she is half of someone truly wonderful, how bad can she really be?”

Jagadamba let an honored little whelp.
“I love the symbolism of what you said. But, all bullshit aside - who am I? Cause I don’t know. You seem to be full of wisdom today. Maybe you can tell me.”

Carl took a moment to think about it.

He came up with a one word, “Mine.”

“Yeah. I am not property.”

“You are wrong. We both are. I belong to you and you belong to me. You are me. You’re Mrs. Me. That is why you have my last name now. I asked and you accepted. You got to choose your name this time. A real marriage is better than being born. Because it a family you actually get to choose. Your parents are forced on you. I get why they say getting married is a type of death. Everything you were before doesn’t really matter. You can make your own identity now. That’s what we both should do. You’re a Grimes now. Just focus on that. Don’t let this beat you down. Don’t over think it.”

“They all lied to me.”

“No. They all protected you.”

Jagadamba sat up and looked at Carl skeptically. Michonne had basically told her the same thing. “Did you really mean everything you just said to me?”

“With everything I got,” he did mean it.

She hugged him hard before kissing him softly.

“Let’s get into bed. I just need you to hold me. Please?” She asked.

He nodded and they got up. She stripped down to her skivvies. He followed suit.

They laid down. She put her head on his chest and her arm across his waist and snuggled him. Ten minutes passed. She was nearly sleep when she woke herself up to ask, “Wanna know why I got so angry with you the other day?”

“Yes.”

“You were right about me being a slave to those monsters. I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. I was also mentally, verbally, physically and psychologically abused. I am so ashamed of what happened to me. Some days more than others.”

“It is not your fault. I can’t say that enough.”

“You’re right. It’s hers. I know you and Michonne want me even forgive my Priyanka but it is difficult. See, siblings are not always going to protect you; they are the ones that fuck you over usually. The Bible makes this clear in Genesis with Abel and Joseph. Hell, Moses and Ramses. They were raised as brothers.

So, there is a certain expectation of failure with sisters and brothers. When I thought she was my sister, I had more or less forgiven her almost. But, as a mom who actually did protect her kid. Shit. I protected Tomeka from having to consummate her marriage to that creep. And she’s not even my daughter. Not to mention Ana and Marco. They were hurting him, too. My mom gave me away.”

“She had no choice.”

“So she says. And top of that she knew how badly I wanted parents. She let me think they didn’t love me enough to come home in time. But, they did. The last flight from England to the United States. Abraham and my Dad called in a favor and my Momma threw her money around. I have been thinking. This means Priyanka hacked their emails and changed them. The emails she showed me were false.

She intentionally took a detour so Achilles and I wouldn’t discover her ruse. All this to supposedly tell me the truth? She never did. She still hasn’t. Carly-Jayne and you and Glenn did. I know you want me to wipe the slate clean with her. But, I can’t. It is not that simple. I avenged and protected my little ones. She can’t claim the same.”

“You are a better person than your bio mom. That almost goes without saying. But, you have to try.”

“No, I don’t.”
“What do you have to lose?”
“Pride? My sanity.”
“Babe, you never really had that to lose.”
She punched him in the ribs.
“Ow. I do kinda like it when you hit me. But, seriously. She’s your mom. And I admit my reasons are a bit selfish. You got a moment and I want one. Me and Priyanka have always gotten along. You need a dad. You and my Dad made a huge stride earlier. Together we can all be a real family. Nothing is better than that. Our children deserve nothing less.”
Jagadamba couldn’t argue with that.
Carl added, “The moment ever comes that she hurts you again. I will cut her ass down like a tree.”
Jagadamba just looked at Carl with admiration.
She snuggled her head in the nook his chest and forearm.
She breathed him in and closed her eyes.
“Hmmm. Safe,” she sighed smiling before quickly dozing off.
Carl held her tightly and felt closer to her than he ever had. He closed his eye and smiled.
He remembered the time before Michonne when he loved Jagadamba just because she was Jagadamba and not the niece of his heartbeat but when she was the heartbeat.
So, this made him wonder. Was it truly possible to be in love with two women? Could it be equal. And if not which one of them did he love the most?
Wait, It's Gets Worse

Chapter Summary

Three stories essentially about Carl that all lead up to the early events of season 6 finale Last Day on Earth.

It starts the day before on Carl's birthday and him discovering his dad and Michonne making bacon, later that evening, Rick has suspicions about him and Michonne. The next day, Carl asks Enid an important question.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Carl- Wishes

"Happy birthday to me," Carl said in singsong and out of breath as Jagadamba rose her head up and wiped her mouth.

"Your birthday is the only time I am ever blowing you. I don't like doing it. Never have. Pussy not so much but dicks are gross."

He thought, Sure as shit can't tell you hate sucking dick. Not with that tongue action.

Playing with her hair, he said, "That was. I can't even. Wow. You're amazing."

"Well, duh."

He laughed and then kissed her.

Nice and nasty, he didn't like tasting himself on her lips but he hid the fact lest she never do that to him again.

Still, he had a query. It was a bit left field but not really.

"When did you know you liked girls?" Carl asked still able to physically feel the little remnants of what she just did to him.

"That is an odd question considering the fact I just had your penis in my mouth."

"I know, I know. I am just curious. Have you always felt that way or is it the result of what happened to you? No offense."

"Since I was nine. Why do you ask?"

"I realize I need to know everything about you. I haven't asked you why on basic stuff. Like how did know you were bisexual?"

"I had my first girl crush on my co-star."

"The chick that who played Ida was really pretty."
"McKenna Heskett. Oh, I would get so nervous around her. I even fantasized I was older and I would sweep Kenny off her feet. Save her. She had the worst taste in men. I hope she is alive and well somewhere."

"I never would have guessed your crush. But, looking back on it. You did talk about her a lot. Like a whole lot. Whoa."

"You thought what happened to me made dig girls?"

"No. Maybe," he admitted.

"Being assaulted doesn't make a woman turn lesbian. It's innate. I like women. A lot. You of all people should understand."

Carl nodded with a grin.

Jagadamba added, "But, if I am going to be honest, I had more or less given up on dick until you. I haven't exactly had the best experiences with it until now. And sometimes that is up for debate."

She smiled playfully but that is honestly how she felt.

After all, he did have a babymama and his whole change in sexual technique bothered her but she decided to treat it as needless paranoia and not a hunch.

Maybe he's just got a natural ability. Like Babe Ruth or Whitney Houston or Charles Manson. Charles Manson? Why did I think about Charles Manson? What the hell does that say about me? Pregnancy brain, uck. Anyway, her thoughts rambled.

She said aloud, "Anyway, I am saying all that to say this. And I am only ever going to say this once. Cause, it is kinda embarrassing."

"Okay. Shoot."

"You're the only man who has ever made me glad I have a, uh, who hasn't made me hate my vagina."

She then ducked down and hid her face under the covers.

Carl stifled laughter for a full minute or so until she peaked one eye at him.

"That is like the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me. I get it. I do. I don't make you hate yourself."

"Exactly. You give me a reason to want to live," she said. She hadn't completely uncovered her face.

Carl thought about what she said.

And Carl came to a grim realization.

"Before you and Enid, I wasn't even sure I wanted to be alive to see seventeen. I wanted to die so badly. I figured my life was over. What girl would want me looking like this?

Then one evening Enid kissed me and we made out. She gave me hope. And how did I repay her? With betrayal and heartbreak. We hadn't even been together a day before I cheated on her. What does that say about me?"
"Well, as the person you cheated with notwithstanding, that doesn't sound too great. But, you forget the context. The way we were separated was fucked up. And I always realized we were hurting Enid. I do feel terribly about it but I wanted you and you wanted me. And she was in our way. I hate to say but it's true. And besides, I don't apologize for being happy. Neither should you," she uncovered her face and clutched his hand.

"I don't. I also don't regret it as much as I know I should. Especially getting married. I am glad we did that. Like at least, some of our childhood dreams we had together are coming true," he kissed her hand.

"I couldn't have said it better myself," she said.

They kissed for a spell.

When they separated, she said, "I know it's your birthday but I need you to do me a favor. Well, Bigelow a favor."

"I will do it because you asked me to but why?"

"Well, the other day, he sort of proposed to Enid."

Carl sat up.

It bothered him more than he thought it would.

"What did she say?"

"She needed time."

"Oh, good," he sighed.

"No, not good. She needs to move on. You have to help her."

"How?"

"You'll figure it when time comes. And if you do, I will do that thing again," she suggestively licked her lips.

"Well, shit. I will go talk to her now," he said pretending to get up.

"Stop. It has to be organic," she laughed.

"If you say so. Come here," he opened his arms to her.

She cooed and snuggled him.

She lied on his chest and they went to sleep.

Six hours later, Carl got up early to make cupcakes. His wife was out like a light.

When he was a boy his mom would wake him up on his birthday with a single cupcake with a lit candle.

"Happy birthday, baby boy. Make a wish," Lori would whisper. Rick would be behind her smiling.

He wanted to do this for Carly-Jayne.
While making the frosting, he heard soft footfalls on the steps.

He turned to see who it was. It was Ana.

"I had a bad dream. I couldn't sleep. I smelled food. I am hungry," those were literally the most words she had ever spoken to him at once.

"They'll be done soon. You get to taste the first one. Okay?"

She nodded excitedly and almost smiled.

"You want some juice?"

"Yes, please."

He poured her cup.

"Thanks," she smiled.

"Welcome, cutie," he smiled.

She blushed.

Carl thought, Looks like I am making some leeway. She's a pretty little thing. Looks like Selena Gomez mixed with a kitten. I really want her to know aren't all men monsters.

"May I touch your cheek?" He asked.

"No," she said.

Achilles had taught her the meaning of no. Achilles was the one who saved her along side Jagadamba.

The first man whoever told her she mattered and that her body was her own. He was her hero.

"Good. Always say no when you don't want to be touched. It's your body," he was proud. Not offended.

"I know. So, today is you and Carly-Jayne's birthday, right?"

"Yes."

"I don't have a birthday," she confessed.

"Sure you do. Everyone is born."

"I don't. Marco doesn't know mine. Or his."

"Oh," Carl came up with a plan right then and there.

Ten minutes passed. He took the cupcakes out to cool.

As he iced them, she whined, "I thought you were gonna give me the first one."

He passed her one.

"Ooh. These are good, Carl," she engulfed it.
"Another one?" She asked moments later.

"What's the magic word?"

Rather mischievous and with a great big smile, she replied, "Now."

"You're where Ceej got that from."

"Please?"

"All right. Bring your brother up one, too. But, be quiet. Don't wake up Carly-Jayne just yet."

"Okay. And thank you." She hugged his waist. Getting some icing on his arm.

"Sorry," she wiped it off with her hand and wiped it on his pants leg.

He shook his head and she said, "Happy birthday," and went on her merry way.

Carl finished icing the cupcakes then upstairs to wake Jagadamba so they could serenade Carly-Jayne together. When he saw their vacated bed he knew where she was.

She was resting her head on the toilet seat catching her breath.

He rubbed her back and lightly placed his head on the nape of her neck.

He spoke softly in her ear.

"Thank you," he said reverently.

"For what?" She knew what. She wanted him to say.

"For having the courage and the will to go through this so our children will be born. I know being sick sucks and pregnancy in general isn't an easy thing to do or be. If it were men would have babies."

She chuckled a little.

He finished, "To sum it up, what you're doing is an act of love. You don't have to do it but you choose to. And it's a beautiful thing you are doing. And I love you. I really do."

Jagadamba didn't know what to say.

"Now that is the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me. I love you so much. I am so glad and blessed you were born, Carl. Happy Birthday. My life sucked so hard without you in it," she rose up and turned around to hug him.

"Say it again," she sniffled.

She wanted to look him in the eye as declared his appreciation.

The jaded young woman actually believed him as he reiterated. After all, that was how he felt about it.

After he repeated it, she said joyously, "I feel better. Just you saying that to me. I feel strong and loved. I don't feel that way very often. Thank you. I feel like I can do everything," she hugged him harder.
"Even have a sit down with Priyanka?"

"Everything but that. Don't kill the mood. You smell like your mom's white cupcakes," she kissed him.

"Taste like them, too. Made some?"

"Yes. I wanna do for Carly-Jayne what my folks did for me. And Ana and Marco, too. But, them tomorrow or next week. Give us time to throw them a proper birthday party. They deserve it. Today is Carly-Jayne's day. I got the distinct feeling she would hate to share."

"She would be pissed. What about them?"

"Ana just told me that she and Marco did not know their birthdays. Next week is as good as any day. Right?"

Jagadamba just looked at him before a weird, proud little smile crossed her lips.

She said with tears in her throat, "You are officially the most decent and kind human I ever met. Damn right, I am having your babies. Your goodness deserves to go on," she cooed and nuzzled his neck.

It was a good thing she couldn't see his face. Otherwise, she would have saw the guilt cross his brow.

Goodness, he scoffed. Kind and decent human beings don't do what I did three days ago. They don't cheat on their wives no matter the reason. Good men aren't in love with someone else.

He felt like the worst person ever.

He hugged Jagadamba tighter.

"I don't deserve you at all. You deserve someone better than me," Carl teared up.

She looked him in the eye and said, "There is no one better than you. Not to me."

Twenty minutes later, the couple made their way downstairs.

As he carefully chosen a saucer for the cupcake, his wife beat it him to the punch.

She sang him happy birthday and presented him with a slightly lopsided heart shaped red velvet cake that she had made him the day before.

"Make a wish," she grinned.

"I already got it. I have a whole house of people who love me. I have a family. Nobody can ask for more than that. Besides, the two things I would wish for are impossible to get. So," he sighed tearing up again.

He was thinking of Lori and Michonne.

"Your mom and Shane?" She assumed.

"Yeah. I really miss her especially. I dreamt about her all night. Its how I remembered the recipe. I could smell her. Felt her when she hugged me. Kissed my cheek. I think she was really with me this morning. She knows about the twins and us being married and Enid. I probably sound insane," he
blew out the candle and took the cake from her.

"No, you don't. Bushrod, my Dad, he came to me in a dream the other day. I never dream about them so I figure he's either dead or dying. I hope I am wrong. I used to dream about you all the time. And here you are. So, yeah. He's alive. Right?"

"Damn straight."

They kissed then went up to Carly-Jayne.

They waited until they were outside the door before lighting the candle.

"Don't want wax allover it," he said.

She opened the door, Carl walked in with the fiery cupcake.

To their surprise, she was awake and coloring a picture she had drew. She was using her nightlight to see. Dawn was beginning to pull back its blinds.

"Happy birthday, Papa. I almost done with your present, Present."

"Okay, Gift. But, first," he and Jagadamba began singing Happy birthday to her.

She blew the candle out and set her cupcake aside.

Ever a serious girl, Carly-Jayne said, "I want a boiled egg and grits first. I want aunt Priyanka to fix it. She makes it the best."

"Grandma," Jagadamba corrected.

"Priyanka is your grandma and you will call her that from now on," she finished.

Carl was surprised and impressed she told Carly-Jayne this.

"Why? I mean how is Priyanka my grandma? I thought she was my aunt like Michonne and Boyardee and Judith."

Jagadamba took a deep breath and said, "She is my Momma like I am your Momma. I didn't know until two days ago she was my mommy. I want you to respect her. I want you to love her. You look like her when she was a girl. I saw the pic. We look like her and have my Dad's eyes."

"So, Priyanka is Grandma like Rick is Grandpa?" Carly-Jayne asked.

"Yes."

The four year old hunched and went back to her picture.

Three minutes later.

"Papa, I am done," she stood up and gave him the drawing with pride.

It was a drawing of him. His hair touched his shoulders, she drew him in a blue plaid shirt and blue jeans.

He was smiling and sans eyes patch. She drew the gaping hole. Colored it red and brown.

She colored him peach and drew his one eye with long lashes and as big and blue as she could
render it. She even displayed his knocked knees.

All in all, it was a pretty accurate depiction from a child so small. She had a gift. All Daltons could draw.

"Do you like it, Papa? I can do another one," she started to panic. She was afraid he didn't like it.

Carl swooped her up and kissed her cheek and Eskimo kissed her, too.

"This is the most beautiful picture I have ever seen. This looks just like me."

"You think so?" She asked hopefully.

"Yes. Thanks for being so awesome."

"Happy birthday, Present," she said.

"Happy birthday, Gift," he said.

Jagadamba was done for. Every doubt and fear she had towards her husband ebbed away.

She was in love. Totally and for real. And motherfuck any fucker who naysayed it.

An hour later, they were at Priyanka's for breakfast. Carl was chatty with her. He was projecting his need for a mom on her.

While her actual daughter refused to speak to her or even look at her or Achilles for the matter. She sat stonefaced.

Even when Achilles tried to give her Dare to hold, she said, "I am cool."

"Carl," Priyanka began, "do me a solid and go to your dad's house and grab me four eggs. I have enough for Carly-Jayne but not the rest of you. I gave him eighteen yesterday."

Carl nodded and went about obeying. Jagadamba joined him.

"Sooner or later, you know you're going to have to talk to her?" Carl said grabbing her hand.

"Says you. I am only at that woman's house because Carly-Jayne wants to be there. No more, no less."

"I get it-"

"No, you don't. Drop it."

"Okay. Okay. Sorry. Way to be mean to the birthday boy. But okay."

She hunched him and said, "Big baby."

Soon they were at the front door.

Carl still kept the key in his pocket and opened the door.

It was quiet. Usually this time of day, the house would be full of chatter and music.

They gave each other a look of concern. He pulled out his revolver and she pulled out the red machete.
"Get behind me," he said.
She obeyed.

They checked upstairs first. Nothing.

They went downstairs. Kitchen was the last room they checked.

Lo and behold, they were in fragrante delicto on the kitchen table. Rick was on top. His cute, little, pale white ass on full display as he pumped like a piston.

Jagadamba chuckled nervously then backed away while Carl died a little on the inside.

Both Michonne and Rick were embarrassed. They didn't stop but still.

Once outside, Jagadamba said, "OMG. I need brain bleach. Your dad was tearing it up. I mean-"

Sick to his stomach, Carl said, "I forgot something at the, uh, uh house. I will be right back."

"Ugh. Don't make me go back there alone. I will come with you."

"Baby, I have to check on something for you. It's a surprise," he actually was not lying completely.

He did. After all, his birthday marked the anniversary of their first kiss when they were eight.

She looked at him incredulously and you have a surprise for me. On your b-day?"

"Yeah. Cause I am that awesome of a guy. Now go. You can handle Priyanka. You know her better than anyone," he assured her.

They kissed then parted.

Once inside the house, he ran into the nearest bathroom and threw up.

He emerged from the commode in a barrage of angry tears.

"Why do I still give a flying fuck? Why can't I get rid of her? She can me," he said out loud hitting his chest.

It took him ten minutes to quit lamenting and get himself together.

He splashed his face with water and dried himself off.

He looked into the mirror. He felt beleaguered by his nearly unfettering affection for Michonne.

He had to remind himself to keep it together.

That they both had too much to lose and being together just wasn't a viable option at the moment. Or ever as it were.

Pull it together, man. You have what everyone wants, he thought. You have an intelligent, beautiful, funny, strong and fierce wife. A little violent and crazy but who can blame her. You got a cool ass stepdaughter who is more or less just like her Momma and actually adores you. And ex-girlfriend that if I tried any I could get her back but that wouldn't be fair to her. She deserves more than that.

Judith is the only piece of my mom that I have left. And she is precious to me.

Dad pisses me off in a way no one else can. But I don't know what I would do if I lost him. Not a
clue. I love him but I hate him, too. Maybe this is just part of being a teenager. Maybe it because he has her.

I can't get over it. I can't get over her. At least before we slept together, it was easier to push it down. But, now . . . I fucked up.

He began to weep again.

Then he heard a little in his head that sounded very much like Lori.

It said, Quit acting as if you have lost. You have won.

He said out loud, "I have lost. I don't have her."

You have something better. You have a woman who is willing to love you in front of everyone. Not some clandestine roll in the hay you got to keep secret. I unfortunately know all about those, she said.

"I know. Jagadamba is awesome and I don't deserve her but it still hurts."

You do deserve her. You have loved her almost all your life. Don't treat her like she is second best. I did that to Shane. See how well that turned out. You did that to Enid. She's taking it well all things considered. Jagadamba is not going to handle it as well. Avoid it at all costs. She's gotten revenge before. She'll do it again. Can't treat people like playthings, son. You will end up regretting everything if you do. Don't be like me or your father for that matter. Be better. Will you? Can you?

"Yes, ma'am. I can do that. I will do that," Carl replied to the voice in his head.

He knew on some level of his was own subconscious giving himself advice in a voice he would heed. Or at least attempt to.

Rick- As Long As His Heart Beats

Rick looked on happily as his son and daughter played in the backyard.

"Faster, Budder, faster," Judith laughed with her eyes closed

"You got it, Sis," Carl twirled her faster.

Carly-Jayne became jealous.

Pouting, she said, "I want to go round and round, too, Papa."

Rick came to the rescue. He picked his step-granddaughter up and twirled her.

"Don't drop me, Grandpa," Carly-Jayne squealed as she giggled.

"I would never. Call me Grandpa again."

"Grandpa, I love you."

Rick's heart was full to bursting.

"I love you, too, little lady. Happy Birthday," he said twirling her so fast they fell.

Rick landed on his back. He hugged the little girl so tightly that her spine crackled under the
pressure.

He simply couldn't remember the last time he felt so normal. Content.

Content that his son was actually alive to have a birthday.

Coming to terms with his new grandpa and father in law status was getting easier.

Speaking of which, him and Jagadamba were actually in a good place. He and Enid were nearly friends. They and Michonne had breakfast together that morning.

Still, he knew there was a storm on the horizon. However, he decided to enjoy the calm before the inevitable.

Two hours flew by.

Rick volunteered to keep all the kids including Ana, Marco and Tomeka.

"I figured you and the wife may want to run around naked. Can't do that with kids around. Your mom and I used to do that before you were born and when you were a baby."

Michonne and Jagadamba guffawed. While Carl said in a stutter, "I-i-it's like I said before. You stay awake at night thinking of all the tmi things to say to me. But, thanks. We appreciate it. A night alone would be nice. I don't think we ever had one before. It could be like a honeymoon type thing."

"That'll be cool. Thanks," Jagadamba said slinking beside her husband and clutching his hand.

"You're welcome. But, before you two leave, would you mind helping us straighten up? Me and Jag will get the younger kids bathed and in bed. You guys got the kitchen and dishes?" Rick asked Michonne and Carl.

They looked at each other with nervous apprehension. Sexual tension.

Rick saw it. Jagadamba did, too. They both wrote it off as paranoia, basic lovers jealousy.

"Yeah, I can do it with Michonne. No problem," Carl said smirking on the inside.

Forty-three minutes passed.

Rick tapped Jagadamba on the shoulder and asked her, "You got this under control? I need to go check on something."

"Tommie can help. Right, Tommie-o?" Jagadamba asked.

Tomeka sighed and said, "I guess."

Rick went about his way. He heard music playing from the kitchen. It was the funky Shirley Bassey cover of Light My Fire. Carl had put it on much to Michonne's chagrin. The song had a special meaning to the duplicitous duo.

Rick was about to speak until he saw them in the kitchen.

Carl was standing not half an inch behind her talking in her ear.

The conversation looked deep. The music prevented him from hearing what. He could make out Michonne's expression by her profile. She looked distressed and annoyed.
Then Carl did something odd. He pulled her in close. His arms around her waist. He tucked his chin in her shoulder. He started to rock side to side with her.

Rick couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Why hasn't she pushed him away? Why is he doing this? What the fuck?

"What the fuck?" Rick said aloud.

Upon hearing his voice, Carl let go of her.

"Hey, Dad. I was fucking around. You know my day is not complete until I annoy one or both of you. I just got both of you. Day complete."

Rick got up on his son.

Seeing the ensuing potential fight, Michonne stood between them.

"Guys. Rick, he meant nothing by it. Let's-"

Rick pushed her aside and said, "Is that alcohol on your breath?"

"Maybe. It's my birthday. Why not?" Carl said scantily concealing his resentment for his father.

"You know the rules. No underage drinking in my house. I won't stand for it," this was not what he actually wanted to say to him. The other thing, the real thing he wanted to say sounded impossible and like he was reaching for straws. It also had the potential to break up his family.

Are they fucking? He thought. Those words were Greek fire.

As smug as he had ever been, Carl replied, "Good fucking thing I have a house of my own, huh?"

Rick wanted to hem Carl up and ask him the question.Fuck all.

Instead, he said, "There's the door."

Carl snorted.

"You really know how to show a guy a good time on his birthday," he reached for the pint of bourbon he had been doctoring the past three hours. It was the only way he could stand to be around them without feeling sick. All he could see was his father on top of her.

Rick followed him to the front door.

Almost out, Carl turned around and said to his dad, "You sure you don't want to drink with me? Maybe it'll help dislodge that stick."

"Good night, Carl," Rick slammed the door.

When he turned around, Michonne was standing with her arms folded.

They asked each other at the same time, "What the fuck was that about?"

"You first," Michonne said angrily. She knew she had to really sell it.

"He was allover you and you did nothing to deter him," Rick got in her face.
"It was harmless," she said summoning every ounce of indignance and hurt she could muster on short notice.

She continued telling a half truth, "I knew he had been drinking and was sad about his mom not being here to celebrate his birthday. That's what he was telling me. About how glad he was to know me. That I made it a little better. How his mom loved that song. And you bust in there, all accusatory in tone like you caught him eating me out or something."

Rick immediately felt stupid.

Last thing he wanted to do was chase away his one and maybe last shot at happiness because of an insecurity.

I am so glad I didn’t accuse them.

"Baby, I am sorry. You know their has been a tension between me and my son. I was projecting. I know he has feelings for you. And you know how Carl is. He's impulsive. Doesn't give a shit about boundaries. He is so much like his mother. It's like he decided to display only our negative qualities."

Michonne knew she had to bring this on home. She couldn't just let it go.

"I am insulted by the fact you thought I would allow a seventeen young man have his way with me," she couldn't bring herself to call him a boy. She knew firsthand that he was not that.

"I will make it up to you, Mic. I swear. I am so sorry," he got down on his knees and batted his lashes at her before segueing into puss in boots eyes.

Goddamn, they favor, she thought.

"Okay. Fine. You owe me though. Like big time. You know Carl and me have a special something. We get each other.

But, I have to admit I dug the fact you are jealous of me," she did.

"I was being protective. Jealous is such a strong word. Or it jelly? Is that what you kids say?" He laughed getting up.

"Don't trying to be something you already are," she said wrapping her arms around his neck.

"And that is?" He asked.

"Cooler than a polar bear's toenails," she smiled wide.

"You Anthonys have the same smile. Just lights up a room," Rick said seeing Jagadamba, Carly-Jayne, Achilles but most of all Bushrod in her face. He missed his friend.

"Oh, Rick, I love you," she snuggled him as she took a sigh of relief.

Rick still had his suspicions but figured it was just anxiety over his younger beautiful lover and a basic distrust of his disrespectful, sneaky cockhungry slut of a son.

Or maybe he was just paranoid about everything in general.

After all, the death of Denise lied heavy on him and he knew his murder spree at the outpost had
been for naught. Negan was still out there. And if anything, their so called preemptive strike was just in reality poking the bear.

Michonne told him she had everything under control.

"Go help Jag," she said.

He kissed her cheek and went on his way.

Once up there, he helped get them out the tub, dress them for sleep.

"Can I sleep with you and Aunty, Grandpa? It's my birthday. You have to say yes," she said.

"Yes, Jagadamba Jr, you may," Rick said shaking his head at her precocious yet familiar decisiveness. If nothing else her mother was decisive.

Judith overheard and asked if she could join.

"Or course, sweetheart."

Before putting the girls to sleep, he asked Jagadamba to stay behind.

Once the younger kids were all asleep, he went downstairs.

Michonne, Jagadamba, Tomeka and to his surprise, Carl were at the dining room table.

"I don't like being away from her too long," Carl said looking right at Michonne then at his wife.

As much turmoil as he was in over his feelings for hell, both of them, he really did miss his wife when she was away.

Rick sighed and sucked his teeth.

"Oh, lovebug," Jagadamba kissed him.

Michonne rolled her eyes. Tomeka caught her.

Odd, she thought.

"So, what did you want to talk to me about, Dad?" Jagadamba asked.

Rick took a deep breath and began.

"I hate to admit it but you made the right call," he said running his hand down his close shaved beard.

Jagadamba was not one to let her opponent get off easily.

With the superiority of an English teacher correcting your grammar just cause they can, she asked, "About?"

"You know what."

"Humor me," she smirked undereyed the effect exaggerated by her healing eye- swollen still and purple and green.

Annoyed, Michonne chimed, "Don't be a little bitch about it. He is talking about the Saviors and you
know it. Be gracious."

Michonne had just admitted something to herself. She loved Jagadamba but did not like Jagadamba.

It wasn't just because of Carl either. She found her be irritating, bossy, obnoxious and disrespectful. She reminded her of too much of Priyanka.

If one doesn't like mother, it is difficult and for some nigh impossible to like the child.

"You can't speak to my wife like that. I won't stand for it," Carl scoffed protectively putting his arm around her.

Jagadamba pouted, "She's right. I was being bitchy. Thanks, Aunty. It's nice to know I have someone willing to call me out on my crap," she meant this though it still hurt her feelings.

Rick continued, "We have put them on high alert which means we should be doing the same. Now, I have some ideas about what we should do. And since you, Tommie, Chill, Big, Boy and Priya have experience with someone of his caliber, I want your input. I figure tomorrow sometime we could get with Daryl, Aaron, Carol, Abraham, Glenn and Maggie."

"Gleggie or Magglen. Like Bennifer or Brangelina," Jagadamba laughed.

"Ooh, Cardamba," Carl laughed.

"Why you got to be first? Jarl," she replied grinning.

"How about we get back on topic?" Rick asked.

They both apologized.

Rick continued, "Tomorrow we get a game plan and take it from there."

"Why not do it tonight? I mean we are awake. I am guessing they are, too. No time like the present. They are out there. They stopped me and took all my shit. Said it belonged to Negan. They murdered Denise. We can't sleep on this. They aren't, "Jagadamba said.

"I know you two are newlyweds. Three weeks?"

"More like twenty days, nineteen hours, seventeen minutes. It won't be three weeks until fifty-five minutes after midnight," Carl said proudly.

Rick couldn't help but smile. He was glad something meant so much to him.

Jagadamba blushed.

Rick finished, "You deserve to have some big kid naked time. Just enjoy tonight. Tomorrow will take care of itself because we will take care of it."

Jagadamba shuddered at Rick's hubris.

His ego is endangers us all, she thought.

She resisted saying that aloud. She wanted to get along with her father in law almost desperately. However, she was not quite ready to acquiesce.

"Aunty, please back me up here. I am scared," Jagadamba touched her hand.
Michonne grasped it. She remembered she may be half Priyanka but she was also half Nimrod and reared by Bushrod. She couldn't dislike her. Or mistreat her.

However, she still had to show solidarity with Rick.

"It can wait. Enjoy your night," she said putting her hand on Rick's thigh.

"If you say so. Come on, hubby," she did not feel like arguing about it any further.

Carl scoffed at Michonne and Rick then left with his wife.

Moments later, Rick asked Michonne, "Have you ever seen Twin Peaks?"


"Our Miss Fury here has the whole box set. . ."

The three of them fell asleep around the same time Mrs. Palmer saw the white horse in the living room.

Rick woke up after a couple hours. He turned off the television. Kissed Michonne's cheek. She smiled in her sleep.

In that moment, Rick felt good about his life.

After all, for all his bluster, he realized Carl was stepping up to the plate. And maybe it would be fine.

"I just want him to be all right. Everything is worth it as long as my son is okay. As long as his heart beats, I am okay."

Rick settled back down on the couch and soon was asleep.

Enid- Do I Make You Happy?

It was the next day. Enid was working in the garden with the Rhees.

Down the way, she saw Carl and Jagadamba come out the pantry. They were all smiles and kisses and hugs.

"They make me sick," Maggie said seeing the hurt on Enid's face.

"No, they don't. But, thanks for trying," Enid said.

"No, I mean it. They are the worst kind of newlyweds. They are obnoxiously affectionate. I think our house is the probably the only surface in Alexandria they haven't fucked on."

"That poor pantry," Glenn shook his head.

"We used to go in there and make out," Enid pouted.

"That's why the grits taste funny," Maggie said.

"Ha, ha. Am I doing this right?" Enid asked aerating the soil with a pen.

Maggie nodded.
Thirty minutes later, Enid said, "Bigelow asked me to marry him."

"You're too young," Maggie said.

"Do it," Glenn said.

"Glenn, don't tell her that. He's too old. He's like, what? Twenty-eight?"

"He's twenty-seven," she scoffed.

"Ooh. By all means then," Maggie said biting.

"He's a good guy. He has a big heart. He's crazy about our little sister. He's not a douche like Carl is being right now," Glenn said.

"Exactly. I know Bigelow loves me. I like him. I like him a lot."

"He's tall. Blond, gray eyed, built like a beast. Like a tall, muscular Matt Damon with Fabio hair. Who wouldn't be attracted to him?" Glenn said.

"Sounds like you are. I am thinking he asked the wrong person to marry him. Switching teams on me, Mister Rhee?"

"Never, Mrs. Rhee. I am confident in my masculinity is all. And he's a good looking guy. Carl's not ugly but-"

"He's a twink. All that's missing is gold hot pants and glitter and that I miss you like the desert miss the rain song," Maggie said.

Enid chortled.

"Missing by Everything but the Girl," Glenn added.

"But, still. I like Bigelow a lot. And he says he wants to be there for me and my baby. It's just. I know this will sound crazy but I almost feel like I am cheating on Carl."

"You're right. That does sound crazy. He cheated on you day one. One," Maggie said.

"I know. I love him. It's not fair. And they are all in lurve acting like I don't exist. I tried to be mature about it but fuck that. It hurts. They betrayed me and it hurts."

"So, move on. Try Bigelow. Why be miserable when you don't have to be?" Glenn asked.

Maggie sighed and said, "Date him. Get to know him. Don't marry him. Trust me. Carl and Jagadamba are going to regret getting hitched so young and so soon. The circumstances under which they married- it was sneaky and on a whim. They are going to crash and burn sooner than later. I hate that. It's going to be a terrible thing to witness. Might even be a war. Who knows?"

"You're all rainbows and sunshine this morning," Glenn said.

"I just hate seeing my friend in pain. So, fuck those guys," Maggie sneered.

"Yeah, fuck 'em," Glenn agreed.

Enid appreciated the solidarity but she knew they had no real ill will the Grimeses 2.0.
A couple hours passed. She and Maggie had just bid Glenn adieu as he and Michonne went off to go find Daryl and Rosita.

Enid had a feeling of foreboding when she saw them drive away.

Bye, Glenn.

Come back if you want, Michonne. Or not. Dirty bitch, Enid thought.

She stood on her porch and caught sight of Carl watching the truck leave.

Enid decided to go tease him.

"Watching your chocolate bunny drive away?" She asked.

"Don't call her that. You're better than that," Carl fussed.

"No. Not at the moment," she shook her head.

"Missed you yesterday," he said trying to soften her.

"Only wives and girlfriends are required to give a shit about your birthday. Since I am neither," she hunched.

"I thought you said we were both your boyfriends?"

"Then I found out you cornholed your step mom and you didn't look so shiny anymore."

"She is not my stepmom."

"I almost feel sorry for her. Jagadamba, I mean. She has no idea she is second choice. For that, I have to thank you. I always knew where I stood. She is totally in the dark. It is going to be tragic when she finds out. Make no mistake. You're her everything. And to you, she is just a proxy. You're using her. You're a user," she said.

"I am not using her. And I didn't use you either. That's what you really want to say."

"You did use me!"

"I didn't! I love you. I am just wasn't in love with you. I thought-"

"Shut the fuck up."

He waited three minutes.

"I didn't say that to be cruel. Bigelow is in love with you. I talked to him yesterday. I-"

"She thinks she finally won. But, you're no prize. You're Adam. You have a pathological need to eat the apple. Consequences be damned. I was one. You weren't even hurt when I dumped you."

"That's not true. I was devastated."

"So much so you want to give me away? What is wrong with you?"

"Now that would be cruel. And selfish. To fight for you and then what? Go back to that dumbass arrangement we had? I didn't want to choose. I still don't. Do I make you happy?" Carl asked with exasperation.
"Are you kidding me?"

"This is a serious question. Cause Jagadamba makes me happy. Do I do that for you?"

In silent tears, she shook her head no.

"Does he make you happy or at least not sad?"

She nodded.

"How do I make you feel?"

"Angry, confused, sad, lonely, stupid and bitter. Sexy and beautiful. Mostly embarrassed and jealous," she admitted.

"You deserve better. I want you to be happy. I need you to be happy. I want you to feel what I felt with you and what I feel for her. You made me happy but only I was happy. Talking to Jag, I think she hated it, too. It was all about me. That was never right. I am sorry I went along with it. I am." He said.

She rolled her eyes and remained silent.

"I am not saying marry the guy. But, give him a chance. If you're happy then my baby is happy. I want the best for you."

"Really?"

"Yes."

With nothing else to say, she went toward her front door.

Carl called out, "I want you to know you saved my life that night when you kissed me. I don't think I would have had the inclination to live if I had never met you. Thank you."

Enid took a second to think about it.

She graciously said, "Full circle. Someone did the same for me once."

He unwisely replied, "Jag?"

"Nah. Jacie Tony saved me. Jagadamba is the bitch who used to be her that stole my boyfriend and manipulated me into being cool about it. Good night, Carl," she went inside and slammed the door.

"It's not even midday yet," he grumbled going back to his house.

Another couple hours went by.

Enid had just cut Maggie's hair when Mrs. Rhee doubled over in pain.

"The baby," she croaked.

In full panic mode, Enid ran from the house looking for Rick. He had just returned from looking for Carol.

Once she found him, he began assembling the posse while she went for weapons. Carl was doing the same thing.
"I heard," he said checking the ammo.

"... You want something to happen. Don't you want a fight? Why? Why not just stay home with us? We need you. I need you."

"I have a feeling. Today is now or never. Negan needs to be stopped. I need you to stay home. Can't lose you. You're my family," Carl said.

Enid grunted, "Is Michonne back?"

"No. B."

"This is about her. So, me and your wife truly mean nothing to you, huh, asshole? All about Miss Special Dark Cacao," by no means was she a racist. Regardless, she still wanted to piss Carl off.

It worked.

"This doesn't have a fucking thing to do with Michonne. I want the world to be a better place for him and the girls. I just have a feeling you're having a boy. And she's having girls.

Anyway, I just feel the need to do this. Besides, Maggie was there for me when I needed her."

"In that case, I am going, too. She is like a sister to me," she decided to call his bluff.

"Go get a weapon then," he said.

She went inside the closet. Carl closed the door behind her and put a chair under the knob.

Realizing what he had done, she stood up and had a shit fit.

"What is a matter with you? Why do have a death wish all of a sudden? I remember the other day in the woods with that walker. You get three kids, four really and now you decide you want to be a daredevil? That's fucking stupid. Even for you.

Wait. I want to go back to my original statement. It's about her. You going to risk your life for her?"

He sighed and admitted, "I would do the exact same if you were out there."

"I don't doubt that. But, she is not having your baby. I am. And I need you here with me. I don't give a damn how much you suck ass. You're still mine and you can't leave me. Fuck everyone else. You can't leave me. What am I supposed to do if you don't come back?"

Callous, he replied, "Just survive somehow."

She screamed and wailed and kicked the door.

Twenty minutes later, Enid decided to do something she hadn't done in ages- pray.

"Dear God, Carl Grimes, is such an idiot. Please let him come back home alive. And Maggie and Glenn and their baby. And Rick. I want my child to have a grandpa. And he is a good man. Mostly. He tries. Please Father, let them come back home. In Jesus' name. Amen."

She settled down in the dark. Cradling possibly one of the last three surviving Grimes in her womb, she became drowsy and went to sleep.
Chapter End Notes

Negan speaks next chapter.

End Notes

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