



EPISODE THREE //

#ThatAwkwardMomentWhenYou're Broke as Hell... And Still Decide to Quit Your Job

INTRO

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

[Beep]

Janie! Have you heard that new YG song? I know you're supposedly "done" with rap music but *sings some lyrics* C'mon girl! You know that's bout to be your jam!

[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, Questioning What Could Have Been"

It happened one day after particularly long run.

I had just hit a milestone, made it back to my apartment, and laid out on the floor to catch my breath. A few seconds later my post run cramps gave a swift kick to my lower half so I headed to pull off my leggings and hop in the shower - and boom.

It was like an episode of Dexter in my pants. Blood everywhere. A normal person would have called 911 but not I. I had so much work to do that I convinced myself that I must be starting my cycle early. I turned on the shower knobs and let the water run over my tired body. Not thirty seconds later, my gut handed over another punch that brought me to my knees in the tub.

More blood. I climbed out and wrapped myself with a towel and called my friend in med school.

"Sounds like a spontaneous abortion, Sol," she says.

"A what?"

"A miscarriage."

What! It can't be. My womb is a self-diagnosed hostile zone. It does not allow for children. It does not allow for children with a man who has moved away from Chicago, who I am so uncertain with... A man who goes from haunting my memories to apparently haunting deep down inside the most sacred parts of me.

I curl in a ball on the floor of my living room recounting the weeks since N's been gone, my last period, and all of our intimate moments. Like a puzzle, it fits. I remember a text conversation in September between N and I where I asked if we could talk and he asked if I was pregnant. "Of course not," I replied. "Don't wish such thoughts on my empty womb!" Now my body has made me a liar.

A few days later I'm sitting at my gyno's office with my legs up in the stirrups as she tells me that what's been growing in my uterus for five weeks has since moved on. "Sorry," she says as she pulls off a green plastic glove. I can't help but think "no worries." After all, how do I miss what I never knew was there?

But sometimes I do.

The days following I stand in the mirror poking my stomach out and wondering what life would had been like with my child in my arms. Rubbing his little belly on the grass in front of Lake Michigan, trips around the city with N; our own little family.

I wrestle with that notion while taking on my role as the worst Catholic ever. I'm sure it's not in God's plan for me to engage in sex with someone who is not my husband but the feeling in the room when N and I made love is electric. The child that left me was made by two people so eager to know each other deeply that they craved to understand and memorize every inch of each other from the folds of their brain to the wrinkles in their toes.

And maybe that's God's plan. For me to get a glimpse of that moment when you're completely open with someone. To trust them with your body, your soul, your mind, your emotional state of being. I've never had that experience with a man until now and come what may I won't live to regret my time with N and the fruits of our union.

I cross my fingers and hope that this isn't the end of our story and that life provides us with the opportunity to have more time together, more love, more children - but only God knows what's in His plan. I'm just learning to trust in my relationship with Him, and I guess, in my relationship N.

CARMEN

"On Empty Gas Tanks and Crisis of Confidence"

Habakkuk 2:2 "Read it plain so the herald can read it on the run."

That has always been one of my mother's favorite bible verses. And this week, as hard as it was, I had to write some things real plain!

I am a dancer, which, in my 5'2, 200lb body, is not easy to say. It's easier to say "I can dance" than it is to claim an

identity that immediately brings to mind of bodies that are the complete opposite of my own. But I have rhythm, I choreograph, I have strength, body awareness, and spirit.

I am a dancer dammit!

But in a dance rehearsal on Monday I stood in the mirror with two other women who's bodies and training are more, let's say, "accepted" than mine and my mind said, "No Carmen, you are not a dancer." And I believed it. So I clammed up and didn't perform to the best of my ability.

A few days later I composed an email with tears in my eyes to the director/choreographer who is also a really good friend half explaining and half apologizing my minor freak out in rehearsal. She said she did notice a shift in me but that I shouldn't apologize. And then she said something that we all need to hear more often, You Are Not Alone. She, with her classical training and lean, athletic body, had often felt the same way. I was amazed and comforted and realized that though those voices are very real their powers are stripped when they are brought into the light.

And speaking of bringing into light: I submitted my two-week notice to a job that had been stressing me for months. A job where I counted down the hours and would have anxiety every morning I woke up and remembered I had to go there. I would hold my breath and tense up because I was always expecting a mental or emotional attack. Yeah, it was that bad.

As soon as I emailed my resignation, I felt a weight lift off my shoulders. And then the fear set in. I mean I have been having trouble keeping gas in my car without overdrafting and now I'm quitting a job!!! What am I gonna do? I didn't leave because I could afford to, but the toll it was taking on my spirit scared me much more than my empty gas tank.

I was feeling stressed to say the least when I got to job #2 and opened my email to find a message from a friend who was in career/life/emotion overload just like me. That scary crossroad of "Who the hell am I?" and "What the hell am I doing?" But as I started to write her back telling her how awesome and powerful and important she is, those words started to bounce off the screen and back at me. By lifting her up I felt lifted too.

Write it plain so the herald can read it on the run. I don't think Habakkuk was talking about Gmail when he wrote those words but it doesn't matter. Message sent.

MAYA

"Better Late Than Never. Or, Just Plain Better Late."

There's a term I have coined for the surge of confidence that comes from knowing yourself better after going through transformation and tumult – "New Pretty." It's the bright shine of the late bloomer, out in the world after discovering that they too, got it going on, but a little bit later than everyone else.

It is the physical manifestation of the inside glow that tells you that you are okay, more than okay. You're fucking fantastic!

After my hell of a week last week - dealing with loneliness, potential job loss (and subsequent financial ruin), and the overall hormonal-ness that comes from the onset of a monthly cycle - I had to recalibrate and find my inner peace.

Somehow, amidst all of the chaos, I had lost myself and my glow – that cultivated and cumulative effect of all the healing, new dating, and moving onwards and upwards. You see, I had just been starting to feel good – no, I was

starting to feel HOT.

Graduating from depression to self-love, from knee push-ups to real girl push-ups and other physical and emotional changes just solidified this feeling of solidness and glowiness.

In a nutshell, I was starting to feel good in my own skin. So good, in fact, that I felt a little like a goddess walking around on earth. Happy, radiant, and attractive. I lost that feeling fleetingly last week in the chaos but I am back and better than ever!

“New pretty” gives me a spring in my step that people notice, but oddly, I don't even need them to notice it because I feel it myself. Seeing myself this buoyant and happy gives me additional motivation to do and be a better me.

But “new pretty” is just that – it's NEW. There's something that I notice about myself versus other women that have owned their looks or sexuality or feminine wiles for years. I am still bumbling a little around it. It is still hard to sometimes own this feeling of awesomeness because I spent so many years – and the months especially after the ending of my marriage and boy 2.0 – wallowing, trying to find an anchor in the quicksand of my identity.

Loving someone can define you, and when they no longer love you anymore or a relationship dies, you lose a sense of who you are. So I was lost to myself during that time, and the process of coming out back into the light has shown me the beauty in myself that I had never taken the time to seek out before; I had always relied on others to show it to me.

I expected other people to tell me who I was. I could only see myself through them, so the loss of a mate was so much more than just the end of a relationship – I had to pay attention to the little things about myself that I had ignored in my quest for external validation.

Now that the smoke and mirrors have cleared, I can finally see myself for who I really am. (And the picture is looking damn fierce if you ask me!)

This feeling, of course, has tricked over into my dating adventures – men are drawn to me in a way they have never have been before in my entire life (not even in my teens and 20's). I find myself surrounded by friends who are expressing interest in me as a romantic partner, and I am able to walk in this world in a way just knowing that I am beauty and love.

That is “New Pretty” – no one needs to tell you, you just OOOOOOZE it.

Now like I said, there is a big difference between me and the girls have clearly spent many years being pretty or knowing how to use their femininity or sex appeal to walk confidently in this world.

They have control over those parts of themselves and see and wield the power that being pretty in all senses of the word holds. They command the pretty. They use it like a weapon. Slay romantic partners, get access to things mere mortals can't.

New pretty isn't the comfort of knowing where you can manipulate, but the buzz of a new superpower. It's my new normal. It's Maya all grown up and owning everything about herself. It's my confidence, my love, my pretty, ready to meet the world.

TAMAR*"Great Expectations"*

I need you to know up front that this is going to be a deep post, so you should prepare yourselves accordingly.

I was recently talking to a friend about her parents visiting and meeting her girlfriend for the first time. While she was excited, she was also super nervous about it and I was nervous for her. Like my family, hers has certain religious views and values that make it difficult for them to fully accept my friend's sexuality.

However, unlike my family hers have made concerted efforts to try, even attending seminars and buying books to try to gain a better understanding. Yet, I don't think any of their reading prepared them for the possibility that their daughter may actually one day marry a woman and spend the rest of her life with that woman.

As my friend told me about some of the things her parents and sister said to her and the apprehensions they expressed I could not help but think of my own family.

There are some days that I get so overwhelmed with the thoughts in my head, thoughts inspired by the expectations of my family that I feel like I should just give in and live the life they want me to live. In less cryptic terms, there are some days that I think, that I believe, my life would be easier if I just sucked it up and decided to be with a man. I mean why not? It's the societal norm, according to mainstream Christian faith it's what's morally right, and most importantly it's what will make my family love me.

Wait, what? Make my family love me...that's not what I meant to say is it?

Well the answer to that question is no, it isn't what I meant to say, but some days it is exactly how it feels. The day my family rejected me because of my sexuality was the day I felt like they said, "we don't love you, and we never loved you, we were just pretending because you did what we wanted you to do." While I know intellectually that my family's rejection of my sexuality does not mean they no longer love me it is hard to make my heart believe this to be true. Heck it's hard to make me believe it when I know that if I were with a man right now my interactions with my parents would be drastically different.

My friend and I both found common ground in this struggle. The struggle to be who we are and who those who are supposed to love us want us to be. We even empathize with those women who after years of struggling, give up and take the easier road (societally anyway).

At one point in the conversation I told my friend frankly: "I completely understand why some of my queer/bisexual/lesbian/fluid sisters end up with men instead of staying true to their hearts. Enduring all this heartache and rejection simply over who you spend your life with!?!?...It is not for the faint of heart...Listening to my mother talk about her "dashed dreams" of being able to share advice with me once I had my own husband and family killed me. What she was basically saying in that moment was that she couldn't give me advice if I marry a woman. And she basically said she feels like she wouldn't have anything to offer me. That ish was hurtful."

On those days that my partner pisses me off or we get into a petty argument ('cause we have them just like straight folk), I sometimes want nothing more than to call my mother so she can either validate that I was right or tell me I was trippin'.

My mother knows me better than anyone and when those times come in my relationship I don't want to talk to a friend or peer who may have the same views on life that I do. I want to talk to my mama. I want to talk to the person who is going support me while also keeping it real with me and let me know if I was being a jerk. I want to be able to vent about how hard it is to join lives with another human being, I want to so bad...But I am petrified that all it will do is taint my mother's view of my partner and my relationship.

I'm afraid that it will give her ammunition to say things like, "Well maybe you wouldn't have those issues if you were with a man?" So, until the day comes when I can, I am stuck. I am forced to keep things to myself, things that I can't say to friends or to my partner. I sometimes get insanely jealous of the relationship that my partner has with her mother, jealous almost to the point of resentment.

Obviously the fact that our mothers had completely opposite reactions to our coming out is not her fault but I am jealous, nonetheless. My partner can literally talk to her mother about anything, and I used to be able to do that too but apparently being a lesbian means I don't get to experience my mother the same way. And that sucks.

The conclusion that I came to at the end of the conversation with my friend was this: "I can't deny who I am meant to be with just because she envisioned a different life for me and for her. The idea that our relationship would change so much by my marrying a woman she wouldn't be able to offer words wisdom is mind boggling to me. But I won't lose out on the love of my life because it's not who my mother envisioned."

For now, progress looks like my mother asking me whether or not I have plans for Thanksgiving instead of assuming I'll be spending it with her. Even if she doesn't say my partner's name it's an indication to me that she acknowledges her presence and a reminder that she can't deny her existence.