

Chapter 8

My plan to meet Fresh was in full swing. The Red Parrot was a huge, trendy nightclub in Manhattan between 11th and 12th Avenues on 57th Street where big-name artists such as Madonna performed.

A neon parrot, ten or eleven feet high, stood in the entrance hall. Real live red tropical parrots lounged the night away in soundproof glass cages; when partygoers tapped on the glass, the birds couldn't hear anything outside that glass, it seemed.

There were three bars. The main bar, closest to the dance floor, had five to seven bartenders working at the same time. The passageway leading to the dance floor was fenced in with chrome wire.

I frequently patronized the Parrot, so I knew my way all around that joint. What's more, I'd had the pleasure of performing live on the Parrot's rotating see-through glass stage months before Fresh's performance.

I was one of three backup so-called models for Milk and Gizmo, a local rap group collectively known as the Audio Two. Most hip-hop heads knew them for their hit single *Top Billin*, off their 1990 *What More Can I Say* album.

The Audio Two and their manager-dad spotted me and the other two models, Purple and Peggy, at a beauty pageant rehearsal held at a downtown Manhattan club.

Milk and Giz had a few shows lined up and were at the pageant rehearsal scouting out a couple of cute girls to prance around them on stages around town to help promote their first 12-inch single, *A Christmas Rhyme*.

Their dad noticed Purple and Peggy and instantly recruited them. Purple, 20 years old then, was a striking Puerto Rican with long, black silky hair. She resembled the recording artist Vanity or some even said she looked like Halle Berry.

Peggy, a sensual, dark-skinned sister who sported a long, lustrous weave, later went on to become a video vixen, as well as a background singer for Diana Ross. She was about 21 years old, then.

Nat Robinson, the Audio Two's manager-dad, was especially smitten with Peggy. He was so busy drooling over her, he didn't even notice me, a 23-year-old who could pass for 17. Fortunately for me, 18-year-old Giz noticed me.

Although the gig at the Parrot was our second or third performance with Audio Two, it was the first big show, a show with major artists on the bill, and Purple, Peggy, and I would be on the same bill, performing to a packed house. I was mad hyped!

I wore the same outfit I always wore—a leopard dress clinging to the contours of my petite, shapely body. There was a split up one of the sides and the dress fell right below my knees. Purple and Peggy wore formfitting outfits, too.

Scheduled to perform that night were the female group 9.9, famous for their 1985 hit *All of Me for All of You*. There was also Val Young, famous for looking like a black Marilyn Monroe, and for her 1985 album, *Seduction*, which was produced by Rick James. To top it all off, Rick James showed up to support her.

"Can I take a picture with you?" I asked Rick as he and an older woman sat on the staircase

leading to the dressing rooms.

“No,” he said. “I’m trying to spend time with my mother right now.”

Oh, please! Spare me the baloney! I thought, rolling my eyes as I walked away. Fifteen minutes later, I spotted him taking a picture with Peggy. Oh, snap! Not only did he take a picture with her, but he also seemed to drool all over her the same way Nat Robinson did.

Later that night, Peggy told me that not only Rick but also comedian Eddie Murphy had tried to get the hook-up and had given her their phone numbers. Guess I didn’t have the right look.

Also scheduled to perform that night were rap stars Salt-N-Pepa. They were promoting their first single, *The Show Stoppa*, a response or dis track to Doug E. Fresh’s hit single *The Show*.

As is normal in the music biz, we arrived at the Parrot a few hours before showtime for sound check. Salt-N-Pepa showed up, too. They weren’t there long before a big, black grisly-looking man went ham on them.

“Get out of here!” Grisly Man yelled.

“Come on, Sandy,” Salt said while walking toward the exit. “Let’s just go.”

“Nah, this shit ain’t right,” Pepa said, nearly in tears, while trying to stand her ground. “He can’t do us like this. Fuck that!”

Pepa refused to leave and continued to yell back at the big, beefy man. A puny dude I’d invited to be my guest claimed he knew Pepa personally, so he walked over to her.

“You need some help?” he asked.

“Nah, I’m all right,” Pepa said.

“Get the fuck out of here!” yelled the grisly man again, walking fast toward Pepa.

I was scared for her. Grisly Man looked as if he was literally going to pick her up and throw her out of the club.

“This shit ain’t right!” Pepa yelled and cried as she reluctantly stormed out of the club in a fit of rage moments before Grisly Man could reach her.

Showtime!

The Audio Two were the opening act, and Purple, Peggy, and I joined them on stage. We had no routine rehearsed, so the three of us sashayed around Giz and Milk as if we were high fashion models.

“They ain’t nobody,” I overheard a couple of haters in the audience yell out as they watched us strut our stuff.

“Coming to the stage next is Super Nature!” the emcee announced.

Loud cheering erupted from the audience but then lo and behold, two scared-looking tackheads pretending to be Salt-N-Pepa (aka Super Nature) stepped on stage right behind the microphones. Of course, I wasn’t surprised to see a fake Salt-N-Pepa, not after witnessing the way Grisly Man handled the real Salt-N-Pepa during sound check.

The cheering instantly stopped. “Who the hell are they?” partygoers demanded to know.

When the fake Salt-N-Pepa opened their mouths to lip sync *The Show Stoppa*, all I heard was “Boooooo! Get your raggedy asses off the stage! Boooooooooooooooooo!” And I ain’t ashamed to admit I was one of the boosers.

After all, the real Salt-N-Pepa were my favorite female rappers, and there was no way I was going to stand there and let those two tackheads—bless their young hearts—pretend to be Sandra Denton and Cheryl James. No, siree! Those two young girls didn’t stand a chance at replacing the real Salt-N-Pepa.

What Grisly Man failed to comprehend was that Cheryl and Sandy had generated a lot of fans from that one song in a short period of time, and it was much too late to replace them because

everybody knew what they looked like. At least every young hip-hop head in New York City did.