

JAMAL & NUNU GET A JOB

JOB #1

THIRD PARTY CELLPHONE COMPANIES JUST WANT YOUR SKIN...

Jamal checked himself out in the full length black framed door mirror of his room. His line-up was immaculate and dreads freshly locked. Far from the body build of a Terry Crews, but you could still tell he frequented the local gym, Jamal was pleased with his decision to go with the medium instead of the large sized polo shirt as he flexed his arms and chest. His tan colored fitted jeans sagged just enough to show off the Louis Vuitton logo across the waistline of his charcoal-colored boxer briefs. And although he was unable to buy the Jordan twelves—his shoe connect was sold out of the limited-edition color he wanted—his tan and white Jordan thirteens accented the full outfit just as well. But no matter how good the outfit came together, Jamal's eyes still ended up focusing on the G.I. Wireless Company logo on the left side of the polo, then his name tag on the right side, and he sighed, once again instantly feeling like a fool.

“Okay, I'm back. Are you ready yet?” Sierra had finally returned to the FaceTime call with her coffee mug in hand.

“I guess. I still look dumb.” Jamal replied as he picked up the phone from his dresser. “See? I look like a damn fool with this name badge.”

“Don't say that. You look cute, bae. I'm so proud of you. Your very first job. Aren't you excited?”

Jamal sighed.

“No. This shit stupid bro.”

“Well, I'm excited for you. You're becoming a contributing member of society. Like the rest of us.”

It was no surprise that Jamal was not particularly enthused about starting his job, but he still felt that he would lose Sierra if he didn't find a more legal way of gaining income. A caramel skin college sophomore he met at the Fox Hills Mall, and during the eight months of

them dating, had introduced Jamal to a less bleak way of looking at life, which as of lately, had compelled him to question his purpose in life, and seek a better way of living it besides his previous plans of becoming a trap god, Sierra was helping Jamal grow.

“They couldn’t wait to do this shit on Monday though?” He complained.

“People work on Saturdays too, bae. Just not me. I’m off on the weekends. And I will be spending this lovely Saturday with my besties at the beach.”

Jamal kissed his teeth.

“So, you just gon’ rub it in?”

“This is actually Bree callin’ me right now bae. I gotta go and finish getting ready. Call me on your lunch break, okay? Talk to you later.”

The call ended and Jamal put the phone in his pocket. He made one last check, making sure he had his keys, wallet, and once he was certain he had everything he needed, Jamal exited his room, and closed the door behind him.

“What up bro?”

Eddie, as per usual on a Saturday morning, was on the couch, in his Miami Heat basketball shorts, white tee, and feet up on the coffee table enjoying a bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch, and the newest episode of one of the many anime shows he was addicted to.

Jamal just shook his head as he entered the living room, envious at the sight of his roommate delighting in the fact that he was able to enjoy the day without work.

“Yo is there anymore of the food left over from last night? I wanna take some of it with me for lunch.”

“Nah, my sister took most of it last night for her kids.” Eddie had answered with a mouthful of cereal and slurping up the excess milk dripping from his mouth. “I also added the rest of the carne asada into the omelet I made myself this morning for breakfast. So yeah, it’s all gone bro.”

Jamal stood at the refrigerator and stared at Eddie in disbelief. There was so much food from the party last night that it was hard for Jamal to comprehend the fact that it was all gone. Eddie’s mother was so ecstatic about her son completing his first year of culinary school that she made more than enough shredded beef, brought plenty of homemade flour tortillas, and cooked so much rice and an abundance of carne asada that it could have fed an entire football team and their families. But it was Eddie’s immediate and extended family who filled the eleven hundred square foot apartment to celebrate his achievement last night. The music was loud, the apartment was shaking from all the dancing, and if the eighteen-unit

complex was not owned by Eddie's aunt, and more than half the tenants being a part of Eddie's family, then the residents below Jamal and Eddie, if not for them being at the party and kin, would have most definitely called the police to file numerous noise complaints.

"Bro. I was tryin' to not spend money. You can't be Mexican Gordon Ramsey for me real quick and whip me up somethin' for my lunch? I don't even care what it is. If you cookin' it up, I know it's gonna be fire." Jamal asked as he scavenged through the refrigerator in hopes to find something to take to work with him.

"Bruh, what is a Mexican Gordon Ramsey?" Eddie asked. "You know what? Nevermind, don't even answer because It's the weekend and I don't have work, nor do I have school. Two days where I'm not the one preparing the meals."

"So, you not gon' hook it up?"

"I'm not cooking at all this entire weekend. Except for tonight. When I go over Melissa's place to cook dinner for us. And also, dessert. It's part of our anniversary weekend." Eddie replied.

"Don't trip. I'll hit up Sonic's again. That is the one good thing about living out here, there wasn't a Sonic's in the hood."

Jamal had been rooming with Eddie in Santa Ana for about three months now. Sierra had convinced Jamal to move out of the rougher side of L.A. County and somewhere he could walk the streets after midnight without a gun, and where she didn't have to worry about someone breaking into her car whenever she chose to spend the night. She assisted Jamal with his search for an affordable apartment in a nicer neighborhood, but every vacancy they came across was out of his price range. After hesitating to agree with the idea of living with someone that he hardly knew, Jamal eventually came to terms with shifting the search to looking for someone who needed a roommate, and their hunt brought them to Eddie. A 24-year-old Hispanic young man, a year younger than Jamal, attending The School of Culinary Arts, who was looking for someone responsible, reliable, chill, and 420 friendly. It was the perfect match.

"Bro, tell your mom and sister I said good looking out on the cleanup. I see they did the dishes and everything."

"Yeah, they wanted me to tell you to tell Sierra thank you for the help."

"I didn't even know she helped."

"She saw them cleaning when she was on her way out and just started helping. You gotta good one bro."

"Yeah, we both do." Jamal replied.

“Before you know it, we’ll be leaving here to get our own places with them.”

“You right. Anyway, I’m out. You’ll more than likely be gone when I get back, so I’ll see you when I see you, and happy anniversary.”

“Thanks. Good luck on your first day. You were pretty clandestine about what you did for money to make your part of the rent, but I never questioned it because you were never late. You were even early once. But I’m glad to see you stepping out into the world. I’m a give you a little advice my abuela gave me: You can be anything you want to be, but whatever it is, make sure you’re your own boss. Let these jobs you work, where you have a boss, be your hustle so you won’t be broke while you figure out what you really wanna do. Once you do, work hard to make that dream a reality, then tell your boss kiss my ass, I quit.”

“Wow. That was, long. But I hear you. And I get whatchyo g-ma was sayin’. I appreciate the motivation bro. This shit still stupid though.”

Jamal grabbed a bottled water out of the refrigerator and headed out the door.

It was yet another lovely and warm Southern California Saturday morning. The children of the parents living in the complex were out enjoying the modest playground of the building and a few of the parents were assisting each other in getting the community grill for barbecuing. There were coolers filled with ice covering the beverages, the residents’ animals were frolicking together with kids, and it was like a scene from a campy family film. And Jamal, with eyes to ground, was determined to not give the harmonious spectacle any of his attention as he made his way out the apartment complex and to his car across the street. While they were preparing for the festivities, Jamal was preparing to be cut off from any festive events of any kind, and for eight hours.

Jamal pulled out of the parking space, drove a few blocks down the street, and made a left onto the bustling main street. He then began to wonder what he could expect at the orientation. The hiring process as a whole was unheard of according to Sierra and Eddie. There was no interview, and on the day after he applied online, he received an email that simply stated he was hired, and that his company uniform polo shirt would be mailed to the address provided on his application within three to five business days. Whether this was all standard procedure when getting hired or not, there was only one thing about all of this Jamal knew for certain, it was all unprecedented to him.

There was hardly any traffic on the freeway, and so, Jamal made it to the job ten minutes before his orientation was supposed to begin. He parked and then stared in bewilderment at the appearance of the supposed store. Similar to the buildings around the area, it looked more like a single-story office building that should have been the companies home office that bought cell phone companies instead of a retail store that sold for cell phone companies.

Rather than immediately head inside, Jamal waited in his car for a moment. He watched as his fellow coworkers pulled up, one after the other, and made their way into the building and less interested in the irony of its appearance than him.

“Not one other black person.” Jamal thought to himself, which also tempted him to start up his car and leave. But Jamal’s rainy-day fund from his not-so-distant trapping days was nearly depleted. Selling cell phones seemed easy enough and he already saw himself as someone who could sell rain to a dark cloud.

“Clouds....Oh shit!”

Jamal immediately turned and began to search the backseat of his car.

“Shit!” He shouted as he gave up the search just as quickly as he started it.

He had forgotten to bring his body spray, and so, him enjoying a smoke session before he went in was not going to happen. Jamal then exited his car and slammed the door shut, upset he was at work on a Saturday, and that he couldn’t smoke until after work. As he made his way to the building a particular car in the parking lot caught his attention and he had to stop and stare. It was the newest Mercedes Benz C Class in white with black trim. The eighteen-inch black chrome rims with the machined face and white trim made the car look like a work of art in the parking lot. Jamal assumed that the vehicle had to belong to a manager, and he felt himself become a little motivated at the thought. If this was something a manager could afford working here, then it probably was not going to be all that bad, and Jamal now had a goal to strive for. If not that particular type of car, it could be something even better, as long as he became a manager, and didn’t quit or get fired before then.

Jamal entered the building and was immediately struck with awe at the sight of the interior. It was set up like a large lavish jewelry store that sold only the most expensive pieces. There was an array of newly designed, exclusively modeled, limited edition, and clearly overseas imported cell phones all presented in lavish display casings and glass counters. There was a section for each cell carrier that was out, and in each section was a myriad of cell phones to choose from. There were even phones that Jamal had never seen before, which looked as if they were fresh out of a sci-fi movie, and Jamal was even tempted to purchase one for himself just so he could show it off. As Jamal continued to look around and admire the many phones, he noticed a sheet of white paper purposely taped to one of the glass displays and walked over to it. There was a large black arrow printed on it and words just below the arrow that said, “Please, follow arrows to break room for orientation.” Jamal did as the paper instructed and followed the arrows as they led him off the sales floor. He walked down a narrow hallway, looking on in confusion at the paintings mounted on the light gray painted walls, and wondering what type of people would want to see these images every day. They were various paintings of a single black hole. Each frame carefully hung displayed a series of brush strokes

that came together to depict the image of darkness devouring darkness. Jamal looked ahead to see a black hole painting mounted on the wall at the end of the hallway. It disturbed him that the closer he came to the painting at the end of the hallway, the more it seemed as if he were being pulled in by the black hole, and so, Jamal focused his gaze on the surprisingly clean beige linoleum floor until he came to the end of the hallway and made the left. When he looked up, it was the same scene, and he dropped his head once again until he reached the end of the hallway and made the right. Again, the same scenery until Jamal walked about ten more paces and stopped at the doorway to the break room on his right. The break room was almost as large as Jamal and Eddie's two-bedroom apartment. There were vending machines, a self-serve pastry and coffee mini shop, and a full kitchen with two large refrigerators. In the middle of the room there were five six and a half feet tables, each with cushioned benches on both sides, and a small flower arrangement in the center of each table. Jamal saw that his coworkers were already getting acquainted with one another and he was clearly the last to arrive. He walked over to the table furthest to the back, carefully eyeing all ten of his coworkers, who he now saw as competition now more than ever since seeing the Benz parked outside, and he sat with a smirk of confidence on his face knowing he could outsell any of these clowns.

"Bruh, tell me why they got soft ass harp music playin' in the bathroom!" NuNu said, addressing the room as she strutted in, and eyes on her phone. "A nigga almost fell asleep on the toilet."

Jamal chuckled and was relieved to see another melanin skin toned individual.

Her dreads were fresh, her line up immaculate, her shirt fit perfectly as if she bought it from a designer store, her tan colored fitted jeans sagged just enough to show off the Gucci logo across the waistband of her black boxer briefs, and she had the limited-edition North Carolina blue Jordan twelves.

Jamal gawked at NuNu's feet as she headed to the front table. His shoe connects told him they were not making any more until the next five-year anniversary. That was three months ago, and three months later Jamal sees his new coworker with a pair. He could not help but feel salty.

Suddenly, the power and lights in the building went out.

"Whoa, they tryna get freaky or somethin'?" One of the male coworkers blurted out in the darkness and making the rest burst into laughter.

The lights then came back on just as unexpectedly as they went out.

"Oh my God!" A female coworker gasped in fear.

She, along with everyone else, was startled by the sudden appearance of a woman standing at the front of the break room with her arms casually behind her back. She was in the company white polo shirt, tan colored slacks, and was smiling from ear to ear.

“Hello everyone!” She shouted enthusiastically. “My name is Susan and let me apologize if I startled anyone with my sneaking in during the black out and seeming as if I just popped up out of nowhere.”

“Nah, bruh. You did like, just pop-up bro.” Another male coworker challenged.

Susan laughed.

“No. I just walked over from the door before the power cut back on, which I do want to apologize for. The building is fairly new and we’re still working on the electrical. So, we’ll be experiencing sporadic black outs. But don’t worry, everything will be all up and running smoothly once it’s time for the grand opening.”

“I’m sorry, but how did you walk from the door to there when it was only dark for like two seconds? It’s like a good ten steps from the door.” A separate male coworker questioned.

“Okay.” Susan responded with a smile.

“Okay, what?” Another coworker asked.

Susan just stared at the coworker with a smile and there was an awkward silence.

“Bruh, is you good” He asked.

“I’m more than good!” Susan quickly replied. “I’m great! And I’m super excited to go over the amazing opportunity you all have just been given. I’d like to welcome you all to Global Integration Wireless, or G.I. Wireless. You are going to be integrated into a company that plans to change the way people purchase their cell phones.”

“I have a question.” NuNu said.

“Yes. Please. I’m eager to answer any and all.”

“I don’t know about the rest of y’all, but I’m here for that check. Your company doesn’t have the pay rate up on your website and there was no interview process. So, I’m just wondering what’s up with that. What’s the pay lookin’ like?”

“I almost forgot that humans are motivated by monetary means.” Susan mumbled to herself, but it was just loud enough for NuNu and those at the front table to hear.

“Humans?” NuNu was thrown aback by what she had heard and felt a little insulted as well. “I’m not sure if you’ve looked in the mirror lately, but you’re one to talk.”

Those coworkers who were close enough to hear the exchange laughed.

Susan then removed a small makeup mirror from her back pocket and began examining her facial features. She carefully poked at her skin and moved it around as if she were adjusting its position on her face. She then placed the mirror back in her pocket.

“Exactly!” She said joyously. “I am a human being. And I as well am motivated by money. That is why I am glad to say that we offer a competitive hourly wage in addition to a very generous commission payout.”

“Generous?” One of the male coworkers scoffed. “I’ve worked for companies like this before, and the commission payout is always bull. So, what makes yours so different?”

“I totally understand, and I will most definitely be going into more detail about the pay as the workday progresses. In the meantime, let me give you all a background on the company you’re all working for.” She said and showing off the company logo on her pen.

At that moment, Jamal remembered his vape pen was still in the glove compartment of his car, and he had just bought a new indica cartridge for it from Eddie’s cousin last night at the party.

“Excuse me!” Jamal shouted and raising his hand. “I uh, left my wallet in my car. Can I go grab it real quick?”

“Sure. You will definitely need that.” Susan giggled.

Jamal then got up and headed out the break room. The moment he stepped out, the lights and power went out once again. Jamal paid it no mind, pulled out his phone to utilize the flashlight, and see what was happening on social network. Although it was dark, Jamal could traverse the hallway without much attention, and so he continued on his way by memory.

“Fuck!”

Jamal dropped his phone after suddenly hitting a wall when he attempted to make the left. He picked up his phone and then used the light to examine the wall. He was stunned. Jamal was positive this was the point where he made the turn. Or was it?

Rather than put too much thought into it, he shrugged it off and kept forward. Wanting to be ready to unlock the doors of his car as soon as he was in range, Jamal prematurely removed his keys from his pocket and began twirling them on his finger like a cowboy twirling his pistol. The power came back on and when Jamal looked around him, he began to panic. He was standing in a completely different hallway. It was much wider, the ceiling much higher, and the walls and floor were bathed in an almost blinding white. He immediately turned to look back and saw that the exit that led back to the familiar narrow

and light gray walled hallway was starting to gradually close off. Jamal quickly began to make his way towards the exits when he suddenly heard,

“I.....ee....ou!!”

He turned and had to squint his eyes to make out what it was he was seeing up ahead.

“I.....ee....ou!!”

It was too far ahead for Jamal to tell what or who it was but he could tell that it was coming towards him.

“I.....ee.....yo!!”

Jamal’s eyes then widened. He could tell what it was now.

It was a man. He was angrily struggling to keep himself upright, but stumbling every few steps. When he fell to the floor, he crawled for a few feet, and then struggled to barely make it to his feet to continue forward. Every few steps he would stand up straight, his body would violently twitch, and he would then jerk forward. Although it looked as if every step he took forward was utter agony, and it angered him more, he continued on, using the wall as a crutch when needed, and leaving a trail of blood on the floor and walls behind him.

“I.....se.....yo!!”

Jamal was in total shock and awe watching this skinless man stain the floor and walls crimson red, while struggling to reach him, and furiously determined to do so. Jamal wanted to leave but he was not sure if the man was calling for his help. He turned to assess the time he had left before he was trapped in there with the skinless man and probably end up suffering the same fate. His only exit was still slowly closing shut and he concluded, sadly, that he may not have enough time.

“I.....ee....you!!” The skinless man yelled, louder, sounding almost rabid, and beginning to catch his footing.

It was not until Jamal saw him start to move normally that he began to make his way once again slowly to the exit.

“I SEE YOU!!” The skinless man yelled angrily and speeding up his intimidating march towards Jamal..

Jamal sped up his backwards walk and fell just as he turned to start a full sprint. The moment he fell, the skinless man immediately went into a full sprint towards Jamal.

Without any second thought, Jamal hopped up, and headed full speed towards the still gradually closing exit.

“I SEE YOU!!”

Jamal glanced behind him, and began to panic when he saw that the skinless man was surprisingly only a few feet away. He was reaching out his bloody and skinless arm to grab Jamal, and he almost has him, and Jamal can feel the heat of his hand when,

“I SEE YO—“

The wall door shut, and Jamal fell to the beige linoleum floor. He had made it before the door closed completely and just before being grabbed. Jamal turned over onto his back, stared up at the light gray painted ceiling, and thanked the heavens that he made it out. But his feelings of thankfulness and relief were fleeting after he immediately cursed himself when he realized that he had dropped his keys.

“Bruh, what is you doin’ on the floor?”

Jamal opened his eyes to see NuNu standing over him.

“Did you not see what just happened?” Jamal asked as he got up.

“All I see is you lying on the dirty ass floor bro.”

“I left my damn keys in there!” Jamal yelled as he punched the wall.

“Okay then. Imma leave you to it. Whatever it is you doin’. And imma go this way.”

“Wait!” Jamal blocked her path with his arm. He then glanced at her name badge.

“NuNu, right? Look, something real weird and fucked up is going on with this company and this building.”

NuNu sighed.

“My nigga, no one is forcing you to work here. You can just quit. You don’t have to make shit up. But don’t think I’m about to rally behind you on some black power shit. Unlike you, I need this job.”

“I need a job too. This place is just up to some shit that ain’t right. You gotta believe me. I just saw it.”

“Just saw what? What is you talkin’ about?”

“I don’t know. I was walking down the hall like normal on the way to my car and then I looked up and I was in some ship like shit. It was crazy, Like something out of Star Trek.”

“Really? Star Trek, my nigga?” NuNu asked in disbelief of his claim. “Okay, you obviously have some shit you need to deal with mentally.”

“I’m not crazy. I know what I saw.”

“Hey there new subjects.” A male employee of the company said and surprising them. “You two doing, okay? Don’t wanna miss the best part of orientation, do you? We’re about to go over the benefits and how our selling incentives work.”

“Yeah, I’m good. I’m just headed to the bathroom. But this guy here thinks this building is really a spaceship.” NuNu teased.

“Why would you say that?!” Jamal was completely thrown aback. “No, I don’t. I didn’t see anything out of the ordinary either.”

The employee laughed.

“Well, that’s a relief. We like to keep things quite ordinary here.”

“I assumed so.” NuNu remarked.

“Well, don’t take too long or you two will miss some very important information. And once again, on behalf of the company, I’d like to apologize for the rolling blackouts.”

The employee headed down the hall and then into the break room.

“I need to get back in there and hear how this pay structure is gonna workout. Make sure it ain’t no bullshit like ol’ boy was talkin’ about. I’ll see you in there, I guess.” NuNu then headed into the restroom.

Jamal sighed, upset that she didn’t believe him, but then wondered if he would believe some random guy if they said the same thing.

Jamal decided to wait by what he believed to be the entrance to the spaceship hallway. He had no clue as to how he would get in, but he figured if he waited there long enough then something was bound to happen.

About a minute had passed and NuNu exited the bathroom. She saw that Jamal was waiting at the wall, and assumed he was waiting for her.

“Bruh, were you standing there waiting for me to finish in the bathroom?” She asked in disgust. “You know this dawg don’t play with sticks, right?”

Jamal laughed.

“Why would I be waiting for you? Like I said I left my keys in there and I need to get them so I can get the hell away from this place.”

NuNu shook her head. Clearly, he was on one and she didn’t want to be a part of it.

“Whatever.”

NuNu walked by him and was on her way back into the break room when she stopped. She immediately thought about what her girlfriend told her about seizing opportunities to connect with people. Maybe this was one of those times and if it wasn't it sure felt like it. She then turned around, walked back, and stood next to Jamal.

“Yo, you good bro? I’m not sure, but it looks like you goin’ through some shit. Whatever it is, you’re gonna get through it. You’re alive, looks like you’re in decent shape, you could eat a little more protein though, but you good, and you gotta job now. And all that stuff I just pointed out are blessings from up above. So, whatever gotchu buggin’, leave it in God’s hands. He got whatever is troublin’ you.”

Jamal glared at her with bewilderment.

“I just told you what was troublin’ me.”

NuNu sighed in anger.

“So, you stickin’ with the Star Trek shit?”

As soon as she asked, the power went out, and the wall door came ajar.

“That’s what I’m talkujn’ bout.” Jamal said in celebration.

NuNu just rolled her eyes at the sight.

“Betchu feel real crunchy right now.” Jamal said.

“Bruh, you found a hidden room. Who cares? It’s probably where they keep the safe. This ain’t the only building to have a secret room. I’ve worked at plenty of places that keep their safe hidden even from the employees working there.” NuNu replied. She then turned to head back into the break room.

“Wait!”

“Bruh, you buggin’. I don’t have time to listen to your crazy no mo’. I need to see what’s to this commission payout.”

“Can you just stand there and keep an eye out for me real quick? I just need to get my keys. I didn’t even drop them too far down the way. Help ya boy out one time.” Jamal asked.

Nu Nu thought for a few seconds and then replied.

“Hurry up. And you not my boy. My niggas ain’t on that weirdo shit.”

“Good lookin’ out.” Jamal said as he cautiously proceeded down the dark hall. He was surprised to see that, when he examined the floor and wall with the light from his phone, there were no massive blood stains, and no sign of the skinless man’s existence.

“Hurry up don’t mean tip toe as slow as possible.”

“Damn, bro. Just hold on. They should be around here.” Jamal said as he scanned the floor with the light of his cellphone. “They not here.”

“What do you mean they not there? I knew yo ass was bulshittin’ bruh.”

“I ain’t bullshittin’ you. I just—” The lights suddenly came back on, and Jamal was stunned to see, but unaware to NuNu, one of the employees standing behind her. Before he could warn NuNu she fell to the floor. And just before Jamal could react, he felt a prick in his neck, a few seconds later his vision went blurry, and he passed out.

“Jamal!”

Jamal slowly opened his eyes.

“Wake up! We gotta get out of here before they get back!”

Jamal groaned as he finally began to gain consciousness.

“Where are.....What the hell happened?” Jamal attempted to get up when he realized that he was confined to an operating table by metal clamps around his wrist, ankles, and waist. “What the fuck bro?!” He shouted in a panic.

“They drugged us and brought us here. It’s some kind of slaughter room or torture chamber.” NuNu said. She had been awake a few minutes longer than Jamal and was able to absorb and come to a full understanding of the situation.

“Why would you say that!? Why can’t it just be a regular room!?” Jamal complained and squirming.

“Because there’s blood on these operating tables, there’s some weird looking tools over on that countertop, with blood on them, and—”

“My keys!” Jamal cut her off in excitement.

“What?”

“They’re right there!” Jamal gestured with a head nod in the direction of his keys that were lying on the countertop next to the operating tools. “We gotta figure out how to get out of these restraints.” Jamal began squirming more violently as if it would help to free him.

“You think you gon’ wiggle yo way out of ‘em?”

“I don’t see you doing anything. At least my intentions are in the right place.”

NuNu shook her head. She then closed her eyes and tried to visualize an escape plan. It was no use though. She could feel the hopelessness begin to creep in and she started to subtly quiver in fear.

“I can’t think of anything.” She muttered to herself.

“What? I can’t hear you.” Jamal said as he continued to wiggle and use his body strength as if it would break the metal clamps.

Before she could respond and tell Jamal to accept that they were about to die, the power went out, and the restraints came open.

Without a second or time to question why, both hopped off the operating tables, and wiped off the small chunks of what they assumed was human flesh.

“That’s what I’m talkin’ about!” Jamal said and grabbing his keys. “Now let’s get the hell outta here!”

“Wait a second.” NuNu then grabbed a sharp tool from the counter.

“What are you doin’?”

“What do you mean what am I doin’? They ain’t gon’ get me again.” She replied.

Jamal thought about what she said and then grabbed a tool as well.

“Aight. Let’s go.”

As soon as he said it, the lights and power came back on, and they were surprised by the sight of an employee and security guard blocking their path out of the room.

“Bruh, what is with you guys just poppin’ up out of nowhere all the damn time?” Jamal questioned.

The two company workers then charged towards them without warning.

The employee attempted to grab at NuNu, but she quickly impaled him in the abdomen before he could fully clutch her, and he fell to the floor. Jamal on the other hand, struggled with the over-weight security guard. He had gotten hold of Jamal’s right wrist and had stopped Jamal from stabbing him. Jamal had grabbed hold of the security guards left forearm with his free hand and had stopped the guard from getting a grip on his neck. Just when Jamal felt he could not hold the guard off any further, the guards grip quickly loosened, and he fell to the ground. Jamal stepped back, exhaled in relief, and stared at the lifeless body. NuNu had stabbed him in the back of the head and ultimately saved Jamal’s life.

“I had him.” Jamal remarked and out of breath.

NuNu sighed and shook her head.

“Nigga let’s go.” She said and exiting the room.

Jamal started towards the door when he noticed the hidden gun under the security guard’s shirt and stopped in his tracks. He lifted the guard’s shirt, removed the gun tucked halfway in between his lower back and pants, and hid it on himself in the same manner before exiting the room.

Both headed down the hallway at full sprinting speed. They made a left, then a right, then a left, and another right until they stopped.

“Bruh, where the hell are we goin’?” Jamal asked.

“I don’t know but it feels like we’re going in circles.”

Suddenly, they began to hear what sounded like the steps of an approaching army descending on them from the front and rear. Only a few seconds had passed when they saw a myriad of G.I. Wireless employees standing shoulder to shoulder in front of them and the same behind them. Jamal and NuNu were surrounded.

“The queen would like to speak with you!” They all said in unison. The crowd behind them then immediately positioned themselves in a way that made a path for the two to walk through them. “Follow the path!”

Jamal and NuNu hesitated for a moment and then made there way down the path laid out by the employees.

After a few twists and turns through what seemed like a hallway of light laid out as a maze they finally made it to a single door at the end of the hallway.

“Enter!”

The door opened and both entered.

The room was as large as an airplane hangar but resembled a eerie, cold, and wet cave. It was dimly lit and there was a pungent odor that lingered in the chilly air. At the far back of the cave was a large dirt and rock throne, and levitating above the throne, using what looked like large thick pulsating veins as a harness to keep itself in the air, was a large ant like alien creature with a large abdomen sack that seemed to be one with the dirt floor.

“Approach humans!” The creature commanded.

Both hesitated.

“Do not be frightened humans. I will bring you no harm.”

Jamal and NuNu still hesitated for a moment before making there way over.

“It’s like a giant deformed ant.” NuNu whispered to Jamal as both stopped a few feet away from creature.

“I know not of this ant that you speak of. Me and my colony have only inhabited your planet for a short period of time now. I am queen Alaxis of the planet Latarian.”

“And you’re gonna kill us and take over the planet, right?”

“Why would you say that?” NuNu was completely thrown aback by Jamal’s statement.

“Say what? That’s what they do in every movie. Kill and conquer.”

“This ain’t a movie nigga!”

“Silence!” The creature shouted and shaking the entire foundation with the power of her voice. “We are not here to invade your planet. My throne was usurped by my treacherous kin. I and those who followed me were exiled from the planet. We wandered the galaxies until we found your planet which had the right atmospheric elements for me and my people to survive. We just want to integrate peacefully into your society and live.”

“Oh. That’s different.” Jamal said in astonishment.

“How many of y’all is it?” NuNu asked.

“Although it is only small of a number, and I wish I could have brought more with me, I am still proud of the amount that I was able to bring in such a small ship.”

“Small number. Small ship. So, like around, what, fifty?” Jamal asked.

“Yes. Around those millions.”

“What!?” NuNu was completely thrown aback. “Fifty million? How can that possibly be a peacefully integration?”

“Because we only have the ability to freely mold our bodies as hatchlings, we must carefully and meticulously remove the skin from someone of your species and allow our younglings to grow into the skin.”

“There it is.” Jamal said. “I knew it wasn’t too different.”

“How is that a peaceful integration? I’m sure people are screaming in pain and agony while you skin them.” NuNu said.

“We thought those were screams and cries of joy that your kind was so ecstatic to be helping save an entire race.” The creature responded.

“You said we. They skin the people in front of you?” Jamal asked.

“No. Me and my people are connected consciously. I feel what they feel, they feel what I feel, I know their thoughts, as well as they do mine, I live because they live, and they can live only with me.”

“Wait, they can live only with you? So, are you sayin’ if you die, they die?” NuNu asked.

“That is correct. But now this meeting is over. I shall forgive you for killing my two children, and because you have spoken to me with respect and as an equal, I will show you mercy. I will give you the option of being killed before your skin is removed and used to house a hatchling.”

“Wait, tell us more about your planet and your kind.” NuNu said and trying to buy some time until she could think of a way out.

“I cannot stall any longer. The integration must—”

There was a loud bang, and the creature suddenly dropped its head.

NuNu, in complete shock, looked over to see Jamal pointing a gun at the creature. He then looked over at her.

“What?” He asked. “Didn’t it say that if it died the rest of ’em died?”

“Nigga, when did you get a gun?!”

“I got it from the security guard.”

“The security guard?”

“I was surprised too. I promise I thought he was a flashlight cop. But that nigga had it tucked.” Jamal answered.

NuNu just shook her head.

“Let’s just get the hell out of here.”

The two exited the cave and followed the path laid out by the trail of dead aliens disguised as humans. After a few minutes they made it out of the maze and back to the sales floor where they saw an ambulance and fire truck parked outside in front of the building.

“Bruh, where the hell have you two been?” A male coworker asked.

“We were out back smokin’” NuNu quickly replied.

“Bruh, and y’all didn’t invite me?”

“What happened? Why the ambulance here?” Jamal asked.

“It was crazy. Both the white girl Susan and this other guy who worked here just fell out in the middle of the presentation and died. Just passed out on the spot.” He explained.

Jamal and NuNu watched as the paramedics rolled twin stretchers from the back and out the building.

“Wait, does this mean we don’t get the job? Because if that’s the case, my baby mama gon’ be pissed bro.” The coworker said as he walked off with his chin in his chest.

“What now?” Jamal asked NuNu once they were alone.

NuNu kept silent for a moment to actually consider the question. There was weight behind such a simple question now and any wrong answer could have major consequences.

“I don’t know about you, but I’m going to call my girl, tell her I’m on the way home early, I’m gonna smoke me a blunt, go lay down in my bed, close my eyes, go to sleep, and forget any of this ever happened.” She replied

Jamal was somewhat surprised by her response but was in agreement.

“I’m more than likely gonna do the same. Smoke a blunt and forget about all of this shit. I guess I’ll see you around.”

“Hopefully not if this is the type of shit you get into on a daily.”

They both laughed, shook hands, and went their separate ways. Both wrongfully assuming their paths would never cross again.