

# The Devil's Plaything

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A.K.A. JAPOC

Just Another Piece of Clay

Isaiah 64:8

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## Act 2 Chapter 2.7.5

I awoke in a hospital bed feeling stiff and groggy. I looked around the room and at first, my vision was blurry and then I felt a pain in my private member as a nurse removed something from me.

“I just took out your catheter. Sorry about that! I didn’t know you were ready to wake up.” The nurse collected some things on my bed near my legs and put them in a red disposal on the wall. “Your family is here. I had them to wait outside while I removed your catheter. I’ll send your family back in now.” Then the nurse pushed a few buttons on IV pump hanging above me and then she left.

A few moments later, my mother and father came in. “Hello Son,” my mother came in with a huge grin. My father took off his cap, showing his smooth scalp.

They stood together on the left side of my bed.

“What happened?” I asked.

“Well...you took two bullets in the back and another one grazed the top of your skull. One bullet in your back went all the way through your shoulder. The other one is still in your chest. It went in through your lower back; they say as you were falling. The doctor said it might do more damage to get it. I think they are still talking about that.”

My mother rubbed my face, “The doctors said you should have a full recovery but that you’ll have to take your time.”

My mother’s face became serious, “Do you remember it?”

I was still a bit groggy and my head felt tight. I let the images form in my head for a moment, “It all seems like a dream. I just remember seeing that look on his face. Then he pointed the gun at Cassie, and I ran to her.”

“Ya took some bullets fa dis woman, man.” My father put his fist on my chest, “Ya strong.”

“Yes. Yes, you did. Any woman that my son is willing to die for...is welcome in my home.” I could see pride in her eyes which immediately changed.

“But she better be worth all that! Nearly got my baby killed!” She took a deep breath as my father put his arm around my mother and squeezed her shoulders. “Come nah, he’ll be fine.”

My mother closed her eyes hard and tears popped out of the slits. “Thank the Lord! Just a little bit this way or that way...” She shook her head and then backed away. My mother had to take deep breaths standing near the window of my hospital room. My father nodded at me and then attended my mother.

A doctor came into the room, “There he IS!” It was a younger doctor followed by the nurse that had been in earlier. The doctor shined lights in my eyes, ears and nose and throat. He checked that I could wiggle my toes and fingers and pressed here and there and checked my responses.

“Well, everything looks good. We still have to think about that bullet that’s still inside you. It didn’t quite make it to your lung. It cracked a rib and then changed path a bit and stopped just into the outer layer of the back of your left lung. We could go in and get it but it’s not going to do any more damage where it is but it’s sitting between some fairly sensitive organs.” He took some films out of his folder and slid them into a light panel on the wall and showed me where the bullet currently sat inside my chest cavity.

“If you really are adamant that we go in and get the bullet we can but it’s not going to do any more damage. My suggestion is to count yourself lucky and move on with your life. I expect you will recover fully...with some scars to remember all this by.”

The doctor and the nurse finished talking with me and soon left. My parents left and sent my sisters in who both cried and celebrated. They left my room teary eyed, advising me that there was someone else that needed to see me.

A short while later, Cassie came in. She looked tired. She stood at the doorway and her eyes flooded with water. She slowly walked to my bedside, “I’m .... I’m sorry. I’m sorry you are involved in my mess.” She shook her head and tried to stifle her tears.

“Cassie...Cassie.” She stopped to listen and looked at me, her face was wet.

“I barely know you but...I love you. And I would do it all again.”

Cassie burst into tears, shaking. She wiped her face and stared into my eyes. She leaned down and kissed me.

I was waiting for her to say she loved me as well. “I promised myself that I would never kiss any man until I found the right one.” She thumped my chest, “You better not waste my kiss mister!” She wiped more water from her eyes, smiling. Then she kissed me again. I guess I had my answer.

“Where’s little man?” I asked.

“Your sister Paula has him. She kept him last night so I could stay with you.”

“You stayed here all night?” I asked.

“I wasn’t sleeping at YOUR house by myself. I don’t have any place else to go, remember?”

“I remember.”

“Besides...I had to make sure you were ok...my hero!”

I smiled, “Super-boyfriend!” I blurted.

“I just might get that t-shirt made for you,” Cassie said tearing up again and giggling.

“So, it’s official?” I asked.

Cassie leaned down and kissed me again, “Yes.”

I grinned. “Really?” I felt joy. It was an odd sense of calm and satisfaction, but I felt joy. “Three bullets for three kisses. As long as I don’t have to take more bullets to get more kisses, I’m good!”

Cassie kissed me again and rubbed my face. “But that’s all you’re getting...kisses. I’m saving the real deal for marriage. Is that ok with you?” she asked.

“I guess you plan on getting married reeeeeeal soon!” I teased.

Cassie giggled shaking her head, “Men!”

The day went along with my family members taking turns visiting me. The hospital eventually moved me to a lesser intense hospital unit for observation with the expectation of release the following day. My sister Ansley convinced Cassie to take one of the spare rooms in her house. As Cassie wanted to stay chaste until she was married and we were now

officially dating, it was decided that Cassie would have an easier time with temptation if she were not living in my house.

The next adjoining unit was unoccupied on the other bed, so I had the whole room to myself which my family appreciated. They could all visit me at once. My friends came by to visit. My boss Rick came to visit. People from my church and my parents' church came by.

The next morning, I awoke to the ring of the room phone. There was a problem with my breakfast order; something they thought they would have but didn't. So, I had to change my order. Cassie was asleep on the room couch and now she was stretching.

Cassie and I played card games and chess and watched television. She actually held my hand unconsciously a few times. It was a little after lunch and we were waiting for the hospital to officially decide to release me when the biggest surprise of all happened.

Stacey walked in somberly and all the air in the room left because of it.

"Hello Mo- Mo," Stacey said somberly. She walked closer into the room holding a somewhat large teddy bear. Stacey's face tightened as she studied the room, "I guess you must be Cassie."

"I am," Cassie answered without standing.

The two women stared at each other for a moment and then Cassie looked at me. She kissed me and wiped my lips, "I'll be outside," she said standing and resuming her stare at Stacey.

Cassie began leaving the room and then stopped without turning to face Stacey, "Touch him...and I'll lay you out." Then Cassie left the room.

Stacey approached the bed studying me, "So...it's true - you traded me for bullet holes."

I grinned. "What do you want Stacey?"

"I can't come and say hello to the love of my life?" she said grimly.

She stood over me and put her hand on the bedrail. "Why did you even come to dinner with me the other night...if you already moved on?"

I took a deep breath, "I guess...I guess at that time I wasn't sure. Then... during dinner I saw the real you. I knew then that I wanted something else...I wanted someone who could really love me...not love themselves through me."

Stacey sucked her teeth, "That's what you think of me, then?"

"I do."

"You think she's better than me?"

"I think she's better FOR me."

Stacey was unexpectedly quiet and introspective. I was half-expecting her to cry or get teary-eyed. Yet, it was no surprise to feel almost a radiation of rage coming from her as she walked toward the window.

"If you love me, you'd want me to be happy. You'd let me go," I said trying to reason with Stacey.

Stacey turned to look at me, her eyes narrowed to slits. "Let you go?" Stacey placed the teddy bear on the bed beside me.

Stacey stood near me to face me. I felt like I was looking into the eye of a hurricane.

"Every man I ever involved myself with used me ... every man I ever loved abandoned me. You're the only person that every really loved me Mo-mo. Let you go? I think you know me better than that."

The doctor returned to the room and stopped to look at Stacey and then at me, "Oh. I'm sorry I can come back. If you guys need to talk."

"She was just leaving, Doctor."

Stacey studied me and then turned to leave. "See you soon, Malcolm."

"My ex. We broke up badly," I explained to the doctor.

Cassie walked in and stood beside me, "You ok?"

"I'm fine," I answered.

The doctor looked at Cassie and then to me, "Soooo...that was your ex. And this is your current?"

I nodded.

"I'm doing something ...wrong," the doctor huffed.

"Ok. So, I discussed everything with the other doctors. We all are in agreement that you're ready to go. So, in a little bit we'll have the nurse come in and unplug you, give you your release papers and then you'll be outta here. Probably goes without saying that it'll be better if you don't

drive. The nurse will go over your wound care with you and some documentation you can refer to at home.”

“So, no therapy?” I asked.

“I doubt it. You should follow-up with your primary in a about a week after we discharge you. Your PCP can take look at your wounds and make sure everything is healing up like it should. Treat the head wound like a concussion, just take it easy for a while, no contact sports or anything, stay out of the sun, you might find that you’re more sensitive to light for a little while and loud sounds. I’ll prescribe a little stronger pain killer that you can take every eight hours as needed. No baths for three weeks. Take your first shower a couple days from now. You can use the wipes to wash yourself. I’ll have a few packages of those sent home with you. That’ll keep your wounds from opening back up.”

The doctor gave a bit more guidance on how I can slowly get back to normal and then he was gone. My family came and my mother and Paula began planning a huge meal to celebrate. Everyone was happy...but me.

Cassie leaned down to whisper to me, “You ok?”

I took a deep breath. “We haven’t seen the last of Stacey.”

“I know,” Cassie said. “I’m ready though,” she said smiling at me.