

## **IF YOU LIVE BY THE SWORD...**

I remember it like it was yesterday.

I was sitting in the doctor's office nervously awaiting my test results. Deep in my heart I already knew what deadly sentence lay ahead of me. I didn't need to shell out dollars to some quack to tell me. He didn't know anything about me. Like everyone else all he was going to do was give me false hope and pray that I didn't cough or sneeze on him.

I knew better than to have unprotected sex. James was supposed to be pay dirt so I couldn't drill him about no condoms. I wanted him to see I was wife material. I wanted the title of being the wife of a high profile MVP NBA player. I know the reputation of a basketball player precedes him and I should've used that as my warning...but I didn't.

"Okay Ms. Dawson, I have the test results. I'm afraid it's what we confirmed earlier." As he continued on with his spill my mind was going a hundred miles an hour. Before I knew, it I was slinging files and anything else I could get my hands on.

"Nooooooo! This is not happening to me!" I screamed, cried and kicked.

"Calm down Ms. Dawson, it's going to be okay!" He struggled as he tried to calm me down but I wasn't having it. I called him everything but a child of God. I even hit him. "Ms. Dawson please! Calm down. It's not the death sentence it used to be! People are living longer, healthier lives with HIV when they do as their doctor instructs them

too!"

I couldn't believe he was sitting there feeding me this bull. "Do you have AIDS? Are you living with this dreadful disease?" I shouted.

"No, I'm not...but through research...."

"Damn you and your research!" I tore out of his office with venom pulsing through my veins.

When I got home, I found that the doctor had left a message instructing me on how to use the meds he'd prescribed for me. There were several other messages from people I didn't care to talk to. Everyone but the bastard who's responsible. He didn't even have the decency to tell me to go and get tested. I had to find out through the television and the damn tabloids. Everyone and everything but him.

I've tried several times to call him. All numbers have been disconnected. Went by his place—for sale. His mother hung up in my face after she used to treat me like a daughter. Not even his team mates would give me the whereabouts on James "All Air" Wilkes.

I guess it was for the best because Lord only knew what I would've done if I'd caught up with him. The media was even speculating that he's bisexual. Supposed lovers were coming out of the woodworks wanting to sell their stories.

What about me? I'm the one who's suffering?" I cried.

I sat in my dark apartment for the better part of two days in a major funk. I tried to think of how I would break the news to my family. My mother would just die of shame. The phone had rung non-stop since the news break. People wanting to know my status so their tongues could wag. And let's not forget the 'I told you so' statements from my jealous ass girlfriends. No more competition from little ole me.

Damn people! People don't give a damn about one another so why should I? That's when the plan for revenge formulated. I might be down for the count but I'm not going down by myself!" I vowed.

It was a typical Friday night at the club. I was looking good enough to eat in a Roberto Cavalli number and Manolo Blahnik stilettos. I made sure to have the eye pleasers on display. I didn't want to give off the vibe of a hoochie but of a woman with class and just enough oomph.

I elected to go to the trendy but sophisticated Diamond Back club

where celebs and people high on the food chain partied. I was regarded as VIP because of the wealthy men that took me there. I intended on getting with at least a few men that night, no matter where it was. I was on a mission.

I spotted my first victim eyeing me like a wolf in sheep's clothing sitting at the bar. Okay, I thought to myself, he wants to play with fire...he'll get burnt messing with me! I walked over to the bar and pretended like I was interested in my surroundings. Even in this stage of my life I would never approach a man. I always made them come to me if they're interested and come he did.

"Hi my name is Vincent...might I interest you in a drink?" He asked while eyeing me the entire time.

"Sure, I'll have a flute of Veuve Clicquot." I smiled seductively.

"Umm...I like a woman with good taste. So, tell me about your fine and sexy self. It's my pleasure to be joining you tonight." He then licked his lips and leaned in closer.

"I 'm whoever you want me to be. The question is where is the wife tonight."

"My what?" He stammered.

"Ahem, ahem...the ring." I cleared my throat.

"Oh, that! She's at home with the twins. I have pictures." He started to dig in his pocket for his wallet.

"That won't be necessary." I cut him off with a wave of my hand.

"Does this mean I can't enjoy your company tonight?" He looked desperate but still trying to play it cool with all that fake ass proper talking he was doing.

*Oh yeah, you can definitely enjoy my company.* "So what do you do for a living?" I asked.

"I'm CEO of a software company." He puffed his chest out like he'd just earned some extra brownie points.

"Really?" My old money radar clicked on. Then I remembered that my mission was to seek, conquer and destroy. Especially this one. He had a family at home and here he is out on the prowl. No more looking for

Mr. Money bags. Those days are over.

"Would you like to get a private booth to get better acquainted?" He asked.

"No need, I know what you want and I definitely know what I want. So let's cut the small talk." I boldly stated.

He looked like he'd just won the lottery. I finished my champagne and he, his Port. "Shall we?" He said as he held my mink jacket for me to slip on. He led the way to the front of the club.

"Leaving Mr. Walsh?" The attendant asked.

"Yes, the lady and I have decided to entertain elsewhere." Vincent beamed while giving the attendant some dap.

"Your car will be ready shortly." Within minutes a sleek platinum Porsche 911 GT2 pulled up. Vincent opened the door for me, tipped the valet and dramatically sped off, hoping to cause a scene with the envious onlookers.

As we cruised down the highway, Vincent kept talking about his twins. As painful to me as it was not being able to have children of my own, I endured his endless chatter. I could tell from his expressed feelings that he was proud to be a father. I couldn't let that stop me. No, I was on a mission. I nearly jumped out of my seat when I felt him touching me. He was asking me a question but I was too deep in my plotting.

"Excuse me?" I asked nervously.

"You never told me your name." He implied.

"Kimberly," I said with an edge.

"Kimberly...that's erotic," he said as we pulled up in the Crescent Court circular driveway. This guy was first class all the way. He even had his flings at five star hotels. Once we got to our suite, Vincent instantly went for my clothes. His hands were roaming all over my body. I was in this to destroy so I went with the flow. Normally, I would object to such behavior but this was one down and a million to go as far as I was concerned. When I pulled his slacks down, his wallet fell and opened to a picture of two of the most beautiful babies. They looked like angels. I lost interest in what he was doing and bent down to retrieve his wallet. He stopped and looked at me as if I'd lost my

mind and I had. What was I thinking?

"These are my pride and joy. Five months today," He boasted. I continued to stare. I never had plans for children. Amazing how situations can make you wish for things that weren't of importance to you before. Vincent drew my attention away from his wallet. He wanted me so bad. I let him have complete control as my mind continued to drift towards his demise.

"Do you have any condoms?" He asked out of breath.

"Don't you?" I shot back.

"No uh...I supposed you did. I know you're drug and disease free like me." Vincent said without a care in the world.

"Yeah...I am," I said as I ravished his body in a fury of kisses and inched my way down to his prized possession. I was completely naked and so was he. He enjoyed squeezing and fondling my body and I admired being touch.

"Come on, baby, Don't make Big Papa wait any longer. I want you so bad I can taste it." Vincent panted.

We hungrily kissed. I was about to give him the gift of death when something came over me. I can't explain it but it was like something grabbed hold of me and wouldn't let go. I tried again to no avail. I immediately started to cry. A flood of emotions overtook me. I cried for the kids I would never have, for my life.

"What's wrong, baby? Did I do something wrong?" Vincent tried to hold me and console me. I couldn't bear to look him in the face because of what I almost did. I ran towards the oversized bathroom and locked myself in. Vincent beat on the door yelling for me to open up. Once again I found myself destroying anything in my path. Suddenly, it felt like someone was embracing me instructing me to get on my knees and pray.

"My Heavenly Father, what have I become? Please help me. I need you now more than ever. I was about to destroy a man's life because of my pain...what James did to me! I'm drowning in a sea of sorrow...I'm scared...scared that I'll perish for my sins! Save me...please! I want to do your will God. I want to overcome my grief." I started to choke. I could hardly breathe. Vincent continued to beat on the door. He said if I didn't open it he was breaking it down

because he had the money to fix it. That statement made me feel even worse because this man looked at me like something that could be brought. The sad part about it is that at one time, I could. I didn't treat my body like the priceless temple Jesus meant for it to be. Everything had a price and I've paid the ultimate price. I continued to pray for guidance.

"I'm so bitter...that...that...I can't see anything but destruction. I want to inflict pain because it was inflicted on me! I want to contaminate because I don't want to die alone! If everything happens for a reason...what is your reason for this God? Please tell me your reason behind this! Is this some kind of sick joke because I'm like the Jezebel? If so Lord...you have my attention now! I want...to be...normal again! Please God...don't turn your back on me! I'm so sorry Lord..."

The door flew off its hinges, Vincent stood shocked. "What the...what in the hell is going on in here?" Vincent said eyeing the damage. He immediately came to me. I was still kneeling on the floor in prayer stance. He picked me up and carried me to the bed.

"If I did anything to offend you, I'm sorry. We don't have to do this. We can just talk or go downstairs to the Palomino for cocktails or dinner if you want." Vincent was scared, probably thought I was going to press rape charges against him. The cocky, nasty, touchy feely Vincent was gone and replaced by a sympathetic fool.

"It's not you...it's me. I can't do that to you. You have been nothing but nice to me and I was..." Vincent cut me off.

"You were going to what...rob me?" He rose up and looked me in the eyes as tears filled them once more.

"No...if only it was that simple." I got out the bed and began to put my clothes back on debating if I should tell him or not. I feared my safety if I told him the truth. He took long strides across the room and put his hands on my shoulders. He was still as naked as the day he was born.

"Tell me...what's wrong? I want to know if I caused this!" Vincent begged.

I dropped my shoe and decided if anything happened I brought it on myself. "I found out earlier this week...that I'm...I'm HIV positive."

He withdrew his hands from my shoulders and fell to his knees crying like a baby. Once the sobs died down he started talking incoherently at

first then he started to make sense.

"I asked God for a sign. He's telling me to quit my philandering; take my vows seriously. I've never been faithful to my wife. I've used my power and influence to get women to do what I want when I want. It's always my way or the highway...even with my wife. I use women for sex all the time. I told God earlier this week if it wasn't meant for me to have as many women as I wanted to prove it! If he existed he would show me! In my heart I knew He would...but not like this. Thank you...for showing me! You've given me a reason to believe! Could've infected my wife...our daughters would've been orphans. I'm a selfish, and pitiful man." An overflow of misery and tears ravaged his body. I continued to get dressed. I was about to walk away when he grabbed my hand.

"I'm not going to hurt you, Kimberly. I was being irresponsible, too." He held my hand while he reflected. "Since we have this room...there's still something I want to do." I couldn't believe my ears...was he insane? Did he have a death wish? Did he think I was playing? "I want you to pray with me...I heard you...in the lavatory. Please, we both could prosper from it. Between the two of us we have some major explaining to do to our Father. He'll forgive us for our transgressions." I knelt down beside him he took my hand and we prayed.

That was three months ago. Since then I've confronted my past. I'm not killing myself with 'what ifs.' I walk with the Lord daily because he's my savior. I can't say that I don't have my moments because I do. As long as I have Jesus in my corner, I'll be alright.

Vincent is now devoted to his wife since our encounter. James still hasn't shown his face but he did send me a letter with a no return address apologizing. He said there were others and I'm praying for us all. His NBA career is practically over according to the media.

I teach others, especially our youth, that they are not invincible to HIV or AIDS. I do what my doctor tells me too because like he said, HIV is not the death sentence it used to be.

