

Hidden Testimony (Cont.)

Maisha Mahalia

Nykol recalls a moment in the past that was detrimental to the path her life had taken.

She was 24 and had just joined the Army. Due to the stipulation that she could not be a single mother in the military, she signed over temporary custody of Van to her mother. In her mind it gave her a valid reason to not be around much. Plus she figured Van was better off without her.

Nykol was a pretty girl with an attitude that would put Beyoncé' to shame. Light skinned, thick in the thighs, wide hips and eyes the color of honey, she was a female that turned heads and enjoyed doing so.

There was no such thing as love in her book. She only dealt with guys who were beneficial to her need for sex. She was independent finically, but emotionally she needed the attention to feel good about herself. Despite how she carried herself Nykol had low self-esteem and lacked confidence.

For these reasons she made it her business to put others down and walk over any guy that came into her life. However underneath she yearned to be loved and needed. She often times hooked up with a guy who was down on his luck and helped him get on his feet. To her she was just reaching out showing love and treating them how she longed to be treated. Thinking maybe what she put out there would come back to her.

She was loyal but not faithful. She never gave herself fully to anyone. In her book men only wanted one thing, which was fine by her, because she only wanted the same from them.

Being in the military was like a fair ground to Nyki. So many men to pick from. She liked having sex with those who were either married or had girlfriends. That way she didn't have to spend a lot time with them. They fulfilled a need and then it was on to the next one.

The first man to break her heart was Corey O'Neal. He was a sexy chocolate man who favored Chris Tucker, who she had a crush on. He had his own ride, but lived with his grandmother. That was cool with Nyki, she had grown tired of carrying a man.

They met on a dreary cloud filled day when Nyki was on the porch of her friend's Tony, house. A sky blue thunderbird drove by with bass bumping.

"Damn, that car was nice." Nyki said to Toni, while keeping an eye on Van.

"Yeah, too bad we can't see inside."

"I know right, maybe they'll ride by again."

It looked like it was about to rain so they doubted that very much.

"I want some candy." Van said as he grabbed Nyki's hand.

"O Kay, we'll walk to the store." It was only a short walk to the *JET* gas station. Nyki had a car but enjoyed walking; it kept her in shape.

They headed for the store, as they were turning the corner the light blue car rode by and slowed to a stop. The window rolled down and what Nyki saw made her heart beat faster. This chocolate drop with a nice goatee and mustache trimmed to perfection and light brown eyes with a smile that blinded her with the shine of his gold.

"What's Up, Can I holla at you for a minute?" His voice was smooth as butter.

"Yeah, but you might want to meet me at the *JET* because you're holding up traffic." Nyki said with a slight smile.

"A'ight." Chocolate drop said and pulled off.

Nyki was awe struck. This dude favored Chris Tucker, who she had a serious crush on.

As Nyki and van got to the store the guy got out of the car and walked with them inside.

"What's your name?" He asked while looking her up and down as if she was a piece of candy.

"Nykol, but you can call me Nyki."

"And who is this lil man, your brother?"

Nyki started to lie but thought better of it. "Nah, my son, Vaniah. We call him Van."

"What's up Van?"

Van stared at the guy while moving closer to his mother.

"My name is Corey."

"Nice to meet you Corey."

They walked to the candy isle where Van had ran to. He was picking up a pack of Skittles. When they had reached him he grabbed his mothers had and started pulling her to the counter. She laughed as they went to the front of the store.

"What are you about to do?" Corey asked.

"Nothing, watch a movie then get ready for work."

"Oh, where you work at?"

"In McIntyre, at the chalk plant."

Corey was shocked, that was a hard job, most men he knew complained and she looked too pretty for such a job. But he knew now why her body was so tight.

"What time do you have to go in?" he asked.

"Twelve and I get off at eight in the morning."

"Well me and my boys are having a cook out, why don't you and Lil man come."

"I don't know about that. I don't know you and your boys."

"I'm trying to get to know you."

"That's 1.07." the clerk interrupted.

Corey reached in his pocket and paid. Nyki noticed the roll of bills and was curious about his type of work. With that ride and now that roll, she figured he sold drugs.

"Thanks." She said and they headed for the door with Van on her hip. As they stepped outside it started to rain.

"Come on, I'll give you a ride back to your friends."

"A'ight." Nyki was glad for the ride. She didn't need Van getting sick again. Every year since he was born he had to be hospitalized for bronchitis. She worried about that. After giving him the directions Corey drove to Toni's.

"Black, this is Nyki and her son Van."

"What's up shawty, Lil Man?" Black said

Nyki was thrown by the nick name, because this guy was anything but Black. He was high yellow with green eyes and dreads.

"Hey."

"You got any friends that look like you?" Black asked.

"May, there is only one me. But I have a friend you might like. Toni, that's where we are headed to.

"A'ight, cool. Ya'll coming to the cook out?"

"I don't know it depends if I can get someone to watch Van." Nyki didn't like taking Van with her to strange places, it was one thing to put herself at risk, but she wouldn't risk her son.

"Shit, Lil Man can come too. I have a son his age, they'll have fun together." Black said.

"We'll see." Was all Nyki could say.

When they pulled up Toni came to the door to see who it was. She saw her friend get out after, but what caught her attention was the light skinned dude with dreads.

They walked onto the porch and Toni let them in out of the rain.

"Toni this is Corey." She said nodding towards him, "and this is Black."

"What's up?" they said in unison

"Ya'll can sit down." Toni said.

"Thanks."

Nyki put Van down and sat the love seat next to Corey.

"So, Toni, you want to go to a cookout?" Nyki asked.

"Girl, it's raining, who's having a cookout in the rain?"

"We're having one." Said Black "but it's not raining in Gordon."

"What do you want to do Nyki?" Toni asked.

"I'm thinking about going. But I need to take Van to my grandmothers."

"Why? Can't you take him with you?"

"I don't take Van to strange places."

"You need to spend more time with Van; you know you leave in two weeks to go to Basic Training. Plus if he can't go you shouldn't be going."

Nyki hated how Toni was putting her out there in front of these guys and wanted to slap the taste out her mouth. Instead she said, "You right."

"Look I'll go but I need to get back before it's too late and get Van to Faye's before I go to work.

"That's cool, we'll bring you back." Black offered.

"No need, I have a car. I'll follow you to Gordon and leave at seven.

"Aight, ya'll ready?" Corey said as he stood to leave.

They all left. Toni and Nyki rode together. It wasn't a long trip, maybe fifteen minutes. The town was smaller than where they just came from. One flashing stoplight, an old gas station, no fast food restaurants, man they were in the boondocks. Despite that they had a good time.

Nyki and Corey traded numbers and made plans to hook up on her off days. On the way home Van was fussy and felt hot to touch. Nyki wasn't taking any chances and headed to the nearest hospital.

Van was admitted and Nyki called her grandmother to let her know. She hated to call her mother because she would make it out to be her fault why Van got sick. Nyki's mother would call her all kinds of bitches and hoes. Nyki didn't want or need that. Faye wouldn't, that's why she called her.

Next she called her supervisor and he understood. Nyki was a hard worker never complaining. Coming in on her days off and working overtime. He told her she could take as long as she needed.

Then she called Corey. Why she didn't know. Something about him made her want to. He didn't hesitate and came to the hospital, brought her some food, took Toni home and then came back and spent the night with her and Van.

Corey won her heart that night, which no one had managed to do ever.