**The Unexpected Turn of Hope and Prayer**

By Angelic Simone

I felt that he was coming soon, so I wrapped my legs tight around his waist and my arms around his neck. My grasp around his body was tight and with one last hard moan and thrust, he held me back and whispered in my ear how much he loved me. Those sweet words were a powerful melody. My brain fired off its chemicals of dopamine and I felt my entire boy relax in ecstasy.

“I love you too, Vincent.”

He freed himself and moved from the top of my body to a spot beside me on the king-sized bed. We laid there in total silence except for our heavy breathing in unison. My mind was telling me to jump in the shower quickly. There was a warm liquid oozing from between my legs and it felt quite nasty, however the other side of my conscious was reminding me to let it all soak in, just to be sure. I didn’t want another failed attempt.

Vincent sat up and threw the blanket over my bare body. I watched him and saw that his chocolate face was bleak. His thick eyebrows were scrunched low and his plump lips were tight against each other. This wasn’t the look I wanted to see after a passionate session of lovemaking, but I expected it after what I did.

He turned his back towards me and suddenly questioned with a sharp tone of voice, “Are you still on the pill?”

“Yeah.” I said and reclined myself on my right elbow. “I took one this morning.”

He sighed, nodded his head, the atmosphere of the entire room changed with his vibe. He was then comfortable. Free from worry of the future.

I sat up with the cover tight around my chest and placed my hand on his brawny shoulder. “I wouldn’t do that to you. You don’t need the stress in your life.”

“You’re damn right.”

That was not the response I wanted to hear.

“I mean.” I started to say in my soft, sensual voice. “We would have an adorable baby.”

He chuckled and finally turned around with an illuminating grin. Our eyes met. His were hazel and mine were the basic brown. According to him they weren’t really basic. Whenever he gazed directly into them, he claimed they were lit up like a loud fire in a forest. Demanding attention. If I was ever mad at someone all that I needed to do was just simply look at them and their soul combust under the glare of my rage.

“Yeah we would.” Vincent said and brushed the back of his hand down the side of my face. “I would want the kid has your smooth skin and beautiful curls.”

I giggled like a bashful schoolgirl. “I hope she has your eyes.”

“*Hope*.” Vincent’s smile immediately vanished. My words must have penetrated a cord in his intuition. I wasn’t speaking of child between us like a mere idea, simple fantasy. I was speaking as if I already had in mind for it to actually happen and he quickly caught it.

The silence had reemerged between us and he didn’t take his eyes from me. They were fixed onto my face, roaming it up and down, and stopped often at my eyes to see if he could find indication of mischievousness. I kept my face straight though. I even cracked a smirk to throw him off.

Finding nothing, his pointless searching left him annoyed by my calm demeanor. Vincent stood up from the bed and started gathering pieces of his clothing from the ground.

“Go take a shower.” He demanded while slipping on his jeans. “And don’t be long. I gotta head back to the office.”

I stood up as well and picked my skirt hanging from a flimsy desk chair. “I’m going home. I’ll take a shower there.”

“Well at least go in the bathroom and wipe between your fucking legs, Monica!”

“Why are you yelling?” I retorted.

Vincent was tugging at his dress shirt to smooth away the wrinkles. “Because I’m not trying to have any kids right now.”

“I know. I understand that the time isn’t right.”

Vincent huffed and slowly turned to face me. “Let me rephrase what I said.” His eyes had darkened with anger. “I’m not trying to have any kids. At all.”

I opened my mouth to speak, but his voiced boomed over mine.

“I’m married, Monica.”

“I know that! You don’t need to repeat it.” I growled and pointed to a gold diamond encrusted ring on his finger of his right hand. “I can see your collar.”

“Good. And Hurry up because I’m leaving now.”

Vincent quickly exited the room and slammed the door behind him. We shouldn’t have even talked about kids. I should have killed the conversation or better yet, kept my mouth such from the beginning about the entire thing. We worked together at his family owned business of traveling consultants so heading back there with tension between each other was going to make the rest of the work day miserable. Well, at least for him.

I lied when he asked me about the pill. Five months ago, I seen the pills where I always left them in one of the cup holders to ensure I wouldn’t be forgetful of my dosage of birth control. I threw those bitches out the window at full speed on the highway and canceled my next refill over the phone.

Vincent and I had been screwing around for years and it all started the moment I walked into his office and sat down for an interview. He couldn’t peel his eyes away from my curvy body. He complimented the way I wore my hair every day, even if it was in sloppy buns. He did everything in his power just to graze his fingers against my smooth caramel skin and when his wife was out of the building one rainy day, he took me in his office, threw everything from his desk, and laid me down on top of it. From that point on we couldn’t stop seeing each other. There was passion between us and its forbidden value was like gasoline to the blaze.

Fixing up the collar of my blouse, I walked towards a large mirror and peered into the reflection of my face. The smirk didn’t vanish. I had every reason to keep it on. I hopped our child would be beautiful. I *declared* it to be beautiful. One month later, my statement manifested itself. I found out I was pregnant.

“How could you do this to me!” Vincent wept.

I was heading out of the clinic with my cellphone pressed close to my ear.

“My family. God. My family.”

“I didn’t mean for this to happen.” I said and climbed inside of my 2010 BMW paid for by Vincent as a gift. Or rather a hush object to keep our relationship under wraps and ass insurance. He gave me whatever I wanted as long as I gave him whatever positions his body craved for.

“Please.” He began to beg. “Please, get rid of it. I’ll…I’ll pay for it.”

“Vincent-

“I’ll give you whatever you want.”

I scoffed at that notion. “I can’t. This is my first child.”

“What!”

“This is my first child.” I nearly screamed into the speaker. “And I’m too old to be waiting for this opportunity again.”

“Monica, please tell me you’re not serious. You know I gotta wife. I have kids-

“Your kids are grown as fuck, Vincent.”

“Monica.” He calmed his tone and sucked down the snot that was at the back of his throat. “I’ll be ruined.”

I listened to him as he cried and for a moment I kind of felt bad for him. Not about the entire situation of me being pregnant. That I was elated about, however to hear a man cry always pained me. They were supposed to always be strong no matter how rough whatever situation they were going through. I wanted him to be as happy as me, but Vincent just kept crying until I told him I was going home to rest up for a bit and hung up before he could beg any more. He should have expected this to happen. I mean, come on. We have been having unprotected sex and *if* I was on the pill there still a chance of pregnancy. The news shouldn’t have saddened him. It should have made him happy that he was given another chance to raise a beautiful child. It what I always wanted, to be a mom and share parenthood with a good man that I loved. I was also aware that my child wouldn’t want for nothing in the world. I was financially set and so was Vincent. So, he had nothing to worry about.

At lunch in one of the finest restaurants of downtown Chicago, I told my mother about the news and to my surprise she wasn’t happy at all with my decision to keep it. In fact, she was highly upset claiming, “This isn’t the way I wanted my first grandchild to come about into the world. Bound by double sin. Sex and a married man.”

“This is something I have always wanted.” I said and sipped on a clean glass of water. “And besides if I don’t have a baby now when my body can handle it, I’ll die in the delivery room trying to push a kid out the right way as you want at the age of forty-five. Mom, I’ve been praying for this.”

“So, what do you want, Monica?” Mother asked.

I leaned back in my chair and put my index finger to my bottom lip. I wanted a lot, but all I could say was, “A baby and a big house.”

My mom threw up her hands at my ridiculous answer, shook her head, and laughed. “Well…if you believe in God, he will give it to you.”

“He will. I’ve been praying for this and why are laughing?”

She placed her hand on my stomach. “I can’t wait to see the results of your prayer.”

When I was seven months pregnant and showing, Vincent was overcome with grief and told his wife. I heard her screaming as she stomped over to my cubical, slapped me hard across my check with the back of her hand, and called me all types of demeaning names. Every employee who had seen held their breaths stunned. Some who knew and gossiped about it gasped and threw their hands over their mouths to hold back laughter. I was the joke of the building. The fool of the agency.

Not only was I fired that same hour and forced out of the establishment, I went into early labor due to the stress. Carrying a child was not how I dreamed it to be. Every month was agony on my emotional, mental and physical state. Vincent was not there for me at all. I would call him to accompany me to appointments and he would hang up on me. I showed him sonograms of little Belle’s development and he cut the pictures to shreds. He didn’t even care that he was having his first little girl out of three boys. Soon I found myself begging for his attention at work and one rainy afternoon I heard him mumble under his breath “bitch” as he passed me by.

I rested in bed a day after a brutal nine-hour delivery. My body was ruined due to a slice of my pelvis and staples to close it back up and my child was taken away from me and placed in ICU to be carefully monitored. My mother was there consoling me, but after telling her everything that went down, she had very little of encouragement to say to me besides, “you will heal just fine”.

Vincent didn’t come to see me while I stayed in the hospital to heal and ignored all of my attempts to reach him. My calls went straight to voicemail and my text messages were left unread. He had blocked me, and it felt terrible. Now I understood the feeling of being purely alone during a dire condition. I had only my mother, God, and a few of my social media friends who congratulated me. I didn’t publicize my pregnancy as much as I desired because it felt pointless to post a photo of my fat, disgusting body that was at least being admired by the father.

On my final night alone in room 309, I cried my ass off. It was raining and at that point I was so tired of the rain. I hated it. Nothing good happened in the rain. Even the first sexual act on the rainy afternoon was like placing a curse on myself. I questioned myself could things get worse and felt my phone vibrate on the night stand. I picked it up and read a text message from a co-worker I was close to.

*Mrs. Allen died today.*

Oh shit. I text back how did she die.

*Everyone is saying because of heartache.*

Oh, my God.

My mother held me close to her chest as I soaked her shirt with my tears. She gently patted my back and told me with uncertainty in her voice that everything will get better over time. A nurse skipped joyfully into the room while wheeling in a basinet. I heard the coos coming from inside of it and raised my head.

“Your princess is here.” The nurse sang. I leaped up seeing a ray of hope. Maybe getting a look at my beautiful daughter would be the good God is finally giving me for all of my pain.

I peeked inside of the basinet with my mom and we both focused our eyes back on the nurse.

“I found the most adorable outfit from the donation center.” The nurse said. “I hope you don’t mind that I dressed her up.”

I only gawked at her. She frowned and cleared her throat, probably feeling a burning sensation throughout her soul form my eyes.

“Yeah. The outfit’s cute.” My mother groaned.

“The doctor will be here in a minute. He will be discussing Belle’s ailment with you.”

Ailment. It was like a blow to my heart. Someone must has released a bullet to a shotgun and the bullet, wild ride landed right at the center of my chest.

The doctor came in with a grave look on his face. My mother sat in a chair near the window and kept her eyes fixed on whatever was happening outside of the hospital. She did that when she didn’t want to be in her current reality. By focusing her attention on something else, it was like an outlet for her. I didn’t have the skill of the strength to do so myself.

My baby’s feet were twisted towards each other and her ankles were swollen. Her doctor said they were clubbed and she will be needing intense physical therapy. She also had congenital heart disease. Hearing that, I almost passed out. I heard my mother crying behind me. He handed me a sheet of paper with the facts on her medial examinations and told me to contact him if I needed anything. Belle was to stay in the hospital until she was fully developed, but I was being discharged.

I was in a trance for days hopping to wake up from the nightmare that I was in, but as much as blinked my eyes I always found myself still walking around like a zombie at my mother’s house. I couldn’t afford to live on my own anymore. I was out of a job with no intent on looking for anything. Post-Traumatic stress had taken over my sanity just sat in bed wishing I had died during delivery.

*What the fuck type of curse did I put on myself*, I thought. The answer came to me almost instantaneously. *Oh yeah, you slept with a married man and made yourself pregnant by him*. I ruined my life and I damned my child to have an even harder one.

On a positive note, Vincent finally removed me from his block list and called.

“You had that baby yet.” Those where his first words, cold as an artic wind. I told him to burn in hell and hung up.

He called again and with a kinder more sympathetic voice, he asked me out for lunch at McDonalds. *McDonalds*? As I can recall, Vincent hated all fast food chains. He said they were the poor man’s food. When we were together we dined at finer restaurants. The ones where they served tiny portion meals worth hundreds of dollars.

I agreed to meet him, took my mother with me for safety, and Belle. By then she had been released from the hospital and I wanted Vincent to see how his wonderful genes played out for our daughter.

He was already there waiting in the parking lot for us, barely identifiable. His appearance had changed dramatically from a well-built handsome piece of chocolate that was once wrapped in Gucci or Lacrosse to a skinny, ungroomed, beauty shop clothing wearing hunk of shit. I concluded as I slowly approached him that his curse was far worse than mine.

“Hey.” I muttered. He was smoking cigarette. I never knew he smoked but understood his reason to inhale on the toxic stick for relief.

“What’s up.” He said and exhaled a cloud of smoke in my face.

“I can leave. I don’t have the time for your ignorance.” I snarled and waved my hand to clear the smoke.

“Na.” Vincent flicked away the cigarette. “I got a few things I need to tell you.”

“What?”

“My wife. She’s dead because of you.”

“Because of US! It takes two-

“Let me say what I gotta say, Monica!” Vincent shouted. I held my lounge in my jaw as tight as I could. “My wife is dead, and my kids don’t want a thing to do with me. I don’t have the business anymore either because she passed it down to them. You know what she said on her death bed?”

I shook my head no.

Vincent laughed. “She said I hope they suffer together. There was a lot of *hoping* going around, wasn’t there?”

I lowered my head feeling shameful of everything. It does take two to make a baby, but everything was all my fault. I tempted a married man and laid down with him. I wrapped my legs around his body and forced him to release inside of me without any protection. I caused his wife to die and his children to resent him. My actions led Vincent to a life of misery. No family. No job. All because I hoped to one day have a family in a large house living the lavish lifestyle.

My mother’s words came back to haunt me now*. “I can’t wait to see the results of your prayer.”* I hopped and prayed to God that he would give me what I wanted, but this wasn’t the outcome that I had expected. He was giving me everything I wanted, but horribly.

I covered my face to hide my tears, but my hands didn’t stop my bellowing from being heard.

I felt Vincent’s hand rest on my shoulder. “Let me see my little girl.” He said tenderly.

I took his hand and lead him to my mother’s car. I could see her sitting in the passenger set and hear the baby crying. She wasn’t paying any attention Belle’s shrieks, instead she had her gazed fixed on the outside world of her current reality.

I ripped open the backseat door enraged that she ignored my baby, but as soon as Belle saw me she stopped.

Vincent peeked his head over my shoulder to get a look at his child.

“Isn’t she beautiful?” I forced myself to ask him.

“I lost everything over this?” He took a step back from me. I gazed at him and realized he was sobbing.

“My family.” He said. “I lost my family over this?”