

Although now we are “good friends” Mark still remains elusive. He is good at that though - talking, asking me questions, feeling me out and getting me to talk but sharing only small bits of himself - don't know if it's just “a man thing” they seem to do that often don't they – share only bits of themselves while we women tell everything, need to share everything? So I find myself thinking that I still haven't really gotten to know this man and may never will. Well maybe that's how it should be.



Andre Prescott resurfaced from the deep area of the pool and playfully flicked water unto Jennifer's face. Jennifer in turn grabbed him, pushed his head under the water and screamed as he dragged her under.

“Andre!” Jermaine shouted.

“Your sister is here to see you!” Jermaine looked worried.

Juleen Saunders-Perez gripped the small black suitcase in one hand and Allison's shaking pale petite white hands in the next. When she saw Andre walking towards her, she smiled in relief and proudly pronounced to Allison,

“This is Dre my brother, he will help.”

Andre gave Allison the once over and intuitively knew what had just went down. The speck of blood on her shoes confirmed what he was thinking.

“Here is not the place to talk.” He said.

He walked towards one of the bedrooms.

When the door was locked, he turned to Allison and asked,

“What went wrong?”

Allison feverishly grabbed the suitcase from Juleen, flung it open onto the floor and tossed the car keys to him.

“They killed him.” Juleen began to count the money in the suitcase.

“I got away” Allison said as tears rolled down her face.

Jermaine took out the coke, stashing them on top of each other.

Allison started sobbing loudly.

“They are looking for me!” She held onto Andre’s hand pleading.

“Please help me! I need to hide.” She said desperately.

“I...I didn’t expect him to do that.” She said in shocked disbelief.

“The rest is in the car?” Jermaine asked as he took the keys from Andre’s hand. Allison nodded. Andre stared soberly at Juleen.

“Why yoh bring er here?” He asked.

“You know a noh my ting dis, me noh inna di coke ting.”

“Mi know man, but ah you alone mi couldah come to” Juleen said with pleading eyes, she too started to cry.

“ah mi fren mi haffi help, you want them kill har? Juleen asked.

“and anuh like me can go to Perez.”

“in a dis business yah you noh have no friend.” Andre stated emphatically.

“And noh start wid di crying, you can’t fool me, me know yuh Juleen” He stated firmly.

“Fine!” Juleen said turning off the tears.

“I met her two days ago, what you expect mi fi doh when she come to me!”.

“a whole heap a money dat and when you sell the stuff you will have even more”

Juleen placed her hands on Andre arms,

“Mi know seh ano your ting this but you did it once fi Matty noh true.”

“Mi wee ask round and see who want it.”

Andre pushed Juleen’s hands off him and walked away.

Rosalind Thompson got up early Sunday morning and decided that she had given Alex more than enough time to mope over being robbed. Besides, it was National Heroes Day weekend, a time when people go out, party and have fun. Alex shouldn’t be alone. She called her niece Tanya. Tanya packed the kids up in the vehicle and they all drove over to Alexandria’s house. The doors were locked, the yard unkempt, which meant that Alexandria had not come outside in days, maybe even a week. Tara, Tanya’s eldest pounded on the door, calling out, “Auntie Alex.” There was no answer from inside.

Inside, Alexandria Prescott pulled the sheets over her head and contemplated whether it was wise to pretend not to be at home. Alexandria had sensed their presence long before they came to the door. She had woken up that morning and knew that her mother would be visiting. At times, her mother’s thoughts came to her mind so clearly, she could not mistake it for any other. Tanya’s were clear at times too. Today, she could hear their thoughts all too clearly and she did not want to deal with their emotions or their feelings. She had her own to deal with! The knocking on the door persisted and Adriana, Andre’s second daughter joined Tara at knocking the door, their voices became louder. Alexandria Prescott threw the sheets off and went to open the door.

“You know me noh rate dem.” Rosalind, Tanya and Alexandria were watching a documentary about the seven national heroes on CVM, one of the two local tv station that Jamaica has. Tanya grabbed the remote to change the station to TVJ but Alex stopped her.

“I want to watch this.” She begged. Nanny the only female national hero was being depicted. Alex wanted to know more about her heritage.

“Why yuh noh like dem mom?” Alexandria asked Rosalind.

“The maroons dem only look out fi dem self.” Rosalind declared. The man who was narrating the documentary was saying that Granny Nanny was a great leader of the maroons and was a symbol of unity and strength for her people in times of crisis.

“The maroon dem sign treaty whey mek dem haffi carry back any slaves whey run whey although Nanny nay agree wid the other maroons dem.” The maroons were fierce strong people, the narrator continued. Nanny, her brother Cudjo and Quao...Alexandria zeroed in on her mother and said,

“Yes I remember reading about that in school.”

“But the school history book them nuh tell di truth just like dis documentary, you know say the maroons dem still have dem own law and live up in di hills deh, dem have them own area in a di country whey a fi dem town.”

“Yes, Maroon Town.” Alexandria stated.

“Wha u a say dem a sell out!” Tanya laughed out loud as she hugged Cheeny, pointed at the tv and said,

“Poop pan dem yah mi gal, tell dem say a fart them a chat!” Alex, Rosalind and Tara burst out laughing as Cheeny, embarrassed, squirmed out of her mom’s embrace. Rosalind continued explaining exactly what had really happened in the slavery days during the rebellion.

She felt it.

It made her look up and around.

She glanced at Rosalind and Tanya whose eyes were glued to the tube and wondered if they had seen how she had just reacted.

She tried to resist the urge.

The urgent need to call Tristan was sudden and immediately unbearable.

He's cheating; I know he is, look who he is talking to.

The thought came loud and clear filled with anxiety, distrust, suspicion, anger and fear.

Him a lie!

The thought was filled with certainty and forcefulness.

Then she felt the overwhelming force of it.

Fear, suspicion, sadness, brashness, boastfulness and so many other emotions and thoughts that Alexandria could not recognize.

It wanted to take control of her.

Alexandria rushed into the bathroom and began to pray for strength. *Clair is near!* She is on her way, Alexandria thought fretfully. I don't know if I can handle this today, she whispered, looking up to the ceiling.

Fifteen minutes later, when she heard Adriana greeted her mother; she knew for certain that Clair had entered the house.

At times, Clair's emotions were so heavy, complicated, deceptive, confusing and scary, so much like Tanya's. The only difference was that Alexandria could manage Tanya's. Clair's emotions were so much heavier. *Clair isn't having a good day today*, Alexandria deduced. Instantly, Alexandria wanted to run but there was nowhere to run. She was afraid, afraid of how she would react to this woman, afraid of her own thoughts towards this woman, afraid of the things she recognized so easily within and surrounding this woman. *Afraid.*

Alex was now filled with fear and anxiety. She did not want to be taken control of again by it, this thing with this woman. It was forceful, uncaring, deceitful, boastful and mocking.

So, she stayed in the bathroom for twenty more minutes, praying her heart out then walked out and faced Clair. They exchanged pleasantries. Then, Alexandria settled in a corner of the room as Clair took over the conversation,

remaining silent, quietly enduring the pain, the vulgar hateful shouting voices, the horrible burning heat that surrounded her, the giggling laughing mocking jeers and the physical invisible attacks on her body and mind that made her want to tear her hair out. She sat there in the corner, trying to hold on to her sanity, speaking only when spoken to and quietly waited until Clair, Rosalind, Tanya and the kids finally left.

October 17, 2011

Monday – 7am

GOD & ME

Yesterday, my nine year old niece, Tara and her mom came to visit. At some point during the visit, Tara realized that it was Sunday and began to complain that she was missing church. Tanya, Tara's mom (my younger sister you know her) and I began to reminisce about how when we were little, we had visited all the churches in Falmouth. And you know there are many churches in Falmouth! As they say, Jamaica is in the Guinness world book of records for having the most churches and bars in the same vicinity in the whole Caribbean. You know, sometimes there is a bar located only a couple feet away from the church! I have a theory about this, you see while most women in JA run to the church/god when shit start going wrong, the men run to the other spirit, the rum or sex. Anyway, my conversation with Tanya yesterday made me remember the day when I started seeking God.

I was five years old. Granny V was alive then and was, what should I say? She was an 'active Christian'. Well, she was a church member, a 'baptized' church member who went to church service almost every Sunday

and participated in most of the church activities that occur on Sunday and in the week. She was trying to live right, I am quoting here, that's what the folks around me often said. Well, in my five years old eyes, she did all the things that I see and have been taught that 'Christians' ought to do so I'll just say she was an active Christian in her community at that time. Although I have never seen my mother go to church except on special occasions such as weddings and funerals, she made sure that all us kids attended church most Sundays. At that time, we were living down grandma's house in Falmouth. Hence most Sundays, mom would get Dre and me ready and we'd go to church with Granny V. Granny V's house is at the bottom of Princess Street near Wakeland Drive while auntie Bobbette use to live at a house on the same street but at the top of Princess Street near Trelawny Street. So each Sunday, Granny V, Dre and me would walk straight up the road, cross the Duke Street main road and pick up my cousin Sammy who also came to church with us. Auntie Bobbette wasn't a Christian yet so only we kids went to church each Sunday.

That Sunday, Granny V took me to a new church. First, Granny V was going to a church right on Princess Street then she changed and began to go to the church situated right in front of the court house building out at Falmouth square. At the time, I didn't know or care why she had changed church; I was just excited to go somewhere new. Later I learnt that the reason why grandma changed church is because she disagreed with the policy of the female pastor governing the church. Grandma changed church because after she was 'baptized with water' by the pastor, the church wanted her to stop processing her hair and to stop wearing pants. They wanted her to look more 'natural' their thought was that having natural

hair was more Christian like and only men should wear pants. Granny V was of a different opinion with what was 'natural' and about wearing pants, so she told them no and left.

I remember that the church members greeted us at the door with a warm smile and directed us to our seats. We were a bit late; the church was already filled with people. The church members were so friendly. There was a certain atmosphere in the church that day. I sat beside Granny V the whole time, just observing, listening and sucking it all in.

The preacher began to preach and quietness filled the place. No one spoke. Everybody just listened. I remember noticing that he didn't bark out his words as I was use to preachers doing but instead he just spoke. As he spoke, restlessness surrounded me, as though it was hanging over my head, hanging in the ceiling of the church. A baby started to cry and I watched as the church members frowned instructions at the mother. The restlessness became more obvious. She quickly took the baby outside. Then, the preacher introduced a woman to us. I watched her walk up the small stairs to the piano chair and sat. the woman began to play and the environment in the church seemed to change instantly. Smooth, beautiful music poured out of her fingers. As she continued to play a hushed unnatural silence filled the room.

I felt it in small ripples at first, this cool, smooth energy seeming to be passing through me, in me, around me, filling me up with so much good energy. It felt as though it was coming from my grandmother then it was as though everybody was being slowly energized, caressed, filled with this cool, smooth energy that was revitalizing them and me somehow. Suddenly

I felt energized, calm, safe and peaceful. When the woman stopped playing it felt as though I had just been taken somewhere else, had a good nap and had been brought back – woken, alert and energized. I left the church that day wishing that I could stay right there at that piano, listening, feeling that energy forever. That day, I wished that I knew how to make people feel good like that. But the next time I went back there to that church, it wasn't the same; I didn't feel that good revitalizing energy again only darkness, fear, shame and pain.

Later in the day that Sunday, when two Jehovah witnesses came by our house, mom bought couple children books from them, you know the kind? The one that has the bible stories in them and I began to read all about David, Solomon, Daniel and Jesus. And, several months later when we moved to live at our own home on Newton Street only a street away from Granny V's house, a different set of Jehovah witness people came by again. As they tried to convince my mother to become a Jehovah witness, I overheard them telling my mother about the joys, wonder and power of prayer that if we pray God would help us so I began to pray to God. That day, I also started reading my new school bible from the beginning. All the stories in the bible were fascinating to me. They were like the fairytale story books my Dad had bought for me to read. It was fascinating reading about people of the past that seemed no different from the very people I knew right now. Lying, fighting, deceiving, having several wives, fearful, fretful, jealous, envious...and among it all there was God, this great supernatural being who is said to be my friend, who knows me completely, whom I can not hide from and who answers prayers. Who could do great things!

That September I had not only moved to a new home but had also started a new school too. I think then, kids moved from Infant school to all age school by the age of six or seven. Yes, kids started infant school at three years old and stayed there until they reached six or seven years old then we automatically transfer to All Age School and leave there at age 10 – 15 years old. Going to kindergarten wasn't a big deal then. Generally, at that age, you move on to high school if you pass your exam. At the time, the exam we needed to pass was called Common Entrance Exam which was taken between the ages of 9 – 12 years old. The Overage and the nine grade achievement exams were taken by students who weren't successful at any of the two attempts at the common entrance exam. These two exams were taken by kids aged 12 – 16 years old.

Well as I have said, I started praying and listening to all the stuff the preacher and Sunday school teachers were teaching at church. I started trying my hardest to be a 'good little girl' because they had said, 'God don't love ugly and being bad was ugly'. Basically, I desired God's love as I had automatically loved God and too, I needed God to answer all my prayers and being good meant that he would. Well, that was my reasoning at the time. So I began to pray to God for everything, talked to him constantly and became Mommy's good little girl. And for a time, I actually believed that God was answering all my prayers, it seemed as though he did. But that belief didn't last long.

One night he came to visit us. I remember that I walked into the living room from outside where I was playing with the kids from next door and saw him chatting, laughing and watching tv with my parents in the

living room. Dre was seated beside him, laughing too. He saw me at the living room entrance, smiled and came to tickle me. Dre reminded him that I was no longer afraid of being tickled which led him and Dre reminiscing about the time he had tickled me so hard that I wet my pants. They laughed about how after that day, I wouldn't laugh no matter how hard he tickled me and I looked at him, silently remembering that that was the day I decided to never let him make me laugh again. I got over the fear of being tickled that day. That day I learnt to control my body's response to being tickled. The movie started that my mother wanted to watch and everybody quieted down. Everything was going fine until nine-thirty when our Dad reminded us for the third time that we were over our curfew and that it was bed time.

Now I remember this night clearly. Dre and I watched our mother get dressed to go out. We begged her to let us stay up late. We wanted to watch the late night movie. Mom told us to go to bed and asked him if he was ready. He said no, he wanted to watch the late show. That's when I began to get scared. They were leaving me alone with him. I lay in my bed fretting, hoping and praying that my parents wouldn't leave me alone, that they would change their minds and stay in that night. I wanted to tell them not to leave me alone, I wanted to beg them to stay with me but I couldn't. What could I have said? And who would have believed me over him? I didn't know what to say and how to say it. So instead, I remained silent, begged God to help me and went to sleep. God didn't help. In fact, he didn't seem to have heard my cries for help at all, though something strange happened that night.

The park was filled with people. They were streaming in from everywhere. The Digicel banner waved proudly from the stage as the MC introduced the next act, a singer duo second prize winner of Digicel Rising Star from some years back. Tanya picked up Cheeny, lodged her at her hip, grabbed Jean's hand and barked at Adriana to slow down and be careful. Adriana was running, running after Tara who was too far ahead. Rosalind dialled Alexandria's number. She answered on the first ring.

"Alex yuh sure yuh naah come?"

"Mom, it's best if I just stay home."

"The show good so far, wish you when deh yah fi see Christopher Martin him really can sing and Sandra Brooks a go come on later."

"Christopher Martin was the guy who won the Digicel rising star thing two years ago right?"

"No him win it five years ago or something like dat."

"A so long?"

"It free, Tanya can just come fi yuh."

"Mom, I don't want the same thing to happen with Clair that happen last time, I will just stay home." Alexandria said firmly.

Rosalind knew when her daughter wouldn't budge from a decision she had made, so she quickly said goodbye and held on to her granddaughter's hand. Adriana began to fuss and Rosalind began to cuss. They soon came to an agreement that satisfied them both and Rosalind began to enjoy the night once more.