



EPISODE TWO //

"Tell The Truth and Shame The Devil"

INTRO

This is Janie's Daughters! Leave a message at the beep!

[Beep]

So, um, my homegirl from grad school wants to do a pool workout in the morning buuuuut, I can't swim. And I don't want to get my hair wet. #coloredgirlproblems

[Theme Music Plays]

Welcome to Janie's Daughters, a podcastumentary that follows five kick ass women of colors and their adventures and antics in the real world of marriages, careers, sex, family, and faith. From one colored girl to another, this is life as WE know it.

Janie's Daughters is a project of Colored Girl Confidential. You're listening to Season One, Episode Two. Here we go...

SOLANA

"On, The Return of the 'Prodigal Son'"

When it rains it pours... And floods. My program has four required classes and two electives that we have to take in the fall. I previously took three of the required classes in law school and since I'm a smart ass- I looked myself in my computer camera and registered for a seventh class. Accounting. I'm not certain what accounting is Latin for but someone should change it to "fuck me this is impossible."

Do the reading, attend the lectures, do the reading again, scourer Wikipedia, bother Germ, attempt the homework, and try not to fail out. Rinse and repeat. Yesterday I stared at myself in the mirror while putting a lime sized dollop of concealer under my eyes and caught myself singing "just keep swimming!"

Every day I feel like I'm getting closer to drowning in the world's biggest pond but then I try to step out and remember what a blessing it is to even be allowed to tread water here. Ain't that a bitch? Being thankful for the opportunity to die.

Since that's not enough, I finally broke down and told N that I was losing it (using words that signaled more Carrie from Sex and the City and less Carrie from the high school prom covered in blood). I wanted to know how he felt for real. Mis.stake.

If there is someone less apt to talk about emotions than myself - it's him. I got the normal jargon: he's into me. He sees me as a long term plan wheeeeeeeeeen.... He gets out of the boondocks, finishes business school applications, is done studying for his stockbroker exam, and figures out the job situation- you know when my eggs develop a hard crust and the slightest gust a wind blows them away into dust. I

kid. I kid. Kind of. I mean realistically when is that? Will I even want to be there when he's ready?

The devil is already busy. As I sat on my bed and prepared to talk to him, my ex- KB, and his impeccable timing let me know that the "prodigal son" had returned to Chicago. With his brown skin- tan from training practice, broad shoulders, strong legs, and well- practiced tongue...

I immediately stopped thinking of N and was reminded of waking up in Prague, KB in my hotel room. Sheets wrapped around his legs but not much else. Now he's back here in my city. The words that ended our relationship were harsh and stretched out over months but the thoughts in my mind don't require words between us. I made a mental note that if things with N don't work out, KB is a good temporary doorstopper.

I know I shouldn't think that way if what I want is N but lately I've been wondering if what I want is something I can't have.

After a few glasses of wine and a few tears last night, I remarked to a friend that this entire situation is out of my control. No matter how hard I work. No matter how hard I dig into the cookbooks, hit the gym, have sex with him, listen to him, and care for him- I can't make N love me.

I can't make anyone love me. And I sit back and watch the (90) social media sites I belong to as everyone gets engaged, married, has children. And I just feel empty. I sat on the train today and watched the women who got on and looked at their ring fingers and wanted to know what made them capable of successful relationships while I sat on the red line listening to Toni Braxton over my crappy iPhone headphones.

It's not just my relationships- I wonder about my future career too. I remember being in my second year of law school and having my choice of firm offers but none of it doing what I felt passionate about. That happened again when my final offer for employment was extended in my third year and I was more frightened than was excited.

My classmates sat in my face daily telling me how lucky I was to have such an opportunity but all I saw was a bunch of old men sitting in a room deciding that no matter how hard I worked I couldn't have what I wanted, what I loved. Everyone keeps telling me to be patient but at what point do you accept that you've just reached your peak and should set up camp?

CARMEN

"On Not Having All the Answers... or Any Answers At ALL"

Who am I? It seems to be a question I am asking myself lately. Every time someone asks me I recite like a chant "I'm an artist, a dreamer, a lover." But that's not who I am. That's what I do. "I'm a sister, daughter, friend." Right, but

wrong. That is not who I am, those are roles that I play. So again, Who am I?

And the real answer is I don't know. I don't know.

Sometimes I'll do something that will cause me to ask in serious disbelief Who AM I? And sometimes its a quiet whisper, who... am I? And sometimes its a demand shouted out into the universe for someone, ANYONE to answer, WHO. AM. I?

I have been doing a lot of reading and discussing lately. About race. About gender. About sexuality. About art. And all of these conversations have ended in a heavy sigh of I don't know. I don't know.

I want to say that I have some answers. Some hopeful upswing to this post to let you, darling listener, know that there's hope for this confused Black girl. And there is. There's hope. There is always hope. But hope doesn't make the answers come. In fact hope only creates more questions.

If I hope, what work must I put in to help my hopes come to fruition? How do I create art that feeds my soul, my vision and my community? How do I find, create and make the love I want in my life instead of waiting for it like a fairy tale my mamma used to read to me as a kid?

How do I stop being so afraid of men and women and dark corners and tinted windows and creaky floors and being alone and loud noises and silence and failure and success and mistakes and everything? How can I stop envying people for doing or having things that I either don't want, don't need or am just not ready for?

What can I do to break down the structures that oppress the 'me' folks see on the outside while also becoming the 'me' I feel on the inside?

I dont know. I don't know.

MAYA

“On Everyday Drama and Childhood Trauma”

I am at a traffic light during the drive home from work, surrounded by the anonymity of other people in their metal capsules going home. The tears start behind my eyes, hurting my face. The pressure is too much and they begin to spill over the sides of my lash line as I try vainly to squeeze my eyes shut to hold them in – hearing in my head “this is not the time and the place for that.”

This week I am utterly overwhelmed by the circumstances in my life. I have too much on my plate. Firstly, I am hormonal and not able to fully process any feeling as they are all amplified and off kilter due to the time in my cycle.

But the things in my life keep piling up – firstly the hole that I feel from the lost loves in my life, the insistent memories of abuse that pop up in my mind at the wrong times, and lastly – the threat of losing my nonprofit job due to funds stuck in DC due to the government shutdown.

All this when I have just moved into my first apartment on my own after the breakups. It's just me now in my little one bedroom, living by myself and trying to find myself through all the muck. Now the threat of losing my livelihood in addition to my mental peace seems too much for me to bear.

It's hard for me to cry – and when I do need to cry, the dam always breaks when I am in the car or another moving vehicle because when I was three years old my abuser made me look outside the window in his home in Bombay from the dark room where he molested me. So pain is tied to moving scenery, and numbness to everything else.

But this week, I need the tears to flow because the pressure in my head is too much. The funny thing is, I don't doubt that I will be okay, even though I feel like fine china cracking under a blow. Deep in the heart of me is a profound message from some unknown place that this too shall pass.

But the incredible weight of the life I have to bear won't let up in this moment. I try to breathe and release some of the pressure but the tear stay behind the eyes, begging to be set free.

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TAMAR

“The Joke's On Me”

I'm a planner. Always have been and while I have relented a lot in the last 25 years I probably always will be. At any given point in my life, if you asked me what my life was going to like in X amount of years I would have a fairly detailed answer for you. So it suffices to say that “God” laughs at me A LOT!

I think the Divine and the Universe have me on a reel, like sports plays: a reel of every plan that I have come up with. When they need a good laugh they put it up on the projector screen and sit back with some popcorn.

In all seriousness though you would think that I would have stopped planning by now because my plans are ALWAYS changing. Alas, I have not. Now to some who don't know the relationship I have with my faith this may seem like a sure fire way to set one's self up for failure.

However, while I do plan a lot I also always hand my circumstances over to the Divine Creator. I am a “free spirit” in the sense that I am willing to go wherever the Universe takes me, even if that means it is the complete opposite of what I had initially planned for myself.

So it came as no surprise to me when on my way to grad school to get an MPH (master's in public health) the Divine pulled an okey doke on me and redirected my steps. Instead of an MPH I am now pursuing an MDiv (master of divinity); yea totally not the same thing, I know. I resisted it at first, a lot! What would I do in seminary? What would I do with an MDiv? I certainly have no desire to be a preacher. Also, I curse, I drink, I fornicate, oh and I'm a lesbian; I did not have time for the judgment of teachers, classmates or anyone else.

These were all of the things that went through my mind when I realized that I could not ignore the “call” that I was feeling.

There was a lot of meditating that had to happen before I gave in but I was finally able to see that pursuing my purpose in life through a faith perspective was the only way that I could pursue it. Let's face it we have all probably endured some level of spiritual trauma at one point or another in our lives.

As someone raised in a Pentecostal household much of my spiritual trauma centered around sex and sexuality. If I was not being shamed for being a woman, or being sent mixed messages about how I should perform as a sexual being, I was being sent to hell in a hand-basket because of my attraction to women.

It took me years (is taking me) to undo the majority of the spiritual trauma that I experienced and to relearn my faith and spirituality for myself. Reconciling one's spirituality with one's sexuality is a daunting task at first and an arduous process. However, it is so worth it.

Having gone through it and "coming out" on the other side (pun intended) I feel that part of my purpose in life is to help others on their reconciliation journeys. It is time for the religious left, myself included, to come out of the closet; so that we can encourage others. Approaching reproductive, sexual and queer justice from a faith lens is my niche, it is where I thrive and shine.

The Divine knew this all along, all I had to do was trust in it.

I still have some moments of doubt regarding whether I belong in seminary. For example: during my first class I said "shit" out loud. It wasn't particularly audible but I still bit my lip in an act of semi-repentance because well, I'm in seminary.

But instead of beating myself up about it and reverting to a place in my childhood where the doctrine I was taught did more harm than good, I took a deep breath and I reassured myself that I am exactly where I am supposed to be. Seminary needs folks like me. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

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ZORA

"Tell The Truth and Shame The Devil"

Today I am on a mission and because I never ever undertake the simple or the easy, the task at hand demand that I be focused, determined, disciplined, and courageous. But this has been a long time coming – decades in fact – back to a lazy summer afternoon when I was eight sitting at my grandfather's knee beneath his magic tree.

"When you got troubles" he said to me that day " tell it to a tree. It will hold on to all of your secrets until you tell it it's ok to let 'em all go. And if you get real quiet you can find truth in the wisdoms it whispers. And if you get even quieter your heart will speak and everything you need to know is right there".

So I am off to find a tree.

Now for most folks in this country finding a tree is not that much of a challenge. Look outside the window and there is an ideal candidate. But not so for those of us who live in the desert. This is a unique landscape with its own very special beauty. It took me a long time to see the charm of shadows and shades of grey and brown. But now this place defines me. Survival here is an act of defiance- a win against all odds. And now that story is my story.

Well, it has taken me twenty minutes through the heat and dust to get to my destination. But I am here now. The tree is perfect and I can feel the spirit and already it is speaking to me. I go into my mountain stance. Balancing on my heel and reaching my hands to the sky my normally weakened body feels strong, rooted and rising toward the sun.

I get quiet and the tree tells me we are now connected in a beautiful story- it's trunk is strengthening my weak back, it's branches reach higher than my arms ever could and it's roots stand firm and because they do, I will too. I get quieter still and I hear my truths...

"Every tub has got to sit on its own bottom" my aunt used to say.

Translation: every woman needs to stand on her own two feet. And I have been standing on my own two feet since I was sixteen years old, taking a job even when financially there was no real need to do so. But I wanted my own voice in what I would own and what I wouldn't and a job gave me that kind of power. So I know I won't be truly happy until I am standing on my own, regardless of how wobbly these feet can seem at times

"Tell the truth and shame the devil" the old folks used to say.

This might be the hardest truth of all because the person I have been hiding the truth from is me. I have been so afraid to admit certain things Maybe here beneath my tree I finally be honest about some stuff. No, life isn't always fair. Sometimes I am really not happy that The Lord decided to wake me up. And I am really, really scared cause I have no idea what's going to happen next. Ok, that wasn't so bad

And finally "you can't raise no already grown man," a favorite of my grandmother.

I agree with that one. You find a weak man, and what his mama didn't give him you sure can't. But I sure am hoping I can raise this already grown woman cause I am starting over and I have a lot to learn.

Well the sun is setting. Time to head back. What a beautiful sight. Nowhere else is the sky turquoise at dusk but in the west. I no longer have doubts that this is where I am supposed to be. A land that is such a fascinating blend of contradictions has my name written all over it and there is nowhere else I would rather be. Time to head home. I hate to leave my beautiful tree but I have a lot to do.