



## EPISODE TWO //

On, meeting as strangers and leaving as sistafriends

### INTRO

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

[Beep]

Janie. Are you coming out tonight? Girl, you know you need to stop hiding in those books. Are you trying to be single for ever??!

[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 Six. Here we go...

### SOLANA

*"Hey bartender, I'll take a double."*

If I were a superhero, alcohol would be my weapon of choice. A shot before I battled my foes. A quick cocktail as I transform from Bruce Wayne to Batman. Probably another one when I changed back. You know, just a little something to open up the walls of the box of anxiety I so often find myself trapped in.

But I'm not a superhero. This is real life and when it comes to real life, alcohol is not the answer to dealing with those annoying bouts of anxiety that crop up at damn near the drop of a dime.

The thing is, I have a type A personality, which is both a blessing and a curse. On the up side, I make lists and I have this insane urge to complete those lists and I will not sleep until they are done. (Yes, I put that on the positive side and I don't wanna hear any shit about it.)

On the con side, everything needs to be done a specific way and if it doesn't happen that way I have to work hard not to fall apart. And by fall apart, I mean not spiral into a panic attack that involves me being wheeled into the ER. A scenario that isn't as unlikely as it may seem, unfortunately.

To prevent this, my doctor gives me Xanax of varying quantities. A regular dose during the school year, and then enough to keep me firmly entrenched in happy land when finals roll around.

I feel like I'd be abusing my privilege when it comes to dealing with all of the N drama to ask for a bump to help me deal with my sleepless nights, trembling hands, and circular mind. Instead I turned to my other tool of choice.

At first it was a glass or two of wine with dinner. Soon, I'd look up and half a bottle would be gone. It was fine though, I had it all under control. I was nearly out of wine anyway. Then I threw a housewarming and my mother brought over a case of wine and my girlfriends and I barely drank a bottle. That left 11.5 bottles to me and my emotions.

There is something so comforting about alcohol until you get to the tipping point. When you're an anxious half-introvert like myself, after the first drink - the world opens up like a budding flower.

Suddenly you're a little less shaky, less worried about N, less worried about your muffin top, and a WHOLE lot less worried about the piles of work sitting on your desk. Instead you're at the bar, sitting cross-legged in a pair of stilettos, playing with your curls, and throwing come-hither eyes at that cutie across the way.

The rush is so high that you grab for another and another, until you find yourself on the floor of your bathroom gripping the edge of the toilet and praying to God that you've learned your lesson. Sure that's exactly what you said last time but whatever.

Now before you rush off to send me the schedule of the nearest AA meeting, I do realize that alcohol is not the solution to my problems. It's not even a band-aid. My relationship with alcohol these days has become like picking a scab - keeping the wounds fresh as the days I made them.

Last night N posted a video on Instagram and I replayed it 20 times. Hearing his voice again. Seeing his smile. The curves his face that I remembered so well wrapped in mine, and I grabbed a glass of wine. And another and another. I began texting with Mal, the new guy, to get my mind away from recalling N's number that I deleted, and I soon fell into a deep sleep.

This morning, I'm realizing what destruction looks like as I'm sitting in class under the noise and bright lights, and hating myself. I think this super girl needs a new tool in her arsenal.

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## **CARMEN**

### *"The Power of NOW"*

So last week I talked about the man I am all in my feelings about. And I'll admit, I may have had a glass or two of wine before I wrote it and when I went back I didn't like what I found.

I am a strong Black Independent woman! I don't get all snively and indecisive over a man! That's not me! Or that's not me anymore! I was that person once and I told myself I would NEVER be that person again.

So I decided that I would reclaim myself. Make it known and clear and public, that I Carmen Alise Jones, was NOT playing boo boo the fool for ANYBODY! No matter how much I love them. And then I came home and found out that my friend was dead.

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Her name is... was... Simone. She was a mother, lover, artist, poet, dancer, teacher. She wasn't perfect, wasn't a saint by any means but who is. She was a young woman, mid 30s who was trying to navigate life and love and motherhood and her art. And I admired her so much.

All I could think about was the child she won't have a chance to raise and the art she won't have a chance to create.

My biggest fear is leaving this Earth without the people that I love knowing how much I love them and dying with unfinished works inside of me. I'm sure when Simone went out on Saturday night she couldn't imagine that she would never kiss her baby girl again, never choreograph another dance, never write another poem.

All we have is now. So all we can do is live in the moment, and hope that we will continue to have more and more moments ahead of us. I know that I get caught up in what's next and I miss out on what's now.

Simone's death reminded me of how important NOW is. And all I want to do right now is love my family, my friends my art and maybe even that complicated man I can't seem to leave behind.

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## **MAYA**

### **"The Little Things"**

I don't know what to talk about this week: I am so utterly busy and my mind is so occupied and my brain is so full of little details for a big event that I am planning this weekend that I barely have time to think about myself.

Then again, I guess I can share with you all of the little things that have gotten me through these stressful few weeks. I read somewhere – probably on Lifehack or Elephant Journal – that it is dispersing little happy things throughout the day that makes a big difference in whether someone feels fulfilled or not.

And lately, even though I am so busy, I have made time just for myself to savor some of small things that make me happy – like men, or food, or friends, or sloths. (I'll explain the sloth thing later.)

So what were the little things that kept me going through these last couple weeks of grind time? Well, I was able to see two of the guys I am dating this weekend even amidst event-planning. Stephan, who puts the spring in my step, was giving me regular bouts of text love and telling me he misses me, and Chris, a PhD student from UNC Chapel Hill who shares my love of Mexican food, had dinner with me over the weekend.

Chris is also my weekly humor check-in and we have ridiculous text wars where we try to one-up each other. He's easy breezy like Stephan, making me smile when we meet and when we don't. He's gone so far as to wish me well for my event this weekend – which is cool because it means he's starting to get invested in my success.

Then, in the middle of the week a conglomeration of my introvert friends and I, the perennial extrovert, met for pizza and a drinking game. There was more pizza than drinking game but being in a room full of people I love in the middle of the week, even though I was heads down on my laptop for most of the time, made my heart feel so at peace.

A date with some of my best girlfriends another day made the week even better. And finally, visits and messages from not one, but BOTH of my exes proved to me that some connection to the past is important, I am not a cold turkey girl and I DO need to feel I can reach out sometimes.

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When not able to see others, I indulged to my guiltiest and most trivial pastime of looking at cute baby animals on the internet. Sloths are #1 on my list.

These are the things I turn to when I want to give myself the little slices of peace I need to during weeks like this one when I am continually on my grind. I never realized how much infusing intentional bits of peace and happiness can transform how I live my life, I never realized that I deserved those bits of peace and happiness – little Maya is learning.

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## **TAMAR**

*"Here's lookin' at you, kid."*

The wind blew in my face, forcing its way into my nostrils and expanding my lungs to full capacity. The cold brisk air combined with the picturesque views and 450 feet of land below my dangling feet made me feel so alive. I was in a sustained state of bliss.

As I began to encroach on my final destination, my guide signaled for me to break so I would not knock him over upon my landing. I let my head drop back and took in the last few seconds of flying free and allowing my spirit to expand and be one with nature.

This is one of the ways I spent my twenty-sixth birthday celebration, suspended by (very strong) cables, various heights above the ground, attached to a zipline. With every zipline I could feel myself growing in strength and courage, I could feel myself growing and becoming more in tune with the Spirit of Life, I could feel myself...growing.

Every year at or a little after 9:46 AM, the time I was actually born, I say a prayer thanking the Creator for life and asking God to see me into another year. I would like to share part of the prayer from this year with you all:

"Divine and Holy Creator, Sovereign of the Universe, for whatever reason, you saw fit to bring me into the Universe in human form...the Universe revealed to my spirit that this twenty-sixth year should be dedicated to growth...I humbly ask you to help me grow in love with myself, help me to know that I am worthy of love in all of its forms; help me to grow in patience, compassion, respect, non-judgment, and all the areas that I need to grow in to help me to realize my authentic and ideal self; the self that You would have me to be. Thank you for this amazing, tumultuous, sometimes traumatic, always wondrous and joyous life. I am forever in awe. WOW."

This year is dedicated to GROWTH in all of its forms. Twenty-five was a very hard year for me: coming out to my family, being disowned by my father, quitting my job, starting grad school, my partner being laid off, my partner and I moving in together, losing a couple of family members, and enduring great financial hardship.

While it caused me much pain, it also gave me much triumph and helped me to grow in ways I never imagined were possible. I stood in my truth, "deliberate and afraid nothing" and revealed my authentic self, even though that meant creating a divide between me and my biological family.

I got into seminary, was awarded a scholarship, and maintained a 4.0 in the midst of all the chaos. I fell deeper in love with my Beloved. I gained insight and knowledge into my purpose, as well as into the woman I am to be, and gained a chosen family who has engulfed me with love.

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With each new step towards self-actualization, the growing pains I felt in the process seemed insignificant when compared to the actual level of growth I attained. I am thankful for the Spirit of God working through me in every way possible and am humbled by the path that has been laid before me.

Twenty six, here I come.

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## ZORA

*"On, meeting as strangers and leaving as sistafriends."*

Well today is another day. Every day has its own challenges and today I have to make my way to downtown phoenix for lab work. Now since I don't drive, this trek will be via bus and train. It will take at least an hour, but I am prepared.

I have my cross body purse that hugs me close, keeping my essentials completely safe, a brand new lunch tote with the necessary bottles of water, and most importantly, my big strong twenty-three year old son who has become accustomed to holding me up literally and figuratively.

As expected, the bus ride is boring and uneventful making my paperback a godsend. But the transit center where we are to catch the train is a bit more exciting. Here, at least there are a few people and the slightest hum of activity. The train pulls off just as we get to the platform so it will be ten minutes before the next one. No problem. I have plenty of time. And there are plenty of pretty little benches where I can wait comfortably.

Pretty little benches on a pretty little platform. So strange for a born and raised New Yorker who tends to think of public transportation in a very different light.

I mean, where are the dark, suffocating tunnels? Or the stains on the platform that have started to look like science experiments? How about the homeless who are trying but failing to look respectable? And who would ever imagine that I would actually miss that stench of too many bodies in too small a space? Good times. Good times.

The train arrives. As usual it is scrubbed clean and brightly lit with large picture windows that allow for clear and spectacular views of the mountains as we move along. I am ready for yet another boring lag of this trek when I am pleasantly surprised.

As my son and I take our seats, I find myself sitting across from a middle aged black woman. A real life sister! Here in Arizona, folks who look like me are few and far between. And like all sisters, she has her own beauty. A rich chocolate brown, with salt and pepper hair, she is an attractive and welcome sight.

She must be new here I think to myself, as I study her more carefully. Her hair is relaxed and she is wearing face powder. Clearly she hasn't been here long enough to understand the practicality of natural hair and waterproof makeup. Just wait girlfriend, I think to myself, until the temp reaches about 115. The luxury of carefully laid hair will go by the wayside quick and in a hurry.

Since I have been raised not to stare, I fully intend to turn my attention back to my paperback to pass the next twenty minutes, when things get kind of interesting...

First, a white man gets on at the next stop. Quickly realizing there is just one seat left and it's next to my girl, he casts

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a disdainful and dismissive look in her direction, snorts, and moves as far away as possible. I thought she hadn't noticed, but the roll of her eyes in his direction says differently.

And she is far from insulted. The sucking of her teeth says it all, without her even having to say a word. "Go ahead and stand fool. You ain't hurting my feelings. I didn't want to share this bench no how." Ha! You go girl, I think to myself, throwing her a silent high five.

And just when I think the drama is over, I can't be any more wrong. Next, a young man gets on the train who looks to be about twenty. Spotting the same seat, he sits. But not content with the space allotted for him, he boldly tries to encroach on my girl's space as well by moving his leg two inches into her seat.

Well, if he thought his six foot, two hundred pound frame would make this an easy task. He was mistaken. Shoving his leg aside and planting her leg firmly along the seat divider, sister lets him know she will not be moved. She has earned this seat and ain't no one going to disrespect her place.

It is almost my stop. My back is really hurting. I must have groaned out loud because immediately my son turns to me and asks with love and concern if I am ok. Fine, I reply. No worries. After all, we are almost there.

I turn and see my new friend looking at me with concern. "The price you pay for carrying four beautiful babies," I want to tell her but somehow I sense she already knows. Is there anything better than a sister who knows your struggle and your spirit even though you have never met or exchanged a single word?

My stop arrives and my son patiently helps me to my feet, hands me my cane, and holds the door so I can exit as slowly as I need. I cast one last glance at my new friend. She is smiling at my son him approvingly. "You have done a good job with him" she seems to say. "It ain't easy for a woman to turn her boy into a man."

Yes, he is amazing, I silently agree, before turning away.

Be blessed, my sister friend, I silently pray. There ain't enough of my strong women kin left that I can spare a single one. Just knowing you are out there somewhere in the world makes living a little less lonely. Let's both vow to stay strong.

Who knew that this short ride would deliver such a gift? Two women start out as strangers on a train but leave each other a mere twenty minutes later connected in ways few would understand simply by sharing stories through smiles and heartfelt sighs.