

PEACE BY THE RIVERS

Written by

Alia Mariah Watkins

INT. FOSTER HOME - PLAYROOM

SUPER: Eight years earlier

CHAVA RIVERS (14), caramel skin and curly hair, searches in a small area alone. Little girls cavort. A LITTLE GIRL (12), wears an old, dirty princess dress, berates Chava.

LITTLE GIRL

I know what you're looking for, and you'll never find it.

CHAVA

Tell me, please. It's all I have left. Give it to me.

Chava lunges at her. The room falls silent. MS. SABRINA JEAN (42), the hunchback woman with coffee-stained teeth, enters with a switch around her neck.

MS. SABRINA JEAN

What's your issue now? You think you're so sweet and so talented, don't you? You have no clue who you are.

Chava hangs her head down and slumps with defeat. Tears stream down her cheeks. Ms. Sabrina Jean reveals her journal. She twirls it in Chava's face.

CHAVA

With all due respect, I just want my journal to write in. That's it.

Ms. Sabrina Jean keeps the journal behind her back.

MS. SABRINA JEAN

Why bother? No one wants a mixed, curly-headed, Haitian brat, not even your mother. Go back to your people.

Ms. Sabrina Jean pretends to hand the journal to Chava. She snatches it back and rips it into shreds. Chava punches Ms. Sabrina's face.

INT. CHAVA RIVERS' BEDROOM - DAY

The alarm BLARES. CHAVA RIVERS (22), stunning and petite, awakens. She receives a call.

SKYLAR (V.O.)

Good morning, sunshine.

CHAVA

Morning.

SKYLAR (V.O.)

Did you hear from the investors about the foster home, yet?

CHAVA

No, not yet. I'm sick of waiting.

SKYLAR (V.O.)

Everything will work in time. What you want to do for these kids...it's really admirable.

Her eyes roll, and she releases a sharp exhale. She rolls out of bed and enters the bathroom.

CHAVA

Too many children deserve to have The Rivers Home. I have an obligation to protect and help them. Someone has to.

SKYLAR (V.O.)

Look at you! You're Atlanta's hottest consultant, and your dreams are to make everyone else's lives better.

CHAVA

It's never enough. I'm just a nobody from the streets. But, I appreciate that. I miss you. When do you get back from tour?

She huffs and scans her closet for her outfit. She dresses in her silk blouse, pencil skirt, and pumps.

SKYLAR (V.O.)

I got a few months, girl. But, it'll be here before you know it.

CHAVA

Ugh, not soon enough.

EXT. GRACE VINCENT CONSULTING FIRM - PARKING LOT - DAY

Chava exits her jet black Honda Civic and answers a call.

MIKE WINTERS (V.O.)

Good morning, Ms. Rivers. How are you?

CHAVA

Mike, just give it to me straight. I've waited my whole life for this moment.

MIKE WINTERS (V.O.)

Unfortunately, the board decided not to pursue. There was a call advising us about a more pressing matter.

She slams down her phone, and she panics. The phone cuts off then on. She dials AIDEN JOHNSON (24), the 6'5 chocolate adonis.

AIDEN JOHNSON

Babe, is everything alright?

CHAVA

You win, Aiden. I need your help. I can't do this alone.

INT. CHAVA'S HOME - FAMILY ROOM

SUPER:15 years earlier

CHAVA (7), watches her mother, ROSELINE (35), beautiful and shapely, prepare for work. Her family members stare at the television with blank expressions.

CHAVA

Mommy, please don't go. I need you.

ROSELINE

Baby, you know I want nothing but to provide for us.

CHAVA

You're gone all the time. I get scared. Why is no one else working?

ROSELINE

You have no reason to be scared. You're with family.

Chava surveys the room with terror in her eyes. Her cousin, CLOVE RIVERS (12), a beautiful nightmare, enters the room. They lock eyes.

CLOVE

Don't worry, little cousin. I'll always protect you. Bye, Auntie.

Clove smiles. Chava's body shivers. Roseline walks out the door. Clove takes Chava by the hand and leads her down the hallway. They whisper and hiss to one another.

CHAVA

Please, Clove. I don't like this game.

CLOVE

Shut up. You'll do what I say. I'm in charge.

CHAVA

Please, stop. Don't touch me there! I'll tell my mommy...

INT. GRACE VINCENT CONSULTING FIRM - PARKING LOT - DAY

Chava dials Mike Winters.

MIKE WINTERS (V.O.)

Ms. Rivers-

CHAVA

I did everything you asked me to for months! You deny children, who no one wants, the opportunity to have a home?

MIKE WINTERS (V.O.)

No, but a woman called. She had an idea the board couldn't refuse. A rehab center to heal these opioid addicts.

CHAVA

Interesting. So, a random woman calls, and you all drop me like that? Who is she?

MIKE WINTERS (V.O.)

Chava, I...Her name is Clove. That's all I know and can say.

The name stuns her. The sparkle in her eyes dims. Her face reddens.

CHAVA

Corporate leeches! Y'all claim to be heroes, but y'all will look for any opportunity to fill your pockets.

MIKE WINTERS (V.O.)

Excuse me-

CHAVA

You listen to me! I hope y'all take all the pills in those bottles and choke on them. How about that?

Chava hangs up the phone. She struggles to calm her breathing.

INT. GRACE VINCENT CONSULTING FIRM - DAY

Chava shakes it off her emotions. She sashays into the firm where the staff greet her. MRS. GRACE VINCENT (52), the epitome of beauty and elegance, greets her.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT

Chava, good morning. How are you today?

Chava smirks, but she can no longer maintain restraint. Her head and shoulders droop, and her eyes swell with tears.

CHAVA

Ms. Grace, I failed the kids.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT

You could never fail the kids. You're so hard on yourself and quick to get in your feelings-

CHAVA

How many Clove's do you know with an agenda? It was her idea that got her the money from the investors for a rehabilitation center for opioid addicts!

MRS. GRACE VINCENT

I am sorry. Take your losses and make them into gains. I've always told you. Never lose sight of that.

She wipes the tears from Chava's cheek.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT (CONT'D)

I know how much she has hurt you, but you are better than her. You just have to believe it. Be patient.

Mrs. Grace Vincent winks and pulls Chava into a warm embrace. She hands her a folder full of papers.

CHAVA

Gee, thanks. Love you too. I'll get right on it.

INT. GRACE VINCENT CONSULTING FIRM - CHAVA'S OFFICE - DAY

Chava opens her door. Dozens of snow-white roses paint her office. The disappointment fades. She blushes and smiles. She reads the card in the flowers.

CHAVA

"To my one and only Chava, May the beauty that is life continue to reside in your heart and spirit. Aiden"

Chava closes her eyes and holds the card to her heart. She glances up to figure standing in her doorway. Aiden smiles mischievously.

AIDEN JOHNSON

Hey, beautiful. I see you got my flowers.

Chava runs and jumps into his arms. He hugs and tickles her.

CHAVA

Aiden! I can't believe you're here.

AIDEN JOHNSON

Guess what? I have more surprises for you.

CHAVA

Why? What's going on? What did you do?

Aiden guides Chava out of her office.

AIDEN JOHNSON

Well for starters, I finished editing your proposal. You're welcome. I added a few things, but you'll understand.

INT. GRACE VINCENT CONSULTING FIRM - HALLWAY - DAY

Aiden hands Chava the folder.

CHAVA

Would you ever leave me?

AIDEN JOHNSON

What? Of course not. Why would you even ask?

CHAVA

I just don't want to get in your way.

AIDEN JOHNSON

Stop that, please. We'll talk later.

He kisses the bridge of her nose.

INT. CONSULTING FIRM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The firm members stand poised.

CHAVA

Hello everyone, good morning.

Chava smiles. SKYLAR (25), statuesque with long, silky hair, emerges and surprises Chava.

CHAVA (CONT'D)

Skylar, oh my gosh! What are you doing here? You're supposed to be on tour.

SKYLAR

I want nothing more than to support you and all your endeavors. I mean you got me where I am today.

Chava opens the folder. A single note reads, "Be Yourself, tell your story." She smiles and walks to the front of the room.

CHAVA

Today, I would like to tell you a story of a little girl who was so angry and felt abandoned by the world...

INT. CHAVA RIVERS' HOME - EVENING

Aiden and Chava speak with enthusiasm.

AIDEN JOHNSON

They were so impressed with you! There will not only be a location in Atlanta but in New Orleans and Haiti too!

CHAVA

You all mean so much to me, and you all believed in me when I didn't.

AIDEN JOHNSON

It's time to return to your roots, baby. It's time to reconnect with who you are and make a difference for these kids.

Chava glides to her window overlooking the city. She smiles and hugs her body.

INT. CHAVA RIVERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chava stirs in her sleep. She grabs her phone and dials.



CHAVA

Mrs. Grace, they want me to first fly to New Orleans and then to Haiti.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT (V.O.)

I know it's overwhelming that it's happening so fast.

CHAVA

It's not even that. I know it was Clove who called, but she doesn't know exactly where I am. I intend to keep it that way.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT (V.O.)

I can't begin to understand how you feel, but you are a better person now. You have to forgive her for your sake.

CHAVA

I know, but she isn't even the most difficult thing I have to deal with for now at least.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT (V.O.)

Well, what's that honey?

CHAVA

I knew I'd eventually go to Haiti.

MRS. GRACE VINCENT (V.O.)

Right, so what's the problem?

CHAVA

I'm terrified of flying.