

The Room That Waited

The door wasn't there yesterday. I know it. The hallway in my old house in Jamaica always ended in a blank wall, chipped paint, and a crack winding like a river. But now, there was a wooden door sitting in the shadows. The handle looked untouched, dusty, almost ghostly. I stood staring for way too long before I finally reached out and opened it. Inside, the air felt thick dusty, heavy. The floor groaned under my feet. No one came here. It was forgotten, breathing in silence, holding itself back. There was a desk, a single chair, and on the desk sat a battered diary. My name was scrawled inside not just my usual name, but my full family name, the one no outsider would know. My hands shook as I flipped the pages. Some entries were dated years before I was even born. They talked about land, money, warnings. Over and over, the same phrases: "Not ready." "Not yet." "Must stay hidden." Then a map slid out, just pencil lines, showing a path behind the mango trees and leading to the back of the house. I didn't think. I ran. The yard looked just as I'd always remembered: cracked fence, burn of the hot air, sweaty palms. But behind the mango trees, where the grass grew wild, I found it. A trapdoor, swallowed by weeds, nearly invisible. My heart hammered as I yanked it open and peered down at crooked steps plunging into the dark. I followed. The basement was bigger than I'd imagined, cool and hushed in a way that felt off. Boxes were piled up against the walls, old, heavy. I pried one open stacks of money, more than I'd ever seen. Another box held gold jewelry, glinting quietly in the shadows. This wasn't just a hiding place; it felt protected. Then a floorboard behind me squeaked. I froze. "You weren't supposed to find this." Her voice was calm way too calm. I turned and saw Grandma Yvonne standing at the foot of the stairs, hand steady against the wall, like she'd walked this space a thousand times. "You read it," she said, her eyes on the diary in my grasp. I just stared. She came closer. "That room wasn't meant for you. Not yet." "You knew?" My voice cracked. She nodded. "It wasn't hidden from everyone. Only from those who would come too soon." Silence flooded the space between us. She looked me straight in the eye, holding onto secrets. "Now you've seen it," she murmured. "And that changes everything." The air felt loaded. The dark wasn't empty anymore. I understood the room wasn't waiting for me. It was keeping me away.

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