

CHAPTER ONE

ALL OF A SUDDEN

I was crying in the rain,
I was screaming in the midst of a thunderstorm.
I was dancing in the dark,
When the rain stopped,
When there was no more thunderstorm,
When the dawn came,
The tears STOPPED,
The screaming ENDED
And my feet could now move.
No wonder, no wonder no one saw my tears,
No one heard my scream for help.
No one knew I could dance.
All they saw was my dry face,
My silence,
My stiff feet.
But ALL OF A SUDDEN
I'm crying and screaming and dancing,
And there is no rain,
There is no thunderstorm,
But I'm still in the dark and there is no one
But ALL OF A SUDDEN
I can see him,

I know he has seen my tears, heard my scream
And watched me dance even though it's dark.
ALL OF A SUDDEN, I'm entrapped by his charms.
My mind screams danger but it is too late
Cause I know I'm lost.
ALL OF A SUDDEN my walls are being broken by a stranger
A stranger more dangerous than the rain,
The thunderstorm and the dark.
But I'm already trapped and there is no escape.

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{Action/Romance}

CHAPTER ONE

She was a force to be reckoned with amongst The Special Force Units. She had been recently promoted to the rank of Air Commodore after she had single handedly rescued a governor's children from the hands of about forty kidnappers, a feat meant for only those in The Circle, the best unit of the Special who were actually independent of the Special Force, her dream team. The emergency rescue had been easy because of a powerful gadget developed by the Circle. Her promotion was also due to the fact that she was recently made the commander of The Python Unit, the unit before the Circle. This was after they lost their leader to Boko Haram, a terrorist organization wreaking havoc in Northern Nigeria. Miles had done what their former commander Star had done to save the lives of the victims they were trying to rescue and also the lives of five members of his team who were with him. He stayed behind to fight them while his team escaped with ten teenage girls that were kidnapped. Fast, one of the members of the Circle, had come as backup but Miles was already dead and those he could not kill were already trying to pursue after the others. Fast had taken care of them in few minutes. Miles was buried as a Major General and it was heartbreaking when his wife and two teenage boys had to leave the Circle house which housed the Python and the Circle unit of the Special Force. They were paid ten million in compensation and given a three bedroom house in Niger State, their hometown. That was where his widow wanted to go back to.

She never expected to be voted in as their new commander. It was a kind of weird rule. Commanders of the Python and Circle Units were not appointed but elected by their units, which was completely different from other units. The twenty four members of the python unit had voted for a new leader. The first stage was for them to write out the name of their choice, three with the highest would

be selected and another election would be conducted under Lieutenant Ahmed's watch, although he was simply called Major. But the election did not pass the first stage because there were just two names standing. One vote for Stone which was her vote and twenty three vote for her. She was shocked beyond words. It took time to register that she was to be made the first female commander of the Special Force at the age of just twenty eight. So she was now Air Commodore Oreva, Commander of Special Force Python Unit. A feat no female had achieved but not surprisingly, the people who were most happy for her, who threw a party for her, who made her feel proud of her feat were The Circle. Nobody showed up from her family, not even her father. She was not expecting the others but at least her father should have come, she had always wanted to make her father proud of her, to make her father look at her for once but his absence showed she would never get her father's attention. It was something only close relatives were permitted to attend because they had to limit their appearance before the masses for security reasons. She would have been lost if not for the Circle, they were not just a unit but they saw themselves as family and almost lived together. The Special Force were made up of the army, the navy and the air force. They were put in units according to their performances in the test they had to undergo on their journey to become a member of The Circle, the best of the best which consisted of neither the army, the navy nor the air force. They had all the ranks of the three armed forces. To become a Circle, one had to qualify to join the lowest ranked unit of the Special force which was five units before the Python unit, then when one passed all the tests, he or she ceased to be any of the three armed forces because they became all of them, able to fight on air, land and sea. Undercover missions started from the third rank and the test for all the armed forces started from the third, fourth and fifth rank. Python unit meant they had passed six of the test remaining four which was technology, another undercover mission, a training in the US where they were made to defeat at least six US marines in a face to face weapon free combat and also they would have to pass the trustworthy test. She had passed almost all and had even gotten a medal for an undercover mission she did as a police officer for two years in the North which had helped Ghost one of the members of The Circle to find Ella who was now his wife.

Wild, the leader or commander of The Circle had one day called them for a meeting and told them that The Circle had decided that the Python Unit would now move to the Circle house because all of them passed the trustworthy test which they were not aware was being conducted. She only remembered she had been called by an ex-soldier and given a sum of fifteen million naira bribe to help cover up for a drug that was going to be trafficked out of Nigeria, and it was the time she was given an assignment to confirm if a particular ship coming to Lagos Port contained hard drugs. The money was tempting but she had made a vow of honor and truth before she became a Python unit member and she just did not know what she would do with the money. She had rejected him and actually stopped the drugs from being trafficked.

Few days later, she was invited to have some trainings with Jason who was the Circle computer guru and a dangerous sniper who recently hit a thousand, five hundred yards mark. She never knew the questions, teachings and answers were all a test. Jason did not talk, he texted, it was rare to hear his voice. She was one of the privileged Special Force member to know his voice. He only spoke when he was in contact with his wife. Then later, she had been made to have some trainings with Wolf, the man

all of them always feared. He was believed to just be a story for those vying to join the Special Force to make them believe in themselves and how powerful they could be. The story of a man who single handedly ended the first rising sect of Boko Haram, the man no one could take unawares because he had the instinct and sense of a wolf, hence his name which he had even before he joined the armed forces. They all believed it was not entirely true. Of course there was evidence that the first boko haram sect were ended and it took time before they resurrected and started their mayhem again but they just knew it was not true that it was just one man and the fact that they were always told Wolf was no longer with them and there was no picture of Wolf and John, the sons of thunder as they were called had raised the large room for doubt. John had been said to have thrown himself on Wolf before a bomb exploded to save Wolf who went berserk and took down hundreds of men. So he was just a legend until he showed up again. She had already started believing because she had accidentally met Pearl, Wolf's daughter at the Circle house. His first visit to their unit ended the argument on if he was truly a wolf because he was there to train them on how to enhance their senses and to start with practice, they were told to try attack him from all sides with his eyes blindfolded. Wolf was just as he was told in stories. He knew where danger was coming from and countered all of them without seeing. Their awe turned to fear because he was brutal with his trainings and never smiled. She had even believed his wife and children would dread him but everything changed when she visited Circle Fortress at Benin. Then Pearl was just nine. She could not believe Wolf could smile and would be a robot to Mena his wife. At first, she had wanted to warn Pearl who had come to call her dad that she had set everything and he should come join her to cook or she would not cook. Wolf had just smiled at her and told her to wait but Pearl had come to pull him out of Jason's parlor saying Mena would soon come back from work and they must surprise her with already made food. And she had succeeded and everyone had behaved as if it was normal. In fact, Wolf had carried her on his back. She had believed Wolf was now a changed man until he came back for training and became Wolf. Her meeting with Wolf had been weird because he was asking her questions on what she would do if she faced some decisions that would be life and death, then money, then betraying the force. And she had unknowingly passed.

The last person she had met had been Wild, a mystery. Jason looked at someone like they were a puzzle he was calculating and solving, Wolf made one feel uncomfortable and careful, like he could sense your fears or bravery, know you are lying or telling the truth and others but Wild was different. Even now, she was yet to know who Wild really was. None knew except maybe his family 'The Circle.' The Special Force all knew from trainings and whispers and gossips that Jason was a dangerous sniper and tech guru who could hack into anything, everybody including soldiers who were yet to meet Wolf knew he could never be taken unawares. The Special Force knew Fast could drive anything and he could fight while driving at a jet speed without losing focus, they knew Mark was Escravos male mermaid and a pentagon, although the name Pentagon ended when Sabrina told all the five ladies he was dating at once but Mark was very popular because he was the last member of the Circle and he was once in her team when she was just entering. So they knew it was suicide to fight Mark under water. They all knew Sabrina was The Venus Flytrap, very beautiful but poison. She used her beauty as a death trap and she had a legendary death dance which made her very acrobatic and balanced almost like a cat. They also knew about Ghost who was just ghost. He could enter anywhere that had a door and he could sneak up on anyone and he could pickpocket a lion's meal. In fact Ghost could kill someone and the person would

never know what happened even after getting to the underworld. He could walk without making a sound and his targets rarely saw him and sometimes, he hunted his targets like a ghost, especially if his targets were much. They died with fear before he would finally send them to the underworld as he usually put it. He was also known as messenger of death, a name he got from a village he killed up to fifty boko haram members, or rather hunted them. Then they all knew Beast who was once called Tamed. Beast legendary tales went as far as the USA where no one was yet to move the stone he carried for miles. He was just like a Beast in war. The newspaper that pictured him inside a bank with the door of a car after bashing through a door, had unknowingly likened him to an enraged Beast which was exactly who he was and he was surprisingly too fast for his size. He was one of their contact combat trainer and he moved with speed and force that one had no time to recover. They also used to fear him like Wolf and Wild but seeing how his daughter who was so little before him could command not only him but all of them, including Wolf and Wild raised a lot of questions if they had personality disorders. Abigail Ifeoma, Beast's daughter just needed to place her tiny hand on her waist and with one finger, she made them do what she wanted but they became wild creatures once they left their wives and kids. The children belonged to everyone, even Jason was under Al's thumb, she was the only one apart from Jason's twin boys and his wife who Jason could touch without wearing a hand glove and he was currently her personal trainer because she was already developing the traits of her dad's strength. Lara was Wild's daughter but it looked like Fast was dragging her from Wild.

She would never forget a weekend she spent at their fortress in Benin City. Al had suddenly refused to go on with her weight lifting training to test her strength. She said she was no longer interested because she wanted to build a doll house and she would continue after two months, she was not sure if Al knew what two months meant, she was just three. She had also suggested they should all join her to build her doll house so she could finish quick and she had said all of them must join. All meant all the seven males of The Circle, Sabrina was exempted. She had watched in awe as Al subjected men Special force dreaded and who she was still very careful with to her orders on where to place her plywood with no fear. Even Wolf was made to fix the window. She wished Al would one day see the real Beast, Wolf and Wild not the ones she had been deceived to see as easy and yielding. Even though she had been to their fortress many times, she still could not understand how their children and wives could easily make men the army dreaded to become robots. Pearl most especially always made her cry in her room because she was exactly what she had wanted at her age. Pearl was now twelve, almost thirteen and she had wanted to have the dad and father relationship Pearl had with Wolf. Even though she never had that at Pearl's age, she still yearned for it, for the love Major, the general Special Force commander had for Sabrina his daughter. She had watched her rest her chest on her father many times and she was almost thirty yet her father still treasured her. She wanted to become part of The Circle. No matter how seeing the love she never had around the Circle hurt her, she wanted to become a part of that family. Their unity was baffling. She was already getting the love she never had at home within The Circle but she wanted to permanently become their family, a Circle. Then she could navigate to their homes at will and not wait for invitation. She just wanted to share in that love surrounding them and be under Wild who she believed was the force holding them as a Circle that had no beginning and end.

Wild was deadly and still mysterious. The Special Force knew they were to watch their thoughts around him, it was as if he could see one's deepest secret. He gave the feeling of a lion crouched close to a prey and would leap on them without warning. And he had done so. He had been to an All Special Force Unit trainings and had been talking and giving instructions and gave that solemn environment of peace but suddenly a naval officer was dead. He was too quick that most only saw the already dead body of the officer. Wild had told late Star to search the dead officer and there was a bomb tied to his waist, the man was yet to ignite it. Since then, securities were tight at the training ground. Now an officer must pass through a door which did full body scanning before entry. Phones were not even allowed except from The Circle, not even the python unit were allowed to carry phones into the grounds. She had been made to talk about her dreams and the reason she so much wanted to serve Nigeria and also become a Circle member. She never mentioned the most important reason but she had said she wanted to be reckoned with the best team and she never knew all the meetings and the drug bribe were the trustworthy test which surprisingly, all of them in the python unit passed and they were allowed to move to the Circle house, a house she still could not comprehend the structural designs and size. Every house was independent of the other yet intertwined together. A particular section, which was the first and second floors belonged to The Circle and she later discovered she was the only one with access to the place. Wild and family, Fast, Sabrina, Mark were the only ones permanently living at The Circle house Abuja. The rest were staying at their second fortress at Benin. But they were almost always around on weekends because of Lara. She also kept Lara company but Lara was not lonely cause her beautiful room had a very large and tall TV which was permanently connected to their Benin fortress and she could talk and play with the children, the only difference was the body contact. She joined her because the children always asked for her and she was already friends with Jake the cousin of George, a Circle fallen agent. They made her feel wanted and she just could not wait to formerly become part of that unified family that glowed love more than a florescent light. The kind of love she had believed no longer existed until she saw them and knew it was real, she was just the one who never had one.

PART TWO OF CHAPTER ONE (HOPE YOU HAVE READ PART ONE)

(Continuation of CHAPTER ONE)

If there was one terrible lesson life had taught her, it was Cinderella's stories and stories of a prince saving a scared lady from danger were just literature stories and had no place in the real world. It hurt her that she realized it just too late. She wasted a large part of her life reading every Cinderella stories and imagining she would one day be rescued by a prince. Her belief had come from the fact that she had the same foil as Cinderella cause she had a wicked step mother and two half-sisters with a dad but the only difference from the regular stories was her half-brother who was also as vicious as the twin girls. It was as if each of her siblings were competing on how to beat their mother's wickedness. At least she had changed her story line after she gave up on that belief, after she discovered she could fight back.

She was no longer the scared little girl but was ranked as one of the best Special Force officer but their verbal abuses remained and left an everlasting mark on her.

She was just a year and half older than the twins and three years older than her half-brother. Her mum had paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring her into the world and her dad had remarried just two months later to a friend of her mum who had shown her that stories of wicked step mothers were real. But she could bear all the beatings, and starving and hunger and verbal assault but not the silent treatment from her dad who pretended he did not know what her step mum and half siblings were dishing to her. Her dad always winced whenever he looked at her which was rare. He avoided her like a plague to the extent that he would walk out of the parlor, he would walk away from her. Her sisters had always told her she looked like a boy. She remembered there was a book about princes and her sisters were choosing the one they wanted. She was eight years. She had tried to pick and they had laughed at her. They had told her she belonged to the gateman that was if the gateman would even choose her.

“You are so ugly and should have been a boy. No prince will marry you” Kate, the younger of the twins had said and she had cried to her room.

She did all the chores and started cooking at seven while her step mum did nothing. She attended all the social functions and dressed to show she was married to a rich man which was not completely true and that was all except if she should count the beatings she received from her as part of her job. She never made the mistake of reporting to her dad after he had walked out on her right in the middle of her reports and she had been beaten till she fainted after her dad had travelled.

They took away her self-esteem and made her believe she was a nonentity, a dullard after her teacher had reported that she always failed English. But she was good in other subjects. She had made up her mind to try harder after her dad had told her that her mother was very brilliant and he had no idea where she took her dull brain from. She was eight and that was the first and last time he mentioned her mother and he had winced like something stung his heart and had walked out of the house. She consumed herself in books anytime she had the chance to. She was not allowed to watch TV and she had used that time to study. She did so well that she finished secondary school at age fifteen although had to depend on GCE exams to pass English language which she almost failed. That had made her act as the dull one among her comrades. It was safer to go with pidgin and act dull or maybe it was because of years of being told she had a block brain. With time, pidgin and dance became part of her, a form of escape although she was trying her best to start speaking formerly because she was a bad influence on Lara, Wild’s daughter. Her step mother only looked at her English mark in her report. She always ignored the ninety and above in other subjects and that was what she always reported to her dad who never bothered to check her result. In fact, she could count the number of times her dad had spoken to her in her twenty eight years of existence.

Her sibling’s menace was not only at home but everywhere that the whole school called her boygirl. She was very good in all sports that teachers on the other house during their inter house sports had all said she should compete as a boy and as horrible as it sounded, she had competed with boys and came out with gold in all the sports she was allowed to participate which her father never congratulated her

for and which had made her siblings to intensify their hatred for her. She had been a little relieved when she gained admission to study Engineering at age sixteen, then she had already started dressing like a boy and she had already physically fought back and beaten all her siblings including her step-mum in a fight. The day she decided she would never be hit again and the day they never tried to hit her again and resorted to verbal abuse.

She actually started dressing like a boy after she had not seen her period at age fourteen when her two sisters were already seeing theirs and were already developing breasts while her chest remained flat. Her step mum had joined them to mock her that she might actually be a boy with a vagina. That was when she gave up on Cinderella stories and accepted her fate that an ordinary man would not even look at her and a prince was out of it. She burnt all her female clothes and started dressing like a boy. The taunting stopped because there was nothing else to say again. Visitors were even asking her about her until they looked well and discovered she was same person. Her dad had not said anything and she had someone felt relieved. She got the name Stud at the university when one of her course mates saw her documents showed female and broadcasted it to the whole class. She was the only female in her level and the boys never saw her as one. She had finally started seeing her period at the age of seventeen and as for her breast, there was nothing to write home about. At twenty one, she was through and it was during her National Youth Service that a soldier told her that she would do well in the military because she was very athletic and could easily slip away or around without allowing an opponent get a hold of her. She had applied to join the air force and that was how her journey as the commander of Special Force Python Unit began.

Major had said that was her gift, that she was like a cat whose back did not touch the ground and very stable and flexible, a skill that had saved her life many times. She also had speed and fast reflex and Sabrina had also helped her with acrobatics. Her dance which she used as an escape from an early age had also turned into a fighting skill which Sabrina and Major had initiated for her.

Even though she had given up on having the story of Cinderella, she had at least believed on the story of the wicked being punished but that also was fake because not only were her siblings doing well and all married, Kate was married to the man who had showed interest in her. Her supposed childhood friend who she summoned boldness to confess her feelings to just before she got into the air force. He had told her he wasn't gay. She would have felt better if he had told her the feelings were not mutual but that word was a blow to the little hope she had that a man would see her as a woman. He had even stopped talking to her and just few months later, there was a wedding card. It was then she went through their friendship and discovered her classmate had used her to get close to Kate. He was never interested in her even as a friend. For the first time in her life, she had confronted Kate and Kate had told her that she must be sick to think that someone would ever see her as a woman. They were happily married and all doing well. Even her step mother was getting younger and fresh. She was also doing well in her field but not in what mattered most. She had always yearned to be loved but with time, that yearning faded. She had concluded she would never found love. Major and Jason had been trying to convince her to change her looks but the idea itself was scaring. She was safer looking as a boy. She knew she was not pretty and dressing like a girl would expose her ugliness more but with so much pressure from Major, she dreaded her hair but it rather enhanced her look as a ruffian dude.

She was having a break after the last mission that led her to become the commander of the python unit. She was still trying to understand her duties. Lara was not around cause schools were on holidays and she had gone to Benin fortress to spend her holiday. They were all expecting Jake in few weeks' time. Already, an ex USA Navy Seal officer was already in Nigeria undergoing some trainings or rather necessary protocols to join the Circle. She had no doubt the Circle were about to have a new member because the man coming was same man who had prevented her from passing the US test. Just that one man defeated six of them. The Circle were about to meet their match. They were yet to have direct contact with him, Wild's order but she knew they could not wait to meet the man she told them about. If she was part of the Circle family, she would have been at their fortress with the children but she could not because no one had invited her. She could not wait to apply for the next training now that the obstacle was out of the way although that was like five years ago. Her skills had greatly increased since then.

She was reading some files about her duties but it was night already and she was tired. She wanted to rest because she had not learnt anything. All she did was just think about what she would never have and what she dreamt of having. She got a text as she climbed her bed. It was Catherine, the eldest of the twins. It was a reminder about her contribution for her dad's sixtieth birthday party that they were planning to shake the whole of Warri as a result not because they loved their dad but because they wanted to show off like their mother. She had sent the text because she did not pick her calls. She knew what would happen. Catherine would talk about her husband's business, her new car, the way she was being looked at during a party she attended and how her husband still wanted to buy another car for her and so many others. Not that they needed her two hundred and fifty thousand naira contribution, they just needed to show her how unhappy she was even though she was a big person in the force. She threw her phone to the bed and slept off but she was not even allowed to sleep because her phone started ringing again. It was a call from Ghost.

CHAPTER TWO

He had sent Ghost a message early that morning that he was being followed and he needed his help but there had been no response. He was not being paranoid because his grandfather's lawyer had told him to be careful before he left his grandfather's house. The old man was sick and his lawyer had warned him to protect himself. He did not understand why he would be in danger because he was his mother's father and there was no way his wealth would be passed on to him. Grandpa had two children, his mum and his uncle who was given birth to twelve years after his mum. But he had noticed a particular car following him as he visited his father's companies to oversee some businesses and he had felt dread.

It was 8:36PM, he was through for the day and he was driving back to one of his father's house at Abuja. He was supposed to be cautious but his mind was occupied. He should have moved on with life after more than two years of trying. He was twenty five and he had experienced his share of youthful exuberance. He never had a girlfriend, just friends with benefits although most of them wanted a relationship not just because he was handsome but also because he was the son of a very wealthy businessman who had over two hundred filling stations for gas, petrol and diesel in just Nigeria, then

had up to a thousand estates in Nigeria with over twenty located in Lekki and Banana island where millions were paid for just a two bedroom flat. His father did not stop there but had a hotel in all the thirty six state capitals including Federal Capital Territory making it thirty seven, then up to fifty other big time hotels scattered all over Nigeria. His father also had restaurants everywhere then up to a hundred supermarket scattered all over Nigeria. It was not just Nigeria but now five other African countries have his father's fingerprint in hotels, restaurants and estates and his mum also had big shares in her father's silk, plastic, mill, water and Beverage Company. So girls never ceased around him, and he had used them at will to quench his desires but never had any other interest until he met Ella.

His dad had refused him going to a private university. He wanted him to get into school through his brain and associate with students from all kinds of background and understand life better. He had written UTME, the exam one must write to enter the university thrice but failed to get law, what his father wanted him to study. He actually applied for law not because of his father but because he wanted it. There was a mutual understanding between him and his dad. There was love but it was a word his dad rarely said to him although his actions had shown his dad loved him. His dad rather reserved the word for his mum and his dad had been consisted. There was no day he could remember his dad not telling his mum that word and his mum also told his dad. The relationship he had with his mum was more than best friends. He loved her with his breath. When his mum's generation mothers were still struggling to say that word to their children, his mum was far ahead because throughout his Kindergarten to primary school, without a kiss from his mum, he would not enter his school. Even now, he still rested on his mum, he still told her everything about himself including girls. He was close to his dad but it was nothing compared to the bond he had with his mum. One thing he had always dreamt of was to have a home like his parents' home. His dad had never raised his hand on his mum and he still adored her like they were newly married and they were gross all the time and his father always saw him as a competition for his mum's attention. He knew love because he grew up surrounded by it. His father would forever cherish his mum who almost starved herself to death before her dad out of panic of losing his precious daughter, the only reminder to the love of his life who died giving birth to her, had finally allowed the both to get married. Grandpa had given his dad twenty million naira and his dad had returned it to the surprised old man just five years later and now his dad was even richer than his grandpa by a few millions according to statistics. But wealth never changed the attitude of those two lovers who always made him feel like having someone to love and be loved. And he had thought he had found her after finally accepting to study English and Literature at the University of Benin, Benin City with the plan to switch over to law after his first section which meant he would have to study hard and have no carryover and nothing below 4.0GP. But the moment he had set his eyes on Ella, he had lost his composure.

He could not place what particularly attracted him to her, he just knew he loved her dark but shining skin, her long hair, her eyes filled with innocence and her voice which stirred his heart to beat faster than normal. With time, he summoned courage to stopped observing her from a distance and ask for her friendship for a start. Actually his mum was the adviser on steps to take and it had worked until another came and took her away from him. He had been hurt that she had chosen another person and he could not understand why she wanted them to remain friends. There was a time hope had returned

when she finally told her about her mysterious soldier guy who was shot while trying to protect her. He had stayed with her and had somehow felt jealous of the dead guy because even in death, he took Ella's mind and soul with him. She was like a walking dead and although she did not shy away from him, he could not reach her until she had rescued some Niger Fulani children who were now his siblings. He had felt that Ella would soon recover but she had suddenly called to tell him the supposed dead guy was back and it had torn his hearts to shreds. Then she had cried when he told her they should part ways as friends. She had no idea the pains he was having even talking to her knowing she was never going to be his. The only girl he had loved. Then something unexpected had happened, the soldier guy had contacted him. He had expected him to warn him off her or to taunt him but the guy with the name Ghost had taken away his resolve to stay far away from Ella.

"I wish I understand how you feel Ken but I don't and I don't want to. But I'm sorry I became part of Ella. Ordinarily you guys were meant to be together. If I had not found her, she would have married you and lived a happy life with you. I had a Chinese master who told us about an invincible red thread that connects two souls together, it is unbreakable once those two souls come in contact with each other and it also rarely happened. He had also said that some do marry those who are not linked to them and live a happy life but the feelings would never be compared to being with the real one connected to us by a thread. I'm sorry my thread found Ella. She was a childhood friend I could not even remember not to talk of meeting. She should have been with you if I never met her but I'm sure you noticed how she behaved in my absence, it was same for me. Thanks for keeping her alive throughout my absence. Thanks for taking care of those kids she rescued. I'm rarely indebted to anyone and in my unit, our words and promise is sacred. I'm indebted to you and you can call me anytime to pay my debt but please don't keep your distance, she cherishes you as a friend and she hurts so much cause you are breaking the friendship. Please, I promise to pay my debt Ken" Ghost had said.

His phone had automatic call recorder and he had made sure he saved Ghost's call and played it over and over till he knew every word. He had lost to a better guy and he would be the bad guy if he did not notice the glow and life in Ella after their marriage. He could not go and Ella had understood. He had stayed as Ella's friend even though it hurt a lot and he would sometimes travel to be in the warm embrace of his mother when talking on phone was not enough. Even after he had successfully transferred to law, Ella still contacted him and they often talked and chatted even though it hurt him but as long as Ella was happy, he was okay. But soon, even the hurt stopped and the worst of his nightmares had started. He could not feel arousal again. He had tried keeping his situation from his mum but he had ended up telling her that his natural desires were no more. His mum had taken him for prayers, another thing he did not want to think about. His mum had only become a Christian two years ago but she was behaving like she was the pastor. Later, she had said it was even better, it would help him avoid fornication and he would be alive when the right one came. It had been a year and half since his natural desires died and he was still not back to normal. He loved his dad and loved his three adopted siblings and most especially, his mum but no matter the love encompassing him, he still felt empty. Each passing day made him feel like he had a hole in his heart that needed to be filled up and for the first time, he had kept his emptiness from his mum.

His mind suddenly became alert bringing him back to reality. They were still following him, it was same white car. He quickly sped up hoping to get to his residence ahead of them because he would be able to enter his house and secure the door but he realized his mistakes too late, he should have just driven to a police station because he saw their headlights as soon as he came out of his car. He had just a split second to decide between diving back to his bulletproof car and running to the door but before he could make a decision, someone pulled him to a wall, the side of the house, same time he fired at those coming out of the car.

“Stay down” he commanded already releasing another shot same time pulling him down to enforce his command. He dived to the side of the car as bullet hit the wall missing the man by an inch. He had no idea about the numbers of assassins, he was just sure Ghost would not be able to withstand them. He felt bad for asking for his help, he had no idea what he was going to tell Ella. He closed his eyes and covered his ears as the gun battle continued, there was hope because it meant Ghost was still alive. His car might be a collateral damage but he was okay as long as he survived the night with Ghost.

Suddenly there was absolute silence. He had no idea of who won the battle, he shook with fear knowing fully well Ghost had lost and he was next. He felt someone raising him.

“Who the fuck are you that Ghost had to wake me up from my sleep?” the man asked closing up on him.

He was resting his back on the wall and the man was so close to him that he could feel his breathe, there was light and he could see his face. He looked very young and handsome, his voice sounded like a boy just getting to puberty stage.

“Ghost said he owe you a debt and he just spoil my sleep because of you. Wetin you do person wen won kill you? Fine guy like you. Guy you still too young to gather enemy, cool down” the guy said.

He opened his mouth to respond but was not allowed to as he was spun the other way making him have a direct contact with him like they were embracing. He was surprisingly taller than the man who looked a bit slender but had a lot of force and flexibility. The man fired at someone but he did not notice because the contact lighted him up, his groins came alive and he felt hot all over his body. Hot liquid like he had never known existed rushed through his groin straight to his cold heart lighting it up in flames that he could almost not breathe. The contact lasted for just a second before he was released and pushed down while the man fired one more shot.

“Ghost is the coast clear? I never saw that one coming, over?” the man said.

He raised his head to see he was balancing something in his right ear.

“Roger that, I dey go back go sleep, you owe me one Ghost. One love men, over and out” the guy said removing what was in his ears.

He moved close to him but he stood up and moved back. This was not happening, he had not felt anything since Ella his first love chose Ghost over him. He had lost interest in girls and had buried himself in school and business, but he was getting aroused by a man, which had never happened.

Something was wrong with him, there was no way he was gay. He started shaking his head in denial. The man looked at him confused.

“Guy you too fear, Ghost say he go contact you on his findings, but no fear, nobody will visit again today. Police go soon come clear them. I dey go back to sleep. Peace” the man said raising his hands for a high five.

He did not want to but what would he tell him? That he could not shake his hands because he had feelings for him?

He stretched his hand but the man did not only want a high five but a body bump and he felt electrical shock from the contact that he could literally see sparkles of fire dancing in his eyes. He never felt even close to what he was feeling with Ella.

“One love” the man said. He walked liked he was bouncing, he bounced to a bike not too far from the house. He should have noticed the bike earlier. He watched him climb the bike and waved back at him as he drove off. He fell to the ground, his hands on his head.

“No, it can’t be, I am not gay. Mogbe, I am finished” he exclaimed.

His phone vibrated in his pocket. It was a message from Ghost.

‘At the moment your family is being guarded by some soldiers and I’m working to find out who sent the assassins, but are you are aware your grandpa died this morning? Get inside and wait for my instruction, for now I’ve begged Stud to keep watch, so don’t move out except Stud is around.’

He had read that his grandfather was dead but it was not close to his bigger issue, he just had feelings for a man and the said man was going to be protecting him.

“I’m finished.”

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER THREE

She was in trouble, big trouble. There was no way she was going keep an eye on that man Ghost called Ken. She never expected the zap of electricity shocking her veins and making her feel feminine. It was never supposed to happen and not with that guy who reeked of money and all the features a perfect male should have. He even looked like he should have been able to fight on his own. He had the statue, the muscle outlined on his chest which was made visible through his tight shirt which clung to him. She hit her hand on her forehead. She had been happy that part of what Major had identified as her gift was remembering of details but now she wished she did not have such gift cause she could still remember everything about him. Just a sight told her his face and body structure would make even rich

girls fight for him. He was no go area, completely out of her imagination but yet she could not stop thinking about him. That first contact with him had almost killed them because it distracted her that she had not noticed there was another enemy. She was grateful for Wolf's trainings if not they would have been dead, then it had become like molten lava when she had to pull him to her to shoot the last target. It had shaken her to the root and it took years of training herself to hide her emotions from her family to remain composed outside. Her inside was vibrating from the contact. Now Ghost had said he needed her help to look after Ken till he got to things he needed. But she would not, she could not. She was going to ask Jaguar who was also on break to do the work. This was the first time she was grateful about her new position.

Jaguar had sent a message the next morning to confirm that he was going to drive Ken back to Benin where he was schooling. There had been no other attack and he had also asked who Ken meant to her. A question she did not answer. She was through with her dance practice which was on her timetable for the morning yet she could not remove the image of that boy from her mind. He was handsome and looked rich but she had always been more attracted to strong men like her. A man who could fight side by side with her but it was mostly because she knew that if she had any chance of a man falling in love with her, it would be someone stronger than her. It was clear with Mark and Sabrina, everyone around could feel the tension around them. There was no way in hell a civilian could handle Sabrina but it would not be because they did not find her attractive but because Sabrina was wild and uncontrollable but her reason was because she was mostly feared by men and civilians always believe she was a man.

She had seen the fear in Ken's eyes. He was afraid of her while she was melting in his presence. While her family who tortured her for years continued to progress, life kept mocking her with something she could never have. She had forced her feelings to become dormant as she accepted her fate but why now? Why with a civilian who would never look at her twice?

She needed to finish studying the files about her new office but she could not concentrate. It was already past 8:AM yet she kept reading same page over and over again. She stood up in frustration to go use the gym but got a text from Ghost.

'I need you at Wild's farm.'

Ghost was around but she did not want to go. She did not want to discuss anything about Ken.

'Ken is no longer mine Ghost. Jaguar is in charge now' she replied as she took the elevator that would take her to the gym but another message came and it was Major.

'I am the one asking of you. Five minutes.'

The Circle where totally not under Major even though they were still seen as Special Force but python unit, her unit was very much under him and five minutes meant five minutes.

As she the elevator stopped at the gym floor, she typed in the last floor which was underground. It asked for a fingerprint before she was allowed to go down to the most secured place at the Circle house,

Wild's farm which had nothing to do with agriculture but weapons and gadgets that would blow one's mind.

Major and Ghost were not the only one there, Wild was also there and his gaze on her looked like he was seeing through her inner thoughts, it made her feel naked. She gave the usual salute and only brought down her hand when Major gave the permission.

'I am surprised you gave Jaguar Ken to handle' Ghost said.

She did not know if it was a question or a statement. It was actually something she would not do. But she could not tell them that just a little contact with the Ken resurrected something she never thought she had.

"I am very busy Ghost. It's not like before, I now have so many responsibilities on my shoulder."

"Exactly why you are here. There is an emergency mission for your team" Major said dropping files on the table.

She took the files and looked at Ghost then at Wild who was making her feel like he knew everything that happened with Ken.

It was a drug undercover mission, location was not named cause it was a silk, mill, transport and Beverage Company that was under investigation for using their company as hide outs to export hard drugs to other countries. The mission was to find out if an INTEL from an anonymous source was right about the company's involvement in drug trafficking. It was not a drug lord stuff so it was definitely a case for the python unit.

"I will be taking this mission" she said without thinking about it.

"Stud you are on break and we have others who would want to go and it is not that serious a mission. I would rather be happy if you call off Jaguar from helping bodyguard Ken, Ghost friends. Then give Jaguar this mission" Wild said.

There was something about Wild's voice that was disturbing but she could not place it.

"Major whose call is it?" she asked.

She had never ignored Wild before and she was shaking inside but kept a stone expression outside. It was very important she took the mission and avoid anything that had to do with Ken. She would forget him once she had something to consume her time.

"You are the new commander of the python unit and this is your first task to order a mission and I'm going to leave it completely to your discretion" Major said.

"Then I'm back from break and I'm back in the field. I am going to take this mission. I will study the files and know which way to go. As for Ghost's friend, at least I did my best. It was a non-Special Force operation" she said carrying the remaining files and standing up. Wild was making her uncomfortable.

“Stud are you sure you want to take this mission, at least check the details before accepting it. You can’t change your mind once I approve it. So I ask for the last time, as the commander of the python unit. Stud are you taking mission 00341?” Major asked.

She stood at attention and saluted. Major stood up and saluted. She waited for Major to pull down his hands before she pulled down hers and then she was off as fast as she could be away from Wild’s knowing stares.

She did not go to the gym, she went straight to her two bedroom lodge to read the files. Somehow the universe knew her plight and had come to her aid. But as she opened the file she kept having a feeling about Ghost. He was not supposed to be there, even Wild was not supposed to be around.

She opened the file and read about the suspect. He was the only son of a rich man believed to be using his father’s business to sneak hard drugs out of the country. She read further and studied the family of the man. Then she opened the second file with instructions on how she was going to go about it. First thing she discovered was it was an open undercover mission. It meant she was not going to take up a character and name which meant there would be no briefing. She would maintain her status as a Special Force Agent and she was going to be a bodyguard to the grandson of the recent late man cause his life was in danger because of some will. Through that, she would use him to infiltrate the company and find out evidence against the son of the man. So she would be seen as a bodyguard without the knowledge of the main mission cause it was not just finding evidence against the suspect but also tracing those he was dealing with both internally and externally. She studied everything she was supposed to do, how she was supposed to meet with the daughter of the late man who was the mother of the boy she was going to guard and how she would move in with the person she would guide. She opened the next file to read about the person she was going to guide and the file fell from her hands.

“What the heck is this?” she shouted picking her phone and dialing Wild’s line.

“You fooled me. You knew it was same mission yet you told me to take over from Jaguar and give him the mission” she shouted something she had never done.

“Stud you are acting out of character. Ghost was beyond shocked that you backed down from a challenge. You never back down which is one great gift you have but you sent someone else and refused to see Ghost. Stud what happened yesterday night?” Wild’s voice was calm but she was not.

“You are missing the point. You knew it was the same mission, yet you made me believe it was not the same thing.”

“I remember you made the choice to go with the mission.”

“That was because I did not know it would involve Ken and you intentionally led me to this trap” she shouted.

“I won’t deny that.”

“Why Wild, what the fuck did you do that for. Why you fool me? Why you won torment me like this. Wetin I do you?”

“Cause it is not like you to back down and I want to know why you want to avoid Ken...”

“You are deviating.”

“Stud I felt your tensed behavior. You were acting like something stung you and you want to run away from it. I see you as my kid sister and I want to know why Ken is triggering this out of character behavior. Did you know Ken before? What are you afraid of?”

She cut the call and threw her phone on the bed, then followed suit.

Wild said something that shook her being, he saw her as his kid sister. She was supposed to be pissed off but that word was now ringing a bell in her head. She knew what Wild was doing.

“Fear is for the brave, it is a personality cowards can never stare in the eyes” she said out loud Wild’s favorite quote.

Wild was making her face her fears. He thought Ken was a hurt from her past and wanted her to face him. If only he knew he was so off. Ken was more than a hurt from her past.

Give her kidnappers, drug dealers, assassins and she would face them squarely. The Circle had even given her their bullet deflector which made sure her targets would not be able to shoot her. It would just be a fight with any other thing about from a bullet so she could take on many men. She would face her fears and handle it very well.

But Ken was different, it was worse than her fears. She could still remember how Ken had shrunk away from her. Ken would never see her as a woman and she knew that her body would continue to be aflame before him. She should be very elated Wild saw her as his kid brother but it was the wrong time to say it because Wild had just condemned her to the worst sentence of her life. Her phone vibrated. It was a message from Wild.

‘You owe five thousand box.’

Yeah she knew that. The F word was not allowed among the Circle because of their children and over the years she had been trying to avoid the word. She could not believe how easy it was for Wild to move on with his life, his wife and his daughter believing he was training her to face her fears, believing she would not break down and become that girl that cried when her friend dumped her for her half-sister. She could still hear his words to her.

“Oreva to be sincere with you, I thought you were a lesbian, I’m surprise you can have feelings for a boy but I am not the one. I don’t think a guy would like the features I’m seeing as I am looking at you. No guy will find you attractive. I am telling you this not because I want to hurt your feelings but because I want you to know that I am also a guy and it’s not personal. I want to marry a woman that has a full chest. Please keep your feelings to yourself.”

And she had cried and her mind and body had tuned in to seal off her interest in men, not that her heart did not hurt when she saw others with their loved ones, not that she did not wish to have someone that would love her. She did have that but her body had never responded to another man. It was a big relief at least she could handle her heart but Ken had not just resurrected what was supposed to remain dead, he had made it clear from his behavior towards her that he would never see her the way she saw him and it was going to break her. She wished she could go and tell Major she was not going to take the mission but it was too late.

Her phone vibrated again. It was a message from Ghost.

‘Your location indicates you are still at Circle house. You know your mission started one hour ago.’

“What the heck?” she shouted grabbing the files and searching the date of mission and it was damn true. Her nightmares had already began.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER FOUR

His mum had called crying on the phone that grandpa was dead. She too was just hearing the news but not from Kayode her brother. He tried all his best to console her but his encounter with the man that saved his life was not only replaying in his mind but in his body that he did not even ask her who had told her the sad news.

Even when he tried to sleep, he could not. He was up before his alarm rang by 6:00AM. He needed to get to Lagos to meet his mum. There was also the trepidation that he was going to see that man again and his body was going to react. He dialed his mum’s line but it was not available, he dialed his dad’s number and got same response making him to panic.

It had never happen. It occurred to him that he was not the only one being targeted. He dialed Ghost’s line but it was also not available. Fear took over his brain as he dialed his mum’s line over and over again.

A knock on the door sent him involuntarily jerking up and running few steps away from where he was sitting down. Fear gripped him clouding his ability to think of anything. He checked his time as the knock continued, it was 7:47AM.

He had no idea what to do because the person knocking had not said a word. He quickly tried to dial the police line but became frozen when the door started opening, like it was being cut from outside. He dropped the phone and tried running to one of the rooms when the door burst opened. He should run but he could not explain why his feet was refusing to move. The person was not huge and not average, just in-between. He was on a T-shirt that had a huge Jaguar with an opened mouth.

"I'm Jaguar and Stud sent me here. You must be a friend of Stud. I have been outside for a long time. I was told you will travel to Benin this morning and I'm to escort you." He actually looked as scary as a Jaguar with a deep horizontal scar running through his forehead and for someone as dark as Jaguar, it must have been a terrible injury for it to be that visible. His voice was also deep and a bit terrifying.

"Sorry about your door, you were not responding, so I had to cut through with a powerful laser knife"

Jaguar walked straight to the kitchen ignoring the fact that he was still shaking. He came back with many slices of bread with three bottles of Maltina drink. He had to hold one in his armpit. He could see that eighty percent of his body must be all muscle. He walked like a jungle cat. Jaguar walked past him again and went to sit down on one of the couches and started eating and drinking.

"I am very hungry, hope you don't mind?" But he had already consumed six slices and a bottle of malt.

He slowly nodded not that Jaguar was looking at him for his response. He was very focused on his meal. Something started stirring in him as he started recovering from his sheer panic. He felt weak and stupid. He felt so powerless that he had no idea how to cock a gun, no idea on how to fight and for the first time in his life that his life was being threatened, he became a helpless little girl. He wanted to be like Stud. Stud was so energetic. He wanted to be like Jaguar. Okay there was no way he was going to be that muscled and athletic but he wanted to exude a little of the confidence radiating from Jaguar. He acted like he was calm but also alert at the same time yet not bothered that some assassins might be on their way to the building. He should have least learnt something about defending or attacking. Jaguar was saying something but he was distracted by his pitiful state he did not hear him.

"You can fear? You did not hear me?"

He shook his head.

"I said you should hurry up. We need to start moving."

He had already emptied the bread and drinks. Ken remembered Jaguar said something about Benin.

"No, I'm travelling to Lagos not Benin. I can't go to school. I need to meet my mum."

He had finally found his voice but he was not happy that it sounded terrible.

"I was instructed by Stud that you will be going back to school this morning."

"My plans have changed. I lost my grandpa and I need to go see my mum but where is Stud?"

The way Jaguar looked at him made him feel like he knew what happened last night.

"I have never seen anybody outside the Force close to Stud. Stud does not have friends and just like that, I am guiding one. A civilian who is handsome and rich. Who are you to Stud?"

"No no no. You misunderstood me. It's not Stud. It's Ghost. I am friends with Ghost not Stud" he answered in a rush.

"Makes sense now."

And that was it as if Jaguar knew something he should know. But he did not dare ask further.

"I will need a direct instruction from Stud before I can take you to Lagos."

"I don't understand..." but his phone vibrated stopping him mid-sentence. It was a call from Ghost. He picked it with speed ignoring that the screen of the phone had crashed.

"Ken I know you must have been trying to reach your mum and dad but that won't be possible for now."

"I don't understand. What happened to them?" The panic was back.

"They are on flight to Benin, to our fortress. Your mum, dad and three siblings. You are not the only target."

"I still don't understand. Who wants us dead?"

"I will discuss that with you once you get to Benin."

"What of my mum..." The line went dead. He quickly dialed the number but it was not available.

"No no no, I need to know, I need to see my mum. She needs me" he panicked redialing Ghost's line, then his mum and dad's line but all were not available. Then he remembered Saheed and Jamila, his siblings. They both had phones but their lines were still not going.

"Ella" he shouted dialing Ella's line but it was not available.

He smashed his phone and destroyed what was left of the broken screen damaging the phone with it.

"Mama's boy can we go now?"

He turned to face Jaguar who had his arms crossed on his chest. It looked like he was entertaining himself with him.

"Please tell me. What is going on?" he pleaded.

"Your grandpa is dead, you, your mum and family are being targeted. Luckily for you, you have a friend like Ghost, so you are safe."

'And?'

"And what?"

"Who is after my life?"

"How am I supposed to know?" Jaguar seemed amused and it was making him angry.

"You just told me about my grandpa."

"No, you told me first, then Ghost called. I have a brain which I used to plus one to one and I got two."

"So you have no idea?"

"Nope. But you should. Who will benefit more if you die?"

"I have only one uncle, my mum's brother who already have forty percent of the company. He is my maternal grandpa, so there is no way I will have a place in his inheritance."

"That is supposed to be correct but your life being in danger soon after your grandpa died explains everything."

"Tell me?"

"Mr. Ken. It's better you hurry up let's be on our way. Ghost should have the answers."

Jaguar was out within seconds. He was just awed by how soundless he walked like a Jaguar stalking its prey. The name suited him perfectly.

In less than five minutes, they were on their way to Benin. There was no dead body outside and there was no attack. He saw how alert Jaguar was as they entered what he would call a four corner jeep, which looked like with was meant to be used only in the jungle. Everything about Jaguar reminded him of the jungle, untamed and wild.

They were almost at the outskirt of Abuja when Jaguar suddenly stopped.

"We are being stalked." He said it like it was something normal. He was even smiling as he said it.

"You mean we are being followed?" he needed to confirm because Jaguar was looking too relaxed.

Jaguar nodded putting the jeep on reverse.

"What are you doing?" he shouted.

"Becoming the predator" Jaguar said still calm.

He risked a glance back and saw nothing to indicate they were being followed. There was steady flow of traffic and not much cars.

Jaguar parked the jeep by the side of the road and stopped it. Jaguar brought out a pistol. No it looked bigger than the pistols he saw in movies.

"Go down" Jaguar shouted firing a bullet at a black Audi car driving past them.

His actions were so sudden. It was like when the Jaguar after stalking its prey finally attacked the prey. It was just a bullet. There was no other gunshot and there were only the noises of car horns and screams not gunshots. He slowly lifted his head when he heard the door being opened by Jaguar. Jaguar moved with such speed that scared him. The Audi car was not moving but the door was opening. Jaguar stared

firing. He had another gun in his other hand which he fired at the same time. The Audi back door was only partially opened, he would never see who were inside just the bleeding head of someone on the front seat which was resting on the window. That must be the first person Jaguar shot. As people screamed, panicked and reversed their cars, Jaguar stalked back to the jeep. There was no way he was going to see how he moved as walking.

He should be worried that the person after their life was not joking but he was surprisingly feeling happy, feeling grateful that he had listened to Ghost's plea and returned as a friend to Ella. Yesterday night and this morning explained how he would have been dead, how his family would have been dead if he had nobody like Ghost.

The six hours journey to Benin was mostly silent. It was supposed to be eight hours but Jaguar drove like a jungle man. Check points did not stop him and they always saluted him once he flashed his ID and at some point, he had to grab whatever permitted his hands to grab to hold on to sanity. It had in a way distracted him from thinking much about Stud. He never left his mind.

Jaguar drove straight to his residence at BDPA Ogbowo, Benin City without getting the directions from him. The time on his watch was 2:32PM. His damaged phone was in his big back bag he usually used for a light travel. Jaguar seemed more relaxed and his sharp glassy eyes were not looking everywhere for a threat.

"My work here is done. It was a pleasure meeting you Mr. Ken. Now get outta of my car. I have a date. I must be at Abuja before eight."

Panicked set in when the implication of what Jaguar said hit him.

"I thought you were supposed to protect me."

"Not anymore. Someone is taking over."

"Can't you wait till the person comes?"

"Nope. You are safe for now. At least trust that Ghost will not leave you unprotected."

Jaguar brought out his phone.

"Yes, I just got a confirmation that you are in safe hands. See you one of these days. Don't make me miss my date. I can't cancel on her twice."

He slowly opened the car and closed it and Jaguar was off in a jiffy. His body shook as he moved the few steps to his door. He found himself struggling to open it. His hands were shaking so badly that the key fell from his hands twice. Once he got the door opened, he rushed inside and jammed it with force. The door was bullet proof. He inhaled a lot of air. It was then he realized he had been barley breathing as he tried opening the door. At least he was safe till Jaguar's replacement would come. Then he remembered

Jaguar had opened the door at Abuja within minutes. What if the assassins had same equipment? He closed his mind to the possibility and turned from the door.

The scream of terror that came out from his mouth sounded foreign to him. He was going to die. Someone was sitting down on his couch, legs crossed and staring at him.

He turned back to the door and it was not broken, he was the one who opened the door. How did the man enter?

There was a bird perching on the man's shoulder looking at him with intelligent eyes.

"Ella is saying hi. She will save your scream for posterity and I won the bet. She believed you will not scream but will just be shocked, but you even exceeded what I thought you will do."

He was smiling, smiling at his predicament but he heard everything he said.

"Ghost?"

"That's one thing people always get."

He was still smiling.

"How did you enter my house? Ella does not have my keys."

He inhaled more air into his lungs, his body already recovering from the shock. He walked to sit opposite Ghost, placing his bag on the tiles.

"That's a secret. You have more things to worry about."

"My mum, where is she? I need to see my mum now."

"Look at the TV."

He turned his head towards the TV which had a code connected to a mini laptop showing the same thing on the TV, his family.

"Mum." He rushed to the TV.

"Ken" all of them chorused.

He could see relieve wash over their faces. His Mum had their last born on her lap, his dad's hands on her shoulder. He was carrying Jamila and Saheed was sitting close to him.

"What happened?" he asked.

"We only heard gunshots and after it ended, we were afraid to find out what was wrong. We wanted to call the police but got a call from Ella who explained what was going on. My father is dead and I have not been officially informed. Ella said he died yesterday morning, yet Kayode has not called to tell me."

His mum started crying making his dad to pull her head to rest on his shoulders.

"We have Ella's husband to be grateful to. We were flown here to a military fortress till the one after your life and your mum's life is apprehended. Thank God school just closed. We can stay here for now. I have instructed my personal assistant that I have gone on vacation with my family and I won't be reached. He has a number to contact me if the need be but you will somehow be in charge. Here is very wonderful and better than a hotel. Don't worry about us, I have never felt safe like this" his dad said rubbing his mum's shoulders.

He turned to look at Ghost.

"Thank you very much. This is more than the debt you owe me."

"You are welcomed. So that's it" Ghost said switching the TV off.

"No no. no. You can't do that. I am not through."

"I just wanted to show you that they are okay."

"When can I see them?"

"Till your life is no longer in danger."

He stood up shaking his head.

"That is not possible. There is no way I would not see my mum."

"No you can't Ken."

"Why?" he shouted.

"One, you are the main target, two, your family will remain at the fortress but seeing them means you will go there and come back here. There is a limit to what my unit will allow. They allowed your family after I explained but you won't be allowed in. Your family's location must remain a secret."

"So I am like a bait?"

"Something like that but more of we need you outside to run your dad's company. You also have school and we need you to access your mum's authority in your grandpa's company."

"I heard all you said but I'm confused about the last part."

"I'm sorry I am not going to explain further, the less you know the more we can easily finish our investigation."

"So let me get it. I will not see my mum ever until I am certified safe?"

"No you are not permitted to visit our fortress until we are sure your life is no longer in danger."

“What’s the difference?”

“You can see your mum if you decide that they should leave the fortress. You are the one I’m owing a debt not your family. Once you ask me to get them out, I will do that and you can see them.”

“And put them in danger?”

“Your choice Ken.”

Ghost tapped the bird on his shoulder. He started operating his watch and the bird flew out through a window. He had not even noticed the window was opened but the bars would only allow something as small as the bird to pass through. That was definitely not where Ghost entered the house from.

He turned and studied Ghost who still looked relaxed with his legs crossed. This was the first time he was seeing him. He was tall, very tall, slim or rather lanky but athletic. He sure looked like the Hausas but his ascent had no trace to any tribe. He must be the first Hausa man he had seen with no ascent.

“I am waiting” Ghost said.

“You know there is no way I am going to let my family be in danger. For my dad to say he had never felt that safe tells a lot.”

“Then it’s settled.”

“But how do I survive without seeing my mum, without consoling her. She was very close to her dad. What if this last for a month?”

“Then it will be a big price you have to pay to make sure they are safe. Your new bodyguard will show you how you can video chat with them. It is secured. Here is a phone with a secured line.” Ghost gave him an android phone he brought from his jean pocket.

Ghost stood up and walked to the door. They never made noise in their unit? They all walked like ghosts. No sound.

“Wait, you have not told me what is really going on? Who is after us?”

“Like I said, the less you know, the better. For now just know you are to stick to your bodyguard, you are to continue with your life as if you are not aware your grandpa is dead cause right now nobody knows apart from some few people. With time, I will be letting you in on some things and your decision will be carried out. Lastly, you cannot physically contact Ella. I hope you know why?”

He did not wait for his answer before he opened the door with another key and walked out.

He stood there assimilating everything Ghost said. Then he remembered Ghost had left. He had left him unprotected. Panicked set in again. What if he was attacked before the bodyguard came. The phone Ghost gave him vibrated making him jump. He almost dropped the phone.

‘Open the door for your new bodyguard.’

He walked the few steps to the door and gradually opened it.

His heart almost leapt away from his body because standing by the door, with a big military bag was the person who had been on his mind, who had kept him awake and insane. The guy from the other night. Stud.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER FIVE

She had sent a general message to her unit about her emergency mission. She would be able to give orders and exercise other duties from wherever she was. To meet up with time, she had to fly a helicopter and had landed on the field close to the underground house in Benin but had waited to gather up enough courage to face her nightmares. Crest who had flown with her had taken the helicopter back to Circle house. There were some Special Force agents at the underground house, five of them from Spider Unit which was ranked fourth, two steps below the Python unit. She took the available bike and drove straight to hell.

Her little hope that what happened the other night was just a mistake or an illusion disappeared immediately the door was opened. He was not even that close but heat rushed through her veins at the sight of him. At the same time, she also confirmed that he was out of reach. His shock of seeing her was clearly visible with his reaction. He had jerked back holding his chest, the side that had his heart. She could see the look of fear in his face, then the look of disgust. She looked at him keeping her face as stiff as a granite. Years of practice with her family had perfected her act. She could be raging inside, she could be screaming, hurt, in pains but no one would ever know. She would never let him see the hurt from his outright rejection of her, almost like he would prefer anybody but her.

“Where is my room? I have things to do” she said, happy that her voice was neutral, devoid of emotion. She had her supposed family to thank for it.

He did not answer and he avoided looking at her. She had no time for him. She walked past him and easily traced the kitchen then the bedrooms. It was three bedrooms and surprisingly all where furnished apart from the third one which looked like it had been turned to a library and reading room with a table and chair at the center of a semi-circle shelf. By the side of the entrance was a couch with lots of cushions and a book. ‘Wuthering Heights’ by Hemmingway. Even though she was pure science, she knew that book because she also had a love of reading. It could only be a sadist that would be able to write such tragic book. She closed the door and opened the second room which looked unoccupied and threw her bag down on the bed.

“This is a nightmare” she said aloud.

She brought out her phone to read his daily schedule which Major had sent. He had sent the full soft copy of her mission. It was on Wednesday and she read that he had lectures by 8:00AM the next day. Until then she was free but she knew she was wrong because if she wanted to be rid of him as soon as possible, she needed to brief him on what she wanted him to do. She unwillingly stood up and went to the parlor. He was still there, same position she left him, standing like a trapped animal. It was making her angry, a feeling she had learned to conquer.

"Ken we need to talk" she said sitting down and ignoring the feelings he was rousing in her. How was she supposed to survive?

Ken did not move, his fear was irritating her.

"Ken" she shouted, something she rarely did which was now becoming frequent.

"Yes sir, sorry. I am still trying to recover from things that have happened in less than twenty four hours" Ken said sitting down at the farthest chair from her.

"Sir?" she asked.

"What should I call you?"

She should not have forgotten that most people saw her as a man and except she corrected them, it remained so. She struggled within her mind to tell him she was female but deep within her, she knew it was safer if Ken saw her as a man. It would give her hope that his rejection was not because she was ugly but because he was afraid of her as a man. She would not be able to take it if she revealed her gender and he gave her the look she normally got from men.

"Don't call me sir, just call me Stud."

"Okay, Stud."

Her stomach responded to his voice calling her name. Something was definitely wrong with her.

"I am your bodyguard till the threat to your life is taken care of. It means you are to stick to me and I am to stick to you except you have a change of mind and you want to commit suicide and you must give me a head start before you make that decision. I have never failed in any mission and I won't start with you." But something flashed in her mind. The memory of a mission with Star in the north. Star was their commander, Miles had taken over after Star was killed. Star had stayed back to allow them to escape after their cover was blown by people they were trying to save. Pain laced through her as she remembered Star, the only one who understood her. They never fell in love but they were best friends. Star was the only one she told about her upbringing. She had to be debriefed by Wild after that horrible mission. Star had died fighting to save them and the people who betrayed them, who later found out that they were still expendable.

"Are you okay?" Ken's voice brought her back to the present. She had slipped, for the first time in years, she had let her emotion to reach the surface.

"I'm fine."

From Ken's stance, it looked as if he wanted to push further and for that split second, he was not scared of her but it was gone and he was back to being afraid of her.

"Are we clear on you sticking with me?"

He nodded and she was happy he did not talk. His voice was doing something to her lead body.

"Secondly, I got this from Ghost."

She dropped a file on the table, she did not want to risk being in contact with him while giving the file to him.

Ken studied the file for some time and started shaking his head.

"I seriously don't understand this. Why will my mother do this? I just spoke to her and she never mentioned anything like this."

"But that is her signature."

"I know that but I can't handle her position in her father's company. I have so many responsibilities on my head. I am in charge of all my dad's hotels, restaurant and filling stations here in Benin, then I was just told by Ghost and my dad that I have to take over from him for now. How can I possibly oversee my mum's position? Do you have an idea what it entails?"

"I know. But we need your mum to gain legal entrance into your grandpa's company. As it is now, she is the manager of the silk company but also a board member of all the others with legal access of records of goods imported and exported along with other passes."

"But why? She had never involved herself with those. That's Kayode, my uncle's territory. She just minds her business with the silk company."

"I cannot disclose the reason."

"The less I know the better right?"

"Yes."

"So I'm not only a bait to get the person after our lives, I'm also an entrance to something else you don't want to tell me about?"

"Ghost said he will let you know in due time. First you have to trust him."

"I trust Ella, I don't trust him."

Almost everything started making sense. Ken was a close friend to Ella, Ghost's wife who had Ghost wrapped under her thumb. The only thing left to understand was why Ghost would want to help a rival,

because she was not dumb. Except what Ken had with Ella was same thing she had with Star. Again that pain in her chest making her hand to automatically rub there.

“Are you sure you are okay? Did you even rest since last night?” Again, there was that concern in his voice that was strange to her but it was also gone and Ken was back to fearing her.

“I’m fine Ken, maybe just tired.”

“Okay, so what am I supposed to do with the power my mum has given me?”

She heard his question but there was something in his tone. Like he quickly wanted the meeting to end so she could rest. Ken was confusing her with his multiple personalities.

“For now you do nothing until Ghost meets with you.”

“Wait. Why do I feel that the power my mum just gave me is already public to the entire company?”

“You are very smart. What else do you feel?”

She did not understand why he jerked back from her question. She wished she had the ability to read emotions like Wild, Wolf and Jason, although Jason was more of calculative. Jason calculated emotions and solved emotions like a math puzzle. For a reason she could not explain, she wanted to understand Ken’s behavior.

“I mean what else do you think is the reason behind you taking over your mum’s position temporarily?”

“Oh that?” Ken paused, breathed a sigh of relieve before continuing, confusing her more.

“If the enemy is coming from there, the attack on me will intensify.”

“So we understand each other” she said standing up. It was best if Ken believed that was the main reason.

“But don’t you think what you guys are doing is extremely dangerous? You are just one man and yes I saw what you did but you are a bit...”

Ken had stopped talking because she turned staring at him with a stern face.

“A bit what?” she asked moving close to him.

He was taller than her, and well structured. He looked more like he belonged in the military but that was all to him. Ken stepped back as she moved closer.

“I’m waiting” she said moving closer and stopped when Ken hit a wall. He was looking everywhere but at her. Trying to find a way to escape from her, like she was a plague to be avoided.

“See, it was a slip of tongue. I was just worried that you might get hurt because you look smaller than Jaguar and you look more feminine in structure than masculine and I just feel I’m putting your life in

danger, like you would not be able to handle them and we might die, and you might die and it will just be better maybe if someone like Jaguar..see I mean Ghost shouldn't have forced you to my mess and what am I even saying?" he stammered but she could almost not hear him.

He had said she looked feminine, she knew he meant it as a kind of dismissal of her capability but it had another implication on her. Nobody had ever told her she looked feminine. Not even Star nor Major and Jason who had been trying to convince her to dress like a female. She was all too aware of her closeness to him, there was a fire burning in her body, not just a fire but a compulsion to hug him, to feel him. She jerked back and gave a little distance from him. She could see the confusion in his face, his questioning stare, like what just happened? She gathered all her trainings and became granite and steel, locking her emotions out of her body.

"I can handle whatever will be thrown at me or at you" she said then turned to leave him.

She walked as fast as she could, away from him. She locked the door immediately she entered her room. She had thought her nightmare had started not knowing she was wrong. This was worse than a nightmare.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER SIX

He was in big trouble. Even though Stud had left, he could still feel hot, so hot. He was not just hot but felt aroused like he had never been and Stud did even touch him. Something must have changed his body after the hurt of losing Ella to Ghost. His grandpa was dead, his life and his mum's life were in danger, apart from taking care of his father's company, he was now in charge of his mum's duties and he also had lectures and exam coming soon. There were so many loads resting on his shoulders yet the only thing he could think of was the male soldier in his house, inside one of his room, probably lying down on the bed. He hit his forehead with his palm.

He needed help. There was no way he was gay. It was a low noise in the kitchen that made him realize it was night, it was past eight. He had been standing in the exact position Stud had left him for that long. He was hungry, he had not eaten since morning but he knew going to the kitchen meant he would make contact with him. He quickly moved swiftly to his room. He was happy Stud did not take his room.

He tried to lie down but could not. He would rather be dead than be gay. It did not just makes sense and it was completely against nature. He turned and turned on his bed trying to think of anything rather than the fact that Stud was lying down not far from him but failed. He felt like screaming. He felt like beating his body which was betraying him. His phone started vibrating. It was his mum but how?

He sat up as he picked the call.

"Ken I've been waiting for your call. What is going on?"

There was panic in her voice.

“Mum calm down. I am fine. I did not know I could call you with this secured line.”

“Not just me but Saheed Jamila and your dad. Ghost saved our new numbers in your new phone.”

“He did not tell me. I’m sorry mum. I’m sorry I’m not there to hold you. Sorry about Grandpa.”

And his mum started crying. He should have not said anything.

“Mum please don’t.”

“Kayode and my father’s lawyer are yet to call me. I called Kayode with my new secured line and you won’t believe he told me that my father’s is okay. That he had some seizures but he was okay. The lawyer’s line is not going. Why will Kayode do that?”

“Do you think he might be the one...”

“No Ken, Kayode cannot do that to me. I am his sister.”

“Half-sister.”

“Ken for the sake of my sanity, I want to believe Kayode has a good reason why he does not want to tell me my father is dead.”

He could almost hear the strain in her voice as she mentioned her father.

“I don’t want to believe that” she cried.

Her tears were making tears come out of his eyes. He hated to see his mum sad.

“How is the new place?” he asked changing the topic.

“Oh my God. Ken you need to see this place. It’s really a fortress and big and so beautiful. The kids already love here. You won’t believe they are not here. They joined the other kids to sleep at the kids underground house, including Saheed. The kids are so pretty and fun and I am already in love with them especially Al, Pearl, Lara, George and Geoffrey and with time John.”

“That is a long list. How many kids?”

“Six.”

“But you mentioned six.”

“Then I am in love with six of them just John is something else.”

He was very happy he had changed the topic. He could feel the excitement in his mum’s tone. His mum and dad never believed they would ever adopt a child, not to talk of children, three of them from same family, from Niger. Ella had been the one to rescue them from Ring Road, Benin City where Jamila

was begging for help to save Malik her two years old brother who was sick. Jamila was just nine and Saheed, the most senior was just thirteen, yet he struggled to push wheelbarrow at Ring road to take care of his siblings. They had escaped from hunger and ran to northern Nigeria only to meet Boko Haram invasion where their parents were killed and Saheed had escaped with his siblings. His stories made his mum cry. He had wanted to tell his dad to console his wife but his dad was also crying. His parents had first taken them to Lagos so he would concentrate with his studies because he had brought them to his house. Few days later, his parents asked if he would be happy to have siblings and within few months they were officially adopted. His dad was just too thrilled with their independence. Life had shaped Saheed and Jamila to act as father and mother. That was more than two years ago, he was twenty two but now he was twenty five. It had happened few weeks to his twenty third birthday. Jamila was twelve which was just a week ago, Saheed was now fifteen and baby Malik was now four.

Saheed had asked him why he was okay with him becoming his brother. He had not understood the question until Saheed had sworn that he would never drag properties with him and his father and when he had asked him where the idea came from, Saheed had said Nigerian movies and he had laughed. He had to explain fully what adoption meant, that he was now his brother and he had every right to what his father had but Saheed was still yet to fully grab the concept. That was the problem with matured children unlike Malik who would never know the difference. But they were getting on along very well. His dad always liked to travel with Saheed. He said Saheed was very intelligent. They had lost two years in their education but had already met up making him feel dull. He loved them with a fierceness he could not even explain. Meanwhile Jamila was daddy's girl.

"So what's with John?" he asked his mum who was laughing probably because she remembered something funny.

"You can't believe the kid attacked your dad when he tried to hug him."

"How old is he?"

"One, almost two"

"You don't mean it. How?"

"We were told he was aggressive to strangers. He even tried to bite my hand when I tried to hold him and then punched Saheed who squatted to greet him, then stamped on Jamila's legs and the scary thing is that he did not even make one sound, his eyes were very sharp and alert. It was only Malik he smiled at and he also prevented their wolf dog from greeting us. He was shouting no at the dog."

What his mum was saying was quite interesting.

"He can talk?"

"Not really just gibberish but his no is very clear. His dad had to apologize to us. You won't believe a little boy like that has no fear in his veins."

"I don't understand."

"The men in this fortress are quite intimidating and there was this huge one, they called Beast. He had tried to intervene and warned John to behave but John had looked at him, someone that was making me a bit scared and he shouted a big no. Somehow, John eased the tension because there was no way we could keep from laughing. But when his dad had told him to allow the dog and to treat us as friends he had listened but just hugged Malik. George told me he listens to only Al and his father and spanking did not work on him. He is cute though. And you won't believe we were not allowed to meet Al at first because Geoffrey who does not talk and his twin George had blocked her and after studying us which Fast told us to allow and remain still, we were given a pass. Those kids are really fun to be with and Jamila already sent dad a message that she will be learning how to fight from tomorrow morning. Let me hope with time, we will all be able to win John's heart."

His mum was so excited. He was laughing with her even though he could hardly grasp all what she was saying. Those names were new to him. He only knew Ghost, Jaguar and Stud. Just thinking about Stud reminded him of his big problem and he just could not keep it away from his mum. Before it escalated he needed help from his mum. Mums had solutions to every problem.

"Mum I'm in trouble. I need help."

"Oh my God. I forgot you are not here. What's wrong? Is there not safe."

His mum's voice had changed from excitement to panic within seconds. He felt like cursing himself.

"Mum no. I'm safe for now. It's not that."

"What is it?"

"Mum please it's help I need not condemnation."

"But you have not said anything."

"I think I'm gay."

He said it so fast so he wouldn't change his mind mid-way.

"God forbid. You are not gay in Jesus name."

And she started praying in Yoruba. The fact that his dad had not intervened meant his mum was far away from his dad. He waited for her to calm down and ask the important question.

"What makes you think so? When did it start?"

He told his mum everything. It was a good thing to have a best friend. A friend he could tell anything. He was one lucky boy to have a mum like his mum.

"I forbid that feeling in Jesus name. I will fast and pray about it. If necessary I will take you for deliverance after this is over."

"But mum what should I do?"

"Why don't you talk to Ella? Let her talk to Ghost to change the man. You mentioned Jaguar but you did not tell me your body reacted to him or to Ghost. Something is wrong with that guy not you."

"Mum wait. Repeat what you said."

"I said something is...."

"No before that."

"You did not tell me you had feelings for Jaguar or Ghost."

"Mum you are right. It's just the guy. Thanks mum. I love you so much."

"I love you more. Just stay away from him and make Ella to make Ghost change him. I'm going to sleep. Your dad is calling me. Be safe."

The line went dead but his hope was alive. His mum was right. It was just Stud. The idea did not even come to him around Jaguar or Ghost. He would make sure to confirm that before meeting Ella during the break. One of his one hour break by 1:PM correlated with Ella's break.

Then he remembered he was not supposed to physically meet Ella but he would find a way. In the main time, he needed to eat.

He just had bread and eggs and drinks and water in the fridge. There was nothing else. He had been planning to shop immediately he came back but he was now learning fast how things most times could change in a twinkle of an eye.

The scent that hit him as he entered the kitchen made him rush to the pot on the already switched off gas burner. Stud had made Eguisi soup. Stud could cook. He did not dwell on it because his stomach was singing and there was garri in a small bag. He made eba and ate.

Stud was waiting for him, hands in pocket, a black back bag hanging on his right shoulder, legs crossed and back resting on his red Toyota Camri when he came outside by 7:48AM. Stud's posture was bringing images to his head. He shook his head several times and stopped when he noticed Stud was looking at him.

"Keys" Stud said.

He was relieved Stud did not question his action. He threw the keys to Stud. There was no way he was going to go near him. He hoped Ella would be able to help him. Even as he followed the long way to the other back seat of the car, he felt like hugging Stud. His mind kept imagining how it would feel like. He was going crazy.

“Ken I am not your driver. You need to come to the front seat.”

He wanted to argue but between what Stud’s voice was doing to his groin and just seating in at the front seat, he concluded that the latter was the lesser evil.

He quickly moved to the front seat and sat very close to the door. If Stud noticed his actions, he ignored it. Stud drove straight to University of Benin, Law Faculty. There was tension between them throughout the four minutes journey.

“Don’t open the door yet. I need to scan.”

That voice again sounding on the wrong place instead of his ears. He nodded without turning Stud’s way.

“I need to be in class eight on the dot” he said when he discovered he had just a minute left.

“And you need to be alive” was Stud’s response.

He knew Stud was looking at his phone but he refused to look towards Stud. The weather was not hot, yet he was already sweating and he rarely sweated. If care was not taken, his white long-sleeved would be soaked with sweat.

“All clear. Nothing Suspicious but I am still going to walk you to your class. Take this and wear.”

Stud gave him a black bangle.

“And this.”

Stud gave him a wrist watch, an android wristwatch. Stud waited for him to wear the bangle and wear the wrist watch after removing the silver wrist watch his mum gave to him.

“Let’s go. I was supposed to explain how the watch works but that will be later” Stud said opening the door. He opened his door and inhaled a lot of air but his breath seized when he saw Stud standing in front of him. Stud was so fast.

“Next time, allow me open the door for you.” Stud was talking to him but was not looking at him. He was watching everywhere with his sharp eyes.

“Walk beside me.”

Stud did not give him any chance to even nod because he was already walking and Stud was fast for someone her height. He had to even joggle to meet up with the swift way Stud was walking. He tried to be as soundless as Stud but failed woefully.

Stud walked him to his lecture hall and stopped by the door. He prevented him from entering the class. He waited for Stud to study the class before allowing him to enter.

“Don’t leave the class except I say so” Stud instructed. He just nodded. Luckily for him, the lecturer was entering the class at the same time he was sitting down.

The lecturer taught but he was not listening. He needed to find a way to talk to Ella. He picked his phone and sent a message to her number.

'Hi Ella. Expect my call by one.'

He was elated when the message was sent and when Ella replied.

'Okay. But we can't see. Ghost has placed an embargo on me.'

He could not wait for 1:PM.

He went from one lecture hall to another constantly aware Stud was nearby. Time ran like a snail and it felt like it was eternity before his 1:00PM break came. He came out of the hall and started walking to the rest room but someone blocked him, the contact setting him on fire.

"I told you to never leave until I say so."

"Which I have obeyed but I really need to go to the rest room."

"You could have still sent me a message. You already have my number."

"I'm sorry. Can I go to the rest room please?"

He would agree to anything as long as he could finally breathe.

Stud shifted and as he hurried away from Stud, he felt him following him but from a distance. It was better than the closeness that he was still feeling the impact. He entered the rest room for the first time and almost felt like running out. Someone had urinated on the ground and someone had defecated without flushing. The smell was turning his stomach but his problem was bigger than the stench. He quickly dialed Ella's line and was happy when she picked almost immediately it started ringing.

"Ken I'm sorry about your..."

"See Ella let's skip that. I need to leave where I am but I need help."

"What is wrong?"

He could hear the panic in her voice.

"I need a change of bodyguard. Please help me tell Ghost. Even if I am going to pay, I don't mind."

"But why. Stud is very good."

Her voice was now that of confusion.

"I wish I can explain but I might die before explaining. I am in the toilet and the stench can kill but trust me that I have a very good reason."

“Ken to be sincere, I wish I can help. It is beyond me and even now beyond Ghost. I don’t know what happened between you and Stud the other night. Even Stud had sent Jaguar to replace her. Something she had never done before and Wild had told Ghost Stud was furious when she discovered her new assignment was you. I wish I can help but Stud is the best you can get. Even Jaguar is below her in rank and...”

“Ella stop. Just stop. You are confusing me.”

“How?”

“Is like we are not talking about the same person.”

“There is only one Stud in the Special Force.”

“Then why are you referring to him as a she?”

There was a pause and then laughter, so loud that he had to push his phone away from his ears. He put it back after some seconds but Ella was still laughing.

“Ella what is funny?”

“Your olodo don reach overdrive. At least even if you are now a law student, you were once an English student na. At least you should know the meaning of Stud. It’s almost same thing as tomboy.”

“What you are saying is Stud is girl?”

“Olodo. No Stud is a sky. Fish” And she started laughing again.

And then the realization dawned on him. He should have known. He could not understand why he never thought about the meaning of Stud and why he never paused when she reacted to his calling her sir. And from what Ella said, Stud was also avoiding him. He was not the only one feeling the heat. All at once, he started laughing like he was drunk. He felt so light like a heavy weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He could not even smell the stench of the rest room. He felt like crying with joy. He was still normal. He was not gay.

“Ken” Ella shouted.

He had been distracted and did not hear what she said.

“Sorry what did you say?”

“I was asking why you were laughing and saying you were not gay.” There was amusement in her voice.

“I can’t believe I said that out loud.”

“You really have a lot to gist me but I can’t assure you it will work but I will talk to Ghost.”

“Talk to him about what?”

“Ken are you sure you are alright? You called me because you wanted Stud to be changed.”

“Don’t try it. Forget I called you.”

Ella was saying something when he cut the call. He could not wait to tell his mum that a miracle had happened and her prayers had been answered. But most importantly, he could not wait to see Stud, the girl that had given him sleepless night.

As he opened the door of the rest room, he felt excited, elated and as he saw Stud standing from a distance, arms folded and resting on a wall, he just knew he had never felt so alive.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER SEVEN

She wished she knew what was keeping Ken distracted. He had not even acknowledged his course mates’ greetings and he looked like he was not following up with the lectures as he navigated from one lecture hall to another, about three of them, one taking two hours before his 1:00PM break. At least he had waited for her message before leaving each of the classroom. She was also without questioning stares from students and lecturers and whoever came in contact with her. During Ken’s second lecture, a UNIBEN security man came to question her referring to her as Mr. man. She had given her ID to him and another short signed paper on what she was doing. He had looked at her strangely, like she was too young to be a commander of a unit and top ranked air force officer. But he saluted and left and she was not disturbed again apart from the wary eyes of law students on white. She understood them because she was on her customary black t-shirt and a black jeans. No one questioned her, just stared and moved on.

Ken had not allowed her consent before he started leaving the class and she wished she had not stopped him. It took time to control her breath as Ken went to the rest room. The distractions Ken was giving her by reawakening her body could be lethal to them if her targets were close by. She forced herself to concentrate and moved closed to the restrooms, making sure to keep a little distance while also checking her phone to see if there were any suspicious movement around the Law Faculty. At the moment, her eyes in the sky was giving her the view of the car park which was directly opposite Faculty of Agriculture. There was nothing suspicious, just students moving up and down, a lecturer entering his jeep and another car driving into the park. She wanted to close the phone but stopped. Something was definitely wrong with the three men coming out of the Audi car wearing white long-sleeve and black trousers. She quickly used her wrist watch to take control of the artificial intelligent bird, Jason and late George’s work which Jason had improved on and with the new initiative of Major, there was a team of some ex-military personnel hunting for talented individuals in areas of technology who were automatically employed and made to work at their technology ground which was still at the Circle house but would be entered through another way by civilians who worked at the ground. Everything was almost now being manufactured from scratch in the Circle house, their technology ground. She zoomed

in on the three men who did not convince her in any way that they were students. She made a screenshot of the image and sent it as a command to the bird. She clicked the image after it had shown sent and many options appeared. She clicked on the option of sensor and clicked on allow, then removed the bird from manual. It was now programmed to follow the three men already entering the faculty but from a distance. It was not weird to see a bird, especially a small one fly inside the faculty and fly out through the window. She had seen more than five birds on different occasions and nobody seemed to bother or look at the birds meaning it was a normal thing. She followed their movements and knew she was right when they stopped at the board to look at the timetable of four hundred level. Then they started going towards the hall Ken was supposed to have his last lecture of the day. She had just two decisions, make the assassins her prey or take Ken and escape. The latter was better because she did not want the ugliness of the battle to touch the students. So many questions would be raised and she was not ready to deal with that. She was supposed to capture at least one of the assassins but Ghost had told her to still wait which meant she would continue to eliminate all the targets.

She was happy when she saw Ken coming out as she raised her head preventing her from going to call him out but there was something different about him. He was smiling at her, no sign of fear or trying to avoid her.

The way he was looking at her made her to momentarily forget they were almost under attack. He was looking at her chest like he was trying to see her in another light and smiling while he looked at her all over. There was something in his eyes that burned her skin.

“Why did you not tell me?” Ken asked and he was clearly not going to run away from her, he was even too close that she could feel his breath.

“Tell you what?” she asked moving back, something she had never done.

“That you are a girl?”

That made her pause.

“You are shocked. Ella told me by mistake. I can’t believe...”

She did not allow him to finish as her senses returned when her wrist watch blinked signaling the bird was very close to her which meant the assassins were close. They would need to pass their way to Ken’s next lecture hall.

Her body was going to get the both of them killed. She pushed Ken to another corridor with a dead end. But that would not do. She covered him with her body but that would raise more suspicion because Ken was taller than her, they would still see him.

“What is it?” Ken asked.

She could see the panic in his eyes. She could not believe she had been distracted.

"There are three men that will soon pass the opposite alley and you must not be seen. Bend down so I can cover you like you are looking at my phone" she instructed.

"I have no idea on how to fight but I know I will still be taller even if I bend my head but this will work."

Ken turned from the wall and made her back to rest on the wall blanketing her which was a stupid idea but before she could tell him the option was to fight, Ken covered her mouth with his. Her blood became molten lava and she felt the ground was shaking under her feet and sensations her brain would never be able to comprehend took over. She had never kissed before, everything she had learned had been taught or practiced the hard way but she could not understand how her body knew what to do because she found herself opening for him and kissing him, tasting him and savoring him like she was going to die if she did not quench her taste.

Only her vibrating wrist watch could return her senses as it indicated the bird was few feet away. She pushed Ken away and her 39mm handgun was in her hand, same time pulling Ken down and blocking him with her body. That was the most stupid idea. Ken kissing her would attract more inquisitive stares, not only because it was something that should be rare but it would look as if Ken was kissing a man.

Few seconds more and the three men would be walking past the opposite corridor which was surprisingly empty as if students knew there was danger and avoided that place.

She changed her mind about the gun and activated Flight 49, bullet deflector which was in her back bag. Her laser knife was out from her shoe same time the three men walked past without even glancing their way, their focus straight on where they were going to.

"They are students Stud."

He had been the first to speak reminding her of what had just transpired. She was going to shout or probably kick him in his groin but safety first. She pulled Ken up.

"Run" she said and took off.

She was relieved when she heard footsteps behind her. She ran all the way outside and straight to Ken's car. She opened the driver door and was already driving out before Ken closed the door. She used her left hand to release the bird temporarily from keeping a watch on the assassins and sent it out of the faculty as she drove straight to Ken's lodge.

"At least say something. Why will you think students are after my life?" Ken asked.

She heard the panic in his voice which could be more of the way she was driving.

"Have you seen them before?" she asked.

She was already on Nineteenth Street, she would navigate her way to twenty First Street from Twentieth Street. She needed the time to allow the bird to get to Ken's house before her because that was where she directed it to. It was already programmed in the map of the bird.

"I have not but I'm not supposed to know everyone in my faculty."

She did not answer. The bird was already there. She stopped the car but instead of using her phone, she brought out a goggle which she activate. It was fully charged. It was automatically connecting to the bird like a phone connecting to a Bluetooth mp3 player without instructions because they had been connected before. The bird was giving her the aerial view of the house and there was nothing. It was safe.

"Does any family member know your house apart from your immediate family?"

"My uncle has paid a visit."

She nodded, ignited the car and drove to Ken's house.

"I'm still waiting for you to tell me why you were asking" Ken said as she parked the car and started coming out.

She took the keys from Ken and opened the door her anger at his stupidity rising to the surface.

She was on Ken the moment the door closed.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER EIGHT

He knew Stud was pissed off but did not know it would result to being kicked on his lap almost close to his groin. At least Stud was not that too angry because it looked like she intentionally avoided that part of his body.

"Ouch, what was that for?" He was holding and rubbing his lap to reduce the pain which was nowhere close to the burning in his groin. He could still taste her, her fierce passion, she was fire, no she was liquid fire, nothing soft but pure fire and brimstone that burned and he wanted to be consumed. He had never felt something close to that and he knew he would always hunger for more, he knew he was already addicted and he was not willing to stop, he would always want that fire burning him and turning his blood to hot liquid

"How dare you kiss me and are you stupid? How can you do that when you have assassins on your tail?"

She was really pissed off. Her voice said it all.

"You needed a distraction so they won't see me."

"And you believe that stupid idea would have worked if they had looked our way. You almost got yourself killed."

She was still angry and looking as if she wanted to punch him. He shifted away from her but she followed like they were dancing in harmony. She shifted again and it was same thing. How on earth was she doing that?

“But you kissed me back. At least you could have stopped it. Please don’t tell me you kiss other men like that.”

Something was definitely wrong with him because the thought of Stud giving that passion to someone else was making him boil with rage but there was not much time to dwell on that because a punch landed on his stomach sending him squatting and holding his stomach.

“Ouch, this hurts a lot. Ella said you guys are not regular soldiers that beat civilian. You are supposed to protect me.”

He went fully on the tiled floor holding his stomach and stretching his legs. His lap reminded him of Stud’s kick.

“Ouch.”

“You won’t be able to talk if you try that again.”

“Stud I can’t promise that. Right now I can’t think straight. You have no idea of the torment you gave me from our first meeting thinking I’m gay.”

“And how is that my damn business?”

“I am a very straightforward person Stud. I am going to kiss you over and over again. You can punch me all you want but I know not kissing you or touching you is worse pain. You have resurrected things I taught dead and I’m not going to pass this opportunity. I can’t think straight and I can see I’m not the only one burning. You kissed me back. I know you feel what I feel. Tell me you did not like the kiss, tell me you don’t want me.”

There was something else in her eyes, he had seen that with girls enough to know what it was.

“Wait, Stud unbelievable. That was your first kiss. I’m your first?”

She was going to hit him again. He saw it coming and prepared for it but it never came because they were interrupted.

“As much as I want to see to the end of this reality show, we don’t have the time.”

He jerked up as Stud turned to look at the intruder.

“What the heck? Ghost are you sure you are human? How did you enter and how long have you been here?”

If he was not scared or wary of Ghost before he was now terrified. Ghost was standing so still by the wall opposite them that he could even be passed as a sculpture with his hands on his pockets. Stud he understood a bit. She was not that big but was spontaneous, flexible and fast and skilled because he had seen her in action. He also understood Jaguar because Jaguar looked wild and intimidating and fast and skilled and he had also seen Jaguar in action but Ghost was something else. A lanky fellow who looked like someone he would dismiss if he was to fight him but looking at him now with his brain and not just his eyes, he knew Ghost was more deadly than Stud and Jaguar combined together. He could not explain how he knew he just knew that as still as he was, he could strike and he would not know what happened to him, he would just see himself in the underworld. The fact that Ghost must have been in the house all throughout and Stud with her trainings and heightened sense did not know was giving him chills, real chills. Just who were they? They were not the Nigerian military he knew.

Stud saluted and only brought her hands down after Ghost had brought his down.

"Ghost you have not answered me. You are giving me chills."

"That's what ghosts do. They give people chills."

"But at least you can give me a head start even though you will never tell me how you do it but at least send a message that you are around."

"Then I won't be Ghost anymore. Stud your targets are four minutes away. You handle all. Omega no alpha for now. I'm leaving with Ken. Will give you full situation reports when I bring him back."

Ghost was walking to the door as he spoke.

"Ken let's move" Ghost said.

"To where?"

"To where I'm taking you to."

Ghost did not give him the chance for another question, he was already by the door opening his car. Stud had not yet said anything. She was looking embarrassed and he felt he was responsible because Ghost now knew something Stud would have wanted to keep private but he would not take it back even if he had the opportunity to.

"Stud.."

"Go with him. Every seconds matter with us. They are coming here."

"Wait Ghost" he shouted from the door. Ghost had already ignited his car and was reversing.

"Ken move now" Stud said all serious.

Stud was already bringing out an instrument that looked like a tiny fluorescent stick light but he was not deceived, it stuff elongated when Stud pressed a button. That thing was deadly.

“Why is Ghost leaving you to face them, I don’t like the idea.”

He was genuinely worried especially now he knew Stud was a girl.

“Cause Ghost knows I can handle them”

Stud shouted pushing him down from the door as Ghost blew the horn.

“Please don’t get hurt. We have unfinished business.”

He did not wait for her response which he knew would have been a punch if he was close to Stud. He rushed to the car. Ghost was already driving out before he could close the door. It must be their general hobby in whatever unit they belonged because they were not soldiers, they were something else, something he did not want to understand at the moment.

As Ghost drove through a road he had never used and did not know about, he remembered no one gave Ghost his car key.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER NINE

If only Ken knew what his words were doing to her. His words were resurrecting emotions she could not even understand and it was still ringing in her head. The worst part was she knew Ken was a playboy, a dog on heat who wanted any hole he could quench his desires with. He was not interested in her, she knew that enough that there was no way someone like Ken would ever be interested in her yet there was also the part where Ken had shown interest, had looked at her as a female, something that had never happened. And the kiss, it destroyed all her believe that there was nothing much she was missing, it might be because there was nothing that had interested her body enough to be aroused that just a kiss had made her blood boil and her body wanted more that it was making her shake with need. The thought that Ken kissed other girls like that and would do so after her was making her angry, she did not want to imagine Ken with another girl. What was wrong with her? Then Ghost was now another issue. Ghost had been inside and had witnessed everything including her conversation with Ken. Even a dumb person would know why she had avoided Ken not to talk of Ghost. The fact that Ghost already knew she had feelings for Ken was embarrassing. She had wanted the ground to open up and swallow her just after she had punched Ken. Her world that had not been interesting was all of a sudden turning upside down.

She tried to think past the kiss she was still feeling but it was as if her mind and her soul participated with her body.

“Stud targets are almost here. You need to focus” she told herself as she stepped outside to hunt for her preys who were a minute and thirty seconds away. She took the gun deflector after confirming it was fully charge, it was easy to carry because she could wear it like the belt boxers or wrestlers were

awarded with, just that the head was bigger, her gun was intact in her pockets and her knives were in the positions she always put them. She was not going to completely trust on the bullet deflector. The taser kill which was known as flight 66 was also fully charged and activated. She quickly brought out her hand glove which was powerful enough insulator incase the Flight 66 went the wrong way. She was squatting at the side of the house. She had not had enough time to study the compound. Okay she had enough time but had not, something she had never missed to do before. Ken was trouble in every way. The compound was fenced but not big. The gate, the house, the park was all the space, almost nowhere to hide because the back was almost touching the fence, barely enough space for one person to squeeze into. She was squatting at the left side, the right was the car park which could contain at least three cars which did not make sense. There was a small prado jeep, her bike and nothing else. With her sunglasses on her eyes, which was also a gadget, she connected to the bird to see what her targets would do. She pressed another button on the glasses and just one of the lenses showed her targets, the left side was left for her to see what was in her line of vision. She must not be taken unawares. The three men went straight to the door and knocked.

She quickly switched on the sound using her wrist watch.

“You sure say he dey inside?” the tallest of the three men asked.

“Break the door make we dey sure. The gate dey wide open, he fit dey inside maybe go do something before him next class” the shortest and fattest said.

There was no way she was going to start thinking of how she would fix the door. She had so many things to think about and fixing a broken door was out of the list. She moved quickly but stealthily towards the three men who were so focused on the motor saw one of them was carrying already by the door as if they knew they would use it.

“You know it is bad manners to break into someone’s house.”

She sure caught more than their attention because they brought out their guns so quick, the motor saw dropping from the tallest man’s hands or rather he had thrown it away.

“You are not Mr. Ken. Who are you?”

Those were stupid questions she did not have the energy to waste on answering. Her music was already playing. It was John Cena’s you can’t see me. She used the rhythm to leap on her first target who was too shock to shoot and who the taser killer was already electrocuting. Her laser knife punctured his throat. She leapt from him to the second one as the third one fired but the bullet was deflected, even if it the bullet was not deflected, it would have hit her second target because using the rhythm of the song, she had already spun her second target towards the direction of the third one and Flight 66 had made contact with him that he could only cock his gun and did not get the opportunity to fire, as her second target vibrated from being electrocuted, she leapt on the shoulder of the third and last target who was yet to come to terms that his bullet would not touch her because he was still firing.

The man dropped his gun and tried to throw her off him. She welcomed the challenge. She spun him very fast to the rhythm of the song and summersaulted with him giving him a smack down. There was no need to electrocute. She just stabbed his throat at the point Beast told them was the killer shot, the point big cats like the lion normally attack for a quick kill. As the man jerked to his death, she finished the other one by stabbing his chest, then she called the local police and reported for them to come to the scene.

She was happy she did not have to explain a lot. Her ID and her mission was enough. She loved open mission like this, although it could be dangerous especially if someone in the police was a friend of the enemy. But she would deal with that if it turned out that way. She locked the gate after the police had cleared the bodies, then mopped the blood because she knew Ken would freak out. Only after she had washed and kept the mob she wondered why she cared how Ken would feel.

She went straight to her room and threw herself on the bed with the hope of getting a quick sleep but Ken's word refused to leave her head.

"I am a very straightforward person Stud. I am going to kiss you over and over again. You can punch me all you want but I know not kissing you or touching you is worse pain. You have resurrected things I taught dead and I'm not going to pass this opportunity...."

"Stop it Stud, he is just a playboy" she shouted hitting her head. She sat up to read her files but she could still hear him. She left the room and went to the library, she smelt his perfume and scent. How on earth would he have a scent? She closed the door and went back to her room. She was going mad. She knew she shouldn't have taken the mission. She was in trouble. Her phone vibrated. Kate was calling. She picked the call because between talking to Kate and thinking of Ken and the kiss, Kate was the lesser evil.

"Hello Oreva, did Catherine call you?"

She hated the way they called, like they were taunting her.

"Yes, I have to contribute two hundred and fifty k for dad's sixtieth birthday."

"So when are we expecting your contribution? It's okay if you don't have the money, you can just pay what you want. My husband and I are contributing a million. Do you know he got a promotion? He is now the Manager no longer acting manager?"

"I will be sending mine soon..."

"Wait Oreva is that all? Are you this jealous that you cannot be happy for your sister? I was also promoted to Manager in a section of silk company. At least..."

"Kate I don't have your time. None of you showed up during my.."

"Is that it? But I told you I had a board meeting, my husband....Wait.. Honey?"

“Yes dear” she heard his voice, the voice that was supposed to make her feel hurt. But surprisingly she was feeling nothing.

She cut the call because she knew exactly what Kate was doing. Kate had already sent her messages multiple times about her promotion and her husband’s promotion. It was just their duty to also stick their successes on her face and they never allowed her report hers. During a gathering, like a birthday, she was never allowed to say one word about her achievements. Kate and Catherine did not only talk and displayed their achievements to her but to their friends who were exactly like them. They talked about the prices of their clothes, their shoes, their bags and everything else and she knew most of the time, they were lying. And Kate always made sure she was holding her husband’s hand and shoving themselves in front of her just to taunt her that she was married to the person she wanted to marry. And it was yet another birthday, her father would not even miss her, he would be even be happy if she did not show up yet she had never missed any of them. Every one of them she ignored her siblings, even her brother and his wife who had joined the twins to compete for the wealthiest, she ignored all, she could bear it. It was just that she wished her father would look at her but she had always been disappointed. She knew this year would not be different yet she would still go, hoping and praying things would change and her father would talk to her. Kate was calling again. She cut the call and sent congratulations as a message to her. Kate would be shocked, but she had to. She would not be like them. But that was actually not the main reason. She just did not feel hurt hearing Kate’s husband’s voice. In fact, the call had not even distracted her body nor her mind from Ken. Ken was taking over her life and there was that dread that she would not be able to withstand him and he was going to break her heart and she would never recover.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TEN

“You know you have to explain how you have my keys. Those are my keys, the key holder is mine. If it’s another key that can open my car, I will understand but that is my key holder.”

Ghost was driving too fast and the only way to keep himself from hyperventilating would be to talk and to find out who Ghost was.

“I took it from Stud’s bag as I walked to the door.”

At least he answered but it was making him more worried.

“I did not see you taking it.”

“You were not looking.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Exactly why I could collect it without both your knowledge. You can’t be thinking, you must be very sure. The human mind is so complex and can be deceptive. It can make you believe what you thought you saw and did not see.”

“So what you are trying to tell me is that you are normal?”

“I am not normal.”

“Thanks for clarifying that. So you are telling me you have supernatural powers? I don’t believe in that.”

“I have talents which I have honed over the years with brutal and excruciating military trainings, there is nothing supernatural about it.”

He knew there was more, there was something unique about them but he was not ready to delve into it, there were bigger issues like where he was taking him to cause at first it looked like they were going towards Lagos but he had changed route and was driving through a bushy part. They were passing civilization with lightning speed.

“Where are you taking me to?”

“I can hear the fear in your voice, you don’t trust me?”

“No, I trust Ella but I’m beginning to think you will find a suitable story for Ella. Where are we going?”

He was already bringing out his phone but with his right hand close to the door where Ghost would not see.

“We are going to meet your mum and decide on a suitable part.”

“I thought you said my mum will be in danger if I met her.”

“I never said that.”

“You insinuated that” he shouted which was making him pissed off because Ghost was looking like he was laughing at him.

“No one knows where your mum is and for now no one knows where you are.”

He did not answer, he concentrated on sending a message to Jamila. He wanted to send the message to Ella but he felt Ghost would know.

‘Is everyone okay? Ken.’

He felt a bit hope when the message was delivered but jerked when his phone started ringing.

“I wonder what you would be able to do if I’m the bad guy. It will be interesting to know how you are going to fight me, kill me, go and rescue your mum and then enter our fortress and rescue your dad and siblings.”

It was the amusement in his voice that made him feel like punching him and wiping it off his face. The phone started ringing again after he had failed to pick the first call because he was listening to Ghost.

“Jamila.”

“Ken.”

The both of them spoke at the same time but he was the one having a voice filled with combination of dread and fear.

“Are you okay? Where is Malik and Saheed and dad?”

“I’m very fine but why are you asking if we are okay and why are you panting?”

She was just too intelligent for her age.

“I was just checking on you because I’m missing you but have not answered my question.”

“We are fine Ken and I don’t want to ever leave here. Dad said it is just for some few days but I don’t want to ever leave. I want dad to buy the house we are staying so we can stay here.”

Children hardly knew how to sound so happy and excited when they knew they were in danger. He breathed a sigh of relief. Her excitement were genuine.

“It’s only a vacation Mila.”

“But we don’t want to leave. We love it here. Apart from you not being around we love it here. I started learning Karate this morning. I like Pearl and....”

“Jamila ssh. Drop the call they are near” he heard a kid’s voice. Definitely a male and won’t be up to six years.

“Ken I have to go, we are doing ultimate battle.”

“What’s that?”

“We are in two teams and we have to get a treasure from the orchard but we have to outsmart our opponents and shoot when necessary and you are out if the liquid from the gun touches your chest. The team to get the treasure wins the price.”

“Sssh, Pearl is coming, we need to take her by surprise, she is our biggest threat” the little boy said.

“Okay George. Bye, kisses and love you.” And the line went dead.

“So?”

He knew there was no way Ghost would not talk.

“So what?”

“Are you going to become a hero and rescue your mum after defeating me?”

Again that amusement almost like a dismissal.

“Don’t think me an easy target Ghost, I know you have your trainings but you have no idea what motivation can do.”

Ghost did not answer but suddenly halted the car in an open space. Okay not an open space but an artificial shade made of bamboo trees and a rusted zinc roof almost like a farmer built it to rest when the sun got high. Before he could ask why Ghost drove into the place, he felt the ground shaking and the car started falling.

He opened his mouth and screamed, he could not believe he had the ability to scream that loud but he was terrified. This was a terrible way to die. They would never find them. Someone was tapping him and it was then he realized that they had not crashed, rather they were in somewhere that looked like a tunnel. He turned to look at Ghost and was angry he looked so calm and confident while he looked horrible, his body still vibrating.

“What was that for?” he shouted.

“Motivating you.”

“Thanks for having fun from scaring the shit out of me.”

“You are welcome.”

“It was sarcasm you nut head and where are we going?”

He did not like the fact that the car was driving through the tunnels which was kind of lighted but still felt dark and scary.

Ghost did not answer but he saw one, then two, then many cars parked at both sides, like a car park in a tunnel. Walls separated the cars. Ghost drove into an empty space. In front was a door.

Ghost was already coming out of the car when he decided to come out. Without speaking to him, Ghost started walking towards the door.

“Where is this place and where are we going?”

But Ghost did not answer. He had to follow Ghost or rather run to meet up and was just by the door when it opened revealing a large parlor. He could not study the house because his mum was in front of him.

“Mum.”

“Ken.”

His mum stood up and they met at a middle point.

"You are safe, you are okay" he said kissing his mum's cheeks.

His mum started crying.

"My dad is gone Ken. He is gone."

He made his mum to rest on his shoulder. He was taller than his mum and she was neither fat nor slim just a little chubby.

"I'm sorry mum. I'm sorry about grandpa."

"But why? Why will Kayode want me dead, why will he want you dead?"

"Are you sure the person after our life is Kayode?"

"There is a huge possibility."

It was Ghost who answered making him to turn.

Ghost was not the only person around, another one, very huge and intimidating. He radiated danger. He instinctively pushed his mum back and blocked her with his body as he studied the man.

"You really are something" the man said looking at him like he could see through his thoughts. It was making him uncomfortable.

"Ken what are you doing? We are safe here. This is Wild, they said he is the one in charge of Ghost unit. The one that gave us the permission to be under their protection at the fortress."

His mum pushed him aside and sat down. He sat down close to his mum and looked around. There was another elderly Hausa man sitting opposite where Ghost had decided to sit down. Wild was directly opposite them.

"Good afternoon sirs" he greeted Wild and the elderly man. They did not answer, only nodded.

"I told Ghost to bring you here because there is a big decision you will have to make that will direct Stud's mission. I'm Ahmed, I'm in charge of Stud."

"But why me making the decision, why not Stud?" he asked.

"Stud, is the one you called me about.."

He covered his mum's mouth to prevent her from talking.

"Mum not here. I will gist you later."

They were looking at him and his mum like they were entertaining them, like they knew what was happening with him and Stud. That made him to remember Ghost had left Stud to face the assassins. He quickly brought out his phone to call Stud but there was no network.

“Ghost is Stud alright?”

Again they looked at him like he was not supposed to ask that kind of question.

“Yes.”

Just one word. He knew Ghost would not elaborate but it was okay. Stud was safe. His mum hit him and turned to see the look of horror in her face. There was also accusation.

“Mum it’s not like that” he said raising his hands up then bent to whisper to his mum.

“Stud is a girl. She is tomboy. That means she dresses like a girl.”

“Praise thy Lord, that...”

He covered his mum’s mouth.

“Mum” he cautioned.

He only removed his hand when she nodded that she understood they should talk about it another time. He turned to face the three men who looked amused.

“What is the big decision?”

He wanted to take away that look from them.

“Your life is in danger because of your grandfather’s will” Major said.

That made him and his mum to sit straight.

“I don’t understand. He is my son's grandfather so why will the will affect him.”

“Because your father had met with Ken’s father and he had told him how Ken had improved sales in his business with his brilliant ideas. And also because your grandfather does not trust Kayode because he believes Kayode is running the business he is handling down and he believes Kayode is into something he is suspicious of” Ghost said,

“What is that?” he asked.

“That is the part where I cannot tell you” Ghost said.

“But how did you know about the will so soon?” his mum asked.

“I went and made a copy” Ghost answered.

“I mean how did you gain entrance?” his mum asked.

“It’s a secret.”

"I seriously don't want to know" his mum answered,

"So can we see the copy?" he asked.

"No you cannot. As of right now, your grandpa is still alive because we believe Kayode has seen the will. Nobody is supposed to see the will. So we are going to keep it that way that you have not seen the will but we will tell you where we need you to make a choice" Major said.

"I don't know what choice I have to make but I'm sure not taking over any of my grandpa's business. I have a lot on my head. Someone should send that message to Kayode."

"Surprisingly nothing was given to you in the will just some percentage to your mum but none for you" Major said.

"You are confusing me. Then why is my life in danger?"

"Because you will be handed over everything and only ten percent will go to Kayode to sustain him and give him a second chance in life but with a condition" Major answered.

"Which is?" he asked.

"You being married" Major answered.

"Great, then what decision am I supposed to make. I am not married. I am not getting married. I don't need his properties so why will my life be in danger?"

"Good question" Ghost said.

"Wait I am not getting this. Is it possible to know when the will was written?" his mum asked.

"Videoed and typed" Major said.

Wild had remained silent just watching them.

"You mean my dad made a video of his will?"

"Yes and it was a year ago and he was very healthy. He believed he will live to see his great grandchildren because he just came back from a checkup and he was certified healthy" Ghost said.

"So we believed he wrote the will with the mind that Ken will be married before he died and also, we believed his sickness was a foul play and also his death" Major said.

"No Kayode cannot do this" his mum cried.

He pulled his mum to him and started rubbing her back.

"So Kayode got a hold of the will and gradually killed my grandpa and he is after me because he does not want to take any chance that I will listen to my grandpa and get married."

“What do you mean?” his mum asked raising her head.

“Last week I went to visit grandpa before my last visit. Kayode was around and grandpa had told me he wanted me to get married because he wanted to be at my wedding before he died. I had laughed it off and promised I will find a wife and show him soon.”

“That explains it. Kayode does not want to take any chances that is if he is the one after your life” Major said.

“But he is dead, Kayode now has the majority of the inheritance. Why has he not officially informed me? Why try to kill us when he has what he wants?” his mum asked what was in his mind.

“The lawyer is to read the will three days after his death and he is to be buried three weeks after his death.”

“Oh my God. My dad still knew the possibility of dying before Ken gets married. The will was supposed to give Ken few days to get married” his mum said.

“Damn it. So why is Kayode not arrested?” he asked.

“Because all we have is theories not prove and we need more. We are investigating Kayode for something and we need entrance to the silk factory, to the mill and beverage company” Major said.

“And you will not tell me what you are investigating him for?” his mum asked.

“Yes” Major answered.

“But how?” his mum asked.

“This is where Stud comes in. We need Ken to attend your coming board meetings on your behalf, we need Ken to visit the factories and visit where the products are packaged and looked at the accounts with Stud as bodyguard” Major said.

“And you said Stud is not a boy?”

“Mum” he called but his mum was not listening.

“I assure you Stud is a girl although I wonder why you want Stud to be a girl” Major said smiling.

“Then I have no problem. I don’t know you guys. I don’t even know Ghost. I only know Ella and later Ella had broken my son’s heart and he was a wreck and it took time to fix him a bit but he has never been himself. But for whatever reason he remained friends with Ella, I’m happy because we would have been dead and I’m grateful. I have been in your fortress and I believe no enemy will take us to their home full of love, kids and laughter to kill or harm us there. It is not possible. I feel this is the best vacation ever. I am already blending with the women and I’m in love with all the kids and I hope John will love me later.”

They started laughing.

“So do whatever you have to do to find the truth, I mean the whole truth” his mum said.

“Thank you Ghost. I will never be able to repay you” he added.

“You are welcome but you have not decided what you want to do with the will because if it’s Kayode he won’t stop until he is satisfied you will have no part in his father’s property” Ghost said.

Anger washed through him even before Ghost finished. If all their theories were correct, it meant Kayode had killed his grandpa and was trying to kill him and his mum for a will he had no idea was existing and for something he would have willingly given to him. He wouldn’t have married if the will was read yet Kayode was bent on killing him. He was pissed off. He never wanted a part of his grandpa’s property but everything had changed. He was the reason his grandpa was dead and he was not going to let Kayode get away with it.

“I had no idea of the will. I wouldn’t have even gotten married even after the will had been read but everything has changed. Kayode is not going to get anything that would have belonged to me if I got married. He has started the war and I’m going to fight back.”

“Ken you want to get married?” his mum asked.

“I am going to make sure grandpa’s wish is carried out.”

“But how Ken? How are you going to find a wife?” his mum asked.

He had not even thought of the part where he had to find a wife, he did not even have any woman in his life but it was not correct. He had one he knew he would never let go. He could still taste her.

“What if I marry Stud?” he asked.

“What?”

It came from everybody like he was crazy.

“You guys can make it possible. It will look real that Kayode can verify it. You want access to my mum’s power. Then marriage is the quickest way. I can legally hand over the rights to her, maybe my mum would actually do it directly like a gift, a wedding gift. Then she can easily investigate.”

No one spoke, they just looked at him. Suddenly, his mum dragged him up and dragged him towards a corridor.

“Are you out of your mind Ken?”

“Yes mum. I’m out of my mind. I have been out of my mind since my first contact with Stud. Mum I thought I loved Ella but thinking about it, I know I still love her but like a friend. I thought it was feelings I had for her until I made contact with Stud. Mum I can’t think straight. I’m burning up. I can’t keep my hands away from her.”

“Ken what did you do?”

She asked in Yoruba, it was serious and if he did not give a good answer he was going to be beaten in front of Major, Ghost and Wild.

“Mum you won’t believe the relieve I had when Ella told me Stud is a girl. Just imagine it. I called you to tell you I think I was gay. Mum just think first. My body reacted to her even when I thought her a boy. Does it make sense? Do you know the courage it took for me to call and tell you what I did?”

“Ken you have always told me everything, including the things I don’t want to hear and know.”

“Okay but this is Nigeria even though you raised me different, my point is that I had feelings for someone I thought a boy that I could not sleep then I discovered he is a girl.”

“Then?”

“Mum I had to kiss her and the feeling is mutual and..”

His mum sent a punch to his stomach.

“Ouch mum, she hit me there too.”

“Good for you. How dare you kiss your bodyguard? Don’t you have respect? Ken these people are risking their lives to protect us and you want to mess up? Keep your hands off her and I hope next time she kicks you somewhere very painful.”

With that she walked back to the parlor. He took a few breathes before going to join them and they were entertaining themselves because they were smiling apart from Wild.

“So what are you saying? Marriage with Stud to help you with the will and to help Stud with her investigation” Wild spoke for the first time.

He wanted to answer but a look from his mum shut him up.

“What do you think is best?” his mum answered for him.

“I like the marriage idea” Wild said.

“But what about Stud? She also has a decision in this even though it will be fake and I promise my son will not touch her.”

He stood and went some distance from his mum.

“Mum don’t promise what I can’t keep” he said shifting further away.

There was no way he would be able to keep his hands from Stud, fake marriage or no marriage. His Christianity was not strong enough.

His mum's look was a promise of retaliation.

"Ken if you are really willing to go through with this marriage it is going to be real."

It would have been better if Wild had dropped a bomb.

"I don't understand."

"Do you love Stud enough to marry her for real?"

There was something in Wild's face, a warning, a threat. He felt like he was a prey before a predator. He shook the feeling from his body and thought about what Wild asked. Wild was weird, very weird.

"I feel embarrassed saying this out but I ran from Stud thinking he was a boy I was having feelings for. I have no idea why you are asking this but from the very moment Ella told me Stud is a girl, all I have been thinking of is there is no way I am going to let her go especially when I know the feeling is mutual. She has feelings for me, she has not denied it. I don't think Stud will agree to this but thinking of my life without her or the feelings, I feel feverish. I will not back down if that is what you are trying to make me do. I will marry her for real if that is what you want. I promise this is not a joke, I have never been this serious and sure of something the way I am sure that I won't let Stud out my life."

"Ken are you sure? I know you."

"Mum when last did you see me with a girl?"

His mum did not answer but she was looking wary.

"Is it not better we just go with fake marriage, I also need to talk to my husband and see Stud."

"Will your husband be against the marriage if it is real?" Again Wild with his weird questions.

"If the two want to get married because of love, my husband will absolutely agree. He knows too much not to allow his kid to make his own choice on who to marry."

"Okay, then talk to your husband because for this to work fully, this marriage has to be real but I would also want your help, I mean you, your husband and Ken."

"Wild I don't like the way this is going but I want to trust you" his mum said.

"Thanks, so Ken I trust you keep to your word" Wild said looking at him. His look send shivers all over his body. It made him believe that he just made a deal with the devil.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER ELEVEN

As she drove back to Ken's house, she kept reliving the conversation she just had with Wild and Major at the underground house Benin and she kept wondering why it had to be a separate meeting from Ken. She was told her undercover mission had taken a new turn and there were just two alternatives for her to choose. Either she continued with the undercover she was doing where she would follow Ken as his bodyguard and try to sneak into restricted places to extract information when Ken would visit the various places she needed to get information which could take time or she would have to become Ken's wife. She had never done such undercover before. Betty from Spider unit had once gone on an undercover mission with Jaguar where they had to be married and it had been that mission that had almost taken Jaguar's life, where he got the serious scar on his forehead.

She had immediately said no to the marriage undercover. There was no way she was going to start dressing like a female but that was immediately corrected by Wild, she would not need to change her dressing because she would still maintain her Special Force identity although she would actually be using her air force ID. She was also told the marriage might cut her time with Ken to half because she would be given the authority of Ken's mum who was there with them. Normally, they were not permitted to have any business but the rules did not apply in a mission. Ken had already left with Ghost.

She had still wanted to say no because the undercover marriage might produce a quick result but it was going to tear her apart that she would never recover. She was being told to live her dream, to relieve her fantasy, to experience a taste of what she would never have. Undercover marriages were not real, they would only act as a couple outside but not inside. There was no love involved. She did not understand why Wild was getting involved but Wild was destroying her without even knowing. First, it was Wild who got her into this mess, now she had her first kiss and she knew she would not be able to resist Ken even though it would break her. Now Wild was telling her to have an acting glimpse of her dream.

"No Wild, I am not doing an undercover marriage. I am going to go with the first one" she said.

"But Wild said that will be quicker. I could not sleep yesterday night because I know my son's life is in danger while I'm safe. Please if this marriage would fasten our safety please help us" Ken's mum pleaded.

That had been a shock to her. In fact, she was not what she was expecting. She was not fat nor slim and she did not carry that air of being rich and she was now the one begging her to marry her son.

"I'm sorry ma. I don't like the idea of marriage. I know you also need it to meet the demands of your father's will. I know you want to kill two birds with one stone but I don't fit into that. I can fight and protect your son but I can't act being married. He should find someone else if the will is too important."

But the idea of Ken kissing someone else was making her angry, making her feel pissed off.

"Stud it is not about the will. I know my son, he is not money conscious, to him money is for convenience not for show off. He does not even want what was given to him. The reason he is interested in this will is because he wants to bring his uncle down. His life is in danger for what he never

wanted, that's why he now wants it. But for me, I don't mind doing anything to quicken whatever your mission is. Please do it for a mother who can't sleep because she knows her son is in the line of fire. I know you can protect him but I am also human and most importantly, a mother. I will sign over my rights to you so you can be in all the board meetings and have access to anything you want. I understand there must be a reason why no one wants us to know what the mission is all about but I always follow my instinct. I won't lie that I am not a bit intimidated by the men at the fortress but even if I don't have reasons to trust them, I trust their wives and kids. That alone is enough to know that Ghost and all of you in your unit are good people. I am grateful to him and I would forever be indebted to you for saving my son's life. Stud please help us bring whoever is after us down. I agree with Ken, I want him to have everything that was allocated to him. Don't let Kayode win. Please."

And how could she say no when Ken's mum was looking at her and crying and was almost going on her knees. She had been fast enough to stop her and she had nodded. But her heart felt painful when Ken's mother hugged her. It felt warm and motherly. Something she had never had and she did not understand why the feeling sent pains to her heart. She understood the feeling of being hated by one's family, she understood the feeling of hurt, betrayal but she had no idea why her heart was hurting like something was piercing it as Ken's mum hugged her. She even kissed her cheek.

She had to call all her years of practice to keep her tears in her mind and she had felt at loss when Ken's mum had withdrawn smiling and thanking her. Then as she started living the place so she could meet up and replace Ghost who was already at Ken's place, Ken's mum had spoken again.

"Can I know your real name?"

"Oreva."

"Oreva I don't know why you chose to look like a tomboy but you are beautiful and you don't look like a boy to me. Once you entered, I knew you were a girl dressing like a boy, it is obvious and I have no idea why people don't see it."

She had no idea what to say, she could not even thank her because she knew her voice would betray her. She just nodded and left.

Now she was in front of Ken's house. She knew Ghost had already left knowing she was close by. Everyone just learnt to get use to Ghost. At first, she had tried to be aware of him and make sure she would be able to track him but it was impossible except he wanted to be found. He could blend into anywhere and she was sure he must have taken the roof since it was already night.

She did not want to go inside, she did not want to face Ken. She was at least grateful she would not explain things to Ken because he had already been briefed. He had even been the one to suggest it. Just thinking about it brought her anger to the surface giving her the energy she needed to face him.

He was not just playing with her emotion but with her heart.

Ken was sitting on the couch close to the TV. He was talking to a Fulani looking girl. The girl was damn beautiful. That did not change anything because she was still angry. She went to switch off the TV but Lara came to join the girl holding John who had a wristwatch with him.

"Jamila, John has something to give you. He wants to now be your friend. John dear give Jamila the watch" Lara said.

She knew what John would say even before he said it.

"No" John shouted.

"John" a voice shouted in the background then joined them. He was small and looked also like the Fulanis and should be about three or four. John turned and gave the boy the watch.

"Thank you but I already have mine. Give Jamila this one."

"No" John said.

She had also said it along with John making Lara to turn. She had not noticed Jamila was online.

"Stud" Lara screamed excitedly.

"Tud" John shouted removing 's' from her name.

"Hi sweethearts."

She found herself smiling as John started telling her what she could not understand. She just knew it must be because of the watch because he was raising it to show her, then pointing at Jamila who was laughing at John's display.

"Okay I get it John. So you don't want to give Jamila the watch?" she asked.

"No" John answered but she knew John meant yes.

"Do you want to give me?"

"No."

"Who do you want to give?"

He pushed it to the little boy pronouncing something she could not understand.

"But Malik already has" Lara protested.

"Then let Malik take it and later, give it to John" Ken said.

He should have just kept quiet. She hated the way his voice sounded in her womb.

"It will not work, if John later catches that wrist watch on Jamila's hand, he would bite it off her" she answered.

"No no no" John started shouting leaving the screen.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Puppy is coming this way. John does not want Puppy to meet Jamila" Lara said.

"Jamila don't mind John. He is like that" she said.

"But I did not do anything to him. He only likes Malik" Jamila said.

"He is like that sometimes. You know what he did to me before we became friends?"

Jamila shook her head.

"He pinched my eyes and bit my hand and when I tried to give him biscuit, he took it, climbed on my legs, then he was yet to walk. He pushed the biscuit to my eyes and tried to bite my neck. I had to drop him to save my life."

All of them started laughing including Ken.

"So what did you do?" Jamila asked.

"I threaded with care."

"I don't understand."

"I did not carry him or give him biscuit again. I decided to just play with AI and when we were doing 'Our grandmother' do you know that game?"

"Yes. Our grandmother likes to sew skirt" Jamila said but Lara joined her to complete the song.

"Yes and then John wanted to learn but I wanted to only teach AI, then Pearl his sister joined but I refused to teach John. Then he stretched his hands for me to carry him, he could walk some few steps and that was it. We became friends since then."

"I get it. I know some stuff that are fun and I will not teach John until we become friends."

"Exactly."

"Where are you guys?" It was Pearl shouting from afar. They were definitely at their kids underground house.

"We have to go. Bye Stud" Lara said.

Lara was out of her line of vision before she could respond, even John was no longer there just Malik and Jamila which was somehow confusing. Ken was Yoruba and there was no resemblance.

"Big brother when are you coming?" Malik asked.

"Very soon. I think you need to go finish your puzzle Mila" Ken said.

"But will you tell dad about it?"

"Mila can we discuss this later?"

"Okay, I am missing you Ken" Jamila said.

"Me too" Malik said.

"I miss you guys more" Ken answered.

"Are you Ken's friend?" Jamila asked her.

"I'm his bodyguard."

There was a shock in Jamila's face, then awe.

"I want to be like you when I grow up. I am already learning how to fight. Pearl is teaching me you and Sabrina's signature. She told me you are very good. I want to fight like you. If you come will you teach me how to fight? Dad does not like the idea of girls fighting but after what happened and after seeing what Pearl can do, he wants to even learn."

"That's great. I promise I will teach you what I know if we meet."

"Thanks Stud. Please don't let anything to happen to my big brother."

The video call was disconnected before she could answer.

The silence in the room was nothing compared to the tension. There was no oxygen to breathe in. She wanted to know more about Ken's family. She had already put in two plus two and knew they must have been adopted but she wanted to know what must have led to it but there was the issue of the marriage stuff. Her anger came back again. She turned to face Ken.

"Why do I have the feeling I have to protect my stomach from being abused again?" Ken asked placing his hands on his stomach.

"Is it possible for you to come out with an idea that is not stupid? Marriage? You want to use me to get your grandpa's property?"

"The same way you will use me to get what you are looking for. I get my grandpa's property, you succeed in your mission."

"I don't need marriage to succeed."

"But Ghost told me you said yes. You said you will marry me."

He was smiling at her like a child who had been offered his favorite food.

She wanted to really punch him but his mum's tearful face prevented her. She went to sit opposite Ken.

"Before you get any idea stuck in your head I am going to lay down the rules.."

"I have been briefed."

"I am going to make sure you understood what you were briefed."

"What rules?"

"The marriage is not real, you must get it into your thick skull that it is fake even though it will appear real with pictures but it is not real just a form of acting which can never be practiced inside."

"Have you done this before?"

"No and that is not important. Ken this is strictly business. When we get a court marriage on Saturday, you must remember what I said. Don't ever touch me again or I might kill you."

She said the last words with a clear warning but it did not seem to have moved Ken. He was just staring at her.

"What?"

"Stud I am seriously the type that doesn't beat around the bush. I don't think I will be able to keep my hands off you. You feel it too."

"This discussion is over." She stood up to walk to her room

"Stud you know it is not over, stop running away from the inevitable."

She paused and turned to face him.

"You mean you dying by my hands?"

He did not answer, he just stared at her.

"Touch me again and I swear you will not be able to use that hand for a month."

The way he was looking at her was pissing her off. It was enough that she was about to destroy her life because of him but she was not going to let Ken take her confidence. His looks were making her to feel trapped, caged with no way of escape.

It was all a game to him, he had no idea it would never be a game to her. It was just another torture she was going to endure. She wished she had said no. She would not survive this.

"I don't know what you think I am when you look at me but not every rich guy is a play boy. Stud I know without doubt you will be able to physically overpower me but you have no idea what you already mean to me. But I am not trying to play on your emotions.

"Then why did you kiss me?"

He did not answer, he just stared at her. She turned and walked to her room, threw herself on her bed, bit her pillow to muffle her scream.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWELVE

He just watched her walk away without answering her question. What was he supposed to tell her? That he had kissed her because he could not stop himself? That would confirm her suspicion that he was just playing with her emotions. He knew something was not all right with Stud from their first discussion. There was always a time when she would look hurt then it would disappear completely. He wished he could tell her that his body had been attracted to her from their very first contact and the only thing that had been on his head was sleeping with her and he had thought her to be a boy and he had kissed her because he was so relieved he was still normal but he could not tell her. He had even told her a little but she had not believed him.

Everything had changed after the meeting with Wild, Major and Ghost. He had seen it as weird that Wild was planning to make the marriage real without the knowledge of Stud but Wild had asked for help. He had told him they were already aware the feelings were mutual and without remorse Ghost had confirmed his suspicion that he heard his conversation with Ella making him to confess what had happened the night of their first meeting. Wild had told them things about Stud but he actually said nothing because he only told them that Stud had a difficult childhood which had formed her to who she was and how she dressed. Wild did not give details or elaborate even when his mum had gotten interested and asked for details. Wild said it was not for him to share. His mum had asked about her parents and Wild had said she was raised by a step-mum and that was all. Wild had said Stud would never come out with her feelings because she had been made to have zero trust and her feelings would remain with her and even if she wanted him, she would never say it out and would never ordinarily accept that he was serious and not playing with her. According to Wild, the best gift he could give him and Stud was to make the marriage real and the rest would be determined by how he handled Stud. He had then told them that he would not take it lightly with him or his mum or his dad if they hurt Stud. It had sounded like a statement but it felt like a warning that he had even shivered. The good thing was his mum was the opposite of rich mums in Nollywood and Korean movies, she had never controlled who he would go out with and his dad would never do that because he had married his mum as a poor man and he knew what it felt like to be rejected by his in-law. If his mum had not starved herself with the intention of starving to death, they wouldn't have married. Wild and Major had said other things but it was Ghost words that stuck. That was after he had dropped him and entered the house with him.

"I do not want to meddle in your affairs but I have an advice for you and it's from experience. Stud might respond to you because there is chemistry between the two of you, she might not be able to resist you but don't confuse that with love. You may have her body but you will never have her heart if all you portray is what you can get from her body. I know it can be difficult but get to know her, get to know the real Stud. Getting her body is easy Ken but getting her heart is everything."

Ghost had walked out as he dissected everything he had said. He had wanted to know if that was what had happened with him and Ella. During the time he had asked Ella out, Ella had been so sad that she had even cried in class. Some of the days, she had looked helpless like she could not get away from something she did not want and when he had asked her to confide in him she could not. There was also a time she had looked ashamed like she was doing something she did not want to. He had always wanted to know more but the idea of discussing Ghost and knowing Ella had probably slept with him always made his stomach turn but now that he just saw Ella as a friend and could not even believe he had thought he had been sexually attracted to her, he just knew he had a lot of questions to ask Ella about Ghost. What had exactly happened during that period her life was being threatened and Ghost was the one sent to protect her. Did Ghost seduce her and took her body without having her heart first? But there was no sign of regret when Ghost was talking.

Ghost's message was very clear. She had melted on him the moment he kissed her and he knew he could easily seduce her, her body wanted him the way he wanted her but he also knew her heart was acting in opposite with her body and he wanted all. He wanted to have her heart and body and mind. If he seduced her it would be nothing different from every other girls he had slept with. Ghost was right, it would not be out of love to Stud.

He was burning inside, he wanted her so much but he knew he could wait, he must wait till he could get Stud's heart. Once he seriously set his mind at something he never lost. Ella was his first loss and he was grateful he lost but Stud was a different story entirely. He was going to wait, he was going to unlock the key to her heart, he was going to know her, know what had hurt her so much to feel so secluded, only then would every other thing come next.

He had just a lecture the next morning around eleven and it was already past nine in the night. He was tired and hungry but too tired to eat. He went straight to his bed and slept off.

Hunger woke him up the next morning even before his regular alarm. He stood up to go check what he could get from the kitchen but paused when he heard music playing outside. He could actually see what was happening from the window. Stud was dancing but it was mixed with something acrobatic and karate or was it Kung Fu? But he knew she was practicing. There was not much space outside but it was large enough for juggling and exercising. He found out that he could not move from his window. He stayed and watched till Stud sat on the ground. The hunger came back and he went to the kitchen. Every pot was clean, no food. He checked the fridge and the bread had gone bad, just beverages and drinks.

Stud walked to the kitchen and from her reaction, she was not expecting him there.

"Good morning."

Stud did not answer but went to take water from the fridge. She was too close that he could smell her sweat and another scent that felt feminine. His groin reacted instantly to the closeness, his hands on his own accord moved to pull her to him but he forced his hand into his pocket.

“Stud please not the silent treatment. If I apologize for my misbehavior will I be forgiven?”

Stud turned and looked at him.

“Which of them?”

“The kiss.”

“I have settled the score for that remember?”

“The marriage then?”

“Keep your apologies. Before your lecture we need to get some things done.”

“Things like?”

“After I finish cooking.”

“Thanks for the egusi soup yesterday.”

“It was not for you.”

“But you used my gas.”

“Tell me the amount let me pay back.”

Stud was bringing out food stuffs from a bag in the cupboard. No wonder her military bag was big.

“What are we cooking?”

Stud paused, stood up and looked at him like she was trying to understand his new behavior.

“I am not your cook.”

“I know that, I want to join you to cook” he said moving close to her.

“Stay far away from me” Stud warned with a clenched teeth.

He raised his hands up.

“Stud I’m sorry I gave you a very bad impression of myself but I promise it would never happen again. I swear I won’t touch you without your permission. Trust me that is the most difficult promise I have ever made. I thought returning as a friend to Ella was the most difficult thing I have ever done but this is way more than that. I really want to touch you and kiss you again, nothing has changed, it is even worse now

because I know there is chemistry between us. Don't even try to deny it but I promise I won't take advantage of you until you want it."

"Until?"

"I did not say I'm giving up, I only promised to get your consent."

She looked at him like she wanted to protest something but she turned back to what she was bringing out of the bag. She brought out a Gino tomatoes sachet then took her hands back to the bag.

"What do you mean by returning to Ella?"

He had known that was what she was going to ask. He had deliberately mentioned that. It was best to reveal himself to Stud first to give her enough confidence to talk to him.

"I was once in love with Ella."

"Once?"

She had already gathered the things she was looking for and from the recipe on top of the cupboard which was covered with tiles, he knew they were eating jollof rice.

"Not anymore."

"Because you lost to Ghost?"

He took the onions and started slicing as she started par boiling the rice.

"No I still thought I had feelings for her until sometime ago when I lost general feelings."

"Let me pretend I understand what you mean but why is Ghost helping you?"

"Because he had been the one to call me and tell me that Ella was hurt that I was breaking my friendship with her and it looked like Ghost can't stand Ella being sad, so he sacrificed his pride and begged me to still be her friends and told me I can call him if I ever needed his help."

"And you returned just like that?"

"I returned because I lost to a better guy and I also knew what it took for a guy to do what Ghost did and my mum liked Ella."

Almost immediately, he regretted adding the last part. He might have just ruined what he had started.

"But that is past now. I have moved on" he added quickly.

"Good for you."

He wished he could add that the reason was because his dull life had changed all of a sudden because he met her but he knew it was too early. He still needed to thread with caution.

It was not easy but he had survived being in the kitchen with Stud. They had eaten, she had taught him how to operate the watch and they were now sitting opposite each other.

"I got a message from Wild on details on how we are going to make this marriage stuff look real."

"I'm listening."

"You will have to call your uncle."

"You are kidding me right?"

"No Ken. It will be more of a bait. Remember your grandpa is still supposed to be alive and you have no idea about the will."

"I get it."

"Do you?"

He did not answer. He started dialing his uncle's line. All his contacts had been restored through his email.

His uncle picked at second ring.

"Hello Uncle Kayode guess who is calling."

"Ken what happened? I have been trying to reach you to find out how you are doing. This is not your line."

"This is my new line."

"Why are all of you having new lines?"

He sounded like he had no idea what had been happening like he was innocent.

"Once in a while you get tired of something and try a new one but that's not why I called. I have a great news I think grandpa will be excited to hear."

He prayed that his uncle would leave the new line stuff to be, that his reasons were tangible enough.

"Tell me Ken."

He breathed a sigh of relief hoping his reasons for new lines worked.

"Uncle I met a girl that swept me off the floor and I'm madly in love."

"Who could have captured your heart?"

"If I tell you, you won't believe me."

"But that is the reason you called."

"Okay, Uncle my bodyguard"

"Ken is everything all right. Which one is bodyguard?"

"Oh sorry I forgot to tell you. The cult issues in my school have increased and I'm like a target because if they can recruit me, they have hit gold and they are somehow starting to be aggressive and also I was recently attacked, that was on Tuesday night and I have a friend in the military who helped me to get a bodyguard. I don't know if it is the cult guys cause they even attacked my mum and dad and..."

"You are not serious." Kayode's voice sounded shocked.

He looked at Stud and Stud just humped her shoulder. Could they be wrong about Kayode?

"I am serious Uncle, maybe my father also have enemies. But Uncle I fell in love with her and I'm going to marry her."

"Ken slow down, I think it's hero worship."

"Uncle is not hero worship. She is a tomboy but she is hot and beautiful and I can't stop thinking about her."

He could not understand Stud's reaction to his statement but it was clear she was not expecting him to say that and it was also clear she thought he did not mean it.

"Ken, you met someone on Tuesday and all of a sudden you want to marry her. It does not make sense. You have to know her first."

"Uncle the thing is that I want to sleep with her, I can't think straight uncle but I cannot sleep with her. She is orthodox and her brothers are all in military and scary and the only way I can have her is to marry her and I am doing a court marriage tomorrow."

"That fast? Ken you are handsome and rich. You can get any girl you want, why settle for a tomboy and why all of a sudden. You are not thinking straight. I think they are all gold diggers. You need to pause Ken. This does not make sense. Is your mum aware of this?"

"Uncle she is very much aware. She has even met her and you are invited for the court marriage as a witness."

"Ken zip your trousers and use your brain. This does not happen, it is not normal. This girl and her family are charming you. Just hold the marriage I have a prophet that will save you from her."

"Uncle that is too late oh. I don't think there is charm here and if there is charm I don't want to be set free."

"Now I am convinced you have been charmed, Ken I am your uncle and you have to listen to me."

“Uncle Kayode please I will be happy if you be at the customary court tomorrow by 12 and if you can tell grandpa the good news. I know he can’t come but tell him I will visit him with my wife as soon as possible. Bye Uncle and don’t be late.”

“Wait Ken this is....”

He cut the line and switched off the phone.

“It is clear my uncle does not want me to get married but is that enough to make him guilty.”

“You are looking at me like I have condemned him. I work with evidence. All the pointers are pointing to him but I can’t say until there is no benefit of doubt.”

“What else am I supposed to do?”

“Nothing, there will be enough military presence to warn any assassin that he is on a suicide mission so your family will be safe although I don’t understand why Wild said it was necessary they come.”

Stud stood up.

“What of you?” he asked.

“What about me?”

“Remember the public must be convinced that the marriage is real. Won’t your family come?”

He saw it clearly, even though Stud tried to hide it but she had winced at his question.

“Wild is standing as my family.”

She was off before he could ask further. As he watched her go, he felt a shift in his heart. Stud looked so alone and he wanted to remove that loneliness from her.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Her world was turning upside down and it was all of a sudden. She wished she could go back in time to change her meeting with Ken. Ken’s actions were confusing her. She could not tell the part where he acted or spoke the truth as he spoke to his uncle on phone and also in the kitchen he had said things that were still ringing in her mind. Everything thing had been set in motion but she could not push off the feeling that something was not right. Undercover marriage was not supposed to look so real. Wild had told her to inform her father and get his permission to come or for Wild to take over his position. She knew postponing the evil day would not help matters. She took up her phone and called her dad. At least he had picked the call.

“Daddy good morning sir.”

There was no answer. It had always been like that. The fact that he had not cut the call meant he was waiting for her to state the reason she called.

“Dad I am getting married, it is not...”

“Oreva do whatever you want, get a court marriage and call your brother to stand or just do whatever you want. I am busy.”

The line went dead. She tried not to cry. It was just an undercover marriage but tears still came out. He was just too harsh, she wished she knew what she did to her father for him to hate her so much. Her father had been the one to collect bride price for her two sisters, although he still gave that air of nonchalance, he was there throughout but he had just cut her off for something as serious as marriage. It did not matter if it was fake, her father had not even allowed her to get to that point before cutting the call. She had sworn never to cry because of her family but seeing Ken and his family and how his mum loved him so much and how they were fully in support of the undercover marriage, how his wealthy mum treated her like a daughter broke her down. Her father was not planning on coming to her marriage even though it was fake, her father wouldn't have come if it was real. She really wanted to know her crime, she must have done something terrible for her dad to hate her so much. Or was it her mum? Did her mum do something to her dad that her dad had to transfer his hatred to her? She felt lost and felt cold. She could not remember the last time she had shed tears but she was crying. Her father just broke her wall down by his outright rejection. She wished she had someone to talk to. She was so alone, no one to share her sorrow. She wished she had died with her mum. She had never been this sad. Her mum should have taken her with her not bring her to the world to face so much hurt from the man who was supposed to guard and protect her.

A knock at the door woke her up, she had cried herself to sleep.

“Stud is everything alright? It is almost time for my class.”

That made her to jerk up. Her hand automatically held her forehead which was pounding.

“Just give me some minutes.”

“But are you okay? You don't sound well.”

There was worry in Ken's voice which was disturbing. She preferred the Ken who shrunk from her at least she understood that Ken not the recent one she could not understand. She quickly took her bath and was driving Ken to school few minutes later, the headache still there.

Time ran faster than expected. There was no attack. Night came so soon and in just a jiffy, it was the dreaded Saturday and few hours into Saturday, she was driving Ken to the customary court. Things were happening so fast and she had stopped trying to analyze anything. She just flowed with whatever

came at her. She had already texted Wild that he was to be the one to stand on her father's behalf. There was no need informing her siblings and step-mum. That would be suicide because the marriage was not real.

She was alarmed when she saw what was waiting for her at the court. All of Ken's family and all of Circle. The presence of the army was shocking and understandable.

Even a certified idiot would not think of trying to assassinate anyone, it would be a clear suicide mission.

She was horrified to see how all Ken's family and the Circle were hugging her after everything and how they were taking pictures like it was real. Jamila was looking at her like she was really part of their family and Saheed had called her warrior princess and sister in-law. She did not even look like a girl. The most surprising was Ken's father. He had kissed her cheek and thanked her for keeping his son alive. What was wrong with everyone? That was not all. The marriage certificate contained her real name which was not supposed to be so. She was now bearing Ken's surname. Even the ID she was using for her mission had her name sealed off and the president's signature was there with armed forces symbol. It was necessary to protect her family. That was one good reason the fake marriage was kept off media but the marriage certificate she signed looked so real but she had to come to the conclusion that it was actually not just for her mission but for Ken to fulfill the terms of his grandfather's will. So it had to look real. Then there was the ring. She felt like crying as she saw the excitement in the kids' face. John had been the one to hold the ring and had glared at Ken and refused to give him the ring but gave it to her. He was just one year but was so fearless. Ken had smiled at him but John had stepped on his shoes. AI had to take the ring from John and took John away from them after giving the ring to Ken. The Circle made the marriage look so real and she had to gather all her strength to hold down her tears.

Even Ken's call had worked because his uncle had arrived when they were almost through with the pictures. He actually came to protest the marriage and came with escorts or maybe bandits who followed from a distance but who were not allowed even near the court. She knew other witnesses would be wondering who was getting married. Ken's uncle almost fell on the ground when Beatrice, Ken's mother told him that she was giving most of her rights to her daughter-in-law until she was through with her break.

"You won't try that Beatrice. You can't. Handing over to your son was bad already but this? A total stranger who you don't know. Can't you see there is something at work here?" Kayode shouted.

The children and the women were already being escorted out of the place and within seconds, only Ken, his parents, Wild and Beast were around with her. The others escorted the kids and women in three cars. She trusted the Circle would never leave a trail to their fortress. She put her mind to the situation on ground. They were outside and by a jeep which looked like Jason's jeep. Jason was the only person missing physically. If there was one thing she could bet her life on, it was Jason being close somewhere high. There was no way Jason would let Cindy, his twins and his beloved AI to be exposed to danger. Jason was under Wild but they all knew he made his own laws and followed his own ways that even the Circle had to change to accommodate him. The fact that he allowed them to come meant it was very

safe because if there was up to a fifty percent chance of them being attacked, Jason would have sealed off the fortress gate and nothing would have made him to open it. It was just his nature. Wild had told her that once they understood that making Jason to do what he does not agree with was like making a cat to stop eating a mouse, that things became easier. Jason did things not out of ego or feelings or emotions but out of calculation and what he saw as right, it was his nature. Also she knew Jason's nature would be very close enough to protect his family.

She had been carried away as Kayode and Beatrice exchanged words.

"Father will be shocked to know what you just did" there was a big contempt in Kayode's voice almost as if he wanted to spit on Beatrice's face.

"I have the right to do whatever I want. I am on vacation and I need someone to help take over my responsibilities till I come back. The burden is too heavy for Ken and now he is married, wouldn't it be better to hand it over to his wife?" Ken's mum shouted.

"You call this Ken's wife? Ken this is your choice, a man. I never knew you to have a bad taste."

"You know I am right here listening to you talking down on my sister" Beast said. There was no caution or civility in his voice. Kayode had shifted back afraid.

"Aha, I know what is going on. Blackmail. Ken they have something against you and they are using it to take over your mum's business. There is no way you can just fall in love and marry all of a sudden. Tell me what do they have against you? I am not afraid of them. I have military connections."

But he was shifting backwards and he was visibly shaking and making sure he was not near Wild and Beast.

"I would have taken advice from you if yours is better. Uncle let's face it. With all your knowledge about marriage you are with your fourth wife, like seriously? And trust me I have very good taste and you won't know what is good even if it is standing right in front of you. Tell me, have you found your second wife who ran away with lots of your money? I am now married, this is my wife."

Ken held her hand sending warm shivers all over her body.

"And soon I will be taking her to meet grandpa. There is nothing you can do about it Uncle, if you won't support me and appreciate my sense of judgment then I won't miss having an uncle."

Ken pulled her in front of him and held her close to his warm body and kissed her cheek. She knew it was all an act but her body refused to listen because she was already melting.

"I was fond of you nephew but you mess up big time. This is a disgrace to a noble family and I will never accept this."

"We absolutely don't need your acceptance Kayode. She is my daughter-in-law and if you are not willing to accept my son's choice then get out now" Ken's father shouted.

He was looking pissed almost as if something Kayode said triggered a beast inside him. She had been quiet, Wild had been quiet but suddenly the environment became tense.

Something was shining on Kayode's chest, it was day but the red dot was unmistakable. Even Kayode knew what it was.

Kayode started shaking raising his heads to try locate the sniper.

All their wrist watches blinked. It was a message from Jason.

'Time up.'

Just that.

"Kayode from the look on your face, it is very clear you understand what that tiny red light on your chest means. The person pointing it at you said I should tell you time up" Beast said.

She expected Wild to talk but he was very silent staring at Kayode. She knew exactly when Kayode's eyes collided with Wild's eyes. Kayode stumbled back, fell, stood up shaking and sweating but he was shaking his head.

"You won't dare shoot me. This is a court premises."

"It's good you know we can't shoot you here. I agree with you that this venue is uncalled for" Wild spoke for the first time. His voice sent a shiver of trepidation all over her body.

It took less than a second for Wild's implied meaning to sink into Kayode's head.

"This is not over Beatrice and I will never allow this thing to meet grandpa."

Then he ran because Beast was walking towards him.

"You are not a thing, you are a beautiful warrior and it is a honor to have you as my daughter-in-law" Beatrice said patting her shoulder.

"You don't need to worry ma, I have heard worst and words don't affect me" she answered her.

She saw a flash of concern in Beatrice eyes but she did not say another word to her, she just pulled her away from Ken's warm body and hugged her. She felt that shifting in her heart again as she was pulled from Beatrice and hugged by Ken's father. She must not. She was not going to break down and cry because some family loved her as she was. She wished the marriage was real. She was hugged by Beast and Wild and then told to hurry out with Ken.

"Jason said will are more likely to be attacked than you and Ken although I don't see the logic in that because Kayode's thought is full of rage but you still have to be careful. He knows where you live. Go now" Wild said.

She did not give Ken the luxury of hugging his mum for more than a second before pulling him to the car. They had taken the jeep this time.

She was driving out of the court premises within seconds.

"I am worried about my parents" Ken said.

"They are safe Ken."

"What if my uncle sends someone to follow them to the fortress? I am seeing the kids for the first time but I already love them. I don't want anything to happen to them because of us."

She smiled. At least Ken had said something to make her smile.

"Ken trust me, if Kayode sends someone to follow them, they will end up chasing shadows and will soon get lost and won't know what killed them at the end."

Ken nodded but looked back as if he was searching for enemies.

"No one is following us" she said to calm him and also because it was true. Jason was right. No one was following them but that meant there was trouble.

"But why? If it is Kayode why are we not being followed?" Ken asked.

"Tell me what you think, you know your uncle very well."

"That is why I am worried. He has something bigger in store. I can't think of anything now but I know my uncle to be meticulous when he puts his mind at something. It is like he knows he is losing and he knows he can't allow us to visit his father. He knows there is only one thing that he can use to turn everything."

"Your mum."

"My mum." Two of them said it same time.

She quickly sent a warning message to Wild.

"Then Ken you have nothing to worry about."

"But you heard him say he has connection in the military. Don't you think you guys are in trouble?"

"Except his connection is with the commander in Chief."

Ken did not talk for some time.

"Tell me Stud, just who are you guys?"

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Stud did not answer his question and he did not push further. There must be a reason she remained silent. Just like before, Stud had been the one to open the gate and once they entered inside, the oxygen disappeared to be replaced by tension. He wanted to kiss her, to feel her body in his but he did not.

"So what is the next plan?" he asked taking one of the couches. Stud also sat down.

"The board meeting is on Monday and I will attend. I will visit so many places and take all the records I need."

"Is it possible to know what you are searching for?" Stud shook her head.

"Okay so am I going with you?"

"Yes, even with my authority I cannot just walk up there. You will have to follow me."

"Okay."

"But there is going to be hell let loose."

"I don't understand."

"I am very sure if your uncle is after your life, he would do anything to make sure you don't get home. After he must have realized how futile it is to try to kidnap your mum, he is going to strike because I am going to take so many files and records and study so many products that will alarm him and he will strike. You must listen to me and do as I say if we are to stay alive."

"Okay, so my mum?"

"Wild said she is fine."

"No attack?"

"Of course there was, you don't need to worry about your mum, you have to understand that Monday is going to be tough."

He knew Stud would not explain more about his mum.

"Okay."

"It's not just saying okay Ken. You can't act the way you acted at your faculty."

Almost immediately, the tension that seemed to have reduced came back in full force.

"Stud I have given you my word and I won't go back on it. I won't do anything stupid but you also have to understand that we must behave like we are couple."

"I know that" Stud said avoiding looking at him for the first time since they entered the house.

"But you don't know the other thing" he said.

"What other thing?"

"That I have feelings for you."

He was careful not to say he was in love with her. She would never believe him.

Stud did not speak. She just stood and left. There was a look in her face like a mixture of hurt and sadness. He wished Stud would talk to him.

It was Saturday and there were other things to do. He had not read his books for long and he needed to concentrate that was after calling his mum. Four hundred level first semester had tough courses and he could not afford a carry over. It took so much concentration and the fear of having a carry over to read. Hunger had been the only thing that made him to stop reading. It was already late. He had twenty four hours light because his whole roof was solar panel and there was also an inverter which automatically connected to power supply from government, then switched to solar once power went off. He went to the kitchen and discovered Stud had cooked soup. He was going to find a way to replenish what he was taking from Stud but he was too hungry, he needed to eat.

He could not sleep as he laid on his bed. The next day was Sunday. How was he going to survive another day alone in the same house with Stud.? He sometimes went to All Saints' Chapel inside school but he knew there was no going out today. He watched Stud's practice through his window. She was graceful as she danced with a sword. But there was something about her mood he could not quite place. He went to the kitchen and took a malt drink. He wanted to talk to Stud but he had no idea what to say.

By 11:PM, he found himself texting Ella using Whatsapp.

'Ella I have so many questions to ask you and I wish I can meet you in person.'

Ella replied few seconds later.

'Can't we chat here?'

'Okay.'

He sent her what he could remember about Ghost's advice and asked her if she had an idea what Ghost meant.

'Did Ghost take your body without your heart?'

'Almost but he was actually the sane one not me.'

'I don't know where to start with Stud.'

'Try to know her. Ghost is right.'

'But how? She is avoiding me.'

'Because you are making her feel trapped.'

'Seriously? Stud can take ten of me. I am the one trapped.'

'I am not talking about strength or fighting skills silly.'

'Then what?'

'You are making her feel trapped as a woman and she has been taught trust does not exist.'

'Tell me about her?'

'I have little knowledge but even if I know I won't tell you.'

'Why.'

'That's for you to find out for yourself.'

'How did Ghost get your heart? You did not tell me much then'

'Ghost is complicated Ken. He was sent to guard me but I had no idea. I watched him kill those the DPO who was a family to me told me were officers protecting me. I made a bargain with him to spare their lives and do whatever he wanted with me which Ghost took. By the way, I never saw his face. He was a shadow in the dark. He usually took me to Ekosodin River. You know it now. We went the other day, during public holiday to read.'

'Yes but you would have seen his face then.'

'He took me there at night scaring me the first time but after I saw what he could do, I was more afraid for any threat than being threatened. He forced me to tell him about me and gradually, my mind stopped fighting him and I just decided to flow with him. But somehow when I think of it, being with nature had helped calm me down. My heart only accepted him fully after he took bullets for me. But I was already in love with him it was just the believe that he was the assassin that made my mind to reject him but I was already in love with him without even knowing.'

'So there was no romance like that?'

'Silly boy, why won't there be when the chemistry was strong but he never took advantage of me and he was the sane one. I thought I have already written that.'

'Can I ask a favor?'

'What?'

'Can you help me ask Ghost for your tent?'

‘What the heck are you planning to do?’

‘Making her not to feel trapped.’

‘Hmm whatever that means but I will ask and I am very sure Ghost will gladly donate, I just hope he does not do more than that.’

He wanted to ask her what she thought Ghost would do but stopped, he would rather not know.

‘Thanks.’

He dropped his phone and went to survey his drinks and water. They might have to buy things on their way.

He went to his reading room and read till it 8:PM before going to knock at Stud’s door.

Stud did not answer but opened the door seconds later. She was really looking like she was trapped. Stud was not shaken when there was threat, she was fully ready to face men with guns but he could see she was trying her best to look like she was not bothered by their closeness but he could see it clearly. Ella was right, she needed to feel in charge.

“What is it?” there was a hoarseness to her voice.

“I want to take you out.”

There was the look of shock on her face which he wouldn’t have noticed if he was not looking at her eyes, her beautiful eyes.

“Ken don’t get the wrong idea, I am not going out with you.”

“You know how to fix a tent one can use in a jungle?”

Stud looked at him confused at the sudden change in subject.

“Yes but why did you ask?”

“Because we are going to the jungle.”

“Are you alright?”

“No I am not. I told you I am a straightforward person. This promise I made with you is making me crazy. I can’t think straight Stud. I did not know you were a girl when we first met but my body recognised you Stud and I have been so afraid I was gay, that was why I avoided you but nothing had changed. I was the stupid one not to look beyond what my eyes could see but knowing you are a girl has not changed anything. I never knew I had restraint like this but I will keep my promise Stud. At least do something for me. I can’t breathe here, I need some fresh air and I know somewhere I can relax and clear my mind and..” he paused.

“And what.”

“Let’s go Stud. I promise to keep my hands off you.”

He walked to the door knowing Stud would not allow him to go out by himself. Ghost had earlier texted that there was a bag in the park. He had made sure to take the drinks and water with him. He was feeling excited about his little adventure. It was not because Ella said it, he had always had that dream of exploring the night without fears. He had seen Stud in action, even if he had his doubts, the fact that Wild and the other bullies who seemed protective of Stud had let her drive him alone after the court marriage meant she was good, they trusted her enough to be safe. Just the few hours with them told him a lot. Without introductions he wouldn’t have known who gave birth to who, the bond of that unit was a family, he knew that because he grew up in a family unlike Stud. If Ghost had sent the bags knowing he would use it in the night, it meant he trusted Stud to keep herself alive, it was that simple. This was the opportunity of a life time.

He only knew he was outside when Stud cut him off by obstructing his movement.

“Ken I am yet to understand what you are doing.”

“Not me, we are going out to the jungle.”

“Still have not said anything.”

“Stud I need fresh air. The house is too hot. There is a river. Ekosodin River. I have been there before. Let’s do a picnic there.”

“Do you know it’s night.”

“That’s why I want to go there, I will be safe because you are going.”

He moved past her to the park, the bag was there, it was very big.

Stud stopped him from touching the bag.

“It’s camping stuffs Ghost dropped” he said but Stud did not listen. She pressed something on her wrist watch and a red light started shining. She pointed the rays of the light or beam at the bag and ran all over it before opening the bag. There was nothing there to indicate something that look like a tent. There was rather other gadgets he did not understand and something that looked like a transparent bag but Stud nodded, stood up and looked at him.

“Are you sure you want to do this?”

“Of course, except you are scared Stud.”

“Nice try for a motivation. I am not going because you tried to use emotional blackmail on me. I also need fresh environment and I like nature but just know if you have other ideas you may not be able to ever walk again.”

"I understand." He could not keep the smile away from his face.

"What is the smiling for?"

"I am happy you agreed to go on a date with me."

She opened her mouth to counter him but just shook her head and walked inside, then came out later with that her black back bag.

He tried to help her when she raised the bag to place on the bike but the bag was already on the bike before he could reach Stud. Stud tied the bag then went to open the gate by herself, he saw her scanning the environment, looking at her phone before coming to the bike. He just watched the easy way she did things as if it was part of her nature.

"Hop in" she said giving him a helmet that was on the handle of the bike and also a night vision eyeglasses. She had already driven the bike out and had already locked the gate. He was standing outside waiting for her.

He wore the helmet and the eyeglasses without talking and entered the back.

His breath left him immediately he entered the bike and made contact with Stud. Fire raced through him down to his groin that he felt he was going to explode. He forced himself to breathe. It was very important to breathe or he would do something stupid. He found the courage to let the arousal wash through him when he discovered he was not the only one suffering. Stud was also affected. There was a satisfaction in that. She went rigid for some seconds before driving towards Ekosodin Junction. He had to give her directions, it was a good thing he had a great sense of direction. Stud had switched off the light of the bike as they left civilization and as they got closer to the river, he became afraid. He had never done something that dangerous before. He almost wanted to tell Stud that they should go back because they were just two, he was not even counted but he did not.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Stud was out of the bike even before he could come down. He would have concluded it was due to her military trainings but he knew better that Stud was trying to escape him. He smiled as he came down. Stud started untying the bag but he kept smiling looking at her and at last he got what he wanted.

"Why are you smiling like an idiot?"

"I know I am not the only one burning. It's one hell to know one's feeling is not mutual. I have experienced that to know how it feels like but it's another to know it is mutual even though the other won't accept it. It means so much, it means there is hope."

"You can wipe that smile off your face because nothing is going to happen between the two of us and I am confident in myself to know that no one will touch me without my permission."

"You have no idea how happy I am to hear that. I don't want anyone to ever do that to you."

"You talk as if you are excluded."

"I know I will get your permission, all I need is time and patience and for someone like you, I have them in full. I will wait Stud because I know it's not the chemistry I am worried about, so I will wait. Nothing good comes easy."

He was getting used to Stud's body reaction, he knew his words had broken a wall surrounding her heart but she tried to hide it. He was going to break that wall, enter and seal it off from others. He would wait.

Stud ignored him scanning the environment. He saw a bird circulating the area they were standing.

"That is no ordinary bird, am I right?"

Stud did not answer. He turned to look at her. She was carrying the bag to a bigger open space directly opposite the river. He watched her fit the transparent stuff. That was the tent. He could have sworn it was just an ordinary material. The stuff had four legs with seemed to be borrowing into the ground as Stud pressed a button near it. She pressed another button and the thing started swelling up and soon the tent was ready but transparent. He watched Stud placed some gadgets at four different locations, then watched her walk to look at the river. He followed her.

"Is it possible to stop watching me and following me?"

"Now you want to control my eyes. I promised not to touch you without your permission and that's as far as I can do. You can't tell me to stop looking at someone beautiful."

He watched Stud stiffen, then inhale some fresh air.

"You must really be good with girls Ken."

"I have never had to woo a girl apart from Ella and thinking about it, I am happy Ella rejected me. I think I must have confused my feelings for her to be sexual. I just love her as a friend. You are the second girl I am wooing. Am I doing well?"

"You are irritating him."

"Then I must be making progress."

He turned to study their environment knowing she would not reply him. The night was really beautiful. He should be afraid but he was not. The voices of the night creatures were soothing. The cloud was clear and there was a little wind making the trees to dance. He looked at the river which looked more like three creeks separated by bamboo trees. The one at his right looked uninviting, it was rushing with force, that force could break bones. Ella had said the villagers allocated it to the gods.

"I always love the nights and hated that I could not come out because it belong to criminals."

"But you are out here in the night."

He was surprised she answered.

"Because I have you by my side. Thinking of it, there is nobody here. Everybody is afraid and at the end nobody will think of coming here in the night."

Stud was silent. He looked at her. She was looking at the river like she wanted to swim.

"Do you want to swim?"

She did not answer but walked to the tent, pressed a button and a space opened. He quickly went and joined her. There was a soft mat already in the tent. He could feel her go stiff but he ignored her and lied on the mat facing the sky.

"Wow" he could not hold it.

It was beautiful, so many stars and the moon was out. He felt elated when Stud lied down on her back and watched the stars with her.

"Tell me about your siblings."

That took him by surprise. He turned his head to look at her wondering what prompted her to ask but discovered he wouldn't keep his promise if he looked at her, he quickly turned his face back to the sky.

"Ella rescued some kids from Ring Road. Jamila was begging for help. Malik was two and very sick. Ella had taken Malik to the hospital and had called me to help which was unlike her. Then Ghost had already taken bullets for her. I know you know about that."

"Yes."

He also knew her yes was for him to continue.

"She was a walking dead and I could not reach her but she looked a little alive during that time. Saheed was pushing wheelbarrow to raise money and Jamila had to follow Ella back to Ring Road to locate him. I had to bring them to my house because Ella had only a hostel. Actually at first I was doing it for Ella to get her to love me but later after my mum and dad came the next morning..."

"So quick?"

“Yeah. I am very very close to my mum. She is my best friend and I feel sorry for her sometimes.”

“Why?”

“Because I tell her things she is not supposed to know.”

“Things like?”

“How do I explain it? Okay I called her to tell her about my first and she had to cut the call after I gave her gory details.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Understand what?”

“What you mean by your first.”

Before he could stop himself, he was looking at her. He was very shocked. Stud was really a newbie.

“I can feel your shock at my question” Stud said refusing to look at him.

“If I ask you your age will you answer?”

“I am twenty eight.”

So she was three years older.

“How come you have no idea about anything that has to do with sex?”

“So that is what you meant.”

“Stud.”

“You know the answer Ken.”

“You mean no boy has ever been interested in you?”

“I look like a boy Ken.”

“No you dress like a boy. There is a difference.”

“I know many who dress like a boy but there is no mistake about them. There are certain attributes that make one look feminine.”

He wished he could counter that, but that was right. Most things that attracted men was the front and back of a woman and he had not even envisaged the thought that Stud might be a girl because her chest

had looked flat but looking at her now with his clear mind. It was not that flat. It explained why her T-shirts were bogus.

"I get what you are trying to say but it's not like you started dressing like a boy that early."

"I started dressing like a boy from the age of fourteen."

"Why?"

"Because there was nothing outside to indicate I was a girl."

"And?"

He was met with silence.

"Stud."

"I don't want to talk about it."

He did not talk for some time, he just watched the stars. This was more difficult than he thought it would be.

"Will you be angry if I tell you I am, somehow happy?" he asked after a long pause.

"Happy about what?"

"That you have no idea about sex, that I will be the one to teach you."

"Keep deceiving yourself."

But he knew his word had touched her again because she had breathed fast for some seconds.

"Time and patience" he said turning back to the sky.

"So your parents took them?"

He was grateful for the change of subject and the distraction because his hands were already moving on his own accord to touch her hands.

He inhaled enough air before talking.

"Yes after they told us how their parents were murdered. They had fled from Niger to meet worse trouble in northern Nigeria. Saheed was able to escape with them and with time and lots of movement, they found their way to the South, Benin City. If Ella had not found Mila at that time, Malik would have died. My parents adopted them."

"And you are okay with that?"

“Why is everybody asking me that? Of course I am okay. I love them, I love Jamila. She is my baby sister. As for being the son of a rich man, I don’t dwell on that. I want to establish myself. My dad has trained me to be independent all the time. I am happy my mum has someone to take her attention because my dad travels a lot. They have even made the family bond stronger.”

“I saw that, the way your parents are to the children and the way your parents are so accepting, I saw that.”

There was a yearning in her voice, a yearning he wanted to quench.

“Your unit too is unique. Without the introductions I wouldn’t have known who gave birth to who. You guys are family.”

“They are not my unit.”

He knew Stud was giving him a part of herself and it gave him hope.

“I don’t understand.”

“I am the commander of my unit which is a unit below Ghost’s unit.”

“But they treat you like you are part of them.”

“Yes but not like am really part of them. I still need permission to go there and...”

She paused. She must have said what she was not yet willing to share. He could not stand the ache in her voice. He found himself holding her hand before he could stop himself.

He removed his hand immediately.

“I’m sorry, I could not stop myself.”

He stood up and came out of the tent. He needed air, he could not breathe inside. He needed something to distract him because all he could think of was to go back and wrap Stud to him but he knew she was going to misinterpret it. An idea came to his mind. He went back to the tent. Stud was still lying down on her back looking at the stars.

“Stud I want to learn how to fight.”

That made her to turn to him.

“You are not serious.”

“Okay I know I can’t just learn in one day but I seriously have no knowledge on defense at least teach me something this night.”

“But you have a lot of knowledge about girls.”

Was that jealousy in her voice? He smiled.

“That will balance everything. Let’s make a deal. Teach me how to defend myself and I can teach you the knowledge I have on how to please a girl and I promise I won’t disappoint.”

He was already moving from her knowing a punch was coming and he was not disappointed. But it looked like dodging Stud’s blow was not the best thing because he found himself running immediately Stud came out of the tent. He thought he could run fast but Stud was faster. He saw himself being tackled from behind and he was literally watching the stars within seconds. At least Stud had not used force because there was no serious impact for him to see the usual legendary cartoon stars.

He suddenly became stiff and aware of the flame licking through his body setting a burning fire in his groins then further down. Stud felt his hardness and jump up from his body.

“Stud you can’t do this to me. I promised not to touch you but you broke that promise. I am on fire.”

“Then burn to ashes.”

“Not when I know what can quench it.”

“Then I won’t mind helping to fetch the water. I am happy there is a river close by.”

He thought Stud was joking but few seconds after Stud had left his line of vision, something made him to turn. Stud was coming from the river with a cup. Where the heck did she find a cup?

He jumped up immediately and stepped back.

“Come here let me help quench the fire.”

“That cannot quench the fire and you know it.”

“Do I?” But she was coming closer and he had to run and Stud pursued him, the both laughing.

“Okay you win, the fire has quenched on his own.” He said backing Stud. There was no way he was going to show her target to her.

“Turn let me see for myself.”

He looked down. It was definitely not quenched.

“Stud if I turn and you pour that water, I am going to burst.”

“No it is going to quench.”

She was very fast. He shouldn’t have forgotten that. She was in front of her and he was able to cover her target with his hands.

"You are a jerk Stud" he said laughing, she joined him to laugh. Her laughter was intoxicating, it was worsening his predicament.

The water had touch many places but he was safe.

"I guess I missed my target."

"And I thought you are a newbie. I'm beginning to think you know more than you portray. I change my mind about the deal. Just teach me how to defend myself."

"Not for free Ken."

"What's the price?"

"I am yet to think of one."

"Till you think of one can we start this night?"

For hours, Stud taught, he followed, practiced and listened. It was difficult when they had to make contact but it was worth it. He was not the only one on fire.

As time flew fast, he wished the dawn would not come because he knew it was not going to be easy. His uncle or whoever was after his life was silent for a reason and he knew they would find out in few hours' time.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Anger, pain, hurt, betrayal were words she understood, she had experienced and lived with those words and she was used to those emotions but laughter, excitement, joy were words and emotions she was unfamiliar with. She had laughed as she chased Ken with water, she had felt joy, happiness, the emotions were new and overwhelming but she could not help enjoying them. Ken was changing what she knew, her wall she had painstakingly built was crumbling before Ken and everything was happening all of a sudden.

She had seen Ken was attracted to her not because Ken said it but because she had seen the evidence. It had been shocking and she could not believe how she was able to act normal when she was shaking all over. There was something else. She had felt feminine, she could not believe she could make Ken react to her like that but she had seen it. That was not even what was braking her wall. Ken was acting different, not that she knew Ken but he was different from his earlier behavior. She could feel how much restrain he was giving himself to keep his promise not to touch her, then there was the part were Ken was always straightforward. She would not place herself as a good judge of character but she knew how

to identify characters and traits and Ken was someone who spoke his mind without twisting it. Could Ken be telling the truth that he had feelings for her? He had not actually said he loved her. What exactly did Ken want from her? She hated what she could not understand. She had taught Ken some basic things about self-defense and Ken was a very fast learner and there was another thing about Ken, when he made up his mind about something, he would not back down. She had noticed how tired he was, they had even taken a break but Ken had continued till it was almost dawn.

Dawn meant the D-day. She was going to enter the lion's den to get documents as many as possible. She was told to send it to Jason for analysis. Jason would do a faster work than her. She was still on shoot to kill and no arrest because protecting Ken and finding out who sent them was not the main mission. If any of the assassins were arrested, there was a big possibility the person who sent them would know and there might be a withdrawal and evidence needed might be destroyed which would make the mission difficult. Getting to know the man behind it was the easy thing but getting a trail of the drugs and their destinations was the most important thing. As for Ken, he would have to skip all his classes and pray there would be no impromptu test.

Driving home and feeling the warm body of Ken on her back was torture and the worst was she knew Ken was aware of her discomfort.

Beatrice, Ken's mother had done a lot of work to help her. She had contacted the secretary and informed all the board members and those who needed to know about her son's marriage and about the position of her son's wife but no picture and name. She had also informed them that her son would be around with his wife. It would not make sense for her to go alone. They knew Ken but not her. She had already driven the jeep out of the park before Ken came out. She had seen him on suit on Saturday but she had most of the time tried to avoid looking at him. He was looking too handsome and was making her heart beat too fast. Ken signaled for her to drive out so he could lock the gate.

"You look good Stud" Ken said belting up.

She did not know how to react because she was not used to compliments.

"Is that a blush I am seeing?"

She just shook her head.

"So you are in the military."

"No, air force."

"I thought military is air force too."

"Military is soldier but people confuse it all the time, even army is soldier."

Ken just nodded.

The silence was deafening as she drove to Agbor where the mill was located. They would still need to drive to Lagos and be there before 3:PM for the main meeting with managers and board members, then they would lastly be at Warri, where a branch of the silk factory was located. There would be no one there by the time they would get there but it was okay. Ken's mother was fully in charge, they would not need to sneak in. There would be no time to visit the cocoa plantation which was about an hundred hectares of land with just cocoa plants. They harvested and processed it and then distributed it both in Nigeria and abroad to be used for the production of different Cocoa end products. She was going to plant cameras in all the places they were going to visit.

She had to drive fast and they were at the mill in less than an hour. The palm plantation was large. Two hundred hectares of land just for palm and there were up to ten of lands exactly like the one in Agbor just that the mill was located at Agbor and it was a big company with machines that looked alien to her. According to the file she had to study, they had over five hundred workers which was not surprising because they processed palm to red oil, oil used for the production of soap, they also processed the shells. It was massive with so many departments with each having managers. Even the ones whose works were just to cut the palm kernels from the tree had a manger. The company had their own vehicles used to transport the goods. Ken's mum's power was limited to accounts and finance which was enough. Ken had to hurry up with the introductions. Some were afraid of her while some loathed her especially the females. They did not need to say anything, their facial expression said it all. She must have used something on Ken, their dream man. If only they knew the marriage was not real. She demanded for all records of all transactions from five years till present and as she waited for them to make a compilation, Ken took her round the facilities. A certain secretary who was among those expressing their disapproval and who was still attempting to get noticed by Ken offered to escort them. Ken refused but she asked Ken to let her. Ken did something unexpected, he held her hand and kissed her cheek. It was all a show but she still blushed and felt heat. The girl scowled back. She was beautiful and had what attracted men in abundance but Ken had not even given her a second glance. She should not be happy but she was.

As they went to the first department where the red oil was produced, she pulled Ken to him to whisper.

"You need to show a little interest in the girl."

"Why?" Ken did not only look and sound puzzled, he looked like she was telling him to dip his hand in a vomit. It made the burning in her body to increase.

"I need her distracted."

Ken looked at her, kissed her lips and turned to face the girl before she could respond. She had to force herself to breathe. Ken was temptation, the definition of enticing sin. She could see the elation in the girl's eyes when Ken looked at her. There were others but they were not paying attention to her the way Joy was.

They were now in the most important place she wanted to visit. The place where the products were kept before distribution. There were so many twenty litters of gallons of oil both the red oil and the

other oil in a very large room. Joy said there were other rooms for other by products. She had to think fast. If drugs were being exported using the gallons as means where would the person put it and how? She turned and gathered all her trainings together. There must be something to distinguish the contaminated ones.

"Today is transportation and there have been increase in capital because the palms are producing well and much. Once these are transported, tomorrow many will be brought in" Joy told Ken.

There were so many, how would she know the ones she was looking for.

"Does my uncle come here before they are transported?"

"Yes. Your uncle is very meticulous. He comes with his trusted men and counts them after they have been put in here and is there when they are being transported. No one but me have access to this particular store. He will be here soon."

Joy was talking fast trying to please Ken.

"How soon?" she asked.

Joy scowled at her and hissed.

"Answer her."

There was anger in Ken's voice, something she had never heard. He was defending her, he was protecting her. Nobody did that for her. Ken was crawling his way into her heart, she knew it but whether she could stop him, she did not know.

"Maybe he is already here."

Joy's voice had changed to Boss and employee. She must have now realized Ken was a lost cause but her job was very important.

Her eyes caught something. It would be difficult for Nigeria Drug Enforcement agency to notice, they would not notice it. It was too subtle. There was a very little difference to some of the gallons close to her right side. It was the color of the labels, it was a bit darker which would not easily be noticed but she was trained by the best of the best. She was trained not to overlook the smallest details, a missing link. She moved close to the gallons.

"Is it possible to go with one gallon? Will it disrupt anything?" she asked Joy.

She was not going to make room for suspicion. But it was Ken who answered.

"Yes of course. I will just inform my uncle I took one."

"Let me scent it first. I have a specific type I like. Some scent and taste raw and it's common with Agbor."

“I promise you this one was well cooked” Joy answered.

She looked at Ken hoping Ken would understand what her look meant. She was happy he got the message. Ken pulled Joy aside towards the left side as he asked about the machines and other stupid things which Joy was happy to answer.

She opened the oil. It was oil no doubt. Kayode was not stupid. Drug agencies were aware of the different methods used in transporting hard drugs. A can of milk might be a can of cocaine. If the distinctive gallons contained hard drugs, even a dog would not be able to sniff it out. It was red oil not water that was transparent enough to see to the ground. There was just one way of knowing if there was something else inside. She brought out a camera, the size of a small wrist watch but had under it fan blades which when powered could spin down and it was water and liquid proofed. She sent the camera inside the gallon and with her android wrist watch, she operated and watched the progress of the camera. It was almost impossible to see but that was not needed. The camera touched ground but she still used the blade to spin and not so surprisingly, it was still going down almost like it was tearing through an obstacle. It was not powerful enough to cut through a rubber like the gallon but it could open a softer material like some of the strongest waterproof. She allowed it to keep tearing till she saw white. That was definitely cocaine, her guess would be crack cocaine very pure and expensive. What was inside that gallon could get up to millions. The white she was seeing soon turned to red because the oil was now staining the cocaine. There would be no need to go to the cocoa factory. She knew where the drugs were. Kayode would have never been caught. His father was just suspicious of him because he had overheard Kayode discussing with someone who would be one of his customers about the price of something and Kayode was telling the person he was not going to reduce the money because the cocaine was pure. He already knew Kayode was an addict but he became suspicious Kayode was a drug dealer. In the will, he had written that if what he suspected was true that Kayode must turn a new leaf. A promise he must vow before he would inherit what he had allocated to him. The man believed dealing with hard drugs would be easy for Kayode because he might be transporting them using his business. In the will, if Ken got married. It would be only the water company that would be handed to Kayode. Ken would inherit every other thing apart from the silk which already belonged to his mum in a way. The man said the idea of the silk factory came from the love of his life, Beatrice's mother. Beatrice had even extended the factory to production of clothes, masculine, feminine, young and old, then she had big boutiques in many locations. The biggest in Lagos and Warri. A new one in Benin. It made her thinking that Kayode might have managed with what his father left for him if it was the mill because his illegal business would continue but he was doomed with the pure water segment. He would not be able to smuggle the drugs through that means and abroad would be no show because they did not export water abroad. Kayode would never give up the mill, it was something she was hundred percent certain. She quickly pulled out the camera, used a handkerchief to take it, wrapped it and put back in her bag, replaced it with a tracking device, covered the gallon, exchanged the position with another gallon with the same label then walked to meet Ken and Joy.

“Every label from the company and from what I heard all the sections and segment are printed by one printing company in Warri. Dallas printing company” Joy said but she froze.

That was her father's company. He was rich because he did work for many big and rich companies and rich people. Her brother was rather more interested in her father's livestock farm which was worth millions in gain. Right now, Kate's husband was the manager of Dallas. He had even been the one to land the heavy contract years ago, then not too long ago he had made another contract with another big company. It was multi million naira contract that changed their life for good. So it was Ken's grandpa's company.

"Dallas is also currently our label printers. The company is very reliable" Ken said.

She was no longer frozen, she became ice and realization dawned on her. She should have known. Not only was Dallas dealing with Ken's dad and his grandpa's companies, Kate was a manager of a section of Ken's mum silk company. She should have known, she shouldn't have ignored what had been there in front of her. She could not go to that meeting, Kate was going to see her. The marriage was not real. Her family would throw a party after the marriage must have ended after her mission. She would not be able to take the disgrace. She could almost hear them taunting her after the divorce must have been announced. They would be so happy. She could not face Kate. She just could not.

Ken turned to look at her. She kept a stone face but she just knew he might have noticed something was wrong. Ken was by her side pulling her to him.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

He only knew of Stud's existence less than a week ago but he knew her, she was tough, she was not fearful and nothing shook her but the Stud he just pulled to him was different. She was shaking, something had shaken her but he could not tell what. He pulled her closer and she surprisingly wrapped her hands around his waist and rested her head on his chest. This was what he had been looking for, he should be excited but he was not. This was not how he wanted Stud to come to him. He would rather have the other Stud than the one shaking and holding him close.

"Stud what is wrong?" he whispered to her ears.

"Let's get out of here."

Her voice was also different scaring him. What could have shaken Stud? He wanted to ask her if danger was close by but he did not, that would never be the reason Stud was shaking, it was something emotional like a trigger of a past experience.

"Okay" he said pulling her away gently but still holding her to his right side, his hand pinning her waist to him.

"Is she alright?" Joy asked.

Joy sounded excited like she wished Stud should die. He understood that they saw her as an obstacle. Even though he pretended not to know, he had been surrounded by ladies and even fought for. He ignored Joy but stopped at the door. Uncle Kayode was there with about five bodyguards. Stud's recovery was automatic. She was studying the men with his uncle. She had forced her emotions aside and was ready for battle. He was beginning to understand what attracted him to Stud, his body had recognised before his mind. But he loved that part of her.

"Joy I thought I instructed that on no account should any person be allowed into the store room?"

Kayode was definitely angry but he could see Kayode was also suspicious.

"Uncle Kayode this are necessary protocols. She had to show me and my wife around the company. I have my mum's keys remember. I don't know if she has a key but I opened the store room with my key."

He had to say the truth although what he wanted was to strangle Joy for being so hateful.

"I thought I told you that never will I or your grandfather accept this woman into our family."

"The last time I checked, grandpa can speak on his own. It is his opinion I'm interested in, you can rot in hell with yours."

"Kennedy how dare you?"

His uncle raised his hand to hit him but Stud was fast. She seized the hand. His bodyguard reacted by cocking their guns.

"Shooting an air force officer is a very big crime but I don't like the long journey of court trial. If you don't drop that weapon I am going to consider it as a threat to my life and trust me I don't have handcuffs."

They looked at Stud and refused to pull down their guns, she was not on uniform and from their looks they did not believe her, they gave her a dismissive look because they knew she was a girl and they were four. But he was confident Stud could defeat them. Looking at them, he knew these same men would also look down on someone like Ghost. That was the problem of thinking with only muscles. He wondered how many Ghost must have sent to the grave without understanding what actually happened.

"Bring down your weapon" Uncle Kayode said.

They obeyed him and one pushed his chest toward Stud, a scare tactics but Stud looked him down.

"Release my hand now" Kayode answered.

There was no way he was going to see him as his uncle ever again.

Stud gently brought down Kayode's hand staring at the men guarding him.

“Stud let’s go and uncle see you at the meeting. And I hope you’ve informed grandpa I am bringing my wife to show him tomorrow, I could not reach him on phone.”

“I will never allow this disgrace to meet grandpa.”

“It takes one to know one.”

“See this idiot, this rat, this nonentity. Useless child born yesterday is insulting me.” Then he started raining curses in Yoruba but he ignored him and took Stud outside.

He held her hand till they got to the jeep.

“My grandpa would have accepted you. Don’t mind...”

“I’m okay.”

“Stud you are not okay and please I am not going to take no for an answer this time. What shook you at the store house that even Joy noticed it?”

Stud was quiet but the tremor began again. Stud was breaking his heart. He pulled her to him and there was no resistance. He did not know what to say again. He just held her close.

“Ken I can’t go for that meeting.”

He knew Stud was opening up, he held his breath afraid he would say the wrong word and make her to withdraw.

“Why?” He hoped that was the right question to ask.

“Because I have what I wanted. I have seen what I am searching for.”

He still had no idea what they were looking for.

Someone was running to them with a file. He held Stud and waited.

“There is also a flash drive inside the file sir” the man said, he nodded. The man turned back towards the company.

“You don’t also need this?”

Stud raised her head and pulled away. He felt a loss and wanted her back in his embrace.

She opened the jeep and brought out something that looked like a laptop but it was different. She pulled out all the files, opened the laptop, it was not a laptop. The space for buttons was blank, that was what he thought until it became transparent. She placed the papers one after the other until all had passed through the stuff. She brought out the flash drive and used a code to insert inside then plugged the mouth of the code to her wrist watch. Seconds later, she brought out the flash drive and arranged back the files.

She came out of the jeep and went straight to the driver's side but his body enveloped her from her back making her to go stiff.

"Stud please talk to me. You know you must be in that board meeting. You need to have records and you need to go on with the plan even though you've found what you are looking for, you are yet to find the enemies and they may be more than one."

"You don't need to explain my mission to me. I know what I must do but I seriously can't go to that meeting."

He gradually turned her and pulled her to him.

"So what are you going to do? Who will go for the meeting?"

There was no answer but she grabbed him as if she was drowning and he was the only anchor. He pulled her closer wishing she would talk to him. He tried to think of what could have triggered her tremor and could not find any. She had been doing something with some of the gallons while he distracted Joy, then she had walked to them and had frozen. Did he say anything wrong? Joy had told him that Dallas produced their labels and he had answered that it was the same for him meaning his father. Did something about Dallas caused her body to shake?

"Stud did I say something to upset you?"

She held him closer. He did not like Stud like this. At that moment, he realized it was the warrior he was extremely attracted to not the terrified Stud.

"Or my family."

"Ken you won't understand, you will call me a coward if I tell you."

She raised her head to look at him. He felt himself falling into those black eyes. There was nothing masculine about her face, she was beautiful and very feminine.

"Then give me a chance to prove you wrong."

She just stared at him, then slowly pulled away.

"We need to enter the road now. We must not miss the meeting."

And just like that Stud was back but he knew that deep within she was still shaking and it hurt to know that Stud would prefer to pretend everything was alright with her to telling him what was wrong, the same thing Ella did. There must be something in him that made them not want to confide in him.

Stud brought out an eyeglasses from her bag, it was a sunshade. She entered the jeep. He had no option but to join her.

She was operating her wrist watch again. Once she looked through the window pressing something on her sunshade before igniting the jeep and driving off.

The journey was long but the silence between them was longer. Stud did not talk. He had tried to start a conversation several times but he was met with silence. At a point, he gave up.

He guessed Stud had the direction because she drove straight to the headquarters of the company at Ikeja. They were almost late.

Many board members were already around and the managers waited to welcome them. It was a silly protocol he hated.

His uncle was not yet around. He was sure he would use flight. He felt Stud tense as he held her hands but her face remained a stone, devoid of emotion and expression but full of determination. They were all chatting and greeting each other when they fully entered the hall. The noise did not stop but it reduced and all eyes were on them. Someone ran to meet them. Mr. Ifeaka who was his grandpa's secretary was the first to welcome them. He introduced Stud to him and he saluted to Stud before giving his congratulations. It was a painful and stressful one by one introductions and greetings. When they got to one lady, he felt the tension in Stud's body increasing and the woman looked shocked like she was going to faint from it.

"Are my eyes deceiving me? At first I was like she is someone that look like her but Oreva this is real? What did you use on him?"

There was a mixture of hatred, disgust and heavy jealousy in just one voice. The woman had all forgotten the person she was talking to was currently her new boss because her tag showed she was the manager in charge of clothing in Warri.

Stud did not answer and it looked like it gave the lady more confidence.

"I know there is no way someone like Mr. Ken would stoop so low to marry someone like you except it is blackmail or jazz" she was spitting out the words and many lines of muscles like the roots of a tree were visible on the woman's throat.

"Excuse me, I am standing in front of you and you are talking to your new boss" he warned.

It took seconds before the meaning of the word boss dawned on the lady. She looked horrified like she was having a nightmare while Stud remained quiet, not staring at her. His Stud who looked at fierce men straight in the eyes was avoiding a woman who would commit suicide if make-ups were declared a crime. He could see how nothing was left of her real face, everything was coated, thicker than a painted wall.

"Sir, it does not make sense. I must be dreaming. Where on earth did you find her and what on earth will make you marry her? Wait I was not told about the marriage. Oreva I know you would have invited

us for your marriage if something is not fishy. No man can ever see you as a woman. You did something..”

“Enough” he thundered.

His voice brought a deafening silence to the hall. He was hardly angry, he could not remember ever being angry as he was.

“How dare you talk to my wife like that? Who the heck are you to know what I want in a woman?”

The look of fear in the woman’s eyes was nothing, he was still pissed off and he wanted more. Fear was just one of the things he wanted to see on her face.

“Ken just calm down you are boiling with rage. Don’t mind her, she is just surprised. She is my sister” Stud said dragging his hand to get his attention.

There were gasps from the people around. They were definitely the center of attraction and they all heard Stud. Stud got his attention not because she was pulling his hand but because she called the woman her sister. He looked at Stud and realization dawned on him. He did not understand everything but he understood enough from that statement. She was Stud’s step sister. Stud must have been raised by a terrible step-mum and wicked sibling or siblings. He did not need anyone to know that the woman Stud called her sister had made Stud’s life a living hell. This was the reason Stud did not want to go. Something had made her to realize who she would meet at the meeting. He also understood why Stud was not standing up against her sister, she thought the marriage was not real, no she believed the marriage was not real and the woman he was seeing would definitely throw a party and call everyone to celebrate when the marriage must have ended after the mission, after they must have divorced. He understood Stud’s silence but at the same time, he understood Stud’s bravery. To her, the marriage was not real but she still came. His woman, a brave warrior in every way. He thought he was already falling in love with her but looking at her at the moment, his heart did a summersault and started melting. He was irrevocably in love with Stud and there was no going back. He took in air into his lungs to cool his temper. He did not get angry, rather he made his opponents mad with rage with words. Kate, which was the name written on the woman’s tag was a woman who wrecked people with just her looks and words. Two can play the game. He smiled at Stud and kissed her, it was supposed to be a brief kiss but the moment his lips touched her, he was lost and Stud did not help. The clapping and noises brought his sanity temporally back. He smiled and looked at Kate.

“Trust me I have met a lot of ladies and I know exactly the kind of lady that turns me on with just a look and it’s not your type. I understand you are not really angry with her but you are very jealous but you know it that even with her dressing like a tomboy, she is way hotter than you. She does not need a bag of cement make-up to look hot. Why you focus so much on who married your sister you should be worried about your husband because your face is a turn down. If he has not told you the truth that you look like the walls of my great grandma’s kitchen then he must be having fun somewhere else. If you must know, the reason you think men won’t like her is the reason I am attracted to her. Your husband really has a terrible taste.”

Her face was now exactly the way he wanted her to be. She opened her mouth wide with shock and embarrassment. Many were laughing while many covered their mouth to hide their laughter.

“Ken” Stud called.

“I am not through. I want to make it very clear to everyone that I don’t give a damn what you think about my wife. The door is very open. If you know you are not going to respect her and her authority in this company leave.” He made sure he shouted for everyone to hear.

“And as for you Kate, you have already rejected her and I think your services will no longer be needed.”

“No sir” Kate shouted going on her knees.

“Ken it has not come...” Stud had to stop because another annoying person interrupted her.

“And who gave you the right Ken to threaten my managers. Everyone is entitled to their opinions and there will be no firing anyone who does not agree with your useless wife” Kayode shouted.

There was nothing to be angry about, he was the master of words and he had the winning card. He turned to face Kayode. Kayode was surprisingly with men in army uniform. He stared Kayode in the eyes and smiled.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

He took in the faces of the managers. Kate was already standing up looking very happy. The others were divided but it did not matter.

“I have every right to stamp down any insubordination and you know it’s exactly what grandpa hates.”

“Maybe your mother did not brief you about your limited power.”

“I know everything and I also know she can fire anyone for a good reason after getting a yes from her dad. If you so much feel it’s okay for an employee to look down on his or her employer, then let’s take the case to grandpa immediately. Let grandpa decide.”

“I seriously don’t understand this, apart from the silk your mum never cared about any other. Why the change? Your dad’s business is about to crash and you think you can also ruin my father’s business?”

“All you have to do is go to Google and check the list of Nigeria’s richest men, that will answer your question. I rather think grandpa wants me here because you are about to crash his business.”

“How dare you” Kayode shouted, almost furious.

“We are already late for the meeting and please if I see you in the meeting, it means your opinion about my wife is no longer permitted to be expressed. She is now one of your bosses.”

He needed to have the meeting and get out of there. He took Stud with him and started going to the conference room. He had been there many times with grandpa. He had never understood why grandpa wanted him to observe a board meeting but now everything was beginning to make sense.

Of course everyone followed and within five minutes almost all were seated except his uncle and grandpa's nephews who were older than his mother. The three of them came inside and a fuming Kayode went to sit down at the Chairman seat as the acting Chairman which was only for the meeting because grandpa refused to even hand Kayode the role of acting Chairman. Decisions were brought for him to make on his sick bed. The second vice chairman was his mother while the first was Ikwere, his most senior uncle, his mother's cousin. The second grandpa's nephew was the overall general secretary. They sat according to position. He sat at the left side of his uncle with Stud. Opening prayers were said and the meeting began.

But he kept looking at the armed uniform men. He had little knowledge about the army but it did not make sense that soldiers would guard an ordinary citizen. Even Stud kept looking at them. He had to turn his focus to the meeting at hand. The first thing was to introduce the person his mother had placed to stand on her behalf till she returned from vacation with no timeline. The secretary read it like he was forcing himself to read what his mum had emailed to him. It made him to look at his other uncle, the three uncles were angry. He noticed but kept it in a part of his brain to study later. Although everything was in brochure for the meeting, the secretary read out the position of his mum which Stud who he called Mrs. Oreva Akindele would be taking over. The secretary welcomed Stud on behalf of the acting chairman who was right there. They clapped and it was Stud's turn to talk.

“I like studying and understanding my work and because of that all financial records from five years till now should be made ready before the meeting ends.”

The whole place erupted in shouts and protests. Kayode started laughing before beating the table to call for silence.

“You must be very stupid. How do you expect them to give you financial record before the meeting ends?”

“All finance department managers send a message to all your secretary to email the records and I need it ten minutes from now or just prepare to hand in your resignation.”

“And as the acting chairman, I overrule your instruction” Kayode shouted.

“I am reading the power I have here and I know I can fire any incompetent worker under my wings and I am fully in charge of finance. The person who can overrule is the Chairman not the acting chairman” Stud replied and turned to the others.

“Before you look at him for aid it is important you don’t waste the money used in printing what you are holding by not reading the rules and regulations. I did not see a chairman overruling my decision. I only demanded for finance records and transactions.”

Stud brought out many flash drives from her bag and told the secretary to distribute it to all the finance managers. The secretary scowled at her but did as instructed.

“All of you came with your laptops. Copy it to that flash drive. That will do for now.”

“This is not going to happen, there is no way I am going to allow this. This is my father’s company and no outsider will come and dictate to me. I want the two of you out of this building.”

“Under whose order?” Stud asked placing a hand on his hand, a signal for him to let her handle the situation.

“I am the acting Chairman and I said your presence is no longer needed you have three minutes to vacate the premises.”

There was anger, desperation but most of all fear in Kayode’s face. There was be something that would be discovered, something he had not have the time to erase because he was not expecting this to happen. It was not only Kayode but also the other two and many others.

“I will only listen to the chairman so your order will not stand. Let’s continue.”

“I am the chairman’s son. I do not care if the chairman will overrule my decisions later but right now as the acting chairman, your time is running out.”

“I am wondering what you will do when our time runs out” Stud said turning her attention to the brochure an insult on the ego of Kayode.

“Please see that Mr. and Mrs. Akindele are escorted out of the premises” Kayode instructed the men in military uniform.

“Oya stand up if you nor want make I treat you fuck up” one of the soldiers said trying to look menacing.

He could see relief in the finance managers’ faces.

“Mr. Secretary I said the meeting can continue” Stud said not even raising her head to look at the soldier.

He was familiar with the average Nigerian soldiers, what Stud did would enrage them, he was sure Stud knew but she still disregarded them anyway.

“I say stand up” the soldier shouted trying to use his hand to push Stud up. Stud was too fast. He had been looking at Stud yet he could not fully comprehend what happened, the soldier’s hand which was touching Stud was used as a momentum to throw the soldier to the meeting table. Stud followed him and twisted his wrist. A scream tore out through the soldier’s throat but Stud leapt on the other soldier

who was bringing out his gun. It was when the soldier started vibrating like he was being electrocuted that he saw the baton in Stud's hand. The other two Soldiers brought out their guns.

"I am Air Commodore Stud of the Special Force, who are you?" Stud was already out with her ID.

Shock came before fear. Whatever her position or Special Force meant must have frozen the soldiers. They were on attention saluting and saying what he heard as gibberish. She demanded for their base and unit after their names and then asked why they were in the company after telling them she was temporally given an assignment because of her marriage. She always answered a question before she asked them. She told them her name, her unit, her reason for being in the building before asking them. Apparently they were off duty but Kayode must have paid their commander millions and their commander had promised them twenty five percent of the money for them to just escort Kayode. He was baffled that they answered quickly. They did not even hesitate to disgrace Kayode. The four were now together, the electrocuted one still in shock, the one with the broken wrist still in pains yet Stud told them to pull off their uniform, fold it and return to base to report their failure to their commander who would soon hear from the chief of staff. With boxers and singlet, the soldiers left the meeting after saluting and after waiting for Stud to drop her hand before dropping theirs. It looked like he was watching a movie. But he smiled as Stud came back to her chair. This was his woman. She was his, no one would take her from him. She was not big, but she was all confident and looking athletic. In the midst of his scared uncles and managers and awe from the others, he kissed Stud. Just a brief kiss but his trousers became full, so full it bothered on serious pain.

"My wife is all fire, brain and beauty. She is one in a million and I am the luckiest man alive. Now that the obstacle has been removed don't you think we should go back to the meeting? You know I am a very busy person I have lots of businesses to run. You won't understand even if I explain."

His uncle stood up shaking from anger. Stud ignored him.

"I guess I should be having my files in five minutes time" Stud said and many started putting the flash drive into their computer. It was now very clear no one would save them from Stud.

"I happen to have a little knowledge that a military personnel cannot occupy the position you are trying to occupy" his uncle, the vice Chairman said.

He could see hope in his other two uncles' faces and he could see some paused with the work they were doing with their system.

"You can send a complaint to the military. Make sure you ask for the address before we leave" was Stud's reply and she was back to reading the brochure. He could see the others knew there was no hope of rescue. They must deliver the transactions or get fired. The secretary refused to continue the meeting until the others were through handing over the flash drive to Stud because Stud had said she had been summoned and needed to leave. There was a flash of hope in his uncles' eyes that Stud was being summoned for wrong doing.

"Let's go" Stud said after putting all the flash drives in her bag.

“And Uncle, I am coming to see grandpa tomorrow with my wife.”

He did not give his uncle time to respond. He just held Stud’s hand as they left the big hall.

“Stud what do you mean by summoned?” he asked as they got close to the entrance door.

“Jason said we should get the files and move now. He is analyzing what I sent to him. I think either he has hit gold or there is serious danger that can be avoided if we move.”

“I don’t like the last idea.”

Stud did not answer. She was turning left and right, front and back, then looking up as they got to their car.

Few seconds later, they were driving to Benin but Stud was alert.

“Did you notice something off about the vice chairman and the secretary?” Stud asked.

“Yes, they did not like you and they did not want you to get the transactions.”

“That is not the big thing.”

“Then what?”

“They looked at each other with a shared knowledge.”

“I don’t understand.”

“If Kayode is guilty, then the other two are also guilty.”

“But they were not in the will” he said.

“Yet they have more to lose because from the look of things, if you become in charge they will lose their position.”

“This is becoming too complicated.”

Stud did not say anything, they drove for some minutes in silence.

“We are not being followed” Stud broke the silence.

“Then that is good news.”

“No that means we are not in control.”

“Don’t you think Kayode knows that if anything happens to me, he will be number one suspect?”

“Not if it’s something that cannot be seen as murder and not if there are more than one person after your life” Stud said stopping the jeep suddenly that he was almost thrown out of the front seat, almost the same time, her wrist watch was blinking.

“Get out of the car now” Stud shouted already out and already removing her military bag from the back of the car.

He was out in a jiffy already panicking.

“I should have scanned, Jason thought I would scan” Stud said bringing out something that looked like a bug detector.

The stuff started beeping when Stud came to the bonnet of the jeep. Stud started opening the bonnet but stopped.

“Ken run” she shouted and started running. He did not know why but he trusted Stud. He ran with her and Stud only stopped after they had given the jeep a distance.

“Stud why did we run?” he asked trying to catch his breath.

“Our car has been compromised, that was why Jason sent the message. He just sent a message to confirm we took another means for transportation. I should have scanned.”

“But how will Jason know?”

“We will find out in eight seconds.”

Eight seconds came and with it the bonnet of his precious jeep exploded and within seconds the whole car was on fire.

He saw himself falling on the ground from shock. If they were in that car they would have been dead. The car was parked by the wayside and the closest car had reacted reversing on instinct but jamming into the car behind him but they would not die.

“We need to leave, we are in the open” Stud said inserting a transmitter in her ears and operating her android phone.

“My mistake Major, thank Jason for me. I need an extra eyes in the sky, the one I have is now following the hard drugs. Over.”

Stud gave out her location and coordinates as she waved at a cab to stop. She told the cab driver the location they were going to. He could not hear what Stud was talking and had no idea who she was talking to. He was still dazed with their near death experience. That would have been a horrible way to die.

“Ken gather your ass and move out, there is no single room for shock” Stud shouted.

The cab had stopped moving but he did not know where they were. He followed Stud still thinking of the way his jeep had exploded.

"Ken look at me" Stud shouted.

He blinked and saw a car driving towards them. The driver came out saluting Stud. Jaguar.

"How the heck did you forget to check your vehicle when you knew there was no eyes in the sky?" Jaguar asked.

"I don't have an answer to that. This was a terrible mistake."

"So what's is the plan?"

"No plan, I must get back to Benin" Stud answered.

"Then stay safe. I can see Ken is still in shock."

He did not know who made the last statement because he was no longer there. He was back to their former place, to the moment the jeep exploded. If they were still inside, would they had died on the spot or would they had been engulfed in the flames?

Something stung his face making him to blink.

"Snap out of it and get inside the car" Stud shouted opening the front seat door.

Almost immediately, he felt ashamed. He was the man but he was the one acting like a baby while Stud acted the man. It was just that he was not new to this kind of life. Stud started driving and it was after a long time he discovered Jaguar was not around and Jaguar was actually in Lagos.

"Where is Jaguar?"

"Gone."

"What is he doing in Lagos? I thought he stays at Abuja?"

"He has an alpha-omega mission an emergency order from Major this night."

"Meaning?"

Stud did not answer and he knew she would never answer.

It was almost twelve midnight before they entered Benin. He breathed a sigh of relief as Stud entered twenty First Street. He had been afraid that there would be another attack but they were home. Stud stopped the car and came out to open the gate. Suddenly, rains of bullets were released on Stud.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER NINETEEN

She had known something was wrong but had no idea what exactly it was. Messages had been pumping into her android watch and her phone and she had multitasked by driving and glancing at the messages on her phone. Jason had hit a jackpot and everything was set but they would not make the arrest yet.

As soon as they entered Twenty First street, she knew the attack on Ken was not over. Kayode must have known the car bomb attack did not work and there were assassins on the roof of Ken's building waiting for them. The bird counted about four and from their stance and weapons, they were professionals. Her bullet deflector was on her waist under her big T-shirt before she came out to open the gate knowing what would happen. They did not hesitate, she was the obstacle to their targets and they needed to take her out before Ken who would be a walk over. The fact that they rained bullets on her as soon as she opened the gate changed her mind about their professionalism, she would have only used one bullet. She acted fast by running back to the car and driving into the compound ignoring Ken's screams. They started shooting at the car, although bulletproofed, it could still be penetrated if one particular area was continuously shot at and the assassins also knew that and if they were shocked that the bullets they shot at her were repelled, they did not show it because they were on an all-out war with the car. She stopped the car very close to the door and turned to Ken bringing out another belt from her big military bag on the backseat. That was her back-up belt. The deflector had a very short time limit.

"Wear this fast."

Ken was shaking and it was obvious it was fear for her because he was looking at her all round checking for bullet wounds. She had no time for conversation.

"The reason I'm alive is this thing I am giving you to wear. We don't have time. You must do exactly as I say. Do you understand?" Ken did not say anything but he nodded still shaking but he took the belt and started wearing it.

She brought out the house key and gave to him.

"You are going to run to the door, open it and close it as fast as you can."

"What about you?"

Again, he was more worried for her safety.

"I am going to take them out."

"No let's get in together and you can call for backup."

"Ken we have less than a minute. If you stay here arguing with me, we both will die, you get inside, I do what I know best. Get inside now."

"Don't let anything happen to you. I won't survive it."

She was relieved the moment Ken was inside. Ken coming out of the car had distracted them to focus on him. The deflector helped. Immediately she was sure Ken was safe she came out with a poisonous bow and arrows. She climbed the roof of the car in one leap same time releasing her first shot hitting her first target on his shoulder, the poison just needed less than five seconds to immobilize and less than ten to kill. She was on the second one almost immediately.

He was the world most useless man alive. He was a man yet he was hiding behind the door while a woman fought with monsters. His body was seriously shaking. What if that stuff she was wearing failed? He had seen her wearing it before coming out of the car but did not know what it meant. He had wanted to ask her once they were in the house but at the moment, he was the only one inside. What if Stud died? He would not survive it. The day looked like it was ten years. It was already Tuesday morning and they were still under attack. He started imagining life without Stud. He could not believe it was not even up to a week since he met her. Tuesday evening would make it exactly a week but it looked like he had known Stud all his life. He knew life could change all of a sudden but he never in his imagination conceive of what was happening to him.

Suddenly, there was no sound. The place become deadly silent, more than a graveyard. His heart and mind started rising. Was Stud dead? He shook his head in denial. He would not survive it. He had come to become part of Stud or rather Stud had come to become part of him, he would become a walking dead without Stud.

There was a knock at the door, he jerked up too shaken to ask who was knocking.

“Open up it’s Stud.”

His body moved before his mind and the door was opened in a jiffy. Even as he shot the door, he started inspecting Stud. She was on black so blood would not be that obvious.

“I am fine Ken, they were nothing. Ken stopping harassing me.”

He did not stop till he was sure there was no blood but he refused to relinquish his hold on her.

“I have been scared of dying many times but the feeling of losing you is worse. I can’t comprehend how you survived but I need to make sure it’s really you.”

“Ken you are...”

He did not allow her to finish as he covered her mouth with his throwing away his promise. He needed more than words to make sure Stud was the one he was holding to confirm that they were still alive. The rush of hot blood flowing to his groin made him to groan and it became fire when Stud who had gone stiff responded kissing him back. He had expected a kick for breaking his promise but Stud’s response was a bit surprising. He pulled her closer to him deepening the kiss and using his hand to roam all over

her body. She pushed closer to him in response taking away his thinking faculty and his reserve. He would not stop, he could not stop. He wanted more. He pulled her to his room. He had no idea how they were able to make the journey but they got to his room and Stud did not protest when he pulled her to the bed. Stud went for his jacket, then his long-sleeved shirt. Stud just loosened few buttons and the seconds he had to stop kissing her so his shirt would come out of his head felt like years. He was back to her mouth that tasted like strawberry. He would never get used to her taste. He went for her T-shirt but Stud stopped and pushed him away.

"What is it?" he asked but it sounded so husky it felt like a groan.

"I can't Ken."

There was sadness in her voice.

"Why?"

"You won't like what you will see."

It took seconds for him to understand what she meant. He sat up and forced her to look at him.

"I can't say I know everything about you but one thing I am sure of is you have been hurt so much that trust is not a word that exist in your dictionary but I am asking you to trust again. Just this once trust me. I have slept with many girls of which I am not proud of, I know beauty when I see it and you are beautiful."

She tried to turn away but he did not give her the chance.

"I am not saying it to flatter you, I am stating a fact. You are black beauty, your eyes make me feel like I am falling inside. I saw your sister and without telling me, I know she is part of the reason you feel you look like a boy but Oreva, the reason they did whatever they did to you is because you are better than them in every way. If she is what a woman should look like, then I will just celibate. If I compare her to you, you are beautiful. I want you to give yourself to me, I know it is not easy but I want you to trust me that I am going to like what I will see."

He took her hand and placed it on his erection, she jerked her hand away and stood up.

"Oreva."

"Don't call me that."

"Well I am not going to call you Stud again because you are a woman to me. See what you have done to me. This is because of you. I have never gotten this for some time now but you brought it back. At first it was just my body but just within a week I fell madly in love with everything about you, your personality and your easy nature despite all you have been through. See and feel what you have done to me."

She did not move or say anything but he waited. After what felt like an eternity of waiting, Oreva left the room. He threw himself on the bed. He should be sexually frustrated but he was not, he was rather

furious, furious at the family Oreva came from. They made her this way. He was almost about to burst but he would wait. One step at a time.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY

She was on the ground immediately she shot the door to her room. She could engage men in battle without flinching. She was not afraid to go face to face with danger yet she had ran away from the one man who was changing her life. Her body was burning, liquid flames were flooding in between her legs yet she could not allow him to give her relieve for fear of being rejected. He had told her to trust him but she did not know how to do that anymore. She had trusted many times and had been hurt in all of them. She remembered the day she had been pissed off after her step-mum had tried to set her all her books on fire. She had carried a pestle to hit her step-mum and her step-mum had seen the anger on her face and had begged her to drop the pestle and she would not light the fire, she had believed her and dropped the pestle not knowing that Okemute, her brother was behind her with a stick which he hit her with knocking her unconscious. Later her step-mum had told her dad she set her books on fire because she did not want to continue with school. The only good thing that came out was her dad had not reacted, he rather dropped enough money for her to get new books indicating she must go to school, he never even spoke. Till today she was yet to figure out the motive behind her step-mum's action. There were so many other incidents that she could not count and each had destroyed her ability to trust. Ken had asked her to trust him but would she be able to take it if Ken rejected her? She tried to go over every thing she had experienced with Ken to find reason not to trust him but there was none. What if Ken would like her the way she was? She would never find out without trying. What would she lose? Her family had taken away what life should feel like, Ken was offering to show her. Could she take that leap of faith? She was so confused on what to do. She stood up pacing her room. There were just two outcome, either Ken would reject her or he would accept her. She decided to try to prove to herself and to Ken that she was right.

She slowly walked to Ken's room. The door was opened and Ken was sitting down on the bed half naked, his head on his palm. He raised his head to look at her. He did not say anything, he just looked at her. She saw something in his look, he was waiting for her to condemn or accept him, he looked vulnerable, like she was the one person who could destroy him with just a word. His look gave her the courage she never had. She closed her eyes and pulled off her clothes and waited.

There was silence, no movement. Her senses were on high alert and she knew Ken had not moved from the bed but she could feel him looking at her. She waited for him to reject her. It felt like years before she heard Ken's footsteps. She shook with fear, she had never done this before. What was she going to do after Ken must have told her she did not look interesting? She could feel his body heat, he was very close. She felt his palms holding her cheeks. He was warm, as if her body was cold and his palm was heating her up.

"Oreva open your eyes and look at me."

She wouldn't have obeyed if his voice was not very husky. Her breath left her the moment her eyes met Ken's eyes. There was stark hunger not just hunger but fierce possessiveness that shook her whole being.

"You have the most beautiful body I have ever seen."

She wanted to process what he just said but she could not because Ken had grabbed her left breast increasing the flames burning in her body. She found herself panting so fast when Ken grabbed the right breast.

"No wonder you wear bogus T- shirt and after wrapping your breast with that tight camisole. I like the size of what I am seeing because I can do this."

Ken bent down and took her breast in his mouth while rubbing the other one. The sensations shook her being, the fire became too hot, something big was building in her body and she needed relief. She pushed herself to Ken. Ken pinched her nipple making her to scream in ecstasy. She could not stand with the sensation shaking her body.

"Ken" she moaned.

She had no idea why she was calling him, she wanted something but she did not know exactly what it was just that her body was on fire and needed to be quenched. Ken lifted her and placed her on the bed. He moved his mouth to the second nipple, his other hand found the liquid pooling in between her leg and she screamed and jerked from the sensation. Her body was no longer on fire, it was melting. Ken was giving her pleasures she could never have conceived of. She completely melted when Ken started kissing his way down. She started moaning and writhing on the bed the moment Ken's mouth entered her.

"Ken please" she pleaded with no iota of idea what she was pleading for. Just when she felt she was going to get the relieve she was looking for, Ken pulled away.

"No Ken.."

"Sssh, I am not through."

She nodded when she saw Ken was pulling his trousers. She watched as his erection came out like it had been held prisoner. She waited impatient as Ken came back to the bed.

She woke up feeling sore and thoroughly used. Every activity of the night came back like a flood of information. She could not believe she had a wanton sex with Ken and she had screamed and begged and enjoyed every moment of it. Ken had taken her over and over again like he could not get enough. Thinking of Ken made her turn. He had wrapped her in his body before they slept off but Ken was not on the bed. She turned and raised her head to check the time. It was 8:51 AM. She jumped down from the bed. She was naked but that was not the issue. She was supposed to update and get update from Major and the dead bodies would still be outside. Where was Ken? She wore her clothes with lightning speed

and ran to the parlor, then the kitchen. Ken was not around. Ken had gotten what he wanted and had abandoned her. But where would he go to? This was his house. Maybe he did not want to face her and tell her directly that she did not meet his standards. She sat down on one of the couches forcing tears trying to find their way to her eyes to go back. Her heart was burning making her to rob where her heart was located. She had known what was going to happen yet she had allowed him use her, okay she had enjoyed every moment of it and that was the problem. She would not survive it. Her eyes located a paper on the table. She took it and opened it.

‘THANKS FOR GIVING ME THE BEST NIGHT OF MY LIFE. I AM NOT GOING TO SAY SORRY TO YOU BECAUSE I AM NEVER GOING TO LET YOU GO BECAUSE I AM ALREADY ADICTED. BUT I WILL SAY SORRY FOR MAKING YOU SO TIRED. I GOT A MESSAGE THAT I HAVE A TEST BY 8 AND I COULD NOT WAKE YOU UP, YOU LOOK SO TIRED. I LOVE YOU OREVA.’

Two things registered at the same time. One, Ken had not abandoned her and he had no plans to, two, Ken had gone to school unescorted. Terror she had never known gripped her. She ran as fast as she could to take her black bag and her phone, she found the car Jaguar gave her. Ken had gone with the camri. She did not bother closing the gate or noticed there were no dead bodies as she drove the fastest she had ever driven to Ken’s Faculty. Her mind and brain refused to function properly. She could not lose Ken. She just found life and she was not going to go back to her bleak world.

She hit the steering wheel , blowing her horn as she got to Main Gate. A vehicle in front of her was discussing with the security man. Her honing made them to hurry. She did not stop to collect tag, she drove like a mad woman. She knew that meant trouble but nothing could be compared to making sure Ken was safe. How could Ken be so stupid? What if his stupidity had ended his life? Her heart was so hot, she could not breathe. Nothing must happen to Ken because she would not rest until she personally kill Kayode and any other person involved. In just a week, her dull life had all of a sudden had a new meaning. She could not believe that just one week of her life was better than her twenty eight years of existence and it had been just one man. One man had broken down all her walls and had entered. She loved him, there was no denying it. She would never recover if anything happened to Ken, her Ken.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

She was leaping out of the vehicle immediately she parked at Faculty of Law. UNIBEN security had been pursuing her but she did not care. Getting to Ken was the ultimate goal.

She stopped running. Ken was coming out of the faculty with two of his friends. He was laughing at what one of them said, he was looking so relaxed and happy that she felt like punching him. Here she was already in trouble because she had been imagining different things that must have happened to him. Her dreadlocks were not even packed, her black on black looked rumpled and she smelled like sex but Ken was looking fresh, handsome and laughing unaware she was even close. He was such an idiot. She

should be relieved he was okay but she did not understand why she was angry? She was angry he had placed himself in danger.

Ken saw her as they got close and his smile widened.

"You looked...."

Her punch stopped his speech mid way.

"Are you crazy, you scared the shit out of me. Why would you do that?"

She saw the shock in Ken's friends faces but she did not care. Ken bent down holding his stomach, he stood erect but instead of being sober his smiling increased showing his beautiful dimples. Men were not supposed to have dimples. How was she supposed to be angry when he acted that way?

"That was deep my love but I did not put myself in danger."

"You left without me."

"Yes but not unescorted."

"I don't understand."

"Ghost drove me to school and he is around somewhere and I guess enjoying my predicament. You made me lose ten thousand bucks to Ghost."

She hadn't thought of that, of course Ken was not stupid. She should have thought about that before running out like a mad woman. She should have thought about the fact that there were no messages from Major or Ghost or Wild."

"Just what did you do Ken?"

"You really want me to tell you here because I am not going to lie to you."

"Follow me." She turned to leave but Ken grabbed her and pulled her to him, before she could protest, he kissed her in front of his friends, then turned to look at them.

"Miracle and Osas meet my tomboy hot wife I told you about. Sweetheart meet my friends."

She was shocked but made sure nobody saw it. She looked at Ken and hoped he got her question like what the heck are you doing? He just smiled at her. She had to shake Ken's friends who accused Ken of not inviting them.

"I heard you are a bad ass in the military" Miracle said.

She smiled.

"I am just an air force officer."

“Wow” Osas and Miracle said. They were clearly awed.

“A female in the air force, and you look hot. No wonder Ken was hiding you” Osas.

She wished there was a mirror she could use to see herself because her body must have changed overnight. Ken punched Osas shoulders playfully.

“Don’t call my wife hot, go find yours.”

“You can help me then. I want to meet your female friends” Osas said.

“I think I need a female bodyguard, a tomboy is a vital qualification” Miracle said.

She was so unfamiliar in this territory. She felt lost on what to do. Before she could answer and say something stupid, UNIBEN security was on her.

“Mr. man you are to follow me to crime office now.”

There was no greeting, no courtesy. She wanted to lash at him but Miracle was faster.

“Sir she is a woman not man and she is an air force officer.”

She mouthed a quick thank you to Miracle before facing the man. She brought out her air force ID and the signed paper. As the man went through it with two others who came with him, she explained the reason for her misbehavior.

“I had to get to him before he is attacked. I was delayed so he was ahead and just last night we were ambushed in his lodge. Just a second can separate the living from the dead. I am sorry but I am happy I got here in time.”

“Air Commander?”

One of the men asked shaking his head.

“You have any problem with that?”

“No I am just awed. You look young.”

“Thanks.”

They gave her the ID and paper and tag after shaking hands with her and wishing her good luck. She thanked Osas and Miracle but asked them to allow her take Ken away. They saluted making her laugh but her laughter changed immediately they got to the car Jaguar gave them.

“Oh no, not that face.”

“Don’t you ever scare me like that again, you could have told me Ghost was taking you.”

Ken did not answer but that smile again, she was never going to get used to loving that smile.

"What is it?" she wanted to use a stern voice but it came out like she was laughing.

"You were really worried about me. That is a good sign."

She wanted to deny it but she was done hiding her feelings.

"Why won't I be worried that the man I have fallen in love with was in danger."

Ken froze. He was not expecting her to say what she said.

She found her back resting on the car, ken's body closing up on her.

"You know I heard you loud and clear and you cannot take back your words."

"I know what I said Ken. I have just known you for a week but in just that time, you've become my world. You are the only thing that matters to me Ken and I don't want anything to happen to you."

Ken kissed her, they were in the open but Ken kissed her. She did not need any more answer to her question. Ken was openly claiming her, telling the world that she was his. He had kissed her before but this was different. It was as if he was trying to express what he could not express in words with a kiss. He was so gentle and she could not hold her heart from falling. Ken pulled back and looked at her.

"I love you Oreva."

"You are my world Ken. You are my everything."

"Thanks for trusting me. I promise not to ever break that trust."

"I am counting on it."

"Okay lovebirds time up. Stop distracting innocent students."

Ghost just had to ruin their moment.

"Great now the two want to rip me apart. Let's keep that to later because we are all flying to Abuja in few minutes' time. Your uncle has finally announced the passing of your grandpa. Grandpa's lawyer had summoned everyone for the reading of the will today because that was your grandpa's wish."

"What?" she and Ken said at the same time.

"But you guys said three days and why will they want to read the will now when Kayode will lose?" Ken asked.

"Because they are not going to read the will you know" Ghost answered.

"My grandpa's lawyer will never betray my grandpa."

"But he had disappeared the last one week but suddenly, he is back."

"Ghost what the heck is going on? I know you know something" she asked.

"Barrister Ayomide's only child is being held as hostage after they kidnapped her from her school."

"No, I did not want it to get this ugly. Not that girl. Her mother died not too long ago. Barrister will not recover. This is getting out of hand."

"Ghost what game are you guys planning to play?" she asked.

She knew them enough to know that there were planning something.

"We are going there to play our last card, checkup."

"But I have not arranged all the findings" she protested.

"Jason has everything ready."

"But how? I know he has the records from the mill but I have not sent the records from the flash drives from my meeting. Then I inserted some devices in Kayode's clothes, I have not gone through it."

"Jason made those flash drives Stud."

"What else are you not telling me."

"Jason sees you as family and once he gets interested in anyone you just have to live with some certain things. The mistake of you not checking the jeep made him believe you are already distracted with Ken and he believed he needed to come in to protect you the way he knows best."

"So what you are saying is that Jason has access to my phone and gadgets, to my privacy."

"All of us in Circle, now you and don't take it wrongly Stud, it means he sees you as family which you know it's rare. Once Jason gets interested in someone, he feels the need to protect that person. There is nothing you can do about it Stud, he won't even argue with you. You can talk from now till eternity but he will still do what he will do because he feels it's the right thing. It's his nature. You just have to get use to him especially when you've put yourself at risk. You distorted his brain according to him. He will send you everything later. Trying to convince Jason on what he believes is right is like trying to find me when I don't want to be found. I wish I can explain Jason to you."

"I know" she said forcing tears not to come out of her eyes.

"Great welcome to the weird. Just make sure you don't get shot by mistake, you might end up getting locked up this time. Let's go play our last card" Ghost said walking to Ken's car.

Ken followed her to their emergency car.

"This Jason is weird and it's creepy to have someone having access to my phone. And I did not see him at the wedding" Ken said closing the door to the front seat.

"You don't understand, my world is changing so fast. I can't believe Jason is interested in me" she said igniting her car.

"Wait. Interested? You are happy a male is interested in you?"

She glanced briefly at Ken's face and burst out laughing.

"What is funny."

"Trust me, Jason can never see me the way you are thinking. He is not supposed to be married but he found a miracle in Cindy."

"You are confusing me."

And he really looked confused.

"Jason is autistic."

"Like those children that used to scream all the time like they are being chased by demons?"

"Not all are like that Ken but Jason is almost like that, he doesn't talk, he does not touch and he is not comfortable around people. Apart from his wife, the twins and AI, I have never seen him make physical contact with someone. He talks a little when he is with his wife. He is a math guru, can hack into anything and a dangerous sniper."

"He was the sniper on Saturday."

She nodded.

"And George and Geoffrey are his sons?"

"Yes."

"Is Geoffrey like him?"

"Seriously we don't know Ken. He acts like him but he is very intelligent. He can hack and he can solve difficult math puzzle and he is just four. Jason had to undergo a lot of trainings to be able to handle triggers and sensations and sensitivity but Geoffrey isn't. He had never complained about somewhere being too bright and people being too loud. He is just complicated."

"So you are telling me you are okay that Jason is monitoring you?"

"I seriously don't know but I have never had someone protect me enough to invade my privacy. Jason is all about puzzles and correct answer. He is very elusive that many don't know him physically in the Special Force. I am not part of their unit Ken. Jason hardly gets interested in someone. His actions were to protect me Ken and that's the way he sees it. I feel honored that Jason feels the need to protect me and yesterday's mistake was a silly one Ken. I was supposed to check the car."

"Oreva I have no idea how your unit or Special Force work but the important thing is that we came out early enough."

"Because Jason sent me a query."

Ken looked at her.

"I have not even taken the time to think about why Jason was involved from the beginning. This has never happened in any of my mission."

"I think Ghost said it. He believes I am distracting you."

"Maybe he is right. You've taken over my senses and I can't think straight Ken. I'm new to this feeling."

Ken smiled.

"What's the smiling for?"

"I like taking over your senses."

"Ken I almost got us killed."

Ken sighed.

"I will try to be taking your senses at the right time."

"You are just unbelievable Ken."

"I will take it as a compliment. By the way do you have an idea what they are planning to do?"

She shook her head.

"What of Sade, Barrister's daughter?"

She also shook her head but stopped the car immediately.

"What is it?" Ken asked already panicking.

"I think I know why Jaguar went to Lagos and why the order came from Major."

"I don't understand" Ken said.

She did not answer Ken, she ignited the car and continued driving.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

They were the ones everybody were waiting for at the airport. His dad had chartered a plane to take them to Lagos. His mum, his dad, his wife, Wild and Ghost. His mum was briefed on what was going on by Ghost.

"Not Barrister, please help her. I can't believe Kayode would do this" his mum pleaded with Ghost.

"She is right now with one of us who has replaced the spokesperson of her adaptors who reports directly to Kayode."

"So she has been rescued?" he asked.

"Not yet, she cannot know she is safe. Jaguar would have let her know but she would not be able to pretend. She was abused by the three men Kayode sent to kidnap her. She is traumatized but she is safe."

"Thanks a lot. I guess her dad is not aware" his mum said.

"Yes" Ghost answered.

"What exactly are we going to do when the wrong will is read? What are your plans?" his dad asked.

"We will handle everything sir" Ghost answered. His dad nodded pulling his wife to rest on his shoulder.

Their second transport were already by the airport at Abuja waiting for them. He knew the drivers of the two jeeps must be military personal but he did not bother to ask. He entered same jeep with Ghost in front, Oreva with him at the back.

He did not speak to Oreva, they just held hands and it was better than words. Kayode with his bodyguards, his grandpa's lawyer were the only ones around in grandpa's mansion. Normally there was supposed to be formal greeting but the tension in the air was obvious as soon as Kayode sighted Wild.

"This is a family meeting, no one else is invited" Kayode shouted, fear and anger mixed in his voice.

"Kayode they are our bodyguards and seriously I don't have the strength to debate with you, I'm mourning the loss of dad if you don't mind" his mum said pushing Kayode aside and entering the house.

The men with Kayode were the ones he took to Agbor. And because they thought with muscles they saw they were no match for Wild but also from their look, they felt they could take him down, they must have dismissed Ghost. Barrister who was sitting down stood up to welcome down. He could see Barrister's hands were shaking when they shook hands. He was trying to pretend everything was okay but he would have known even though he had not been told that his daughter was kidnapped. He wondered what would be going on in Barrister's mind.

"I am sorry about your loss ma. Your dad treasured you so much. Your dad is at peace now. He wanted me to tell you that."

His mum nodded trying to wipe the tears flowing from her eyes but his dad's hand got there before her. He pulled her to him.

"Barrister please get straight to why we are here, I have a meeting with a client" Kayode fused.

"Sorry I should have known" Barrister said opening a book that had the cover of a school project, thick and dark blue. He never liked Kayode and always stood up to him. But he was apologizing for doing the normal thing.

Barrister used a razor to open the sealed book after showing them it was sealed. He also showed the front page which had grandpa's stamp and fingerprint but no signature.

"Why no signature? That's unlike grandpa" his mum asked.

"He was too weak to sign, he said his finger print should be used " Barrister answered his mum.

"He wrote his will on his sick bed?" his mum asked.

"Yes Beatrice, it was as if he knew he was going to die and decided to write his final will" Barrister answered but he was sweating.

He understood why lying did not go well with Barrister. His grandpa trusted him with his life because over the years he had proven to be trustworthy.

The will Barrister read was as he expected. His mum was officially given full authority of the silk and also the pure water while every other went to Kayode. He read other gibberish for long before he closed the book.

"So it is just me and Beatrice and members of his family for his burial. I don't know how that will be possible, he was the chairman of a big company" Kayode said.

"Kayode is this what you are concerned about? Why all of a sudden I don't know my brother. You talk as if you are describing dad in a vacation in Paris. I don't even see sorrow in your eyes" his mum cried.

"You want me to cry like a woman before you know I'm also heart broken? Dad has gone to rest. He was sick for long Beatrice. I am sad but life must go on" Kayode said standing up.

"According to grandpa's will. All the transition of inheritance will take place after his burial tomorrow. I have things to do and put in place" Kayode said.

"But we are not through" his mum said.

"What do you mean? I have read the will ma" Barrister said.

Ghost stood up with a book exactly like the one Barrister was holding. He placed the sealed book on Barrister's hand and went to switch on the TV.

"What is going on here. What is this lunatic doing?" Kayode shouted.

Ghost ignored him. He instead brought out a mini laptop with codes he was connecting to the TV.

"Beatrice take your family and get out of here. This is now my house and I want all of you out right now."

"Till dad is buried this house is not yours Kayode" his mum shouted back.

Barrister was looking so confused and afraid.

"I want you to bundle them out of this house now" Kayode told his bodyguards.

Wild and Stud did not wait for them to make a move. They attacked the bodyguards so fast that they had no time to recover. That baton was used to tase them, their guns were collected and they were handcuffed and dragged to a part of the sitting room.

He watched Kayode's shock and fear but it worsened when there TV started playing. Jaguar was carrying Sade to a car. She was sleeping. He guessed it was induced sleep. Barrister jumped up.

"Sade" he cried.

"She is fine Barrister. We are sorry we couldn't get there on time. She is traumatized and he had to put her to sleep so she would not go into shock" Wild spoke for the first time. His voice was soothing and he felt calm.

"Thank you so much. I don't know who you are thank you so much" Barrister said going on his knees, tears of relief flowing from his eyes. Men did not cry, for someone like Barrister to shed tears, he must have been scared to death, he must have given up hope of seeing his daughter alive even though he had to still try by following Kayode's instruction.

"So can you read my dad's Will now?"

"No, no. I won't allow that to happen. Never" Kayode shouted rushing to grab the book from Barrister. He was intercepted by Oreva who pushed him and as he fell, she brought out a handcuff and handcuffed Kayode who was now shouting no.

"I don't want to know how you knew but it's better we play the tape. He made me hand over the will to him and gave me this one" Barrister said but he was standing up to meet Kayode.

"You kidnapped my daughter from her school. You sent people to her university to kidnap and hurt her. You" Barrister shouted punching Kayode all over. He had expected Oreva to stop Barrister but she waited too long to pull him out but by then Kayode's face was swollen. Barrister allowed Stud to pull him to a chair but he was still fuming.

The video lasted for thirty minutes. Grandpa was very healthy in the video making him believe Kayode did something. There was silence after the video. From the will, he was now the chairman but must not change the name of the company. Grandpa would be buried in two weeks time. He noticed Oreva did not pay attention to the video. She was using her phone.

"What are you looking at?" he asked placing his hands on her laps. Heat sipped into his palm, then ran straight down to his groins. At that moment he wished he was alone with her.

"I can't wait to have you alone" he whispered to her ears. He saw her shiver making him to smile. She raised her head to give him a warning stare but she ended up smiling.

"Oreva and Ken."

They both turned to look at his dad. His dad shook his head.

"You sure did not hear what Wild said" his mum said winking at him.

There was still sadness in her eyes.

"I'm sorry" Oreva said showing him an accusing face.

"I said it is your turn except you are not through" Wild said.

"I don't even need to be through. They are just too much. Jason did a thorough work in just few hours." Oreva said.

She stood up and walked to Kayode.

"Attempted murder, murder, illegal drug sales, kidnapping. Theft. You will never even inherit the pure water business."

"You don't have proof of anything."

"Your calls, text messages and chats for a start. You found out about the Will, hired a new maid for your dad who poisoned him gradually with the hope that you can take out Ken. But everything did not work out because your plan did not work. I was in time to stop the assassins. You never thought Ken would have someone in the army. You did not work alone. Two of your cousins helped you because you promised to secure their position and make sure their money laundering will not be discovered. You had a back up plan which was kidnapping Barrister's daughter to force him to use the Will you prepared. We have been following you. We know you did not send the last assassins, that was the vice chairman. If you escape death sentence for murdering the maid to keep her mouth shut, you will never see or know freedom again. Newsflash, Ken would have left everything to you. He was never interested in your dad's properties. You made him fight back and you made him to meet me. Thanks for bringing me to Ken."

"Wait, you knew? All of you knew my dad was dead? Ken you married because of the Will? The marriage was because of the Will. You all played me. Beatrice you fooled me. I should have killed you earlier." Kayode was rather furious he was bested than scared of his future.

"You know you are being recorded, more proofs. I am not a police officer, so I will just leave you in your handcuffs. The police are almost here."

"No Beatrice you can't do this to your brother. I love you. It was the drugs, it was the devil. You can't let dad's only heir to go to prison. Who will continue the family line. Beatrice please" Kayode cried.

His mum stood up like she was going to say something but she was crying. She shook her head and ran out of the house. He ran after her with his dad but he was there first.

"Mum."

She was resting her head on one of the jeeps they came with. His mum threw herself on his shoulders increasing her cry.

"I can't believe everything is real and I am not dreaming. He is my baby brother. I literally took care of him after his mum ran away with dad's money. I was like a mother to him. I loved him. I can't believe Kayode and my cousins could do this. Okay my cousins are greedy but Kayode was never like this. He was fond of you. What happened?" his mum cried.

His dad stood close but did not say anything.

"Maybe it started when his wife ran away with his money. She emptied his account you know. He must have started using drugs then. I can't explain why he went so far to want us dead but mum you need to look at the bright side. We are alive and that's all that matters. I even found the love of my life through this. Mum your tears is breaking my heart."

His dad gently pulled his mum from him and hugged her tightly.

He heard the police sirens and within a minute, they drove into the compound. It was clear the gateman was very confused about what was happening. His dad's back was resting on the jeep as he held his mum. He rested his back also on the jeep and held his dad's shoulder as the police officers entered the house.

Not long after, they came out with Kayode and his four bodyguards. His mum tried to look as Kayode screamed her name for help but his dad pushed her head back to his chest. He hated the sound of his mum crying. It was when one of the policemen opened one of the cars, he saw his two uncles. They pushed Kayode inside while the four guards were forced into the other car. The gateman just placed his hand on his waist as the police cars drove off.

Wild, Ghost, Barrister and Oreva came out of the house.

"Is time to leave sir but I will be travelling to Lagos with Barrister to meet his daughter. She will need a psychologist and I will try to help her" Wild said.

"Thank you Wild. I wish there were other words I can use to express my gratitude. Thanks a lot Wild, Ghost, Oreva and your unit. My family owe you a depth we can never be able to repay" his dad said.

They nodded. Wild led Barrister to one of the jeeps and drove off.

"So what's next dad?" he asked.

"We are all flying back to Benin. We are still on vacation till after grandpa's burial. We will go back to Lagos then."

"I hope I see you before then" Ghost said and started leaving.

"Wait Ghost are you not coming back with us?" his mum asked.

"No, I'm off to Borno State. I hope I'm fast enough to meet you at the fortress."

"Ghost" he called.

Ghost turned to look at him.

"I am happy I listened to you."

Ghost nodded. He was out of the compound seconds later.

"Is he taking a cab?" his dad asked Oreva.

"I wish I can explain Ghost's movement but Ghost is complicated."

"So it's just us" he said.

"Ken and Oreva you are both coming to the fortress with us" his mum said.

He pulled Oreva to him.

"Not today. Tomorrow mum. We have somewhere we are going to."

Oreva looked at him confused.

"Let's do another picnic" he whispered in her ears. She looked at him as if she was studying him. He remembered she was not yet aware the marriage was real. There was a question mark on her face and also uncertainty.

"Let's start moving then lovebirds" his mum said mischief in her voice.

Within seconds, they were out of the compound and within minutes they were on a plane back to Benin City with how he was going to reveal the truth to Oreva being the major thing occupying his mind.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Her mission was over. Major had said she should forward everything to the police. They were driving back to Ken's house using the car they left at the airport. It was already late in the evening. She

was supposed to be happy Ken still wanted her but Ken had suddenly withdrawn making her wonder what she had done.

"Do we get inside first or do we go straight to the jungle? We have food" Ken asked as she drove inside the compound. Ken's mum had come with two coolers of rice and drinks.

"Why do I feel like there is something you are not telling me?" she asked.

"Something like?"

"You've been silent."

"I have so many things on my mind."

"Things like?"

"Let's go to the jungle and we can talk."

Ken kissed her but before she could open up, he came out of the car. The tension that had also been building in her reduced a little. At least Ken was still interested in her.

When Ken joined her on the bike after locking the gate, she welcomed the heat, she felt warm when Ken wrapped his arm round her waist. As they drove out of civilization, Ken's hands left her waist to her breast, her breath seized immediately and she almost crashed the bike.

"Ken it would do us no good if I crash this bike" she panted.

Ken slowly removed his hands and she felt like pulling them back, but she needed to concentrate.

Ken was kissing her as soon as they were out of the bike. She had thought the pleasure would reduce with time but it was increasing. She loved the taste of Ken, she loved the way he kissed her like she was the only woman in the world for him. It brought tears to her eyes. Ken suddenly pulled back, she automatically tried to get his mouth back but Ken raised his head up.

"Ken what is it?"

"I am the one who is supposed to ask. You are crying Oreva. Did I hurt you? "

There was so much worry, so much tenderness in his voice, on his face, in the way he cupped her face with his palms. She could not stop the tears as it flowed freely. No one had ever taken care of her. No one had looked at her like that. Ken pulled her to his chest and wrapped her in him.

"You are breaking my heart Oreva. Please talk to me, please."

"I'm sorry, I don't know why I can't hold my tears. "

"No, sometimes it's okay to cry. It takes courage to learn how to cry. I want to know what hurt you to bring tears to your eyes."

"No no, I'm not hurt. It's the opposite."

"I don't understand."

"You are making me feel things I never dreamt I will ever feel. You look at me as if I'm the most important person in the world."

"Because you are."

"That's the issue, I have never been cared for, I have never been loved. I am not wanted in my family. I understand my step-mum and half-siblings, but even my dad hates me so much. I know hate but love is a new concept. You have broken my walls and taken over my heart and the sensation is too much."

There it was, she had said it. What she had never told anyone. Ken held her tighter almost crushing her but she loved it. He did not say anything, he just held her.

"I want to know about them. I want to know about your father most especially. I want to know everything about your childhood."

"There is nothing interesting. You will get bored."

Ken pulled away and palmed her face roughly, forcing her to look at his beautiful face.

"You are intriguing, interesting and exciting to be with. I don't know the monsters you were raised with but Orevans humans find you interesting. You said you are not part of Ghost's unit yet no one would know. You are not the only Special Force soldier, sorry air force but they treat you as one of their own. My sister already likes you and you've not even spent time with her. You are sweet and your heart is so filled with purity and honesty and love. Monsters don't have that. They saw that in you. You were like a mirror showing them the monster they are when they look at you. That's why they wanted to crush you and break you because they know they can never be like you."

His words dissolved into her like the feeling of taking a chilled water after a long walk under a scorching sun. The tears came again.

"You describe them like you know them but you have not even met them."

"I met one and that was enough to tell me what they are."

"But my dad is not like them Ken. He never once hit me. I would have preferred that to the silent treatment he gave me. He hardly look at me. He just hated me, no he did not notice my existence. He does not notice me even now."

The ache in her heart made her hand to automatically locate it but Ken got there first.

"I can see your sorrow and pain. Let's set tent so we can talk more."

She nodded and forced herself to pull away from the warmth of Ken's body. She was not clingy but she could not understand why she felt like holding Ken forever.

Ken pulled her to rest on his chest as soon as she had set down everything.

"Ken you are making me addicted to your body."

"That's the best word I've heard tonight."

"Are you sure it is not the words of your grandpa making you the chairman of his company. You are a billionaire at twenty five."

"Wow, like seriously. I am a billionaire. I have never thought about it. Thanks."

She had to raise her head to look at him.

"Ken seriously?"

"What."

"You are just noticing you are now a billionaire."

"Yes, I can't think of anything else apart from the fact that I got you, and the fact that you are all mine."

"You are the first rich man or even human that acts the way you do. It's as if you don't know how to be rich."

"Money is for convenience Oreva. I have two cars, okay my jeep is gone. I have a car and I will definitely get a new jeep, then stack my house with foodstuffs, then what else. I use money to be convenient. I think I took after my dad in that aspect."

She was looking at him as he spoke but her eyes were fixated on his inviting lips. She slowly pulled her lips closer to his. She was doing things beyond her ability and she felt scared that Ken would stop her. She watched for Ken's reaction as she moved closer and closer. She touched her lips with his. Ken did not move but she could feel his heart beating faster. She opened her mouth and kissed him. It was too good to be true that this gorgeous man would find her interesting and beautiful. She moved her hands to his chest. She wanted to explore every inch of him. She jerked her hand away when it grazed his hardness. It felt like an electric shock. Ken brought her hand back. Her heart thundered in her chest. Ken groaned sending darts and sparks of fire all over her body. Ken rolled over making him to be on top of her.

"Oreva we are supposed to be having a conversation" his voice was very husky and his eyes burned with hunger, hunger for her.

"Can that talk wait?" She did not wait for an answer. She pulled his head down and took his mouth.

It was way past 2:00 in the morning and she was exhausted. Ken had made love to her over and over again, then he had spent time feasting on her sensitive breast. Now he was looking at her. She had put her clothes on because she would die if they were to make love again.

"Ken I don't even think I can raise my hand that should tell you how exhausted I am so stop looking at me like that."

"I can never get enough of you."

"Well you have gotten all of me already and I want to sleep."

"You said your dad never hit you."

"Can we talk about this later? I don't want to ruin this moment."

"Please Oreva, I need to know."

"My dad treated me like I was not existing and the few times he noticed me, he looked at me like it was better I was not existing. He never talked to me and when he did, it was just few words. Whenever he looks at me he would wince like someone struck him."

Ken did not say anything. They were not wearing night vision goggles but there was light in the tent. It looked as if Ken was trying to dissect what she had just told him.

"What about your mum."

"I never saw her. She died giving birth to me after my dad had been married for five years. I don't even know how she looked like. There are no pictures of her."

"How long did your dad stay before marrying your step-mum?"

"Few months. She was a very close friend of my mum."

There was a look on Ken's face.

"Not what you think. I don't think my step-mum did anything to my mum. Although she loved my dad, she did not."

"And how will you know?"

"Because the little I knew about my mum was mostly from her. There was a time she was furious with me, right now I can't remember what I did but most times I was not the one to cause her anger. I think it was my dad that made her angry. I was ten then. She waited for my dad to go out then pounced on me. She said she saw my dad first, her mistake was introducing her to him. She never thought my dad would be attracted to someone like my mother. She said my mum took him away from her and nemesis had paid my mum in full preventing her from doing it herself. She said Oreva, that's my mum's name. She said my mum still had his heart even in death. She was crying as she hit me. She said my dad

wouldn't even look at her. She had thought my dad finally saw her after my mum died, after she had left her bank job to nurse me not knowing he married her to take care of me. That had made me confused because I thought my dad hated me because he did not love my mum and was forced to marry her but it changed everything for some time."

"For some time."

"Yes because it doesn't make sense that my dad would not look at me, he avoided me like I was a plague, he still does that. I later came to the conclusion that they must have fallen apart before I was born because there is no better explanation."

Ken did not say anything. He was thinking. She knew that because his concentration on her was gone.

"I don't think so Oreva."

"What do you think?"

"Tell me about your siblings."

She wanted to argue but there was something in his eyes that made her pause on the subject.

"Two sisters, Catherine and Kate. They are twins. A brother."

"What does your dad do? "

"He is the Chairman of Dallas printing company."

It took less than a second to notice the shock on Ken's face.

"Oreva there is more. I can see there is more."

She had been able to train herself to keep her emotions inside but it was as if giving her heart to Ken made him to read her so easily.

"I once had a friend. I thought he was a friend but he used me. I thought I had feelings for him because he was the only one who tried to take care of me. But he was using me to get to Kate. I told him about my feelings and he made fun of it and months later he was married to Kate. He is the manager of Dallas."

"The one who got the label contract with my dad's company."

She nodded. Ken smiled his silly smile that she loved seeing.

"What's that smile for?"

"The same way I'm happy Ella rejected me, I am happy he rejected you. And don't you see it? From my grandpa to my dad, you literally have the future of Dallas and Kate in your hand."

Did Ken forget the marriage was not real? Thinking about it made her to panic. She had avoided the subject as much as she could. She did not want to face reality. There was no way she could ever live without Ken.

"Ken you know the marriage is not real." The words came out of her like she was being choked.

"Oreva."

Just her name sent butterflies, millions of them dancing in her stomach. She closed her eyes. She did not want to look at him.

"Oreva don't shut me out please. Look at me. Oreva look at me."

She slowly opened her eyes. Her heart somersaulted as their eyes met. They said love could only be felt but it was not true because she was seeing love in Ken's eyes. She tried to breathe but even that was difficult to do not with the way Ken was looking at her.

"Do you know how to swim?"

She found herself laughing.

"What's funny?"

"Your question."

"I'm happy I made you laugh but still can't figure out why my question will trigger a laughter."

"Ken Special Force are trained to fight on land, air and sea. To be in my unit which is a unit before Ghost's unit, one must have passed those three test."

It was Ken's turn to smile. His smile was so infectious. She found herself smiling, then laughing.

"I get what you mean, but Oreva you can't best me in everything. I am a natural swimmer. I started swimming before I was three. Fighting and swimming are not the same thing."

"Then it's on. Let's do this" she said opening the tent, feeling excited.

She ran to get her eyes in the water. It looked like a torch with fan blades at the bottom which when powered would help it to spin below the water. The light had a camera and it's side had the ability to detect life form in the water. She took three sending them to the three partitions of the river. It actually looked like a creek. Her night vision goggles was in place. She gave one to Ken and watched the visuals from her eyes on the water and waited to know what life existed there. Surprisingly there were no fishes and nothing disturbing.

"So how do we do this?" she asked raising her head to look at Ken. He was only on boxers.

"Like what you see?" Ken asked smiling.

Her eyes had roamed down to what was swelling at the middle of his boxers. She found herself turning away immediately.

"Seriously after what we did you are still shy?"

"Let's race towards the end of this straight creek. First to get to the end which opens up to the beginning of the third creek and come back to the starting point wins."

She had pulled off her clothes and only her singlet and panties remained. Ken was laughing at her shyness when she entered the river.

"Oreva that is cheating."

Ken rushed in. She had actually dismissed him but he was not joking when he said he was a good swimmer.

But she was trained, a second late whether land, sea or air could mean death and she took it like that. Ken would not beat her.

As she raced back to the starting line, she felt her legs being pulled back and felt herself surrounded by Ken's warm body.

"Ken you jerk, red card Ken."

Ken covered her mouth with his taking all thoughts away from her and she knew she looked flushed when he pulled back.

"Ken you can't do that."

"Do what?" Ken asked feigning innocent.

"You can't cheat in a race game and try to distract me by kissing me senselessly."

Ken smiled, that smile that sent bells ringing in her chest and her stomach.

"So apart from kissing you senselessly what else am I good at?"

"It was not a compliment you jerk. I was telling you what you should not do and please add that mischievous smile of yours. It's not going to save you this time, I refuse to be infected this time."

She must have said the wrong thing because his smile widened revealing those dimpled cheeks that made her crazy and made her want to kiss and bite him there. Why should a handsome boy have dimples.

"So smiling mischievously and kissing then" Ken said swimming close to her. She swam back.

"Don't you dare come closer. Move back."

But he was smiling and coming closer while she was the one moving back.

She splashed him tons of water and splashed him again.

"Oh you started this" Ken said splashing her simultaneously. She retaliated and it was war time.

They laughed as they acted like teenagers fooling around. It was crazy fun. At a point the idea came that it might be a dream making her falter. Ken took the opportunity to close up the gap and he was kissing her before she could counter him. She melted into him, giving back as much as she got.

She knew dawn was coming and with it reality of the fact that she and Ken had not yet discussed about their future. She knew she would soon come to terms that the marriage was not real and what she was doing with Ken was against her belief. She had a commander's work to do. Major had taken over because she had not been functioning well because of Ken and she was grateful but she knew it was time to take over her responsibility. Although now back on her official break with an invitation to spend it at the fortress, she knew there would be no home without Ken.

She had no idea what the future held but she would be a fool not to live in the moment.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

They were on their way home. He had noticed on many occasions the uncertainty on Oreva's face and her attempts to avoid talking about it as if postponing the evil day would help. But he knew and he knew she knew that there was no avoiding the topic and he had no idea how he was going to tell her their marriage was real. What if she did not accept him? Even if she accepted him how were they going to be together? He was in school and he knew Oreva's base was at Abuja. Ghost had told him Oreva was recently made the new commander of her unit. He was yet to understand how Special Force operated. It was obvious they were not the regular soldiers or Air Force officers. From the little he knew, he would bet his money on them being agents like FBI or more. The last and only information he understood from Ghost was they normally got a break after a serious mission and to his horror, Ghost had not counted Oreva's mission as serious. He swore never to find out what their serious mission looked like. Oreva had ended up telling her more about herself to the extent he felt he knew her from childhood. None of her childhood had sweet memories, he wished he knew her earlier.

Oreva was trying to get to her room immediately they entered the house but he blocked her.

"Oreva you know we need to talk."

"Can't we do that some other time? I am still relieving our moment together and I don't want to ruin it."

"Ruin it? I don't understand."

He just could not place what she meant.

"I just know if we talk now it won't turn out well."

And he got what she meant.

"Wait Oreva there is no question of us splitting, never, not even if you want to. I am never going to let you out of my life."

She raised her head to look at him searching for lies.

"Then what is the plan?" she asked looking at him with expectations.

"You tell me."

"I'm still off. The last week is not added to my break, so for the next three weeks I'm off and Wild gave me permission to spend it at the fortress. I will use the time to study my duties. I was recently made the commander. Major has been helping me but I have to take charge now."

"That will be a dream come true for my kid sister."

She raised an eyebrow of enquiry.

"You promised to teach Mila how to fight. We are going there together. My mum and dad and siblings want to know you more."

It would be better to tell her there where his mum could help, where she would know that his family already saw her as part of them.

"There are two guest houses, one four bedroom recently completed, the other is five bedroom. I usually stay at the five bedroom same with others who don't live there."

"My mum said they have four bedroom to themselves but the kids hardly use theirs because there are enough rooms at the underground house meant for the kids."

She nodded.

"We also hardly use it. We normally sleep over at the underground house."

"So we are going now or later?"

"Wait Ken, do you really think your parents would be okay with our relationship? The marriage is not real, it was to help with your grandpa's will, I don't think they will like the fact that we fell in love with each other."

He could not help smiling. Oreva was looking as if she was out of place and she really had doubts, although he understood her doubts.

"You are doing it. That mischievous smile. What did I say that is funny?"

"I remember telling you my mum is my best friend. She knows I'm madly in love with you and she was very happy that I won your heart and she is aware that she won't be having that much of my attention. She can't wait to meet you."

"Ken don't tell me you told her we slept together."

He burst into laughter.

"Kennnnn."

"Of all the things I said you are worried about that? Of course I sent her a text that you gave me my best night ever."

There was shock then horror, finally embarrassment on her face.

"How am I supposed to meet her?"

"We will get dressed, or we can make love again then get dressed and we can pack up and move, all you need to do is show your face. My mum will do the rest."

"Kennnnn."

"The way you are stressing my name."

"Ken be serious."

"Oreva seconds ago you were worried my mum won't approve of you, now you are worried she approves of you."

She turned her head away from him but he turned her head back.

"Oreva from the three times you've met my mum, has she ever made you uncomfortable?"

"Ken it's not that. It's just that I am not used to this. I don't know the first thing to do or how to act. I have never had a family."

He pulled her to him. She did not resist, she wrapped her hands around his waist.

"One step at a time Oreva."

She did not say anything. She just held on to him for long.

"Ken" she said after some time.

"Yes."

"I need to travel tomorrow to Warri. It's public holiday and my dad's birthday."

He did not release her from him.

"You sound like you will rather not go."

"I've always gone because I had hoped he would notice me but I feel like I should let go, he will never look at me and I will never know my crime."

The ache and sadness in her voice was making his heart hurt. He had plans but he would have to do it immediately.

"I think we should get ready. You don't want my mum to call and tell me to let you have some space. She will just conclude I'm keeping you here to myself which if my opinion was consulted, I would rather have you to myself."

She pulled out of his body and stepped back.

"Ken I don't like the way you are looking at me."

"Please describe it" he asked trying to cover up the space but she stepped back turning in a semi circle.

"Like I am food and you are hungry."

She moved back again as he moved forward.

"You sure know your books."

"Ken this food is finished."

"How do you want me to believe you when I am looking at the food."

He stepped closer but she turned and ran. He pursued her but he was too late, she had locked her room before he could get to her. Almost immediately, he realized his mistake, he should have prevented her from spinning in semi circle.

Oreva held his hand as he came out of the door of the guest house at the fortress.

"Ken it's okay if you don't want to tell me where you are going to but you can't leave me with them. And you still need a bodyguard."

"And Fast offered to drive me."

"You won't be able to survive Fast Ken, he drives like a maniac."

He smiled at her.

"You are trying everything to run away from the attention you are getting from everybody."

"Seriously Ken, I prepared myself to face your mum not all the wives of the married Circle Unit members. They are treating me like I'm still married."

"Of course you are still married and it's not that you are not used to them."

"Ken your mum and Halima, Beast's wife are discussing what material they will use to sew a gown for me. Your mum wants me to go for my dad's birthday and they want me to wear gown, imagine me on gown. Mena Wolf's wife has offered to be my makeup artist, Cindy will handle my accessories, Ella is going to teach me how to walk with high heels and Bella Wild's wife is planning to teach me how to dance girly dance. This is horror."

It was the horror on her face that made him burst out laughing.

"Why are you laughing and why did you even tell your mum about the birthday party?"

"Oreva you are having a panic attack for something normal."

"Normal? You call wearing a sexy gown normal? Imagine me in a gown. Ken you have to help me. And don't you dear laugh, don't."

He raised his hands up forcing his laughter to remain inside.

"Oreva I am way out of my league here. We were literally thrown out. It's ladies' time as they called it. Trust me as your husband, you are definitely going to look hot in a gown, scorching hot."

He opened the door and closed it as fast as he could. Fast was already driving as Oreva chased them. He knew he was in soup but he would deal with that later.

"You are in deep soup dude" Fast said as he drove out of the fortress whose gates opened on its own.

"I know but I....what the heck?"

he shouted belting up. The car was flying instead of running.

"Can you slow down please?"

"I'm driving very slow Ken" Fast answered.

"Then please don't let me know what driving fast look like."

"Unfortunately for you, I don't do slow. I do fast."

Fortunately for him, he was able to hold on and only threw up when they got to Warri but not their destination because it would have been embarrassing. He had contacted the Manager of Dallas that he wanted to meet the Chairman of Dallas, first time he was making use of his authority in his father's company in that way. He was told Mr. Daniel was not around but he would contact Mr. Daniel

to contact him which he sure knew Mr. Daniel did but there was no way he could pick his call with the way Fast was driving. He washed his mouth and went back to the car.

"Feeling better?"

He scowled at Fast.

"I should have listened to Oreva."

"Too late, you are stuck with me."

"What's with Special Force that always give you guys a pass at every check point?"

"Well my unit is not exactly under Special Force, although we are Special Force in a way."

"You know what I mean. They all looked like they were looking at legends."

"That is correct."

And there was no inflection in his voice almost like he was stating a fact.

"I seriously don't want to know" he said dialing the number that had been calling him.

"Good, the less you know the better" Fast said as his call was picked.

"This is Mr. Daniel, I believe I am speaking with Mr. Kennedy"

Mr. Daniel spoke before him. He breathed in fresh air to keep his anger at the man who had fathered the love of his life at bay.

"Yes. I need to see you unofficially if possible not your company."

There was a pause.

"I hope all is well? I am at home I will pick a hotel... "

"Sir that won't be necessary. It's something personal. Meeting you at home is better. I'm already in Warri, if you can give me your address."

"Something personal?"

"Yes Sir."

There was a long pause. The phone was on loudspeaker so Fast was listening. The man gave his address after a long wait like he was deliberating on what to do.

"Thank you sir. I will be there soon."

"Do you know the...Jeez, and I thought Jaguar was a terrible driver."

He grabbed wherever permitted his hands to grab.

"Jaguar is fast but mostly in battle. He stalks his prey like a jaguar and his victims always or mostly get hit on their head, specifically skull like a Jaguar's kill and he makes no sound although it's part of what we are trained on but Jaguar is just Jaguar. He is the latest addiction to Stud's unit and that is because he joined the military just three years ago but he has made his way to the second best unit. That tells you much about him but he drives too slow like the others."

Although he was happy with the distraction, he needed to point out some errors.

"No Jaguar drives too fast like a maniac but you, you drive like you are not normal."

"Thank you."

"It was not a compliment. What exactly is wrong with you and Ghost?"

"We are not normal and we are here. The compound is cool from what I can already see."

Fast was already blowing the horn as he spoke. He was just fast and simultaneous with everything. The gateman opened the gate and as Fast drove in, he was more worried about going back with Fast than the fact that he was meeting with Oreva's father.

He had been hoping to see Oreva's step-mum but did not know if he was disappointed that it was only Oreva's father he met at home. Fast did not follow him inside neither did he remain in his car. He joined some men arranging canopies and chairs and other things in a space in the compound. He was greeting and shaking them like they were his friends. All he could think was crazy Fast.

Mr. Daniel already had wine waiting for him. They had already shaken hands and he was seated.

"I see something is about to happen here" he said sipping his wine and studying Mr. Daniel's face.

There was no resemblance between him and Oreva. Nothing to indicate they were related.

"Yes, my wife and kids always make my birthday a big deal. "

He sounded bored.

"I see."

"Mr. Kennedy your visit is a surprise and I have been trying to figure out what will warrant your visit but I can't."

The anger he had been keeping at bay came to the surface. He tried to calm himself down before speaking but it was not working.

"Mr. Kennedy I hope all his well, the deal with your company..."

"All is not well Mr. Daniel or should I call you Father-in-law?"

Mr. Daniel gasped shock written all over his face.

"You don't even know you are speaking with your daughter's husband. I am Oreva's husband. I know she called you but you asked her to use another person as her father. You made her cry. Why Mr. Daniel. Why do you hate Oreva so much?"

There was no way he would forget hearing the conversation on the phone. Oreva was in her room and he had followed her to ask more about the reason Wild was standing for her. He had heard everything. Her tears had torn his heart. He had pretended he did not know because he knew she would be embarrassed. It was a part of herself she was not yet ready to reveal then.

"I don't hate Oreva. Why will she believe I hate her?"

It was the surprise in the man's face that made him stop from lashing at him. He sounded really surprised. Something was definitely off.

He brought out his phone knowing Oreva was going to flay him when she discovered what he had done. But he had to do it. It has always been in his mind to meet the man that hurt Oreva so much. He played the record of Oreva talking about her father when they went to Ekosodin River the other night. The record was short so he did not have to wait long.

"I came here because I'm lost too. I need answers, I want to give this as a gift to Oreva. I want to know her offence? Why did you neglect and treat her as if she is not existing. It does not make sense. Even if her mother was forced on you or maybe she forced herself on you, is it enough reason to hate your own daughter? I'm confused here. My mum's mother was her father's soulmate. She died giving birth to my mum. Her father dedicated his life loving my mum. She is the evident that his soulmate was real. He lived for her and married because of my mum although the woman became a tigress but my grandpa never allowed her touch my mum. I know Oreva's mum died giving birth to her, you married months later and avoided her like a plague to the extent you refused to be her father even during her marriage. I am not forcing you to love her. I am going to give her the love she never had, she is already loved by my parents. So I am not here to ask you to love her. I just want to know why you treated her that way and why you are still treating her like that. That's all I came to know."

He expected anger, explanations, defense, worse case scenario getting kicked out but never tears. Mr. Daniel was crying, no weeping. If he was not confused, he was now deeply confused. He did not even know what to say. He just watched the man cry.

"I don't hate her, I don't even know I treated her that way. It hurts looking at her, hearing her voice. Even after twenty eight years it still hurt like yesterday. For twenty eight years I have been living a half because of Oreva. I remarried because of her, I live every miserable day because of her, because of my promise."

"I don't understand."

"She was more than my soulmate. She was my life."

"Who?"

"Oreva's mother. Her name was also Oreva."

He noticed Mr. Daniel grabbed his chest as he mentioned 'was. '

"I had to name her Oreva because her mother demanded for it. We were married for four years without a child because she had a weak heart. I was okay. All I ever wanted was her. She was on drugs to prevent pregnancy but she stopped without letting me know and when I discovered she was pregnant, it was already affecting her health and it was either she removed the pregnancy or she would not even be able to carry it to term, she and the baby would die. But she refused. She held on to the pregnancy and by her sixth month she was put on oxygen and machine. I sat with her. I watched my wife die slowly. I watched helplessly as death took her slowly. Before she went unconscious I had told her I would follow her if she died but she made me swear I will stay back and look after the baby. She even died before term and the baby had to be quickly removed from her womb and put in an incubator. She took my joy, my life with her and left only a shell. I tried my best but my heart stings anytime I look at the child's face. She is the carbon copy of her mother. It hurt so much looking at her. I was constantly in pains and it became worse as she grew up taking her mother's voice. I couldn't bear it. I don't hate her but I can't take the hurt, the stabbing pain whenever I look at her. I should have known Pat was maltreating her. I should have ignored the pain and kept my promise. I failed her mother. I have always dreamt of the day I will join her mother but right now I'm afraid to meet her and tell her I failed. I never meant to hurt her. I never knew I was hurting her. Pat was her mother's best friend. She had taken care of Oreva from birth and was the one that told me to marry her so Oreva can have a father and mother and not miss her mother. I was not thinking well then. I am sorry. I'm sorry I was not there for her, I should have been there despite the pain" Mr. Daniel cried.

At a point he could not hold himself. He went to pull the old man to his arms. He was not expecting this to happen. He had also recorded everything and did not know how Oreva would receive this. He was very sure Oreva would not be expecting this from her dad. His mum did not look like her mother, although grandpa said she had her mother's eyes. His mum resembled her dad and her dad's mother. He wondered if the story would have been different. But it was completely different from beginning. He tried to imagine what it would be like living with someone he loved and knowing the person had a weak heart. Just imagining his Oreva having a weak heart was too much to bear. No wonder the man looked older than his age, no wonder Oreva said he always winced whenever he looked at her like someone struck him. Oreva's mum took away the choice from him. It was different if it was not deliberate. He wondered what could have prompted her to get pregnant. But thinking of Oreva not existing made him stop his line of thought. He should still be angry because that was no excuse for his actions but he could not find the anger again. The man really looked like a shell. He knew that because he had been around Ella during the time she had thought Ghost was dead. He wondered if Oreva knew, if she had noticed that what she had seen as nonchalant behavior was not exactly true.

The man raised his head to look at him.

"Please can you take me to my daughter?"

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

She could not believe Ken had abandoned her. It had been a walk of faith going back to the house. She had been tempted to call Ken but decided to allow things to flow and surprisingly it wasn't that bad. She allowed Mena to braid her dreadlocks and cover her head with a wig. There was no mirror. They chatted and laughed as Halima started sewing a red sifon to a gown with electric sewing machine.

Everything felt like a dream. She had known all of them apart from Ken's mum but this was the first time they were treating her as Orevia and not Stud. Jamila had been around but the kids including Saheed and Ken's father were at the underground house, only God knew what they were doing. The Circle were not around. It was just the women. She was only told about Wolf who left since Saturday after the marriage to track and neutralize an assassin syndicate. It was a very dangerous mission because he also needed to find out their clients and technology was almost useless because they used paper and verbal as means of communication. Beast had some trainings with the lowest unit of the Special Force. Wild had not returned. Sabrina and Mark had been missing in her wedding, Major said they were on an undercover mission. She found happiness and joy and laughter at a point when she had given up hope.

"Done" Mena said, after rubbing her face with just pancake.

"Oh mine" all of them said making her want to see what they were seeing.

"Can I see?"

"No no no. I'm almost done with the gown. Everything must be ready" Halima said.

"Okay let's try this black heel" Cindy said.

"That's perfect, the gold at the top perfectly matches the red gown and most especially the style" Bella said.

"I don't think I can stand with this."

"That's why we are here to teach you" Bella said.

Cindy started wearing the shoes on her legs.

"I think this will match" Ella said to Ken's mum.

They were ransacking a box looking for a bracelet that will match a golden necklaces.

"Yeah yeah. Go try it" Ken's mum said.

Ella came to fix the bracelet and necklace and she and Cindy were done at the same time.

"Are you sure you don't want your finger nails fixed?" Mena asked.

"I'm not sure I want any of this."

"Yes you do sweetheart. You need to know the real you. You have refused to see you are a beautiful lady and we are here to remind you. We are not going to that birthday party with you as tomboy. You might need that when you go military but tomorrow is our show. Let's show them class" Ken's mum said.

"We? What do you mean by we?"

"Of course we are all going for your dad's birthday party" Ken's mum answered.

Before she could answer Halima spoke

"Done."

"Wait, so fast" she said stalling.

"Yes, the machine is fast, the hard work was cutting" Halima said.

There was no running away. The most surprising part was there was a perfect handleless bra for the gown. She had no idea where it came from but it was brown new and her size.

They started wowing and clapping after forcing the gown on her but the shocking part was when she was taken to the mirror. The woman she was seeing was not her.

"This is the best moment" Ella said.

"Hello Stud do you recognize Oreva?" Halima said.

"Did you notice she walked by herself without assistance?" Bella asked.

Every body looked at her heels including her.

"Oh my God, I did that" she said covering her mouth from shock.

"You are a natural. I feel like going with a frying pan to the birthday party tomorrow. Your step mum needs a good beating and that witch of a sister. What did Ken call her. Ha Kate. Ken said she looked like a masquerade."

They started laughing. She was no longer surprised about what Ken's mum knew. The funny part was she did not feel it as disturbing.

"I still don't understand about you going for the birthday party" she said to Ken's mum.

"Me? All of us are going plus my husband."

Ken's mum had used her hand to indicate the other women as she spoke.

"Why are you looking surprised. Mummy Ken told us how your siblings and step-mum were all jerks. But tomorrow we are taking over Warri. I know you can dance, but you need to learn soft dance" Bella said, one hand up her waist twisting as she spun round.

"Just like this."

Bella was a stunning beauty with no comparison. She used to be a stripper although against her will at Port Harcourt before Wild rescued her. She had grown up with Wild before they were separated. Wild had found her with a daughter who he claimed for his own.

"I don't think I can twist my waist like that and this is too much ma."

That was not how she wanted to say it.

"It's nothing Oreva. We are your family. It's a must your mother-in-law comes for her daughter-in-law's father's birthday party. I can't wait for your husband to come back and see this. He is going to be shocked."

"The cameras are set" Ella said.

"Husband?"

"Yes, it's always weird at first but with time you will get used to the concept. I'm happy this trauma is over. I'm happy Ken agreed with Wild to make the marriage real. I wouldn't want any other woman for my son."

She froze. They all noticed her reaction. Ken's mother covered her mouth like she had made a mistake.

"What do you mean by the marriage being real? "

"I'm sorry I thought Ken told you."

"Please somebody explain what is going on here" she shouted.

Her phone vibrated in her hand making her to look at it. Ken sent her a whatsapp message.

'I know you are going to punch me, okay strangle me but you have to understand I did it for you.'

She raised her head to look at Ken's mum, she was not with her phone neither was any of the women so how did Ken know she now knew what he did with Wild without consulting her?

"Strangling you? I am going to kill you Ken. How dare you?" she replied back.

'I'm sorry I left you with them when you were not comfortable but Oreva I'm talking about something else I did. I wanted to tell you as soon as I come back but things changed and I have to confess my sins before we get to Benin to lessen your shock. Please allow me to explain.'

She sent an angry bird emoji and put question mark.

'I went to visit your dad and I played a record of what you said about him. I recorded it with the mind to play it before him and demand for an explanation and you can kill me later but you need to listen to the record I'm sending now because I'm right now with your dad and we are on our way to the fortress.'

She could not stand. Luckily for her, there was a chair close to her. She sat down holding her stomach. What did Ken do? She had forgotten about the marriage issue, this was worse. Why would Ken force her dad to come to the fortress?

"Why?" she shouted.

"Oreva what is wrong? You are taking this overboard. You look like you are about to pass out. Is marrying my son that bad?" Ken's mum said looking hurt.

There was no time to answer her because Ken had sent the recording.

She clicked on it. She did not bother that everybody would hear. She wanted to know what Ken did.

The first sound was the voice of a man crying. It was not Ken, she was sure of that. It sounded elderly. Then the voice spoke. It was her dad. Her dad was the one crying and he was saying he did not hate her. Then her dad started talking, giving answers to questions that had been on her mind for years. When the audio stopped, her face was soaked with tears.

"Oh my God. I should have noticed. My father's haunted look was never nonchalant. He was like the Walking Dead, never showing interest in anything. He did not avoid the others like a plague but he also never showed interest. All this while I thought he hated me. I should have known" she cried.

She found herself being wrapped in a warm embrace. Ken's mum was also crying.

"I don't know what to say. Your mum must have had a reason because it doesn't make sense that she would get pregnant knowing she had a weak heart. I was not there but I could hear so much agony in your father's voice. If after twenty eight years, he is sounding like this. Then it's more than walking dead. I think he is yet to face the reality of her death and the fact of what your mother did" Ken's mum said holding her to her warm body. She held to her as her anchor. She cried her eyes out. Ken's mum just patted her back and allowed her to cry. Bella embraced her from the other side and the others touched her hands and shoulders till her tears subsided.

"I know that's is not an excuse for your dad Oreva but trust me I know what being hurt feels like especially when the situation is too difficult for someone to comprehend. I grew up with Wolf in same compound. He was my brother's best friend. I started crushing on him from even age nine. He fell in love with me while my brother fell in love with Pearl my best friend who was staying with my family after

becoming an orphan. Wolf respected Pearl as John's wish but he never liked her. To Wolf she was too fearful, soft and clingy to John. I always forced Wolf to treat her as a friend and stop avoiding her because she did not fit his standards. Then John had thrown himself on Wolf before a bomb explosion saving Wolf's life but his body was blown to pieces. Our two families were mourning. Wolf had gone insane that he had to be taken to a psychiatrist. Pearl became a zombie refusing to face reality, instead she started drinking hoping to drown reality. I made sure to watch her because she was suicidal but when I had to leave town I begged Wolf to check on her. Only for me to come back and see both of them naked on the bed. It hurt more because I could not understand. Because they were accusing each other of doing the seduction. Wolf told me he could not remember anything because he was drunk. Pearl or Ese said same thing but we all blamed her because Wolf never liked her and Wolf did not lie. He does not lie. Wolf almost strangled Pearl when she got angry at my nagging and admitted that she seduced Wolf because it seemed everybody had moved on while she was suffering. She was being sarcastic but I was too angry to take it, to even realize she too never liked Wolf. I was too hurt that I left Nigeria and married abroad. I hated Pearl so much that I never read her emails for more than eight years. But she never stopped sending. I should have read it or at least sit down to think about the whole thing. My husband beat me all the time and changed girls like wrapper. He died in an accident, during the period I finally decided to read Pearl's emails only to discover she had died of breast cancer leaving her child with no one. She got pregnant, had a baby girl but could not go home because Wolf had vowed to kill her. She had to run and remained in hiding contacting me through emails with the hope that if she could make me forgive her, she could come home. It became worse when she discovered she was going to die and with no one to hand over Wolf's daughter. They suffered and starved with no one to help. All I needed to do was to read those emails. For more than eight years she sent me emails begging, telling me Wolf was not at fault, begging me to forgive Wolf because it was a mistake. She wrote about getting pregnant and wrote about the child each time begging but I never read them. The shock of knowing she was dead and no idea where her daughter was staying will always remain in my memory. I never loved the man I married then because I couldn't forget Wolf. At the end I spent years torturing myself and hurting everyone I cared for. If Beast had not discovered and rescued Pearl, I wouldn't have forgiven myself. Pearl was able to locate her father through The Circle because she had to find a way to take her mum's corpse home because she wanted to be buried close to John. It was all there in the emails. She died without getting my forgiveness. Wolf had hated Pearl and maltreated her when he could not trace where she had come from. He could not stand looking at his daughter who was the exact replica of Pearl senior, that's her mother. He called her his nightmare not knowing the little girl just lost her mother, she was an innocent girl being punished for a sin she never committed. She needed her father but he hated her mother so much that he transferred the hatred to his daughter. At the end we were all burdened with guilt. Guilt that I could harbor hatred for years and did not forgive Pearl before she died, guilt that he had hated his daughter and treated her so bad that she intentionally took what could have killed her. Guilt that we did not take good care of the woman John loved. Mummy Ken said she could hear agony in his voice but there was also guilt. Your father already has enough guilt to cover both of you. I also agree that he never accepted reality or recovered from the shock of what your mother did. The guilt is so much in your dad's voice so much, I guess he is even confused if he must have done something that must have prompted your mum to get pregnant. Right now stop this guilt you are looking for because there is none. Your father needs you now, the only way you can help him is to

make him see you are okay. Oreva at least you got the answer you were looking for. Don't make same mistake we made. The birth of John was the beginning of real healing for me and Wolf but nothing would change the past. We just have to move on Oreva not move back" Mena said wiping the tears from her eyes.

"They are back" Cindy said.

"You can't go to your dad looking like this" Ken's mum said pulling her back. She was already up on her feet and about to run outside.

"You really are sweet Oreva. You are not supposed to feel guilty in the first place but you want to blame yourself" Ken's mum said wiping her face with a handkerchief.

She ran outside as soon as she was done forgetting she was on high heels.

Her dad was coming out of the car which was opened by Ken when she came outside.

"Dad" she called.

Her dad raised his head. She could not stand the agony in her dad's face. She ran to him and threw herself against the surprised man.

"She heard everything you said."

Ken must have answered an unspoken question. Her dad's hand wrapped her to him.

"I'm sorry. I never knew I was neglecting you or avoiding you. I don't hate you although my actions said otherwise. I'm sorry."

The croaked voice told her he was crying. She held him tighter and also cried till she could gather up courage to look at him.

"Dad I guess I am not the only one in need of answers. You have nothing to apologize about dad. I'm fine. All I needed was answers. I should have asked you earlier. I won't say I was not hurt but I was more hurt about the reasons behind your behavior just as you are hurt about the reasons for my mum's behavior. I'm sorry you lost my mum."

Her dad just stared at her.

"You look and sound like your mum. So beautiful and forgiving like your mum. I can't believe I failed her."

There was too much sorrow in his eyes that she wanted to wipe out. She remembered everything Mena said, she could not use guilt to counter him and make him feel better.

"Dad I'm twenty eight."

"I know Oreva, I can't believe it's been twenty eight years. I was never aware of time passing, of not showing you the love you deserve. It was not your fault that you were born. Twenty eight whole years."

"And you will be sixty tomorrow. Don't you see it? "

"See what?"

"There is time. You can't wallow in the past dad. You can start making up for the past. All I ever wanted was my dad to look at me, to acknowledge me. It has never changed even after twenty eight years, I still want my dad. Right now you've changed from not acknowledging me to guilt, when will I have my dad? Dad please let's heal together. I can see it hurts looking at me and you are trying not to break down, that's progress dad. Please you can't start feeling guilty, not now, not ever. Please just be my dad from today. Fear is for the brave dad, it's a personality cowards can never stare it in the eyes. A psychologist said that dad. Look at me, be my dad, face me. I know it hurts but you are not alone. Let's do this together. No guilt, no self blame. Let's make use of now. Okay?"

Her father held her cheeks.

"You talk like your mum. You really know what to say."

"Will you? Will you be my dad from today? Let's face your hurts and fears together. Will you?"

"If you will give me a chance, I know it's too late but I will try if you allow me."

She hugged him tightly allowing the tears to fall. This must be a dream. There was no way she was in the warm embrace of her dad. Everything must be a dream. She had suffered so much. She knew exactly how life looked like and it was not like this. It must be a dream. She pulled away when her dad started coughing. She knew it. Life was not a fairy tale.

"Dad what is wrong. Are you okay?"

"It's nothing Oreva. I am okay."

"Please tell me if something is wrong. Why are you coughing?"

"Oreva you are panicking like your mum. The cough started only yesterday. I'm fine Oreva."

"I think you need to see a doctor."

"I think your dad needs rest Stud. I will call Pastor Sam's wife to come check on him" Fast said.

She nodded, grabbing her dad's hand.

"Dad let's go inside."

"No Oreva, I can't stay. I do not want to inconvenience you. I need to return to Warri. There are things I want to do."

She looked at Fast.

"Mr. Daniel you need rest. There are enough rooms. You can go back tomorrow" Fast said.

"We will go back together for your birthday party" she said pulling him towards the house.

"I don't think I'm interested in my birthday Oreva. There are so many things I need to do, I should have done and I have to do it now."

"What is it?"

"I don't think your step-mum will like it if I miss my birthday party. I will use the opportunity to do what I should have done long ago."

"You are not making sense dad."

"I know. You will know tomorrow."

They were at the front of the house. The door was opened by Ken's mum. There was no need for introductions because she called her dad her in-law and he already knew she was Ken's mother. That made her turn to find Ken. He was resting on the car staring at her gown making her to remember she was looking unStud. There was something else, he knew she knew about the marriage. Of course his mum must have updated him. They were doing introductions but her mind was on Ken. She only noticed she had been distracted when Ken's dad joined them. They were acting as if they had no idea of what had been happening between her and her dad. Ken mouthed we need to talk as she turned to join everyone at the parlor.

"Stud did I tell you, you look good?" Fast asked.

She played along by shaking her head.

"Okay, Stud you look like Oreva. You look stunning" Fast said.

"Thanks."

"I actually did not know she was my daughter-in-law. I thought we had new visitors" Ken's dad said.

Once again she shut down. She had no idea what to say.

"She look like her mum" her dad said bringing out his wallet and taking out a picture. He gave it to her. The lady in the picture could be mistaken for her.

"I've always had this. You can have it now" her dad said.

Ken's mum was now with the picture. She felt tears falling from her eyes. It must have really hurt her dad to look at her. She was her mum literally in looks.

"Thanks."

"With time, I will tell you about your mum. She was an athlete before she had her heart issue which was rare because she was not born with it" her dad said coughing, alarming her.

"Dad, you need to rest" she said grabbing his hand and looking at Fast and Ken's mum.

"Pastor Sam's wife is coming" Fast said

"This way." Ken's mum said.

They followed Ken's mum to a room she had once used before.

"The kids were supposed to use the room but they never did. They even packed their clothes to the children house" Ken's mum said as she made her dad to lie down positioning the pillow under his head. She sat close to him holding his hand.

"Oreva you need to let your dad rest, you also need rest. The doctor is coming. Come" Ken's mum said pulling her up.

"I want to stay with my dad for some time."

"Oreva I am here. I'm not going anywhere. She said you need rest. Go rest. Come see me later" her dad said.

She nodded and allowed Ken's mum pull her outside the room.

"Oreva I know you want to be with your dad but you know there is another issue that needs settling."

"Ma...."

"Hear me out first. Ken was planning to tell you. He wanted you to first meet us and make you know that we want you, that you are welcomed to our family. I blew it. If you are angry please don't pour it only on Ken. We all are guilty. We all planned it because Wild said you will never accept a real wedding because you won't believe Ken was sincere enough and you won't believe he won't break your heart. And also the fact that Ken was insisting he was not going to keep his hands off you which was against my religion and even yours. The chemistry was there, the only thing left was for Ken to work his way to you. I understand if you don't feel the same way and if you want a divorce but that will hurt Ken a lot. I am his mother and best friend and I have never seen him so happy even when he thought he was in love with Ella. He has also not been himself for sometime but you changed everything. I am sorry I participated in this deception but I'm also not sorry your marriage with Ken is real because I also fell in love with you. Jamila is making me fulfill my dream of having a girl, I wouldn't mind having another daughter especially when I have a lot of work to do. Please Oreva."

"I am supposed to be angry but I am not ma. I am just overwhelmed. I feel I'm not qualified to be your daughter-in-law. My world is changing so fast and I'm lost ma."

She pulled her to her.

"Mum Oreva. You can call me mum" she said patting her back.

She cried. The emotions were too much.

"Okay" she stammered.

"Okay what."

"Okay mum."

She felt herself being held tighter.

"My daughter, you know it's a crime to ruin your makeup."

"It was just pancake" she said pulling out and wiping her tears.

"That's better. Ken is waiting for you."

She nodded and walked to the entrance door. Ken was still where she had left him. He looked worried, he looked like someone in front of a judge waiting for judgement. It melted somewhere in her heart.

"We need to talk."

Ken nodded. Ken was always playful and smiling even when he had committed a crime but the Ken before her was looking tensed. She pulled off her heels which she just noticed was disturbing and with her barefoot, she started walking towards the orchard knowing Ken would follow.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX (Part one)

He could not tell if she was angry or not. He followed her and found himself in an orchard with other beautiful flowers neatly arranged in rows. The whole place was flooded with light. The place had a sense of peace that came with it. She stopped at a mango tree. He wanted to explain himself but he could not find a single word to use. He was not angry with his mum, she had thought he had told her and had promised to talk to her. He had no idea if his mum was able to do a great job but this was his mess that he must fit. There was no question of breaking up with her. He would never let her go. Never. If she decided she wanted out, he would take time to persuade her but letting her go was not an option especially after he had seen her looking hot in female clothing. Looking at her sexy body and her beautiful face was making things worse because he could not concentrate.

"Ken why? Why did you make the marriage real?"

He raised his head to look at her, to understand where she was going with the question but the sight of her real face, the wig made her look to feminine, it brought the things that made her stunning. Her eyes, her nose, her lips.

"Ken" she shouted.

He rubbed his palm on his forehead.

"I know I'm in soup, I know you are pissed off. I know I did the right and most importantly, I heard your question but I'm trying, trust me I'm trying but your new look has taken over my senses that I can't think straight. You are beautiful and you look stunning."

"Why did you make the marriage real?"

"Because I knew I was not going to let you go. The moment I discovered you are a girl I knew I was going to make you mine. Wild said you will never accept a real marriage even if you want me because you will be afraid I will break your heart. I want to tell you sorry I made the marriage to be real but I am not, I don't like lying. I will do the same thing over and over again because Oreva, I love you. I can't imagine life without you. You gave me joy when I thought I knew what joy really meant. Now I understand why my mum has always been my dad's first priority. I tried to remain mad at your dad for his actions but thinking about life without you made me understand him, made me understand why Ella became a walking dead when she thought Ghost had died. I have found the one connected to my thread and I'm not sorry I did what I had to do to make her fully mine. I'm only sorry about the situation. I would have courted you till you believe I will never leave you but the chance came and I took it. It's okay if you are mad at me but please don't leave me."

He wanted to say more but he had ran out of words. He was not even sure he said the right thing because she was crying. He moved a step to go to her but she stepped back raising her hand for him to stop.

"Oreva."

It hurt to see her cry and to feel helpless.

"Why me Ken? Why me. What is so special about me that you have not seen in other girls? I'm three years older than you Ken. I am not gorgeous. Men never looked at me twice. Why all of a sudden, in just one week the life I have known and lived for twenty eight years is torn to pieces? What does a tomboy, a stud has to offer you Ken. Why me? "

He could not stand her tears. He closed up the distance but instead of pulling her to him, he kissed her. His hand started running through her back, one hand cupped her breast, he applied pressure and was rewarded with a moan. She melted into him sending sparkles of electricity to his groin, he automatically became full and painfully hard. He pushed her hand to feel his hardness.

"This is why Oreva. Just a sight of you turns me on and hard, not just your body but your personality and view about life. Most times I often needed to see a naked body and a lot of foreplay to get me hard but you are a drug Oreva. I found everything I need in you. I always thought I won't get married because I'm always caught up with girls who are more conscious of my wealth, who are too artificial and extravagant in everything. I can't stand that. I know not all I met necessary wanted my money because I've met rich girls but they have nothing to offer, nothing natural both in appearance and behavior. They don't want simple life. But with you I found out what is most important in life, not money although money is very important but happiness, joy is everything. Simple things like our jungle made me more relaxed than a trip to Dubai. You give me that Oreva. There is no other for me. You are an addiction I don't ever want to give up on. Please say yes to me. Enter my world as I have entered yours. Stay with me and let me love you. Make me your home as I have made you mine. Oreva be mine forever."

She slowly pulled away from him and he felt empty, he wanted to pull her back but he withheld himself and waited.

"I am the commander of my unit and I have to stay at Circle House Abuja and you are in school. You have a lot on your hand."

"You have to know when there is a will there's a way. We will find a middle ground Oreva. Buildings are just structure. Home is where you are."

"I really want to say yes. You brought my dad to me. You gave me my dad, you showed me the real definition of love but I'm afraid."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Everything is happening all of a sudden and it's too good to be true. I'm afraid it will not last. I'm afraid you will disappear and break my heart. I'm afraid this happiness is too much that it will not last. Ken I can't take it if you leave me" she cried.

"Oreva I promise I will never leave you, there is no other person for me Oreva. It's just you. I am not going anywhere."

"You promise?"

"Yes" he answered stretching his hand forward, waiting.

She looked at him for some minutes as if she was looking for a hidden trap. Slowly, she placed her hand on his and he pulled her to him. It was then he discovered he had not been breathing well.

"I love you Oreva."

She did not answer but he knew she heard him because she grabbed his waist.

So this was how it felt like to belong to someone and for someone to belong to him. His heart squeezed and it was almost painful but he loved that pain. Something beautiful had come out of a dangerous situation. Among all the prices, Oreva was the ultimate price and he was going to treasure her.

His mum was a drama queen and she met her partners in crime at the fortress. They were already in Warri, almost at Oreva's place and they were with an entourage. His dad's fleet of cars had arrived at a strategic point and the ladies were looking flashy and Oreva was looking stunning. She had spent time with her dad all night making him wish he had not brought her father because he did not sleep. He was at least happy none of the kids came with them. The ladies had held a meeting and he knew they had plans, definitely wicked plans. Well he did not have much plans. He and his dad were enough plans. The two of them showing up would shake the whole place. Mr. Daniel had been checked by the doctor and she said he was stressed and needed bed rest. Oreva had said her dad should call and cancel the party but his dad insisted he had something he was going to announce. His wife was already angry he was not around. So here they were driving into the large compound, birthday party had even started.

According to Oreva, they normally set canopies for individuals, meaning each of them had their canopy which surrounded the center canopy meant for her dad. There was also an empty space at the center. She had always told them to skip hers because she did not have friends but they always set it to taunt her. She had never used her canopy. The numbers of cars his dad summoned was so much that people came out or looked from their car to see who was coming. His mum must be the one with the idea. The other canopies were already filled up with guests even his father-in-law's canopy had guests. His guess was they were friends of his father-in-law. Those sitting and standing were greeting and introducing. There was music in the background and some were already dancing. His dad had also hired securities. Only few of their cars could enter the parking space in the compound. The others were left outside.

Unfortunately for him, his mum and the other ladies chose to use his dad's limousine. He was made to travel alone. He could not believe Oreva would betray him and follow his mum. His father and Father-in-law entered a hummer jeep. He was left and stuck with a driver. Fast had refused to follow the entourage. He said he would not be able to drive slowly but he was already there. According to him he needed to recover from driving slowly while driving back to Benin because of Oreva's father. But actually, Oreva's dad had to beg him many times to slow down. The guy was nuts. As for Jason, he was yet to see him physically but he had the feeling he was around.

The music did not stop as the ladies came out of the limousine but human activities stopped because all eyes were on them. As he came out of his jeep which he opened himself because the securities believed the women and his fathers were the only important ones, he saw a lady running past him to the women.

"Oh my God. Oreva you look unbelievable" the lady said crushing Oreva in a bear hug. There was something about her that he could not place. She was on a red gown that was split in front showing her lap, her heels were the tallest he had seen and her hair was like Mila's hair, even her face was Fulani which some would mistake as half cast but she was just too balanced, confident and walked like a ballet

dancer. She was stunning but did not actually attract him. He had thought Bella, Wild's wife was going to drive men crazy and now a second one that looked like sweet but poison. She looked you-can-see-but-you-will-die-if-you-touch.

"Sabrina you came? "

Oreva sounded surprised.

"Of course I came. I can't miss this for anything" Sabrina said kissing Oreva's cheeks. She pulled away and started hugging, kissing and chattering with the others. She hugged his mum and whispered something to her ears that made his mum laugh.

"What exactly are they up to?"

"You are not the only one asking."

He turned to locate the voice. He was very fair, handsome, muscled and balance. He was definitely a Circle or whatever they called themselves. He had their aura, same with the girl.

Sabrina. Yes he remembered. The one Mila said was Venus fly trap. And there was no doubt about it. He wondered how many had touched and go.

"You are not Jason? "

He looked at him and shook his head, then placed his hands on his shoulder. He thought he was tall but he was yet to meet a Circle he was taller than.

"So you are the one who caught our sister's heart."

"Why do I feel like you are threatening me?"

"Because I am. Mess up and your rich ass won't save you."

He was walking towards the women before he could answer. He had nothing to worry about because he had no plans on messing up.

He was more fascinated that every eye was on the women chattering and uncaring. His fathers had entered their canopy and were greeting guests. Some were almost kneeling down to greet his dad. He saw one man who was holding Kate's hand who was fuming with jealousy leave to welcome his dad. That was the man who got the contract for Dallas company. Mr. Umukoro who had rejected Oreva. He made a mental note to thank him later.

He looked at the other canopies. There was another woman who looked like Kate. She was also fuming with jealousy. No one was looking her way. She was also not looking her way because she was looking at the women. Another canopy had a man and a woman in front, with a child all looking at the women. That must be Okemute, Oreva's brother. Her step-mum had same canopy with her Father-in-law. She was more than fuming. She looked like she was going to faint. She offered a seat at the front to his

father but his father declined and pointed to the empty canopy. The one belonging to Oreva. There was just one chair when they arrived but chairs were being packed into it with lightning speed. His father shook Oreva's father's hand then left for his canopy. That was when he turned to locate the women but they were nowhere to be found. He turned to their canopy and saw his father waving for him to come sit down. Mark and Fast were already sitting down with ladies drooling on Mark and then on him. He knew he was Mark because Mila said Mark and Sabrina were always together.

"Dad what is going on? "

"Her father gave her the keys to her mum's box. There is a room he kept her mum's things. Your mum decided that they would find something for her to wear from her mum's things. Her dad had told the MC to wait for his daughter."

"Her siblings and step-mum are not happy about it" he said.

"I'm sure you know that's exactly part of your mum's plans."

He smiled shaking his head. Someone came to give him the paper with the program and to greet him.

"Mr. Ken you are highly welcomed."

He looked at the face of the man who had hurt Oreva and smiled.

"Thanks. I really have a lot to thank you for. Thanks for marrying Kate and leaving Oreva to me. I hope we meet after this party because I really want to find out what is making you sad."

The smile died on Mr. Okemute's face as he went back to his wife.

"Ken there is time for everything" his dad cautioned.

"Exactly dad. I don't like the way his eyes kept following Oreva. It's making me feel unfriendly. I don't have the ability to pretend."

His dad just shook his head. Others came to greet, introduce their businesses instead of themselves. He followed people's eyes as he noticed they were looking somewhere. The women were making an entrance and they were making a show of it. Oreva led them to her dad's canopy. He froze, okay his body froze but one part came alive and became painfully hard. Oreva had changed to a pink short gown just above her knees. It was as if it was made for her because it brought out her curves and made her small breast although not expose looked inviting. She was wearing a silver necklace and earrings to match and a black bracelet that had pink and silver hanging down from the bracelet. Her heels were silver and it made her gown look sexy. He felt like going over to pull her away then find a room where he could quench the fire racing through his veins to his groins worsening his hunger. Oreva paused at her dad's canopy, kissed her dad's cheeks, came to theirs and told him to follow her. He was happy he listened to his mum to wear jeans. He wouldn't have been able to stand up. He held her hands. She tried to kiss his cheek but he was not having that. He found her mouth and tasted her, his drug, his addiction. His mum's punch was the only reason he pulled back.

"Please don't ruin my parade. Her step mum and siblings can't die now. We just started. Oreva take us to greet your family" his mum said trying to pull Oreva to her but he managed to secure one hand as Oreva took them to all the canopies. He would ask her how the gown was looking neat. He tried to pretend what the ladies were doing as they moved from one canopy to another making introductions was not interesting but he failed. They stole friends as they paraded the ground. He almost pitied Oreva's siblings who their friends were abandoning, eagerly introducing themselves and giving out cards and numbers. He could swear her step-mum looked like she would commit murder as they made their way back to their canopy.

The opening prayer was said, introduction was long, then the MC said the celebrant wanted him to hurry up. So many other programs but his mind kept thinking of when he was going to have Oreva to himself. He forced his mind back to the party when the last event was announced. Oreva's father came out to the big space at the center and his last child Okemute was called to dance with his dad. His choice of music was played and his friends and well wishers came out to spray him and Oreva's dad money. The old man did not dance, just moved his body a little. Next was Kate, then Catherine and last was Oreva. A song he was familiar with but did not know the singer started playing, it was about a wish to dance with once father again. "Back when I was a boy" the song played. For the first time, Oreva's dad held out his hand and started dancing with his daughter as the song sang. It was breathtaking to watch. They held everyone's attention. At a point, he saw tears coming out from the eyes of both father and daughter as they danced slowly to the tune of the music. As the music was coming to an end, Oreva pressed her head on her father's chest still following the tune of the music. There were screams and clapping when the song ended. It came from all canopies except her siblings and step-mum. Her father kissed her forehead another music started indicating they could join. It was one Christian Yoruba music. Bella, Cindy, Mena, Ella, Halima, Sabrina and his mum made an entrance. He knew his mum could dance but this was different. It was as if she was celebrating her daughter's marriage. They captured everyone's attention like they were being hypnotized. Bella and Sabrina were something else. If he was Wild, many men would not get home alive. The crowd erupted when his dad danced to the center spraying money like water.

"Dude are you not joining your wife?"

He jerked back to see Jaguar and with him many others he had never seen. He turned to look at Oreva. She was screaming excitedly waving at them to join.

"Betty you think you can best anyone of this ladies?" one of them asked the only lady with them. Five males and a female.

Betty was already running to the center. She saluted Oreva before joining the the dance.

"Let's go dance" Mark said standing up.

He watched all joining the dance. He noticed apart from Mark and Fast, the others saluted Oreva. Oreva's excitement was infectious. The shock on her comrades faces was not known to her. He found himself standing up when one of them pulled her to dance with her.

"She is mine" he said pulling Oreva to his chest.

The dude raised his hands up.

"You are one hell of a lucky man. Who would have known she was this hot."

"Your loss" Jaguar who was very close said pulling Oreva from him and spinning her round then moving on to another lady who joined from another canopy. In fact the whole space was filled up. Who would not join?

"I think I prefer you being tomboy outside. This should be declared private" he whispered to her and got laughter as a response.

"You know some ladies have drolled on their clothes looking at you and Mark?"

"My eyes are on you lady and don't avoid the topic. I'm serious."

Screams of excitement made the two of them to turn. His mum and dad were digging it in Yoruba style.

"I hope you are not angry I've converted your mum. I'm beginning to know where your play play came from. Your parents are so fun to be with" her voice was so full of excitement. He just stared at her.

"What?"

"Oreva, I have never seen you this happy."

"I have never been this happy. I danced with my dad. My friends came. Ken my friends came. This is more than a dream. I think I will soon explode from being too excited."

She was pulled away from him before he could respond. It was his mum again. He was going to have a long talk with his mum.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX (PART TWO)

HOPE YOU HAVE READ PART ONE OF THIS CHAPTER

Their dance brought the party to a close, by then her step-mum and siblings had all disappeared. Everybody was leaving except him and Oreva. Her dad requested for a brief family meeting. He said it was very important. Within minutes the compound was almost empty apart from the event planners. He held Oreva's hand as they walked inside. Everybody was seated when they entered. There was another man who was not Catherine's husband.

"That's my dad's lawyer" Oreva whispered to him. There was worry in her voice.

"I am going to be brief by going straight to the point" Oreva's dad said.

There was silence.

"Pat I'm filling for a divorce."

"There was a collective gasps from everybody.

"What is the meaning of this" Pat, Oreva's Step-mum shouted.

"You heard me Pat."

Oreva's dad looked at the lawyer who brought out a file to give to Pat. She took it and threw it away.

"I will never divorce you" she shouted.

"Dad why" Okemute shouted.

"Your mum knows why. Pat it's either you tell them or I do."

"Tell them what? Are you sure you are okay. Oreva what did you do to..."

"Don't you dare talk to my daughter" Oreva's dad shouted and started coughing.

Oreva ran to get water. She sat close to him as he drank.

"I told you Pat. I told you I can never love another woman but you insisted you will marry me. You made it the only way you will stay to take care of Oreva's daughter. I agreed because you were there for her throughout. I thought you were the best my daughter could have as a mother. But now I know I made a mistake. I have wallowed in denial for the past twenty eight years. The only thing keeping me a little sane had been when I had to clean her room and dry clean her clothes. It made me still feel connected to her. I avoided my daughter because looking at her and seeing a replica of her mum brought me excruciating pain. I thought the best way was to avoid her not knowing I was hurting her. I should have looked at her and looked past the pain. But that's the past. I promised my daughter I will not wallow in the past. I want to spend the rest of my life spending time with her. Seeing her yesterday hurt but they were right because I don't feel hurt anyone. I feel I'm healing. I feel connected to her mother. Spending more time with her is healing me. I have waited for you to come out clean. I would have forgiven you because I understand how my actions towards you must have felt but this has to end now Pat. I forgive you but we must go our separate ways. Take your children, take the livestock farm and go."

"Dad what is the meaning of this?" Okemute shouted standing up.

"I am not your father."

The man should have rather denoted a bomb.

"How dare you Daniel" Pat shouted standing up.

"Show them the DNA test. I have only one child. I never slept with you. None that I remember. You always get me drunk but even when you say we slept together after I got drunk, I never felt it or remembered. You knew I was not in love with you. Although that was no excuse to agree to marry you. I shouldn't have allowed you to convince me. I am not angry Pat. I need to spend my remaining days on earth being a father to my only child. If you don't sign the divorce, you will lose everything."

The lawyer had already dropped some more files on the table.

Oreva's dad continued ignoring the gasp, shock, denial in all their faces.

"I'm going to hand over my printing company to Oreva and also fifty percent of the livestock farm shares is for her."

"Dad" all her step siblings chorused.

"I have said I am not your father. Ask your mum about your father. If she does not sign the divorce papers today. We will go to court and she will go empty."

Kate and Catherine were already crying. Umukoro looked drained.

"Mum?" Okemute called. They were all looking at her.

"Daniel why are you doing this to me. Daniel why? I stayed with you. I quit my job and dedicated my life for you and your daughter. How dare you hurt my children like this. You are the father they know. Why not confront me privately. Why?" Pat screamed.

Kate and Catherine put their hands on their heads.

"Mum please tell me this is a lie. Tell me he is lying. Mum" Okemute shouted.

"What do you want me to say? I gave up everything for this man. I loved him with all my heart yet he never touched me, he never allowed me to touch him. More than twenty seven years of marriage, of begging to be loved. What do you want me to say?" Pat shouted back.

Okemute picked the file from the table and started glancing through the papers inside. His wife was already crying. Her baby sleeping peacefully on her arms.

"This is ten years ago. Dad you knew since ten years?" Okemute asked.

"I knew from the beginning, that's just a confirmation."

"Then why now. After keeping quiet for that long why all of a sudden you are coming out?" Okemute asked.

"Because I was giving your mum the chance to come out clean. The divorce is not all of a sudden. I've been planning to but getting to know how my daughter's life was hell on earth under your mum and all of you, I can't spend another day with her or the three of you."

"Dad no. I hold nothing against them" Oreva said.

"Oreva I know. You are just like your mum. I am also to blame but I'm done living in a lie. I raised them knowing they were not mine. I did that because I pitied Pat. I knew she would sought for what I could not give her somewhere else. But today we need to sort things out."

"I know. But I don't really need those things dad. I am in the Armed Forces and I'm not allowed to run a business."

"Then find someone who could. That printing company was initiated by your mum. The livestock belonged to her father, that's the pig and fish. I can let them take the others but never anything that belonged to your mum. I am not changing my mind about this."

"I saw you first. We were friends. Then I made a big mistake of introducing Oreva to you. She took you from me Daniel" Pat cried.

Her sorrow was genuine.

"Pat that's past. You knew I saw us as just friends. I never loved you."

"Because Oreva took you away from me" she shouted.

"Pat I am human not an object that one can pick anyhow. This has nothing to do with Oreva. Oreva was my first love and will remain like that. I am done with you. My remaining life will be spent being a dad to my daughter."

"Your daughter? Is it the same one who you wanted Oreva to abort immediately you found out she was pregnant? The daughter you never wanted. Oreva had to run away until you agreed to allow her keep the baby. Now she is your daughter? Now you want her? Did you tell her you swore to kill her if Oreva did not abort her? Did you? "

"Stop it Pat. Stop. Please" Oreva's dad pleaded.

He had expected Oreva to pull away from her dad but instead she moved closer.

"Oh now I should stop. Wait till I get to the interesting part. Have you not wondered why Oreva decided to get pregnant? Why against your wish she wanted to give you a child? It's because I told her."

"Told her what?" Oreva's dad queried.

"You heard me. I told her you told me you wanted a child, at least one. I told her you confided in me that at first you were in love with her and a child did not come into view but as you saw your friends' children, you wished you would have your own child. I told her you said you were doing your best to pretend you were okay with just the two of you when you were not. I told her not to let you know what I said."

Oreva's dad rushed at Pat. He had to join Oreva to hold the old man.

"You did this? Pat Oreva was your best friend. Why would you lie to her. You knew she would believe you. Why?" The anguish in his voice was heartbreaking.

"Because all I wanted was you. Oreva took you away from me."

"Barrister destroy that divorce paper. Pat I want you to take your children and leave my house and my life. You go with nothing."

"Dad you can't do this" Okemute pleaded.

"I am not your father. Get out" Oreva's dad shouted.

"I will never let this happen. If I don't have you no one will have you not even Oreva's daughter" Pat shouted running inside the house.

"Get out" Oreva's dad shouted after her. He started coughing.

The twins went on their knees with their husbands.

"Dad please don't do this to us. Oreva help us beg your dad" Kate pleaded.

"Please. You are the only father I know" Catherine pleaded.

"Dad.."

"Oreva don't" Oreva's dad said.

Oreva faced her dad. He relaxed his hold and removed his hand but still stood close watching them.

"Dad hear me out first. You can't visit the sin of the mother on the children dad. They hurt me but it's past. I have forgiven them. Dad your daughter is the happiest girl in the world. I fell in love with the best man in the world. Dad your daughter is a member of the respected Special Forces. The first female to command a unit and not just a unit but the second best unit. And now I have you. I don't want more. You are enough for me dad. I personally don't lack money. Then my husband is now a billionaire without his father's wealth. The most important thing right now is we have each other. Do good to those who hate you and use you. You are the father they know. They did not ask for this same as me. I was the one they hurt not you. Don't transfer your anger to them. If it's because of how they treated me then don't because it won't make me happy. I have all I wanted. More than my dream. I got my Prince Charming and my dad then a family. Dad the important thing is that they did not break me. I was a princess today dad. Did you not see my friends and family? Let's pack up and go. Come spend time with me and think it through before taking actions that will hurt who never hurt you. It's okay if you want a divorce but don't hurt them over what they had no choice in."

"You talk like your mum. You are so much like her" Oreva's dad said cupping her cheeks.

"Then you know she would have told you same thing."

It happened so fast. They had all been distracted watching and listening to dad and daughter. Pat was already on them before he saw how close she was. She had already lifted the long knife to stab Oreva. He moved without thinking inserting himself between Oreva and the knife. The pain was shocking and excruciating as the knife went through his stomach. The world started spinning as the knife was pulled out and raised again. It never touched him a second time. He saw himself falling. He could hear screams but it was becoming faint.

"Ken don't do this to me don't" Oreva cried putting pressure on his stomach. It hurt so much.

"Oreva, I love you" he had to struggle to say it. He felt liquid rushing out of his stomach. The pain was too much and he felt he was being pulled into a dark place. It looked inviting. It was different from the place he was which was too hot, it was a furnace burning over and over again. He did not know why he was refusing the forces pulling him away from the excruciating pain.

"Ken, no no Ken don't do this to me. You promised you will never leave me. Ken" a voice screamed. He knew that voice but the burning furnace was too excruciating to figure out who it was. The darkness felt safer. Maybe when he would get to the dark place, he would be able to remember who the voice belonged to. He allowed the unseen forces pulling him to that dark place to take him to a place of no pain.

A piercing scream from from afar was the last thing he heard.

DEAR READER, "ALL OF A SUDDEN" WILL BE COMING TO AN END TOMMOROW CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN.

ALL OF A SUDDEN

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN (The end)

Time stopped long ago. She had no idea of of time, only an endless grey world of nothing. Time stopped that moment she watched Ken fall. The moment he closed his eyes. She had no idea how she was able to rush him to the nearest hospital, she could hardly remember Ken being flown to Circle house Abuja and placed on machine and oxygen. Time had stopped for her when Ken refused to wake up. Just there, a machine keeping him alive. The doctors headed by Hadiya Major's wife had done their best. She was finally told the truth that there was almost not hope of Ken waking up. Lower than twenty percent. The room was large enough to live in. Her clothes were there. Food was brought to her by different people, most of the time she was forced to eat. Her dad came and left, same with Ken's mum. She could not bear to look at his family. Unless she was forced to freshen up, she never stood up from her seat. Watching Ken, cleaning him up. Praying and hoping against hope. But Ken had not even blinked his eyes. She had known, she had known it wouldn't last. It was too good to be true, no one could be happy like that without repercussions. What an irony that she had protected Ken against his uncle, against numerous assassins but could not protect him against a woman with a knife. Her dad had told her she had stabbed her step-mum when she tried stabbing her after Ken had taken the first knife.

He said she had brought out the knife from her gown and stabbed her step-mum's neck. She had also been rushed to the hospital and she was discharged few days later but now in police custody. Her half siblings had called to beg and show their concerns but she could not remember what they had said. Ken would have recovered if her step-mum had not pulled out the knife. Hadiya had said she could not explain how he was still alive but he was not alive. A machine was keeping him alive.

Few days earlier, she had vomited the food Sabrina had forced her to eat making them to force her to run some tests. The result came out she was pregnant. That made her to be aware how long time had passed. She was a month pregnant with Ken's baby. And now Ken's mum was around forcing her to eat, to rest but how? How was she supposed to survive without Ken? She was the reason he was lying on the bed on machine support. His family made things worse by not blaming her. His mother was mad that she was making what Ken did to look stupid. His father had said she should not make Ken's sacrifice to be wasted. Who did that? They were supposed to blame her. How could she not know her step-mum would try to stab her. It had been okay when things were exactly how Pat wanted. Her father had neglected both wife and daughter but she should have known Pat would not stand losing everything all over again. How was she going to live without Ken in her life? Life was empty, meaningless, an endless dark pit. A color of just grey and nothing else. She understood her dad better, she even wept for him. How did her dad survive twenty eight without the love of his life? Was this what life would be like for her?

She had not resumed duties as the commander of python Special Force unit. She had no idea of missions or anything else. Sabrina and Jaguar have done their best to update her about Special Force and latest happenings. She remembered Sabrina telling her that the ex- USA naval Seal officer had gone through the necessary protocols and had passed and would soon become a Circle agent. She said Jake was coming. Jake had even called her but she could not remember what he said. She did not even get all what Sabrina said. Her life which had been dull was given colors by Ken, then all of a sudden it turned grey and hopeless. Even food did not have taste to it. The blackmail they were now using on her was the baby. She needed to eat for the baby. Then just yesterday after she had been forced to go have a bath, the machine had made an alarming noise and Special Forces doctors had all surrounded Ken.

The noise stopped but Hadiya's face said it all.

"Don't you dare hide anything from me. Tell me" she had demanded.

"Oreva I'm so sorry. Even with the machines I don't think he will make it through the next few hours. Highest tomorrow. I'm sorry" Hadiya had said crying.

She wanted to cry but could not. Ken's mum had entered when Hadiya was talking. She heard everything. She had cried, she had dialed her husband's line and cried to him. But she could not find a single tear in her eyes. Only her heart felt like thousands of needles were being pierced into it. It was so painful. It hurt a lot, she could not breathe. She had heard Hadiya and Ken's mum shaking her and calling her name. Later she had woken up on a bed on drip. She had been allowed to leave after they realized she was serious about fighting her way back to Ken.

Here she was, sitting down close to Ken's bed holding his hand. Two weeks after she was told she was a month pregnant. She had to be there when the machine stopped. It was a most. Ken's father had travelled down immediately and had literally pulled out Ken's mum from the room because she was staggering. The others had to carry Malik, Jamila and Saheed as they screamed Ken's name. But no one dared touch her, although Sabrina was sitting opposite making sure she did not hurt herself. She had spoken to Ken everyday. She had begged him to come back and not condemn her to a half life. She had cried and cried till her tears ran out. No wonder she could not cry again.

She knew he was not hearing her but she needed to tell him just this once what he meant to her.

" I was crying in the rain,

I was screaming in the midst of a thunderstorm.

I was dancing in the dark,

When the rain stopped,

When there was no more thunderstorm,

When the dawn came,

The tears stopped,

The screaming ended

And my feet could now move.

No wonder, no wonder no one saw my tears,

No one heard my scream for help.

No one knew I could dance.

All they saw was my dry face,

My silence,

My stiff feet.

But all of a sudden,

I was crying and screaming and dancing,

And there was no rain,

There was no thunderstorm,

But I was still in the dark and there was no one

But all of a sudden

I could see you,

I knew you had seen my tears, heard my scream

And watched me dance even though it was dark.

All of a sudden, I was entrapped by your charms.

My mind screamed danger but it was too late

Cause I knew I was lost.

All of a sudden, my walls were being broken by a stranger.

A stranger more dangerous than the rain,

The thunderstorm and the dark.

But I was already trapped and there was no escape.

So I gave in, I did not even want to escape.

You brought me joy, laughter, love, family.

You were my Prince Charming who rescued me from a dark high tower and gave me colors. You gave me an extra life breathing inside of me. In just a week, you made my life a happy one.

My short time with you was better than my twenty eight years of existence...."

She stopped talking because the machine started that noise again. Sabrina stood up and starting operating it. Hadiya rushed in and started charging one medical equipment she knew was used to shock the heart to respond. They shocked his heart, once, twice, many times. They made noises calling for this and that but her focus was on Ken and the machine that was reducing in numbers and noise, like a generator being switched off. She climbed on the bed and held Ken to her, she allowed them space for his chest.

"I am not going to be greedy. I have prayed and fasted but God did not answer and I am not angry. I know you are in pains, they said it is subconscious pain and I know against all odds you fought to stay. Thank you for the time you spent with me. Thank you for giving me the best week of my life. Thank you for giving me my father. Most especially, thank you for leaving part of yourself behind. I am carrying your baby Ken. I want to make a vow to you that I am going to love this child whether it's a girl or a boy who looks like you. I will tell them stories of their father. Stories of a man who is rare to find. My hero, my prince. As you travel to the next world you must know I love you now and tomorrow and forever. I love you Ken."

Her face was resting on his arm. She held him as the tears finally came. The world around her seized to exist, it was just her and her last moment with Ken.

A hand held her waist, it felt like the person was using his or her last strength to hold her.

"Not yet please. Just give me some moment with him. Please five minutes. Please" she cried.

She did not even know if the five minutes she was asking of would even be enough. No time would be enough.

"A baby? For real? You are pregnant?"

She froze. She must be hallucinating. There was no way that could be Ken's voice.

"Oreva."

She shook as she slowly raised her head to confirm her insanity. His eyes were the first thing she saw before the noise and the people and the excitement, all saying a miracle happened.

"Oreva the moment I removed the oxygen after the machine stopped reading, the machine started again before I could disconnect it" Hadiya said.

"Gentle Oreva" Sabrina cautioned holding her and preventing her from touching Ken's stomach which she was about to do. Actually, she was about to jump on him and wrap her body in him.

She quickly shifted away from there and moved up. She cupped Ken's cheeks with her palms staring him in the eyes afraid everything was all an illusion.

"Oreva are you pregnant?"

She could not speak, she just nodded.

"I'm going to be a father?" he said it like he was panting.

"Yes and please don't talk."

She looked to Hadiya who nodded to what she said.

But he still opened his mouth to talk. She covered it with her mouth.

"Oreva stop" Hadiya said.

She pulled away and looked at Ken's face. There was a look of pain he was trying to hide.

"I'm okay" he coughed out.

"Stop talking" she said picking an handkerchief close to the bed and pushing it to his mouth.

"Please any tape?" she asked Sabrina who was already attending to his stomach.

"Oreva please excuse us" a nurse said holding her to pull her away.

"No I want to stay."

Ken tried go shake his head but it seemed that was difficult for him.

"Oreva go and meet his mum. I will call you back soon. Trust me he is out of danger, breathing without support. We need to focus" Hadiya said.

She nodded but kissed Ken's forehead before leaving.

Immediately she entered the corridor that would lead to her lodge she ran screaming.

"Mum" she screamed as she ran.

The door was thrown open as she got there.

They were in her house. She threw herself on Ken's mum's body.

"Mum he is back. Ken is back" she screamed same time crying.

She was alone with Ken after so many had come and gone and Ken had slept and woken up numerous times. He was sleeping when everybody left. He opened his eyes to look at her. They just stared at each other without talking for long. Ken was the first to talk.

"I heard everything Oreva. I couldn't figure out who was talking. I was in and out of a dark place where I won't feel pain. But anytime I saw myself back to the the field of pain, I would hear your voice. I wanted the dark place with no pain but with your voice too. I stayed back at the field of pain whenever I heard your voice but I allowed myself to be dragged to the dark place when I couldn't hear you. I know I could leave the dark place to a better place but I did not want to leave because I also knew your voice won't be there. I could not fully remember you and I knew it was important I remembered who the voice belonged to. I tried and tried but could not and my will to remain was running out, the powers pulling me away even from the dark place were getting stronger. I knew they were pulling me to a better place. I ran out of strength to resist and as I allowed them to pull me away I heard you, then you told me about a child. You told me you love me. Then I remembered you. My Oreva was having our baby. I got the will to fight my way back to the field of pain. I did not care if I would burn, I was not going to leave, even if I would only hear your voice I wanted to stay where I could hear you. You brought me back Oreva. I came back thinking hours had passed since the incident not knowing it's more than a month. I've been out that long."

"I only knew of a grey world, time stopped the moment you took that blade."

Just the memory was making her shake.

"Oreva join me. "

She turned to him looking horrified.

"No Ken, I don't want to shake the bed."

"Then do it slowly. You will just stay by my inside. You are still in shock. Come feel me. Me too, I need to know I'm alive. I need to feel you close. Please Oreva."

She nodded and slowly climbed the bed making sure she did not touch him.

"Closer Oreva. I am not stupid to do anything that will cause me pain and keep me in bed longer. Just shift to my waist."

She slowly shifted till her body touched his. He raised his hand to pull her to him.

"Stop. Don't move Ken."

"If you don't want me to move, gently rest your head on my chest. Please."

She shifted closer, then placed her head on his chest. Seconds later, she felt Ken's hand on the back of her neck.

"I'm home" Ken said, almost like a whisper.

"Thanks for coming back. Thanks for bringing back the colors" she whispered back.

"Thanks for bringing me back. We have a lot to talk but I'm sleepy courtesy of the drugs."

"Then sleep Ken. I will be here waiting for you." She tried to pull away but Ken held her back.

"Stay, I feel better with you resting on my chest. Just stay like this. "

"For how long? "

But he had already slept off. She held him listening to his heart beat. Her love, her prince, her miracle. Who could predict life? It could remain static for twenty eight years, then become colorful and enjoyable, then turn to grey but then it could change back to joy, laughter, colors, happiness, peace which was her unbelievable story and it had happened all of a sudden.

(THE END)

THANKS FOR READING STUD AND KEN'S STORY.

TOMORROW I WILL INTRODUCE MYSELF AND YOU CAN ASK ME ANY QUESTION.

Thanks.

