



BECOMING US

A Story By

BAAWA ACQUAH

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A SHORT STORY BY

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“I am so sorry.” she apologised. And started helping the other person gather up their belongings. As the person moved his left hand, she noticed the tattoo which made her lift her head and come face-to-face with her high school sweetheart, Jeff Porter.

“Oh my God! Laura!” he exclaimed. “What are the odds of bumping into you here?”

“Next to none.”

Acknowledgements

I want to thank God for just being who He is.

I am also thankful to all my readers. I appreciate you so much. I pray I give you the emotional experience you expected.

*I dedicate this to all my blog readers and my mom. I hope to make you all proud to
have been with me from day one.*

It was an usually hot Saturday afternoon. And all Laura wanted was to get home and have a really cold shower. But she still had some more shopping to do and not a lot of time to do it. She turned a corner and bumped into someone making a mess of her things and the other person's things.

"I am so sorry." she apologised. And started helping the other person gather up their belongings. As the person moved his left hand, she noticed the tattoo which made her lift her head and come face-to-face with her high school sweetheart, Jeff Porter.

"Oh my God! Laura!" he exclaimed. "What are the odds of bumping into you here?"

"Next to none."

They finished gathering the rest of their shopping and proceeded to catch up.

"I can't believe I am seeing you here-," her phone rung interrupting him.

She apologised and answered, "Hello mom, you won't believe who I just met. Anyway, I will be home soon and how is Avery doing?"

They spoke for a few minutes and the call ended.

"Avery's my daughter. She is teething and has been unwell all through last night and this morning."

“Congrats. So, you’re married now huh”

With a shake of the head, “No, I am not. Single mom by choice.”

“Laura Anderson, a single mom. Who would’ve thought?”

“Life happens, you know?” she shrugged.

They visited for some minutes and exchanged contacts and then went their way.

He couldn’t believe that after a decade she still had a hold on him. She looked even better than when she was a teen. He always had a special place in his heart for that girl who pushed him and encouraged him to do better at all times. Laura made him chase after his dreams of pro ball even when he thought he wasn’t good enough. He could still remember the times she coached him. They had worked out together. She wasn’t a cheerleader for their school team and it wasn’t mandatory for her to show up at the games but she did. She was always his biggest cheerleader. She was his biggest encourager and critic. No one knew him and understood him as much as Laura did. Theirs was a beautiful friendship that blossomed into one of the greatest love stories that lived in Rockberry High, their high school. It was going so great until the fame of being a football star had gone to him so much that he started ignoring her. He lied to her so many times. And the worst thing he ever did was step out on her with one of her closest friends

when she wasn't putting out for him. She had forgiven him for all the lies and missed appointments but what shattered her was the cheating. She walked out of his life and he'd never seen her since. They had been in school together but she was super smart and intelligent. She took all sorts of classes and participated in all sorts of programs that made sure they ran in completely different circles. He caught a glimpse of her here and there but he'd never gotten the chance to speak to her or hold her. She'd been the one who'd gotten away. He wasn't hurt about losing her in the early years because there had always been a super beautiful woman ready to jump into her spot and be his woman. Years down the line, he'd searched for her in every woman. He'd looked for her everywhere when the high of being a pro athlete wore off and he was drowning in the day-to-day. He'd searched for her everywhere but found nothing. Right after high school graduation, she'd left their hometown and has never been back there. She lost touch with all their mutual friends and those that knew where she was, iced him out. But ironically, when he stopped searching here, she was.

With a shake of the head, he strolled off towards his car.

On the drive home, she couldn't believe she'd seen Jeff. It's been a little more than a decade since she saw him. She had loved him dearly. She sacrificed so much to be with him and to help him achieve his dreams. She thought they'd be together for forever. That was a childish notion but she

thought there was hope. Then he went on and ruined it by being a cliché. She couldn't forget the day she'd tried to surprise him and got the surprise instead. It was a hot sunny day much like that very day and she figured she'd drop by and convince him to for a picnic near the lake. They could swim to cool themselves. He'd been so busy with practice and she thought it'd help him relax a bit. He seemed kind of tense each time they spoke. So, she borrowed her mom's car and packed some food in the cooler and then off she went to Jeff's house. She got there much more quickly than was normal but I guess the weather left people stuck in their homes where the air was cool or at the community pool or the lake. Either way, traffic was light. She saw his car in the driveway so she knew he was definitely home. And knowing him, the backdoor would be open so, she decided to sneak in using that entrance and scare him silly like they normally do to each other. So, she moved her car to the house next door and went around the back. It was open as expected and she stealthily walked in. usually, he'd be stuck in front of the tv in the living room playing his games but downstairs was missing his usual foul language when he was playing. He'd be probably be knocked out by now which would make her plan much more interesting. She'd been to his so many times she knew which part of the stairs to avoid the creaking noises. As she neared the top of the sounds, she could hear noises of his creaking bed. And a very familiar voice.

She shook her head that it wasn't possible. Her friend Judith was probably stuck in her parent's diner working her butt off in this heat. She followed the sounds and her eyes may be deceiving her but there was said Judith riding her boyfriend, Jeff like a damn mechanical bull.

"OH MY GOD!!" someone screamed stopping the couple's antics.

"Laura" Jeff gasped trying to push Judith off him making her realise that the scream came from her.

She couldn't believe how cliché everything seemed. She wanted to surprise him and he did her one better. She ran out of there as if the devil was at her heels. She got into the car and that was when she felt that her face was wet with tears. She saw him coming and she zoomed off.

She called out to her mom as she went into the house with her shopping bags.

"Who died?" her mom asked

"No one" she answered

"Then why are you making all that noise? My grandbaby is sleeping"

"Oh, sorry"

"Did you get everything?"

“Nope. I got distracted”

“By what? Or is the better question by who?”

“I bumped into Jeff today”

“Jeff? Which Jeff?”

“Porter”

“Oh God no.”

Ever since that incident with Jeff, her mom had disliked him with a passion. Her mom, Karen didn't initially like Jeff for her daughter because she said he came off as a player but he, however, won her over with his sweet gentleman side. He didn't just break Laura's heart; her mothers' heart was shattered in the process. Laura and her mom had always had a fantastic relationship but they got closer when her dad died after she graduated high school. Karen couldn't bear to be in the place she had loved and started a family with her beloved husband, Robert and following her daughter's break up, they moved out of the town they had lived all their lives.

“So, what did he want? And how did you guys meet? It's been over 10 years, right?” Karen asked

“He didn't want anything. It was a chance meeting.”

“So, are you gonna see him again?”

“No, not really. We exchanged numbers, though. He probably won’t call.”

“That is probably for the best, baby girl. You have so much going on now and don’t forget Avery. She already has a sorry excuse of a man for a father. She doesn’t need another.”

“You’re probably right” Laura sighed.

“I am right. Not probably” Karen chuckled patting her daughter as she left the room.

Laura was lost in her thoughts for a while when her phone chimed pulling her back into reality.

“It was nice seeing you today. -Jeff”

“Same here” she replied.

Across town, Jeff was laying up in his couch wondering what good he’d done lately to be blessed with a chance meeting of the one woman he knew he needed. He knew that if he was ever going to get her back, then he needed to come correct and that meant ensuring that his life was free from all the womanising shenanigans and luckily for him, he left that life a while back. If Laura was ever going to be his woman again, he needed Ms Karen on her side and he knew that was the hard part. He had absolutely no idea on how to get on her good side but he knew that a sincere apology for hurting her daughter would be a great start.

So, the next morning he set off to meet with her at her house. Getting the address had not been an easy feat. It took him begging and pleading one of their old school friends, Lily and bribing her of course. He knew he'd regret promising to do anything she wanted no questions asked when the time came. But he had Laura's address and according to Lily's information, Laura would be at work now leaving him to talk with miss Karen alone for a while. An hour and a half later, he was parked at the house which must belong to Laura because it was giving off her vibes. It was a two-storey house with a nicely mowed lawn with beautiful flowers lining the sides of the walkway. It had a porch with a swing and a rocking chair. There were a few other 'normal' seats available. He liked the house. It was pretty and had a home vibe.

He had been parked outside for the house for a good thirty minutes. She had already been informed of his arrival. She'd been waiting for him. She heard him pull up to the house and waited for the doorbell to chime after a few minutes but she heard nothing. It prompted her to check out what was going on and she saw him hunched over the steering wheel. She let him be for a while after all meeting the woman whose daughter you hurt badly was a daunting task for any man even a pro-athlete. After ten minutes, she got sick and tired of waiting for him to man up and come and so she did the

logical thing. She walked out of the house and knocked on his window.

That startled him and made her chuckle.

“Come in” she instructed and then she strolled back to the house.

It was time and he prayed to God that everything works out. He barely knew what he was going to say to get back in her good graces.

“Lord, please don’t let me put my foot in my mouth” he prayed.

He followed her into the house and stood awkwardly at the entrance of the kitchen. He looked around the kitchen. It had a modern feel to it. He liked it very much.

“Coffee or tea?” she asked interrupting his thoughts

“Water. If that’s okay with you.”

"That's fine by me," she said moving to grab him a bottle of water from the fridge.

“Let’s move this to the living room. It’s closer to where my granddaughter is”

“Yes, ma’am” he responded eliciting a light chuckle from her.

“Have a seat”

“Thank you”

He sat down looking at her. There were tell-tale signs of her ageing over the years. But she still looked beautiful. Matter-of-fact, she looked like the older version of Laura and he was not mad at all.

“Well, would you say what brought you here or you’re just going to keep staring?”

That quickly brought him back to the situation at hand.

Clearing his throat, “Mrs Anderson, I am here to apologise for my appalling behaviour many years ago. I-”

“I’m going to stop you right there, mister. Are you sorry you got caught or you deeply regret your actions? Because from where I’m sitting, if my baby hadn’t walked in on you two, you would’ve kept it from her.”

He shifted uncomfortably; this woman was just going for the kill.

"Both, ma'am," he said with his head bowed in shame

“I like your honesty. I appreciate it. Thank you”

Her response surprised him greatly.

"Stop all that grinning," she said making him aware that he was indeed smiling.

“Sorry, ma’am” she responded with a nod

“Go on with your apology”

"As I was saying, I am deeply sorry for my actions. I regret it terribly. Not just because I got caught but because what I did was wrong. Laura didn't deserve that. No one deserves to be cheated on. I was young and immature. I let other people's voices in my head and I emulated their bad habits. My mom taught me better than that and I know that she was greatly disappointed in me when the truth came to light. This is in no way excusing my behaviour."

She sat there stunned for a minute before Avery's cries rang out in the house signalling that she had woken up from her nap.

"I'll be right back," she said. The moment where she picked her up could be assumed considering how the loud cries toned down.

He'd gotten the chance to really look around the room which had pictures of the occupants all over. The baby was beautiful. She looked so much like her mother did. His heart ached a little because if he hadn't been a jerk and cheated on her, this baby would be theirs. Irrespective of who her biological dad was, he vowed in his heart to love and cherish her as his own if he is ever given the chance to be in Laura's life again.

A few moments later, he heard footsteps descending the staircase. He couldn't wait to meet the baby. He could hear her sniffles as they drew nearer.

"Hi, you must be little miss Avery," he said startling Karen because she had momentarily forgotten he was around.

"Sorry, Mrs Anderson. I didn't mean to startle you"

"It's alright, dear," she said with a smile.

Did she just call me dear? Avery should've been here from the beginning. Her countenance is so friendly now and the vibe here is relaxed and calming.

She moved to place her in her playpen off the side of the living room so she could prepare something for her to eat.

"Please keep an eye on her for me. I will be right back" she said to him

"Hey grandma's baby, I'll be right back with the yummy for your tummy" she cooed.

He waited for her to disappear completely before he moved towards her.

"Hello, Miss Avery," he said causing her to lift her eyes from the screen that she was watching.

"I'm mommy's old friend, Jeff" at the mention of mommy, she stretched out her hands indicating that she wanted to be carried by him nonetheless.

He was so afraid because he didn't know whether that was the right move but seeing her lips quiver and her eyes watering made him throw caution to the wind by carrying her out of the pen. She laid her head on his chest and

that made his heart flutter a little bit. He felt all warm inside. He loved the feeling of holding her in his arms. It felt right and it seemed that she loved it too.

“What is going on here?” Karen questioned as she came into the living room with Avery’s food.

“Mrs Anderson, I just wanted to introduce myself and she indicated that I carry her?”

“She did what?” she asked a little too loudly startling Avery.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know if it was-”

"Boy, hush. She doesn't like being held by strangers and even her father which is understandable if I might add. Maybe she gets a good feeling about you" she stated as she attempted to take him from her so she can feed her. Little Miss Avery moved away from her a bit signalling that she wanted to stay right where she was.

"I guess you have to feed her now," she said with a light laugh

He panicked. He had zero experiences with babies.

“I’ll teach you. Your expression told me what I needed to know. You don’t know anything about babies” she laughed

They settled down and after a few tries, Jeff got the hang on feeding Avery. It was as if she sensed he was new to being close to babies because she jerked him around for a while before she ate all her food. After being burped, she got comfy in his arms and then her eyes became droopy from the meds she took after her meal.

He held her so carefully and she could see how much love he seemed to have for the baby. She didn't know what to think of this whole situation. She knew why he'd come, Betsy, Lily's mom had informed her. Her daughter thought it was that she was given a heads up which she appreciated. He seemed to be so in awe of Avery and that left her feeling good inside. He was currently trying to rock her to sleep and she found the scene rather beautiful.

"I think she is finally asleep now. Where can I lay her down?" he asked jarring her from her thoughts.

"Follow me" she led him upstairs where he saw three doors in the little hallway. The middle door was slightly open and without really entering, he knew that was Avery's room. They entered the room and he gently laid her in her crib while she turned on the baby monitor. Avery stirred a little that made him panic a little but all was calm when it seemed she was still very much asleep. The tiptoed out of the room nevertheless.

When they settled down once again, she said, "I heard all you said and frankly I see how much you have changed by the way you speak. But I have learnt that words aren't enough. You need to walk the talk. I know you want my daughter back in your life and that is why you are here. I know who you used to be and you don't talk like him anymore. I will give you the chance to show me and us that you have changed because I can't ignore the sudden attachment Avery formed with you today. I was going to send you on your way without a second chance but your interactions with her have changed my mind. Listen carefully Jeff Porter, you have just this one shot. Use it wisely. I won't let my daughter be hurt again. She's been through enough and my granddaughter doesn't need to get hurt either."

"Thank you so much, Mrs Anderson. I will not make you regret this decision."

"You better not" she stated emphatically.

"I won't" he assured her and then bid her goodbye. It was now time for him to work on how to get Laura back. One thing he knew was that if he let his honesty and sincerity shined through it would always work out. That's what his mother taught him and now he can see that she has always been right.

"Boy, would she have a field day if she knew that I was saying she was right."

He chuckled and drove off.

When Laura got home later that day, her mom spoke to her about Jeff stopping by and the conversation she had with him. And most importantly the reaction Avery had when she met him. Laura was happy to know that Jeff had come to see her mom to make things right. Avery's reaction, however, surprised her a lot. It was unlike her. Even the few occasions her dad, Morris Blankson, had come to see her were disastrous. She just started screaming like a banshee. That was one of the main reasons he stayed away. *"Who am I kidding? He stays away because he's a deadbeat and for some reason, his flesh and blood knows that."*

Two days after, a package was delivered to Laura. It contained her favourite chocolates, a teddy bear for Avery and a note that read, "Would you have dinner with me?"

"So, would you?" he repeated at the entrance of her office startling her a little because she knew everyone had left for lunch.

"Oh my gosh! Jeff, you scared me!"

"Sorry but you didn't give me an answer though"

"Yes, I'll have dinner with you. When?"

"Tonight"

"Tonight?! That's too soon."

“Why?”

“I need to give my mom a heads up”

“I’ll take care of that”

“Well, okay then. We’re having dinner tonight.”

"Great! Be ready by 7 pm" he said with a wave and he was gone as quickly as he came.

When he left, she placed a phone call to her mom.

“Hey, mom”

“Hey, baby. What’s wrong?”

“Oh, nothing. I just want to check in and also let you know that JEFFASKEDMEONADATEANDISAIIDYES” she spoke quickly

“Laura Marie Anderson, what on earth did you say? I didn’t catch a thing.”

She sighed, “I said that Jeff asked me on a date and I accepted”

“That’s alright, baby. He already asked me if he could and I said yes”, she laughed

“Really?! That’s great, mom! Thank you. How’s my baby doing?”

“You mean my baby? She’s fine. She’s over here playing with some toys

Jeff brought over for her”

“Mama, she’s my baby” Laura groaned and her mom laughed.

“That’s all you heard?” , her mom asked.

“Yes, Mom. What else did you say?”

“I said that Jeff brought Avery some toys that she is currently playing with”

“Really? That’s great, right?”

“Yeah because they spent some time together before he left to come and speak with you. She likes him a lot”

“I love that”

“So, this date? Where is it taking place and what are you wearing?” her mom asked

“I don’t have an answer to any of the questions you just asked mom” Laura groaned

“Good. I can help you with the last bit. Jeff bought you a dress”

“He did what?!”

"Stop with all that yelling. I'm old but not deaf, Laura"

“I’m sorry, mom. But you were saying?”

“you heard me. Don’t let me repeat myself. Your entire outfit for the date is here and ready. You just need to put it on”

"He took care of everything. And how did he know my size?"

"Because he asked me and I told him. Sue me"

"Okay, mom. Calm down. Kiss my baby for me and bye" she laughed and hang up.

Jeff came over a little earlier than expected so he could spend some time with Avery as Laura got ready for the date. He knew she was going to love the outfit he picked for her. The dress was her favourite colour. He was coming back to the living room with Avery after getting her some water to drink when he saw Laura descending the stairs. She looked divine in the midnight blue off-shoulder knee-length dress. With every step, the slit in front of the dress exposed a bit of her leg and that drew his attention to the shoes she had on. She was wearing red heels and red was his favourite colour. And he loved what she did with her hair. She let her curls loose. He loved how they framed her face so perfectly. Her makeup looked very simple and natural and the red lips were calling out to him.

"You're going to drool all over yourself," her mom said alerting him that his mouth was wide open.

"Ah, sorry" he cleared his throat

"Laura, you look beautiful"

"Thank you, I feel it too. And you're one to talk"

“No, I am going to be the luckiest man in the restaurant tonight. I am with the most beautiful woman in the world” he said which made her smile.

"Thank you and I am the luckiest woman to be with such a sweet man. I'm going to be envied at the restaurant"

“No, I-”

“Hush, both of you. Just get going already” her mom said with an eye-roll as she took her granddaughter from Jeff

“Bye, mommy’s baby. I’ll be back soon, okay”

“Bye, princess. Bye, Mrs Anderson”

"Avery, say bye mommy, bye Uncle Jeff," Mrs Anderson said waving Avery’s hand.

“See you later, mom”

They arrived at the restaurant, *A Taste of Heaven*.

"Wow, I have heard so much about this place. I have never been though."

“Good because that makes two of us. Let’s go”

He got down and helped her out of the car while the valet parked the car.

The approached the maître d, “Good evening, reservation for Porter, please” he said

“Good evening, Mr and Mrs Porter, welcome to *A Taste of Heaven*. Your table for two is ready. If you would please follow the gentleman next to me, he will take you to your table.”

“Thank you”

They got seated at their table. And their waiter came over.

"Good evening and welcome to A Taste of Heaven. I will be your waiter for the evening. My name is Josh and this is the menu"

"Thank you, Josh. I am Jeff and my lovely date here is Laura. We have never been here before so what do you recommend."

“That’s lovely. Tonight, be prepared to be wowed. You will be having the Chef’s Treatment”

"Oh, I have heard all about it," Laura said excitedly

“What is that?” Jeff asked

“Everything will be specifically chosen by the chef based on the clothes we have on. He uses that as a personality test to curate a special dining experience for the patrons.” Laura explained

“That sounds intriguing. I think it’s safe to say that is what we want, right Laura?”

“Yes, we’ll be having the Chef’s Treatment”

“Okay, then. I’ll be right back” and they nodded

“Laura, I asked you out today to apologise for what I did to you. I know you've probably heard from your mother but I need you to hear it from me"

“No, Jeff, you don’t have to. It was years ago and I made peace with it.”

“I know but I haven’t because you didn’t deserve that, Laura. You were so good to me and I treated you so poorly. I did the most cliché thing ever.”

She laughed, “Very cliché but if it’s going to make you feel better then apologise. I’m all ears”

“I’m so sorry, Laura. You were the best partner for me and I hurt you because I was stupid. I learnt myself be carried away by all the female attention I was getting when I should have kept my eyes on you, my blessing. I messed up so badly and lost a diamond and a pearl such as yourself. I want to spend the rest of my life proving to you that I am not the same immature man from many years ago that is if you would have me again.”

"Wow, thank you so much. But I have a daughter, Jeff."

“She’ll be ours. We’re already developing a bond and as time goes on it will be stronger.”

“I can see that. I have been fooled by words before and so please understand if I’m being so hesitant”

“I understand. You have every right to do this but just know that I plan to make my actions match my words. Believe in me one last time, Laura and give me one last shot to get my family back. Because you guys are my family.”

“Wow, I didn’t know you felt that way. Alright, let’s try again” she said amongst some sniffles.

“Thank you, baby. Don’t cry. I promise this time will be better.”

“I can tell. You even sound different.”

They enjoyed their great meal. Jeff even left a huge tip for their waiter.

Several months passed and everything between them was just peachy. They were having the best time of their lives. They hung out a lot as a family.

On this particular outing, Karen insisted that the couple go by themselves and leave Avery in her very capable hands. She said she missed hanging out with her and they obliged. They went mini-golfing. The date was going great until Avery's dad showed up and caused a great scene that got them thrown out of the establishment.

“I’m sorry, baby” he apologised when they got into the car.

“No, that wasn’t your fault. It was his fault. You were just defending me like any normal man would do when his partner is being disrespected. Something he knows nothing about.”

"But still, our date got ruined. You told me that he was a jerk but I underestimated how big of a jerk he is"

"Let's not stress out about him. We can go home if you want or we can go bowling. What do you say?"

"I say, let me do one better. I know the perfect place"

He drove them to this huge traditional mansion on the outskirts of the city. It took them two hours to get there.

"Whose house is this? This place is nice," she asked as she got out of the car.

"It's ours."

"Ours?" she turned to find him on one knee with an open ring box

"Oh my gosh! This is not happening!"

"This is happening, babe." He smirked

"Laura Marie Anderson, I've loved you my entire life. My life has been so empty ever since we went our separate ways many years ago. I bless the day I bumped into you at the shopping centre because that day led us here. The journey to becoming us has not been easy but everything has been worth it because I have gained a family out of it all. Would you please do me the honour of being my wife and partner throughout the changing scenes of life?"

I want to be a husband to you, a father to Avery and the best son-in-law to your mother."

"Yes!!" he quickly put the ring on her and they embraced.

"What do you mean the best son-in-law? I'm an only child."

"Laura, that's not the point." He laughed.

They toured the house for a little bit and they drove off to go and tell the rest of their family the good news.

THE END