

RAYFIELD WALKER

OUT OF THE JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE BOY

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CHAPTER 2

“Ounga, if you don’t stop going onto the back stairs, you’ll keep falling down the concrete step stairs. See how your head is swollen? If you keep hitting your head, it’s going to burst, and no one has the time right now to take no hard-eared child to the hospital,” said Aunt Kimberly.

“Boy, if you don’t stop touching that electrical wire, it’ll shock you,” said my grandmother.

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“What you crying for, Ounga? I told you that what you don’t hear, you’ll feel,” said Uncle Carlos.

My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and neighbors all continued to tell me how much of a bad and destructive baby I was. My parents told me no one could leave anything around because it all went right into my mouth. My grandparents said I was rushed to the hospital several times because I had been chewin’ on Krazy Glue tubes, and got my tongue pasted to the top of my mouth. When relatives visited us during the Christmas season, my grandmother was always happy to tell everyone about my misadventures.

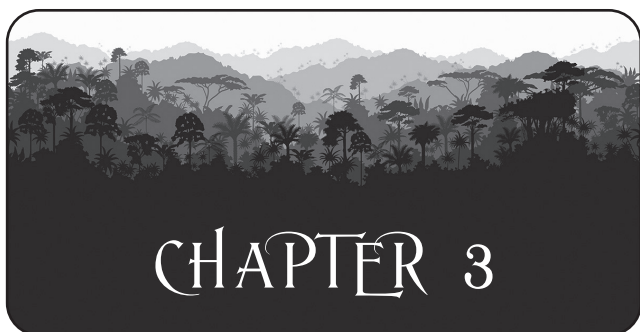
“It was last Christmas, and I had just come home with Ounga. Kimberly, Carlos, and Bryan were out shopping for Christmas decorations in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana. Now, I’m in the kitchen baking chicken and making pepper pot, so I set him down in the living room because I didn’t want him getting himself burned in the kitchen. Then, as I’m cooking, there’s an explosion followed by a scream. Right away, I drop everything and run to see what happened.

“There, laughing under the dining table, was Ounga. Just to make sure everything was okay, I turned him over and give him a quick check. His finger was grayish, smelling like smoke, and he kept pointing towards the electrical outlet behind the television.”



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CHAPTER 3

I tried to think: why do people have their names, why? Why I was named Rayfield Walker after my father, who was named after his father? My grandmother said my Mother was really in love with the man. That's why.

My father wanted me to move in with him and his family the second weekend my mother brought me to visit. I wasn't aware until she told me I wouldn't be coming home, and then she left. Every day, while I experienced abuse, I knew my mother could have eliminated my pain, but my parents had something else planned. I believed they didn't want me. And the fact that I was alive meant they enjoyed seeing me suffer. I still loved them, but I hated their presence; it demolished my own joy.

One afternoon, Kate had cooked green peas, mashed potatoes, and stewed chicken with corn for dinner. As soon as I walked into the house, I went into the bathroom

to take off my uniform and put on my house clothes, before taking a seat at the dining table. I ate everything on my plate except the green peas. I told Kate I didn't like the way they tasted and then threw the peas away.

"You have to eat everything on your plate," said Emma.

"I don't like the way it tastes," I said.

"All right."

It wasn't long before my father walked through the door and said, "Where's my kids?"

"Daddy, Daddy," screamed Emma, as she and Erica ran into his arms.

"How was school today?"

"Good! We don't have any homework," said Emma.

"All right, So can we watch The Lion King?"

"No, can we watch Cinderella?"

"Yeah."

"Oh yeah! Daddy, Junior did not eat all of his food. He threw away the peas."

"Where is he?" my father demanded.

"At the table, sitting down."

"He better eat everything on that plate, or else I'll beat him like a snake," my father said, raising his voice.

"He already threw it in the bin," said Emma.

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Chapter 4

After meeting my father for the first time and then spending two days and one night in his house, I grew to fear him more than anything else that had ever scared me. Daddy made me believe it was my fault, that he had a reason to punch, kick, and slap me, when I started peeing in the bed from the nightmares I had of him beating me. Sometimes it was just a dream, but other times I was beaten out my sleep; accused for something I hadn't done but was being blamed for anyway. Instead of Supply being my home, it became the place I visited on the weekend. Every Friday, my mother came to Agricola after work and took me home. Bright and early Monday morning, she dropped me back so I would be able to travel with Erica's father.

During the second time my mother returned me to my father's house, when my mother and I were walking down the street back to his house, I told her I

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didn't want to go back to Daddy's because he beat me bad. I told her he locked me in the cupboard and the drum. She told me not to worry, that she would talk to him, but I continued telling her I didn't want to go.

Her exact words were, "Stop behaving like an idiot."

I cried and wiped my eyes before we reached his doorstep. I told her not to say anything because he would beat me for it. When we arrived, Kate was in the kitchen preparing lunch for the girls while they were in the backyard bathing. She said Daddy was supposed to be on his way back from the store with tenniss roll, a delicious Guyanese bread roll.

While I was in the bedroom unpacking my clothes, I heard my mother telling my father that I was crying to go back to Supply and that I hadn't wanted to come back. Immediately after hearing those words, I became sleepy, and my hands, feet, and face went numb.

A moment later, she said goodbye to everyone, and came by the bedroom door and told me, "Don't cry next weekend and you will get to go back." Then, she took off.

I looked at him, and he wanted to kill me. He sent Emma in the room for his leather belt, while he called for me from where he was standing. The hair on my skin stood up, my heart beats rapidly, my eyes couldn't focus on what he was saying, and I felt sleepy.