THE RUSHED CHAPTER

The Accelerated Development of Black Girlhood

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Abstract: The Adultification of Black Girls

Black youths seem to be dealing with an issue of having their childhood cut off much sooner than their white counterparts. Just to give one example, black children are 5 times more likely to be arrested for a crime compared to their white peers who commit the same crime.

I'm focusing on the adultification of black girls. There are a number of stereotypical labels that are thrown on black women, and I'll be focusing on the main 3; The Mammy, the Jezebel, and the Sapphire. The first section of this paper discusses the stereotypes individually. Next the paper goes into the creative aspect of story writing. Each chapter is focused on a stereotype manifested as a child, and then the story shows how their lives intertwine.

It is my hope that my paper successfully communicates the issue of adultification of black girls and what they eventually lead to.

Childhood is something that everyone should get the opportunity to experience, it should be a right and not a privilege. However, not everyone is afforded the luxury of living life as a child and having no worries. Young black girls are just one group of children who don't get the opportunity to exist as children. When one is born as a girl, it seems as though we've already committed a sin against nature. Being born black, you're labeled as trouble right out of the womb. Being born a black girl is a hybrid of problems that will stay with you for the rest of your life, problems you didn't create nor ask for.

The purpose of this paper is to show how historical stereotyping has damaged the views we have on little black girls and how this stereotyping and negative perception stunts their childhood at a very early age and pushes them into adulthood way before their time. The three stereotypes I'm going to be focusing on in this paper are; The Mammy, The Sapphire, and the Jezebel.

The Mammy is a stereotype that was born out of slavery. She's usually depicted as a heavy-set woman, dark skinned, wearing a head wrap on her head, and is happy to serve her master and his family as if they were her own. We see this depiction in advertisements such as Aunt Jemimah, and in television shows such as *Gone with the Wind*, and the *Imitation of Life*.

The Sapphire is a depiction of a black woman who seems to be angry all the time, constantly yelling, usually emasculating the men in her life. We see imagery of this character in shows like *The Jeffersons*, *Everybody Hates Chris*, Tyler Perry's Madea movies, *Martin*, *Why Did I Get Married*? etc. This character is usually a dark-skinned woman, which in itself counters the idea that white women are the end all to be all when it comes down to femininity.

The Jezebel is a stereotype that was used to excuse the treatment of black women both during and after slavery in the United States. During slavery, black women were often put on

display at side shows for having what white people deemed, an unusually big rear end and bust. One notable woman who was famous for her rear end was Sarah Baartman. Black women were painted to be these lustful, animalistic creatures ruled by their hormones so they'd be less believed when they were raped by masters, their sons, and whatever white men would find them on the streets. We often see black women in the position of being jezebels in movies like *Foxy Brown*, *Black Hooker*, *Being Mary Jane*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and even see the concept being pushed on both grown women and young girls in the movie *I Can Do Bad All by Myself*.

I'm questioning if this historical depiction of black girls and women have been influenced by the media, which in turn influence the way we see young black girls and determine how we treat them. My educated guess would lead me to believe that it does. We're not only pushed into adulthood by non-black people, we're pushed into it within our own communities. Particularly, older black women have a habit of labeling young black girls as fast, policing everything they do from how they dress, to who they hang out with, to how they behave, and everything in between. Young black boys don't get that level of scrutiny from older black men, they have their own trials, but that's a topic for another research paper.

Literature Review

I broke down my research into the three aspects I'm focusing on: The Sapphire, the Jezebel, and the Mammy. The sources I looked for helped me answer the question of what causes our girls to be pushed into these categories.

The Sapphire: A rude, loud, combative black woman. A politically correct way of calling a black woman "an angry black woman."

Gonzalez, T. (2018). From the Classroom to the Courtroom: The Adultification of Black Girls. *Westlaw.*

In this paper, Gonzalez attempts to make a distinction between how the justice system fails to take unique positions into account when dealing with black female minors and the intersectionality of their lives. These girls are being met with harsher punishments than boys who commit similar offenses, however the author does give suggestions as to how the system can be reformed to use practical solutions so they can better handle these cases.

This article helps me prove that the justice system paints people of color as a whole with a broad stroke brush. There's no variation when it comes down to how children are treated in general, except the fact that little black girls, since they're deemed less innocent, get harsher punishments than boys for similar crimes. Does it have anything to do with the notion that girls mature faster than boys and should know better? I'm hoping to find out.

With over a decade of experience with law and policy, Thalia Gonzalez has more than enough experience to speak on the injustices people face in the justice system. Her work ranges from school-to-prison pipelines, race and inequality, down to juvenile justice. She conducts research and

writes reports, and then moves on to give advice to policymakers, educators, and lawyers on a local and national level.

1) Epstein, R., Blake, J., & Gonzalez, T. (2017). Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls Childhood

The authors of this article attempted to bring attention to the vast differences between childhood for black girls and childhood of white girls. Black girls between the ages of 5 and 14 are seen to be more adult and therefore need less nurturing and compassion compared to their white counterparts. This is not just in the legal system, but the educational system as well. Since black girls are seen as less innocent, they're put in a position to be met with harsher punishments at the hands of school administrators, and their independence puts them at a disadvantage for leadership opportunities at school.

This article helps me prove that even if a black girl is remarkably young (in reference, age five) she's still pushed into adulthood a little more by being forced to be more independent. People see these little girls are mini adults and therefore do not provide the same level of comfort and support they do to little white children as a whole.

Rebecca Epstein is an Executive Director of the Georgetown Law center on Poverty and Inequality. Pair that with her 20-year focus on race and sex discrimination, focusing most of her energy on marginalized girls, she had proper authority to speak on the topic of the adultification of black girls.

Jamilia J. Blake is a well published professor who focuses on educational psychology with a personal interest in children's peer relationships and how aggression in ethnic/minority population and females relate to a child's psychology and social adjustment

Pilgrim, D., Dr. (2008, August). The Sapphire Caricature

This article seeks to break down the concept of the Sapphire stereotype that black women are depicted as in the media. Originally speaking, the Sapphire is supposed to be this mean, bitter, angry woman who directs her anger at the black men in her life. It depicts black women as emasculating and takes away from their femininity. The author then goes on to discuss how the image of Sapphire shifted from just man hating to essentially being upset with anyone who doesn't agree with them, making a reference to how a large portion of Americans viewed Michelle Obama during her time in the white house. When she deviated from being a devoted wife and mother but active in her community, and started showing signs of being a human being with thoughts and feelings, she was painted with the same broad stroke brush a lot of other black women are painted with, angry, unreasonable, etc.

This article helps to show that even if you're the definition of femininity on paper, as a black woman, anything you do that deviates from that definition will get you labeled. Michelle was perfect on paper, even with her being just as successful as her husband, and yet certain news outlets were quick to call her a baby mama, a bitter, angry black woman just because she didn't agree with them. This article made me realize that one of my favorite actresses has mastered the role of angry black woman, and that discovery is going right into my story.

Dr. David Pilgrim is one of the country's leading experts on multiculturalism, diversity and race relations. As an experienced writer on matters regarding racism, a curator of a museum that hosts a number of racist artifacts used to teach tolerance, and served as a consultant regarding how the topic of racial slurs should be used in television (This Is Us for example) Dr. Pilgrim has become an authority in the world of communicating social injustices and navigating the difficulties of discussing racism in America.

The Jezebel: The portrayal of black women as lascivious by nature is an enduring stereotype. The descriptive words associated with this stereotype are singular in their focus: seductive, alluring, worldly, beguiling, tempting, and lewd.

2) Parker, A. M. (spring 2018). Fast Tailed Girls: An Inquiry into Black Girlhood, Black Womanhood, and the Politics of Sexuality

In this paper, Parker tries to bring light to a very serious problem in the black community, the concept of calling young girls "fast tailed" (politically correct way of calling a child a whore). Taking inspiration from @HoodFeminism, she followed a trail of posts using the hashtag #FastTailedGirls and saw a growing trend in what was deemed to be inappropriate behavior for young girls (hanging out with boys, getting unwanted attention from older men) and was even exposed to stories of sexual abuse that was swept under the rug since the girl was deemed "fast."

This article helps me with a particular chapter of my story, where my "Jezebel" character is confronted with her mother over a situation that happened with a male teacher, and how the mother is quick to dismiss and disown her child for being fast. The concept that there's a young girl in the world fast enough to catch a grown man is disgusting, because there's no girl fast enough to catch a man who isn't attracted to children, and in this case, it was a complete abuse of authority and less about her chasing him. She wasn't fast enough. He chased her, and caught her.

I don't know much about this author and a Google search ended up being no help. All I know is that she wrote this paper as a requirement for her to graduate from Duke University.

The Mammy: A caretaker, devoid of sexuality and completely selfless in nature. Often will take pride in taking care of others before taking care of one's self.

1) Lack, C. (2015, April 28). Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, or Queen? Stereotypes of the

African American Female

This think piece is centered around the stereotypes that black women have been painted with since they were brought here during slavery. The Mammy being showed as a docile, self-sacrificing plus size woman who loves taking care of her master and their family over her own, suggesting that slaves enjoyed that, the Jezebel being an excuse to sexually assault female slaves, the Sapphire being modeled after an old TV show *Amos and Andy* where a rightfully upset woman was painted as hostile and aggressive, the breadwinner of the family, castrating, all characteristics deemed opposite of the femininity white women possessed. For the sake of my project I won't focus on the "Queen" stereotype because it's a new one to me and doesn't really go along with the story I plan on writing.

This piece helps me frame the innerworkings of the Mammy character's mind. She's fully aware of the stereotypes black women are placed in and encourages her sisters not to watch programs that would indirectly cause them to lose a sense of self worth because of how black women are always portrayed, and yet, she isn't aware enough to realize that she's fallen right into the Mammy stereotype.

Dr. Lack is a professor of Psychology at MFT and has overseen the production of six books with topics ranging from critical thinking and pseudo psychology to racism and sexism in psychology.

All Three Stereotypes

West, C. M. (January 2008). Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and their homegirls: Developing an "oppositional gaze" toward the images of Black women

This article seeks to give historical context behind the main three stereotypes black women have been put in since they were brought to America on the ships. These stereotypes came after years of structural inequalities, and how they shape the psychological functions of black women in America today.

This is relevant to my project because it gives a baseline as to how these stereotypes came around and how they manage to shape the way non-black people look at black people in this country. We're a country that takes in media like water so there's no denying that what we see on TV effects the way we perceive people, even if it's unconsciously.

Dr. West is an associated professor of Psychology and the Bartley Dobb professor for the Study and Prevention of Violence in the Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences Program at the University of Washington Tacoma. She is best known for her work with violence in the minority family and her work on the imagery of African American women in pop culture.

My perspective of my sources

All of my sources aimed to answer why we treat African Americans and black people the way we do in this counter as it currently stands. Half of them used scientific data, conducting research and showing patterns, while the other half used historical patterns and current examples of stereotypes to get their point across. Most of the authors I referenced are pretty solid authorities on the subject matter at hand, and I feel as though they helped me get my point across so I can write an efficient story. While it doesn't explicitly reference my research throughout the whole story, I do try my best to incorporate a good amount of my research within the story.

Chapter One: Athena

"Please…please God, I need something!" At 16 years old, Athena Johnson never thought she would be in this position; in the delivery room with just her mother and a group of apathetic nurses, trying to give birth to her triplet daughters. The man who got her pregnant promised her the world, but at the end of the day, he not only failed to deliver, he abandoned her to fend for herself.

"Bet you wish your ass wasn't so fast now, huh? You're old enough to walk around the house around taken men, you're old enough to sit and wait patiently to see if these nurses are gonna give you somethin'." Athena glanced over at the older woman in the room. The two hadn't been on good terms since Maribel found her daughter bent over the counter with her boyfriend pressed against her. As much as Athena pleaded with her mother, telling her the truth of the situation, the older wouldn't budge. She was kicked out of the house for a couple of months and left to couch surf until she found out she was pregnant.

It wasn't easy being back home and pregnant by your mother's boyfriend, but Athena did what she had to do to make sure she kept her mother happy. She didn't come out of her room unless she was called, she didn't do anything else after school but come straight home, and the little money she got from tutoring during the day went towards her mother to help pay for "all the food she and her damn babies were eating up." None of that seemed to matter though. Maribel was snarky, mean, and just plain hateful towards her daughter. She called her all sorts of whores and bitches when she was in her presence and talked shit about her on social media.

She didn't stay with her boyfriend after the whole ordeal, though she completely blamed Athena for seducing him and being a spiteful child of the Devil. They simply lived together to keep ACS off Maribel's back, but nothing about the situation was ideal for Athena or her girls.

Athena grew up in a project building at the far end of the town. The two-bedroom was small and always seemed to have some sort of issue. Since finding out she was pregnant, Athena turned her bedroom into a nursery for the girls. Three children in the living room just didn't sit right with her.

Maribel wasn't as open to sacrificing anything as her daughter was. Athena had to go get an air mattress because her mother refused to let her sleep on the living room couch. *"If you can get on your back for taken men, you can sleep on the damn floor for all I care."*

With all this being the case, one would find it hard to believe that Maribel mourned the loss of her daughter. After giving birth to three beautiful little girls, the doctors and nurses left Athena unattended, and she bled to death in the delivery room. The girls were left to be raised by their grandmother, who didn't make life exactly easy for them.

Chapter 2: Becoming May

Since the death of their mother, Jasmine, May, and Star had to live with their mother. During the first few years of their lives, the grandmother did a relatively good job taking care of them. She made sure they were fed, the house stayed clean, and the girls were in good health.

At some point around their seventh birthday, Maribel started to become a lot less concerned with the condition of the house. Food shopping started to occur every so often, it got to the point where the school was the only place the girls could get a meal.

"Grandma, we're hungry," May said as she stood at the side of her grandmother's bed. The other two girls really didn't like approaching the older woman since recently, she started getting defensive and snapping at everyone, but May couldn't take another day of not having anything to eat in the morning. "When are you gonna get up?"

"If you're so hungry, fix your own damn food," Maribel muttered, rolling over and away from the girl. "You bet not touch any of my frozen meals. They bring them for me to eat."

May sighed and walked out of her grandmother's room, gently closing the door behind her. She felt her stomach growl and she shook her head.

"No one wants your nasty meals on wheels food anyway." She muttered. She walked to the kitchen and looked around in the cabinet. There wasn't much there except a huge bag of rice and various cans of beans and sauces. She looked at the stove, well aware that she wasn't supposed to be playing on it, but she couldn't wait until Monday for their next meal.

May grabbed the stepping stool from under the sink and started taking out things she figured would be easy to make. After 20 minutes, she went into her bedroom and grabbed her sisters.

"Come on, let's go eat." Jasmine and Star whined when they were forced to get up, and when they looked at the food that was prepared, Star sucked her teeth.

"This isn't breakfast food. This is dinner food."

"Well, it's the only food in here we're allowed to touch so do you wanna wait until Monday to eat or not?"

After that little banter, the girls started eating. From that day on,

May took up the responsibility of making sure she and her sisters ate when their grandmother refused to feed them. After seeing May work in the kitchen, Maribel decided it would be best to make the girl her "helper", so any chores that needed to be done got thrown on May. It progressed slowly from making the family meals, to doing the family laundry, doing the grocery shopping, cleaning up the house, running the mail, and making sure her sisters were properly dressed and fully prepared for school. May took on the title of being the second woman of the house, though Maribel would never own up to it. While her sisters got to play and have fun, May was stuck inside handling whatever needed to be done, not being allowed to go outside and have fun because there was too much work to be done. Sometimes the level of chores would have the girl up from six o'clock in the morning to 11 at night, way past her bedtime, but she liked the praise she got from her grandmother for *"being such a big help around the house,"* so she did everything with a smile so she wouldn't seem bothered by anyone. By the time she was 15, she had absolutely no issue with putting the needs of her family above her own, and it reflected in her grades, but so long as everyone was kept out of trouble and safe, she was happy.

Chapter 3: Becoming Star

Starlina, Star for short, always was the tomboy between her and her sisters. While May stayed inside and Jasmine spent time with the girls, Star spent most of her time playing with the boys and getting into trouble. She'd been chastised over and over again about not behaving the same way her sisters did, in a much more ladylike fashion, but it never really bothered her. She had no interest in acting girly.

She also had a fierce sense of independence at a young age. She didn't need to reach out for help often, and this independence ended up leading teachers to ignore her when it came down to her work. No one checked in to see what was going on if her grades fluctuated. She noticed that her white classmates got more hands-on attention from their teachers, but she tried her best to ignore it the same way they ignored her. The only time they seemed to not ignore her was when she was getting in trouble.

Getting into trouble was something Star had no issue doing. It seemed as though every time she looked around, she was being yelled at. Her grandmother would yell at her for crying too loudly if she got her. The administrators at her school would put her in detention if she retaliated against unsavory behavior, and then she would get whooped by her grandmother for misbehaving. None of her friends seemed to care if they got too rough with her because *"she's one of the boys, so she can take it like a boy."*

This lack of consideration started extending to blatant disrespect. Star hated nothing more than being disrespected, and that seemed to be the only way people knew how to talk to her.

People had a habit of cutting her off, the teachers, her grandmother, even her friends. It made her feel small… as if she were insignificant. So, to counter this, Star started to talk louder and got very loud when someone tried to cut her off. *Hush up. What are you mad for? Watch your attitude. Watch your tone. You need to respect me,* etc.

At only seven years old, Star learned what it meant to be gaslit. Constantly being picked at and disrespected but being expected to stay calm and respectful made her think she was going crazy.

Everything came to a head when she was eight years old. While Jasmine sat with her group of friends, and May sat in the back of the lunch room, Star was spending time with her guy friends in the lunchroom. She got up for one moment to get something she left on the lunch counter, and when she came back, there was another girl sitting in her seat. She couldn't remember if it was the fact that the girl was in her seat, sitting on her jacket, or if it was the girl's nasty demeanor towards her, all Star saw at that moment was red.

"You're sitting on my jacket."

"I'll get up in a second."

"I want my jacket, now!"

Star yanked her jacket from under the girl, causing her to almost fall off the seat. The girl got up and pushed Star for being so rude, and all Star could hear was her friends telling her to relax and how it wasn't that serious. The next thing she knew, she was sitting in the principal's office with blood on her knuckles and the girl's skin under her nails. Even though she was pushed first, the principal decided that not only did Star need to apologize, but she was going to serve a month's detention for breaking the girl's nose. She didn't say much, mainly because she lost her voice yelling at her friends for not sticking up for her, and how she never wanted to speak to them again.

Word spread around the neighborhood around Star's fight, and adults were quick to label her as problematic, troublesome and disrespectful. That summer Star had no one to play with and spent most of her time indoors to avoid hearing the adults whisper about her. As long as she kept to herself, no one should have anything to say to her.

Chapter 4: Becoming Jasmine

Jasmine was the most "normal" of the triplets. She didn't give anyone any sort of trouble. She was either out at the park with her friends, or at home with her nose in a book.

Jasmine was also the "smartest" of the three. Since she didn't have any other responsibilities, she was able to focus on her school work without the weight of chores crashing down on her. To most people looking at her, Jasmine was an angel. Never giving anyone any trouble, and always doing as she was told.

Everything changed for her when she hit puberty. Puberty hit the girls like a bus, but unlike May, who wore her grandmother's hand-me-downs that weren't flattering to her body, and Star who dressed like a boy 90% of the time, Jasmine wore clothes that were feminine and fit her well. Clothes that were appropriate for a girl her age, but still made her feel good about herself.

That's when all the unwanted attention started to rear its ugly head. Jasmine couldn't walk down the street with her friends without some man in a car pulling up to the sidewalk and making comments about how attractive she was, even though she was only 13. Men standing in front of her building would whistle at her, and the older women in the neighborhood started making snide comments about how grown she must've thought she was.

The whispers and words escalated to physical approaches. Men would reach out and grab Jasmine if she didn't here or simply chose to ignore their advances. The women in her neighborhood would snatch her up if she was being hollered at by a group of men, but instead of doing it for protection, they would simply jump down her throat for dressing like a whore, even though everything she wore was age appropriate for a girl like her.

School didn't get any easier. The boys wouldn't focus on their lessons and decided to put their focus on her. She was sent home 20 times in the last school year over her clothing being a

distraction for the boys, which in eventually turned into an ACS case against her grandmother because *"obviously something must be going on at home for her to keep coming in inappropriately."* The funny thing was that she was dressing the same way as her white counterparts, and none of them were being sent home for dressing inappropriately.

She didn't like the new way her grandmother was treating her. It seemed as though the older woman always had her foot on her neck. *Where do you think you're going? Get your fast ass out of that grown man's face. If you wore looser clothes these men wouldn't be bothering you, you like the attention. You're just like your fast ass mother, and I know you don't want to end up like she did.*

Jasmine became very insecure when it came down to her appearance. Anyone who knew her when she was younger would think she had depression. She started dressing in sweats and baggy T-shirts, didn't care how her hair looked, and simply just gave up trying to look nice. The attention didn't stop though, and neither did the harassment.

Chapter 5: High School

The Johnson triplets never went to different schools. Their grandmother justified this as a way for the girls to never be lonely in new schools… when in reality, she just didn't want to have to go to multiple parent-teacher conferences. The girls were never in the same classes, but they always kept an eye out for one another. *We're all we got* was their mantra, and they lived by it fiercely.

May acted as the guardian of the three. Before anyone called their grandmother, May would show up to talk the teacher off that cliff since it was dangerous for everyone involved: their grandmother for her health reasons, the student because of how the grandmother would react to the situation, and the teacher because depending on the situation, her grandmother might just whoop the teacher's behind and end up in jail.

Star was seen as the physical guard of the family. Spending so long needing to defend herself, people knew not to mess with her, and by extension, her sisters. Both she and May worked to protect Jasmine because they were completely capable of taking care of themselves, but they still had their issues.

"Would you turn that shit off?" May asked when she walked into the living room. She snatched the remote from Star and turned off the television.

"What the hell are you doing? I like the Hunger Games." Star whined, taking the remote back. "You always have a problem with something."

"My problem is when they make the only two black people competing in this competition from a coal mining district. Plus, they killed off Rue. Don't you remember how people reacted to her when they found out she was black?"

"And why would I care about how a bunch of racist ass people feel?" Star muttered. "You're always caring about what people say."

"They said making the girl black ruined the whole image for them. They lost all types of sympathy for Rue because of how the movie showed her. They don't give a damn about us and I'd really rather not have movies where black children die being played here. We get enough of that on the news."

"More white children died in this movie though."

"But did all of them die? No. All the black children in this movie died."

May loaded up the laundry cart and walked into the bedroom, nudging Jasmine. "You okay? You've been sleeping a lot lately."

"I'm fine," Jasmine said before she sat up. "Just haven't been feeling so great." She looked over at her laundry baskets and got up to put them in the card. "Do you need help with the laundry?"

"No, I got it. What's been going on? First, you're acting weird at the beginning of the year and now you're sick all of a sudden."

"Must be the school food then. I'm fine." Jasmine finished putting her clothes in the cart and went back to her room. May sighed in defeat and left to go do the laundry.

Two weeks later, May sat in the principal's office with Star sitting next to her. "Ms. Braun, I really think this might be an overreaction."

"An overreaction? May your sister got into a screaming match with the teacher in the middle of class." Ms. Braun scrolled through her contacts so she could call the girl's grandmother.

"He was cutting me off mid-sentence!" Star snapped. "Then when I lose my train of thought I'm left there sitting stuck on stupid because I only got to say a quarter of what I wanted to."

"Maybe you talk too much? Did you think about that?" Ms. Braun said as she put her phone down. "Mr. O'Connor cuts everyone off. He's not personally attacking you."

"And that isn't right either. You just let teachers cut us off, but when we start cutting back you wanna threaten to call parents." Star sunk into her chair when May started to pet her shoulder. She shrugged her arm away. "Don't touch me."

"Ms. Braun, I'm not saying what Star did was right but that's a serious issue we have in the school. Teachers cutting students off and then moving on without letting them finish their thoughts." May cleared her throat and simply hoped the woman wouldn't pick up her phone again. "Mr. O'Connor is the teacher. Being a teacher commands respect from your students."

"It's really hard to respect someone who isn't giving it. I know right now if I cut you off mid-sentence, you would feel disrespected."

"You're children and we're adults. That's that." Ms. Braun crossed her arms and leaned back in her chair. "If I'm being entirely honest with you, May, none of you are doing too hot in school right now anyway. Star is coasting on a C level, you're not turning in your assignments on time, and Jasmine fell off the honor roll. I don't know what's going on with you three but if you don't get it together I will have to call your grandmother."

"Thank you so much for the concern, Ms. Braun but everything is fine. We're just all dealing with things in our personal lives. Just like you." May gently tapped Star's shoulder and the girls left out of the office. "Can you not get into a fight with a teacher every day?"

"Fuck these raggedy ass teachers. They want respect but don't give it." Star said while she sent a text. "Can we order out for dinner? I'm tired of rice with every meal."

"Sure. We'll ask Jasmine what she wants when we see her at lunch." Though that afternoon, the girl's didn't see Jasmine at lunch.

Chapter 6: You're Special

Jasmine spent her lunch period with her history teacher, Mr. Damien Rosewell. He'd been flirting with Jasmine since the first day of classes, and three months into the school year, he decided to pursue her. If they weren't riding around town on her lunch break, they were hooking up in the back seat of his car in the parking lot behind the school.

While Mr. Rosewell knew what he was doing was wrong, Jasmine didn't have a care in the world. He made her feel good about herself. He was the only man who looked passed her baggy clothes and made her feel pretty, and when they were together, he always told her how special she was.

Jasmine rested against Damien with joy in her eyes. She looked up at him and laughed when he pecked her forehead. "Looks like you got something on your mind, Jasmine. What's going on?"

"Well, I haven't been feeling the best lately, I've been sleeping a lot and can't keep much down. But when I'm around you I don't feel so sick, so I'm just happy. It's like you're medicine or something." Jasmine sat up and started to put her clothes back on. "I'm gonna go to the nurse's office at the end of the day though."

"Why would you do that? You said you were fine." Damien buckled his pants and shook his head. "It's not like you're pregnant or something. You're on birth control, right?"

"Where did you get the idea that I was on birth control?" Jasmine asked, confusion in her voice. She told him that she never slept with anyone when they first got together, so she never had a reason to get on birth control.

"You're 14 and puberty hit, I thought all of your mothers put you on birth control when you hit puberty." Damien held genuine confusion, while anger settled on Jasmine's face.

"What do you mean *our* mothers? If a woman isn't having sex, there's no reason to be on birth control." Jasmine snapped. She finished pulling on her clothes and went to get out of the car, but was stopped by Damien holding her wrist.

"You need to take a pregnancy test, Jasmine. And not with the nurse. You're smart enough to know that when you have unprotected sex, you get pregnant."

"And you should've been smart enough to know that if someone says they've never had sex before, that they're more than likely not on birth control." Jasmine snatched her hand away and got out of the car, slinging her bag on her shoulder.

"Jasmine I can not have a kid right now. My wife is going to murder me if I do." Damien leaned out the car window a bit so he wouldn't have to yell.

"And what does it matter if she's gonna get upset if you were gonna leave her anyway?"

"I'm not leaving my wife for a 15-year-old high school student. I'd be thrown in jail and you wouldn't see me anyway."

"You told me you were gonna leave her for me when I graduated!"

"Would you keep your voice down? That's not for another 3 years and I'm not going to go to jail because you decided to seduce me."

"I seduced you?!" The next thing Damien felt was an open hand smack across his face. "You told me I was special! You pursued me! Not the other way around!"

"You were special but clearly you aren't as smart as I thought you were." Damien growled, rubbing his face. "Just another fast ass like all the other whores at this fucking school."

Hearing those words brought tears to Jasmine's eyes. She quickly stormed off back into the school for her next class, doing everything to keep her emotions in check.

Chapter 7: Fast Tailed Girls

Jasmine didn't go straight home afterschool with her sisters like she normally did. After her fight with Damien, she felt worse than ever before. At least when everyone else was whispering and making up rumors about her, they were brave enough to be honest when she confronted them about it. Damien spent the last few months lying to her face, making her feel more important than she really was, and metaphorically spat in her face when she presented him with the possibility of her being pregnant.

Her phone lit up for the 12th time in a row. Her sisters were blowing up her phone, trying to figure out where she was. She turned the phone off and sat in the park a few blocks away from the school. She didn't know what she was going to tell them. She'd been blowing off their lunch plans to spend time with Damien and spent most of the weekend asleep because of the sick feeling. She felt too much shame to try and go home and act like everything was normal.

An hour or so later it started to get cold. Jasmine sighed and dug around her bookbag, trying to find her sweater, but remembered she left it at home. When she lifted her head to cry, she saw the blue sweater dangling right in front of her. She averted her eyes and took it. "How'd you find me?"

"Snapchat." May said before she took a seat next to her. "And it's gonna rain, so we can't be out here too much longer. What the Hell happened to you today? You know we go everywhere together after school. Too many girls are getting snatched up and no one's reporting on it. I don't want you to be the next one."

"I didn't want to come home. I'm kinda dealing with something right now."

"Oh, you're dealing with something? What do you think I'm dealing with? I got Star constantly dragging my ass to the principal's office, and grandma on my ass for every little thing, and now you're acting funny. What's going on?"

Jasmine's eyes watered and she quickly wiped them with her sleeve. "I…" She took a deep breath but refused to look at May. "I thought I was in a relationship with Mr. Roswell, but when I told him I wasn't feeling good he demanded I take a pregnancy test. When I asked him what's the worst that could happen, he yelled at me and told me he wouldn't leave his wife and called me stupid and a whore."

"Oh Hell no." May muttered under her breath. She pulled Jasmine into a hug and gently squeezed her. "We're gonna deal with his ass, in the meantime, do you think you might be pregnant? Did he use a condom?"

"No, he didn't use a condom. He said he didn't like the way it felt." Jasmine looked at the drug store across from them and sighed. "I went in to get a pregnancy test, but I felt like everyone was looking at me, so I just walked out."

May sighed and gently stroked the top of her sister's head. "It's fine. I'll go get it. You stay right here." May got up and walked to the drug store. "Let me get one of the pregnancy tests."

"Who you been fucking?" The man behind the counter asked. Since the grandmother lived in the community for a long time, and the girls spent their whole lives there, people had a general idea of who they were and what they were like, much to the girls' collective annoyances.

"Your father. Now give me the damn test." She put the money on the counter and snatched up the little black bag. "Nosey ass." When she got back to Jasmine, she took her home so she could finally get some answers.

Jasmine sat on the floor of the bedroom crying while May simply held her. Star paced around the room, clutching her fists over and over again, while trying not to blow up at her sister. "So he just fucked you and now that he thinks you're pregnant, he doesn't want shit to do with you?"

"That's what she told me, essentially." May said as she rubbed Jasmine's back. "I'm gonna need you to calm down and just help me comfort her."

"What the Hell are we gonna tell grandma?" Star stopped and looked at the two. "She's gonna be livid and I don't want to deal with that."

"None of us do, okay? But that's a question that can wait. Right now, we need to be here for Jasmine." Star sighed and moved to sit next to her sisters. She wrapped her arms around both of them and they let Jasmine cry until she fell asleep. Star slowly got up and helped May put Jasmine in the bed.

"So, what are we gonna do now?"

May looked at the ground for a moment, feeling the carpet between her toes. She remembered when they all picked it out, their grandmother finally decided to let them have some decorations in their room and they all chose that pretty purple carpet. They were seven at the time, and now here they were, and one of them was pregnant.

"I don't know. We can't tell grandma." May rubbed her face in exhaustion. This was the last thing she needed on her plate since she was also actively trying to keep her grandmother from being called by the school.

"Are you gonna take her to Planned Parenthood?"

"Does it look like I have $600 laying around?" May asked, almost shocked that Star would ask such a dumb question. "Besides, it's up to her if she wants to keep it or not. I can't force her hand."

"She's 15 years old and the father of her child wants nothing to do with her. What are we gonna do about him anyway? We can't let him get away with just fucking her and casting her to the side with his bastard."

"I'm gonna call the police." May said before she was pushed by Star.

"What the fuck are they gonna do? Take him in for questioning and let him go?"

"He fucked a 15-year-old, Star. That's against the law. They're not gonna let him go."

"They let R Kelly go after he fucked a 14-year-old, and he's black. You think they're gonna let a white man go after he fucked a black girl?" Star scoffed and shook her head. She snatched up her towel and laughed. "I'm gonna go take a shower while you come up with a real plan, because I will fuck him up for what he did to Jasmine. She's never done anything to anyone to deserve this bullshit."

"If you assault him, you're gonna go to jail."

"I'm assaulting him because he fucked my underaged sister and got her pregnant. Fathers and brothers, do it all the time, May, and we're all we have. You said that, and now we need to be there for Jasmine now more than ever. If you don't wanna throw hands then fine, but I will be beating his ass tomorrow before the first bell."

"Star…" Once the door closed to the bathroom, May climbed on her bed and laid down to think of a more rational way of handling the situation. She couldn't let Star go and get herself thrown in prison, she only had one more strike left, but she couldn't let this man get away with what he did to her sister, and she knew Star had a point about the police not doing anything. If anything, Jasmine's name would get dragged through Hell and back on the news, and the last thing she wanted was something to happen to the girl over the unnecessary attention.

The next morning, the girls walked to school and the awkward silence was heavy enough to cause Star to audibly gasp. After last night, she decided that she would wait until Jasmine was taken care of first before she decided to do something about Damien. "So Jazz, what do you plan on doing? Are you gonna keep it? Any idea how far along you are?"

"I don't know if I want to keep it…and I can't be that far along if I'm not showing." Jasmine kept her head up, refusing to let the pressure of this situation make her walk with her head down.

She didn't do anything wrong, and she wasn't going to allow anyone make her feel that way. She even went back to dressing the way she used to. Since dressing homely didn't keep grown men from approaching her, she saw no point in dressing down a bum. "I'm going to the clinic on Markson ave after school."

"No, the fuck you're not. You're more likely to catch something in that clinic than actually get any help. We can go to the Planned Parenthood and have you checked out, and you can make your decision there." May said firmly, not up for any kind of argument. She had a friend who died at the clinic Jasmine wanted to go to, and she'd be damned if she saw someone else die at their hands.

"I'm not gonna decide on getting an abortion right then and there. And we can't afford them anyway."

"Don't worry about if we can't afford it. You worry about your health." May said with a smile on her face. "I like your outfit. It's been so long since you've put on a skirt."

"Yeah...I wanted to feel pretty today so I got up early and fixed myself up."

"Well, you look good Jazz." Star said before she gently squeezed her hand. "Let's try to have a good day at school. Luckily you don't have his class today, so you won't need to sit in a room with him. If you think he's trying to get close to you, text one of us." Once they got to the school, the girls split up to their classes, but May and Jasmine kept their ears out for a text notification from Jasmine.

Later on that evening, the girls were sat in living room while their grandmother paced in front of them with the pregnancy test in her hand.

"So, one of you little fast asses is pregnant. Well, which one is it?" Maribel looked down at the girls, who were all avoiding eye contact with her. "Did I fucking stutter? Which one of you is

pregnant?!" The continued silence pissed her off, but she kept a calm face and took a seat across from them on her love seat.

"Well, I'm gonna tell you like I told your mother…I'm not raising any babies that aren't mine. I didn't have a choice with y'all since she passed away, but I have a choice now. Whichever one it is, y'all can get out of my house tonight. I don't want you here. I'm too damn old to be taking care of newborns because you couldn't keep your fucking legs closed. And if you still here in the morning, I will physically remove your ass from my house and throw all your shit out with you."

The night was quiet from there on out. Jasmine cried silently on her bed, wondering what she was gonna do. Star was fuming mad, and May was panicking internally on what she was gonna do.

"What am I gonna do?" Jasmine sobbed, pulling her knees to her chest. "I don't wanna be homeless."

"You're not gonna be homeless." May said quickly. "I'll figure something out, but you're not gonna be homeless."

"Where else is she gonna go? We don't have any other family out here besides our damn sperm donor and we haven't heard from him since our sixth birthday." Star said.

"I'm gonna reach out and see if he's finally willing to help his daughters."

"He's not gonna do anything for me." Jasmine whined, covering her face with a pillow, trying to keep quiet so her grandmother won't here.

"No…he's going to finally do something to help us. No matter what."

Chapter 8: Desperate

May sat on the floor in the bathroom, leaning against the wall. She'd been on Facebook trying to find her father, and when she finally did, she decided to give him a call to get some help. Trevor was too happy to hear from his little girl, and it showed in her voice.

"I looked through your profile, May. You girls really did grow up looking just like your mother."

"Thanks, I guess. So, what are you gonna do? We really need help, and grandma isn't joking about throwing Jasmine out. We've never been separated, and I really don't want it to be now." May tried to keep the desperation out of her voice since, based on his internet footprint, she could tell her dad was an opportunist.

"I can see that. But what are you gonna do for me if I take y'all in? I'd have 4 mouths to feed out of nowhere. Y'all would fuck up my lifestyle."

"You don't have to worry about paying for us. I can get a job and handle all of that. We just need somewhere to stay so we aren't on the street."

"Nah, that's not enough. It's not just my money baby girl, it's my lifestyle. My brand. Everything is gonna change if I suddenly have three teenage girls living with me, especially if one of them is pregnant. I'm not gonna get the same play I'm used to, and that's just something I'm not going to part with without a better offer than that."

"Then what do you want me to do?" May's voice trembled as she spoke. She had a bad feeling in the pit of her stomach, and really hoped that he wouldn't say what she thought he would.

"Well…how badly do you want me to let y'all stay at my house?"

"You're our father! I shouldn't have to beg you for this. You should want what's best for us."

"No, you need to learn that in this world, everyone needs to look out for themselves. Now, answer the question. How badly do you want to come and stay at my house?"

The line between the two went quiet for a couple of seconds, and Trevor could hear the nerves coming up in the girl's voice. "I'm desperate."

With a chuckle, Trevor grabbed his keys and shook them so she would hear them. "I'm more than ready to come and pick you girls up. I'll take good care of your sisters, so long as you take good care of me. That sound fair, baby?"

With a sign of defeat, May nodded. "Fine. I'll take care of you. Text me when you get here and come with your lights off. I don't want grandma knowing that we're gone."

"Whatever you say, May. I'll see you girls in a half hour." When the phoneline went dead, May went back into the bedroom and looked at her sisters.

"Pack a suitcase, he'll be here in half an hour to come get us." She didn't look at either of them while she packed her bag.

"Are you serious? He just agreed to let us stay?" Star was excited, not to be spending time with her dad, but she wouldn't be separated from her sister. "We're gonna have to get jobs?"

"No, he didn't say we had to get jobs. But we need to be quick and quiet, so we don't wake grandma."

Jasmine watched May as she packed her back and raised an eyebrow. "What did you say to get him to take us in?"

"Nothing really. Just told him the situation and he agreed to take us in. Don't overthink it." Without another word, all three girls packed their bags and snuck out of the house, leaving their housekeys behind, and left with their father.

The following day, May sent Star and Jasmine to school without her, glad that Trevor offered to put them in an Uber so they could get there on time. She used the excuse of looking for a job as the reason why she didn't go to school, but Trevor was excited to get her to honor her side of the deal, so he kept her home.

Despite the horrific ordeal, Trevor slept like a baby and May still had some sense of composure. Never in a million years did she ever think that her father would be her first, but she needed to do what she had to for her sisters. It was a miserable few months of her being kept home to be his pet, and eventually she had to drop out of school because she missed too many days, but she never stopped working to make sure her sisters were okay.

She was glad Jasmine decided to terminate her pregnancy, so much so that she sold her computer to help pay for it. She convinced Trevor to take out a hefty life insurance policy so in case anything happened to him, he could keep his word about taking care of the three of them.

May's mind didn't stop working since the first night they spent at his house. While she snooped, she found so many things around the house: drugs, sex toys, wads of cash, and a pistol with a silencer. She had no clue he was living the life of a drug runner, but she decided to use the opportunity to her advantage.

Chapter 9: A Pseudo Mother's Choice

May walked down the halls of the school after the final bell. The shoes she wore were her father's, a little too big for her, but perfect for what she needed to do, and a pair of leather gloves. The hair she usually kept under a scarf was pulled into a high ponytail, still tied back by the scarf. For once, she was grateful that her school was so underfunded that they couldn't afford to keep the security cameras running, because in the moment, she was focused on her objective.

She was fully aware that Mr. Roswell stayed back very late to grade papers. According to Jasmine, he couldn't focus at home, so he had to do it on campus. She walked to his classroom and smiled with a gentle knock. "Mr. Roswell, do you have a minute?"

"If you're here to talk about Jasmine then no. I already said everything I had to say to her." The man didn't look up from the papers he was grading, and May walked in anyway.

"I think you're being very childish about the situation and you're backing her into a corner. She's not comfortable coming to your class, and now she's considering getting an abor-"

"She's not aborting my child. She doesn't have the right." Damien looked up at her and laughed. "Just because she decided to be reckless doesn't mean she gets to kill a child over it."

"A child? Mr. Roswell, you're a science teacher. An embryo isn't a child. And since you don't seem to want her, why would she keep a child?" May took a seat across from him, placing her purse in her lap.

"Because she made her bed and now she needs to lay in it. There's no point in making a child pay for her mistakes."

"Your mistakes." May said harshly. "You decided to go after my sister and you almost ruined her fucking life." She quickly pulled the gun out of her bag and pointed it at him. "And now you're gonna answer for what you've done."

Damien's eyes widened and quickly got up, but he wasn't as fast as May's trigger finger. She watched the man collapse and she took a deep breath. "Monsters. All of you. You're all monsters." She muttered as she slipped the gun back in her bag. She left the school and went back to the house to put the gun back where it was. Lucky for her, Trevor was in the shower, so he didn't see her, and the way he acted for the rest of the evening, he didn't seem to miss it.

It would be months of speculation on the news when the beloved teacher Damien Roswell was reported dead. Students and teachers both mourned the bastard, and the news outlets made him out to be an angelic hero. May never got around to telling her sisters that she was behind the murder, she didn't want them to get involved. They got to have their 16th birthday in peace, no grandmother making them feel bad about existing, and no baby to have to worry about.

A few days later, Trevor was snatched up for the murder of Damien Roswell. Thanks to May's planning, the police were able to pin the murder on his since he had motive, opportunity, and the murder weapon was in his house. Since the girls were 16, and May eventually got a job to keep herself out of the house, ACS didn't attempt to remove them from their home. They did clean the place and regularly checked on the girls. Along with the murder charge, May reported Trevor for rape, knowing that meant he would be locked away for a very long time, on top of all the other illegal activity that went on in his house.

The girls sat in the living room, May on the couch while her sisters laid on the floor. The girl smiled as she looked down at her sisters. She pretty much raised herself and them to get to the place they were today, and while it wasn't ideal, it was better than their previous situations. "I love you guys."

"We love you too May."

Summary

Throughout the story we see the variation between the main three stereotypes I've discussed for my project. We saw how Maribel took advantage of a situation and decided to throw grown up responsibilities on May, despite the fact that she was young enough to still be cared for herself. Her childhood was cut short because her grandmother didn't want to take full responsibility for the girls anymore, so she because a stand in mother for her sisters. She did everything her grandmother told her to with a smile, not for the old woman's benefit, but to keep her sisters from feeling like burdens. She even denied needing help from Jasmine when preparing to do the whole family's laundry. She acts in a similar to real mammy's during slavery, doing everything she's told without making much of a fuss (though, back during slavery, there was more than likely no fuss made at all to avoid trouble.)

Star was pushed up through the mental age ranks due to how society handled her. Teachers ignored her, and when they didn't, they were yelling at her over something they never got on any of the non-black children about. She faced harsher punishments for the same crimes, and due to this, she became loud and aggressive, wanting to do first and ask questions later. Without May acting as her voice of reason and Jasmine being her reason to stay out of trouble, it's very likely that someone like Star would've ended up in jail long before their 15th birthday, even as a juvenile. Black children are five times more likely to be locked up than white children when committing similar crimes or infractions (The Sentencing Project), and it starts from how schools handle the two in similar situations.

Jasmine did everything right in her life and she still ended up being labeled as fast because of the way her body developed. This is very similar to the case of R Kelly and how the jury declared that the underaged girl in the video could've have possible been less than 18 because of

how her body looked. She was pushed into adulthood after being groomed and pressured by a male authority figure and had to deal with the consequences at the hands of her grandmother. Had it not been for May's act of selflessness (another trait of being a mammy), she would've been out on the streets with a child and no one to turn to.

This was a fictional story written after extensive research into the matter. The adultification of black children is a real epidemic in this country, and it contributes to the weathering of us as a collective. I believe that the history behind these three stereotypes, being paired with constant media representation, are pushing post slavery America to sort our children into these boxes and treat them accordingly. It isn't right, nor is it fair, and I hope that my story properly executed the aftermath of all of this well.

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