

LESSONZ LEARNED

by

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- Book Sample -

"IF YOU WALKED BY A STREET AND YOU WAS WALKING ON CONCRETE AND YOU SAW A ROSE GROWING FROM CONCRETE, EVEN IF IT HAD MESSED UP PETALS AND IT WAS A LITTLE TO THE SIDE YOU WOULD MARVEL AT JUST SEEING A ROSE GROW THROUGH CONCRETE. SO WHY IS IT THAT WHEN YOU SEE SOME GHETTO KID GROW OUT OF THE DIRTIEST CIRCUMSTANCES AND HE CAN TALK AND HE CAN SIT ACROSS THE ROOM AND MAKE YOU CRY, MAKE YOU LAUGH, ALL YOU CAN TALK ABOUT IS MY DIRTY ROSE, MY DIRTY STEMS AND HOW I'M LEANING CROOKED TO THE SIDE. YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE THAT I'VE COME UP FROM OUT OF THAT SHIT."

- TUPAC SHAKUR



## *Dear Mama*

*I know that both of you are truly disgusted with me! You had so many high expectations, and you definitely didn't raise me to be the way I've turned out to be. I'm fifteen years old and I have a newborn baby that I can't even take care of! I don't know how to be a mom or how to provide for myself! Mama, I'm so sorry for everything! I'm sorry I stole from you, snuck out of the house, and I'm sorry that I didn't keep my virginity! I feel like I can never be the daughter that you want! When you and Daddy sent me away to that detention home, I lost my mind! The correctional officer yelled at me every day in that place! I know y'all were hurt and upset that your teenage daughter was pregnant. And you didn't want anybody to know because you were embarrassed! But you sent me away like a caged animal, away from everything and everybody! I cried every day and night while I was there and y'all barely came to visit me! But I think I know what the problem is. You wish I were more like Denise! She's smart, responsible, and not hanging out in these streets like me. Daddy won't even talk to me, and it's killing me inside! I just want to hear his voice, and hear him say I'm still his little girl! I'm going to make things a lot easier for everyone though. I'm running away! I can't take care of Sheila right now. But once I get on my feet, I will come back for her! You know I love my baby so much, but I know both of you can provide a much better home for her than I ever could. Chauncey hasn't called me in weeks, and I haven't seen him since Sheila was born! So please, keep Sheila away from him, he doesn't deserve to see her. I love you Mama, I love you Daddy. Please forgive me, and take care of my baby!"*

*Your daughter,  
Sasha*

Sasha folded the letter in half, stuffed it in an envelope, and signed her name on it. Then she took her three-month old baby and put her in the car seat with the letter. Sheila's rose-colored cheeks were glowing. Sasha could always make her little face just light up, smiling from ear to ear. She took the car seat that Sheila was sitting in and sat it on top of the kitchen table. Then she leaned over to kiss her baby on the forehead and instantly became physically weak. Sasha was full of despair and grief because she didn't want to leave her baby. Tears fell from her face onto Sheila's cheek and ended up on her little chest. Sasha turned away and walked out the door. All while her baby was left on the table helpless, watching her mother walk away from her...

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It was September of 1985 and *Facts of Life* was the latest new hit TV show. *Tootie, Natalie is going to go crazy when she finds out what you did!* Denise thought in regards to the show... *Ah man, it's already six o'clock?! Let me get my ass up and do this homework, I hate chemistry!* Suddenly, there was a noise in the distant background. "Sasha, get the baby! She's up from her nap I think she needs a bottle!" A few minutes went by, but still no response from

Sasha... "Sasha get the baby, don't you hear her crying!?" But still, there was no answer from Sasha. "What type of mother are you, letting your baby cry for this long, really Sasha?!" Denise yelled out from downstairs. She assumed that Sasha was upstairs in her bedroom ignoring the baby. She quickly got up and walked towards her crying niece. She was led into the kitchen where she discovered Sheila on top of a table sitting in her car seat. And she was crying hysterically. *What in the hell is going on?!* Denise was in disarray at what she saw. She ran to the table and unhooked her niece from the car seat. *Oh my goodness, what are you doing here all by yourself!?...Wait, what's this?* Denise looked down and noticed the letter Sasha left inside of the car seat. She sat down with her niece on her lap and began to read it...

After reading the letter, Denise furiously threw it down on the table and burst out into tears. *Why would she do this, what in the hell is wrong with her?! She just left her baby here helpless and all alone? This girl has completely lost her damn mind!* Denise was on a rant and questioned her sister's actions. Scrambling to collect her thoughts, she tried to figure out what she should do next...*Oh my goodness, ok, what should I do? I know, I'll call Mama!* She scurried to get to her feet while holding Sheila in her arms. Then she picked up the phone to call Nora...

"Hello, Ma?!"

"Hey Denise, is everything ok? Why do you sound so nervous?"

"Mama, Sasha just ran away from home! She left Sheila all alone in her car seat on top of the kitchen table, and she's gone, she just left!"

"Wait a minute, what do you mean she ran away?! Are you two in some sort of trouble, where is your sister?!"

"Ma I just told you she ran away! She left a stupid letter in the baby's car seat saying all this mess about her leaving because she can't take care of her!"

"Denise, I'm on my way. I'm coming home right now! You just wait there with the baby for me!"

Denise began to cry. "Ok Ma, I'm really scared though, where do you think she went?!"

"Sweetie just let me get home ok. We'll sort this whole thing out once I get there, I promise!"

"Ok Ma, see you in a little while!"

Nora hung up the phone. "Lord, where on earth is my child?!..."

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Nora made it home twenty minutes later. She was struck with anxiety as soon as she walked into the house. "Give me the baby! And where is the letter?" Denise gave the baby and the letter to Nora. She sat down and began to read it...

"Isn't she worried about what could happen to her?! She must think those gang bangers she hanging with will help her! The only thing they're going to help her with is to a quick death!" While bashing her daughter's ruthless actions, Nora's eyes became filled with tears. Denise took hold of her hand for support.

"Ma, it's going to be ok! She has to be somewhere around the neighborhood. With no money or car she can't get that far!" Suddenly, Nora's husband came rushing through the door. She called him while she was on her way home and told him everything that happened. "Where



is Sasha?!" He asked in a vigorous and angry tone. Frank was a tall cocky man with broad shoulders. He had the type of look that demanded respect. And no one ever dared to challenge him if they knew what was best for them...

"Where is she?! And what were you talking about on the phone Nora?! All this shit about Sasha running away and leaving the baby?!" He went to his granddaughter while she was in Nora's arms and kissed her on the forehead. Sheila was the only one that could bring out his gentle side.

"Frank I just got here, we're still trying to figure everything out baby! I think Sasha has gone completely crazy this time!" Nora gave Frank Sasha's letter so he could read it.

"Denise what happened, did you see her before she left?"

"No Ma I didn't! I was in the living room watching TV. She must have left during that time."

"Did she tell you she was going anywhere today?"

Denise tried to remember if Sasha mentioned anything about going out. "You know what, I think I overheard her on the phone this morning with Carmilla. She was saying something about going to the mall to look for an outfit for homecoming. Maybe they're at the mall!"

Frank abruptly interrupted the conversation after reading the letter... "I swear, when I find this girl, I'm going to beat the hell out of her! Maybe she'll learn some common sense then!" He bawled up the letter and threw it on the ground. "She's got everybody worried sick about her while she's out here with these damn low life ass thugs who don't give a damn about her!" Frank stormed off upstairs.

"Ma, Daddy can't just jump to conclusions like that! I mean she might not necessarily be with the Bloods. Let's go see if Carmilla-"

Denise stopped in mid statement as her attention was turned towards her father who was coming back down the stairs holding a 357 special revolver gun in his right hand.

Nora gasped in fear. "Frank, what are you doing with that gun?!"

"I'm going to get my daughter back! I know she's with those gang banging Bloods hanging out over there on Shaw! I'm driving over there, and if they don't tell me where she is, then they'll have hell to pay!"

Nora got up from her seat and passed the baby to Denise. "Take the baby upstairs and let me talk to your father in private." Denise hurried up the stairs with her niece in her arms.

"Look Frank, I know you're upset! But baby we have to think logically and smart! I called the police but -"

"Those bastards said she has to be missing for 24 hours! Forget waiting on the police Nora! What if that was their daughter missing?! They wouldn't wait 24 hours to search for her!"

"Baby I know, I know! But look, we can't handle it this way! You can't put yourself in a situation to end up in jail!"

Frank sighed heavily. "You tell me then Nora, what's the next move, huh? What are we going to do to find Sasha?!"

"Well for starters, let's not think the worst, she might not be with the Bloods. Maybe she's with Carmilla! Denise said she overheard her talking on the phone earlier about going shopping for homecoming. Let's go to Carmilla's house and see if she's there or if her family heard from Sasha. That's a good place to start baby ok, let's be smart about this. I know you're worried

about her just as much as I am! But in my heart I know God is watching over her honey, I know he is!"

Frank paced the floor back and forth. He looked at Nora, and then towards the stairway. After giving it some thought, he ran upstairs to their bedroom and put his gun away. Then he went back downstairs, grabbed Nora by her waist, and kissed her on the cheek. Taking her by the hand, he led her out the door, on a search for Sasha...

## *I'm Leaving Everything Behind*

"Who is it?"

"Carmilla, it's me Sasha, open the door!"

"Hey girl, I thought you were going to call me before you came over so I could get this hair of mine together first!" Sasha looked at Carmilla and instantly began to cry.

"Sasha, baby what's wrong?!"

Looking up with tears rushing from her hazel brown eyes, she attempted to calm herself down so that she could speak clearly. "I just can't take it anymore! I can't stand being in that house, it feels like I'm living in a prison!"

Carmilla wrapped her arm around Sasha's shoulders. "Oh no, what's wrong now? Did Nora try to lock you in the house again?"

Sasha instantly snapped. "You know what, your fucking jokes ain't funny right now! I'm on the verge of leaving Cleveland and my baby, so my life isn't a damn laughing matter!"

"Damn, I didn't mean anything by it, I'm sorry! I would never joke about anything serious you have going on! I didn't know it was, I'm just, I -" Carmilla stumbled over her speech, clearly at a loss for words.

"Girl I'm so sorry. You know I'm just really stressed out right now! This nigga Chauncey hasn't been giving me any money to help out with Sheila. And he hasn't even seen her since she was born! Worst of all, word on the streets is that he's messing around with Tameka now!"

"Tameka, girl who is that?"

"It's his next-door neighbor girl! The same chick that was telling me all last year how he was no good for me, and that I could do better!"

"Wow Sasha, she's a back stabber for doing that!"

"Yeah, well apparently she must like sloppy seconds! But who cares, she doesn't have anything on me Carmilla!" Now Sasha was what guys referred to as being a tall drink of water. And she had an hour-glass frame to go with it. A slim waist and curves shaped to perfection. Standing at 5'8", she was built like a stallion and men would call her just that, a tall stallion. She was the catch of the city, and any man that had any type of hustle about himself wanted her. From the football jocks to the dope boys, even grown ass businessmen had a thing for Sasha. But her heart belonged to Chauncey, and everyone knew it. Most people couldn't understand it, and some hated the idea of it. But above all, her parents despised it.

"Look, you don't even have the time or energy to be focused on that Sasha! You have a beautiful baby girl, Sheila is gorgeous! And what's this talk I heard you say, about leaving the city, and leaving Sheila?! Come on now girl, I know you love Chauncey and all, but that nigga is not worth you leaving your baby behind! And nothing at home could be that bad to make you want to leave your daughter! Shit, girl honestly you're talking crazy because you know I'm not letting your ass go anywhere!" The girls looked at each other and began to smile with tears in their eyes. Then they embraced one another with a hug.

"Your problems are my problems Sasha! We've been best friends since we were five years old, and you're more like a sister to me. I would never leave you hanging! We are in this together ok, that's my God child! And at the end of the day, forget Chauncey and everybody else! As long as you and Sheila are happy, then that's all that matters!"

"Carmilla, that's why I love you! And I know, talking about leaving the city and Sheila sounds crazy! I just feel like I can't handle the responsibility or the thought of being a mother! Like come on girl, we're only fifteen years old! What am I going to do with a little baby? And as fucked up as it sounds, I still want to go out and have fun! I want to do the things that make me



happy! This baby is only going to slow me down... Girl, I can't even lie. Sometimes I wish I would have just given Sheila up for adoption like Chauncey wanted me to. Maybe we would still be together, maybe we would still -" Sasha stopped midway in her thoughts and slumped down onto Carmilla's bed. She grabbed a pillow and hugged it tightly as she reminisced about her child's father.

"You probably don't want to hear what I'm about to say. But I think you're being really selfish right now Sasha! You decided to have sex, so you have to deal with the responsibility of being a mother! And yeah, it's going to be extremely hard to be a mom! You have to still go to school and graduate, but you can do it! You know me and my mom are glad to help you however we can! And as much as your parents get on your nerves, they do buy everything the baby needs. And you know they love her to death! They're not going to let that baby go untaken care of! You should be focusing on you and Sheila right now! And once you stop smoking weed and hanging out with these thugs, I'm sure things will get a lot better for you."

"Look, a lot of the things you're saying are true Carmilla, ok, I'll admit that. But I don't need you telling me who to be friends with. I choose my friends just fine, I chose you didn't I? I did that without any assistance, so I know what type of company to pick for my life!"

"Don't go getting all sarcastic and defensive Sasha. I'm just saying that some of your choice of company, I mean, they're just -"

"They're just a little what Carmilla, a little hood, Ghetto, bad, a little thuggish?! What, they're not good enough for your standards little Ms. Perfect? You must be all holier than thou and shit! Oh wait, I forgot you're perfect, that's what it is! Motha fuckas kill me with that shit! Acting like they're just Saints and never did nothing wrong. You're just like my damn parents! You should have been their daughter, they'd love you! ... Damn, I just wish people really understood me sometimes."

"Sasha, I do understand you! But at the same time I just want what's best for you and the baby. Who happens to be my God Daughter by the way!"

"I know you do Carmilla."

"And speaking of my baby, where the hell is she, who has my little chunky monkey?!"

Sasha's heart felt like it had sank deep down into the pits of her stomach. Thinking of how she left Sheila on the table strapped down in her car seat with the letter. She began to second guess her decision and instantly became distraught all over again. "Oh, she's with Denise, they're at home watching *Facts of Life*. You know Denise is addicted to that damn show." The girls both laughed. "So, are we still going to the mall to find an outfit for homecoming?"

"Hell yea girl! Let me just go change my clothes real quick and I'll be ready."

"Ok," Sasha looked through some music records in Carmilla's room while waiting on her to get dressed. Suddenly, Carmilla's mom knocked on the bedroom door. "Hey Mrs. Parker, how are you?" They greeted each other with a hug.

"Hey sweetie I'm fine, just getting home from work. I can't wait to sit down and relax... Where's the baby?"

"Oh, she's at home with my sister."

"Well next time you bring her with you ok?! She's just as cute as a little button. And she looks just like you!"

Sasha forced herself to smile. She was uncomfortable with the conversation, knowing that she just left Sheila all alone. "Yes, I will surely do that Mrs. Parker, next time I won't forget."

"Ok honey. What are you and Carmilla getting ready to do?"

Carmilla entered the room at that moment. "Hey mom, we're just going to the mall to look for something to wear for homecoming."

"Oh ok, well don't get anything too tight, too short, or too low cut in the cleavage area!"

Carmilla shook her head while rolling her eyes in disagreement at her mother. Sasha couldn't stop laughing at the two go back and forth. "Ok mom, I hear you!"

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Nora and Frank arrived at Carmilla's house thirty minutes later and knocked on the door.

"Yes, who is it?"

"Hey Bonnie, it's me Nora, I've got Frank with me. Can we talk to you for a minute?"

Bonnie was surprised to get a visit from Nora and Frank. They rarely ever came over unannounced... "Sure, come on in. Is everything ok?"

"We hope so Bonnie."

"Oh, well you actually just missed the girls, they left about thirty minutes ago."

Nora and Frank looked at each other with a smile of relief.

"What's going on?" Bonnie asked while looking confused.

"Honey I'm sorry, we're just very overjoyed right now! Sasha left a letter at home, telling us that she ran away, and that she was leaving Sheila! So we're worried about her right now! We're just glad to know that she's with Carmilla and not the wrong people!"

"My goodness, I'm so sorry I had no idea!"

"Bonnie you had no way of knowing, Nora and I are just glad she's safe. By the way, where did the girls go?"

"The girls went to the mall to look for homecoming outfits."

Frank's facial expression quickly turned into a look of aggravation. "She has the nerve to want to go shopping, after she just said she's running away from home, and leaving her baby?! Doesn't she have any remorse for what she's done?!"

"Now Frank, I know you're upset. But you can't be too hard on her! I mean she's still just a kid herself, give her a break!"

Frank stood up from where he was sitting and made direct eye contact with Bonnie. "Well Bonnie, until you have a fifteen year old daughter that gets pregnant, does drugs, and hangs out with gang members, I don't think you really have a place to comment on how I should raise my daughter!" Frank stormed out of the house.

"Bonnie, I'm so sorry about that! He's just upset about this whole thing and he doesn't really know how to deal with it!" Nora pleaded on Frank's behalf.

"Oh don't be silly, there's no need to apologize Nora! How about you make yourself comfortable here and wait for the girls to get back. I'm going up stairs, I have some things to do."

"Thanks Bonnie, I truly appreciate this. It means everything to me right now!"

"Of course Nora, anything I can do to help!"

Bonnie left Nora downstairs in the living room. She sat anxiously waiting on her daughter's return...