

# **Sins of the Father**

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**A Short Story**

**By**

**Mark Stephen O'Neal**

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**ALSO BY MARK STEPHEN O'NEAL**

The Root of All Evil  
Frenemy  
Blind Fury  
Night in the Underworld  
Nefarious  
Nefarious 2  
The Gifted  
Deception  
Agents of Chaos

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# chapter 1



Jalen Townsend had just wrapped up his day at work and was ready to start the weekend. It had been a busy and productive week for him as a mechanical engineer at a firm in the heart of downtown Chicago. He worked hard and loved to play hard as well, and what better way to play than to kick off the weekend at the strip on the near north side of town in between Chicago and North Avenue on Wells Street. This was his original plan unless a better opportunity presented itself.

Jalen said goodnight to some of his coworkers that were still around, and he then briskly walked toward the Metra Station on Randolph and Michigan several blocks away from his firm. It was a few minutes after five as people in mass droves exited the Loop, and traffic was at a standstill on most streets. He arrived at Millennium Station at twenty minutes after five, and the train was scheduled to leave the station at 5:27 pm. He lived in the south suburbs, and his stop was the 147th Street stop in Harvey, Illinois where he parked his brand-new white BMW 740i. He then entered the first car and sat in the second row behind the vestibule on the right-hand side of the train. He saw some familiar faces as he placed his earphones on and started listening to one of his rap playlists that he created on Spotify. He subsequently shut his eyes after he placed his monthly Metra pass inside the card holder on the seat in front of him.

Jalen awakened just before his stop as the clock read 6:15 pm, and he remembered that he needed gas before he started his Friday evening. There was a Food4Less grocery store on the corner of Sibley Boulevard and Greenwood Avenue, and he frequently bought his gas there. He pulled up at the first pump and was taken aback when he saw this gorgeous young woman at the pump next to him. He would

see this young lady quite frequently but never had the courage to approach her until now. They usually rode the same train back and forth to work every morning from the 147th Street stop in Harvey, Illinois to downtown Chicago, he sometimes saw her at the grocery store alone, and this time, she was at the gas pump filling up her gas tank. She was five foot six and curvaceous, and she was wearing a halter top that exposed her navel ring and white slacks that hugged her thighs and derriere while gradually flaring out from her knees to her shoes. Her olive brown skin was smooth and shiny, she wore her wavy black hair in a ponytail, and he simply couldn't take his eyes off of her. His car was adjacent to her car as he was almost finished fueling, so he took the opportunity to say something to her.

“Hi, I’m Jalen,” he extended his hand to her by the pump, “and I see you on the Metra from time to time.”

She carefully looked him up and down and looked at his white BMW 740i parked in front of the pump across from her, and she smiled in approval before saying, “I’m Lisa. Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to finally meet you, too. You look beautiful, by the way.”

“Thank you,” she blushed.

“So, I’m just going to ask you point blank. Do you have a man?”

“No, not at the moment.”

“Would you like to go out with me?”

“Sure, what do you have in mind?”

His gas nozzle clicked—indicating that his tank was full. He quickly placed the nozzle back on the pump and said, “How about dinner and drinks tonight?”

“I’d like that. Where do you want to meet?”

“Let’s meet up at Chili’s in Calumet City at nine. Does that work for you?”

“Yes.”

“Can we exchange numbers just in case one of us is running late or something?”

“Okay.”

They programmed their respective numbers in their phones, and Jalen drove off in the direction of his home in South Holland, Illinois,

hardly able to contain his excitement after landing a date with the girl he'd been eyeing for months. He had a little over two hours to kill before his date with Lisa, so he stopped off at a florist to get a bouquet of twelve red roses for her. Once he was done at the florist, he stopped off at Jewel-Osco to buy a bottle of red wine just in case the date went well enough to ask her for a nightcap.

# chapter 2



Jalen went home and took a quick shower before ironing his outfit for the night—a white crew neck shirt and blue denim jeans. The temperature outside was a warm but breezy sixty-five degrees on a Friday night in June, so he grabbed a dark brown blazer from his closet that matched his brown Salvatore Ferragamo Italian loafers and left the house. He lived just west of the I-94 expressway, so he hopped on and exited at the Torrence Avenue exit with Chili’s being only a few blocks away. When he arrived at the restaurant, he circled the lot to see if Lisa’s car was there, but she hadn’t gotten there yet. He then decided to park near the entrance and wait. His clock read 9:04 pm, so he patiently sat in his car while listening to the radio. Lisa came in the lot about five minutes later, and Jalen jumped out of his car holding the bouquet of flowers that he bought for her. She had changed into a black, tight-fitting dress that came just above the knee, and she also had on four-inch heels that made her almost eye-level in height to him as he stood about six foot two.

“Hey, Lisa, these are for you,” Jalen said, handing her the flowers.

“Wow, I love roses,” Lisa said. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, and you look absolutely gorgeous.”

“And you look quite handsome yourself, Jalen.”

She placed the bouquet of roses on her back seat, and Jalen held both the front door and second door of the entrance for her as they stepped inside of the restaurant. The hostess then led them to a booth on the left side of the restaurant by the window.

“Do you come here often?” Jalen asked.

“Yeah, I suppose so,” Lisa answered. “I don’t know if coming here a couple of times a year qualifies as often, though.”

“I guess you’ve been here enough to know the menu somewhat.”



“Yes, I have.”

There was brief silence as they looked over their respective menus, and Lisa tried to break the ice by asking, “What do you do for a living, Jalen?”

“I’m glad you asked,” he answered. “I’m a mechanical engineer at Burns & McDonnell’s. Have you ever heard of it?”

“No, I can’t say that I have. So, what does a mechanical engineer do?”

“We design power-producing machines like electric generators or airplanes, or refrigeration and air-conditioning systems inside office buildings, for example.”

“That’s really impressive, Jalen.”

“Thank you.”

“Where did you go to school?”

“I went to NIU in DeKalb, and I graduated three years ago.”

“How old are you?”

“I’ll be twenty-seven in November. Why?”

“I usually don’t date guys my age, but I’ll make an exception this time because I see that you really have your stuff together.”

“Well, alright then,” he said with confidence. “I’m flattered.”

“And you should be,” she said coyly.

“How old are *you*, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“No, I don’t mind...I’m also twenty-six, but I turn twenty-seven on the twenty-fifth of this month.”

“And I turn twenty-seven on November fifteenth.”

Jalen then smiled and asked, “So, what type of older guys do you usually date?”

“I like ex-basketball players like you.”

“Oh really? And what makes you think that I played ball?”

“It’s the way you walk...ball players have a certain type of swag that I find irresistible, and you’re definitely a ball player.”

“Guilty as charged. I played the point for four years in college.”

“I thought so.”

“You like my swag, huh?”

“Yes, I’ve been checking you out, too.”

He paused briefly before asking, “What do you do at Chase Bank?”

“How did you know that I worked at Chase Bank?” she asked curiously.

“I saw you go inside the branch across the street from the Metra station a few times after we got off the train together, so I assumed that you worked there.”

“Oh, okay. Well, I’m a teller there, and I’ve been with them for five years.”

“That’s great. Maybe you can put in a good word for me when I decide to apply for a loan.”

“Do you bank with Chase?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Why would you want to apply for a loan?”

“I plan on starting my own firm within the next five to seven years once I learn everything that there is to learn from my company.”

“You’re very ambitious, and I love that quality in a man. I’ll definitely put in a good word for you if I’m still there.”

“So, what are some of your goals, Lisa?”

“Well for starters, I want to finish school. I have my associate degree in Arts from South Suburban College, and I just got accepted at Roosevelt. I don’t know where I’m going to get the money to pay for my tuition without going into some serious debt, though.”

“I’m sure you’d qualify for some grants to help you in addition to your student loans.”

“I just started looking into some possible grants, so I hope your right.”

“I can help you with your research if you want.”

“I’d like that very much,” she smiled.

The server asked if they wanted something to drink. Lisa ordered a margarita, and Jalen ordered a sixteen-ounce Bud Light beer. They took a few minutes to decide what to order before the server came back to their table.

“Do you know what you want to order?” the server asked.

“Yes, I’ll have the chicken fajitas,” Lisa answered.

“And you, sir?”

"I'll have a full slab of ribs with the sauce on the side," Jalen answered.

"Okay."

The server left the table and Lisa asked, "You don't like barbeque sauce on your ribs?"

"No, I prefer them without the sauce, but I like a little sauce on my ribs when I dip them," Jalen answered."

"Interesting."

"Did you grow up out here?" he asked, changing the subject.

"Yes, I'm from Hammond, Indiana," she answered. "And you?"

"I grew up in Flossmoor, and I just bought my house in South Holland last year."

"That's great...I have an apartment in Calumet City."

"So, you live near here?"

"Yes, the Sandridge Apartments complex."

Lisa paused before asking, "So, do you have any brothers and sisters?"

"Yes, I'm the youngest of five siblings...two brothers and two sisters."

"I always wished I had siblings."

"An only child, huh?"

"Yep, just me and my mom growing up. Are your parents still together?"

"Yes, they've been married for thirty-five years."

"You seem to have the perfect family, Jalen."

"Nah, we're far from that, I'm afraid. We're a real-life family with real-life issues..."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to imply anything..."

"It's okay...no family is perfect no matter how things may appear on the surface."

"I agree."

"Are your parents together?"

"No, I didn't know my father growing up, and I had spoken to him for the first time in my life just recently."

"Yeah?"

“Um hum. He ran into my mom at the Strack & Van Til grocery store three weeks ago, and he had her call me on her cell phone. I had been so angry at him for the longest time because I felt that he abandoned me and my mom.”

“Why did it take him so long to contact you?”

“Guilt, I suppose. He really didn’t say why he didn’t try to find us and apologized for not being in my life. Maybe he wants to make up for lost time, I guess, but I haven’t agreed to meet with him yet.”

“You haven’t seen him face-to-face?”

“No, we had only spoken on the phone once.”

“I’m so sorry, Lisa.”

“Thank you, but I’m okay.”

The server brought their food, and they ate while continuing to enjoy each other’s company. When they finished eating, Jalen paid the bill, and they stepped outside of the restaurant and continued their conversation.

“I’m not ready for this night to end,” Jalen stated earnestly. “When can we see each other again?”

“I don’t want the night to end just yet, either,” Lisa suggested. “Do you want to come to my place for a nightcap?”

“I would love to, but I have a cold bottle of wine that I bought just in case our date went well in my fridge.”

“I have wine too, and besides, my place is just down the street right off of 159<sup>th</sup> Street.”

“Okay, I’ll follow you.”

# chapter 3



Jalen trailed Lisa to the apartment complex right off 159<sup>th</sup> and Paxton Avenue, and they parked their cars near the front entrance of her place. She grabbed her flowers from the back seat, and they walked about fifty yards to the front door of the apartment before he planted a soft and sensual kiss on her that lasted about a minute.

“Careful, baby,” she said. “If you keep that up, we won’t get a chance to have that nightcap.”

“I’ve been wanting to kiss you for the longest time,” he said.

“Was it as good as you’d hoped it would be?”

“Yes, it most definitely was.”

She turned the key in the door and said, “Make yourself at home while I pour us some wine.”

He sat on her living room sofa and said, “You have a very nice place.”

“Thank you.”

She placed the flowers in a vase with some water, and then she poured two glasses of red wine before coming into the living room and sitting next to him.

“Here,” she said.

“Thanks.”

“So, tell me more about yourself, Jalen.”

“Well, my last name is Townsend. We never told each other our full names.”

“And my last name is Sosa.”

“Are you Puerto Rican?”

“No, my grandparents were from the Dominican Republic, and they moved to Chicago in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Once I was born, my mom moved farther south.”

“Why did your mom move from Humboldt Park?”

“She was offered more money as a nurse at the Franciscan Hospital in Hammond.”

“So, why did you move to Calumet City?”

“I moved over here out of convenience because I didn’t have a car at first, and my previous job was a salesclerk at JC Penney in the River Oaks Mall.”

“I see.”

Lisa sighed and asked, “Where do you see this going, Jalen?”

“What do you mean?”

“I know that we’re getting to know each other, but do you see a future with a girl like me?”

“Absolutely, Lisa. I wouldn’t have stepped to you if I didn’t.”

“I don’t know...you seem like you might be a playa. Why did it take you so long to say something to me besides hello?”

“I’m a little shy, I guess.”

“Um hum. I bet you have all the girls fighting over you.”

“Believe it or not, I don’t get out much other than occasionally hanging out with my friends at a sports bar or going to the gym.”

“Who was your previous girlfriend?”

“Her name was Kenya Terrell, and we were college sweethearts.”

“What happened to her?”

“She died in a car crash on her way back to NIU in the fall of our senior year.”

“I’m so sorry, Jalen...”

“It’s okay. I was completely devastated, and it took me a long time to get over her death. However, I’m in a good place now.”

“And you haven’t been with anyone since then?”

“Just a few dates, but nothing serious. What about you?”

“I was engaged once a few years ago. His name is Corey Smith.”

“Why did you two break up?”

“He played college ball at Purdue, and we broke up once he went overseas to play professionally.”

“You didn’t want to go with him?”

“No, I didn’t want to leave the United States.”

“Do you regret breaking up with him?”

“No, it wasn’t meant to be. He ended up marrying a Spanish girl from Barcelona.”

Lisa paused briefly and asked, “Do you want some more wine?”

“Yes, thank you,” Jalen answered.

She went to the kitchen and filled up both glasses with wine, and she handed him his glass before snuggling up with him. He wrapped his arm around her and kissed her on the cheek before he said, “I’m really enjoying getting to know you, Lisa. I don’t want the night to end.”

“I’m enjoying your company, too, but we’re not having sex tonight.”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to imply anything...”

“I know, but I want to be crystal clear that I’m not that type of girl.”

“Duly noted.”

She took a breath and asked, “What do you have planned for the weekend?”

“Nothing spectacular...I have a ton of laundry to do, and I promised my dad that I’d come to church on Sunday.”

“Church, huh?”

“Yeah,” he sighed, “my dad is a pastor at a church in Hazel Crest.”

“You don’t sound too enthusiastic about it.”

“I’m not, but a promise is a promise.”

“Why did you stop attending church?”

“Let’s just say that the recent events that happened in my life have tested my faith in God.”

“You still believe in God, don’t you?”

“Yes, but I’m having trouble staying focused, I suppose.”

He sighed and asked, “What about you? Do you attend church somewhere?”

“My family is Catholic, but I haven’t been to mass since I’ve been on my own.”

“I’ve been to a few masses, and I fought to stay awake at every single one of them.”

“I hear you...mass can be a bit boring.”

She then put her wine glass down on the table and began kissing him passionately. He placed his glass on the table and put his arms around her waist before she eased her body on top of his. Their kisses became deeper and more sexual, and his nature began to rise. He let go of his embrace after she motioned to get up.”

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

“Nothing, baby,” she said reassuringly. “I was into it, too, but I want to take things slow.”

“Maybe I should go...”

“No, please don’t go. We can snuggle up to each other in my bed.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, and I promise I’ll be worth the wait.”



# chapter 4



Jalen awakened to the smell of bacon, eggs, and pancakes. He had spent the night at Lisa's apartment, and they slept in one another's arms with their undergarments on. He went to her bathroom to empty his bladder, and she had left him a toothbrush and face towel on the sink. He then proceeded to wash his face and brush his teeth before he put his clothes back on. Once he got to the kitchen, Lisa had already prepared his plate.

"Thank you, Lisa, I wasn't expecting breakfast," he said. "You're beginning to make a brother feel special up in here."

"You *are* special, Jalen," she said, "and I want to make sure that my man gets fed."

"Am I your man?"

"Yes, baby, you're my man," she kissed him.

They sat down at her dining room table and began to eat. She cooked enough for three or four people.

"Eat as much as you want," she said.

"Thank you, Lisa. I'm starving."

"You're welcome."

He paused and asked, "What do you have going on this morning?"

"I have no plans. What about you?"

"I'm supposed to meet my brother and some of my friends at the gym around noon. We usually hoop every Saturday."

"Which brother is this?"

"John is my oldest brother, and he's thirty-three. He's a licensed mechanic, and he owns his own auto shop. My other brother's name is Jerome, and he's an artist and musician but not much of a ball player."

"Does he have a band?"

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