

DISOBEDIENT WIFE

CHAPTER 26

When Beth opened the front door Tom had dozed off. Cain ran across the apartment and jumped on to the bed. "How was your trip up North?" Beth asked as Tom sat up and then rubbed his eyes.

"It was okay. I didn't find that Ten Commandment tourist stop but I found a great golf course and couple of guys to golf with." Tom smiled at Abidemi who was leaning hard against Beth.

"I'd like to see that site, maybe we should go together." Beth knew better than to talk about Tom's visit up to Zangam village or golf.

"Did you see my Mum?" Abidemi asked with trepidation.

"No, I was helping to fill up fuel tanks at the cutoff road."

"That is good. My Mum didn't like it when she had to burn firewood to do canning. It takes longer to get water to boil."

"Did your Mum do a lot of canning?" Tom asked.

Abidemi tilted out from Beth with a puzzled expression. She knew 'did' to be a past tense word.

Tom immediately realized his slip up. "Does your Mum do a lot of canning? I bet she had some good recipes."

"Yes, we seal and preserve food for most all the village." Abidemi was more confused. How did Tom know about the secret recipes?

"What does your Mum can?" Beth asked without delay so to cover Tom's slip of the tongue. "Do you make jam?"

"Beets, pears and beans this time of year." We do applesauce mostly during the summer. That's how we make money. Our berry pineapple jam is our secret blend, we always sell out."

"I bet you are a big help," Beth continued to deflect to present tense.

"My Mum wants me to go to college so that I can learn more about running a business and make jobs for our village."

31 "That sounds wonderful. My mother did canning when I was about
32 your age. We made orange peel, apricot jelly with a hint of cinnamon
33 for Christmas gifts." Beth worked to change the subject.

34 Tom moved next to Beth and while he kissed her on the cheek he
35 whispered. "Abidemi's mother was killed by rebels."

36 It was what Beth thought; she fought to hold back tears. Her tears
37 flowed harder when she grasped that Abidemi's had no other family. "I
38 need to contact someone." Beth turned to the left so not to let her face
39 be shown. She exited the apartment weak and in disarray.

40 "I think there are some popsicles in the freezer if you are up for a
41 late night treat." Abidemi followed Tom toward the refrigerator.

42 On the other side of the door Beth tapped out the message:

43 **Change of plans! Put getting Abidemi a visa on hold. Her**
44 **mother was killed.**

45 Even with the black box MYK78T Clipper Chip decoder and all of
46 Dan's hacking skills he couldn't get a student visa or a passport.
47 Anyone without a last name or legal guardian was considered a non
48 citizen; Abidemi wasn't born in a hospital and didn't even have a birth
49 certificate. Dan had yet to find out any information on the three other
50 girls from Zangam Village. The Kong Fang didn't file a shipping
51 manifest and it didn't list any ports in United States as a destination.

52 What was odd was that pier 13 security photos of the Kong Fang
53 arriving at Tin Can Island showed a draft of a fully loaded ship. For the
54 next three weeks from 1 am to 4 am high-end cars and pickup trucks
55 were unloaded from containers and then driven off in the middle of the
56 night. Dan surmised the left hand drive luxury cars were probably
57 stolen from the United States. Some of the trucks that had been
58 retrofitted with armor plating and weapon mounts in the truck bed
59 were right hand drive — they had al-Qaeda markings.

60 Most the shipping containers were loaded back on the Kong Fang
61 empty. The 168 meter ship left port without much ballast sitting at a
62 plus 9 meter birth. A loss of headway in a rough sea would likely
63 capsized the under loaded ship.

64 A small percentage of the cars concealed drugs or weapons,
65 locating contraband would be like finding a needle in a haystack. The
66 trucks with armor plate ready to mount 50 cal machine guns were
67 concerning. Dan had to be careful lurking behind the Nigerian
68 government firewalls. His contract was to help and train a team of
69 internet sleuths' for the SSS to spy on scammers and Crypto-currency
70 swindlers. All the illegal activity happening at Tin-Can harbor was
71 above what he contracted for. There was a multibillion dollar loan offer
72 by the Communist China Party to computerized shipping in and out of
73 this sixth largest port in Africa. The 60% ownership clause in case of a
74 loan default was settlement colonization in disguise.

75 Chinese lenders account for 12% of Africa's private and public
76 external debt and it grows ever year. Dan wanted to have a meeting
77 with an official above the (SSS) State Security Service of Nigeria.

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81 When Beth came back into the apartment she asked Tom to bring
82 the mattress from the back of the rental jeep into the apartment. This
83 was the first time Abidemi experienced a sleep over. Tom and Cain
84 slept on the bed and Beth and Abidemi on the motorhome mattress
85 under the table that was draped with a sheet — it was their private
86 fort. This was not an inappropriate sleepover, but any busybody could
87 construe this as child abuse by adults. Thank God that Idogbe had
88 removed the spy camera above the dog door.

89 At the crack of dawn Jacob used his key to get into the apartment.
90 Cain was the first to greet him. Abidemi rolled out from under Beth's
91 arm and they took Cain to the back field to potty. That first naive love
92 is natural and strong, it can begin at age ten or even younger.

93 Beth crawled onto the bed with Tom. "That poor little girl. I was
94 working with Dan on getting her a student visa. But without a parent
95 or a legal guardian I told him to put things on hold."

96 “It makes me sad. It felt so dreadful when I saw only ‘Abena’ on
97 the grave marker and no last name. Not even a birth date. My heart
98 aches for Abidemi.”

99 “When do you think we should tell her?”

100 “Sunday I’m going to preach on death and how we are at rest until
101 Judgment day. I’ll tell her afterwards. Maybe you could drop her off at
102 the strawberry farm next week. I can’t leave town.”

103 “Tom she is too young to hear your belief about the rapture and
104 that her mother is dead until the end times. We’ve had this discussion
105 before! What about the Communion of Saints? What about all the
106 near-death experiences we hear about? Can’t you just tell her that her
107 Mum is in heaven?”

108 “Beth, you know my feeling about the Communion of Saints. I
109 would not give that kind of false hope to Abidemi.”

110 “Oh... So you’re going to drop her off at a strawberry farm, tell her
111 that God loves her and then drive off,” Beth let her fury fly.

112 “Beth, I don’t know what to do. I didn’t expect or ask for any of
113 this. I never wanted to kill anybody!” Tom’s head and shoulders
114 slumped. “I’m losing my faith...”

115 In the silence Beth knew that Tom was not embellishing another
116 stolen valor story. The last few weeks she sensed that Tom was
117 different; not more of a man — not less of a man. He’d been muted by
118 the malevolence gloom and doom spirit of guilt.

119 “Do you want to talk about it?”

120 “No! I just want all of this to be over. I’ll deal with it...”

121 “You’re not thinking about harming yourself.” Beth shivered as a
122 cold head to toe sweat shed from every pore.

123 “I would trade my life for Abidemi’s mother’s life. Watching an
124 innocent woman almost being decapitated is testing my faith. The
125 three school girls before Abena... Where’s God in...” Tom rambled.

126 Over the last month Tom had given Beth tidbits of what happened
127 at the outreach school. She shared that info with Dan, hoping that he
128 could search the wire service for any news about Zangam Village.

129 Dan used an upgraded Clipper Chip to tap into different Nigerian
130 news services to search obituaries and death records. He had a short
131 list of teenage girl's deaths from Plateau State that coincided with a
132 splinter Boko Haram insurgency aimed at overthrowing Nigeria's
133 secular government and establishing Islamic laws.

134 "Tom let me tell Abidemi about her Mum on the drive up to that
135 strawberry farm. I'll find some way to be gentle, God willing."

136 Tom felt a slight relief but a dark force was still evading his
137 emptiness. *I would have been better off if that shot to my butt had*
138 *been thru my heart. I wouldn't be dealing with this... I was part of the*
139 *fundraising for the outreach school right from the beginning. From the*
140 *get go we were told how dangerous of evangelizing would be...*

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144 From behind the pulpit Tom looked up and out over the
145 congregation. Beth was sitting in the front row holding Abidemi's small
146 brown hand. The entire Onukwulu family was on the other side of
147 Abidemi. Tom looked down at his prepared sermon titled, 'The dead
148 are not in heaven or hell'. He delivered this discourse many times.

149 Tom cast his eyes up from the paper. Abidemi's hazel eyes had the
150 same look of grief as Abena's did the day he was looking thru the rifle
151 scope. To say that Abena was absolutely dead in a grave until the
152 second coming of Jesus were words Tom planned to preach.

153 "In our country," Tom blurted pointed at Beth and then himself; it
154 took a moment for his eyes to refocus on the speech. "The United
155 States has witnessed over five hundred school children murdered since
156 the turn of this century. The good book tells us that after the birth of
157 Jesus that King Herod had all the boys two years and younger
158 murdered. We know that event as the massacre of the innocent."

159 A heavy silence fell over the congregation! Tom paused to take a
160 drink of water. "What happens after death to innocent children and not
161 yet saved adults is something my wife and I disagree on in our

162 different faith backgrounds." Tom motioned toward Beth with the hand
163 holding a water bottle.

164 Beth tightened her grip on Abidemi's warm hand. She hoped Tom
165 would spare the 'For you are dust, and to dust you shall return' spiel
166 that they diverge about. Her argument was aligned with the mercy
167 that Jesus showed to the rebel on his right side at the crucifixion.
168 When Jesus spoke the words, 'Today you will be with me in paradise'.

169 Tom went on, "Ever since a few trips to the outreach school in
170 Zangam Village I'm at a crossroad with my personal beliefs." Tom
171 glanced toward the front row. "After three innocent school children
172 plus a young woman got trapped up in an unprovoked, ongoing
173 century old conflict. Let us pray that they rest in peace."

174 In dread and uncertainty Abidemi stood, turned and whispered into
175 Beth's ear, "Is he talking about my Mum?"

176 Beth sadly whispered back, "Yes, I'm afraid so. Your Mum is in
177 heaven with your classmates, angels and all the saints."

178 Miraculously from far above Jacob heard Beth's words and knew
179 them to be absolute truth. He climbed up on the stage and pointed
180 from right to left and then hand signed at Beth. Next he pressed his
181 palms together with his fingers pointed upward — the sign for prayer.

182 Beth stood and then turned toward the congregation. She pulled
183 Abidemi into the pleats of her long church dress, Abidemi's curly black
184 hair contrasted against the starched white blouse. "Jacob would like us
185 all to join in prayer for Abidemi's school mates and for her Mum who
186 recently was called home to be with Jesus."

187 From behind the pulpit Tom froze, he was speechless. All eyes
188 were on Jacob as he signed words to Beth.

189 Then Beth spoke, "Jacob asks that we bow your heads and pray for
190 all family and friends that are in heaven."

191 Tom finally gained composure and recited the first names of the
192 three schoolgirls. He eulogized Abena with what the village elder had
193 told him; about how Abena became pregnant and was considered an
194 outcast. How she walked from her home village in Ghana across the
195 counties of Togo and Benin to Plateau State, Nigeria. Tom spoke

196 about the canning business Abena operated and the apricot-pineapple
197 marmalade that the villager's loved. Tom's words gave a small amount
198 of closure to most at the same time left question for others.

199 That evening Tom moved the mattress off the floor in the
200 apartment to the storeroom in the church. Ayoola was informed about
201 Abidemi and wanted video evidence for his ongoing investigation of
202 Tom's close friendship with children. A thirteen year old girl would be
203 more fuel for the fire. It was not fate that Tom chose to sleep in the
204 church alone — it was good old common sense. Same as following the
205 order not to leave town. Best to play it safe, especially as a foreigner.

206 Most the next day Beth insisted on using the rental jeep to take
207 Abidemi up to the strawberry farm. Idogbe's beat up truck didn't have
208 seatbelts or a front bumper; it wasn't even safe for an adult. Jacob's
209 heart was torn — in two days Abidemi would be gone. Beth promised
210 Jacob that she'd find a way they could keep in touch. Tom was
211 steadfast that children shouldn't have smart phones. Beth was too
212 tired to pitch the messaging app on a smart phone for the deaf. She
213 needed a good night's sleep for the long drive in the morning.

214 * * *

215 Wednesday afternoon Beth found a secluded place to park a few
216 miles from the Abuja airport. She backed up the rental jeep, opened
217 the lift gate and told Abidemi to get inside Abel's dog crate. Abidemi
218 crawled inside and under a blanket as Beth zipped the travel curtain
219 around the crate.

220 Dan was at the airport security station and handed the guard a
221 shipping documents and a yellow and black triangle sign that read:
222 **Danger Ebola Infected Animal.** The custom agent remembered that
223 two dogs had to be quarantine about a month ago. "What happened to
224 the other dog?"

225 "Unfortunately Able had to be shot," Beth replied with sadness and
226 sincere grief.

227 The agent was trained to spot deceptive answers. He went into his
228 office and put a mask and gloves on. He came out of his office and
229 stamped the shipping document handed it to Beth along with the Ebola

230 warning sign. His hands were shaking. He pointed for Beth to pull up
231 to the Gulfstream G550. He then radioed the tower about the
232 situation.

233 This was the fasted clearance for takeoff that Dan had ever
234 experienced. Private jets are often subjected to last minute cargo
235 searches. The bogus Ebola scare worked as expected. Dan's expertise
236 was digging out fake news, click bait scammers and the likes. He'd
237 learned from the best; David his stepdad who was an electronic
238 communication technician during the Vietnam War.

239 Beth had prepared Abidemi that she might have to be a stowaway
240 for almost ten hours. But, once the Gulfstream G550 reach cruising
241 altitude the copilot went to the back of the plane and brought Abidemi
242 to the seat across from Beth and directly behind Dan. Abidemi gazed
243 out the window in awe.

244 Dan gradually turned his seat around to be face to face with
245 Abidemi. "Hello young lady. Is this the first time you've been in an
246 airplane?"

247 Abidemi glanced forward at Dan and then back out the oval
248 window. "I've never been above the clouds near heaven."

249 "My dad is above in heaven." Dan pointed up.

250 Abidemi's eyes darted away from the window back toward Dan.
251 "So is my mum!"

252 "I know that." Dan reached out and put his hand on Abidemi's
253 shoulder. "I'm bet your mum helped us get you on the plane."

254 "Do you really think so?" Abidemi already liked Dan.

255 "I do! I'm praying that David my Dad and your Mum can help us
256 get you back with your school friends."

257 "I'm praying too," Abidemi quipped with a glimpse of hope.

258 From across the aisle Beth stayed silent. She'd been praying
259 nonstop the moment she met Abidemi.

260 Dan had been tracking the Kong Fang container ship since it left
261 Tin-Can harbor. He'd yet to find the legal names of Abidemi's
262 classmates. He'd already searched the recent visa applications for
263 school abroad and found nothing. Dan's contract with the (SSS) State

264 Security Service gave him access to most federal record departments
265 in Nigeria. Some of the Nigerian state departments were still keeping
266 records on paper, making it hard to extract reliable information.

267 So far what Dan had found thru the Port Authority Dept about the
268 Kong Fang container ship was mixed. The 162 meter ship was built in
269 1998 and registered to the Communist China Party. Recently it
270 switched to sail under the flag of the Islamic Republic Shipping Line of
271 Iran. Passenger portage was never allowed on Iranian ships and most
272 of their fleet was oil transport tankers; not cargo container ships. He
273 found nothing about the three girls from Zangam village.

274 Dan twisted his chair toward Beth. "You need to quit using '65 split
275 window corvette' for your secret code words."

276 "Why?" Beth leaned toward Dan so to whisper. "Tom is the one
277 that picked those code words."

278 "I know." Dan leaned in toward Beth and held out a piece of paper.
279 "Here is Tom's burner phone number. When you get home I want you
280 to call this number. Tell Tom to give his personal cell phone to Jacob."

281 "I don't know if Tom will do that." Beth leaned back and glanced at
282 the number on the paper. "Tom has preached many times that the
283 main reason children don't honor their parents these days is because
284 of the influence of social media."

285 "I understand his objection. We have four children and my wife
286 was adamant about no phones for children."

287 "How's that working out? I never allow phones in the classroom
288 when I substitute teach. Parents are a big part of the problem!"

289 Dan frowned. "I installed tracking software on our thirteen year old
290 daughter's phone. Our ten year old has a phone for sporting events."

291 "Well Jacob just turned ten! He's deaf. What good will Tom's smart
292 phone do for him?" Beth rattled off her concern.

293 "Could I please see your phone. I'd like to install point to point
294 video software, same as I installed on your husband's phone. It
295 doesn't require a connection to the internet and is child-safe."

296 A smile came over Beth's face when she realized what a wonderful
297 communication tool for Jacob to have. Not being connected to the

298 internet and all the mind altering Apps was a blessing. Half asleep
299 Abidemi overheard that Dan had a daughter the same age as herself.
300 She wondered if someday, somehow that she'd have a phone with
301 video. Now asleep her eyes closed and head bobbed forward. Beth
302 stood up handed her phone to Dan then opened the overhead
303 apartment and got a pillow and blanket. She placed the pillow behind
304 Abidemi's head and then reclined her seat. After she covered Abidemi
305 with a blanket she kissed the silk smooth forehead of one of God's
306 innocent children.

307 Dan had turned back around to his work station with dual curved
308 monitors, a joystick, some sort of black box with flashing LED's and
309 other electronic stuff. He spent an hour changing settings deleting
310 contacts and scrubbing messages and emails from Beth's phone. He
311 copied down the IP and MAP address of how and where the FBI was
312 eavesdropping, careful not to change or delete any of those setting.
313 *Got you!* Dan grinned privately to himself. Now the FBI would be
314 listening in on; more accurately watching kids being kids over a
315 private VPN connection.

316 As they started the approach into DFW airport Dan handed the
317 phone back to Beth and said, "After you contact Tom on his burner
318 phone give your phone to Abidemi. Don't have her use the Graphene
319 pouch I gave you! Same with Tom, tell him just to give Jacob his
320 phone without the signal blocking bag."

321 Several times during the flight Beth looked at the phone number
322 on the piece of paper and wondered. *Why would Tom have a burner
323 phone? I wonder if he is still in contact with Tina? I did hear rumors of
324 photos of Tom with someone in the apartment. The picture is of him in
325 his underwear and someone wrapped in a towel...*

326 Beth's investigative thoughts were squelched when the pilot's
327 message came over the intercom, "Please bring your seat forward and
328 fasten your seatbelt. We are on our final approach into the Dallas
329 Forth Worth airport."

330 The intercom announcement woke Abidemi. She pulled the pillow
331 out from behind her head brought the seat forward and checked her
332 seatbelt. She was now a seasoned air traveler.

333 Hank looked like a Texas welcoming ambassador with white
334 Stetson hat, cowboy boots, long sleeved starched shirt and Bolo rope
335 tie accented by a turquoise arrowhead. With boots on Hank was over
336 six-foot-seven, he took a knee so to be eye to eye with Abidemi when
337 the two came thru the gate door. "Howdy young lady." Hank extended
338 a hand to Abidemi.

339 "Hi..." Abidemi laid her hand in Hank's palm.

340 "After y'all get settled in with Elizabeth it would be nice to have
341 you visit my horse ranch."

342 Abidemi was at loss for words. "Okay," was her response."

343 Then Hank stood tall, wrapped his strong arms around Beth and
344 pulled her into his muscular chest. The mix of aftershave and manly
345 sweat was intoxicating. Hank was the bigger than life protagonist in
346 western romance novels. The one that couldn't be roped, the one that
347 mounts his horse, gently slips down into the saddle, turns back and
348 tips his hat before riding off into the sunset...

349 Dan used the jet steps handrails like they were gymnast parallel
350 bars. At the bottom the copilot held out two carbon fiber crutches. Dan
351 wrapped the wide Velcro bands around his forearms and gripped the
352 handles. He was fairly fast at placing the black carbon poles in front
353 and then swinging his legs thru.

354 Hank stepped out the automatic doors to talk with Dan privately.
355 "I've already dispatched an extraction team to Bermuda."

356 "Good." Dan reached into his vest pocket. "The Kong Fang is less
357 than forty eight hours from Little Saint James Island. All the
358 information about the three girls and the GPS tracking software is on
359 this USB drive."

360 "Paul, our team leader just recruited a seasoned electronic
361 technician for this mission. I'll give this USB drive to him. The new IT
362 guy is really sharp with communication and computer stuff."