



"Shameka..." she whispered to her reflection, running her free hand across her body, feeling her new curves, her new skin. A hysterical laugh escaped her newly full lips. "I'm really stuck like *her*?"

Her father's face flashed in her mind - that stern, disappointed. *What would he say now?*

"Oh God," she choked out. "They must be searching for me! But I can't show up looking like this!". Outside, Booker's voice called from the bedroom, warm and amused. "You okay in there, babygirl?" "Be right out, *daddy*." The worst part? Part of her *meant* it.



"Daddy, are you sure this is safe?"

Don't worry babygirl, just give the package to my man at the club and you'll be done. Booker's plan consisted in turning Melissa in a real drug dealer to seal her destiny.

Her stiletto heels clicked against pavement as she approached the intersection. She looked like a hooker. Two officers stood near a cruiser, their radios crackling with static that set her teeth on edge. *This was her chance.* One cop glanced up. Their eyes met. She thought she could have talked to them. Told them everything, escaped from this life.



But then she realized it would have been a dangerous move. She now looked like Shameka, she had her fingerprints and even her dental records thanks to those veneers. And she was carrying drugs, while being slightly high. Nothing good could happen to her talking to the cops.

She kept moving, hips swaying to a rhythm Booker had taught her. The officers tipped their hats as she passed.

"Evening, ma'am."

The club's bassline thrummed in her chest as she pushed through the crowd. At the VIP section, Booker's lieutenant licked his lips at her approach.



"There's my favorite little mule," he purred, taking her purse. His fingers lingered too long on hers. "Daddy's gonna be so proud. How does it feel to be a criminal, Melissa Whittaker?"

"Please don't say that name! Call me... Shameka." - she said, pissed.

"Wow, impressive, so you're embraced this lifestyle?"

"I had no choice" - the Black woman replied, lighting a cigarette.

"The boss will be happy to hear this! Welcome to the club!"



Weeks later, one ordinary Tuesday, the club's neon glow was drowned by floodlights as sirens wailed and tactical boots thundered in. Officers swept the floor and Booker's lieutenant hit the tiles in cuffs.

Shameka tried to keep her cool but she was horrified.

"I hope they won't get daddy" - was her first thought. She tried fighting those thoughts, but Stockholm syndrome was something real. She genuinely loved the man who had stolen her identity and forced her to a life of crime.



When a shepherd's nose hit her handbag, the handler's smirk said *gotcha*. Shameka babbled that she'd only taken a bump or two, they nodded but still dragged her to a police station as a "material witness", where she was treated like a real criminal. Female officers snapped commands, shoving her from fingerprint scanner to holding bench; male cops ogled and made comments on her curves. She'd once respected law enforcement, but their contempt stung deeper than Booker's threats. The door clicked shut and a broad-shouldered captain took the



“Shameka Jackson, quite the looker, I see” he said, with a smirk. “Couple of misdemeanors. Nothing headline-worthy, but it adds up.”

He slid a photo across the metal table: Booker. “You’ve been seen with this gentleman more than once. Shameka’s pulse thudded. She said nothing.

“We’re not filing on you today,” the captain continued, folding his hands. “But you could be the key that locks him up.” She lifted her eyes. “Testify,” he said, blunt. “Think about it, your chance to take down the man who’s been exploiting you.”