

The Collector
By: Lourdes Jaliz Rivera

Prolouge

“Isabella Clyde, the doctor will see you now.” Isabella stood up and walked into the doctors’ office awaiting the news that she heard so many times before “ I’m sorry Mrs. Clyde you are not pregnant”, but this time her doctor had a twinkle in her eye. Her doctor, Dr. Lovejoy, was smiling ear to ear when she said “ Mrs. Clyde this one stuck, you are 6 weeks pregnant”. Isabella began to cry as she fumbled around in her purse to grab her cell phone so she could call her husband at work. When she told him he too began to cry tears of joy. They had been trying for almost a year now and this was the best news they had heard in a long time. Once they hung up Isabella bombarded Dr. Lovejoy with a million questions on how to stay healthy in order to have the best pregnancy possible. In return she received a large pamphlet called *What to Expect When You’re Expecting*. There was also one in there for Mr. Clyde and how to handle sympathy pains and his wives wild cravings in the middle of the night.

After her visit Isabella was so excited, but she had no idea who to tell, maybe her mom or her brother. She decided to go to work and tell her pre- k class instead. Room 9-27 would surely be happy. Upon arrival Mrs. Clyde dismissed the sub in a hurried fashion, she closed the door behind her and turned to her class with a huge grin on her face. One student giggled and said “ Mrs. Clyde why you smiling so funny like that?,” Mrs. Clyde replied “ I’m glad you asked Noel, I just found out that I am pregnant, I’m having a baby.” The room fell silent, then an up roar of excitement hit Isabella all at once and she couldn’t hold back her tears any longer. Her tears wet her face as her students asked an array of questions and shared their comments, “ Is it a boy?” “Can you name it

Joshua like me?”, “We gets to meet her?”, “I think she’s going to be tiny like my sister.” “Bring it in kids, hugging time” she said, with her eyes full of tears and her heart full of joy. As the kids poured into her arms she couldn’t help but wonder how much better this feeling would be when it was her own child wrapping his or her tiny arms around her neck.

The weeks flew by and by. Isabella and her husband found out they were having a baby girl, and decided to name her Mackenzie Janelle Clyde. At 16 weeks their baby is whole and moving around. Then one morning Isabella realized that Mackenzie wasn’t moving as much as she usually does. She was so concerned about her baby that she decided to call her job and tell them she had a check up she forgot to mention and that she would be in by lunch. She then called Mr. Clyde at work and he left immediately to meet her at the Mount Sinai Medical center. Isabella jumped in her car and decided to push her luck and speed her way there. As she was turning onto E 101st she was t-boned by a truck that sped out of control due to the wet floor. She was slammed into a light post, now stuck in the middle of the light post and the truck she cried as she slipped into unconsciousness.

In the ER Mr. Clyde waited and waited and he grew very worried he had been there half an hour now. He decided to ask the front desk if an Isabella Clyde had checked herself in and she replied no. He called her phone about a million times, but no answer. The sweat on his brow thickened. It’s been 45 minutes and he turned around and there she was being rolled in on a stretcher with a crew of EMT’s commanding people to move out of their way.

They immediately rushed her to the OR and Mr. Clyde ran behind them crying and pleading to know what happened to her. Everyone shooed him away and the guards pulled him back and tried to soothe him.

His face was stained with tears and he couldn't stop pacing around the waiting room to find out if his girls were ok. The doctor came out and removed his facemask to reveal his sympathetic look as the words slipped from his mouth. " Mr. Clyde I am so sorry, but we have to perform an emergency C-Section and your little one will not survive past an hour she is too weak, we can take you to the nursery to see her so you can say goodbye. Mrs. Clyde is still unconscious," Mr. Clyde's tears poured from his eyes like floods and his heart felt like it was being pressed together by two boards that had nails protruding from all sides. He walked into the nursery and saw his little girl. The nurses handed her over, she was only 4lbs 12oz, tiny and frail. He held his little girl to his chest and cried until he felt her last little breathes slip away from her body, and he held her a little longer wishing he didn't have to say good-bye.

When Isabella woke up Troy was the first face that she saw. He was sitting on a hard wooden chair looking as if he was the one that had been in the car accident. She realized the baby was no longer inside of her she cried.

"Is Mackenzie ok?"

Troy looked at her with red eyes, swollen from crying. He had no idea how to soothe her or how to tell her what happened, instead he wept alongside her until they were all cried out. When the cries subsided he looked up at his heart broken wife and said the words she was dreading to hear, " Mackenzie didn't survive the accident." She stared

at him wide eyed for a few more seconds before she could really process the information that was given.

Their lives would never be the same again and they knew it. When the nurses came in they revealed that they had to tie her tubes in order to stop some internal bleeding. She would never have her own children now. She would never know what it's like to love her own flesh and blood. Her world, their world had crashed and burned in the matter of a few hours.

Part One

From afar Mrs. Clyde seems like your ordinary kindergarten teacher. She loves her students more than anything in the world. Her husband Mr. Clyde enjoys hearing all of her stories about the crazy things they say or do via phone calls because he lives on the opposite end of the country for work. Mr. Clyde took a job in the west coast, after Mrs. Clyde had the car accident and baby Mackenzie passed away. They grieved separately, but always remained firm on the idea of having a family. She loved her job and the school too much to move with him so she stayed in New York, especially since her job was all she had left. So they worked out a schedule in which they would visit on holidays and always vacation together. Mr. Clyde's job in the west will be ending soon and he will be coming back to the east to work from home. The idea of Troy being a stay at home dad made Isabella happy because she would never have to hire a sitter and leave her children with some stranger, ever again.

The one thing that sets Mrs. Clyde apart from a devoted teacher is her inability to realize that abducting her neglected students is not very lawful. She finds children that live in troubled homes and she steals them. She files reports to ACS then once the case is

open she abducts them. The parents then go to jail or grieve on news outlets and she gets to give the children a new life. So far she's taken three. Jenna, Hector & Logan. Jenna, prior to her abduction was known as Emma. She was born to a crack head mother who willingly gave her over for a few bucks so she could get a quick fix. It took her months to report Jenna's disappearance. Jenna is already presumed to be dead by now, no one is even looking for her anymore. Hector was once called Luis, he was rescued from an abusive father who beat him regularly. His biological mother was more of a woman than an actual mother whom protected her kids, instead she stood behind her husband and allowed the beatings to occur. When he vanished she cried and recited speeches on the news praying for his safe return, but he was already safer with his new family then he had ever been with his biological one. Logan formerly named Jordan was taken from a single mother who barely made ends meet and sometimes wished she had gone through with her abortion. After his disappearance his mom too recited speeches on the news and cried out for the safe return of her son. Isabella took the three all one-year apart from each other on May 13, 2013, 2014 and 2015. The thought that the police had never tied the kidnappings together satisfied Isabella and Troy. They often patted their-selves on the back for being so versatile with their work that they successfully eluded the police for years.

Now she was working on her last child, the very advanced little girl in her class, the one that would make her family whole. She loved Sabrina for her intellect and her pure heart. Sabrina was one of the most kind-hearted and loving little girls Isabella had ever met. Mrs. Clyde and Mr. Clyde agreed that she was the missing piece to their family and they would stop at nothing to complete their family.

The only problem was that her parents loved her. Sabrina was a loving, smart and

very independent little girl. Her parents loved her tremendously. She excelled at everything, she was conceived with the help of fertility treatment because her mother had a uterine cysts. Her parents were active members of the Parent Teacher Association at the school, they were very involved in the local Parish, and they often spoke out about their journey to pregnancy and how difficult it was. The whole community would absolutely crumble to a million pieces if something were to happen to her. The news outlets would be all over it and the cops would be searching for her double time. Isabella and Troy didn't let that idea stop them. They wanted *their* little girl, and they would stop at nothing.

The Clyde's had been thinking about having Sabrina complete their family for months now. Isabella finally came up with a mediocre, yet plausible plan. She got Mr. Clyde to pick her up early from school saying that he was her uncle and since Sabrina was so loveable she would surely go anywhere with anyone.

Now the day had finally come and Isabella was nervous beyond her wildest dreams. It was now Twenty-minutes before Troy was to pick Sabrina up. Thirty- minutes later and Mrs. Clyde was sitting at her desk texting Mr. Clyde from a burner phone to check in. The plan had worked. Troy called and they were talking for a few minutes until he was pulled over by the cops. The sweat on his brow was so thick it began to drip by the time the officer reached the car window.

“License and registration.”

“Here you go officer.”

“Ohh, we have an outer-stater Mr. Humphrey, you were doing 75 in a 65 zone.

I'll just run this really quick. Give me a moment, sir.”

“ Sure thing officer, I hadn’t realized I was going so fast.”

The officer walked away and returned a few minutes later.

“ You’re record is clean and so I don’t want to be the one to tarnish it, I’ll let you off with a warning, I don’t want to ruin you trip to New York anyhow.”

“ Thank you officer, it won’t happen again, have a good one.”

Isabella who was still on the cars Bluetooth speaker system breathed a sigh of relief. They both did. In less than hour he and little Sabrina were on their way to Nevada.

Isabella knew that the abduction was going as planned and she was overjoyed. In a few hours she knew she would be on her way to sunny California to get to see her *family*. She knew that it would all be worth it once she held her *kids* in her arms and got to do all the lovely activities she had planned for their weekend in San Diego. She had already spoken to Troy and he was on a plane headed to Nevada to pick up the kids with Sabrina in tow. Sabrina seemed to be ok with leaving this world she knew behind and becoming someone else, but then again she was only three what did she know?

“Mrs. Clyde, are you ok?” Said Mrs. Dillard the schools principle.

“Yes, I’m fine, am I not supposed to be?”

“Well your students are waiting for you downstairs in the gymnasium.”

“Oh my, I’m so sorry I just got caught up in my planning for my weekend getaway with the kids.”

“Alright, don’t let it happen again it’s careless and unprofessional and I won’t tolerate it Mrs. Clyde, now go attend to your students.”

Just as they were about to exit the classroom phone rang.

“Room 9-27, what can I do for you.” Said Mrs. Clyde.

“Sabrina Johnson’s father is here to pick her up she has a dentist appointment.”

“Ohh um, Sabrina’s uncle picked her up hours ago saying he was taking her to the dentist.”

“Well, he’s saying she doesn’t have an uncle.”

“I’ll be right down, give me a moment.”

Upon arrival in the secretaries’ office, a confused, angry, and scared Mr. Johnson met Isabella at the doorway.

“ Hello, Mr. Johnson what do you mean she doesn’t have an uncle? She went with him willingly as if she knew him.”

“She doesn’t have an uncle, I’m and only child and so is her mother.” Said Mr. Johnson growing angry.”

“Well there’s a sign out book, let’s see the name that he signed on that.”

They searched the book and couldn’t believe their eyes, next to Sabrina’s name was the signature of the name “John Doe”. Now in an obvious frantic state, Mr. Johnson starts wreaking havoc in the office demanding the police to be called and pulls out his cell phone to call them himself. Isabella sways him to stay calm and assure him that they can and will check the cameras to see if he recognized the man that came in to pick Sabrina up. The only problem with that is that the cameras have very obvious blind spots and the perpetrator, Troy, used them to his advantage. He wore a plain black hat very low and close to his brow with a simple black hoodie, blue jeans and some Chuck Taylors.

Obviously enraged and terrified, Mr. Johnson finally called the cops to report his missing child. Isabella did all she could do to ease Mr. Johnson's pain, but a little piece inside of her was hurting too. She was feeling a bit out of character for this child's abduction. She had ripped this little girl away from a good home, but she shook the feeling off and told herself that she will provide a better home for Sabrina. One where she can have her own back yard and her own room with a puppy and things that all kids dream of, even a pony if she wishes. In the matter of a few minutes Isabella was fine and good as new.

The police arrived and started questioning the secretaries that had released Sabrinato the abductor.

“ How did the man look.” Asked the officer.

“ I didn't get too much of a look at him, Sabrina didn't seem to be scared so either. All I did was look up once, I think he had blue eyes or maybe green, about 5'8.”

“ Was there anything memorable about him? A tattoo, a scar, was he a lefty? Things along those lines.”

“ No, he was just very nice, let me do my work, stood staring at the photos of the children on he wall, he had his back turned to me almost the entire time.”

“ Ok, thank you, if you remember anything at all please call me, here is my card.”

When the officer questioned Isabella she remained calm, but still appeared to be in somewhat of a distracted state. The officer questioning her had to give her some water so she could calm down a bit.

“ Now, Mrs.Clyde, did you think anything strange about someone claiming to be Sabrina's uncle and picking her up two hours earlier than the expected time?”

“ No not at all. I just figured they were taking advantage and giving her a treat before the dentist or something. My parents did that for my brother and I all the time.”

“ Are you close with the Johnson’s?”

“ To some extent yes, I went to college with one of Mr. Johnson’s friends. I’m sorry what does that have to do with Sabrina being taken by a stranger?”

“ Mrs.Clyde, if you have spent some time with the family you would have known that either parent has no siblings.”

“ I didn’t spend Holidays with them, I just went to a few functions that they happened to be at a few times. I don’t know their life story. The secretary said her uncle and I didn’t even bat an eye. It all sounded normal to me.”

“ Well alright then Mrs. Clyde, I’ll be in touch.” Said the officer as he glared at Isabella as she made her way across the room and out the door. She sighed a sigh of relief once she was allowed back into her classroom. The day went on in such a blur for Mrs. Clyde. She couldn’t wait to be with her *family*.

The next day Mrs. Clyde was happily headed to the airport to enjoy the weekend that she had planned for her now complete family. She was also going to let Sabrina know that she was no longer Sabrina Johnson. She would now be Arianna Clyde. Isabella had the whole thing planned done to the T. If Arianna asked she would just say her parents gave her away so she could live a better life with a better education. Which wasn’t exactly wrong, Arianna was going to live such a fantastic life as a Clyde. Between Mr. Clyde and Mrs. Clyde they had a small fortune and it was enough to buy each of the kids an older modeled car when they learned how to drive, send them all through catholic

school and good enough for some college tuition as well. But yet again guilt settled in Isabella's heart. She felt just awful. At least the other kids weren't wanted, but Sabrina, *Arianna*, had a great family despite their lack of luxuries. Just because they didn't own a house or a car didn't mean that they couldn't care for her. That didn't mean that they were bad people, and it sure as hell didn't mean they deserved to have their child taken from them. However, Isabella shook the feeling off once again and boarded her flight. But the look on Mr. Johnsons' face when he realized what happened kept haunting Isabella. He was absolutely distraught.

Six hours later she landed in Las Vegas, Nevada! She was HOME! Where her *family* was. When she got to the baggage claim she was looking down at her phone picking out wallpaper for Arianna's new bedroom and she found herself thinking if she had her own bedroom in her old home. Was it a sick shade of white or baby pink? Did she have toys or books? What kind of bed did she have, or did she sleep with her parents? *This isn't right, I need to give her back.* She called Troy.

"Hello." Troy said.

"Troy, honey... We need to talk."

"What's going on sweetie?"

"Arianna, I mean Sabrina. We need to give her back."

"Sweetie what's wrong? We have been dreaming of this day for ages."

"Honey, her father was so hurt and I can only imagine how her mother feel.

Remember how we felt when we lost Mackenzie? Do you really want to make another set of parents feel the way we did?"

"Isabella, listen to me. We did this for the better of Arianna. She will be happier

here, with us.”

“Troy no, it’s wrong. We started off doing this as good citizens or something and now we broke an entire family and possibly an entire community. I can’t do this.”

“Darling, just come home and we can speak about this, okay?”

“Okay.” Isabella reluctantly replied.

She turned to find her luggage when a security officer met her with an unpleasant look upon his face.

"Are you Isabella Clyde?"

"Yes, I am can I help you?" she replied in a concerned fashion.

"Yes we have your luggage in our office. It broke open so we brought it with us."

"Oh, how sweet thank you darling."

As soon as she walked in she saw two police officers, Sabrina's Parents and the photo of herself, Mr. Clyde, Jenna, Hector & Logan with a picture of Sabrina taped to the side of Isabella. That was the moment that Mrs. Clyde knew her selfishness had given her up.

Isabella awoke groggy and confused as to where she was. She look around the room and not soul was there. She was covered in wires and heard the steady beep of her heart rate monitor. *Why am I here? What happened to me? Where’s Troy?* She looked around the room fumbled around the bed for something that could make noise. She found the call nurse button and pressed it with no avail. She was weak. *What is going on where am I? Why do I feel so weak?* Three attempts later and she mustered up enough strength to press the button. Almost instantaneously the nurses where running in the room in disbelief.

“Hello, my name is Dr. Ernest, do you know what your name is?”