

**Central Province, Kenya, sometime before The Day the Music Stopped.**

Somewhere in the background John Denver's "Fly Away" was playing.

Catherine wiped her hands with a T-shirt, and then walked to the wardrobe, pulling out a book and a pen.

She quietly walked to the living room and lowered the volume, keeping in mind the old woman slumbering away on the couch.

She opened her book and grabbed her pen.

**MOMBASA RAHA, MY  
FOOT**

**Beyond The Hotel Gates, Money Silenced  
Many.**

**By  
HAROUN RISA**

## *Glossary*

\*monolized – plural for monolization, a form of bullying common in Kenyan high schools.

\*Colombo – Slang for good quality, slightly flared high school trousers.

\*In East Africa, someone clicks when upset, angry, sarcastic or impatient.

\*Connate – Slang for sub-standard school uniform.

\*mukhali – smugglers/traffickers who co-ordinate & organize 5-10 small networks of mainly Somali Kenyans, normally respected figures in the community who operates from within a legitimate business.

\*mzungu/jungu – white man/woman

\*junge – German for kid, young boy, youth

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**WARNING: Slightly mature language.**

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***Majengo Mapya, Bangladesh Slum, Changamwe District, Mombasa.***

"Om Shanti?" asked a confused Angela.

"It's how they greet," she said to Catherine. "Also, they believe in the religion of peace. There's no such thing as a specific belief.

*Moonlight and ocean water made such a beautiful pair, despite the reminder that there was a time I was always wrong, courtesy of people who were always right.*

*The shadows were what made everything else magical; the shadows of the palm trees as they swayed, bathed in the lunar light, was reminiscent of the swaying trees when we played hide & seek under the moonlight.*

From people driven home by an unforgiving stomach and a mind running on fumes, to small yellow lights which illuminated fights, to shopkeepers hopefully leaning on counters despite the boredom & monotony, chasing after papers which were meant to postpone the inevitable expiry date, but because of the results on people's lives, seemed to pull the expiry date closer; the night was absolutely stunning, with the regal light making the shadows and all harboured by them easily spotted.

*In nights like those, skeletons knew the world beyond the gates of their closets.*

*In nights like those, nature taught me that colour was a sign of danger.*

The sky being orange at night was the sign that many were gathered in various places to show their skeletons; downing drinks which ensured the real self never betrayed the skeleton hidden within.

The real self knew betrayal, because the real self was never a learner of a lie.

In nights like those, my female age mates, their true character shown because they possess nothing, let their skeletons out of the closet, heavily adorned with makeup; my male counterparts relished in the many acts which proclaimed that they were free not just to populate, but also to live as they pleased, and please the females they desired for a moment.

Of course, it wasn't always like this. Life was colourful and bright; we danced to the songs of the many Kenyan musicians of the time, before our parents yelled at us, forcibly switching to Family TV, which broadcast gospel content round the clock.

We played together regardless of where we came from, and after the sky began getting darker, we played when the moonlight shone, relishing in the lunar light which enhanced hide and seek.

*Everything changed after The Day the Music Stopped.*



*A home truly is a feeling, not a building.*

**Isiolo, North Eastern Province, Kenya.**

*Upon removal of her blindfold using her knees, she realized she was in very, very deep problems.*

*She had been placed on the truck floor, among many other Kenyan girls, some clearly underage, who had been gagged like her, and had their hands tied behind their backs.*

*They were all unwilling passengers in a commercial truck which was going to a location only them and God knew.*

*Some clearly had blood around their thighs, and just like her, many had salty traces of tears along their faces.*

*Thankfully, she had no blood on her trousers, and no part of her trousers was ripped, though she knew that was a short-lived moment of relief.*

*Based on the AMIKEN collaborating with the Al-Shabaab in attacking the administrative offices of Nairobi, and the many Kenyans who fell victim to the brutal torture in the streets by them, she knew she was now to follow suit in facing the same.*

*A door was opened, and three Al-Shabaab operatives walked in, with ski-masks on their faces and the trademark AK-47 rifles hanging in front of them.*

*Two were standing guard outside, but weren't as focused because they only cared about the lust boiling from within.....*

*.....We became mirrors of each other the minute the magic of the rhythm flowed through our veins.*

*We became reflections of each other the minute we decided no more looking over our shoulders.*

*This was a crime to many.*

*Our love was a crime to many. But we knew one thing was for certain.*

*Their opinions were their business.*

*We loved because we were of a flower that didn't wither.....*

*In the darkness of the street, they visited us.*

*They salivated as we showed what moved as we walked.*

*They sure made it rain, shilling notes with elephants on them falling to a ground that had sustained more dumped polythene bags and diapers than nutrients.*

*It's funny how the elephants in the notes shared a common problem with us, a common purpose.*

*Tourism.*

*In some way we were as soiled as the elephants.*

*The only difference was that the elephants did not dance like we did, and they were not the ones to feel a tusk hot with lust pushing within.....*

## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgement .....	xiv
Foreword .....	xv
FACTS ABOUT SEX TOURISM IN KENYA ....	xix
Chapter One .....	1
Chapter Two .....	13
Chapter Three .....	44
Chapter Four .....	90
Chapter Five .....	133
Chapter Six .....	161
Chapter Seven .....	200
Chapter Eight .....	277
About The Author .....	301
EPILOGUE .....	304
A SNEAK PEEK INTO THE NEXT NOVEL ...	313

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*Asanteni, Kila Mtu.*

**HR**

# Foreword

## **WHAT IS MOMBASA RAHA?**

It is a term popular in Kenya for the joy and excitement most people feel when they visit the Kenyan Coast. You get to see sandy beaches, award winning resorts and tourist destinations; you also get to experience festivities and cultural diversity.

But then, there's a very disturbing trade that puts an ugly stain on Mombasa Raha.

In the beginning of 2016, a former schoolmate, Jedidah Karimi, woke up to find her younger sister Christine Karimi lying dead outside their home.

Before her death, it is said Christine was involved in a relationship with a man way older than her, a man known for his manipulative and abusive nature. She did not know he would be the one to end her life. She decided to stay in the relationship so she could receive gifts and be taken out on weekends just like her friends.

I attended the memorial service held at St. Joseph Catholic, whose youth group is filled with enthusiasm.

We made Jedidah and her family feel at ease, however the police case is still on-going, and it is clear two things took place; murder and statutory rape.

The Kenyan coast is well known for beautiful tropical beaches and amazing tourist destinations, on the downside it is a major source and transit point for sex tourists and human trafficking.

What happened to Christine is just a speck compared to many teenagers and young adults who go through this harrowing vice, most forced into it by their own parents due to abject poverty, while others get into it due to unemployment, peer pressure and fun.

I toyed around with the idea of "Mombasa Raha My Foot" since 2012, looking up online sites that talked about this problem, like the Walk Free Movement, HAART Kenya, and UNICEF, and realized that there was a huge problem Kenyans were not addressing. Moreover, they were beginning to condone this thing, especially in the cases of those suffering from abject poverty.

It was in 2014 when I finally got to work on this novel series, talking to people from HAART Kenya & even inviting them to the book launch of the 1st novel to share more about this problem, talking to people who



have lived in Mombasa, and witnessed human trafficking, paedophilia and sex tourism with their own eyes and/or even participated in it.

This novel series is not only in honour of Christine but many others who perished under the hands of rapists, pimps, paedophiles, sex pests and traffickers capitalizing on people's economic problems to make quick shillings, tearing apart generations in the process.

Human trafficking is real. Sex tourism is real. Sexual slavery is real. It is happening in Kenya, and this is my input in joining the fight against it.

By reading this book and the novel series as well, by sharing it, you spread the awareness about the vices.

You give others hope that they can overcome such challenges and be better people in society.

Most importantly, you restore faith in a future generation that is healthy, wise and strong enough to say no to peer pressure, but to stand strong despite feeling left out, you encourage them to say no even to their parents who ask them to do it for the money.

If you are a parent reading this, you have a duty to protect your children. They are not a business plan or

partnership but your responsibility. When you grow old, you will be your child's responsibility, that's the very essence of respect.

According to The Bible, children should respect their parents, and in equal measure parents are not to provoke their children.

*To you, the reader, thank you for reading this book. You pay homage to the survivors of this vice, and to those who departed too soon, under the hands of greedy sex pests. You give them a voice, you share in their poetic experiences, and you experience their joy, their hopes, their crushed dreams and their victories.*

*This is in memory of Christine Karimi, and every single young soul who died due to sex tourism, paedophilia & child trafficking.*

*May their souls rest in eternal peace.*

**Asanteni Sana, na Karibuni Kenya.**

**Haroun Risa.**

# **FACTS ABOUT SEX** **TOURISM IN** **KENYA**

"It is estimated that 30,000 Kenyan children are victims of the sex tourism industry.

A UNICEF-supported 2006 survey on sex tourism along the Kenyan coast reported that between 2,000 and 3,000 girls worked year-round as commercial sex workers, and nearly half of them started as young as 12 or 13 years of age.

Tightened restrictions in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia have pushed the trade to Mombasa, where dozens of weekly flights from Europe fuel its existence."

~ UNICEF

"Kenya is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and sexual exploitation. Kenyan children are trafficked within the country for domestic servitude, forced labour in agriculture (including on

flower plantations), cattle herding, in bars, and for commercial sexual exploitation, including involvement in the coastal sex tourism industry. "

**~ US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2009**

"According to the NGO End Child Prostitution in Kenya, in 2009 there were up to 50,000 children involved in the sex trade. Most of the customers of child prostitution were Kenyan nationals, as well as tourists from Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In 2012, child advocates reported that men were paying around \$25 (2,500 Kenyan Shillings) to have sex with girls as young as 12."

**~ Naomi Conrad, "Fighting to save Kenya's child prostitutes", Deutsche Welle, July 31, 2012.**

"It is estimated that before the age of 12 almost 30% of girls and boys are already exploited for transactional sex along the coast, fuelled by the tourists who visit Kenya for that very reason."

**~ The Walk Free Movement.**

"Nothing gets a family out of poverty faster than a daughter with a white boyfriend."

~ **Kenyan Coastal Urban Proverb.**



## Chapter One

*Mombasa, Kenya.*

**04:00**

*Two men, one of Indian heritage, walked down a long corridor of containers offloaded from the ship. They turned left and paused at one container snugly hidden by two others. The port officials who were their guides stopped after pointing towards it.*

*The Indian man pulled out an envelope and handed it to one of the ports officials, who, after looking satisfactorily at the contents inside, shook hands and walked away.*

*The two men turned to the container and, the Indian began to open it while the other man made a phone call.*

*After clearing the boxes of sardines that blocked the inside, the Indian man took out a flashlight and used it to illuminate the cartons that were piled up and riddled with pigeon holes.*

*In Punjabi he said, "Stick out your left hand."*

*Immediately after he said so, left hands emerged from the holes, slowly at first then simultaneously.*

*The Indian man made a mental note of the number of hands sticking out, then as the distinct sound of a forklift truck got louder, he shut off the flashlight and walked outside.*



"It still hurts," said one girl to another.

"Shut up!" the other replied, crouching down.

"You can't be serious," said another, looking on as the girl crouched on a small bucket to pee.

"Do you see any latrines in this stuffy container?" She retorted. "Be grateful you're far away from Mumbai!"

"Let's not forget whose fault it is we are miles away from home," retorted the first girl.

"Oh, so you'd rather be where you are the one to pay dowry?" the crouching girl retorted.

"Leave her, Deepika. She's naïve. She'll learn," said another girl who was biting her nails.

Deepika, the girl who was crouching, finished her business and closed the bucket lid; she then extracted a small jar of hand sanitizer from between her breasts and used it.

The forklift driver came out with a briefcase, and as he handed it to the other man, the Indian man locked up the container.

The other man took a look at the file inside, placed on top of a lot of Kenyan one thousand shilling notes, and then handed the briefcase to the Indian man.

The forklift driver went back to his truck and commenced his task of transporting the container to the awaiting truck.

Suddenly he was grabbed to the side and muffled with a rag, his file taken by an unknown individual who replaced him in his task.

Moments later, two men briskly walked to the truck and entered it. It was waved off by a port official, beginning its journey.

*The game show's going on.....I can't afford to miss seeing many people embarrass themselves just to be on TV.....*

He turned to grab a bottle of water and accidentally knocked it over, spilling water. Cursing, he stepped out.

The game show presenter started with her usual greeting, "Who's Smarter....."

"Now," he said, looking at the feet lying out on the tarmac. "What is this one doing here?"

*Some weirdo thinks this place can double up as a hotel.*

*Again.*

He walked over to where the feet were and, stopping in his tracks, saw the unconscious bodies of the original forklift & truck driver.

"Isn't this Jared?"

*The forklift was gone, too.*

*The last truck.....*

He quickly dialled a number.

“Boss, we have a big problem,” he said.

*Downtown Malindi.*

**04:43**

A black car pulled up on the street and the passenger door opened. A man stepped out with a huge parcel wrapped in a bed sheet, then quickly uncovered the bed sheet to reveal a young woman, dazed, groggy, model-like and with blood trickling down her face & on her dress.

The girl shivered in agonizing pain as the car drove away.

*Lamu County, Kenya.*

**06:09**

The beach was calm, a soft breeze which blew through the coconut trees.

The sun was slowly rising, making the sky glow with the first rays.

*All was well.*

Until a speedboat suddenly appeared, making its way to the coastline faster than the athletics of a man after a sudden diarrhoea attack.

The speedboat didn't reduce speed. It made its way for the coast and kept pushing on, despite no longer being on water.

Three people had jumped from the speedboat while still in motion, running for dear life.

One tripped, and as fast as he fell he quickly rose, running scared.

Something fell from his pockets.

A ghost was coming to haunt his imbalanced, blood-soaked life.

*Somewhere in Nairobi, later on.....*

A graduation hat was tossed in the air, followed by many others. Then a deafening roar of happiness engulfed the atmosphere as young graduates relished the moment they all were waiting for.

"Finally!" screamed Jamo, catching his hat as the others shared in the celebration.

"We did it!" said Khadijah as BMW pulled out a selfie stick.

*The end of their studies.*

*Or was it?*

*Present Day.*

Their faces, filled with jubilation, appeared on their fridge, printed and pinned with magnets.

Angela was washing the dishes when she dropped a steel pot and the sharp noise echoed in the room. Khadijah appeared at the doorway as Angela rushed to pick it up.

"Sorry," said Angela as Khadijah strolled back.

Angela spotted her reflection in the water as she got back to the dishes, and froze.

*Dunga Beach, Lake Victoria.*

"I'm hungry. Where's Mum?" asked her younger brother after coming home from school.

"She'll be back soon, she has gone to work, just wait," said Angela, knowing very well that her mother won't be back anytime soon, that is, without anything substantial.

*Angela was hungry too and until Mum came back, there was no immediate solution.*

*In the shores of Dunga Beach, Lake Victoria, there were hundreds of fishermen from the Luo community. Fish traders and merchants conducted their business and went fishing, but the currency was in most times not money.*

*Mama Angela was a fish trader, pushed into the business after her husband succumbed to tuberculosis, but because she didn't have money sometimes, the 'jaboyas' (fishermen) who were the dominant factor in the trade, accepted another form of currency for the fish they brought forth.*

*Sexual favours.*



*On many occasions Mama Angela would spend many days away from home, inside a Jaboya's house, warming his bed so she could get the best fish from him.*

*At times, Angela had to be involved, as a Jaboya wasn't satisfied with Mama Angela, and in all matters sex, the youngest and the fresh ones were always on demand.*

*Despite knowing the risks, Mama Angela made sure no Jaboya knew of Angela's whereabouts, but still made deals with them for a night with Angela.*

*The trick seemed to work, as things started looking up. Both Angela and her mother knew that it was not going to be long before her mother's luck ran out. The Jaboyas were known to be extremely violent, so Angela accepted her mother's proposal to go to Nairobi to study, as she remained with her younger brother in Kisumu.*

*That was the very last time Angela ever saw those two.....*

"Angela?" said BMW, bringing her back to the present.

"Oh...um...," she said, fumbling nervously with the steel pots as BMW looked at her, holding polythene bags of shopping.

"Daydreaming again?"

"Um....sorry....I just zoned out for a while....," she said nervously as BMW smiled.

"Have you seen Meshach?"

"No, not today," she said.

BMW turned to the fridge and filled it with the food.

Angela, clearly nervous, threw side glances at BMW as he finished his task.

He paused at the picture, a pin drop silence falling in the kitchen, and then turned to go, with Angela rinsing the last of the steel pots.

Angela paused as she placed the last steel pot on the rack, smelling BMW's sweet cologne that still lingered in the air.

She wiped her hands on the apron, and then poured herself a cup of tea.

## Chapter Two

### *LANG'ATA WOMEN'S PRISON. 11:00*

A young woman walked down the gangway to collect her items that had been confiscated as she completed her clearance from the correctional facility.

*She was calm and collected as she stepped outside for the first time in ages.*

She walked calmly to the bus stop and patiently waited. Many matatus stopped, picking and dropping passengers, but she still waited.

*Until one specific matatu stopped.*

The number plate was all she needed to know. Without hesitation she sat shotgun, and the driver permitted no one else to sit there except her.

The conductor winked at her, and she relaxed, knowing that she was in safe hands.

As she alighted the driver pointed out a series of directions and handed her a brown envelope with an address.

Without hesitation she walked in the CBD, following the exact directions, turning left down Moktar Daddah Street, further down to an electronics dealership.

A Muslim man rose to greet her.

"You made it! I am so happy! Karibu sana," he said as he kissed her on the cheek. She handed over the package, and as the Muslim man acknowledged the safe delivery, he handed her a headscarf, then led her to the back room.

The back room was a nightclub, a very gisty one too, with Timmy TDat/RapDamu's hit song, 'Welle Welle' playing in the background.

"She is inside. Take your time," he said as he went back to the dealership front desk, leaving her.

The jailbird walked towards a petite woman, smoking a joint as she watched the choreography of some amateur pole dancers.

The petite woman spotted her, and then puffed her joint.

"I like your 12 o'clock," she said.

The jailbird shot a quick glance at the time, and nervously replied, "Traffic jam. Sorry."

"Lang'ata Road is packed sometimes," said the petite woman as she crushed her joint like a cigarette and motioned her to sit.

The jailbird sat and watched in silence as the woman pulled out another brown package.

The jailbird looked at the contents; her birth certificate, twenty five thousand Kenyan shillings, a cell phone, a laminated National ID with her name, a Kenya Certificate of Primary Education document with her name, and a photo of BMW with the address to his car wash written in the back.

"That cash is down payment. This guy will set you up somewhere as you figure out your next moves. The phone has everything you need to contact him, make sure you get there before sunset."

The jailbird put everything in place, stashing the money inside her bra, and said her thanks as the petite woman turned her attention to the on-going choreography.

*Later on, she alighted from a matatu, dialling a number as she walked towards one car wash.*

*BMW checked his phone, and then glanced at the woman in the headscarf waiting for the phone to be picked up.*

*As he signalled the other guy to watch out for the car wash manager, BMW walked quickly to the jailbird.*

"Excuse me, what's your name?"

"Agnes," she replied, putting down her phone. "Na weve ndio....."

"Yes, ni mimi. Follow me," he said, leading her to the back entrance.

He opened the door, and walked down the corridor to the accommodation rooms, the jailbird following behind.

He walked to one room to the right, near a flight of stairs, then unlocked it and ushered her in.

As Agnes walked in, BMW savoured her ample hips from behind, then turned to the condom dispenser and took three condoms as he walked in and locked the door.

Later, BMW handed her a card with a telephone number. "Call him and tell him I sent you. He's got a

place reserved for you for a while. You'll be reporting every month here to me and me only. Sawa?"

"Yeah, sawa," said Agnes as she looked at the card. "Asante, by the way,"

*BMW, once again, advanced at her lustfully, savouring her figure from behind.*

*She, too, felt something pulling her behind.*

*She couldn't fight the urge to look back.*

"How do you like your coffee, Agnes?" asked BMW.

*Her head went slightly up as he kissed her around the neck, making her knees weak.*

"Kahawa kama ya Java," she said. BMW simply smiled.

*In no time she was in his arms again, participating in the Bedminton gymnastics session.*

*News Station Office, Nairobi*

**14:48**

Saul was in his office, playing with a tennis ball when Ruth walked in.

"They're here," she said.

*Saul stood up as he grabbed his notebook.*

As they walked down the newsroom hallway, Ruth sent a text on her phone.

"Any leads on the Queen Bee yet?" asked Saul.

"She moves invisibly amongst us," said Ruth. "I don't know how someone stays totally in the shadows that long."

"How about the winners?"

"The winners will be announced soon. Editorial wants full coverage of the broadcast," said Ruth.

"That means we officially head down to Mombasa?" said Saul.



"Yep. Other channels will broadcast from our feed if we get there first," said Ruth. "The entire country has been waiting for this. That cruiser vacation from Dar is a total dream."

"You're saying someone got the answer to the final question?"

"Shocking, isn't it? Whoever solved that riddle must have godly powers. That question hasn't been answered since 2010," said Ruth as she pushed the door open.

A white man in cargo pants and a Kenyan cameraman rose up, and the white man introduced himself to Saul. "Hi, I'm Clarkson."

"Saul. Nice to meet you."

As they all introduced themselves, Ruth turned to Clarkson.

"You're saying you saw something going on at Orchardson-Yusuf?"

Clarkson motioned to the Kenyan cameraman, who pulled out an envelope.

"We found out how they smuggle guys in," he said. "Apparently, the guests love their meat so much they have it delivered all the time."

*Ruth and Saul, alarmed, looked at a photo of a few Kenyan teenage boys and girls walking briskly out of a Nyama Tamu Sardines truck.*

*As Saul looked at one picture, he saw someone who looked familiar to him.*

*He couldn't immediately figure out who it was, but one girl in the picture was familiar.*

"The truck is what worries me," said Saul. "This truck is preserving meat en route to its destination. So if they were being transported there....."

"Whoever placed that order wants the organs fresh for harvest," said Collins. "We have already identified major hotel companies as fronts for traffickers. This is a clear indication."

"This is the same hotel that will be broadcasting the winners of the lottery, right?" asked Ruth.

Clarkson grimly nodded.

"So, you ride with us, masquerading as press personnel covering the lottery winners.....," trailed off Saul.

"And we dig deeper into the Orchardson-Yusuf saga," said Collins.

Ruth's phone ringed, signalling a text message.

"We already have an inside man there," said Clarkson as Ruth zoned out for a moment.

"These guys have been busy," continued Clarkson. "Some have been spotted in children's homes, interacting actively with them."

"There's a good reason why these kids can't enter through the front lobby," said Collins. "Hotels have a policy not to book in guys with kids who are not related to them."

After some silence Ruth said, "Gentlemen, it's time to pack our bags."

"Ingiza hizo takataka ndani!" yelled the female officer as other officers pushed eleven girls inside the cells, locking the cell with venom and brutality.

"Nyinyi wote ni ibilisi," one spat at them.

*The girls were huddled on one side of the wall as the other inmates frisked them for valuables, taking what the eleven were too stupid to leave at the Occurrence Book while recording their belongings.*

*One inmate shoved her hand inside one girl's bra and came out with a fifty dollar bill. She looked at the girl keenly, and then rolled the dollar bill like a weed blunt and shoved it up her private parts.*

"So, ni Nyinyi, eh?" asked one inmate.

"Yaani mmeshindwa kupata sponsor so mnaendea mbwa zao? Hata nyinyi!" blurted another inmate. "Wacha tu niwe kitu ingine, lakini si kama nyinyi."

*The female inmates burst out laughing as the others continued roasting the girls, the insults laden with fluent Swahili doing even more damage.*

*In the adjacent male cell, there was pandemonium. The Swiss national who was pushed inside was being*

*robbed off his possessions; as he pleaded for mercy. But half of the inmates did not give a damn about his thick English, especially after they heard what he did with the girls.*

"Hey, Fisherman," said the skinny inmate, handing him the Swiss's watch. "Huyu ndio mzungu wa wasichana 11."

"Man, these white people are just sick!" said the skinny inmate, looking squarely at the cowering Swiss. "I'm sick of these twisted guys!"

*Other inmates watched in absolute loathe, they stared daggers at the Swiss national.*

"You know, whites don't survive African jail," said the Fisherman, squatting near him. "So, we're going to come to an agreement if you want to see tomorrow."

*The Swiss national looked at the Fisherman, with the skinny inmate standing behind, and knew his fate was sealed.*

*At that moment, a Mercedes Benz E class parked outside the police station. A woman in navy blue stilettos stepped out and walked into the station. She had very shapely calves and feet that fit perfectly into the stilettos.*

*Police officers watched her in awe, transfixed by her graceful entry.*

"Good afternoon," she said as she stopped at the police reception desk.

"I want to see the OCS."

The young officer looked at her for a moment, then said, "I'd like to have your ID, please."

*She flashed a tiny wallet in his face, and as he looked at the identification document she just flashed, he wasted no time dialling the extension.*

*The OCS came out of his office and looked at her as if she was an atomic bomb.*

"My office is this way, madam," he said as she walked in.

"There are some people I want released from here."

"Madam," said the OCS, his voice had a slight twinge of fear in it. "I'd like to know who you are bailing out."

*She fished out a list of names from her purse and handed it to the OCS, who looked at the names, stunned.*

"What they've done, madam, it's.... It has made headlines all over. The public can't wait for them to be dealt with. In fact, we can't wait to have them arraigned in court," he said.

"How much is bail?" She asked.

"Five hundred thousand shillings for all of them."

*She took out her cheque book, wrote down the figure, and then handed it to him.*

"And, I am sure, after this, the matter at hand shall be forgotten."

*The OCS looked at the cheque, which was a million shillings, and loosened his upper shirt button, clearing his throat.*

"And what about the gentleman who was with them?"

After some silence she said, "Do unto him what you wanted to do to the girls."

*He dialled the extension as she fished out her phone and sent a text message.*

*Later on, the girls were loaded into the police land cruiser, and driven away. The woman crossed her feet, looking at the Land Cruiser as it drove fast, sirens blaring. She dialled a number and waited.*

"They're all yours. Give them thorough discipline, but I want them squeaky clean by the time I get back," she said briefly, and then hung up.



*Mumbai, India.*

*A few weeks before the Coast Cultural Festival,  
Mombasa.*

A group of Indian girls surrounded an elderly woman who had been watching their choreography, murmuring with an expectation of some sort.

"It is time!" said the old lady in Punjabi, excitedly pulling out passports.

The girls were ecstatic because they knew what she meant. They took the passports and looked at the Kenyan tourist visa stamped on it.

"Finally, we can have a life away from here!" said one girl excitedly.

"I'll get a car of my own just like Deepika," said another girl as a third one joined the conversation.

"Now we can pay dowry for ourselves," said the third girl.

"Pay dowry? I won't!" said the first girl. "There are Indians in Kenya, whoever will be lucky to make me say yes is the one to pay."

"I hate the fact that girls are the one to pay dowry here," added the second girl. "And most times the boy's family ask for expensive things. Things they know for sure we can't afford."

"In Kenya we will have a new life," said the first girl. "Then we will come back to Mumbai and help our parents."

"I'll build Mama a better house, and take my younger brother Raju to college," said the second girl.

As the girls shared in the excitement, the old lady silently walked out to a payphone, dialling a number from a notepad.

"They are ready," she said in Punjabi. "Yes, sir. I have their tickets."

After some silence, "Okay, sir. I will accompany them." she lingered for a moment and got back.

"Are you sure?" asked BMW.

"Yes, I am. Make sure your friends know about it, and make sure they participate," he heard the voice on the phone say. "There are others who will arrive from very far away, so get ready."

"Okay, sure," said BMW as he hanged up the phone.

BMW paused for a moment and watched his comrades as they worked on a Land Rover, and then he opened the glove compartment and pulled out a newspaper.

The 7th page of the newspaper had a full page advertisement of a lottery competition, with vibrant images of the Coast. It was in its final rounds, with the grand prize being an all-expense paid vacation on the Mzalendo Cruiser, a super yacht currently docked at Dar es Salaam.

*Full board, all expense. For half a year.*

The catch was the questions. Most of them were general knowledge, but needed very keen eyes and memory. Most of the questions were based on events that took place in East Africa, landmarks that people did not pay attention to until the trivia questions had millions of shillings worth of prizes to be won.

*The final round's question was the capital city of Tanzania.*

Three years had passed, with even intellectual folks giving the wrong answer, and sparking debates on which answer was the correct one. And the more wrong answers given, the more exciting the grand prize became.

But BMW knew it wasn't about the correct answer.

*It was about the correct people.*

BMW knew that amongst his friends, one was bound to give the right answer, something that would jeopardize the entire mission, and he was disturbed that he was now going to involve all of them in this.

Though he was not worried about Khadijah. She wasn't just valuable, she knew the ropes just like him; but she was a wild child, which at times made him hesitant to throw her a bone.

She never understood that, just like Notorious BIG said in the Ten Crack Commandments song, "Never get high on your own supply."

Khadijah proved a worthy mule, and had devised the most ingenious way to transport contraband, even in airports. But always made that costly mistake.

*And so, as he folded up the newspaper to get back to work, BMW made up his mind.*

***Meanwhile.....***

"So, mnaonaje huyu anaitwa Agnes?" asked Zablon, looking at the couple facing him while occasionally looking at a document with passport photos.

"Ako sawa," said the wife, holding Agnes's papers. "Wacha tumwone."

Zablon smiled as he walked over to the next room, calling her.

*The transformation was epic.*

*Agnes was very humble, not looking at the couple right in the eyes, occasionally fidgeting with her fingers, not answering questions in a matter-of-fact manner which would show she had stayed in Nairobi for years, and even donned a head wrap, complete with the skirt that reached the ankles, and a very good impression of a church girl from the countryside.*

***The couple bought it.***

As the husband helped Agnes with her medium size suitcase, the wife stayed behind, to sign the contract, and then as she rose to leave, Zablon asked for Agnes one last time, claiming he forgot to tell her something.

"Remember, kila three months, you report to me ama the guy who sent you here," he said. "Keep up the act, jifanye fala. Utapata mgeni after a month."

"As long as I am not going back to prison," she replied.

"As long as unajifanya mjinga, hutawahi rudi jela," said Zablon with finality.

"There is a much bigger ploy here," said Saul as they packed their bags onto Clarkson's game drive Land Rover. "If those teenagers were being transported using Nyama Tamu Sardines freezer trucks it's no longer about the kids being items of desire."

"Of course," said Ruth. "Let me ask you something. What's the first most important commodity in the criminal world?"

"Drugs," said Saul

"Second?"

"Money?"

"Wrong. Weapons," continued Ruth. "And third?"

"Don't tell me. Humans?"

"Both dead and alive," said Ruth as she finished her task. "And especially when young, less fortunate and inexperienced. It is human beings that rank third in that list."

"It's not just a fetish anymore, is it?"

"Oh, no," said Ruth. "These folks ail from horrendous diseases, due to their unhealthy lifestyles, and they want



to live for as long as they can. So because they have the money....."

"They spend their last days exploring and exploiting?" asked Saul.

"Close," said Ruth, "What I meant was, they unleash their sick fetishes like sleeping with underage kids, paying off the parents, and handsomely, then when the kid goes missing he/she winds up dead in an unknown place, with missing vital organs."

"Which explains the Nyama Tamu Sardines truck?"

"Yep," said Ruth. "Though, I doubt anyone at Nyama Tamu Sardines knows what their trucks transport in some hotels."

"Okay, we're all set," said Collins as Clarkson jumped into the driver's seat.

As the vehicle roared to life, the radio came on, and the news bulletin was already airing.

*"A Swiss national was arrested last night in an apartment in upmarket Nyali, together with eleven girls who participated in an illicit sex act. The police received an anonymous tip off, raided the up market*

*apartment and arrested everyone present, including the eleven girls. This comes months after a British national was arrested in Mtwapa for allegedly running a strip club business in Kisauni....."*

"Anonymous tip off? Really?" asked Saul.

Khadijah lay on her bed, holding her necklace as her insomnia-ridden eyes stared up.

*For a moment she was back in that hotel room, looking at the smouldering cigarettes in the ash tray. He was snoring, his hairy gut sticking out of his vest.*

*She pulled open a drawer and plucked out a wad of notes. She woke from the bed and grabbed her purse, she wore a dress and then turned to her necklace that lay on the counter.*

*The necklace was the one memento she had left.*

*It felt like yesterday, watching as her mother put the necklace on her, with mournful and caring eyes.*

*She turned to her phone, as it vibrated beside her. It was a mobile money transaction.*

**Money. The root of all her problems.**

*It drove her into the business in the first place. It was the mournful eyes of her mother, who had no choice but to give her away, that gave her the boldness to survive.*

*It was the resentment of her father, who saw it fit for his daughters to participate in sex tourism for the little*

*dollars the tourists had to offer, that gave her the fuel to persevere, growing eyes at the back of her head.*

*Everything was pretty vivid. The twerking lessons her elder sisters gave her, barely at puberty, the hairy old men who selected her numerous times, defiling her over and over..... The look of pure glee in her father's eyes after receiving the dollars, not once caring about the ladies who got drenched in sexual filth for it, only for the money to go down bar urinals and Fallopian tubes that definitely were not her mother's.....*

*It was why she ran away.*

*Her elder sisters had chosen their fate, and it was time she chose hers, she said to her mother as they ran away to Shanzu, where a relative lived.*

*Where she met **him**.*

*Khadijah thought she was in love, when he appeared, an angel, with a toned dark chocolate body, and a spear full of fire, a spear that pierced into places she never thought she knew.*

*She followed him everywhere he went ever since.*

*She stared for a moment at the message, and then opened up the menu, sending money.*

Moments later, a message popped up on her screen, "Asante, mwanangu."

*The last few weeks, it had been crazy since she was on night shift. The roommates obviously didn't know, and hopefully didn't care, because she was scared of the stigma she'd receive. So she kept her activities to herself, reporting to the car wash once her shift was complete so that her manager would get his cut.*

*At least she had a humane manager, for a change. All he cared about was his cut, and it wasn't just money, the sly devil.*

*It was **him**, the same angel with the spear of fire.*

*She had already cleared her studies thanks to him and his ingenious ways to get bursaries, and of course, a small sacrifice was enough to gain a lot more.*

*Soon enough, she thought to herself, she'll build a home for herself and her mother in Shanzu.*

The talking in the next room got her attention and she sat up. There was murmuring about a newspaper

advertisement, and some objections but still the murmuring continued.

"Should we try this out?"

"It's in the final round. What chance do we have at winning?"

"Kwani shida iko? They need a maximum of five guys. Sisi tuko wangapi?!"

"Okay," said the unmistakable voice of BMW, "Wacha the ladies get here, then we'll discuss this together."

After murmurs of acknowledgement, the boys turned on the TV for their daily dose of PlayStation games.

*Khadijah smiled to herself as she turned to her phone and put on her headphones.*

*Bernard Mwangi Wachira, alias BMW, was reeling the others in. And they could not see it. She couldn't help but remember when BMW was talking to a woman with a notebook, overhearing the conversation.....*

**"There is always a constant demand for fresh meat, so they either go back to their rural homes to seduce their sisters, cousins or friends, or recruit from around. When the new fish are brought, they are**

**rarely told they are going to become prostitutes. They are told they will get good jobs and lead a good lifestyle but once they are here, we introduce them into the business."**

*One statement Khadijah picked up as she eavesdropped, that always resented her, was:*

*"Remember the saying; The Beautiful Ones haven't been Born Yet?"*

*That pretty much summarized everything. The clients always go for the youngest. Gospel truth. They're always in demand for the fresh ones and youngest boys and girls....."*

She knew that womanhood was dealt a massive blow by fate (or God or karma) because of one biological fact.

*Women were given physical youth & beauty **early** in life.*

With that realization came a wave of shock; *what if she was no longer desirable, even to BMW?*

What if she could not maintain the racket, and brought in more losses? What next, after her time was up, and she was replaced by another young thing?

*What next for her, after no man looked at her twice?*

*She fought for clients too, sustaining injuries; making bitter rivals just to keep the racket going, to bring in more shillings so her mother would not go hungry.....watching her mother swallow food with difficulty because she was helpless at stopping her daughter..... She found herself on certain occasions reflecting on the rollercoaster she had been on. But she knew, just like the Dalai Lama said, that nothing was permanent.*

She looked at her phone, running her fingers on the smooth screen, and remembered one specific bitter rival who somehow awakened a resolve in her.

She was not going down without a fight, she thought to herself. She was in this out of choice, and she was going to make it pay. Big time.

*By the time those beautiful ones are born, I'll be the one they will run to for tips on how to stay in the game, she thought to herself.*



*But first, one very important loose end to get rid of.*

*Once and for all.*

## **Chapter Three**

***A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT ON CHILD WELFARE, AND A FEW YEARS BEFORE THE ORCHARDSON-YUSUF LOTTERY.***

*Coast Modern Taarab. Chakacha Nights.*

*Bahari FM Nights.*

It was synonymous with the life, and both parties benefited greatly, for the two bosom friends knew one fundamental thing.

The bottle of vodka, or beer, was sweeter when the bill was on someone else's tab, especially, if it was someone else's Kinyanya (Sponsor/female sex tourist).

Tom was occupied with a curvy European, while BMW was busy sampling the dark skinned curvaceous lady friend the European had tagged along.

The revellers were dancing to the tune of a local Taarab troupe, totally lost in the sweet music. The lead singer was showered with banknotes by revellers, very beautiful women who enjoyed not just the music but the message being spread.

"So you're telling me you once served?" asked BMW.

"Oh yes," said Delilah, the dark skinned companion of the European. "Though the pay was just wrong."

"Don't tell me. White Cap?"

Delilah laughed out loud. "That's what you call traffic cops?"

"Well, you did wear a white cap, so...."

"Yep, but now I have a better occupation," she said, filling up his beer goblet. "Which is way better compared to standing all day on the roundabout."

As they both drank, Tom came to their table, with the European lady's hand on his elbow.

"Oh, Delilah, you should have told me about this place sooner!" she said, sitting next to them.

"Hey, I just gave you a taste of what fun you'll have with us ahead of the AU summit," said Delilah, swallowing a tot of tequila.

"There won't be much activity with the security detail scrutinizing everything out here during the summit," said Tom. "How about we head off to Kisumu?"

"I second him," said Delilah. "Nairobi is not fun and the Homa Bay Festival will be happening."

"All roads lead to Kisumu away from the Summit for guys like us," said BMW, winking at Tom.

Tom poured a drink for BMW as they shared a knowing smile for what was ahead in Kisumu.

It was his favourite hideout when shit hit the fan. For sure, Tom would not take any chances on the beefed up security that would throng the Coast during the Summit.

*BMW smiled, downing his drink.*

***Endelea kunionyesha kila kitu. Tutakupata vizuri.***

*BMW spotted a slender, brown-skinned girl, barely eighteen, being fondled by a middle aged man.*

*A scenario which reminded him of a very tragic event.*

*It was not clear what a girl her age would be doing with someone of his age, but there were circumstances even BMW could not understand.*

*Maybe it was raging hormones that drove her to the arms of that man, or peer pressure, but it felt bad to*

*know that a girl that young was brutally murdered by an insecure, controlling man like him.*

*He never really kept tabs on the girls or boys he gave jobs to, but it always bothered him when girls came to the gigs, not out of necessity but for the fun of it.*

***The fun of receiving lots of cash like their friends, to be popular, the need to be the nucleus of the atom.....***

*He hated such girls. Most of them brought bad luck and serious scandals. In fact, girls like those were the ones who, when arrested, would spill the beans about everything in the Old Town movement.*

*Belinda was one of the many girls directed to BMW's car wash. After his stint in conjunction with Tom at Funzi Island, BMW had been occasionally sent to Nairobi for fresh meat. Most of the girls and boys he got were the ones who were in the high school, campus and unemployed bracket.*

*Tom could not do much business around the coastal area because he was still undercover after the Shimo la Tewa prison escape so he laid low in Kisumu at one of the safe houses he and BMW had saved up to buy. He would masquerade as a Jaboya, then drop down to*

*Homa Bay for fresh meat, paying bus fare for his fresh catches to Nairobi, where another middleman would continue with the transportation, and Tom would be wired his money after a few days.*

*Belinda wanted the usual. Starry eyed and daydreaming, Belinda was easily convinced to get a sugar daddy so as to get the money she saw her friends with, and even though she wasn't that well off, as BMW came to learn later, she was just playing truant.*

*It pissed off BMW, based on the fact that he ran away from the school he was in and had to finish his high school studies in another school far away, and here was a truant girl who didn't seem to lack anything important getting into the Old Town movement just for the thrill.*

***Of course, she's wasn't the only one.***

*After he hooked her up with a waitress job in a bar along Mombasa Road, BMW did not pay much attention to what happened next, because he already had informed her of what to do, since the bar's clientele included middle aged men, truck drivers and long distance travellers looking for a stopover for the night. After a few days, as promised, down payment was wired to him from HQ.*

*So far, business as usual.*

*Until one day, her body was found at her doorstep with a knife sticking out of her neck.*

*There were two men later on, undercover CID officers, who were tracing the suspect, a regular patron at the Mombasa Road bar. The suspect was being investigated after two previous murders were linked to him, with both victims being girls.*

*BMW, for fear of being snuffed out by the CID, jumped on the idea of going to Kisumu, despite the fact that he never met with the suspect. The girl may have said something that would jeopardize him.*

*Luckily though, even the administration at the bar had no idea she was an employee, or who employed her at the bar. Because the minute the CID officials showed up, money talked.*

***Money silenced many.***

BMW and Tom were relaxing in their apartment when they saw the Queen Bee on TV addressing an African Union Summit on Child Welfare held at the Bamburi Beach Resort, Mombasa. To say this was hypocrisy would be an understatement.

To the world, she was the champion of the youth, fighting for the welfare of the young generation, opening businesses for rescued sex workers, rehabilitated sex slaves, prostitutes and trafficked children, and providing bursaries for the underage kids rescued from sex trafficking.

*But BMW and Tom knew her better. Way better.*



"How real can it be?" asked a skeptic Meshach.

"Are you serious? It's a huge opportunity for us!" said Jamo Cool.

"Something doesn't sit right with this, by the way. It feels too good to be true," added BMW.

"Fungua macho! Cruise ship vacation!" blurted Jamo Cool, his bling hanging from his clothes.

"I can't be too sure about that," said Angela.

"Stop being a pessimist for once!" replied a starry-eyed Jamo Cool.

"Now you know why he stays single," retorted Angela, looking at Khadijah's direction.

"This feels like that Bollywood film, dude, the one with the lottery questions," said Jamo Cool. "The kid who waded through a latrine to get an autograph?"

"You mean Slumdog Millionaire?" said BMW.

"Yes!"

"Wait.....what is Tanzania's capital city again?" asked Meshach.

"It's Dodoma."

"No, it's Dar Es Salaam!"

"Acha ujinga. It's not Dar!" said Meshach. "There's the other question.....and I don't know the answer!"

"I should have paid more attention to my History class..." said Khadijah.

Jamo had found the newspaper with the lottery advert, and everyone was excited about the lottery. BMW, on the other hand, was sceptical.

"Guys, it's in the final round. What chance do we have at winning? So many people have tried and have not gotten to the first draw," said BMW.

"Oh, come on!" said Jamo, grabbing his phone. "Can't we just try?"

"Yeah, what's the harm in trying?" added Meshach, slightly sarcastic. "Even if we don't win, as Beamer here says, at least we tried."

"Is it really a cruise ship vacation?" asked Angela.

"Darling, look," said Meshach, as he handed Angela the newspaper and Khadijah walked in to see them.

After some time, Angela sided with the two guys. "I'm with the boys on this one. I've never been to the beach, let alone a different country."

Khadijah looked at Angela and almost laughed at the hypocrisy, BMW noticed it too.

"Majority wins," said a triumphant Jamo as he dialled the lottery number to answer the question.

"We have reason to believe the Queen Bee will move quickly," said Ruth. "Those girls cannot be put in the front page of the dailies. The Queen Bee cannot afford to let that happen."

"Wow. Bestiality," said Saul. "And I thought it only happened in porn."

"Real people act porn, dumbass," said Ruth. "Only this type of porn isn't that common here."

"The cops say they raided the villa after receiving a tip off?" asked Collins.

"Yeah, how did you know?"

"Tip-offs sometimes mean that someone knew of the dealings, or was part of the deal, and got short-changed on something."

"He's right. Probably someone decided to throw the cops a bone," said Clarkson. "Or....someone's undercover."

"Undercover for who?" asked Saul. "It could be the cops, or someone else."

"He has a point," said Collins. "The Queen Bee could have an inside girl on that deal who helped with the tip off."

"Where are they held up again?" asked Clarkson.

"Kisauni Police," answered Ruth.

"Why did the cops decide to lock the girls at a South Coast based police station, when there are tons of police stations in the North Coast?"

"Probably to increase humiliation, because the junkies and drug mules are mostly in the South Coast, and they don't want the good name and picture perfect reputation of the North Coast being tarnished?" said Saul.

Ruth looked at Saul, with total awe at his quick thinking, then after some silence, Ruth said, "We need to get to the Coast quickly."

"What is the name of the creature that's featured on the one thousand Kenyan shilling note?" asked the lottery agent on the phone.

*Jamo looked at Meshach for answers as Angela looked for the bank note.*

"An elephant!" answered Angela, holding out the banknote.

"Your answer is correct," said the lottery agent, and the group reacted in excitement.

"Now for the second question. If you get this second question correct, your chances of getting to the grand prize will be very, very high! Ready?"

"Yes!" They all said.

"When Tusker Lager was called Pale Ale, where was it brewed and bottled? Was it:

A) Mombasa

B) Nairobi

C) Kampala

D) Dar Es Salaam?

*The answer was so clear. Meshach remembered the promotional pictures of Tusker Lager up on a bar he once visited atop the Kenya National Theatre.*

*It had pictures of Tusker Lager's history, from its inception, to what it looked like today.*

Without a second thought, Meshach said, "Dar Es Salaam!"

"Your answer is..... Correct!"

Everyone turned to a snug Meshach, who stood up proudly.

"Now, for the third and final question. If you get this second question correct, you'll be the official winners of the Orchardson-Yusuf lottery competition. Are you ready?"

Meshach prepared himself, his ego leading him on as the others looked at him.

BMW looked around and saw the excitement of his friends, especially towards Meshach and his wealth of general knowledge, and felt a lump of guilt choke him.

"What is the capital city of Tanzania?"

*Khadijah looked at him, and knew exactly what the guys were getting themselves into. She gave BMW an understanding look, and then turned to the group as Meshach quietened the guys down.*

"What is the answer?"

Silence.

*Meshach felt nostalgic as he remembered passing in front of a primary school, a few years back. It was a recent school branch, and there was a young male student being carried shoulder high by others; parents and teachers alike mingled and ululated in happiness as they carried him shoulder high.*

*Kenya Certificate of Primary Education: Student of the Year.*

*Near the gate was a mural of Africa and another mural of East Africa;*

*Kenya, Nairobi.*

*Uganda, Kampala.*

*Tanzania.....Dodoma.*



*Meshach's daydream was shattered as someone else spoke into the phone. It was what was said that brought Meshach's daydream to a crashing halt.*

"Dar Es Salaam," said BMW.

*Meshach turned to him, absolute shock written all over his face.*

*Jamo turned to look at them both, a bit perplexed as to what is going on.*

"The answer is.....," said the lottery agent. Meshach's face was locked squarely on BMW, knowing exactly what was at stake. Angela was keen on what the agent was going to say, not for once noticing Meshach's look.

But what the lottery agent said next was what made Meshach feel like a rug was just yanked from his feet, despite all the guys, as if on cue, jumping in happiness at the answer.

"Correct!"

*A sleek Mercedes stopped outside the Kisauni Police Station, and The Queen Bee stepped out of the back seat after the driver opened it. Some onlookers stopped and stared at the mysterious, elegant lady with the Navy Blue Stilettos who sauntered into the police station, her heels making a distinct sound with each step.*

*The officers present stopped working for a brief moment and stared at her, flanked by driver and bodyguard. It was not like in the movies where a dazzling woman made everything stop, it was more like the Kenyan nature of seeing a celebrity up close; you are awed by her but you had things that preoccupied your attention.*

*She bypassed the queue and marched straight to the Occurrence Book reception, and some folks that were in line grumbled in hushed tones.*

"Where's your OCS?" She asked in impeccable English.

The young corporal did not waste time calling the extension.

"Sir, she's here," he said, as the other people looked at her in a mixture of awe and contempt, mainly because she was among the elite few who had the money and power to get whatever they wanted at any given time.

The OCS appeared and quickly ushered her and the bodyguard in while the driver left on cue.

Some officers found that odd but knew better than to question the OCS and his mysterious guests.

"Now, sir," said The Queen Bee. "Let's discuss the matter at hand."

"Yes, madam," said the OCS as he opened the file. "They came in on Friday, and they were all under a European national, a Mr Hans Jose Maria Muscatt."

"Yes, that man's responsible for taking my girls from the centre they were in," she said. "My centre is known for setting the record straight about junkies and sex workers being rehabilitated. I don't entertain relapses of any kind."

"We understand, madam," the OCS said. "We know of the good work you have done for this region, and for our police station, too. We won't let other people's selfish needs interfere with the good work of your organization."

With that he dialled a number, spoke to an officer, and then rose from his seat and guided her outside to the cells.

Meanwhile, the driver was outside when he got a phone call.

"Hello?"

"Guess who's coming back home?" said a voice.

The driver, a young man in his early twenties, stopped what he was doing, his brown eyes lighting up.

"Don't tell me.....?"

"Yes. He's en route to Mombasa as we speak."

"This is amazing news!" said the driver, smiling for the first time. "I have not seen him since he went for new fish."

"Now he's back. I know there's a lot for you two to catch up on," the voice continued.

"You have no idea," said the driver.

"Finish up with The Queen Bee first, then get back here. It's going to be epic," said the voice.

"I would not miss it for the world," said the driver.

"Hey, and speaking of new fish, you might want to get here soon. You're going to like what you'll see," said the voice.

"Okay, on my way," said Tom as he hang up.

He turned to the side view mirror, beaming with anticipation of meeting an old friend after a long time.

"Finally," said Tom as he inclined the driver seat backward.

*One inmate scribbled on the wall while another one sat on the floor, bruised. Many of them looked down in shame upon seeing her inside the cell, with the two inmates minding their business.*

"Mtarudia hii maneno tena?" she asked.

*All girls mumbled their agreement to never do it again.*

The Queen Bee looked at the pitiful girls, and then she left, stopping in front of Hans, now a forlorn white man locked up in an adjacent cell.

Hans looked up at her, then smiled, revealing tobacco stained teeth.

"Came to gloat?"

The Queen Bee looked at the poor man, then at the other male inmates. It seemed they had a field day extorting and harassing Hans.

Without saying a word she turned and left.

"Make sure they get transportation back," she said to the bodyguard, who turned to his phone.

They walked into the outside corridor, and then a fourteen seater matatu stopped near them.

"As for the mzungu," she said to the OCS, handing him an envelope. "Asiwahi toka, ever."

"Don't worry, madam," he said, pocketing the envelope. "He won't be going anywhere."

*At the Orchardson-Yusuf hotel courtyard, people were setting up sound systems and stage lights in preparation for the Coast Culture Festival.*

*Some technicians were almost done when a tour bus arrived, parking at the front entrance. A number of Indian girls disembarked as a porter climbed atop the bus and offloaded their luggage.*

*Three of the Indian girls gleamed with adolescent expectations and looked at the magnificent resort and it was exactly how they imagined.*

*Some porters assisted with the luggage as the girls walked into the reception section, flanked by the driver and a significantly older, sari-clad Indian woman.*

"We're here with the performance troupe from Mumbai," said the woman.

"Oh yes, the boss is expecting you," said the reception lady as she dialled the extension. The driver walked over to the excited girls and checked their luggage as the reception lady talked on phone.

The official in charge of booking the performance individuals came out of his office and shook hands with the Indian woman.



She wasted no time in following him to his office.

"I hope you have all their documents," he said.

She wasted no time in producing an envelope full of passports.

As he looked at them, he said, "In other resorts they would have denied you entry. These days, beach resorts have been put in scrutiny by the government on tourists who check in with unrelated children."

"I assumed so, that's why we came here, ahead of the Festival," said the Indian woman. "Also to save money."

"Very well then," said the official. "I'll notify my supervisor on your arrival so she can keep you updated on other things the girls can participate in."

"Can they take a walk around the town, do some shopping and sight-seeing before the Festival?" she asked.

"Why, of course!" said the official, rising up. "I'll get you some tour guides."

The girls placed their things in their rooms as a few male and female tour guides waited outside, the driver patiently waited in the bus.

One tour guide walked over to the driver, leaning on the window.

"Ati wametoka Mumbai?" he asked.

"Yeah, niliwachukua kutoka Bamburi Airport."

"New fish indeed," said the tour guide. "Shanzu tunaenda ama?"

"No," said the driver. "This time inakaa tunaenda Frere Town ama Ngomongo."

"Sema priority," said the tour guide. "Ngomongo, Nkomani, Mtwapa..... Nani hajui, mtu yeyote anakuja na Bamburi Airport ni client ama anaingizwa biz."

"How do you think we all got here?" asked the driver. "Umesahau kuhusu Kijipwa Airport?"

"Yeah, niliona kwa news. She was furious."

"Haiya! If someone doesn't fulfil his part of the bargain, the deal goes sour," said the driver. "And The Queen Bee has ears and eyes everywhere."

Just as the driver pulled his seat upright, the Indian girls began walking outside to the vehicle. The tour guide rode shotgun as the bus roared to life.

"So, where do we start our tour?" asked one Indian girl.

Whether it was her voice, or the excitement in her, he could not tell, but the tour guide remembered an incident a very long time ago that brought a smug smile on his face.

"Do you know how to swim?" asked the tour guide.

The driver shot him a look and almost giggled.

"Actually, I'd love to learn," she said innocently.

The tour guide turned to the driver. "I wish BMW was here sooner."

"Usijali, kifisi," said the driver, grabbing his cell phone.

"I know who to call."

*The feeling of seeing the landmark was always breathtaking, the very mark that showed you were now entering what was regarded as another 'country', an offshoot that belonged to Kenya, but according to the locals didn't feel like Kenya. Even to the tourists it had a different and more vibrant feel than other places of Kenya.*

*BMW always felt nostalgic when he saw the centuries-old buildings, looking on outside as the townspeople lived their lives. Some pushed carts, others sold wares and 'kahawa tungu' outside as the vibrant evening engulfed the place.*

*As the vehicle went down Moi Avenue, bypassing the elephant tusks monument, BMW looked outside and saw it all. The streets he and Tom went down when doing deliveries, the hotels where a lot of Badminton championships took place.....*

"Mombasa City Says Yes for Children....." said a placard in the middle of the interlocking tusks, surrounded by logos of companies like UNICEF, the government's efforts in eradicating sex tourism.

*It was ironic, thought BMW. The people who fought against the business participated and benefited from it.*

It brought a smile to his face, passing by one bed and breakfast joint where he celebrated his completion of the KCSE exams.

Nobody in high school ever knew what he did to pay the school fees for his final year. Not even the teachers.

*All they cared about was that the fees were paid on time. You were on your own in everything else.*

Khadijah looked outside too as she was seated next to BMW, blushing as memories of what happened at the joint came back, and they both shared a secret smile as they remembered what happened between them.

"You think they can handle it?" she asked.

"Let's hope so," he said.

"Everything will change."

"Najua."

"Kwansa Meshach. You know how self-righteous he can get," she continued.

"Even he will cool his heels," said BMW. "They wanted jobs, now they have jobs."

After some silence she said, "Unakumbuka Malindi?"

BMW laughed. "It was truly unforgettable."

"Though I'll be honest, wengi wananiudhi."

"Just the same way we feel humiliated going down on a European."

"Truth is they are so frustrating. Most times nataka tu amalize ndio nimwache."

"Sounds like there's a lot you've been missing."

She leaned on BMW's shoulder. "You have no idea."

*The others were busy looking outside the windows, taking pictures and admiring everything about Mombasa. From the Tusks Monument down Moi Avenue, turning left on Digo Road, and then turning right towards the Nyali Bridge onwards, they took pictures, animatedly told stories, and could not contain their excitement.*

*The Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resort was always breath-taking, magnificently crafted from what used to be a white man's palace during the colonial days. It was a huge mansion with many rooms, and the outside neat & trimmed hedges, fresh green grass, and what*

*was in those days a grazing ground for horses was now a very ample parking space.*

*BMW always felt nostalgic when he saw that building, and as the others poured out of the vehicle excitedly, he knew that it was not going to be long before the excitement turned to confusion, denial and in painful finality, either rebellion or acceptance.*

They trooped to the front reception, ready to be booked in. Many people turned up to see them and congratulated them on their lucky stroke.

***Click! Click!***

An official ushered them in his office to brief them on the program, and also to prep them for the televised address, the official presentation of the grand prize, and the festivities thereafter.

***Click! Click!***

They excitedly got out later on for some sightseeing, a tour of the resort, and one of the workers there, upon seeing BMW, stopped his work and went up to him. "You guy!! The prodigal son is back!!!"

BMW smiled at him as the others, somewhat confused, looked on.

*Click! Click!*

"I can't believe you're here! Mjamaa, it's been long!"

"How's everyone?"

"A lot of things have changed here, man! I wish Tom was here!"

The others went on with the tour while BMW was left behind.

*Click! Click!*

"Tom's still with the Queen Bee?"

"Yeah, they went to take care of a loose end."

"Ngoja, what happened?"

The worker pulled out a newspaper, which had the story of the 11 girls caught with a white man practicing 'unnatural sexual activity'.

"Oh, no," said BMW



"Hivyo ndio kulienda! You do not want to know what will happen to them!"

"Kuuzwa?" asked BMW.

"Worse. They'll be given away."

*BMW understood very well how much the Queen Bee hated her good name ruined. When it was clear you were going to be a loose end, you were immediately dealt with.*

*You would remain a story when she was finished with you.*

"I do not think these girls will be given away in Kenya," said BMW. "Unakumbuka Coast Fashion Week?"

The worker burst into laughter. "The models that got sold off to Paris!"

"Labda atafanya the same thing. Si kuna another planned fashion week here."

"Yeah, after your little 'lottery win'," he said amid laughter.

BMW giggled. "Indeed."

"By the way, one of the models alirudi."

"Who?"

"Catherine," said the worker.

"Wait, Cate wa miguu?" asked BMW.

The worker nodded grimly.

*If there was a girl who gave BMW chills, it was Catherine.*

*She was trouble from the day BMW hooked her up to a modelling agency. Catherine was very tall, she was six feet two and she had legs for days. She would have made a talented basketball player, considering how she made people feel intimidated.*

*The modelling agency was involved in the first ever coastal fashion week, and of course, you just guessed who sponsored it. A lot of players in the entertainment and fashion industry were going to attend.*

*Catherine's hope was to get a white man who would whisk her off to Europe so she could gain access to top-tier fashion houses like Gucci and Louis Vuitton and kick-start her modelling career.*

*Maybe she went too far in her ambitious quest because things went terribly wrong for her after she landed in Paris.*

"Na sasa amerudi," said the worker.

BMW knew one thing was for sure, as he turned to walk into the hotel, there was going to be serious drama in the Backrooms.

**Click!**

"We got what we need," said Saul, looking from his lens.

"What next?"

"The festival," said Ruth.

The Indian girls disembarked from the bus as Tom handed a wad of cash to the driver.

"Anyone you have your eye on?" asked the driver, with a wide smile.

Tom pointed to an Indian girl with ample hips. The driver, laughing, said, "Kifisi."

"Nini? You know I love something I can hold on to!"

Then the radio crackled, and the driver reached for the radio mouthpiece to respond. After some time he said, "Akina BMW wamefika."

"Finally!!"

"I'll go give him the heads up. You go after your hippo ladies," said the driver.

Laughing, Tom jumped out of the bus.

"Hey, usisahau," said the driver from his window. "Festival inanza seven p.m."

As the bus sped off Tom reached the girl with the ample hips. The other three noticed the bus leaving. "Where is the bus going?" asked the girl with ample hips.

"Duty calls. He'll be back. Come on, I'll show you a great spot on the beach."

"You are so kind. What's your name?"

"Tom. You?"

"Deepika."

"Same name as Deepika Padukone," said Tom, making the other girls giggle.

"Yes," said Deepika, blushing.

"Bollywood here is quite popular, you know."

As they went down the beach, three more guys approached Tom and his girls.

"These are my fellow guides. They're here to assist anyone who wants to swim."

Tom pulled Deepika aside as the guys approached the Indian girls, making them blush.

As they all split into pairs, they got into the ocean. Tom made sure Deepika was far from the others as the session began.

The girls were led deep into the ocean, where the boys knew it would take some effort before the girls mastered the art of treading in the water.

Deepika was having trouble floating, and as Tom assisted, he was secretly groping her body. She also somehow felt it, but didn't raise an issue.

As she struggled with balancing in the water, Tom was slowly getting to work, slowly heating up the charcoal cooker that was Deepika's body.

Deepika knew she had to hold on to Tom to prevent herself from drowning, and it was clear what he wanted, based on the way his fingers circulated inside her swimming costume.

*For a moment, Deepika was lost for words, frozen with shock. She knew she needed to hold on to Tom if she wanted to stay afloat. Also, she didn't know that the fingers of a boy inside the cookie jar were capable of erasing memory.*

*In no time the charcoal cooker was fired up, for no single soul had ever touched Deepika like Tom did. The sensations emanating from her loins were like a rupture she had never experienced before, and even though at*

*first she tried to resist, knowing where she was, she had no choice.*

*Tom's fingers worked magic inside the cookie jar, the fantastic techniques of hooking the finger, and circulation of the finger around Deepika's epicentre drove Deepika wild, as she leaned her head backward in pleasure, surrendering to Tom's touch.*

*The ocean was wet, but not as wet as Deepika.*

*The others had already gotten to work, in scattered areas around the beach.*

*Tom relished every moment; electric currents flowing through his loins as he faced Deepika. It was child's play to say the least, for he and BMW participated in that enjoyable thrill when the tide was low, when there was no steady flow of new fish entering the Coast.*

*If only BMW had arrived early and sampled the delights from Mumbai, he thought as he proceeded to turn the tables, fully taking charge of the ample hipped Indian beauty holding on to him.*

*All Deepika could think about was the spasms rocking her loins, sending her to the point of ecstatic pleasure. She had not seen it coming until she was in the ocean,*



*and despite the tables being turned, deep down she admitted to herself, she liked it. It was a welcome relief to the pestering young men from Mumbai who believed all they saw in Bollywood movies, and were perverted by nature. They did not surprise her in a delightful manner, they were too cowardly to take charge, and they had a massive inferiority complex when it came to Badminton.*

*And here was a young man she just met, who did everything right, she thought as she whimpered in pleasure.*

***THE OFFICIAL MZALENDO CRUISER  
VACATION GRAND PRIZE ANNOUNCEMENT,  
ORCHARDSON-YUSUF BEACH RESORT.***

***21:34.***

BMW looked on as the presenters shouted their names out to the audience, and the ecstasy that clouded reason for everybody else.

The other guys were giddy with excitement as they posed for the pictures, with a rather huge audience applauding their winnings. The audience looked unauthentic, and did not have the life of a genuine crowd applauding, the sincerity of appreciation. They had wooden expressions and had the mismatched rhythm of clapping whenever they were cued to.

He hated to admit, but he knew that he had indeed, come a long way.

*He appreciated the fact that a bone was thrown at him and it was full of nutrients that kept him going.*

*The bone came after a very bizarre encounter. An encounter that propelled him to a world he never fathomed he'd be part of.*

*However, it was a long way from his days of couch surfing.*

*Those were haunting days; days when he stayed hungry for so long his lips dried up revealing deep cracks.*

*He didn't have a single clue as to his bearings.*

*He knew he had to leave very quickly or risk coming face to face with a volcano that always let emotion cloud reason.*

*Fate had turned the tables on him in the utmost horrible manner.*

*It was a simple morning of staying watch. All he had to do was watch who had the most important goods, who had the most snacks, who would stash pocket money under the box.....*

*Not that he had not participated in the trade recently; he had almost a year in 'experience'.*

*That year had begun with on-going post-election violence and had been riddled with violent strikes from institutions of learning all over the country.*

*Despite being used to boarding school life, BMW did not have enough utilities to sustain him.*

*It was painful to see his fellow mates get snacks on Visiting Day/Prize-Giving Day, and he had to join the small percentage of the students whose parents, for reasons unknown, did not make it.*

*BMW was a regular in that small percentage, and he would seethe with rage on the many occasions he was not visited and did not get to receive pocket money, and the dead giveaway of his predicament was his trousers. They were the standard issue Connate school trousers.*

*The school uniform of total humiliation to high school students.*

*He wanted a pair of the popular 'Colombo' trousers; he wanted the security of stirring up a nightcap when he was skipping 'Githeri' mealtimes. He wanted money to be able to buy snacks for the ladies he had the courage to talk to during inter-school provincial and national activities like drama and music festivals. He wanted to board the flashiest matatus, where all the pretty girls would board on their way home.*

*One day, he was approached.*

*A plan was proposed.*

*He listened and took action.*

*He became their eyes, and ears.*

*Everything went smoothly. He got good returns, he stayed fresh.*

*But he let his guard down.*

*Others started taking an interest in his sudden upgrade; Suddenly, the one who was barely monolized because he did not have anything valuable was suddenly wearing 'Colombo' trousers, boarding the matatus with the beautiful girls, having snacks from the tuck shop, and even wormed his way into special diet.....*

*Inevitably, his fortieth day arrived.*

"Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for the CEO of the Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resorts, Madame Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf!" The MC's voice echoed through the auditorium, bringing BMW back to reality.

*The audience clapped for a short period as an elegant lady took centre stage, rocking navy blue stilettos and standing confidently at the podium.*

"Filling in for Madame Ingrid is me, Madame Delilah Mwangengi, liaison office manager. Madame Ingrid has sent her congratulatory messages to the winners of the lottery, the group of youth present tonight. As we all know with our prestigious....."

*BMW couldn't help but smile, looking at Delilah speak with the clarity of an orator. It was the same clear voice that a few weeks ago produced melodious moans.*

*A bus stopped at the parking lot, and some scattered, curious members of the audience turned to look at the colourful Indian girls alighting from the bus, turning their heads back after seeing the passengers alight.*

Then BMW saw *him* alight. The mischievous look on his face was a clear indication of what he had been up to, the thought sending a jolt of arousal down his thighs.

"Isn't this awesome?!" exclaimed Angela as they walked away from the lottery podium. The ecstasy written on Angela, Meshach and Jamo's faces was unmistakable.

"I knew we made a good choice trying this out!" exclaimed Jamo. "Now we got the grand prize!"

"Hey, the Coast Culture Festival is just about to begin," said Khadijah. "How about we go celebrate?"

"Why not!" said Jamo. "We can always check in at Dar Es Salaam later!"

Khadijah and BMW masked their worries perfectly, under a veil of happiness. They walked away, jovial, and BMW stopped and looked around.

*Until a hand grabbed his arm, making him turn.*

"You have any idea what you've missed out on?!"

*For a moment BMW forgot about everyone.*

*The happiness on BMW's face was unforgettable as he embraced his long-time friend, his ride or die.*

## **Chapter Four**

### ***THE COAST CULTURE FESTIVAL.***

**23:58**

*Starry night.*

*Music.*

*Frenzy.*

*Painted faces.*

*Pin drop silence like a film set.*

*One movement in rhythm,*

*One united expression,*

*No emotion except what is rearing to escape from the inside; with every move we show a page of ourselves.*

*Emotional content like that Bruce Lee movie,*

*Expressions of distant times and past mementos,*

*For a few minutes all is forgotten,*



*All worries and stresses out the window,*

*Released through the steam of sweat into the night sky,*

*Speakers releasing caged animals into the atmosphere  
called freedom,*

*Throbbing beats releasing beasts of the nation,  
spreading infections,*

*Of pure rhythm and music.*

*Turn and face me, talk to me with your eyes*

*Use your body to tell me what you feel.*

*Let your inner wolf howl.*

*Let your bonfire rage high with the fury of the Devil*

*With the infectious disease of music, giving amnesia to  
souls of synchronization*

*Long live the night, long burn the bonfire*

*Long live the infection in the rhythm, which devours our  
spirits more than Lucifer.*

The sky was misty with sweat and smoke as the revellers got down to the beats.

With Jamo on the mic, it was pure magic. Nobody expected Jamo's song to go so smoothly with the coastal dance rhythms.

There were main acts too, but Jamo's surprise performance was what set the crowd in the mood.

After the Indian girls joined in, with Deepika in the lead, the crowd lost it, totally engulfed in the music.

*I can't make sense of what's going on.....but I like this.....*

Then everyone coupled up, and the atmosphere turned silent.

*".....You already have a wife....."*

*.....Hang on, my hips can do this?*

Then someone played Turbulence's "The Way I Am", mixed beautifully with Nameless & Kidum's, "Karibia".

Every couple moved with the beat, in perfect unison and synchronized movement. Every man with his lady, emotion written over their faces.

..... For some reason that song makes me so nostalgic.....

*Gosh, when was the last time I heard Tanya Stephens...*

*Mkombozi wangu.....*

*My fire in my loins..... I cannot tell you to go with Jah, I am too jealous to let Him take you; I don't even know whether he exists*

*But you and I exist,*

*You are life to me*

*I am life to you*

*You belong to me and I to you,*

*But remember, and Tanya knows too,*

*I will always love you.....*

BMW and Khadijah matched each other move for move, Jamo and Angela, with Angela and Khadijah gyrating like it's the end of the world. Tom, nearby, was getting it on with his Deepika.

*That tiny first drop is always so acidic.....why don't  
dudes ring bell.....?*

*Oh well, the show must go on.....*

Other members of the "Usiku Sacco" were lost in the moment, onlookers blown away, locals watched in awe as those young people moved with such perfect unison and synchronization.

*I enjoy this so much, but I can't take this anymore.....*

*Why am I doing this to myself?*

*How did I get to the point where.....?*

*Is he even sheathed?*

Their leg movements matched perfectly, switching positions with such brilliant unison the locals even applauded. No one changed emotional expression, as their dance, their unison in movement had such emotional content that Khadijah shed tears as she matched BMW move for move.

*When you first laid eyes on me*

*Despite my situation, despite my father's greed for the  
shilling*

*You treasured me even though I was just an object*

*You fought for me, when they fought me over my body*

*You nurtured me*

*You loved me, and still do; your soul tells me so,*

*You found me and I found you*

*.....I don't care how cloudy my senses are.....*

*The show must go on.....*

Jamo had fun with another girl; Meshach was happy chatting with his partner, as the others lost themselves in the frenzy that was the Coast Culture Festival.

For a moment, no one spoke. The locals were so captivated no one made a sound as they recorded the dance.

*For how long, again, am I supposed to hold in the smoke?*

.....*why am I so sleepy?*

For a moment, everyone was free in the arms of the other; everyone was lost in the memory of their freedom before the Backrooms, the regret of immersing innocent people into a world so harrowing, lost in the brief moment of free expression.

*Explore the wonders I have to offer*

*Let me take a safari on you,*

*Let Tanya feel pity that she can't have you*

*For she can't give you what has made you get lost in me.....*

*For she isn't as vibrant as I am*

*You and I are the ones who can make a beautiful daughter.....*

As the song faded away, the onlookers erupted in a multitude of applause and cheering.

The fiesta continued well into the night, with the atmosphere heavy with sweat, smoke, and all the intoxicating agents known to man.

*I can't even stand straight.....but I like that.....because you are here*

*.....Hold me some more.....don't let me go.....*

*My body only, is for the others.....a soulless vessel whereby a total stranger can feel like a man again.....if just for a few minutes.....*

*But my body and soul, intertwined.....*

*My heart, pure and loving*

*My everything is yours and yours only.....*

*Look into my eyes, and get lost in me*

*I am yours, whole, vibrant, full of life in all your favourite places.*

*Take charge, baby, you are mine and I am yours.....*



*Majengo Mapya, Bangladesh slum, Changamwe District, Mombasa.*

**09:11**

She's so familiar.....yet I can't even remember her name.....

She insisted on 'upfront' before service.....Pretty smart, based on the fact that she's holding my wallet hostage.....

Why is she so young..?

*Finally.....The show has begun, I can't wait.....*

*I'm scared though.....will it end quickly.....*

*.....focus and finish.....*

I can't think straight..... And I like that.....

*You're way younger than my daughter.....*

*I don't know you..... But I don't care....*

*Please don't stop.....*

*No, hold on..... I feel so good.....*

.....*the music is so perfect.....Taking us back to the days when we were lost, when we were running away, when we had no choice.....*

**"Where in the world am I?!"**

Angela sat up, bed-headed, a few braids missing from her head....

She looked around at the rather posh room, now significantly stuffy. There were two beds, the other one barely slept on, a flat screen TV mounted on the wall, a wardrobe with an unusual design of the doors, whereby there was a tiny window partition built into the upper part of one door. Noticing that the partition slid open, she opened it, and on peering inside, saw some luggage she had difficulty knowing who they belonged to.....

"Where's my luggage? Did I even have luggage?"

She walked around the room, nearing the window, and as she pulled the curtains, what she saw made her stomach feel like the bottom half just dropped off.

**A stone wall greeted her.**

No cool breeze, no way of even knowing whether it was morning or evening.

Puzzled, she turned to her bed.....

"What the hell is that?!" she exclaimed to herself, looking squarely at it.

*She came closer.....examining it.....wondering if she really was seeing her own things.....*

*She touched  
it.....smooth.....black.....light.....portable..... with  
a big eye.....*

"Oh, no...." whispered Angela, looking at the camera propped on a tripod.

**"It can't be....."**

*Help! His breathing,*

*Grunting like a diesel truck, sweat dripping on my  
young body.*

*I clawed at his back trying to get him off,*

*But his thrusts erased my memory and I ended up  
goadng him*

*In my drunken stupor,*

*In the darkness, here I am with a man I don't know,  
ploughing me like a tractor on my grandma's  
plantation.*

*Help.*

*Who can hear me.....?*

*What have I done.....?*

*Who are you.....?*

*Where am I.....?*

"Karibu Banglapesa!" said a female voice, making  
Angela turn around, puzzled.

A long legged girl was perched on her bed, with a grill separating the two. She had a hideous scar on her forehead, partly hidden by her hair.

"Nini? Hujawahi ona camera?" she continued, her eyes glinting with malice. "You should have seen how you performed for the cameras."

"Where am I?" said Angela, transfixed by the scar.

"Nyumbani."

"Huku ni wapi?" asked Angela in her confused state. The long legged lady laughed out loud, then said, "Give it some time, utazoea. Hata mimi I was the same way," as she grabbed a magazine.

"Nataka marafiki wangu! I want to get out of here!" screamed Angela.

"Marafiki? Wagani hao?" said the long legged lady. "Huku Bangladesh, friendship is earned. Your previous friends are no longer important."

Angela sunk down on the floor, crying.

"There, there, dear, calm down," she said, clutching the magazine. "The first times are always rough, lakini utazoea."

"Nataka kuenda nyumbani....." cried out Angela.

"This, my dear, is your new home," continued the long-legged lady in a condescending tone as she looked down on Angela for a moment.

As she turned away from the sobbing Angela she added, "Oh, and if I were you, hiyo pesa umewacha ovyo ovyo kwa drawer, naiweka vizuri. In-house money is so hard to come by in Bangladesh."

*Angela was a whirlpool of emotions. She was still trying to figure out what happened to her; how she got to the point where she had no clothes on, that strange room with no exit except through the long legged lady's room, no window, and a camera propped on a tripod stand near the bed.*

*She clambered up to the drawer, and as she pulled it open, she saw a huge wad of five hundred Kenyan shilling banknotes neatly tied with a rubber band. Frozen, she glanced at it, wondering what really happened.*

*Suddenly, a buzzer rang, and as Angela looked up, the long legged lady stood alert as a skinny man she never saw before walked in, wild eyed, then opened her own drawer, took her wad of notes, took out one note then*

*returned the rest. The long legged lady shot Angela a warning glance as the man advanced to her room, the grille unlocking on its own.*

After the man took what he took, he turned to go.

"Huku ni wapi?" blurted Angela.

*The man turned to look at her, and the long legged lady intervened, visibly worried.*

"She's new, let her go. Achana tu nayeye."

*The man eyed Angela for a while, then advanced to her drawer, took all her money, then turned to leave.*

As the doors slammed shut, the long legged lady eyed Angela, worried.

"Do you realize what you've done? Thanks to your big mouth all your money is gone! You don't ever ask him questions like that! Do you want to go face the Queen Bee?"

"Who is he? Where did all that money come from? Who is this Queen Bee? Who are you?" said Angela.

The long legged lady stayed silent for a while.

"BMW was your handler, wasn't he?"

*Angela momentarily paused, thinking about him all of a sudden.*

"Yep. He didn't tell you. He didn't tell me either. But I have no regrets," continued Catherine, sitting down as she returned to her magazine. After some silence, Catherine added, "I'll tell you all you need to know, but it'll do you well not to confront him. The last thing the Queen Bee needs is confrontations."

For a moment Angela was lost in thought, thinking about BMW.

*The way he suddenly cut Meshach short when we were answering the questions..... His periodical withdrawals from us during the Festival.....*

*Who was that guy BMW embraced in a greeting.....?*

Angela watched as the long legged lady flipped her magazine, reading it. The magazine had pictures of beautiful models strutting runways and posing for beauty cosmetics.

The long legged lady became aware of Angela's probing eyes.



"Wewe ni model?"

The long legged lady stayed silent for some time, and then said, "Yeah, kind of."

"Until ukaletwa huku?"

She nodded.

"Do you have a name?" she asked. "Angela," she said to Catherine after some awkward silence, pointing at herself.

Catherine looked up, and then introduced herself, saying, "My name's Catherine."

"Unakumbuka when we were waiters at Roasters Inn?" asked Tom. "One of the first jobs we got after we came to Nairobi?"

BMW laughed his head off. "I know where you're headed."

"*Maundu!!!* God, that guy was so stupid!"

"I never saw a bartender so slow in response, man."

"If customers complain about you, your services are shit," said Tom. "Unakumbuka he refused to add up the receipts properly, and we had to pay double the clearances?"

"I tell you, I was ready to swallow him whole. Man, you were pissed!"

"As if you weren't!"

"Though, I hated it when those drunks fondled barmaids like they were hookers," said BMW. "I mean, here's a girl, trying to make some money by sacrificing sleep on a night shift, and here's some drunk fool, groping her hips cause he can't save his craving for a hooker. I could see it, the poor girl's morbid fear hidden by sheepish smiles."

"Usisahau how annoyingly impatient they'd get," said Tom. "How do you, as a customer, walk over to the chef, and while he grills meat, you give him your order, and you don't send a waiter, you don't tell where your seat is, and then complain about shitty service?"

"I told one straight up to make my work easier," said BMW. "The impatience was getting on my nerves. I can't be bouncing up and down, handling lots of orders, and here you are yelling about how late I am in bringing your order."

Tom shook his head. "The many shoes we've worn, bro."

After some time he asked, "The new fish can handle it? Especially that sceptical conspiracy theorist?"

They both burst out laughing.

"Not forgetting how the girls will be able to handle reminding some poor old man to take his gout pills while here's a young man receiving love emojis?"

They both burst out laughing. "Dating a sponsor is no joke, I tell you."

"Looks like it'll take a toll on them," said BMW.  
"Especially Angela."

"Your wannabe rapper had a field day with the sisters,  
by the way,"

"Oh, boy....." said BMW.

"Yep!" said Tom. "The sisters ran a train on him!"

For a moment the colour in BMW's face drained out.

*Oh, hell, no.....*

"What is this place.....?" asked Jamo, looking around.  
He could not fathom why his backside hurt, and for the  
first time in his life he could not walk.

A bolt of fear crossed into Jamo as he opened his  
drawer, and he saw all that money in there.

The black hole of fear engulfed him as the truth of what  
happened dawned on him.

*Oh, no..... It can't be.....*

*Jared.....?*

It was the same fear that he experienced with Jared Nelson.

Only this time he was not sure whether it was Jared who did it to him.

***He had no idea.***

*I am swimming in muck, because of the carrot you're dangling in front.*

*I need this carrot, so forbidden yet so nourishing.*

*I cannot walk away from the carrot,*

*I am a slave to the carrot, so rewarding yet so heart wrenching.*

*Stop leading me further to my ruin!*

*But I can't pull away, because your carrot nourishes me, drives me, gives me purpose yet destroys me, sinking me further.....*

It came back with the impact of being hit by a truck, as vivid as yesterday.

What he could not comprehend was the nightmare that had become reality.

"No...." Jamo said as he looked in the mirror.

*Nairobi.*

*Seven years ago.*

*"Samahani, mteja wa nambari uliyopiga, hapatikani kwa sasa....."*

*"Sorry, the mobile subscriber cannot be reached....."* came the reply for the umpteenth time. As he peered into the windows, he saw nothing. He tried the locks one more time and he switched off his phone, then rose to go, hoisting his travel bag on his right shoulder.

*Just like the hip hop song. When the money goes, will the honey stay?*

Clearly, Jamo was by himself. Right at the moment he got kicked out of his parents' house, Catherine was nowhere to be seen. At "her apartment", there was total darkness.

He trudged along the dusty road to a pal's house, trying to hold back the tears that threatened to burst through his eyes, asking himself what he did to deserve such a life.

*Helicopter parents.*

They were the reason he was in the predicament he was in. It was they who made him a man so fearful of asking for assistance hence his apprehension of knocking at a friend's door, knowing that when that door opens the host will look on in disgust, wondering why he could not call first before showing up, or why he always showed up during mealtimes.

"Don't tell me....." wondered Sunday as he stared at Jamo standing on the veranda with his travel bag.

All Jamo did was nod his head.

"Hey, don't worry, everything's going to be okay," he said as he handed Jamo a mug of cocoa. "Umepata anything?"

"No," he said. "She changed the locks, man. She's gone."

"I guess she was good on her intentions to fly out with her 'Shrek'," said Sunday as he sat on the bed. "Don't worry bro. Her Fallopian tubes aren't paved with gold. She carries a kid for nine months just like all the others. Forget her."

*It was puzzling how much money Sunday came home with, in different denominations. He'd show him US*



*dollars today, after some days he'd be counting Euros, and after a weekend where Jamo stayed all alone, he'd show up Monday morning with wads of cash.*

*Jamo, despite the fact that he relished his solo weekends so he can write lyrics and freestyle, was not only bored with being indoors all the time, for there was no entertainment, but was broke. He saw Sunday counting money, and locking it up in a metal box like the high school one, and would never mention a single thing about the box.*

*The box gave him sleepless nights, especially when Sunday was out, and did not leave him with anything to keep the painful hunger pains at bay.*

*Slowly, Jamo began to get curious, observing every single thing Sunday did, and his schedule, and his counting money ritual, noticing his careful arrangement of dollars, Euros, five hundred and one thousand Kenya shillings and a strange velvet bag stashed away from view.*

"What's with all the money?" asked Jamo one time.

Sunday looked at him, pausing with two Benjamins.

*"Can he handle the truth?" wondered Sunday.*

"I'm saving up for my future home," he replied as he resumed his calculations.

*Not that he was not going to be let in on the deal, but the question made Sunday think hard about his musician friend. The same friend he was having difficulty housing.*

*Sunday wanted, more than anything, to have his personal freedom back, but he had to keep the raging beast that was his tongue caged up, lest he lost a friend as ambitious and bold as Jamo.*

*He was prepared for this moment.*

"I work for someone who is very rich," said Sunday, as he scratched the crispy clean face of Benjamin Franklin with his thumbnail.

"I haven't been able to get enough cash for the Sanaa forums I've been trying to perform in," he said. "Would you mind if I got the job you have?"

*Sunday knew that he was begging for the carrot to be dangled in front of him.*

"This job is not one you can just walk into, you know," said Sunday. "It's kind of exclusive, and the patrons are rather.....pushy."

"What kind of clients can be pushy yet pay you in foreign currency?" asked Jamo. "Isn't that job pretty plum?"

"Yeah," said Sunday as he stacked the Benjamins together, "But before you get the hang of it you'll get peanuts. And the twists and turns are so unpredictable."

"Look, man," said Jamo, standing up. "I may not know what this is you do that gives you that much cash, but I can't stay here and wallow in boredom and poverty. I want in on whatever you're doing, whatever it is. I know for sure, that cash isn't clean, but fuck it. I want that kind of money too."

*Sunday looked at him as he glanced at the neat arrangements of his savings, and for the briefest of moments, he felt sad.*

*Sunday, all of a sudden, saw himself in the same position, a carrot being dangled in front of him.*

*Like many, he had no choice but to follow everywhere the carrot pointed.*

"Are you sure you're up for the job?" asked Sunday.

"Dude, look at me. Look at the situation I'm in. Do I have a choice? Mchagua jembe si mkulima!"

Sunday looked hard at him, and then said, "You even breathe about that suitcase, we're done."

"I understand, man," said Jamo.

"And you're not going to that job wearing that," said Sunday as he pointed at Jamo's clothes. "Keep the hairstyle though."

***WINNERS CASINO, MUINDI MBINGU STREET,  
NAIROBI.***

***TWO DAYS LATER.***

***11:26.***

Sunday and Jamo walked through the entrance and turned right, walking into a room full of lockers. Sunday opened one locker and took out two hangers with matching uniforms then put his bag inside and locked it. "Change quickly; we have no time to waste."

As the two guys walked into the main hall, Jamo marvelled at the gleaming gambling machines, Blackjack tables and Poker tables occupied by impeccably dressed ladies and gentlemen.

Sunday picked a tray and handed Jamo one. "Stick to the tables I'll be dealing with. Under no circumstances should you wander off, the big brother is watching."

"How do you even do that with all this happening here?"

"Because if the big brother spots you getting distracted, you're out," said Sunday as he reached a table, with two sharply dressed white folks enjoying themselves,

surrounded by four Kenyan ladies. One of them puffed on a cigar, with the air and arrogance of Leonardo DiCaprio's character in Django Unchained.

"Michael, it's been a while," he cheerfully said to the white man puffing on a cigar.

"Man, Sunday!" he exclaimed in a booming American accent, holding his cigar. "Look at how the room has brightened up!"

He motioned to the Kenyan ladies, all over him. "Ladies, this is Sunday! My best friend in this whole club!"

*The Kenyan ladies acknowledged Sunday with a nonchalant look, their eyes shooting a condescending glance at both parties. One of them was sipping on a Martini, her makeup hiding her wincing with every gulp of the drink. She was deliberately avoiding Jamo's eyes, despite the fact that he had not noticed her.*

*Jamo was immediately sickened by the excess makeup the ladies wore, and the air around the millionaires club, though he did a great job at hiding his resentment.*

*The other white man was eyeing Jamo with a strange look, as if he was checking him out.*

"My usual," said Michael, and as Sunday took out his notebook, he looked at Jamo. "You do have a notebook, right?"

"Yeah," said Jamo, immediately getting the cue as he walked over to the other white man, who was still eyeing him with glassy eyeballs, as if he was wearing contact lenses.

"May I take your order, sir?" he asked.

The white man eyed him in that creepy manner before smiling. "My usual, as well."

Jamo turned to Sunday, who winked at him. "I'll get the orders. Come with me."

As they turned to go, Michael stopped them.

"You haven't even told us about your friend here,"

"Oh, yes," said Sunday. "His name's Jamo."

The lady with the martini eyed Jamo; her eyes glinting with familiarity before turning to her Martini.

Jamo acknowledged the greeting, and the white man eyeing him smiled for the first time.

"Sunday," said Michael, "Make it snappy, please. My throat is getting parched."

"Right away, sir," said Sunday, and as he scribbled on his notebook and dragged Jamo along.

"Here, feed this into the computer over there as I get the order," said Sunday, handing the order to Jamo.

*As the two waiters returned, carrying trays of drinks and cigars with them, Jamo noticed the white man eyeing him strangely, and another woman looking at his cornrows. The other woman was strangely familiar, yet Jamo could not understand why he felt that way.*

"So, Jamo" asked Michael, "You're an artist or something?"

"Yeah, I'm a musician," he said, his attention back to the present moment.

"I like his hair," said the white man.

Jamo smiled at him as he rose to go, following Sunday.

The white man kept looking at Jamo as he walked away, smiling to himself.



"Looks like you found another one, eh?" asked Michael.

The white man sipped his cognac and said, "He is quite intriguing."

He turned to the lady with the Martini. "And I would not have found him if it wasn't for this angel," he said as his hand grabbed her right breast.

*The lady didn't make a single move and didn't say a thing as she looked on at Jamo, remorse glinting in her eyes.*

*When Michael rose to go, he signalled Sunday over, who in turn signalled Jamo to stay put.*

*A huge wad of notes was handed to him, with a small, black card, and the white man motioned to Jamo, then they walked away with the four women. As Sunday looked back, one of the women's tights had a gaping hole in her inner left thigh, very close to the entrance of the kingdom of heaven.*

*Sunday smiled to himself, then he walked over to Jamo, handing him the notes.*

"It's for you," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Yep. You are someone's best friend now."

"What's the other guy's name?"

Jamo looked at the ornate, black business card.

"Jared Nelson. Says here he's a.....whoa."

"What?" asked Jamo.

"He's the producer of Sahara King Productions!" exclaimed Sunday. "Jeez.....that music label is huge!"

"So, he wants to talk to me or something?"

"It appears so, because I already got my tip and yours is the lion's share!"

*Jamo couldn't have been more excited.*

"I knew I made a good choice!" he exclaimed.

"Hey, hey, relax....." said Sunday. "The big brother, remember."

"Oh, okay, okay," said Jamo. "Other customers are coming from that Poker table."

"Yeah, time for more tips," said Sunday.

*Jamo was enthusiastic. His first day on the job, and he landed a huge tip. Sunday was there to ensure that he did not make any mistakes in recording orders lest customers slipped away without paying, so he made sure Jamo paid full attention to the job.*

After that night, they both went back home, Jamo's sleepy eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Damn! I should have started this sooner!" he exclaimed. "Now I got so many things to buy, and go, and do..... Thank you, bro!"

"Anytime," said Sunday, and as Jamo looked outside, happy, Sunday turned to him.

"You have no idea the kind of hellhole you just walked into," thought Sunday.

*A week after Jamo began working at the casino; he received a call from the manager. He went up to his office, wondering what he may have done wrong.*

"No new fish has ever been called to his office," wondered one waitress as she looked at Sunday. "What could he have done?"

"Sijui," said Sunday. "The big brother sees things that we have not."

*Jamo walked into an ornate office and found a man leaning back on his seat behind a huge, ornate, mahogany office desk, and a white man seated on another black leather office seat, comfortably sipping his cognac.*

They both turned to him, and the man at the desk said, "You have a visitor, Jamo."

Jamo turned to the white man, now identified as Jared Nelson, CEO of Sahara King Productions. "My name is Jared Nelson."

Jamo shook his hand, "Nice to meet you, sir".

"Do you have a stage name, Jamo?" asked Jared, eyeing him with that glassy look.

"Yeah, Jamo Cool," he said.

*Then there was a slight disturbance coming from the ornate desk, and a black, model-like girl with a scar on her forehead came from underneath the desk, wiping her mouth. The man behind the desk quickly fastened his trousers, and then watched as the girl walked into a small room adjacent to the desk.*

*Jamo was transfixed, not because of her model-like beauty, or even by the casualty of what he just saw, but by how familiar she looked.*

"Okay, Jamo," said the man behind the desk, "Jared here has a proposal for you. Fire away, Jared."

"I hear you have always wanted to record, to do music and earn from it," he said.

"Yeah, I've always wanted to be a musician," said Jamo.

"What type of music? What genre?"

"Soca, Hip Hop, R&B, I also write songs," he said.

"Not many songwriters here," said Jared, smiling. "So, I'd like us to get into a partnership."

"At Sahara King?"

"Oh yes."

"Awesome! I'm ready to do whatever it takes for this!"

"So, what do you say?" asked Jared.

"What do I say? Where do I sign?"

*Jared smiled at the man behind the desk as he took out a pen, handing it to Jamo. The man behind the desk motioned to Jamo as he produced a contract, thick with printed detail.*

"We will offer you 60% of the profits from the sales of your albums, and 70% of the music publishing rights to your songs."

"I hate math," said Jamo, signing. "Except when I'm counting money."

Everyone burst out laughing as the girl came back. After Jamo finished signing, the man behind the desk took the contract then, satisfied, put it in his left desk drawer, saying, "It is time for a toast!"

*As Jamo got transfixed by the familiarity of the girl, Jared poured cognac for four people, and then passed drinks around.*

*The girl slowly drank her cognac, slowly eyeing Jamo, trying desperately to send him a warning sign. But it was too late.*

*Jamo downed his cognac without difficulty, marvelling at its salty taste.*

*Much later, Jamo woke up, and found himself in a strange room, with his clothes strewn all over. He was dressed in something he never envisioned himself in his entire life, and despite the pounding headache, he groggily got up and took it off.*

*As he reached down to pick his boxer, he suddenly felt a stabbing pain.*

*The pain came back when he crouched down to pick up his short trouser, making him realize that it was real.*

*The girl who emerged from beneath the office desk was lying in the adjacent bed, naked, hands tied to the bedposts. She was barely fifteen, yet had blossomed shapely breasts. Jamo leaned over so he could get a*



*clearer visual of her face, her familiarity so striking, yet he could not quite figure out who she was.*

*As he rose, he noticed something that stopped him in his tracks. Something propped beside her bed, and the bed he rose from.*

*Something big.*

*Black.*

*Flexible.*

*Very portable.*

"What the hell.....?" he asked himself, looking at the girl. Ignoring the pain, he looked again at the girl, racking his mind about where he saw the girl.

Then he found a small envelope lying beside the girl, with money in it. He reached for it, and emptied its contents. There was the wad of cash, a note, and a Kenyan ID card.

The note said,

*"By the time you're reading this you will have known what you signed up for.*

*I'm very sorry it had to be this way, for if we told you up front you'd end up in the newspapers like the other junkies.*

*Congratulations, you are going to be a star.*

*We'll be expecting you in the studio at exactly six p.m. tomorrow, for your first recording session. Come with all your lyrics.*

*Should you fail to follow our instructions, dire consequences will follow you and your girlfriend."*

Then, like Chris Brown hit Rihanna, it hit him.

*"No..... It can't be....."*

He looked at the Kenyan ID card, and then slowly looked at the girl, slowly lifting off her wig to reveal a scar on her upper forehead.

**"Catherine!"**

## Chapter Five

### ***ORCHARDSON-YUSUF BEACH RESORT, A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE COAST CULTURE FESTIVAL.***

She walked in, and everyone rose up as she did so.

*Everything literally stopped as well shaped legs in navy blue stilettos walked to the office seat, and when she sat down, everyone followed suit.*

"It's good we've taken control of the previous situation, Madame," continued The Spokesperson as the Queen Bee looked on.

Not a single person could see her face, except for her friend and confidante, Madame Delilah Mwangengi.

"I had to handle *that* situation on my own," the Queen Bee said after some silence. "Was it really necessary for me to step in and finish a deal you proposed, Julius?"

The Spokesperson, Julius, stood silent with morbid fear, and he was not the only one.

"Our operations are not going to be fodder for the press, just because you couldn't control a few spoilt brats from upcountry," she said.

"I'm sorry, Madame. I did not expect them to go against our will. They all were to be in the club only, not to be in the client's villa. They acted on their own initiative."

*For a moment, there was pin drop silence.*

*The Queen Bee turned to Delilah, and talked for some time. No one could hear what those two said.*

Then after some silence, "The position of The Spokesperson is now vacant. Whoever is up for that position should stand up now," said Delilah.

*Before Julius could object, two heavily built men in tuxedos sauntered in, and stood behind him, one of them extended his hand out.*

*Julius reached into his pocket and produced a small wallet, which was promptly taken from him, and the other man in the tuxedo lead Julius out as the second man pocketed the wallet, bowing down to the Queen Bee as he walked out.*

Another man, elegantly dressed in a midnight blue tuxedo rose up. "I, Sir Robert De Verlinden, nominate myself for the role of The Spokesperson."

There was pin drop silence, then after the two ladies talked again, Delilah said, "Welcome aboard, Sir Robert."

The Queen Bee turned to Delilah, then after some dialogue, Delilah said, "You'll be briefed on what the previous Spokesperson was up to."

The Queen Bee rose, her gleaming navy blue stilettos shining in the dim light. The others promptly rose, giving her the due respect she deserved, and as Delilah followed suit, not a single person breathed until the navy blue stilettos disappeared.

**09:39.**

***Inside The Bangladesh Backrooms.***

"The minute you hear that buzzer, you stop everything and stand up," said Catherine.

"Lemme guess, more taxation?" asked Angela.

"Utaona," said Catherine.

*The same skinny man from before came in, followed by a beefy female doctor, wearing a stethoscope.*

"Wewe, lie down there," ordered the beefy doctor, and Catherine promptly obeyed, spreading her legs out wide.

*The doctor produced some surgical tools then set to work on Catherine, all the while Catherine looked up at the ceiling, reacting to the cold feeling of the tools being passed around her.*

*It felt like her body wasn't hers, like she was a specimen being prepared for research. Every time the doctor came in for the weekly check-up she felt like she was being dissected, like her private parts were part of an important role in finding a cure for HIV/AIDS.*

"She's clean," said the doctor, when she was done with the Pap smear, and she turned to Angela's room.

*Angela did not need to be told what she was to do. She quickly lied down, and the beefy doctor began to clean her up.*

"Relax. This is a necessary medical check-up to ensure everyone is in good health for work," said the beefy doctor after she saw Angela's quizzical looks.

*In a small office in downtown Nairobi, a small, pudgy man opened his office and placed his small bag on the desk. He extracted a file and placed it on the desk, and then thumbed through the file, containing registration forms with passport photos pinned atop each form.*

*He stopped at one, with a photo of a young woman, and then dialled a number.*

"Hello?"

**(Pause)**

"Yes, I was to call you about her."

**(Pause)**

"Very available, very diligent."

**(Pause)**

"Okay, when will you come to pick her?"

After a short pause he said, "Excellent. Friday it is. Send the deposit through MPESA. She'll be ready then. Thank you so much."

He hanged up the phone, then after some time his phone vibrated, signalling the MPESA transaction, and then dialled another number.



"Hello?"

**(Pause)**

"Yes, it's me. I have a message for BMW."

**(Pause)**

"BM! She's been hired. Very good money too."

**(Pause)**

"Yes, your cut is on the way, sit tight."

**(Pause)**

"Okay, stay safe; I hear she's on edge now. Business isn't that good."

**(Pause)**

"We both know it was not our ship in the first place, so we won't be there when Titanic snaps into two."

**(Pause)**

"Good. She seems to be productive; I don't know where you found her but let's hope for discretion."

**(Pause)**

"Okay, bro. Sit tight, I'll handle her. She only has three months in that cage."

**(Pause)**

"Sawasawa. Asante sana ndugu. Stay safe."

He hung up, and then proceeded to send the money.

After he was done, he dialled a final number.

"Be ready by Friday. You've been hired."

Then he hung up.

*Inside the Bangladesh Backrooms.*

"Hey, Beamer," said Tom as he walked in with candlelight. "You have some water on you?"

"Yeah, check the plastic bottles on the counter," said BMW as he dug into the sufuria of rice.

"I can't believe we all have to go through this."

"The Queen Bee's way of 'teaching us a lesson, apparently," said BMW. "Blame it on the 11."

"More like 'cutting down on costs'," said Tom. "Though using the 11 also is a good excuse."

"They're all over the papers, social media's shredding the poor girls," said BMW, gulping down water. "Even with Bi Kijembe things did not get this severe."

Tom burst out laughing.

"The legendary Bi Kijembe!!! I haven't seen her in millennia!"

"She's still in the game, despite being older than Mama Lucy, god bless her soul."

"And with more drama."

"If there was a drama queen to rival Mama Lucy, it can only be one woman."

The two friends burst out laughing as they shared the sufuria of rice in the candlelight.

"Though just like Mama Lucy stood up for Kibaki, she stood up for us."

"I sure miss her," said BMW.

"Your friends are having it pretty rough," said Tom.

"We also went down the same road."

"I just want to see how the dark skinned girl does with her first job."

"Angela?"

"Yup. The guards came for her, the ladies dressed her up, and off they went."

As they talked, a young woman appeared asking for salt.

"Why not cook here?" BMW asked.

Tom looked at him and knew one thing. BMW was on hyena mode.

The girl blushed as BMW came closer, grabbing the cup she had. "Come cook here. We're as hungry as you are."

The eyes were enough to make the girl follow his directive.

"Come see what I'm cooking first," she said as she led the way, and BMW's eyes followed her swinging hips.

"Khadijah akijua....." said Tom, smiling as he grabbed BMW's hand and placed five condoms in his back pocket, winking as he turned back to the rice BMW just abandoned.

Meanwhile, Khadijah and Angela were dressed up elegantly for a casino party, already in position. Angela, in this case, was the new fish, and Khadijah was watching her every move as she followed her date at the poker table.

A young waiter appeared near Khadijah, looking in the same direction.

"You think she can handle this?"

"She better," said Khadijah.

Angela's date, an old, pot-bellied European, was getting bored with the poker game, and based on how many times he lost; he was ready to abandon the game any time.

"Let's hope she does not make mistakes like his poker game," said the waitress.

Khadijah burst out laughing. "Looks like his Bedminton will be just as bad."

They both laughed as one man approached Khadijah.

"Hennessy for me, and the lady, please," he said to the waitress.

Khadijah turned to look at him. He was pretty old, white, and clearly tipsy. "How many games have you lost?" she asked.

"It's that obvious, eh?" he returned, sitting down on a couch.

"I know defeat when I see it," she said.

He motioned for her to sit down with him, patting the couch, and she followed suit, sitting at a safe distance; not too far away and not too close either.

"I'm sure your name is as pretty as you are," he said.

*From the way he looked, and talked, Khadijah knew, he too, was testing the waters.*

*This was his first time.*

*She despised virgins but loved the money they offered.*

The Hennessy came, and as the waitress filled their drink goblets, Khadijah noticed a pale circle around his ring finger.

She couldn't help but smile as she put two and two together; Recent divorcee, addicted to gambling, and now trying to get laid so he can fit in with his mates

whose confidence and fat tip ensnared a poor waitress into spreading her legs.

Angela had never seen such money in her life. She was elegant and beautiful. She had a good time watching the poker game as she flanked her date. She did not mind his advanced age, because she had gotten involved with someone's father when she was in campus.

*All I have to do is go on a date with him?*

It didn't seem to be a bad idea.

*One date won't change my life.*

Her date was a sore loser at poker, and she had become uncomfortable. She knew how bad a man's mood can get after a big loss in gambling, and her date was nearing that point.

After a last game, he got up and went for a drink, and she followed him.

He ordered a lot of drinks, and all it took was one tot of the powerful whiskey for Angela to loosen up.

*Whether it was naivety or ignorance, not even Angela knew, but Angela had not eaten a thing since going to the casino.*



*She became too loose, and upon her date noticing it, he silently left her, finding himself in the company of a leggy model.*

*Angela found herself in the adjacent bar, totally intoxicated and lost. What she did not know was that there was someone silently watching her, sipping his drink, and all he needed to do was buy more drinks to get Angela to his side.*

*In no time, they headed away into the private villas of the North Coast, Angela lost in the fog of indulgence.*

*After the car was parked, they walked out of the car, and as Angela staggered into the villa, the man opened the back seat door and pulled out a tripod stand, and handed it to the houseboy to be taken to the master bedroom.*

*By the time Angela and her anonymous date had reached the bedroom, the houseboy had already set up the camera, snugly hidden inside the wardrobe, with a perfect view of the bed, and its occupants.*

"So then, your name?" he asked.

"Khadijah."

"Pretty much grew up in the Coast, eh?"

"Since childhood."

"Came here a few years ago on business, and decided to stay."

"Not bad," she said, downing her Hennessy. "You don't really know how to play, eh?"

"No," he said, downing his drink. "But maybe you could teach me sometime?"

"Yeah.....," she said, rising slowly from the couch. "Later," she said as she walked away.

*The waitress joined her in the ladies room, ecstatic.*

"You have no idea what tip I got!" she said. "100 dollars! Benjamin, I tell you!"

"Good for you, my dear," she said. "But he's a loser. As green as Angela."

"He even wrote down his number," she said, showing the bill with the written digits.

"I know losers when I see them, my dear. Don't waste your time with him," said Khadijah.

Just as Khadijah was about to go, the waitress added, "I saw Angela going with some strange guy."

Khadijah turned. "What?"

The waitress nodded.

"Looks like she finally got the hang of things. Let's see how she'll do."

"No," said the waitress. "You don't understand. The dude was not the client."

"The girl cannot stay ten minutes without letting her excitement get the best of her. Damn!" said Khadijah, walking out.

"And, you don't want to know who's in the casino," the waitress added.

"Who?" asked Khadijah.

The waitress led Khadijah outside the ladies room, and as they sauntered into the main hall, she pointed at a lady that was busy flirting with the same gentleman the waitress had served.

*The client.*

*The model-like features, the scar on her forehead, only one woman alive matched those features.*

***A FEW WEEKS LATER.....***

Another couple arrived at Zablou's office and were ushered in by a beaming Zablou.

Seated in the office was a young lady, sporting a headband, a maxi skirt and was surprisingly shy.

The couple took an instant liking for her, smiling as they handed Zablou the cash and he handed them a photocopy of her ID.

In no time the couple carried her suitcase to the boot, then all three got in, Zablou waving goodbye.

***It's my turn to eat.***

Catherine looked at the gentleman who was indulging her with Hennessy. She could not help but smile at his many attempts at flattery.

*A fat cow, with very juicy steaks.....*

His wallet was what really got her attention, watching as he filled it with one thousand bank notes. It did not matter whether he was not wise enough to stay silent over his winnings.

It also didn't matter whether she owed her life to one specific person, and she was back in the Backrooms starting afresh.

Also, there was The Queen Bee's mission.

***Do not take any electronic devices from him.***

All Catherine had to do, was be flattered by this pudgy, disgusting fellow, finding pure relish in the many times she flicked her pinkie finger over his Hennessy while he was distracted. Getting rid of Angela was too easy, which ensured she got this guy's attention while Angela was busy ogling at another guy winning at a Blackjack table.

*The level of gullibility that poor girl has.....*

Khadijah saw her with him, and despite the fact that she was not assigned that mission, she kind of felt betrayed by the fact that The Queen Bee changed the assignee of the mission so easily.

Then again, not a single person could tell The Queen Bee's next move.

She dialled a number, and after some time, the phone was picked up.

"Guess who just showed up?"

**(Pause)**

"Yep. The model bitch. Hers Truly."

**(Pause)**

"I tell you, she'll do anything to get back in Italy."

**(Pause)**

"It is not Angela carrying out the mission. I guess she got distracted, you know her. She sees something different from what she's doing and gets totally distracted."

**(Pause)**

"Unless I do my own hunting, I can't do much."

**(Pause)**

"She's at a Blackjack table with some hotshot."

**(Pause)**

"Okay. Wish me luck."

She hung up, and then turned to her waitress friend.

"I need one of those uniforms."

"You're way above our level. Why the uniform?"

"To roast me a huge, juicy steak," she replied.

"Whatever orders I get you're in the deal."

"Fine by me," she said as she led Khadijah to the changing rooms.

*Upstairs, there were rooms which bore a testament to the many children fertilized and terminated by the Bedminton activities. Catherine's heart went out to the housekeepers who cleaned after these rooms, witnesses of untold things and unspoken messes.*



*In no time, the poor old man was lying on the bed like a crocodile, his everything strewn across the bed.*

*Catherine wasted no time as she wriggled free of him, and sat up on the bed. She studied him over, amused at how easy it was to topple a man so mighty.*

*She reached for his iPad, took out the SIM card, then grabbed his two gadgets and took out both SIM cards, replacing them with brand new ones.*

*Only three.*

***Put the new SIM cards in, take NO electronic devices. Everything else is yours.***

*Then she reached for his wallet, in his left coat pocket, and as she was pulling it out, he stirred, grabbing her weave in a moment of confusion, grogginess and anger.*

*In that moment, she acted quickly, grabbing her handkerchief stuffed inside her bra and placing it on his nose, hard, pinching his mouth shut until he stopped struggling and let go of her weave.*

*She breathed a sigh of relief, still on his lap, and then got off, finally managing to place the last SIM card in his third device.*

*She yanked his wallet and went off with it, not giving a damn what identification documents were in it.*

"That job wasn't yours," said a voice behind her.

Catherine turned to look at her, almost laughing out loud.

"Hako kasichana kako can't handle this, and you know that," she retorted, fixing her weave.

"How badly do you need this, Cate? Sisi wote tunajua ulirudi kwa nini, and it's not worth it."

Catherine grabbed her purse, and turned to Khadijah.

"Nahitaji Schengen visa. Unajua hiyo ni nini?"

She turned to the old white man lying unconscious. "Unajua huyu ni nani? *A French diplomat!* This job is what will ensure The Queen Bee gets me that Schengen Visa I need to get back to Paris."

*She walked out quickly, leaving Khadijah in her waitress uniform.*

*She looked at Catherine walking in her stilettos, and then shook her head.*

Catherine walked out, and as she turned left, a black SUV was waiting for her. She wasted no time and got in, tossing her weave away.

"You have done well, my child," said the stellar, articulate voice of The Queen Bee. Besides her was an unknown man using an iPad. Catherine handed over the SIM cards to him, and one by one he began putting SIM card after SIM card, absorbing the information stored in the SIM cards.

"The wallet," he said, and Catherine handed it over, minus the money.

The man looked at the ID cards in the wallet and nodded his approval to The Queen Bee.

The Queen Bee broke the silence. "I have something planned for you."

She nodded to the man, who tapped the partition, and the vehicle began moving away.

**22:34.**

***Downtown Malindi.***

The car pulled over, and the driver opened the door for the occupants to walk out.

Catherine stepped out before her, glancing at a magnificent mansion. The Queen Bee walked ahead, briskly entering the main hall.

Catherine was mesmerized by the architecture of the mansion, looking up at it.

"Feel at ease, young lady," said The Queen Bee, disappearing with two bodyguards.

Catherine sat at a cosy, leather recliner, marvelling at everything she saw; the sound system, the gigantic flat-screen, the Persian carpet that was definitely real, the magnificent drapes that softly billowed over the cool coastal breeze and very antique cabinets with the carvings from a bygone era.

*Just like in Europe.....*

Catherine was ecstatic.

*After the two bodyguards closed the control room, she sat down; looking at a tablet she was handed. She used it for a while, and then set it down.*

"The Summit will begin soon; I have a lot of hard data thanks to this operation. She certainly has performed well, but she's nosy. I don't operate with nosy people."

She glanced at one corner of a flat-screen which showed the many rooms under surveillance. The main hall was clearly visible, with Catherine lounging around.

"See what I mean?"

"What should we do with her, Madame?" asked one bodyguard. "She already knows this place, and that isn't the only problem."

*She remained silent for some time, looking at the screen. Catherine had already played music on the sound system.*

Turning to the bodyguard, she said, "Make sure she has the time of her life."

The bodyguard smiled, signalling a female bodyguard to follow her.

Catherine was playing hard-core dancehall music when the two bodyguards arrived and switched off the sound system. Catherine turned around, puzzled and speechless.

"We have something for you," said the male bodyguard.

"You'll love the sound of dancehall where we're going," added the female bodyguard. "But not dressed like that."

As Catherine was escorted, dressed to kill, the male bodyguard received transmission.

*"Make sure her ecstasy is forever."*

## **Chapter Six**

*Have you ever wondered what it was like to be free?*

*Dreamt of feeling the wind as you were on top of a pickup truck in the summer,*

*Like in the days we were carefree?*

*Have you ever wondered when our innocence was robbed?*

*When, just like Nelly Furtado asked,*

*All good things came to an end?*

If you ask me, they came crashing down like the Flight 507 in 2007,

*The same way that plane crashed was how my childhood was destroyed.*

The same way that plane went up in flames was how my innocence burned; with every prod, every cajole, every whiplash,

In the name of boosting your ego, proclaiming yourself king, and ensuring my childhood turned to dust from a raging inferno,

The same raging inferno that resulted in the missing,

**The 115 that we've never heard of.....**



*50 is the new 25, they all will say to me.*

I'm longing for you, for that feeling again,

*Free to play again, to enjoy the sun without worrying  
about your shadow, to walk away from you without a  
care as to how much you'll be hurt.*

*Free to be the young and blossoming person I was  
supposed to be.....*

Here you are telling me you are not the man you were  
ten years ago,

Yes, me neither, and that's because I was nine years old.

*Let me exterminate you, for once.*

*No more being haunted by you*

*No more selling myself for your entertainment*

*I am me, I am proud of me*

*I am not just my tribe, I am a walking heritage*

*Just like MC Hammer, You Can't Touch This.*

*Inside the Bangladesh Backrooms.*

BMW could hear creaking in the night.

*Heavy creaking and breathing.*

*A bed had once again become a witness to Biology, thanks to the one and only failed runway model, thought BMW.*

*If you ask me, that bed was looking up on the wall next to it, and the wall was nodding in understanding. Another wall was probably eating popcorn.*

The creaking brought a haunting memory to BMW, a memory of an attempt to find peace of mind which turned into an opportunity to learn important lessons about why the Family Ring line on very many Kenyans' palms was always a broken one, filled with cracks.

**2012, Kayole, Nairobi.**

*After some grunts and cries, there was pin drop silence.*

*Then sobbing. Laden with pure sorrow.*

*Quiet enough to be ignored by many.*

It was the sobbing that always made Bernard stay awake.

*Men were shoving broken bottles at others' bellies outside, a few gunshots echoed in the darkness, but it was the sobbing that got my attention the most.*

*The sobbing showed a lot of things; whatever it was the girl hoped for, it wasn't going to materialize anytime soon.*

***A clear indication of A Kenyan Lie.***

The sobbing was a leftover from the previous crying after his violent outburst.

*We were just sitting down, watching the pirated 'DJ AFRO' narration films many Kenyans loved (He hated them from day one, which was high school).*

*Alongside him was Jedidah, the man of the house's wife, and Mutisya, a close friend of the man of the house who was also the chief supplier of multimedia.*

*Then Nash, the owner of the house, arrived dog tired, some mud sticking out of his face.*

***Finally, we can eat.***

*Plates were brought out as he placed a packet of fermented milk inside a jug, then he kicked off his shoes, which sent the signal to our noses that the man of the house was indeed around.*

*Jedidah handed Nash the plate, he reached out for it, and for nanoseconds, a plate of food was a helicopter.*

*And in the silence that followed, one sound from Jedidah was enough to break the dam that held back Nash's raging waters.*

**Click.\***

*After it all ended, I looked at the plates of food I took aside just in time, and the fermented milk left inside the jug, the packet intact, and couldn't help but see what the girl was to him; another breathing packet of fermented milk.*

*No longer as creamy, no longer fresh.*

*Angela, too, heard the same creaking in the other room and knew Catherine was at work.*

*At least there was no sobbing after that, but she knew that bed was witness to acts that would make your Parish Council members burn with rage.*

*It was somewhat a relief to BMW not to hear any sobbing after the creaking. Catherine was a relief to Angela, as she had been led to believe, though it was only a matter of time before Angela, Meshach and Jamo Cool got to know first-hand the power of A Kenyan Lie, just like BMW, Tom, Catherine, Louisa Kimani and many others he got to meet.*

*The other girls, too, behind the masks they had to wear and the brutal fight with biology to keep their chests firm, saw the faces behind the dropped masks of their customers; bore witness to guilty pleasures that caused wives to run for the hills and silently made sure, just like in the Nonini song, machali leo hamtalala. (The boys tonight will not sleep) at the expense of destroying families for a short-lived pleasure a bed had grown tired witnessing.*

"I feel good I'm not the only one from the 254," Catherine said to Louisa Kimani after they were done.

"You'll be shocked how many from Kin are migrating to Mombasa," replied Louisa.

"Congo Ndogo," she replied. "It's like another Malindi, only with rhumba and less Europeans."

They both laughed.

"You know," she said. "This is a lot better than back there."

"Why's that?" asked Louisa.

"You're not trapped, for one."

"How so?"

"It's a rather long story," she said.

"Try me," said Louisa, looking squarely at Catherine's face.

..... *The author of "Across the Bridge" put it in a pretty simple way.*

***Hail Jail, The house for all.***

*He was right.*

*Jail housed doctors who did abortions because they understood the crippling fear the young girl had of a pregnancy outside the cocoon of marriage and barely before a National ID, thieves who wielded knives and saw fear in the eyes of their victims, relishing in every purse forcefully snatched because they were driven by lack of support as they grew up, lack of a parent on visiting days and being painted as a suspect for things they barely did but now were locked up for.*

*Oh yeah, and the nurses of the night, whose bodies were like plates of food, salivated by many men who clearly weren't satisfied by the 'missionary' position their wives knew, also because of 'conforming to the norms of society' and the brutally crippling opinions of that society.*

*If only jail could tell its story.*

After the escape, I succeeded and found a job in some plush house next to a shopping mall under construction.



The truth is, it was my first cousin, Rebecca's place, and it was some sort of miracle I remembered the location. Thankfully, only our real names were published on the papers, not our faces, and we already had learned to use fake names as we manoeuvred through the streets.

*I always felt like this parasite around Rebecca and her house, especially when it was dinner time and we all sat together; Rebecca, her rich Luo husband whose businesses was one reason he was mostly away, and whose paralyzed mother was another. My job was to clean, feed and make sure she took her medicine.*

*There I was, changing the diapers of a seventy year old whose eyes were the sore reason she was able to say anything, mostly out of shame. Though, it was through those eyes I learned some pretty important lessons, like for one, the beginning and the end are the same. As a toddler, you'll wear a diaper, and as an aged cabbage, you'll wear another. The difference is the size.*

*Rebecca instilled very harsh rules, seconded by her husband who, if you asked me, was the type of guy who was a lion outside, but inside the house was a chicken. The paralyzed mother could only blink as Rebecca made sure her rules were followed to the letter, probably watching more of what she will share once her body will be too old for her soul.*

*It was clear to me who was the perpetrator of violence against house helps in Kenyan households.*

*Most times my first cousin just dolled herself up and left, leaving me and the paralyzed mother to ourselves as her husband was sometimes gone for weeks on business trips. As we kept each other company, I watched TV, checking out the fashion channels. I watched shows with runway models strutting catwalks and wearing designer clothes, and I always dreamt of myself there, strutting the same runways and being in photo shoots, magazine covers and more.*

*I'd imitate them sometimes; I would wear Rebecca's stilettos and practice my catwalk, much to the joy of the paralyzed mother, whose eyes lit up with encouragement every time she saw me.*

*She was my secret cheerleader in my modelling dream.*

One day, as I practiced my catwalk, my secret cheerleader's eyes suddenly changed from the usual admiration and glee, and they flashed with dread as they glanced left.

Thinking she was sick or something, I moved to mute the TV, and saw the reason her eyes flashed with dread. I froze completely, trembling in those stilettos.

*Rebecca was standing near the door, murderously gazing at me.*

*Her eyes were consoling.*

I could see the way they glinted every time I looked into them.

*She made occasional whimpers every time she wanted something, but the way I saw it, she was desperately trying to console me, but her tongue had exhausted its power of words long ago.*

*What actually comforted me was that there was another soul who saw all this; another witness.*

*Though she did not have much time left, she hopefully will go up to heaven and tell all to the Almighty directly, because clearly the computers up there needed upgrading. Many prayers these days just went unanswered.*

Despite difficulties in movements because of my bruises, I still managed to put a fresh diaper on her. It was at first embarrassing for her to be cleaned up by a toddler, but she probably came to understand that roles change in life, and the beginning and the end are the same.

*I could see her eyes glinting with some sort of malice, not directed towards me, but towards the bedroom door where Rebecca had locked up the decoder.*

*Probably she was telling me to take charge of my situation before I turned into a slave. Not that I wasn't already one, but then I started to feel, all of a sudden, that I was not a sheep.*

*I could feel it, actually. I did not need to live like I needed a shepherd. I could be my own shepherd.*

In stilettos, while I was at it.....

"You, Msupa and I share a thing in common," she said. "We're all marching to a different drummer. We all want to get out of this hellhole and find paradise abroad."

"I like the sound of that," Louisa said. "Though I can't believe you had the stomach to change a grandma's diaper."

"A grandma and a toddler share one thing in common," said Catherine, smiling. "A diaper. Only difference is one of them is wearing it for the second time."

"So that means.....?"

"The beginning and the end are the same," said Catherine.

*Three months later.....*

Agnes prepared the tea, carefully extracting a small packet of white powder from within her bra, and after separately pouring herself a cup, she poured the white powder inside the pot, letting the tea simmer for two minutes.

"Agnes, bring me my clothes from outside," said the wife from upstairs.

"Yes, Mama Owuor," she said, turning to go.

Owuor ran inside the kitchen, grabbing a box of biscuits. Agnes yanked the biscuits from him, saying, "Mum refused snacks in the morning."

Owuor threw a tantrum, then after jumping up and yanking the box of biscuits from the top shelf, he stuck out his tongue at Agnes.

*Agnes walked out and got the basket of dried clothes from the veranda then walked upstairs, visibly angry.*

*She placed the basket in the main bedroom, then briskly walked to the kitchen, and after pouring the tea in the flasks, she took aside Owuor's flask and added extra powder in it.*

They were in a hurry to have breakfast, it seemed, as they walked in the dining room just as she was finished. They sat down and had breakfast, with Mama Owuor speaking in Luo, saying:

"I'm telling you this girl is so stupid. Even washing clothes is a burden for her! I can't leave her with our good food. I just leave githeri there for her. All our food is for us."

"Mummy, she was refusing me to eat the biscuits you bought for me," Owuor contributed, still in Luo.

"Don't worry, baby, all the snacks are yours. No one should stop you from enjoying them," she replied.

Baba Owuor was mute most times, and Agnes peered over at him, drinking his tea without much talk.

*She was sickened by him.*

*He was shameless, making passes at her yet she was the same age as his niece.*

She silently sipped her tea, slowly taking relish at the many cups of tea they all drank.

Moments later they all got into their saloon car and after Agnes opened the gate, Mama Owuor handed her



some money, saying, "Buy some maize and beans from the grocery store for your lunch," then the car drove away.

*Routine.*

Agnes waited for two minutes after locking the gate, and then walked inside, stashing the money in her bra.

She quickly called a number, and then said, "Nakuambia vile wameenjoy hiyo chai!"

"Wako na ID yako?" said a husky voice.

"No."

"Good. Give us thirty minutes. Pack vitu zako; make sure umewacha kila kitu. We already have our own keys. Make sure the main switch is off before you go."

"Okay," she said as she hung up.

*Hours later, a news briefing had the following:*

*“A saloon car was involved in a grisly road accident on the Thika Superhighway this morning after the driver lost consciousness on the wheel. It collided with a stationary lorry, and everyone in the saloon car perished.....”*

*“..... In other news, a burglary took place in a middle class residence in Nairobi West. Nobody was injured in the burglary but neighbours claim the burglars acted as house moving personnel, and no one suspected a thing until visiting family members found no single occupant or items of the family.....”*

"There's no way I'm ending up like that!"

"Bado unataka kufika Dar Es Salaam?" asked BMW.

"Is Dar even real? What's even real now?" shouted Meshach.

"You're always negative, bana. At least be thankful you're seeing another city," retorted Tom.

"Not forgetting kulipwa!" added BMW.

"Getting paid, you say? Selling dick for cash? That was your idea of a job?" shouted Meshach. "How come you didn't tell us from the get go? At least we'd know what we were signing up for."

*Meshach was quarrelling with BMW, and Jamo was confronting Tom. Both the guys wanted answers, totally confused and scared, especially when they saw Angela as she returned from the outside world.*

*For a moment there was this moment of silence, watching the female guards as they escorted Angela back. For some reason she was walking in pain, though nobody needed to be told why.*

*Tom had gone to make his usual phone call when Meshach confronted BMW and Jamo joined in, and then later Tom returned to find chaos.*

"We need to get out of here!" said Meshach, visibly angry.

"You don't just waltz out of a place like this," said BMW, trying to reason with the two guys. "At least wait things out. Get some jobs first so you can have some cash on you....."

"This can't be," he replied, shaking his head. Jamo was just silent, dejectedly looking away. "The capital city was Dodoma. Not Dar."

"There's no way you can expect....."

"Whoa, guys, timeout, we're attracting attention! Um, BM....," said Tom, a bit worried. "Can I talk to you for a minute?"

"You guys wait, don't go," said BMW, walking to a place out of earshot. "What's up?"

"He's still fluent in German, right?" asked Tom, motioning to Meshach.

"Yeah, I think so. What's up?"

"The Queen Bee has a job he might be best for," said Tom. "Also, the reporter is undercover in the event they'll be in. This is the best shot the reporters have at breaking even with their exposé."

"With that attitude? And being so inexperienced in handling top tier clients?" said BMW. "You know The Queen Bee doesn't hesitate in cutting you off! Remember what happened to Msupa?"

"I know..... It's just that this job has really high stakes. It could get us enough to go to Kisumu," said Tom.

"You mean go undercover? Because I'm not the fugitive here."

Tom smiled. "How exactly, did we meet?"

BMW smiled too. "Okay, you got me. Who's this high stakes client?"

Tom sighed. "If the new fish fucks up, we're all in big trouble."

"Who is he? Or she?"

"Ein mann. A he," Tom replied. "The German Ambassador to Kenya."

*BMW felt as if the bottom half of his stomach just dropped.*

"Do you realize what this means?" asked BMW.

"I'm scared for him," said Tom, motioning to Meshach.

*The Queen Bee, the Vice President and The German Ambassador to Kenya had signed a Memorandum of Understanding to boost operations in snuffing out anyone participating in sex tourism; from the clients who flew in on tourist visas to the sellers who literally threw themselves at them. The MoU signing took place at a gigantic resort whose shares were owned by Orchardson-Yusuf, and then everyone unwound at a major festival in the same venue.*

*As BMW was busy with Delilah, Tom was busy with The Queen Bee, but he was wearing a bug given to him by Ruth, and his uncomfortable nature almost gave them away, especially on the dance floor.*

*The German Ambassador, drunk, was visibly jealous of Tom, and he confronted Tom in the gents. A fight broke out, and Tom knocked him out, fearing he may uncover the recorder strapped on his torso. Tom had to run for his life, once again, as The German Ambassador threatened to sue for aggravated assault.*

*Luckily, the threat never materialized but the stain on The Queen Bee never washed away, and she used the ambassador like tissue paper.*

*Whatever real plans they had, it all went up in flames. Maybe that was a screen smoke, nobody knows, but as the world got fooled about their deal going sour, and got lost in sensational news and controversy, more incidents of sexual slavery increased, with more German women sampling the dudes, and girls in the Bangladesh Backrooms sent out to 'spend time with family', beautifully adorned.*

*Meshach, though, had scored a straight A in Deutsche during the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education national exams, a record in his school, and was the only person BMW knew, who spoke, read and wrote fluent Deutsche.*

*BMW knew the task that awaited him as he went out to reel in the others, having informed The Queen Bee and the others about Meshach's fluency in Deutsche, among other things, and she wanted him in the business because of the clients jetting in from Berlin.*

"If he does not take the job, he won't get to see tomorrow," said Tom. "Who's going to talk to him about this?"

BMW looked at Meshach saying something to Jamo Cool, and knew he had to make an important decision.



As Meshach got dressed up by the male guards, BMW and Tom looked on from their balcony.

"I hope he won't forget "ich bin ein Mann," said Tom.

"He probably will spill the beans," said BMW. "He's way too green to go up against that calibre of clientele. Before he even knows it he'll be sporting diapers when he's on leave."

"Maybe Msupa can teach him something," said Tom, and both guys burst out laughing.

"Msupa rivalled the ladies in being eine frau," said BMW. "We'll need to hook them up."

"And the rapper too," said Tom, laughing.

BMW, laughing, said, "Msupa was crazy..... Let's not forget his big mouth?"

"Dude talked like a drama queen and a radio station combined," said Tom as they continued laughing.

"And does he know the German Ambassador is a closet neo-Nazi?" Tom continued. "It was a miracle I got out of that alive. Those white supremacists don't fuck around."

"We told him all he needed to know. He makes any smart moves out there he becomes The Queen Bee's problem," said BMW. "And we all know how quickly you become history after she takes notice of your bad business."

*Jamo was isolated in his room, watching everything with loathe as he looked squarely at BMW.*

"The rapper dude can be petty sometimes," remarked Tom.

"Oh, you have no idea," said BMW.

Meshach seemed calm, but he was nervous of what he was going to do while in the Ambassador's company. Moreover, he wanted to see the outside so bad, so he accepted the job.

*Ich bin Meshach. Ich bin ein Mann.*

*What everybody didn't know was that Meshach had a trick up his sleeve.*

BMW just watched as the gates unlocked, Meshach seeing the outside of 'Banglapesa' for the first time.

*As brief as the light came in, it went out.*

"I have a bad feeling about this," said BMW.

"So then, Mein Mann," said Harry Schmidt-Iburu, the German Ambassador to Kenya. "Where would you like to spend the day?"

"Anywhere far away," said Meshach, fastening his seatbelt. Harry nodded to the chauffeur, who inserted the key into ignition.

Meshach looked outside as the car cruised down the highway. Everything was going according to plan, and all he had to do was wait.

*I have an aunt who lives here, thought Meshach.*

He also remembered a very crucial thing BMW said during the confrontation.

He remembered the many times he was the laughing stock with that group, the many times he was underrated by that very group, and now here he was, doing something so revolting and despicable to him it made him sick.

*But not anymore. It didn't matter whether he would die getting out.*

"There are plains in Hamburg as green and fertile as the ones here, you know," said Harry as he opened the wine

cabinet, pouring cognac. "I could take you there someday."

"What's Hamburg like?"

"Schön," he added, "with youth clubs and amazing pop culture."

Meshach turned to look outside.

"Were you born with that tiny dimple on your cheek?"

Meshach turned to him. "It's what you'd call Schönheitsfleck."

Harry burst out laughing.

Though Meshach wasn't stupid. This man was a closet neo-Nazi, and Meshach knew no one needed to be told exactly what he represented.

One statement from her kept ringing in his ears, which brought him to the reason he was selected for the job.

***He possesses documents that are of importance to me. Documents that threaten the very foundations of the Kenyan tourism industry. These documents, in a small external hard disk drive, are kept in a safety deposit box in a Standard Chartered bank branch.***

***Your sole mission is to retrieve the key to that box. The key is emblazoned with the Nazi symbol. Nothing else.***

Meshach knew the risks awaiting him, and his own personal vendetta somewhat clouded his judgment, looking on outside as he pondered everything.

*Get a key with the Nazi symbol on it, deliver it, and get enough money to start afresh with my aunt.*

***I can't believe I have to do this again.***

*Or do I?*

He stole a glance at the cognac Harry served himself. Then he glanced at his pinkie nail.

***I have to make this count.***

"Look at that!" said Meshach, pointing outside the window. Harry turned around and looked, seeing a magnificent high rise building. As quickly as possible Meshach dipped his pinkie finger in Harry's cognac bottle, then grabbed his own drink, sipping.

"That's a beautiful villa!!" exclaimed Meshach.

Harry smiled, saying, "You should see mine."

"Is it that big?"

"Way bigger!" said Harry. "I understand you did architecture in campus?"

"Yes, and it was pretty engaging."

"I know of companies in Hamburg that might need good architects for their projects in Nairobi."

Meshach's impression of his face lighting up with total glee seemed pretty convincing. "Wow! Thank you!"

"Just as long as you are a good boy," said Harry, pouring himself more cognac. He offered Meshach some, but Meshach declined, saying, "I haven't eaten anything."

"Why didn't you say so in the beginning?" he said, pressing a button. The chauffeur partition parted and Harry said, "Take us to the nearest food outlet you can find."

"Yes, sir," he said, and the partition closed.

Meshach smiled with satisfaction as he downed the one glass of cognac he was offered.

*At least he knows that important rule.*

"Ngoja, ati nini?" said BMW as he listened to Khadijah.

"The bitch jumped us. It was supposed to be Angela's job. Angela got carried away. You know her!"

"How did she end up in someone else's room?"

"Haki sijui. We returned to find bloody Catherine with the client!"

"Maybe Her Majesty changed tactic, who knows."

Khadijah sighed with frustration. "Angela alijiharibia. You know how easily she gets distracted."

"Get over it, my dear. Let her make her own mistakes. That's how we learn," said BMW, as he embraced Khadijah.

Suddenly there was a flurry of activity outside the main courthouse.

Tom came in quick. "Guys, you might want to see this."

They walked out into the outer alleyway, and saw the following:

*Deepika and the other girls were being quickly dressed up, with the guards on standby.*



*Other occupants of the Bangladesh Backrooms watched in silence as the guards ushered the Indian girls, all dolled up and ready.*

*They were ushered into a bus and without wasting time the bus accelerated, the main gate closed up as quickly as it was opened.*

*One guard received a call, and then motioned to another guard to follow him.*

*They marched down an alleyway, and then turned to the rooms where the 11 girls were kept, Jamo having spent some time in there too.*

*"It's time to go," said one guard as the other roughed up the occupants of the room.*

*They were frog marched to the main gate, and one guard, after verifying the number, twelve, opened the gate.*

*Jamo was confused about everything, but did all he could to stay silent, for fear it might happen again.*

*The eleven girls had already resigned themselves to their fate, staying mute as they were led to the bus.*

*In another room were men in white overalls speaking outside, their mood pensive. A female nurse talked to them for a while then rushed back.*

"Isn't that where Angela is?" asked Khadijah.

*BMW noticed two bodyguards and two doctors walking with a stretcher, and moments later came out with a very weak Angela carried on the stretcher down an alleyway, the bodyguards walking beside the doctors who carried her away.*

"What happened to her out there?" asked BMW.

"I don't know. The waitress I told you about saw her leaving with some guy. I've never seen that guy in my life," said Khadijah.

"I talked to one of the doctors. They're saying she developed complications. She's not so good," said Tom.

"Something she drank?" BMW asked.

"No. Something she came into contact with," said Tom. "Khadijah, I need to talk to him alone, please."

"Sure, okay," she said. "You know where to find me, beau. I'm going to go get some answers."

"Okay," said BMW, as he walked back to the room with Tom.

After Tom closed the door, Tom said, "Yesterday, Angela was being followed. Someone made her out. Someone who had her eye on the client Angela was to meet."

"Angela gets easily distracted, so she must have followed someone else," said BMW. "And this someone, what was she after?"

"She was chosen by The Queen Bee for this. There was some important information the client had, and probably sensed Angela wouldn't pull it off so she called someone else."

"Who?"

"Catherine," said Tom.

BMW felt like smashing the wall with his fist.

"I told Ruth about that client, and Ruth's the one that filled me in on what happened. Angela hadn't taken any meals at the time she was in the casino."

"Oh, no," replied BMW.

"Catherine went for the client immediately Angela got loose, and succeeded in getting the goods. Angela was seen in the company of some jungu."

"Let me guess. The same man who dealt with the eleven?"

Tom nodded. "Even Ruth couldn't believe it."

"How the hell did he buy his freedom?"

"His money is just as valuable, remember?" said Tom. "I know The Queen Bee is fuming right now."

"This is bad," said BMW. "Remember Christopher?"

"Same case. We tried to warn the poor soul not to set foot on that plane. Did he listen? Where's he now?"

"Serving decades in a Hamburg maximum security prison," said BMW. "Wait..... Hamburg....."

*It dawned on him as if BMW just got hit by a car.*

***Hamburg.....***

*The glint in Meshach's eye when he was being escorted.....*

"Tom, are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"The German ambassador....." said Tom in a horrified tone.

"Remember Meshach's face? It was like he knew something," said BMW.

"I don't know where you got these new fish, bro, but they're messed up," said Tom.

"I knew I had a bad feeling about this," said BMW.  
"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Let's do this," said Tom.

## **Chapter Seven**

**FACT:** Mujra dancing dates three hundred years back; an art perfected through constant practice and during Mughal rule in places such as Jaipur. It is a family art often passed down from mother to daughter, traditionally performed in places called kothas.

Mujra is a cross between art and erotic dancing, with the performers serving as courtesans amongst Mughal royalty or wealthy patrons.

**22:36.**

***Westlands, Nairobi.***

Deepika and the girls got in formation behind the curtain, tense.

*If this is what will get me away from poverty, then so be it.*

"Don't worry. It's just like home," she said to a nervous girl, who nodded in agreement.

*Revellers walked into a very poorly lit room and after ordering their indulgences, the show began.*

"See, security is present. They won't touch us," added Deepika, making the nervous girl more relaxed.

*Ten girls, with Deepika in the middle, got into formation as they began their Mujra dance, very sensual and enticing to the revellers.*

*As the dance continued, one flower was placed on one girl, and another was placed on Deepika's neck.*

*Security was on standby to ensure no one touched the girls.*

As the dance continued, more flowers were placed on the girls' necks, with Deepika having the most flowers.

*The girls increased the gyrating tempo, sending the revellers wild and the atmosphere reeking of sexual anticipation.*

*The girls were showered with money, and as the girls continued, the flowers on their necks increased, with Deepika having the highest number.*

After the show, the revellers made bids for Deepika and the other girls with the higher numbers of flowers on their necks and money sealed the deal.

Slowly, the girls branched away; each of them had a partner to satisfy. A very wealthy individual paid for Deepika, and they both disappeared to a backroom.

*I am going back to Mumbai a millionaire.*



"Just confirmed the rendezvous with him. Eastleigh, Nairobi," said Tom.

"Fantastic," said BMW. "Looks like it's a trip down Memory Lane."

"Hey, you know those streets better than I do. I'm following you all the way."

"You forgot the miraa truck day?" said BMW, laughing.

"We were some daring sons of bitches, I tell you," said Tom amidst laughs. "I still can't believe we got ourselves out of there alive."

"Dadaab's messed up, man," said BMW as he put the keys in the ignition.

"The Ambassador's up to his neck in Dadaab's muck, so we have to grow eyes back here," said Tom, patting the back of his head.

"I can't believe what this guy's getting himself into," said BMW, driving off.

"Something big's going down," said Ruth as she took her coat.

Saul, holding his tennis ball, walked by. "The Pope got caught up in a child molestation case?"

"Close," said Ruth, "Only it's the German Ambassador to Kenya."

"Come on, gimme the dirt," said Saul.

"Let's meet up with my source first, he has business in the location. A pretty big business deal is expected there."

"Where?"

"Eastleigh," said Ruth as she got in the driver's seat.

*Dadaab Refugee Camp.*

*A Few Years Ago.*

"Finally," said the Mukhali to BMW and Tom. "You gave him."

"Yeah, he accepted," said BMW.

"Where's the form?"

*BMW motioned to Tom, who produced an A4 envelope. After the Mukhali looked at its contents he smiled.*

"It's normally very easy to get them to sign. Most are in despair to go as far from Somalia as possible."

"I agree," said Tom.

"The others have gotten into the truck?"

"Yeah."

"How much were they willing to take?" Tom asked.

"Trust me, there is power in ten Benjamins," said the Mukhali. "Where are your clients?"

*BMW rose and opened the side door, motioning to a hijab clad woman, who walked in with three more. The Mukhali produced application forms and handed them to the women as he tossed a fat envelope to BMW, then they both left the Mukhali in the office with the three women.*

*BMW opened the envelope and he peered inside, Tom also looked, mouth open in surprise at the clean, crisp Benjamins staring at them.*

"Refugee got his?"

"Yep," said BMW. "Now we go back."

"What about Customs?"

"Oh yeah, Abdi," said BMW. "Let me sort it out."

BMW dialled a number as Tom neared the heavily loaded truck, passing some cash to the driver.

"Hello, Abdi?"

(Pause)

"We're on the way, bro."

(Pause)

"I wasn't!" he said, laughing and winking at Tom, who was shaking his head as he entered the vehicle.

(Pause)

"Yes. We have it, no worries."

(Pause)

"Brown Hilux, 347Z. You see us you meet us. Asante."

BMW hung up and hopped in the passenger seat as the driver ignited the truck engine.

*They quickly parked and got out upon arrival, getting in position in the opposite building. Saul took out his camera and fixed his lens, then positioned himself near the window.*

“Let’s hope it’s the same brown Hilux,” said Saul.

"If this won't get us front page, I don't know what will," said Ruth, smiling.

Saul smiled as he looked through his lens. "Let's hope they show up in time."

Meshach looked on as Harry made phone calls, communicating with people he did not know and did not care about.

*They are not my mission.*

He looked over and saw the ultimate chance in seizing what he was supposed to take.

*Harry didn't have his key with him. He had placed it on the lower compartment in his car, and the business deal was really distracting.*

*The minute he looked outside, no other chance was there. He slithered his finger and grabbed the key, sliding it inside his bracelet up his right hand, and it became even tighter.*

*It was a split second of a decision. He wasn't going to waste it because he wasn't going to have another chance like it.*

*His heart relaxed after Harry turned away from the window, still on the phone.*

*He has not suspected a thing.*

*What he did not know was that he was badly mistaken.*

*Forty five minutes later.....*

Two pickup trucks and a saloon car arrived and parked, heavily loaded with cargo. The driver of the saloon car got out and went to the Toyota Hilux, communicating with the driver. The Hilux driver got out and made a phone call as the driver of the saloon car returned to his car, communicating with the unknown passenger in the rear.

*Click! Click! Went the camera.*

The Hilux driver finished his call and signalled to the saloon car driver, who went to the L200 (the other) truck and opened the cargo bay. Out came shadowy figures, all wearing hijabs, and they hurriedly walked into the building.

*Click! Click! Click!*

"Come on, get out of that car," muttered Saul, focusing his lens on the saloon car.

All Saul needed was an opening, a small window of opportunity. And just when he thought he was not going to get anything,



*The Hilux driver opened his cargo bay and a lot of people, covered in hijabs, were quickly rushed out. One of the passengers was stopped, and the Hilux driver ushered him to the saloon car. The young man walked there, and then the passenger in the rear got out.*

Even Saul gasped at the passenger who stepped out to greet the young man.

***Click! Click! Click!***

"Wait till your source sees this," said Saul.

"What?" Ruth asked, coming close.

Saul motioned for her to see through the camera.

Ruth froze in shock after she looked through the lenses.

"You think he's under her?"

"The possibility is pretty huge," said Saul.

BMW parked the car near the exchange spot and looked outside. "The exchange is going on. Where's your crew?"

"In that building over there," said Tom, pointing to the opposite building.

Just as Tom finished talking he froze, not believing his eyes. "BM, who the hell is that?!"

As BMW followed the direction Tom just pointed, his mouth went agape. "Oh my goodness....."

They saw Harry Schmidt-Iburu, the German Ambassador to Kenya, right in the middle of the business deal, the money exchange, but it was the young man with him that bothered them most.

"What does he think he's doing?" asked BMW.

"I thought he was new fish," said Tom.

"He dug his own grave if he's not," said BMW.

Meshach clasped one briefcase, smug with satisfaction.

Just as he turned with the briefcase, Harry snapped his finger, and the Hilux driver produced a pistol. Harry aimed at Meshach and pulled the trigger.

Everyone's heart stopped.

*Click! Click!*

08:56.

*Ali Balqysa Hotel, Eastleigh, Nairobi.*

BMW leaned on the window, looking out, as Tom lied on the bed and fiddled with remote control of the TV, which had been broadcasting the following news report:

*...."The now former German Ambassador to Kenya, Harry Schmidt-Iburu, is wanted by the Kenya Police alongside the Interpol for attempted murder and heading a massive syndicate of paedophilia and sexual trafficking. He is armed and extremely dangerous....."*

The copy of the newspaper was lying on the counter, with a picture of the German Ambassador pointing his pistol at Meshach, turned to the car.

**'German Ambassador among those named in Mega Trafficking Syndicate.'**

*Both were absent minded.*

Then the toilet flushed and Meshach stepped out, washing his hands with difficulty and he slipped his arm into a sling with great pain and discomfort.

Tom looked at him, then rose and walked to BMW, ushering him outside the room.

"He has a right to know," he said.

BMW looked on at the window, peering at Meshach dressing the sling on his bandaged arm, then said, "Does he have any idea what shit we're all in?"

"Cheki brathe, the least we can do is get him to Bi Kijembe. He'll be safer there."

"The Queen Bee knows what happened. Even we didn't know he was in the business."

"We did a good thing saving his ass, man. 'Cause he's going to spill the beans on how he got recruited, and played dumb with you all in Nairobi." Tom said.

"He has a lot to answer," said BMW.

"The journalists got the scoop of the year thanks to last night. I could get my slate wiped clean after this," said Tom.

*Keep dreaming, Tom.*

"I had even forgotten that," said BMW. "How will you manoeuvre around without being noticed?"

"How many times have I manoeuvred around Kisauni, Malindi and all of North Coast without any problems?"

"Luck does run out, and I'd hate to see you go back in," said BMW. "You can't afford to be reckless."

"Deal," said Tom. "So we start with the Holy Trinity origins?"

BMW chuckled. "Where it all started."

"I'm sorry I tried to rob you, bro."

"No worries. Already let go of that," said BMW as he pushed the door open, and went back in.

*Meshach was seated on a plastic chair, facing both guys.*

"Don't beat around the bush," said BMW. "You tell us all you know, na sisi tutakusaidia."

"Somewhere there's medical treatment and The Holy Trinity," added Tom.

"What's that?" asked Meshach.

"You have no idea what The Holy Trinity means, and you're in the business?" asked Tom.

"It's TLC," said BMW. "Transport, Lodging, and Cash. We're willing to provide these, we know somewhere where you're going to be safe, but there's something you're doing in return."

"You expect me to snitch?"

BMW smiled as he took the newspaper and showed Meshach the headline. "See this? It means you're dead. The government knows that. The neo-Nazi you were riding with is now outlawed by the German government, and now a wanted fugitive, even by Interpol. The minute the government realizes you're

still alive, or The Queen Bee, guess who's going to be used as an example?"

"Right now you don't exist. This is your only chance," said Tom as he packed a duffle bag. He produced two passports, handing one to BMW.

After some silence, watching the two count banknotes, Meshach said, "Okay. I'll tell you all I know."

"We're all ears," said BMW.



As they got into the car, BMW turned to Tom. "It's time for The Origins, man."

Tom chuckled. "Damn sure." He turned to Meshach. "Now, it's time you knew about how I recruited señor BMW here."

Meshach smiled as he turned to BMW. "No way...."

"Guilty," he replied as Tom switched on the ignition.

**2009.**

***Last week of March.***

*BMW hastily unlocked his tin box, and then took out two cardigans, trousers, a pair of sneakers and an encyclopaedia. He stuffed them in the backpack, and then took the set of master keys and quickly stuffed them in the bag.*

*He looked around the dormitory, and then yanked the blanket from the bed, leaving the mattress bare as he stuffed the blanket in the box and locked it.*

*He descended from the bed and wore the sneakers as he stuffed the sandals in the backpack.*

*He hoisted the backpack on his back then glanced at the suspension letter.*

*Cause of suspension: Persistent cases of theft.*

*No time to lose. It's now, or never.*

*He took the set of master keys, opened a box opposite his lower bunk bed, and then took what he expected to find. A small wad of cash hidden inside a cocoa tin.*

*He replaced everything nicely then left the empty dormitory, suspension letter in hand.*

At the principal's office he waited, watching the man sign and stamp the letter. The principal looked up and asked, "Where is home?"

"Namanga," he immediately blurted, surprised at his own answer. The principal, having bought it, reached into a drawer, pulled out a wad of cash and counted one thousand five hundred shillings, handing them to him. "Get home quickly. Make sure your parent calls me upon arrival."

"Yes, sir," he said as he rose to leave, folding the suspension letter.

*The child is always wrong, the parent is always right.  
Not this time.*

*As he reached the shopping centre he bought himself a beanie, and a long sleeved shirt, and then lounged at a small cafe with a soda as he contemplated on where to go.*

***I can't afford to go to juvi.***

*He knew it was a matter of time before the principal realized he was tricked, and Madam Kimani was definitely on her way, probably armed with that dreaded signed form that confirmed his incarceration, for parents had power in matters juvenile detention.*

*Then he looked at the TV, airing a special on the Coast province, and an idea struck him.*

*What if I went to the Coast? What town would I start with? Hussein told me to be careful of South Coast lest I became a junkie, North Coast has its own share of problems.....but I'm not going to be a drug mule, or a junkie.*

*He saw the special talking about Malindi, Diani Beach, and saw the famed White Sahara Beach.*

*The picture perfect images they air on TV because they're photogenic enough for the New York Times-reading expatriates touring there. How interesting.*

*Malindi sounds like an option, though cash doesn't grow like sukuma wiki. I don't see any other way, because I'll be spotted very easily in Nairobi, and Madam will send me to juvi.*

Then the channel was changed and an on-going news briefing aired.

**".....about twenty nine inmates at the Shanzu Approved School have been recaptured, with seven still at large. Some of the seven juvenile inmates were incarcerated for serious crimes like drug trafficking, underage prostitution, first degree murder and robbery. On screen are pictures of the seven juveniles still at large....."**

*It was clear where he was headed. It was clear he was not prepared to face a scenario where he was going to be a fugitive of the law.*

***I'm not taking any chances.***

He downed his soda, paid for the drink and left the hotel, catching a bus to Mombasa.

*Little did he know.*

**15:34.**

***The Nairobi-Nakuru Highway.***

*A beautiful colonnade of trees lined up the sides of the highway, sprinkling beautiful violet flowers on the sides of the dual carriageway.*

*Tom, the young boy, looked outside as the bus sped down the highway and marvelled at the beautiful colonnade of the trees. Any passer-by could tell that he was an excited boy on probably a once-in-a-lifetime trip upcountry, with a bored parent dozing off on the adjacent seat.....*

*Then a screeching sound caught his attention, and before he knew it he was hurled forward, debris and shattered glass flying everywhere as the vehicle was catapulted high into the air.....*

*How quickly, good things end.*

Tom rose from his small bed, and after catching his breath walked to the window, glancing outside into the night, a hot, blustery wind blowing from the east.

A small newspaper lied open, with a small segment of the classifieds showing the Kenya Police Wanted

notice, and seven pictures underneath, his picture being the first one.

Tom, alongside the others, was wanted for escaping from an Approved School, a well-planned, last-gasp escape attempt.

One of the comrades he escaped with had been transferred from Shikutsa Approved School, Western Kenya, and he had seen his fair share of forced labour before being busted after the truck he was riding in as a turn boy was discovered on a weigh bridge containing something else apart from cement bags.

Tom knew that it was not going to take long before his luck ran out, and he contemplated leaving the one place he knew best.

It was going to be tough, he knew, but time was of the essence.

He grabbed a vest and walked out into the bar, still open, and ordered a drink. He paid and got outside and lounged in a small chair with his drink.

As he sipped, he noticed someone sleeping on the ground partly hidden by some vegetation.

He got up and left his drink, walking towards the person sleeping outside.

As he came close he noticed he was quite young, had a beanie on, and a long sleeved shirt, and used his backpack as a pillow.

He prodded him with his foot, waking him up. "Who are you?" he asked.

"What are you doing here?"

As he woke up, Tom reached for the bag and yanked it open. The young man realized what he was up to so he quickly got up and tried to get back his backpack, and they began wrestling for it.

"Let go of my bag!"

"Nini hizi unabebea hapa?!"

Tom got a jacket from the bag and hurled the bag back at the young man, then the young man splashed sand on his face and yanked the jacket from him. As he tried to run he hit the coconut tree and fell down.

As Tom regained sight, a police Land Cruiser pulled over, and two officers stepped out. One was holding a newspaper.



When the young man saw the police, he did not wait to be told what to do. He grabbed his bag and ran.

At first Tom did not understand why the young man bolted, until he looked at the outside of the bar.

Tom froze in horror as they walked outside with a waitress seconds later, and he also ran for his life.

He ran inside a small colonnade of thatched houses, jumping over obstacles like an athlete, surprising people that were sleeping outside on their verandas. He turned left and saw the young man up ahead navigating through a maze of structures, and halted outside the Masjid Musa to catch his breath.

Tom also hurried on to catch up with him, and the young man, upon seeing Tom, continued running.

"Wait!" Tom yelled, running after him.

"Wait; hold on, I don't want to harm you!"

He managed to catch up with him, and both of them stopped, looking at each other. The young man held on tight to his backpack, not trusting him one bit. "Why did you run from the police?" Tom asked, genuinely puzzled.

"Why did you?" the young man asked in return, walking away.

"Look, we both ran for one reason. Maybe you were arrested somewhere?" Tom asked.

The young man replied, "I don't want her to find me. I can't afford to go back there."

"You're a fugitive?" Tom said. "That makes two of us."

He stopped & turned. "What did you do?"

"Crackdown on beach boys," said Tom. "I happen to be a well-known one, someone sold me down the river, and I was in an approved school until we escaped."

"I was to be taken to an approved school for theft, something I didn't do," the young man replied. "Walikuwa wananikujia shule, nikahepa."

"Maybe we should look out for each other," said Tom. "We both are in the same boat. And you look like you could use some help to survive here."

"You're right," said the young man. "Bora tu usiniibie."

"Promise, I won't," said Tom, extending his hand. "Naitwa Tom."

"Bernard," said the young man, shaking his hand.

"Mtoto wa bara, there's a way you have to live in the Coast. You keep sleeping in the streets like that utajipata South Coast na walanguzi."

"Tunaendaje?" asked Bernard.

"Follow me," said Tom.

Tom climbed the flight of stairs and turned left. He reached for a small crack atop the door of the apartment and extracted a small key.

He opened and ushered BMW in.

"What's your full name?"

"Bernard Mwangi Wachira."

"Okay, BMW," said Tom. "Mine's Thomas Ongeru McCloud. Tom for short."

"BMW," said Bernard, smiling. "I like the sound of that."

"You should," replied Tom. "Because here, no one even hints at their real name."

BMW placed his bag on the couch as Tom spread a mattress on the ground. "I hope you're already used to the humidity."

"Naeza manage," BMW said.

Tom handed BMW some snacks, then removed his vest for a fresh one. "Tunaanza kesho; I'll take you where I'm based at. It's been a while since I've reported to Kinyanya Sacco."

"Kinyanya Sacco?" asked BMW.

"I know, it sounds crazy, but you'll see what I mean," said Tom. "Just make sure you have enough firepower down there. These ladies hate short term victories."

**01:34.**

**MTWAPA. MUGITHI NIGHT.**

A young lady entered the ladies room. She felt disgusted as she reached for the sink. She spotted a European woman adjusting her leather strap belt, making sure her fat rolls were well hidden.

In the background was a popular Mugithi hit, and the revellers were lost in the frenzy, as Salim Jnr belted out the famous catch phrase many Kenyan students loved using on teachers who overstepped their mandates.

*"Slow down teacher..."*

She turned to the side and made sure the push-up was well adjusted in amplifying everything, then after she fixed her miniskirt, puckered her lips as she took a selfie and stepped out.

As the young lady turned to open the toilet door, she came face to face with Tom, who was belting his pants up. A woman was also inside.

Tom looked squarely at her, and then wiped his lips, smiling as he stepped out.

*"Slow down teacher...."*

The woman was left bewildered and she shook her head as she turned to another toilet as she avoided that one.

"I've never," said BMW, chomping on the snacks.

"Don't worry, my virgin friend," said Tom. "It's like this Kenyan version of the Fiera dei Contratti."

"You know Latin?" BMW asked, stunned.

"Added advantage. Pick your own foreign language to specialize in," said Tom.

BMW smiled a bit. "Anything I should know when dealing with a Kinyanya?"

Meshach looked at BMW, stunned.

"If he's fluent in Latin, what language are you fluent in?"

"Yo soy BMW. Yo hablo España, señor," BMW replied, smiling.

"And, what is this Fiera dei something?" Meshach asked.

"Very, very long time ago, in Florence, Italy, there was the *Fiera dei Contratti* - *the Contracts Affair*. It was an event where fathers sold their daughters into a contracted marriage, the poor girls often forced to



dance provocatively in a bid to secure the highest offers," said BMW.

"The more you hang around these old ladies coming down here for some Bedminton, the more you learn," said Tom. "We learned about the Fiera dei Contratti from some Italian twins who came on vacation here."

"Probably they're still in Little Italy," said BMW, as Tom nodded.

"Bottom line is, Meshach," said BMW. "Learn what you can about the world from these old ladies. Don't just be the doormat, be the shoe rack and the wardrobe."

"Learn all you can about the outside world," said Tom. "Read books the 8-4-4 does not dish out, learn about their country of origins, and the golden rule...?"

"Never, ever, get on that plane back to her country with her," said BMW.

"Many of us, even the ladies, get really tempted to do this, but once you're out of Kenya, you're done," said Tom.

"What was it like going down on a European?" BMW asked, Tom stifling laughter.

Meshach, uncomfortable, replied, "Do you have any idea.....?"

Everyone burst out laughing, Tom hi-fiving BMW.

"They don't actually find pleasure in that!" said BMW. "They tell you to do that 'cause your black ass too broke to dish out terms and conditions!"

Tom laughed, then said, "She does not actually enjoy what she tells you to do. So do whatever she asks, get paid and keep your mouth shut."

"That is where a real member of the Kinyanya Sacco is tested," said BMW. "And the Vanilla Sacco too."

"I hope you save, by the way," said BMW after some time.

Meshach remained silent.

"He's right," said Tom. "The minute a Kinyanya is bored with you, she replaces you faster than you can say, "Wahu Kagwi just got married." So whatever you get from her, be wise. You don't have a shelf life."

"Remember Hussein?" BMW asked Tom.

Tom shook his head. "The poor fool."

"Who's Hussein?" asked Meshach.

BMW turned to Tom. "Is it time he knew of him?"

Tom parked the vehicle inside a roadside eatery. "Let's grab some takeaway first."

**"..... The President has issued a statement condemning the actions of former German ambassador to Kenya, Harry Schmidt-Iburu, upon release of the warrant for his arrest. Relations between the two countries have since been shaky, since German authorities had no idea what the former Ambassador, Harry Schmidt-Iburu was up to during his personal time....."**

**"The Diplomatic Officials Review bill is being tabled in Parliament which will Kenyan Police to conduct background checks on all diplomatic officials working in Kenya. This is after the police issued an arrest warrant for German ambassador to Kenya for murder, illegal trafficking of persons and paedophilia....."**

**"Activists have taken to the streets in protest against paedophilia and sex tourism taking place in the**

**Kenyan Coast. This is after a breakout story by the Daily Nation that resulted in the warrant of arrest for former German ambassador to Kenya, Harry Schmidt-Iburu, wanted by Interpol for murder, trafficking of persons and paedophilia....."**

**"The International Summit on Sex Tourism will take place in two weeks at the Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resort, Mombasa. Among the issues being discussed will be what the government is doing to spread awareness to the community about the dangers of sex tourism, and what the diplomatic and international community is doing to curb sex tourism, trafficking and slavery....."**

**"Police have confirmed the issue of an arrest warrant by Interpol for former Germany Ambassador to Kenya, Harry Schmidt-Iburu, wanted for murder, sexual trafficking and paedophilia. He was last seen yesterday in Eastleigh where he killed one of the people he was trafficking to Berlin....."**

**10:23.**

***Nation Media Centre, Kimathi Street, Nairobi.***

The editor was ecstatic as he looked at the newspaper.

"You two have done some really good work here," he said as he glanced at the paper. "Even the President voiced concern."

"It's going to go a long way in securing the lives of the young people that are involved in this involuntarily," said Saul as Clarkson fiddled with a tripod stand.

The editor smiled and put the newspaper down. "We all know how much of a thorn in the flesh the German ambassador was to a lot of people here."

"Not forgetting how he would call for press conferences and say nothing of essence," added Saul, as Ruth smiled.

*The fog was heavy, pressing down on her with pressure as she woke up and looked around.*

*The banging headache was unbearable.*

*Catherine could not make sense of where she was, whose house it was, what day it was, or even how she got to where she was then.....*

*And her bruises.....*

*"What is this place.....?"*

*She was chauffeured in a majestic limousine to a party.....She had a wild, ecstatic time.....*

*"I was supposed to be sending the.....Did I send them to her?"*

*She drank, and drank, and drank.....*

*She knew then, that she was to get her Schengen Visa, and go back to where she was.....*

*She toasted to her accomplishments..... Or so she thought....*

*"The party..... The drinks....."*

"Who was she.....?"

*A young woman silently watched her.....*

*Enjoying the mighty Catherine stumbling, and falling.....*

*The young woman relished every moment.....*

*Pummelling the daylights out of her.....*

*Seeing her with a total lack of coordination.....*

*She smiled and rose after the deed was done, she pushed a small pill inside her mouth and stepped over Catherine as she lay down, hopelessly lost.....*

With sudden realization Catherine knew..... It dawned on her with horror.....

*"Oh, Jesus, No....."*

As Khadijah walked away from a hopelessly drunk Catherine, she felt the rush that came with achieving a goal, an amazing jolt of sensations rocking her body.

*She's going to pay for what she did to Angela.*

*Funny enough, she can put up a fight even when drunk.*

She smiled at the thought that Catherine was going to wake up at some isolated place far, far away from anything and anyone she knew.

***Make sure her ecstasy is forever.***

The message could not be any clearer; she thought as she was being escorted by the waitress from the casino, now known as Njeri, she sat down in the ladies room near the mirror, weak.

"It felt good, I tell you," Khadijah said as she relaxed.  
"She still can fight despite drunk."

Njeri laughed, and then said, "You think she'll get the visa she craves so much?"

"Not from where she is now," replied Khadijah.

Njeri started cleaning the small blood traces on her lower lip, and as she did so, she stopped, horrified.



"What?" Khadijah asked, bewildered.

"My dear," Njeri said, alarmed, "You might want to look at the mirror."

Khadijah stood up and glanced at the mirror, bewildered.

"Check the left side of your lower lip," said Njeri, clearly alarmed.

As Khadijah glanced at the mirror, she froze, after she saw what made Njeri so horrified.

*On the left side of her lower lip there were sores, tiny but somewhat noticeable. Khadijah froze in horror as the reality of what the sores on her lip meant dawned on her.*

"My cousin had the same thing three years ago," said Njeri. "She's a skeleton now."

"Wait, so you're telling me...?"

"He broke the golden rule," said Tom. "And since then nobody has ever seen or heard of him."

"Guys, I was in the business, but I feel like I barely scratched the surface," admitted Meshach.

"That's because you made too much noise," said BMW. "The Queen Bee hates guys who are loud. So she does not call you up for top notch stuff."

"And I'm sure you're familiar with her famous disavow protocol," said Tom, gazing at Meshach.

BMW said, "The minute you contract an STD, or don't complete a task, or most importantly, know too much....."

Tom sliced his throat with his finger. Then his phone rang. He motioned to BMW, who nodded in understanding as Tom left.

"So, Hussein," continued BMW. "He was a model. Muscular, proportionally toned, eye-candy for many ladies. The Queen Bee took an instant liking for him. Everywhere she went, Hussein was there. Not

forgetting the aftermath, where they'd get busy at the back of her Mercedes many times.

Hussein wanted money, big time, and despite the good looks, the guy was broke as hell. He carried himself around as a top tier model but deep inside he was terrible in matters money, and hygiene. I crashed at his place for two months and ended up contracting scabies. I was out of a job for two weeks."

"Yikes!"

"I went under the radar in Kisumu until I recuperated and Tom got me a belated 'get well soon' gift."

"Let me guess..... Some of Kisumu's finest?"

BMW smiled. "I always had a soft spot for ladies from the lake side, man. The body, the attitude, and the way they love and care, the skin, the features, and also how responsive they are in matters Bedminton, they can get it anytime. Anyway, Hussein had this lack of financial responsibility that plagued him into his final years."

"Final years?" Meshach asked. "What happened?"

"The shelf life of a beach boy, a toy boy, a clandestine is very short," said BMW. "You must always grow eyes

at the back of your head. He didn't. He made the mistake of trying to expose The Queen Bee's identity to the world."

"We both know who she is in this country," said Meshach.

"Exactly," said BMW. "With a reputation that important at stake, Hussein became a wanted man. He was framed for maintaining a human trafficking racket and now is serving twenty seven years in Mandera GK Prison."

"Jeez," said Meshach.

"If you have seen her face, and she gets it in her head you have known too much, you disappear completely if you want to live," said BMW. "Tom here is a very lucky man."

"Why's that?"

"Tom was The Queen Bee's official massage therapist. Anytime she wanted to be pampered (and of course serviced), Tom was on standby, and he reaped big from it. Though the money was not the only important thing he gained by being that close to her."

"Information...." Meshach said.

"You're a fast learner," BMW said. "Tom's wanted by the police for escaping from an approved school. He signed a deal with two journalists he helped out in Mombasa; if he helps the journalists with info about the Kinyanya Sacco and all it entails, so they can get the ground-breaking story they've been researching on and hopefully win the Pulitzer, he gets his slate wiped clean and walks away a free man."

"Not forgetting the arrests of the century."

"He's managed to be close to The Queen Bee for five years with absolutely no suspicion, and I want to see that guy free," said BMW, suddenly grabbing hold of his injured limb. "So if you start having any smart ass ideas, I will personally gut the daylights out of you."

Meshach nodded in understanding as Tom came back, alarmed.

"What is it?" BMW asked.

"There's this International Summit on Sex Tourism taking place two weeks from now," said Tom. "Guess who is heading it?"

BMW didn't need to be told who.

"If we provide sufficient information to the journalists some very high profile individuals will be arrested in that summit."

"You and I both know how high this thing goes and these folks appearing to campaign against this thing..."

"Are benefiting from the same thing," finished BMW.

"And the manhunt has begun for the German ambassador guy," Tom continued. "The journalists are happy, The Pandora box is about to be opened, and if I testify before the inquiry upon the arrest of the people involved, I'll be free."

"What's the problem?"

"Have you forgotten The Queen Bee reads the newspaper too?" Tom said. "Because of the German ambassador's screw-up in Eastleigh, she is on high alert with any future clients."

"It's a miracle we even got him out alive," said BMW, as he motioned to Meshach.

"She is ready for anything, that's for sure," said Tom. "So we need to be careful."

"What about Delilah?"

"The woman jettisoned herself to Kinshasa," said Tom. "I hear she and The Queen Bee have fallen out."

"That's not good," said BMW.

"We need to tread carefully around Mombasa, man," said Tom. "We can't afford to go down the drain here."

"Is Delilah planning to sell her down the river?" BMW asked suddenly.

"It's likely she'll do so but not until someone makes the first move," said Tom. "The community is sickened by all this and soon there will be demonstrations across major roads in the Coast. The journalists told me to keep a low profile there, at least until we meet up again at their address."

Looking at Meshach, BMW asked, "Has the Queen Bee ever treated you with any form of malice, contempt, disrespect or done anything to you that made you traumatized in any way?"

*Like an oncoming locomotive, it came back to Meshach.*

***Let go of me!!!!***

He couldn't see where he was taken.....

***This is not what I agreed to!!!!***

He fought back but was beaten.....

*They're too many.....What are they doing...?*

He was forced on his knees, then forward in an awkward bending position.....

He could hear them snigger as they ripped all his clothes off.....

*No,*

*No,*

His efforts to break free went futile.

**No.....**

Pain rocked his body as the act continued, mocking laughter echoed across the room, and an occasional beep of the camera.....

A very powerful woman watched everything, lost in the cloud of sexual ecstasy.....



**Meshach's face said it all.....**

BMW laid a hand on him, bringing him back to reality. "Say nothing. We understand."

"Want to help us take this bitch down and get our freedom?" Tom asked. "You need your freedom as well, man."

*What makes you think you'll get yours, Tom?*

"Did the same thing happen to you?" Meshach asked, close to tears.

"We did not fight back," said BMW. "We only asked for one condition."

"To always use protection," finished Tom.

"Our faces are all over the Internet in the middle of humiliating acts, but we knew we would overcome this eventually" BMW said. "We knew we were in this, not because we wanted to, but because we had no choice."

"That's why we persevered, to get something we could fall back on when shit blows up," said Tom. "And now it's time we took down this bitch."

"And all she stands for."

Meshach looked at the two, then, with his good arm, raised his drink.

"For our freedom."

*Yes. Except yours, Tom.*

The others followed suit, saying the same thing, and the three guys downed their drinks.

As they walked to the car and Tom ushered Meshach inside, he walked to BMW. "I did not want to tell you this in front of him, but there's another issue."

"What?"

"I called up someone at The Backrooms. He told me about your new fish."

"Go on."

"Angela's sustained emotional trauma, but she has no STDs. Jamo, the rapper guy, is going bonkers. He's holed up with the eleven outcasts all set to be given away."

"Damn," said BMW. "What about long-legs Kate?"

"She was beaten senseless by Khadijah. She'd been last spotted in Kisauni in the company of some European. Rumour has it it's the same dude with the eleven."

"That girl will do anything to get back to Europe," muttered BMW.

"You're still clean, right?"

"Yeah," said BMW. "Why're you asking?"

"Khadijah," said Tom, "It's confirmed; she's not clean anymore."

*BMW froze in horror.*

*He once said I had the lithe and graceful body of a ballerina..... He wanted me to be his ballerina....*

*He said things I never heard from anyone before*

*He was hairy....bushy.....and pale*

*All I ever dreamed of was being a ballerina,*

*For no one else.....*

*He told me of places we were going to visit together, speaking a language so sweet I wanted to learn it.*

*He didn't care how young I was.*

*I was only twelve when he started this....*

*My father wanted me to spend time with him.*

*My father was blinded by the wads of cash he was given.*

*Different currencies bamboozled him, too nonplussed to think twice, about deals too good to be true.*

*I was collateral, a commodity,  
A tool for amusement and satisfaction, a vessel which a  
man would use to experience a brief taste of heaven,  
Hence the exclamations upon prodding my insides.*

***He did it eight times. It was going to be the ninth time***

He did not know that a doctor in South Africa,  
And a war bride from DRC taught me how to put teeth  
in between.

Razor sharp teeth that cut through his forceful entry and  
severed the hot, bludgeoning presence that sickened me  
and weakened him to the point of falling to his knees,  
His pale skin now laden with a crimson that reflected  
my hatred.

*I was on the run, fearing for my life, until I bumped into you*

And for some reason, as I looked into your eyes, I knew I could trust you.

*I knew you would save me from the hell I believed for a long time I belonged*

*Still I see, and feel myself gracefully moving like a ballerina*

*I am another's ballerina, delicate and graceful in his loving arms*

*Mkombozi wangu.....*

*My saviour.....*

*You gave me the teeth I needed,*

*You set me free from nectar-filled poison*

I am now in a faraway land where the language is so sweet, I can't wait to share it with you

*I long for you.*

I was sent to another land, but I yearn for my triumphant return to the land which hosts your loving arms, to be your ballerina....

*Always full in the rightful places, for you,*

*Flexible and graceful,*

*An African ballerina.*

*Té quiero.*

*Nakupenda.*

*I love you.*

**19:35.**

**PARIS, FRANCE.**

A young woman sat down on a bench at the dance studio, tired after her rehearsal. She took off her ballerina shoes and replaced a Band-Aid on her big toe, then paused for a moment.

*Silent among others.*

*No one knowing where we were headed.*

She reached into her purse and grabbed a photo of BMW and her, sharing very happy times, and then turned it backwards to reveal contact details.

*It was you who took me back to my beautiful home,  
made sure I was reunited with my loved ones, shielded  
far from my greedy father*

*You said to me,*

*"You belong out there, where you're free to be the  
butterfly you are."*

She looked out at the Eiffel Tower, glistening in the night, and fixed her ponytail, turning again to the photo of BMW.

*I am your butterfly*

*I am coming home to you.*

She grabbed a cell phone and dialled the number from the photo.

*Finally, we shall be reunited.*

*No longer running, looking behind our backs, no longer afraid of what the world will say to us.*



"Hello?"

(Pause)

"Yeah, we're on our way."

(Pause)

"We know how to convince them."

(Pause)

"I know the location, and I still got them."

(Pause)

"Okay, got it."

Tom hung up as BMW looked at a memory card.

"You're saying the recordings are here?"

"Yep," said Tom. "A lot of conversations that took place when I was massaging her. All I needed was my phone."

"And the other deals we've been handling?"

"All of them; Dadaab, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nairobi, your 'butterfly' rescue mission....."

BMW blushed.

"Butterfly?" Meshach questioned, puzzled.

"When I say BMW has been around the world please believe me," said Tom, his eyes on the road.

Meshach smiled as he looked at BMW.

"Someone tried to steal our job a few years ago," BMW said. "One of the people inside the truck was my 'butterfly', a mixed-heritage girl from France who was a ballerina and gymnast before being trafficked here."

"A huge shipment of human cargo was headed to South Africa," Tom continued, "That's where BM here and his Butterfly met, and became very inseparable. Khadijah was livid with jealousy because of the girl's agility, amplified by a very good body figure, and skin darker than hers too, so she revenged by sleeping with very many white men."

"Emotions cloud reason," said BMW.

"The girls trafficked from Europe were to be taken to South Africa, and BMW was chosen among others by

the Queen Bee to accompany them. Khadijah pretended to be part of the deal, leaked everything to the German ambassador fugitive, and he set up an ambush on the highway to Tanzania."

"Jesus," said Meshach. "Is that why you always were so uncomfortable around her?"

"Yep," BMW nodded. "Even in campus I really didn't have a lot of freedom."

"The mission somehow went well, but some girls ran away, BMW saved his Butterfly by getting her on a plane to France, going broke so as to get her a flat in Paris where she could lie low....."

"And The Queen Bee, thankfully did not know my part in freeing the girls so she stopped dealing with Harry, the German ambassador turned fugitive," said BMW. "But Khadijah has always had it in for me ever since."

"In fact, Meshach," Tom said, "You know one of the girls very well."

"Who?"

"She made it to Europe but messed up badly, and has been dying to get back there ever since."

"With very long legs too," added BMW.

**....." Demonstrations have taken place in the middle of Mombasa ahead of the International Summit on Sex Tourism set to take place in two weeks' time. Activists have taken to the streets in protest after the increasing number of underage girls found dead along the beaches in South Coast....."**

**".....Police have begun investigations into hotels suspected to be housing underage persons kept for the purpose of sex tourism, alongside rumours of clients being allowed in hotel rooms with children that do not belong to them. This is after the Kenyan government lifted visa requirements for all children visiting Kenya with their guardians....."**

Tom stole a side glance at BMW and saw a slight streak of sadness in him. He didn't have to be told why, and he also knew the risks that came with trying to stop the disavow protocol that followed Khadijah the minute her disease was going to be noticed.

"Maybe we can rescue her," Tom said.

"I don't know," said BMW. "She could have hidden this from me, and there probably are other things she kept from me."

"We're going to need counsel from Bi Kijembe first before we make any hasty decisions, man," said Tom. "I mean, Bi Kijembe has handled disavowed folks before, and she'll know what to do with her before it gets too serious."

"I don't know, man, the more she keeps it a secret the more she suffers," said BMW. "Even her mother won't like the sound of that."

"Ultimately it's her choice," said Tom. "We'll just tell her and let her decide. Meanwhile, the journalists are on the way to cover the Summit in two weeks. How about we cut folks in from The Backrooms?"

"After we've dropped off Meshach?"

"Yeah," said Tom. "And we get as many guys as possible to speak out, though that's going to be an uphill task."

"For one, Jamo won't listen to shit," said BMW, "and let me not even start with Angela, whose emotional trauma....."

"Is a good excuse for us to show the world what's really going on," said Tom. "Think about it."

"The idea seems apt, man," added Meshach. "At least let's save Angela. If the others don't want to swallow their pride, it's their funeral. I swallowed mine; here I am on the way to salvation."

"Just my point, BM," said Tom. "Enough of coaxing grown-ass adults as if they're children. The beehive is crumbling down, with The Queen Bee in the centre."

Then Tom's phone rang, and upon looking at the screen, turned to BMW.

"Guess who?"

"Who?"

Tom handed him the phone and continued driving. "Your Butterfly."

*Maji Matamu Rehabilitation Centre, Ukunda.*

*One Week before the Summit.*

An old lady sat outside glancing at a beautiful early afternoon enjoying the gentle breeze from the coast as she chewed on some khat.

Beside her were sounds of young men and women enjoying a game of volleyball with the villagers, and she paused with a leaf in one hand, occasionally glancing at the on-going game.

*She was proud of herself.*

She looked on as the young people played volleyball, happy with each other. Her wrinkled eyes looked away from the game and turned to the beautiful early afternoon sunshine, relishing the taste of the khat leaves.

*How far I have come.*

*How much I have accomplished.*

The legendary Bi Kijembe, now heading a little rehabilitation centre for everyone who did what she used to do, who walked the streets she walked, and saw all that she saw, was content with the fresh start she was

awarded by life, for she knew how dangerous the streets of Mombasa were; she was living proof that no family should ever use their daughter as a means of escape from poverty.

One of the volleyball players, a tall girl, stopped playing upon seeing a car park outside, and walked to Bi Kijembe and told her about the guests.

On walking to the front of the building adjacent to the parking lot, she beamed gleefully at the sight of the three gentlemen, one with a sling supporting his arm.

"My babies!" Bi Kijembe exclaimed as the two guys hugged the old lady, the one with an injured arm watching with a smile.

"You finally came to visit!" Bi Kijembe said after looking at the two.

"We missed you," Tom said, still holding shopping bags. The tall girl offered to help him with the shopping bags.

"I have missed my two adorable boys," Bi Kijembe exclaimed as she embraced both BMW and Tom, the tall girl smiling as she walked in.



"I see you've brought a new one here," Bi Kijembe said as she looked at Meshach.

"He could use some help, Grandma," said Tom.

"What happened to him?"

"Someone went too far," BMW said.

"Oh, poor baby," Bi Kijembe said as she embraced Meshach. "Let's get you cleaned up first."

Inside the Centre, as two doctors tended to Meshach, BMW and Tom sat outside with Bi Kijembe, watching the on-going volleyball game.

"These expatriates think messing with our children is acceptable," Bi Kijembe said, sorrowfully. "I don't know what their mothers teach them in their homes."

"We're all living proof of their deeds, Grandma," said Tom, looking on at the game.

"They think they can visit our beautiful Coast, and take advantage of the poor children here," she continued. "It pains me to see young people willing to do anything to go abroad with them, not knowing what their real intentions are."

"Like Hussein?"

"Exactly! If only the poor boy listened to me," Bi Kijembe continued. "He wouldn't be in Shimo la Tewa today."

"It was not easy getting out without her knowledge, Grandma."

"Aaaaaaa....." Bi Kijembe said. "She's still locking up poor kids for pleasure in that awful place?"

"Yes," he said. "There are others we want to rescue from there, just like Meshach."

"Oh, you two have been very brave in helping your friend," she said. "You've seen first-hand how dangerous these wazungu can get, like that one in the newspaper."

"We don't want others to end up like Hussein," said Tom. "Or even die."

"How many of our own have perished under that dreadful 'Queen Bee'?" Bi Kijembe said. "Remember Matilda in 2007, and how that case got hushed up?"

Everyone nodded grimly.

"All that poor girl did was run away from the violence, but instead she ended up with that German ambassador. Where is she now?"

She turned to the two boys, and said, "What makes me so happy is how you two always stood by each other, and how you safely brought your injured friend here. He will be okay here, because God protects this house."

"Grandma, we were talking to some journalists about her," said Tom, "They too want to help."

"They're part of a group that wants to put an end to all this," said BMW.

"We're going to put an end to her, Grandma," said BMW. "Too many of our own have been taken for granted."

Bi Kijembe looked at the two boys and beamed with pride. "Nobody knows her more, in this whole world, than I do. And yes, it's very easy to do what you're planning. But in equal measure it's very risky, because she has eyes and ears everywhere."

She stood up, still fit for her age. "There is a lot you two must see before you face her. Follow me."

Inside a private room they walked in and sat down as Bi Kijembe began sifting through files. On the wall was a pin-up of Bi Kijembe in her younger days, performing in a Taarab night.

"By the way, do you know a lady called Lola Montez?" she asked.

Both guys shook their heads.

"You see, our 'Queen Bee' here has many similarities to a woman many years ago whose reputation ended up toppling even kings," she said, pulling out newspaper articles that featured The Queen Bee.

"You see, this woman started off just like you. She was in the business, striking gold after selling herself to a dying hospitality guru, now 'giving back to society,'" she said, producing a birth certificate. "She parades herself as adopted, but how is it possible when she had parents all along?"

According to the birth certificate, Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf, also known as The Queen Bee, was born Alice Yusuf Kijembe.

The look on the two guys was unforgettable, as they saw the birth certificate.

"Hang on," said BMW, alarmed. "She's your granddaughter?"

She nodded, saying, "And there's more."

*It never occurred to the two guys that The Queen Bee was no different from someone like Khadijah; only she got a head start with the former CEO of the Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resorts, Christoph Orchardson.*

*Christoph, a European expatriate with buckets of money, landed in Mombasa and in no time started an empire that grew into one of the biggest hotel chains in Eastern Africa.*

*In the midst of 'giving back to society' he met a young lady who was a bush prostitute in the heart of Kilifi, and took her under his wing, infatuated by her waist's ability to rotate at the speed of two hundred kilometres per hour. In no time, he took her everywhere he went, not knowing what she had in mind for herself, and also not knowing her real reputation, the Kenyan version of Lola Montez.*

*He bought many shares from the many resorts that were there before Orchardson-Yusuf, bringing them all into one giant umbrella.*

*As tourists flocked into the Coast, he continued making deals with government officials and boosted the economy by 33%.*

*The government officials enjoyed special treatment as guests of Orchardson-Yusuf, and also were envious of the arm candy he was spotted with all the time.*

*Knowing she was once a bush prostitute, the government officials met her and proposed a deal.*

**Make his death look like a heart attack, and your slate, together with the others you've ever been arrested with, will be wiped clean.**

**All we want is Orchardson-Yusuf.**

*She was no stranger to intimidation, and knew that the government was never going to keep their part of the deal; still she liked the idea of doing away with the dying old man whose empire now was on the brink of collapse, so she added something small to his favourite drink.*

*The last drink Mzee Christoph Orchardson ever took.*

*She acted quickly, marshalling all the girls she worked with, rehabilitated them, paying for their business*

*classes and giving them top tier positions at Orchardson-Yusuf.*

*Before the government knew it, three quarters of many prostitutes along the Coast were major league players in the hospitality and tourism industry, opening businesses, recruiting more sex workers and establishing the popular Banglapesa, what looks like a slum at first glance, but is the biggest underground brothel in all of East Africa.*

*The government knew that they had a serious competitor for the Orchardson-Yusuf, but also knew that Alice Yusuf Kijembe, who was now Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf, had grown eyes at the back of her head. So the government took a back seat, buying time ahead of her fall from grace, because in the game of power, it is during the moment of victory when you are the most vulnerable.*

"She has forgotten about the deed she committed to get to power," Bi Kijembe remarked. "She forgot about me, disowned her family and gave herself the identity she has now."

*Both guys, sat stunned at the story they just heard.*

"She is at her most vulnerable, and now is the time."

*It was no secret she was one of the major perpetrators of paedophilia and sex tourism, but the guys had no idea about the history. How a bush prostitute rose to be one of the biggest hotel owners in Eastern Africa, only God knew, but they knew one thing. They were going to need professional help in taking her down.*

*Were the guys sickened by the life they lived? Deep down they knew the truth.*

*Circumstances led them to this life, but as Bi Kijembe told them, all they had to do was to have faith, for nothing was permanent.*

*They always had a place to run to when things heated up, despite the assets they acquired over time, but it was time to call it quits. It was time for accountability and truth.*



"How's Meshach?" asked Tom.

"He'll be okay," said BMW.

"Now we wait."

"This'll be the craziest thing we've ever done."

"Don't worry," said Tom. "We never liked the Queen Bee anyway."

Moments later, as the guys sat at the veranda and enjoyed the sunset, another car parked outside, and a man and woman came out.

Tom mentioned to BMW, and both walked to them, shaking hands.

After introductions, Tom produced the memory cards, and handed them to the woman.

The two were very grateful, enthusiastic about everything that transpired.

Bi Kijembe walked over to them, and they respectfully shook hands with her, enthusiastic about seeing her and the good work she was doing.

"So then, shall we begin the interview?" asked one of them, as the man produced a camera.

"We will position the camera in a way your faces won't be recognized," said the man.

"We'll work on your voices too," said the woman.

**BMW, Tom and Bi Kijembe nodded in agreement.**

## **Chapter Eight**

*I am tired of it all.*

*I am tired of sleepless nights,*

*Worrying about my baby's health, what deed is being done on her now.....*

*I am at fault, I accept.*

***I told her to go right ahead.***

*I wanted our house to be as majestic, and I believed when I was told that nothing gets a family out of poverty faster than a daughter with a white boyfriend.*

*Now my daughter, my flesh and blood, is the star in hideous acts, the participant in horrendous fetishes, all so she can bring home something*

*My daughter, I am too proud to say sorry*

*Because my upbringing taught me*

*That the parent is always right*

*And you, the child, are always wrong*

*I can never apologize*

*Because I don't have the strength to*

*I was never taught how to*

*How important it is*

*I can only hang my head in shame*

*Knowing all the things you do*

*To bring home something*

*Is all thanks to my guidance*

*I am to blame*

*For the horrors you've participated in*

*You are free to turn your back on me because I  
provoked you into this*

*You are free to no longer respect me*

*How can you,*

*After all you've done*

*To get me out of poverty?*

*How can you,*

*When all I've done*

*Is think about my happiness, talk about me, put myself  
first,*

*Yet you're my responsibility?*

*Usinisamehe, mtoto wangu*

*Don't forgive me,*

*Don't show remorse,*

*Walk away and turn your back,*

*I deserve no forgiveness*

*I deserve to die alone*

*I deserve to be disowned*

*Paying for the sin of not taking the responsibility*

*That is you, my baby.*

*01:44.*

*South Coast.*

Khadijah's mother stepped outside, tears freely flowing down her cheeks.

Her husband was lying on the veranda, still clutching an alcohol bottle. His pocket was sticking out, revealing a tiny fragment of a fifty dollar bill.

She looked at him, and then took a few steps to a nearby tree.

She looked up at it, having very robust branches, and threw a rope around one branch and tied it firmly.

With surprising agility she managed to climb up one branch, and then stood up, her weight being supported by the robust tree branch.

She hesitated and looked behind at the small homestead still crying, she slipped the rope around her neck.

*Don't forgive me, my child.*

Then she jumped from the tree branch.

*Mumbai, India.*

A young woman in Western clothes disembarked from the plane and checked in, clearing with the immigration officials.

She produced a Kenyan passport, and after it was verified, together with her Indian birth certificate, she was granted access to the country.

The immigration details showed that Deepika Akshay Kapoor, born in India but married to a wealthy Asian businessman based in Nairobi called Gurneal Akshay Kumar, had returned home to spend time with family.

Deepika, with a smirk on her face, knew she had one person to thank, the one who was so sly as to trick her into 'offering swimming lessons' in the Indian Ocean.

She walked briskly to a small girl who was holding a placard with her name on it, and they embraced and quickly walked to a car.

The driver drove the girls to a mansion twenty six kilometres northwest of Mumbai, and the girls walked in, she produced a set of keys and handed some to Deepika.

*Like I promised myself, I came back home, a millionaire.*

"Where are my parents?" Deepika asked.

"Still in the suburbs," the girl replied.

"Good. I'm planning a surprise for them," Deepika said as she sauntered into an amazing living room.

"In a few weeks' time their last days here will be the most peaceful."

"I'm so grateful for what you bought for me," said the girl. "But Deepika, how did you get all this money in such a short period of time?"

"I got married," said Deepika. "I am no longer the one to pay dowry."

"It's so fascinating," the girl continued. "The man paying the dowry. I'd very much like that."

Deepika took a long, hard look at her.

"It's so hard here," the girl continued. "You can't find jobs even after school, you're supposed to pay dowry if you want to be wed.....and we both know how



malicious the boy's family will be when they realize you want to be wed to their boy....."

Deepika looked at her, then said, "Are you sure you want to know how I got all this?"

"Yes," said the girl. "I was stunned to see you out of the blue buying a house! Very few girls can even get designer saris, let alone assets. How did you get so lucky?"

Deepika looked outside, then said, "Are you tired of being the one to pay dowry?"

"You have no idea, Deepika. I want to be married to a rich man who will buy me a house too!" the girl said.

Deepika looked at her, and then said, "I hope your mother taught you Mujra very well."

"Dancing? That's a walk in the park!"

Deepika looked at her and saw the desperation, the yearning for the best in life.

*This is going to be easy.*

"Get your sisters ready. Meet me here Tuesday at two in the afternoon," she said with finality. "And make sure you have passports."

**18:44.**

***The International Summit against Sex Tourism Conference,***

***The Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resort,***

***Mombasa, Kenya.***

Delegates mingled and shared ideologies as the press continued to take pictures, covering the on-going conference.

Then the MC took the stage, saying, “And now, ladies and gentlemen, the moment we've been waiting for; please welcome the CEO of the Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resorts, Madame Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf.”

Amid applause, she walked to the stage, ever graceful with every step. After acknowledging the introduction she commenced her speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this Summit would not have been successful if it was not for the County Government of Mombasa. I'd like everyone to give a round of applause to the Governor of Mombasa County, Hon. Hussein Ali Mohammed."

*The Governor acknowledged the applause.*

"It is his support that has not only made this Summit successful but also increased massive awareness against sex tourism in our Coast."

*Applause echoed in the building.*

Saul was one of the cameramen focusing on Ingrid, and Collins was busy taking pictures.

"How long till the premiere?" Saul asked, still on his camera.

"Sit tight, bro," Collins said. "It's about to go down."

"We have come together, as stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism industry, to sign the Memorandum of Agreement with the Government of Kenya, to control the number of tourists booking hotels with children who are not related to them, and to monitor any paedophilia activities in the Coast."

As the applause died down she continued, "Our children barely reach puberty before they are thrust into the world of sex tourism, because of a worrying issue, which is poverty. Poverty has resulted in parents selling off their children to paedophiles, sex pests and other people involved in sex tourism, and we, as the stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism industry must spread awareness against this vice to protect the future generations of Kenya."

As Ingrid continued her speech, with a pie chart showing the staggering number of children involved in

sexual slavery, Ruth inserted a small memory card into Clarkson's computer, looking at audio files.

"I'm assuming that the audio files will premiere in this Summit?" Clarkson asked.

"I don't see anywhere else fit for a grand premiere," Ruth remarked.

"The minute we play these files, she's toast," said Clarkson, looking at a specific audio file they were listening to.

Ruth smiled, looking at the audio file.

"Here comes the Pulitzer," she remarked as she took an auxiliary cable and Clarkson walked over to the mixer.

"Did you know that a UNICEF-supported 2006 survey on sex tourism along the Kenyan coast reported that between 2,000 and 3,000 girls worked year-round as commercial sex workers, and nearly half of them started as young as 12 or 13 years of age? These are girls who are supposed to be in school, girls who will become future leaders and very important people in this country....."

*Her microphone suddenly got cut.*

"Hello....? What's going on?"

*As curiosity got the best of the delegates and the audience an audio file was played, loud enough for everyone to hear.*

"How many girls do we need?" the voice of Ingrid clearly asking. "The sooner we can supply them, the happier our clients will be."

A male voice replied, "The shipment is on the way, Madame. Once we have arrived at the port we will inspect and deploy them to various brothels for the clients."

"Fantastic," said Ingrid in the recording. "I want some of them directed to The Backrooms. The sooner we have new fish, the better."

It quickly jumped to another audio file of a truck being reversed and stopping, the rear doors being opened and voices saying "Move quickly, your clients await you! Make no sound, make haste!"

*Madame Ingrid's face was as pale as maize flour, all the blood drained from her face.*

The projector screen behind her popped up and showed a POV video of a structure, with hundreds of young men and women divided, holed up in grilled doors and with security guards standing near the main exits.

As the main gate opened, navy blue stiletto-clad Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf briskly walked in, inspecting every room and stopping near a room which had eleven girls covering their faces in shame.

Then finally, one interview was played, naming her as one of the biggest perpetrators of paedophilia and sex tourism.

The audience gasped in total shock, the Governor frozen in pure surprise.



The press was having a field day with amazing photos of the shocked audience, and of Madame Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf frozen in pure shock as to how the house of cards came crashing down on her.

Right on cue, three female officers came on stage and arrested Madame Ingrid and frog marched her away from the stunned audience.

Delegates, foreigners and diplomats were appalled by what just happened.

Ruth and Clarkson looked on from the equipment room, the International Summit against Sex Tourism taking one bizarre twist of events.

Saul and Collins came out bursting from the door, saying, "You have any idea what this has done?"

"It was about time the Pandora box was opened," Clarkson replied, smiling at the brave Ruth.

"Hold on," said Collins. "How exactly did you get all this footage?"

"Remember the Nyama Tamu Sardines truck?" Clarkson commented. "Ruth here played the part of a trafficked girl, and that's where she met up with Tom."

"I was wearing a wire the whole time," Ruth said. "The minute we arrived at Orchardson-Yusuf, Tom gave me the other recordings he could smuggle, and we promised to meet up soon for the others."

Saul and Collins were beside themselves with shock. "No wonder one of the girls in the photos looked so familiar!"

Ruth smiled. "I always cherished my acting lessons."

She closed down her laptop as others came inside the equipment room, finding the four individuals.

One man, with a press tag on his chest, looked at the four press personnel in the equipment room, and said, "You four are the bravest of all."

*"Madame Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf, otherwise known as The Queen Bee, has been taken into custody for racketeering; sexual trafficking and paedophilia after damning recordings of her were played at the International Summit against Sex Tourism going on in Mombasa. Police have confirmed the recordings to be of Madame Ingrid as she awaits trial....."*

*"The four journalists who broke the story on a massive sex tourism racket in the Kenyan coast have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, with the President of the Republic of Kenya honouring them with the Moran of the Burning Spear for their brave exposé. This is after the CEO of The Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resorts, Madame Orchardson-Yusuf, was arrested for racketeering, sexual trafficking and paedophile activities. She has not been awarded bail and will stand trial on November 24....."*

*"After the arrest of Madame Ingrid Orchardson-Yusuf, the President of Kenya, in conjunction with the Governor of Mombasa, has launched a special tribunal which will vet every single stakeholder in the hospitality and tourism industry. This is after the CEO of the Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resorts was arrested.*

*"On further investigations into the architecture of the Orchardson-Yusuf Beach Resorts, police have found*

*massive rooms with high security, housing many teenagers and young people believed to be participating in sex tourism. Many of the young people found in what is known as "The Backrooms" have been taken into custody, with others being taken to hospital awaiting rehabilitation....."*

***".....A body of a middle aged woman was found hanging from a tree in a South Coast village. Police have yet to release the identity of the woman who took her own life, and her husband has been arrested for failing to prevent the suicide of his wife....."***

Khadijah was in tears. The news she just received struck her right from the core.

*My mom.....gone.....*

She saw no reason to go on with anything. She was dying, and just as she had amassed enough courage to tell her mother the dreadful news, her demise happened.

*Do I have a purpose anymore?*

*Should I continue?*

*How can I find equilibrium now, when my centre of gravity is gone?*

Khadijah knew that her time was nearly over, and if there was something she truly dreaded, the one place girls no longer desirable ended up, it was the bush.

The bush was the place where girls once glamorous and desired by white men hungry for a youthful pair of legs to spread open found themselves, no longer lovable,

eking out a living by servicing locals in the bush and receiving peanuts.

Khadijah silently sat down on the edge of the bed and stared at the grilled partition of her room. Loathe simmered inside her as she reflected on her father, his greed the core reason she was in this situation.

*This is his fault.*

Her loathe for men grew tenfold since then, growing extra bitter about them.

Her anger increased, especially towards a certain woman who was definitely going to yank BMW off his senses.

A woman so graceful and beautiful she captivated and mesmerized everywhere she went.

A woman Khadijah worked so hard to eradicate, making sure BMW was hers and hers only.

A woman Khadijah knew, upon reuniting with BMW, would erase his memory of her forever.

Was she scared of her?

Was she scared of losing the one thing she had left?

What extent was she willing to go to make sure she still had BMW, despite the fact that she was dying?

*Anything.*

*That's what she was ready to do.*

*One thing was for sure, Khadijah said to herself.*

*I will never end up in the bush.*

A young, leggy woman looked at the ocean, with tears flowing down her cheeks.

A cold breeze brushed past her blood-soaked maxi dress as she looked on at the ocean reflected by a beautiful sunset.

*All I ever wanted was to be a model.*

*From the many times I'd wear my mother's heels,*

*Her loving eyes radiant with hope.*

*Looking at myself in the mirror,*

*The pretty little girl I was, that dreamed of beauty pageants & runways,*

*All dolled up and beautiful for the world to see.....*

*I ended up seeing hideous acts being done with me as the main show*

*I asked for the party,*

*I ended up being the party.*

She walked towards the ocean, tears flowing down her cheeks, her body slowly getting submerged.



*I'm not so sure*

*If my mother will have the loving eyes she had if she saw me.*

*All I ever dreamed of.....*

*All I ever wanted.....*

She continued getting submerged until she completely disappeared.

A young boy, motionless, looked at a painting on the wall of a beautiful coastal horizon.

"I've never understood exactly what it is he keeps looking at, lost in his own world," said Bi Kijembe, as her nurse stood nearby.

Bi Kijembe slowly walked to the young boy.

"Okay, now," she said, taking his hand as the boy looked at her.

"Come, let's wash your hands. It's dinner time."

***#mombasarahamyfoot***

## **About The Author**

Haroun Risa is an actor, author & scriptwriter from Nairobi, Kenya who has featured on both local & international film & TV productions including the feature film, 18 HOURS, alongside the acclaimed Netflix production, Sense8.

His interests range from palm reading to travelling, filmmaking, meditation, world music, reading novels, documentaries, journalism, acting, dancing, motorsports, soccer, basketball, and writing.

Also, Haroun Risa is using the Mombasa Raha, My Foot novel series to raise awareness against human trafficking and sex tourism in Kenya, joining hands with HAART Kenya, the NGO in Kenya known for fighting both cross-border & mainland trafficking.

He has also gotten into the agroforestry world, & has been part of Emesera Forest Tree Nurseries Ltd, an organization known for advocating for the planting of the fibrous-root, clonal variety of the eucalyptus tree, among other beneficial agroforestry projects.

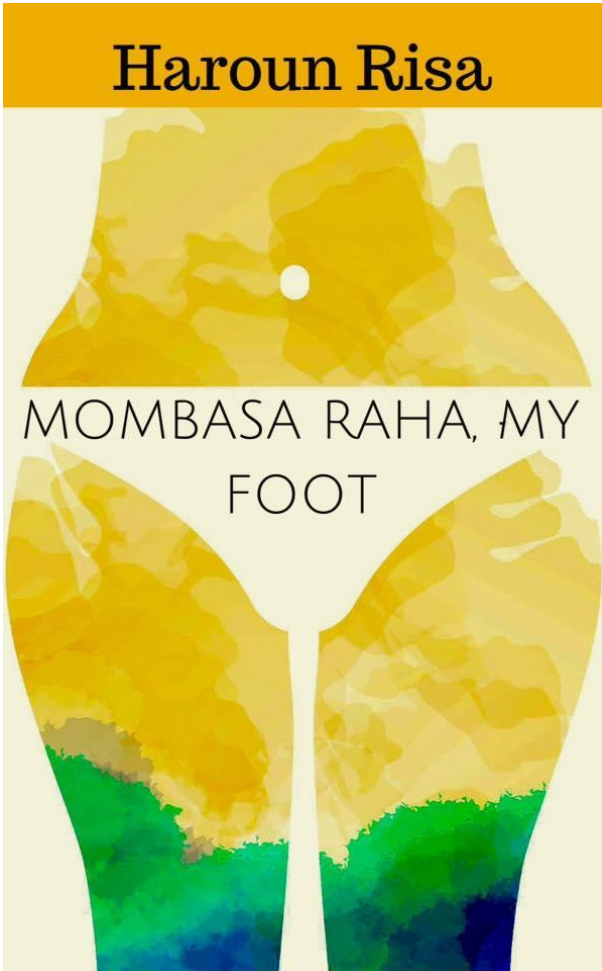
You can find Haroun Risa on major social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, to catch a glimpse of his blog posts alongside the snippets

## HAROUN RISA

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of productions he has featured in, or interviews from various TV shows.

Original Book Cover Design by Nduati Githae.





## EPILOGUE

*Behind closed gates,*

*Lie bruised souls; trapped by those they lent their hearts to,*

*Streams of tears flow freely, shed by innocent folks trapped by circumstance,*

*Surrounded by a thousand plagues.*

*Behind every door in a bedsitter, lies a simple mind with no ambition,*

*Satisfied with a few shillings gained from rough hands,*

*Hands like sandpaper, that know no cleanliness, and a bladder so loose it causes accidents on the sheets,*

*Resulting in the trademark cologne from his local's urinal, a cologne he can't detect despite drooling on the same place he caused that accident.*

*I am saddened by simple minds and grown men who can't clean, whose shoes, when taken off,*

*Result in a nuclear blast.*

*Behind tinted windows,*

*Lie partners, whose backs face each other, whose  
tongues are as silent as graveyards.*

*Partners, who once vowed to remain loving until  
death's cruel hand took either one away*

*Who spent vacations locking legs and straddling hips in  
that ridiculous but sweet exercise which resulted in  
grunts and moans of pleasure,*

*Now see red in each other,*

*And not red, as in love,*

*With suppressed urges to take off the burning ring on  
the finger, which had so much value, and was once  
proof of a love so strong.*

*Behind shut curtains in the back seat of that Benz,*

*Sit two total strangers,*

*One significantly ashamed by the fact that an empty  
purse, an empty promise from HELB,*

*Demands from living a lie,*

*Pressures from peers to fit in,*

*Resulted in her legs being spread open, in that  
ridiculous position every woman must find themselves  
in,*

*So an old mzungu can poke, push and prod,*

*Grunting like an Isuzu DMAX all in the name of 'barter  
trade'.*

*Behind every locked bedroom lies a bitter soul who  
refuses to accept self-mistakes,*

*Who refuses to acknowledge self-wrongs, and lets them  
manifest inside her instead of fighting through self-  
healing,*

*Until it becomes a cancer that feeds on her,*



*Pushes her further into the abyss.*

*Behind every single room*

*Lies empty alcohol bottles that tell the story of failure,*

*A statement of resignation and a proclamation of failed  
ambition,*

*Scattered ashes,*

*A testimony of charred lungs,*

*Blackened by years of hopelessness*

*Scattered, used condoms that tell of the ridiculous  
gymnastic session of the championship game,  
Bedminton that involves 'Moaning Lisas' in ridiculous  
positions, seeking release in grunts that sound like  
diesel engines.*

*We have lost. We gave up on the ones that mattered.*

*We have lied,*

*We have tried,*

*We have fried,*

*We have been fried,  
In shameful acts, we have survived.  
But we will be revived by the extermination of the  
skeletons  
With the luminescence of a thousand lanterns that shine  
light on the truth  
Truth so brilliant and powerful these doors will no  
longer shut,  
These keys will no longer lock,  
Tinted windows will not hide,  
Shut curtains will not block.*

*Indian Ocean.*

**16:44**

*I was floating.*

*I was somewhere between being airlifted to heaven and hurled back into the hell I was crawling out of.*

*I couldn't tell where I was, I couldn't see, I didn't want to see.*

*I was afraid of seeing.*

*It was as horrific as when they threw me into the tarmac, leaving me for dead.*

*Only this time, the waters calmed my raging soul, the waters washed my battered shell, nourished my armour, full of chinks.*

*Then gentle hands picked me from the waters, loving and caring hands; carrying me with the dedication and love of a mother.*

*Gentle hands worked on my body, cleaning me, gently handling me like I was just born.*

*Maybe I was born again, passed from purgatory and now in paradise.*

*Or was I?*

***Theodore Mazrui Apartments,***

***Mtwapa, Kilifi County.***

Tom walked down the corridor in a carefree, nonchalant manner. He had a big smile on his face as he munched on a chocolate bar, feeling the cool breeze on him as he stepped into the balcony to savour the sunset rays.

*Finally. Free.*

It was the one thing he envied about BMW in the first place. BMW was free to go anywhere, for he had perfected the art of disappearing so much that none of his family members knew where he was to this day. Even as the exposé broke out, nobody had asked about him. Just as planned, they stayed anonymous, and later on they reaped the fruits of their hard work.

Now, he could taste the delicious flavour that freedom had to offer.

*No more looking over my shoulder.*

The journalists had gotten their own rewards for the major exposé, and everyone went home happy.

Tom could not believe that finally, he no longer had to worry.

As Tom looked on, his phone vibrated, and when he looked at the screen, he froze.

*The message was very simple.*

*The hawk, with its prey, flies above and beyond the Southern Sun.*

Bells of alarm ringed in Tom's ears as a deepening chill sank down on him. He looked down the street just in time to see a black vehicle accelerating from the driveway, leaving behind a package.

He dialled a number and after a few rings, said, "BM! We got a big proble....."

*"Samahani, mteja wa nambari uliyopiga hapatikani kwa sasa....."*

*"Sorry, the mobile subscriber cannot be reached....."*

Having already dropped his chocolate bar, he looked down at his phone.

An anonymous message popped up.

“Happy Birthday, Thomas.”

He looked inside the package and froze in horror.

**Oh, Jesus, No.**

Three,

Two,

One.

## A SNEAK PEEK INTO THE NEXT NOVEL

*"Most people should know that every next level of your life will demand a different version of you.*

*That's why maturity isn't measured by birthday cakes."*

~ **Haroun Risa**

The minute the car hooted outside the gate, I either ran out in joy or approached the gate with fear, knowing exactly who will saunter in with reproaches.

There were times I hid under the bed but the mattress got soaked to the point where it couldn't shelter me anymore and I had to ashamedly crawl out.

Maybe this time round I'll be chased around the compound, machete in hand, and the neighbours will save me from unrecoverable wounds.

At the back of my head I knew I did all the chores, but there was always a chore left incomplete.

There was always something to quarrel over.

*Always.*

"Hii ni marks gani unaleta kwa nyumba?"

I stared, shivering.

My younger sibling quickly hid behind the curtain. My private tutor, the one who just couldn't shut up about the low marks stood there, ajionee cinema ya bure.

"Nimekuuliza swali, ni nini hii? 298 marks!!  
Ninakulipia tuition kufanya nini?"

The next thing I knew, I was grabbed and hurled hard to the wall, and before I could gather my senses, she had already grabbed her belt.

It was this heavy belt laden with steel clips she wore with her uniform.

My cries echoed into the night, and not a single soul dared save me.

The worst part was that Liz just stood there.



*2007.*

*Sarafina Primary School,*

*Nairobi, Kenya.*

I was just standing there, my school bag lying on his feet.

My eyes were transfixed by the small drops that fell from the iron roof.

*Drip.*

A small picture of a blindfolded woman crossing two swords with her hands caught my attention. There it was, lying muddy with two swords which always gleamed.

It reminded me one thing about the double edged sword I faced.

You're expected to conform to the norms dictated by those who came before you, and satisfy the wishes of those elder than you.

Your wishes, your hopes pushed aside, castigated as 'part time hobbies'.

*Drip.*

Many more will have to scribble the phone number 116 on a notebook, just in case.

Many more will hide bruises under school cardigans, just like me.

*Drip. Drip.*

Another visiting day, skipped.

A National Exams Prayer Day, forgotten.

*Drip.*

I haven't even begun telling you about the harrowing and insensitive questions asked by the teachers.

*Drip.*

All she had to do was walk.

*Drip.*

All I had to do was give her good marks.

*Drip. Drip.*

"If I so much as hear that you've been suspended from school, I will finish you myself!"

*Drip. Drip.*

I'm scared to go back there.

*Drip.*

Tom's scared, too. He's sickened by his mum and dad exchanging blows every night.

Dickson just had another fight with his elder sister.

*Drip. Drip.*

Our circumstances have united us. Under one goal.

A goal we must fulfil after our dates with the foreskin butchery.

*Drip. Drip.*

We cannot continue to live like this.

*Drip. Drip.*

The child is not always wrong.

The parent is not always right.

*Drip.*

**It is time.**

*"The first attempts are always the ones with most hope, courage, belief, love & affection, and mostly trust."*

"Father Abraham,

Had many sons,

Had many sons, oh Father Abraham.....'?

***Shauri Moyo Baptist Church, 2002***

*All it took was an afternoon & an evening for me to never trust gifts again.*

*There I was,*

*Mr Kaunda Suit,*

*Playing with my age mates in the afternoon sun as Mr Ken taught us this silly game with that Father Abraham song.*

*It was at first tricky to understand but I got the hang of it later on.*

*Though, I'll be very honest here.*

*Mr Ken looked at me in a way he never looked at the others.*

*He bought me the Kaunda suit.*

*I had not seen a single gift that day, and since last year was no different, I was beside myself, relishing the suspicious looks from elder siblings, who happen to know my entire wardrobe.*

*It was more like this dark purple shirt and trouser combo that was the fad for many boys in those days.*

*Those were the days of humiliation when you were handed a garment fresh from Gikomba and woe unto you if you dared grumble about it.*

*Those were the days you were forced to tag along in a very hot afternoon, following the swishing of your mother's dress left to right as she bargained for groceries and clothes in the stifling Gikomba, the one thing in our country that has successfully fed and clothed many Kenyan generations.*

*This was the time you learned the hard way that you as a child were to be seen, never to be heard, to be sent for errands, to be among the first to wake up and to be frontline in completing chores on time.*

*All Mr Ken had to do was give me something I hadn't received in two years, and being just a kid, I followed him to his house.*

*It had been a very long time since anyone bought me anything without orders on how to use it, what to never do with it, or even when to wear it.*

"Let me go prepare some avocado punch," said Mr Ken, as he walked into the kitchen.

*I sat there, admiring the Kaunda suit & looking around at artefacts hanging on the wall. My toddler mind then hadn't learned a very valuable lesson;*

**Free lunch always had an agenda.**

*His Nokia 3310 started chirping, and I took the phone to him. Just as I turned into the kitchen, I saw him holding a strange, tiny sachet, like the ones that hold tea bags.*

*To my knowledge, tea bags have a string attached to it and you never tore open the tea bag.*

*I gave him the phone, and as he answered, I saw a strange apprehension develop, something I had never*

*seen in him but seen in my uncle's face the minute anyone of us siblings were not watching Family TV.*

*I walked back to the living room and stayed silent, listening in on the conversation.*

*I couldn't hear much, but some words caught my attention.*

*".....He'll be okay with me; he's just finishing some assignments I gave him....."*

*A warning bell rang inside my ears. A warning bell I didn't hesitate to pay attention to.*

**I'm not doing any assignments!**

*I snuck outside as Mr Ken continued with his phone call, noticing that indeed, it had gotten dark.*

*It was my failure in closing the door silently that caught his attention but I cared less.*

*I didn't even care whether I'd be run over by the flashy 58 Buru Matatus going down the Jogoo Road highway.*

**My concern was one thing.**



*Somewhere in Laikipia.....*

You could say she was hesitant to show her scars, for they were like memories, they showed that you lived.

*Finally*, he couldn't help but think, a boyish smile playing on his lips.

She continued to unzip the side of the dress, ignorant of what she could sense outside the door.

*He relished the feeling of being in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*He was a raging bull in the Rift Valley that night.*

*She was equally lost in the World of Arousal, in her own way, and gaining from it.*

*She had waited for this moment for a very long time.*

A small smile played on her lips as he continued raging on,

She knew, she had played her cards well.

*All I had to do was carry my sister's geometry compass, and poke a few holes.*

The poor raging bull had let emotions cloud reason, she knew.

**The 50th recipient.**

*Khadijah had already begun showing signs, and wanted to reach the 50th recipient before surrendering to the fate she found herself in a few years ago.*

You're lucky you didn't fall pregnant, one girl said.

*How she wished it wasn't what it became.*

*How she wished she could yank the remote control from God and rewind the show.*

*But then, maybe a rewind wasn't necessary. It already happened, after all.*

*Like the ignorant fool she was, she didn't see it at first.*

*A rewind was possible*

*A retake wasn't foolishness*

*A re-attempt wasn't considered weakness;*

*For it was not the story that's different.*

*It was the perspective.*

She turned to him and smiled cheekily.

He smiled coyly as she gave him more.

*He had no idea.*

The lock turned, ever slowly.

*He didn't notice.*

The lock froze halfway.

*Her lips parted.*

She knew one very important fact about human beings.

**The character of a man was tested when he had everything**

**The character of a woman was tested when she had nothing.**

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