



EPISODE FOUR //

On Old Breakups, New Beginnings, and Sexy Men Who Don't Shave.

INTRO

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

[Beep]

Yo. Today in public policy class, one of my white classmates was acting out our case study and decided to rename herself Shaniqua and name her pretend son De'sean. My professor thought it was hilarious. All types of side eye!

[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 Four. Here we go...

SOLANA

"On, No Longer Scaring Innocent Children on the Street"

There were a few days right after N left when I was prone to break into a fit of sobs at the drop of a dime. It was incredible really. When I got home from class, when I went to sleep at night, when he sent me a text, seeing couples on the street on my way to Whole Foods.

One particular incident involved a five-mile run that was cut short by a panic attack outside his apartment building. Without thinking, I had jogged there by mistake. I haven't been there since, which is kind of problematic because both my father's office and my new networking contact's office reside in the next-door building.

Six weeks and things haven't gotten much better. I've relegated my crying to nights before bed instead of scaring kids in the street, which is positive. Still, I'm a best customer of the month at my local wine store... not so positive.

My uncertainty with N has crossed over into every part of my life. I get frustrated with myself to the point of throwing textbooks clear across my apartment. I look at the answers that I've put down on the paper and they don't seem right. So I stop at 2am frustrated, feeling stupid, and just lay in bed and cry.

It's been sixteen days since N and I last spoke. My decision came to me randomly. I tossed back and forth about our relationship: where it was going, what it meant, was I ready? His last text to me glares like a glowing hidden treasure in my inbox.

I want to respond and reach back at him but I can't. Just like I can't talk to him face to face or lay in bed watching the stars and discussing religion while I run my fingers through his curls. So I don't. I want to erase everything.

I saw an article in Cosmo last week about the uptick in heroin usage among college age women. The drug, they explained, allows users to forget and escape reality. For a second I wondered what it would be like? To take a pill and forget what I've experienced. I'd be like Alice In Wonderland with a heroin pill to make me fall in the hole and follow the white rabbit.

My parents taught me better though, so instead of being Alice I feel more like the mad hatter. A soul split. I go through the motions. I listen to my friends tell me that everything is going to get better and I'm going to get married and have kids sooner than I know. I go on meaningless date after meaningless date, stirring the drink with my straw and wondering why the person sitting across from me isn't N. Why he doesn't smell like N, and look like N, and most importantly make me feel like N.

I smile at them but deep down I feel like someone took pill and erased me. How else do you explain having everything you've wanted and then suddenly finding your cupped hands empty, waiting for something to fill that space?

I'm hoping that my heroin is my passion, my will to be great in life. My heart isn't in it yet but I'm determined to go through the routine until it comes back. I want to be so filled with the energy to be better that there's no room for the hurt. But right now I can't.

I passed the bar exam this week and I couldn't even fully celebrate because the first person I wanted to call was him. I stared at the phone and at my results and thought about the nights when I panicked and ran straight to his apartment and into his arms, for him to tell me that it would be ok; for us to just lie there and then him to send me back home to study, to pass. I passed the biggest exam of my life of this week and I couldn't even celebrate because he wasn't there to celebrate with.

CARMEN

"On Being Thankful for Non-Shaving Men and Other Such Things"

Ok so I wish I had something prolific to share. Something that would change lives but I don't. This is going sound like a page from any 20-something's journal in Anywheresville, USA. Here goes:

I am tired of living in my parents' house and working a job that needs me but can't really pay me, and applying for jobs I really don't want, and being envious of people on the internet and second guessing every decision in my life (For instance, maybe I should have majored in engineering like my dad suggested).

I'm just tired. That bone deep, can't ever get enough sleep, waking up breathing heavy cuz I always feel late for something tired. There's got to be something better than this. Got to.

But you know what, it's November, a month of giving thanks so I will be thankful. Thankful for the use of my limbs

(especially my knee since, long story but, I no longer need surgery thanks to physical therapy). Thankful for living in a place where there is always something in the fridge (even if I don't know how long it's been in there) Thankful to live in an arts community that is open and accepting.

Thankful for cheap wine and chicken wings. Thankful for my nappy hair. Thankful for laughter. Thankful for the opportunity to drive into the sunset. Thankful for all my wonderful sister girl friends that challenge me, encourage me, keep my spirits lifted and inspire me to no end.

Thankful for sweet beginnings and necessary endings. Thankful for knowledge but more thankful for wisdom.

Things may not be perfect. Hell they will never be. But I'm still here and I'm still kicking ass and it could always be worse but it will always get better. Cheers to that.

P.S. You know what else I'm thankful for this month. Non-shaving men. That is a holiday gift sent from the gawds. #JustSayin

MAYA

"New Year, New Beginning"

Happy New Year!

You might be saying to yourself – yo, Maya is crazy - it's not January first, but actually, in the Hindu calendar (well, the state where I am from in India) New Years day follows the festival of . During this festival we clean house, eat good food, wear beautiful clothing, and invite the goddess Lakshmi – who is the goddess of wealth, into our houses by leaving the front door open and lighting oil lamps that help her “find” us.

I celebrated my own Diwali and Indian New Year by sending time with family and friends, and lighting my house up with little votive candles last night, illuminating my new crib. Even though I am not religious, I do believe that little rituals can help us move beyond the harsh realities of life and can lift the heart.

As I watched the 50 little votive candles flicker and sway all around my house I was reminded to be grateful for where I am and all that I have gone through.

My time with my family this weekend was great, but also difficult. One of the consequences of taking time out for you and going underground to heal is that people really begin to take your absence personally. My grandmother and I are close, and she can feel when I am hurting – so she calls me. But when I am in healing mode, sometimes I cannot talk to people.

So I sat with her for while and told her that I am not hiding, but really intentionally seeking time to myself to figure out what I want and need. I likened it to how a Hindu holy man, a sadhu, may spend years in a cave meditating. It is a part of his spiritual journey – how he gets closer to God.

My time to myself is my time with some higher power or sense of justice in the world. I need the silence to hear myself think. I love my grandmother, and know that this was hard for her to hear – but I told her this is what I need and I won't change – b/c I NEED it to be well.

One of the hardest parts of my life to clean up and reclaim is my relationship with my ex-husband. He is still around, still in my life, and still draining my energy under the guise of friendship. And I let him stay here, afraid of really letting him go. I don't know how you can both love someone and need them to be away from you at the same time, but that certainly sums up how I feel about him.

No one knows how much time we spend together – not my friends or family and definitely not the people I am dating. I don't really seek out his time, but when he asks me for something or needs something I make myself available (usually).

Even though I am not reaching out to him I open the door to him every time and it feels like a dirty little secret. I know deep in my heart that I have to let him go – and one of the last times he was over, he spent the night and we ended up becoming intimate, and afterwards I just cried and cried b/c in my mind I knew I had to let him go – I asked HIM to tell me how to let him go.

I found out that night that he had hooked up with a mutual friend of ours and it made me angry b/c I feel like he just gravitates from one fucked up woman to the next – including me. Anyone who is vulnerable and has a backstory he decides is the next thing he is attracted to, and the pattern is so clear to me.

I have decided once and for all that I really need to make intentional space between he and I. This city is not so small that I can't avoid him. I had a small triumph today, when after a weekend of not seeing each other he asks for my help with his schoolwork, and I tell him I have too many other things going on - which is true. I always put my needs last and run to help him whenever he asks for me. But not today.

I need this time away from him to reconnect with my own energy and to rest. After saying no to him, I took a few minutes and looked at the flickering tealights in my house. Felt my own thoughts quiet and subside – this is really cleaning house – letting go of him. My mind, free of its previous clutter then opened the front door and invited the goddess Lakshmi inside to bless me in the New Year. Happy New Year to me.

ZORA

"On Trading Pain for Poetry, or Something Like That"

It waited for me each and every day, a relentless presence that seem to haunt me. A daily reminder of my new reality and unfortunately there was no escaping it. It was my pain journal.

Ironically it was a beautiful little book with an embossed cover and delicate little handmade pages. A gift from my youngest daughter, something beautiful she picked up while on a college trip to Mexico. "Write lovely things in it that make you happy" she suggested, and honestly that seemed like an excellent idea at the time.

I fully intended to store my poetry there, but several years passed without even one lyrical word making it onto those stunning sheets and I realized sadly a poem would never ever live there. So when my doctor suggested a pain journal, that beautiful little book once again had a chance for a purposeful life.

Here I would document my wellness or more to the point, lack thereof. Here was a place to hide the scars I never want to show. Here was a place to lock away the madness.

The little journal wasn't supposed to live its life this way. My doctor clearly had other ideas. "It's simple," he explained to me, a bit too slowly for my liking. "Just give me a number, one to ten, with one being the least and ten being the max and tell me how bad the pain gets, how intense your stress seems, and how significant the swelling has become. And if there are other emotions or events affecting your life at that time, no need for personal details, just add an asterisk so I know something extra is going on"

Wow! A number and an asterisk. Is that how I'm meant to document the mind numbing pain to that paralyzes me so I can't even walk? Tell me is that a six or seven? Or what about that pain that shot through my neck and forced my head to lean to one side all day long? Is that just a nuisance five or a more frightening six?

And this thing about no words? What's with that? I am a witness to my own trials by fire and a witness has to testify or the truth has no power. So there will be words, doctor, and memories and laughter that breaks through the tears and the screams no one else gets to hear. It's all going to be there. It has a right to all be there.

So my pain journal has become my friend. It is the place I hide my mess. It's the place I cage the demons so they can never hurt me again. It's the place I peek into to remember the battles I've won. It's a shout of dammit and hallelujah in the very same breath. It's my soul on a page.

I still have problems trying to get the ratings just right. Sometimes that's a funny thing- like when I rated my stress an eight because I was trying to figure out if my expansive words, wit and wisdom could ever fit neatly into a 140 characters? Sadly it does not. Who needs twitter anyway?

Or sometimes it's kind of sorrowful- like trying to figure out if a pain is really a ten because even though it feels like the worst thing ever at the time, I know the pain will eventually get worse. It always does.

But after all this time of wresting my way through my beautiful little book I admit I love it and the story it tells. I just wish everyone had one- a place to tuck away the day-to-day crazy makers. A place to bury the past hurts and the horrible fears. I wish everybody had a place to put the pain so that some real healing had half a chance. And each new page would remind us that a new day has begun.