

CHAPTER ELEVEN

~11~

Daylight shining thru the unfinished dog door, along with horns honking and bustling street noise was making it impossible for Tina to sleep in. The fourth time someone lightly tapped on the apartment door Tina yanked the pillow off her head, got out of bed and walked across the damp concrete. She stood on her toes to peek out the peep hole — it was blocked. The tapping started again!

As a teenager Tina had vacationed abroad with her mother and learned how to stay safe and protect herself while in a foreign country. She found a butcher knife in a drawer next to the sink. She tried the peep hole again, it was definitely blocked. The tapping turned to knocking. Tina gripped the wooden knife handle as tight as she could. *Thrust first and then scream is what mom taught me! I think that was the rule?*

Tina barely cracked open the door, looked down and saw a black curly head of hair, a green tee shirt and a boy with a red bucket in hand. "What do you want?"

Jacob pointed into the apartment and then held his other hand as high as he could over his head so to indicate a taller person.

Tina understood what Jacob wanted. "Pastor Tom slept in the motorhome! Go knock on that door!" She slammed the door in Jacob's face, tossed the knife on table then crawled back into bed and buried her head into one of the pillows.

Barely five minutes passed... This time the light knocking was more like hard pounding. Tina tossed the pillow to the side, stepped on the floor and headed toward the door with determination. Her big toe hit the leg of one of the green chairs. "God Damn it! Jesus Christ that hurts!" Tina yelled out while bouncing on one leg and rubbing at her swelling big toe.

Idogbe could hear the profanity thru the dog door opening that he was trimming out. Auspiciously Jacob couldn't hear the taking of God's name in vain. Tina hobbled to the door and yanked it all the way open. "I told you that Tom slept in the motorhome!"

35 Jacob shook his head side to side and then pointed toward the
36 front lot and then back down the side alley. Tina stepped all the way
37 out of the apartment and looked right and then left. "Like, what the
38 Fu__! Where's the motorhome?"

39 Idogbe came around from the rear corner of the apartment. With
40 the sun shining thru Tina's camisole she might as well been nude.
41 "Pastor Tom left you a note." Idogbe pointed at the door with a
42 screwdriver in his hand.

43 Tina looked back over her shoulder and then snatched the
44 envelope that was taped over the peephole. "What the fu__ is this?"

45 "You shouldn't curse so much! Idogbe slipped the screwdriver into
46 his toolbelt.

47 "Sorry that I dropped the F-bomb in front of the boy.

48 "Jacob can't hear, but I heard you take the Lord's name in vain
49 inside the apartment." Idogbe scowled and then added, "You should
50 cover up, especially when you are next to a house of worship and a
51 young child."

52 "I stubbed my toe and it hurt like a M-F." Tina held back the full
53 words she normally would have said. She returned the scowl and then
54 tore opened the envelope. While reading the note she walked into the
55 apartment and slammed the door! Tina hated the better than thou,
56 self-righteous types like Idogbe.

57 Jacob had taken up his usual waiting spot on the church steps with
58 his bucket and cleaning supplies. *I hope Pastor Tom will have work for*
59 *me. Or maybe we can play more games?* Jacob thought.

60 It wasn't even ten minutes before Tina came out of the apartment
61 with skimpy shorts and a half buttoned sleeveless shirt on. She
62 strutted around to the back of the apartment. "You are supposed to
63 help me!"

64 Idogbe stopped attaching the dog door trim. "What?"

65 "My uncle Tom wrote that you have to be my driver and take me to
66 some good spots," Tina spun out a lie. The note actually stated that
67 Tom would be gone for a day and that if she had any questions to ask
68 the church handyman.

69 "Okay, let me pick up my stuff."

70 Jacob leaped from the steps and helped Idogbe gather up his tools
71 and put them in the back of the worn out Datsun pickup. Idogbe had
72 to pull hard to open the passenger door. The rusty hinge squawked
73 like a hungry seagull. The half inch of mud on the floor board put Tina
74 on a different plan. Riding around in a rust bucket of a tiny truck
75 wasn't going to be her way to see the largest city in Nigeria.

76 Idogbe started up the old pickup and a gray cloud of smoke
77 belched out from underneath. He leaned over and yelled, "Where
78 would you like to go?"

79 Tina had yet to get in. "My uncle took me to a Holiday Inn
80 yesterday. A white British speaking man was working the front desk.
81 There was a lounge and there was a swimming pool out back."

82 "That must be Oyins Holiday Inn and relaxation lounge. It is less
83 than two kilometers. I'll drive you there?"

84 Tina looked at the bench seat with dirty foam rubber pushing out of
85 two or three slits in the vinyl. "How far is that in miles?"

86 "Just over a mile. Not that far."

87 "Like, I need to get some more things." Tina strolled back into the
88 apartment to put on sun block, pack a pool bag, get different
89 sunglasses and put on walking shoes.

90 After a few minutes Idogbe shut off the rusted out work truck and
91 stepped out. *I wonder if all American women take this long? I need to*
92 *finish up the kennel before Pastor Tom's dogs get here.*

93 When Tina finally came out of the apartment Idogbe and Jacob
94 were sitting on the church steps passing a writing notepad back and
95 forth. Jacob glanced down at the pad and then shook his head side to
96 side. He didn't like the sketch of two big dogs inside a jail like fence.

97 Tina approached and said, "Let's walk to the Holiday Inn. I don't
98 want my stuff to get dirty in your old truck."

99 "Should I call you Pastor Tom's niece or Mrs. _____?" Idogbe
100 extended his hand to help Tina with her oversized bag.

101 "Yikes, your hands are dirty! This is a Louis Vuitton! I'll carry it
102 myself."

103 Idogbe scrutinized the beach bag. "It looks fake to me. I can take
104 you to a market that sells all kinds of sham stuff. Your uncle bought a
105 phone there."

106 The insinuation that Tina was phony didn't set well. "Call me Ms.
107 Williams!" She made a beeline toward Frontage road.

108 Idogbe locked the church gate and then caught up with Tina. "I
109 know street vendors that sell knock-off stuff like your sunglasses.
110 Want me to take you there? Tourists like those kind of places."

111 "Can you walk a few steps behind?" The honking and cat calls as
112 Tina chassed thru the crowd felt right. She was a skilled temptress
113 that knew how to get what she wanted.

114 From an early age Tina's mom often embellished the story of how
115 Princess Salome danced for her uncle and stepfather. About how
116 Salome's natural beauty and seductive body movements were so
117 seducing that King Herod promised her anything; even up to half of his
118 kingdom. Solomon's mother told her to test her stepfather's promise
119 by asking for the head of John the Baptist on a platter — Salome did
120 so without hesitation. Tina vowed to have the control over men the
121 same as Princess Salome had. Seducing her stepfather in high school
122 paid off when she wanted a brand new car — now she had her uncle in
123 her grasp.

124 Idogbe followed a few steps back and kept his eyes off of Tina's
125 short white shorts. His mum had taught him and twin sister about
126 temptations and not to covet. The golden rule not to do anything to
127 someone that he wouldn't want done to himself was nearly set in
128 stone.

129 Tina blasted across the hotel lobby toward the front desk. Phillip
130 gave Tina the onceover and then gave the okay for her to hang around
131 the pool and to use the other hotel amenities; technically she was a
132 guest. Tina's mother had taught her the do's and don'ts while traveling
133 abroad. She chose a modest one piece swimsuit instead of the thong
134 and crop top that she had packed in her beach bag. She rubbed on
135 sunscreen and pulled on her Versace gold tinted sunglasses before she
136 left the changing room.

137 Out back the ten foot high cinder block wall and multiple security
138 cameras gave the outdoor area a feel to be on guard. She positioned
139 a chaise lounge chair so that her head would be in the shade and her
140 body would be in the sun. She was going thru her music playlist on her
141 phone when a tall Nigerian dressed in a long sleeve white pullover and
142 white cotton slacks came out from a sliding glass door.

143 Victor Vee made a turn at the shallow end of the pool and then
144 beeline toward Tina. He balanced a frosted pink drink on a round
145 serving platter and a bag of Chic-chin from the Balogun Market. "Oyins
146 would like to treat you to one of their super chilled Strawberry
147 Lemonades."

148 Tina did a quick stare over the top of her Versace sunglasses; she
149 could tell that most of the gold bling on the waiter was fake. But, the
150 large pendent against his brown chest looked real. The white pullover
151 with open V cut neck and long sleeves was sort of cheesy but Victor's
152 perfect teeth and smile pulled it off.

153 "Thank you." Tina replied and then took the tall frosted glass off
154 the platter.

155 "You must be Tom's niece?" Victor said as he tossed the
156 complimentary bag of Chin-Chin's on Tina's flat stomach.

157 "Like how did you know that? Tina asked as she took a sip.

158 "Your uncle asked me to show you the Lufasi Nature Park, the
159 Lekki Conservation Centre and some of our museums."

160 Tina took a firm drink and then sniffed at the pink froth. "What
161 kind of alcohol is in this?"

162 "There's a shot of vanilla vodka and a shot of palm wine. It's a
163 favorite of our younger guests."

164 "Bitter Chinese Baijiu is the only thing I've had to drink for the last
165 four weeks at sea."

166 "Whatever you have to drink today is on me." Victor flashed a full
167 smile.

168 "Like, thank you for that." Tina laid back and pushed her
169 sunglasses up as Victor walked away. *That waiter seems nice. I*
170 *wonder if he'd show me where the action is?"*

171 Victor ordered Tanny to serve Tina whatever she wanted. Back in
172 his security office he focused two of the pool area cameras on Tina.
173 *The Pastor's niece is one fine looking lady. I need to play this one*
174 *right! She's from Los Angeles and could be my ticket to Hollywood.*

175 Victor left the security office and went into the storage room
176 directly across the hall. He made a withdrawal from the
177 Bitcoin/Bitcoin ATM. That crypto currency transaction flashed up on
178 an eighty inch smart screen almost halfway around the world — 3
179 floors underground in Pueblo Colorado.

180 Tanny knew how Victor played most the do-gooder white women
181 that came to Lagos to save the Western Cheetah or the endangered
182 Dama Gazelle's. Tanny always enjoyed informing a table of well
183 decked out earth baby activists that Cheetah's liked to eat Gazelles.
184 But, never had any of these activists been as gorgeous and put
185 together as Tina.

186 Tanny spit in the bottom of a glass and made a strawberry
187 lemonade drink with a double shot of vodka. It was the only bit of
188 power an unwed mother raising three children had over a rich white
189 American that looked to be on the make.

190 "Here's another drink." Tanny said as she bent over and set the
191 drink on the concrete. *Wow her natural beauty is even more striking*
192 *up close,* Tanny said to herself.

193 "Thanks but one drink is my limit. I need to take my Zovirax
194 medication and it doesn't mix well with alcohol." Tina was laying out a
195 falsehood that worked to protect her from any unwanted advances.

196 "Oh ... What do you take Zov-a-wrap for?" Tanny took Tina's bait.

197 "Zovirax is for a flare up; sort of like a UTI but worse. You know
198 private female stuff."

199 "Oh?" Tanny was confused. "I'll go get you a glass of water so you
200 can take your Zov-a-wrap."

201 "That would be great." Tina rolled over onto her side. "I'm taking
202 Z-O-V-I-R-A-X not Zov-a-wrap," Tina wanted to make sure Tanny had
203 the correct spelling.

204 Back inside Tanny did an internet search for Zovirax. She found out
205 that it was the latest drug to be used for the herpes virus! The

206 information that the American was HSV-1 positive helped to knock a
207 stunning beauty off the high horse that men always put good looking
208 women on. Tanny couldn't wait to spread the gossip — especially to
209 Victor. Before she had a chance to tell Victor, he offered Tina a ride in
210 the band's step van to show her the neighborhood.

211 Victor drove an hour or so wandering thru a neatly kept middle
212 class neighborhood pointing out stores and food vendors that Tina
213 might need. Eventually he pulled thru some trees that opened up onto
214 a vacant field. He pointed out that they were looking at the back of
215 Tom's church and then suggested they move to the rear of the van
216 and smoke weed.

217 Given that Tina could walk to the apartment she was okay with
218 smoking some pot. They moved to the back of the truck that had no
219 side or rear windows. Victor flipped over two buckets for them to sit
220 on. Tina's brain shifted into protection mode; coyly she pushed at a
221 square piece of brown metal with her foot, she moved it within arm's
222 reach. It was heavy enough that it could be used like an old cast iron
223 skillet for a weapon.

224 The African weed was more potent than what Tina was used to,
225 plus she hadn't eaten much all day. After a few more drags off the
226 joint her head started to throb and spin. She gagged, coughed and felt
227 sick. Victor opened the side door! Tina got on her hands and knees
228 and started puking chips and pink froth out the door onto a muddy
229 road.

230 Victor knelt behind her and held her blond hair away from her
231 mouth until the vomit smell got overwhelming. He climbed back into
232 the driver's seat so to move the step van closer to the back yard of the
233 church. The bumpy field and tight turns caused the square piece of
234 metal to bounce and then slide out the open side door. The embossed
235 **Gloria and Praise Church dedicated June 16, 1991**, words on the
236 dedication plaque landed face down in a mud puddle. The chain link
237 fence prevented Victor from driving up the alley between the church
238 and apartment. He jumped out and ran around the front of the truck
239 to get Tina out of the back.

240 Idogbe was working on the new dog kennel and had heard the
241 truck bouncing across the field. He looked down the alley and saw Tina
242 being pulled out the side door. He rushed to the fence running along
243 the rear of the church property. "What did you give her?" Idogbe
244 yelled over the fence.

245 "We smoked some wee-wee and she freaked out immediately."
246 Victor felt for the Runga stick in the long slip pocket sewn into his
247 pants. If Idogbe got too threatening he'd have to use it.

248 Idogbe pulled open a loose section in the fence "Let's put her in the
249 apartment."

250 Victor threaded Tina thru the opening and then Idogbe ducked
251 under her other arm. From across the field a young set of eyes
252 watched two men carrying a white woman down the alley. Idogbe
253 pushed open the apartment door with his foot and the trio vanished
254 out of Jacob's sight.

255 "Help me lay her on the bed," Idogbe affirmed to Victor.

256 Even with pink puke around Tina's mouth Victor thought about
257 rolling Tina on to her stomach and giving it to her.

258 "I'll take it from here!" Idogbe affirmed with more authority.

259 "Let the babe know how I came to the rescue and brought her
260 home," Victor boosted.

261 "Sure thing! I'll let her know about the tainted marijuana that you
262 probably gave to her."

263 Victor felt for the Runga stick in the sheath pocket in his white
264 pants. If it weren't for Idogbe he would...

265 Tina rolled on to her side and curled up into the fetal position. She
266 was even more out of it; her arms and legs felt very heavy. She was
267 utterly helpless and felt two men standing over her.

268 "Do you need some water? You have vomit all over your face."
269 Idogbe asked.

270 Tina pulled the bed sheet over her head. "No, I need my
271 medication. I'm in a breakout. I take, I take... Zovirax."

272 "I don't know what she's talking about," Idogbe looked over at
273 Victor standing on the other side of the bed.

274 "Let the Ashawo know that I saved her."

275 "She's no prostitute! She's Pastor Tom's niece," Idogbe forcefully
276 rebutted.

277 "She came across the Atlantic on a super freighter with some
278 Chinese official, you figure it out." Victor said halfway out the door and
279 trotted down the alley. There was musical equipment in the back and a
280 quarter pound of marijuana inside his wide open truck.

281 Jacob was exploring in the woods when he took note that a truck
282 had parked in the field. The VV on the side of the truck were letters
283 he'd never forget. It was that afterschool job hanging posters on
284 telephone poles when his brother's arm was broken with a club like
285 stick. Jacob had a flashback of that night in the hospital. How Ekon
286 warned him to never tell anybody what really happened that day.
287 Jacob ducked out of sight behind a clump of trees. When he saw Victor
288 Vee jogging toward him — he peed himself.

289 Victor reached inside the side door and grabbed his bag of weed.
290 He did a quick look around, slid the door closed went around the back
291 of the truck jumped into the driver's and drove toward the woods.
292 Thru the branches and leaves less than five meters away Jacob clearly
293 recognized Victor.

294 Victor Vee drove thru the patch of trees and then meandered out
295 thru the marginalized neighborhood. Jacob hunkered in the over grown
296 brush and watched until the blinker came on and the step van turned
297 and went out of sight. The front of his red shorts was soaked with pee.
298 Being mute put a target on his back for a few of the neighborhood
299 hoodlums. Jacob ran toward the center of the field; tromping in a mud
300 puddle would cover-up the wet spot on the front of his shorts.

301 Like a long jumper Jacob took three huge strides and went
302 airborne. Then there was a solid thump instead of a big splash! Jacob
303 landed directly on the dedication plaque that was just below the
304 surface of the murky water. He stepped back, bent over and raised
305 one end of the brown metal square. He didn't know what the
306 embossed words meant but he knew where the plaque belonged.

307 Ekon had warned Jacob never to mention anything that had been
308 taken out of the church and never ever to draw a truck with two V's on
309 the side. The Onukwulu's got insurance money from the church for

310 Ekon's broken arm, but it wasn't because he fell off a bucket. Without
311 being able to hear, Jacob processed things differently. If he told the
312 truth, the VV man would be locked up and couldn't hurt anybody —
313 literally he had to.

314 The brass was cold, wet and heavy. The embossed letters pushed
315 into Jacob's chest as he carried it into the woods to the base of an Ube
316 tree. Jacob used his bucket to dig a deep trough in the loose dirt.
317 Then he covered up the plaque and spread some leaves and sticks on
318 top. Jacob was dirt and muddy water head to toe, but he had put a
319 horrible memory to rest.

320 Across the field, up the alley and inside the apartment Idogbe was
321 trying to process the note he spotted on the table.

322

323 **Tina, I'm sorry for what happened. I lost my**
324 **self-control. I'm traveling up to the Glory and**
325 **Praise outreach school to think about my**
326 **marriage. I will be back late Saturday. The church**
327 **handyman, Idogbe will be working on the dog**
328 **kennel if you need anything. Please don't ever talk**
329 **to Beth about what happened. I will do whatever**
330 **you ...**

331

332 Without finishing the message Idogbe placed the piece of
333 stationary back on the table, he knew that it was wrong to be reading
334 a message addressed to someone else. But, he had read enough to
335 know that adultery happened between Pastor Tom and Tina! It was
336 something that Tom's wife probably should know about before she flew
337 all the way from Texas to Nigeria.

338 Idogbe drew a glass of water and then set it on the nightstand next
339 to the bed. Then he went out to his truck to get some organic Kola
340 tablets from the glove box. Now back in the apartment, "Here take two
341 of these," Idogbe said standing over Tina.

342 "Get away from me! I know about date rape drugs! I grew up
343 around Hollywood people and..." The dry heaving started again; Tina
344 was in no shape to fight off anyone.

345 Idogbe set the bottle of Kola tablets on the nightstand and then
346 went outside to call Pastor Tom. The call went to voicemail, Idogbe
347 hung up, he'd already left three messages. Idogbe figured that it
348 would be a good time to install the mini spy camera Constable Ayoola
349 asked him to hide in the apartment.

350 He drilled a small hole in the aluminum trim above the door flap on
351 the new dog door and inserted the tiny camera. The point of view was
352 too low and obscured by the green table and four chairs. Idogbe didn't
353 care! Building a hidden closet for a Christian pastor seemed wrong.
354 Now installing a spy camera for a Muslim elder was not what Idogbe
355 wanted to be part of. He detested these types of requests by
356 sanctimonious men in positions of power.

357 Idogbe kept calling Pastor Tom's phone without any luck. It started
358 raining hard when the sun went down; he'd gotten wet picking up his
359 tools and it looked like he was going to have to spend the night. He
360 pushed together two of the church benches for a makeshift bed and
361 then lay down on his back and crossed his arms across his chest.
362 There was no heat inside the church and without anything to cover up
363 under the cold chills were setting in.

364 **The Church of the Nine Commandments** banner that Pastor
365 Tom had him hang over the Decalogue tablets was made out of cloth.
366 Maybe that could keep him warm? It didn't... His fingers couldn't even
367 feel the rosary beads as he prayed for the Mother of peace to advocate
368 for mercy on him. A Malaria flare up wasn't what Idogbe needed, he
369 had to take action! He locked up the church and walked thru puddles
370 of water to his truck. The exposed seat foam rubber was like sitting on
371 a wet sponge; the truck heater was ineffective. His shivering was now
372 full on cold chills, he needed to get dry and warm up.

373 Rainwater had run under the apartment's front door and covered
374 about half of the concrete floor. Idogbe kicked off his soaked shoes
375 and stripped off his wet clothes; he hung his pants over one chair and
376 shirt over another chair to dry. He took one of the blankets and rolled
377 up in it like a mummy and then plopped down on the far side of the
378 mattress.

379 Tina pulled the sheet over her head and deliriously rambled out,
380 “Don’t touch me! Don’t rape me! I’m HPV positive!”

381 Idogbe curled up into a ball on the edge of the mattress, it wasn’t
382 comfortable but he was dry and wrapped tight in a blanket. All the
383 commotion and Tina’s delusional outburst turned on the mini spy
384 camera for its first recording. A 30 sec A/V clip was sent to Constable
385 Ayoola Ashiru’s smart phone.