

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL by Oma Holly.

CHAPTER ONE {Day 30}

The night had ended just like any other night but his tumult continued. He had everything he wanted, his night club which also served as a bar was the most popular in town, his five supermarkets, three in Warri and Effurun, the other two in Sapele brought daily income that he could use to survive without doing anything. He even had the biggest restaurant where the rich and poor went to prove their wealth. He had two gym houses that had become popular and most especially, he was feared by many but peace was a very distant relative.

At first, he had wanted nothing to do with the money he was compensated with. He had lived in self-isolation for more than two years. The traumas of the battle, the shootings, the screams, the river of blood, after John had thrown himself on

him seconds before a bomb exploded were still there but there was just one nightmare that came with a particular pain in his chest which had refused to go even after almost nine years.

“Stop it, don’t go there.” He hit his right hand on his forehead hoping to remove memories of his nightmares that were flooding his brain.

He could not go back to that horror of almost nine years ago, he needed to focus. It was already Monday and he was at his office in his night club. There was a big musician who celebrated his birthday using the club as his venue so they had to close a little later than the closing time. The club was almost empty except for two staffs and his personal assistant Johnny. Johnny had been in the military like him but they had retired for different reasons. Johnny had quit after an injury he sustained while on duty but he had quit because of what happened almost nine

years ago at Maiduguri. John had been his best friend from age six, they had done everything together, shared everything together apart from girls because he had loved only Mena, John's sister. They had fallen in love when he was in Senior Secondary School three and Mena was in Junior Secondary School three and it remained that way even after his University degree and his first deployment. In fact, life was wonderful, he had a friend that was closer than a brother, he was madly in love with his friend's sister and had plans of spending his life with her, then things started becoming the opposite and everything crashed and there was nothing left anymore.

Special Force Team A had stopped visiting after his appeal but life felt like a river of traumas and nightmares, and he had almost left Warri to look for the woman he hated so much to end her life, maybe he would find peace after that. It was his dad that

had stopped him. Somehow the old man had an idea of his intention and he had made him vow on his dying bed to let Pearl go and to find something to distract him. After his dad's burial, he had decided to open a bar and a club to represent the night he could not forget, the night Pearl had made him drink away his sorrow, the night Pearl had seduced someone who was tipsy, the night he had woken up to discover he was naked and Pearl was the girl by his side, the night Mena had walked in to see her fiancée and her best friend naked in bed. There was no explanation he could give. The Special Force were not allowed to take alcohol, especially Team A, that was one reason he could not hold his liquor, he had gotten drunk just after drinking two glasses. He never wanted to drink but Mena had asked him to check on Pearl because she would not be around until later in the evening. Pearl had been drinking when he came, she had asked him to join but he had refused.

“Try it Wolf, I can see your pain, you stopped the debriefing because it was not working, trust me, this will give you relieve” she had said pouring him a glass full.

She had been looking so devastated almost making him believe she suffered more from losing her fiancée, but taking that drink had not ended well. The look on Mena’s face was heartbreaking to even him. The worse was he could not even remember the pleasure from sleeping with Pearl. Pearl had been the only one to remember what happened, she had even accused him of taking advantage of her. And when everything could have been settled by Mena’s family and his family, Pearl had also ruined it. She had a huge quarrel with Mena, then she was no longer begging, she made herself the victim and he was there the exact time Pearl gave the final blow. Their shouts had made everyone come outside.

“What else do you want me to do? Everyone keeps blaming me, I have no one, no family to even back me up. I made him drink, but he was the one who took advantage of me.....”

“James never liked you Pearl, just admit you wanted to ruin my life just as yours is ruined” Mena had shouted interrupting Pearl’s crocodile tears.

“Ruin your life? Did you just say that? John died and no one consoled me, everybody was hugging you and James. Yes he was James best friend and he was your big brother, but what about me, I was his finance, why is everyone thinking I will feel less pain? Because I’m not family? Funny how you all have moved on with your life. Look at you about to get married to your late brother’s best friend, about to move on with your life while mine will remain in shambles. Yes you are right, I intentionally made him drink knowing he cannot hold his liquor,

then I seduced him because I can't be the only one left out. So much for James cannot look at another woman, if you were that special to him, he wouldn't have caved him without resisting” Pearl had said and Mena had slapped her.

He had stood there boiling in rage, confused on what to do. It was supposed to vindicate him but her last word must have gotten to Mena, because she had started screaming for the both of them to get out, she even told his parents to get out of her family house. She was held back from attacking Pearl by her younger brother but no one focused on him. He had been so pissed that it took everybody including Mena to free Pearl from his grasp. He had sworn to kill her and she had ran away the next day. Mena had gotten a visa to the US through the help of her uncle and within a month, she was out of Nigeria.

“I said don't go there.” He hit his head again.

There were other things to worry about, he was not supposed to be having nightmares when he was not yet asleep. Maybe he was just apprehensive because Tejiri had informed him Mena was coming back to Nigeria. He had paid lots of money to be getting information from her brother, he had felt hope when he heard she had lost her husband in a car crash and now she would be back, there was still hope. He would do anything to turn her heart again. He still had other issues to solve. He had been informed that a group was selling drugs in his marked territories and it was either they were new or just stupid. Marking a territory was never done without bloodshed and he had never been the first to strike. It was Wild, his Team A comrade who had initiated the idea of self-defense. They were just five then, and they had always changed most alpha missions to omega by using Wild's idea. They provoked their enemy to strike first then they went on rampage, he remembered there was one that acted

like a Beast without control, not that any of them were normal.

If only their cover was not blown, John would have still been alive and life would have been different.

A knock at the door interrupted his thoughts. It was Johnny.

“Sir there is a delivery. It came so fast but something....”

“That’s not possible, I ordered for the fridge just three days ago, it is not supposed to be delivered today. Who signed it?” he asked standing up to inspect the fridge

“Sir nobody could signed it, two men on black with glasses and face cap dropped it and they were off before I could question them, I tried chasing them but they had sped off with a black Honda jeep and sir something is wrong” Johnny said.

He was saying that earlier.

“What is it?”

“The carton is shaking and something is kicking inside.”

He paused and looked at Johnny, he was afraid. Safe for the cushion chairs resting on the wall, the bar was empty. The chairs and table had been removed for the party. The two staffs greeted him as he walked to inspect the carton. They were also afraid. Just when he got close, he heard the sound. Something was kicking in the carton. Johnny shifted back.

“Oga what if it is a bomb?” Oke asked.

“Bombs don’t kick carton Oke” he said tearing the seal with a safety knife he brought out from his pocket.

He had no idea of what was kicking the carton but there was no way he could have imagined that it would be a girl. Her head was bent down and he could only see her hair which was parked with a pink hair parker and she was putting on a pink gown.

“Johnny come and see” he said.

Johnny came closer.

“Jesus! What is this?” Johnny shouted.

The other two ran to check.

“Oga, she dey alife so?” Efe asked.

How would she be kicking the carton if she was dead?

“Who will put a girl in a carton, and why our bar?” Oke asked.

“Get me out of here” he heard the girl’s voice.

The voice stirred something in him.

“Thank God she dey alife, I don dey fear say police go come investigate” Efe said.

“Sir what do we do?” Johnny asked.

He looked at the carton again, her head was still down and she was still kicking the carton.

“Bring her out first, let her not suffocate” he told them.

As they tore the carton to free her, he tried thinking of a possible reason and a possible solution. Her back was facing him, and the three men were trying to alleviate her fears, because she was visibly shaking. He brought out his phone and sent a text message to Tega, his brother who was a lawyer to come immediately to the bar.

“It’s okay, pretty girl, you don’t have to fear, you are in safe hands” Johnny said holding her hands.

‘It’s past 3:00am bros’ Tega replied.

‘Better be here in the next ten minutes’ he replied.

“Who put you in the carton?” Efe asked.

“My mummy told them to put me in the carton” the girl stammered.

What was with her voice?

“You sure? How your mama go put you for carton send you comot. Girl are you sure?” Oke asked.

She nodded. They all looked at him as if he had an answer to her answer.

“Why did your mother tell people to put you in a carton?”

Johnny asked.

He was married and had three kids, so he knew how to handle children.

“She said they should send me to my daddy” she answered.

“Which kind yeye dream be this?” Oke said.

“Okay, so your mum made people put you in a carton and told them to send you to your daddy. Do you know your daddy?”

Johnny asked.

She nodded.

“Do you know where he stays?”

She nodded.

“Okay, but right now, you are in a wrong place, this is not a house. But don’t worry pretty, we will help you, we will take you to your daddy’s place. You will just show us your daddy’s place” Johnny said.

He really knew how to handle the situation. He shouldn’t have called Tega.

“No, this is my daddy’s place” the girl said.

“No, this is like a restaurant where people....”

“John’s bar and club” the girl said, interrupting Johnny.

“Sir, maybe her dad works here” Johnny said.

“Who is your dad? What is his name?” he asked.

The girl turned towards the direction the voice came from and almost immediately, he felt the world was spinning. But he recovered quickly, it was just a nightmare. But why would he be having a nightmare of Pearl when she was small, when she lived in the same compound with Mena before moving in with them? So he would now be seeing the younger Pearl, as if that would change the fact that he wanted to strangle her. It explained everything, no sane person would put a girl in a carton and deliver her in a bar by three in the morning. Now, he just had to find a way to wake up. He closed his eyes and opened it but he was not on his bed, he was still standing in his bar and little version of Pearl was still staring at him looking scared.

“Sir did you hear her?” Johnny asked.

They were all staring at him.

“Hear what?” he asked.

“She said you are her dad” Oke said.

“Oh my God! Why is Pearl looking small? Bros my eyes dey deceive me?” Tega spoke from the door preventing him from responding to Oke.

“That’s my name. I’m Pearl junior” the girl said.

This was way past nightmare and it had to end.

“Pearl junior? I nor understand. Which one be Pearl junior, bros what is going on?”

But it was Pearl that answered.

“I’m Pearl, my mummy said, it’s my daddy’s turn to take care of me.”

“Jesu. Eyes have seen, ears have heard. Bros Pearl born your chil...”

“She is not my child” he shouted making his staffs move few steps back including Pearl.

“But she resemble Pearl na. Baby girl how old are you?” Tega asked.

“Seven, I will soon be eight.” Pearl answered.

“Damn, bros eh, you don born pikin, see she even get your eyes” Tega said.

“Tega if I hear that word from your mouth again” he threatened his brother.

Tega raised his hands in surrender.

“Okay, so what do you want to do?” Tega asked.

“You are a lawyer, I did not spend my money on you for you to ask me that stupid question. Deal with it” he said walking to his office.

“No my mummy said, I must be with my daddy, my.....”

“I don’t ever want to hear what your mummy said, just shut your mouth. I don’t want to hear your voice” he shouted moving close to her.

She cawed in fear as he spoke. This could never be his child.

There was nothing of him in her. She was all Pearl. Very tender and fearful. He had never seen what John saw in her. She was so dull, and also scared of everything, and that had always irritated him. This could never be his blood.

“There is nothing of me in you, I can never be your father” he said as she shifted away in fear.

“Bros I know she looks and behaves like Pearl, but you know say she fit be your....”

His brother stopped talking the moment he looked at him.

“Nor ves” Tega said raising his hands.

“Take her with you and find a way to send her back to her mother” he said

“No, mum said I must stay with my dad, they will pick me up in a month.”

She was still speaking. He moved close to her with the intention of pushing her to meet Tega but she ran from him. This was not happening. His nightmare could not become a reality, not when

he was expecting Mena. It would ruin everything. But he was not going to let it happen.

“Go with him. He will send you back to your mum.”

There was a school back bag by the carton.

“Johnny, take her bag and take her to Tega’s car. Now” he commanded.

She started crying as Johnny carried her bag and moved close to her. Tega also moved close. She was definitely not his. She was too soft to be his product.

He had almost turned when it happened. She was very fast, too fast. Just when Johnny held her hand, she stepped on him, kicked him in his groin and as he bent down from the pain, she climbed his back and used him as a lift to land on Tega who she

knocked to the ground with a flip summersault. She landed on the ground without falling.

“My mummy said, I must stay with my dad” she shouted picking her bag from the ground.

“Try take me with you, and you will wake up on the roof of your building with your mouth sealed with a super glue” she said to Tega, then went to sit down on one of the cushion chairs by the wall, legs crossed as if nothing happened.

As Johnny continued groaning, Oke and Efe were already on top of the counter. Some expensive glass cups were scattered on the ground. The two cowards would definitely pay for the cups.

Tega stood up and ran to his back.

“Bros wetin I do you na. Na your pikin be this na, you nor see her eyes? You don forget wetin Mama talk say you go born?

Bros I know say I offend you but nor punish me with her I beg, I

have a wife and two kids, and you want me to carry a wolf pup to my house filled with mountain goats. Bros this is not fair, you want make wolf chop us finish before dey break? See I be your brother but I nor join follow be Wolf, na you be wolf and I be goat. I use God beg you, if na your money you won collect, I go pay back, but I love my wife and kids. They na resemblance you dey find? Na you be this, forget the face, her eye and behavior na you. Carry your pup, I nor won die” Tega said taking off.

CHAPTER TWO {*Day 30*}

There was no traffic because he was driving the only car on the road. He was almost close to his house at Effurun GRA. His nightmare was sitting on the back seat. He made a few glances to check if he had been hallucinating, but she was still there

looking at the lighted streets through the windscreen. He had asked the staffs and Johnny to close up after Tega had ran away. As for his nightmare, she had carried her bag and left. He did not stop her, he just wished she had disappeared, she had dissolved and vanished, but she was actually waiting for him by his car door. He did not say anything to her, he just opened the door for her to enter, that was because he still believed he was having a nightmare or hallucinating. He would have to visit a psychologist. He should have allowed Wild to debrief him. Wild was still in school with the beast guy as per-timers but he was already successful in debriefing many soldiers, although his methods were out of this world, he always produced good record, he could not just tell Wild he had slept with Pearl, John's fiancée, who was Mena's brother. They knew them because John always wanted to see Pearl, he was too protective of her. He had first thought it was an act of pity because Pearl's

widowed mother had been knocked down by a driver as she was hawking her food with her wheelbarrow. John had convinced his parents to allow Pearl move in with them. She was just ten and John was fifteen. His family house was sharing boundary with John's family house and their friendship had brought the two family together. Anytime Mama John did not find John, she came to their house, vice versa. They fetched water for both houses together and he had no resistance when they became aware of his relationship with Mena, only John had refused because the idiot believed he was not good enough for his kid sister. But John's protective strict for Pearl was disturbing to him. She was the only one who behaved like she was not born in Warri, she was too clingy to John and John had loved her like that. He had opposed their relationship as much as John opposed his. Then, Pearl had always sneaked into John's room to sleep. John was way ahead of him when it came to what his mother

called illegal activities. He and John had come to a compromise to stop fighting against who they chose to love. So he could date Mena as long as he accepted Pearl. He could not argue that Pearl was extremely beautiful but she was also too soft, a turn down for him. The numbers of guys that lost a tooth or more because they looked at Pearl were uncountable and Pearl had often visited because John wanted to make sure she was still his. And there was no way Pearl would visit without taking Mena along, so the Special Force team A knew about them. Because of that, he could not tell Wild what really happened. He could not tell him that he had betrayed John's memory. He knew John enough to guess what John would have done. He would have killed him or attempted it and that alone had worsened his psychiatric problems. He could apologize to Mena, in fact Mena had punished him. But there was no way to get his punishment from John. But it looked like nature which some called nemesis had

been patiently waiting for him. His punishment was not over. Pearl had gotten pregnant and instead of her to abort the fetus, she had given birth and just when he had a little hope of bringing back Mena into his life, nemesis had possessed Pearl to send her child he had no hand in to him. So much for being happy that Mena's husband died. Except he did something, he was going to lose Mena forever and he would die an unhappy bachelor. Tega was ruled out already, he had seen what happened, she was not threatening Tega, she was stating a fact. What worried him was she would have harmed Tega like she said. He looked at her again and hit his head on the steering wheel. She was still there, it was no illusion, it was just his nightmares becoming a reality. And did she say thirty days? He was going to live his nightmares for thirty days. Mena would be around before then. He had to do something. First, he would check the cameras and trace Pearl's origin, then send her back.

He did not want to sleep with Pearl, he could not even remember how it happened, the punishment sitting at the back seat was too much for his crime. His only crime was the drink he took. He had known Pearl was stupid but he could never had predicted her stupidity was on a top notch. Why bringing a child she knew he would never accept? He accepted that he would have killed her but she could have sent someone else to ask for the money she needed for abortion. He used a remote to open his gate.

“Wow” Pearl spoke for the first time as he parked the car close to three other cars.

He just wished she never spoke. She did not only resemble Pearl but still had her voice. And why did Pearl name her daughter Pearl? Who does that? She was out before he could tell her to get out. He did not talk to her but she followed him to the door.

“Wow. You live in this place by yourself?”

Was she asking him or just observing? He ignored her and switched on the AC. His house was a very large room, the size of a five bedroom flat but devoid of rooms except one.

Everywhere was glassy and white, the parlor, his kitchen, his one seat dining table, his mini house gym, small golf target and mini swimming pool were all inside the house, separated by transparent glass doors with sensors which opened as one got close except it was locked and they were all bullet proof. It could also be manually opened in case there was power outage and the generators didn't work which had never happened. He had no second room and no plans of making a second room, only a second chair for Mena and maybe a baby's room. He shook his head, he was thinking way faster than his shadow. She had been standing beside him but she was now opening the fridge and bringing out his milk and bread. She had used his bar stool which was his dinning chair as lift.

“What the heck are you doing?” he shouted putting enough force to his voice.

But she was no longer the Pearl that had cawed in fear. It did not work because she smiled and looked at him like he was asking a stupid question.

“This is a gallon of milk, this is bread. They are called food, and people eat them when they are hungry” she said dragging the chair back to the dinning and climbing on it.

It was not what she said but how she said it. It was as if she was giving an answer to a stupid question. She was definitely not afraid of him, but she would be.

“Don’t put that in your mouth” he shouted going over to take the expensive gallon of milk from her.

“Did your mother not teach you fu..damn table manners?” he asked picking a glass cup at the center of the table.

“She tried her best, but I had no father to help her.”

She even had the guts to answer back. He gave her a glass of milk, she took it and started drinking without saying thank you.

He took the glass from her.

“I’m not true” she protested.

“I knew Pearl was useless. She could not even teach you how to say a simple thank you. What did she ever teach you” he said pouring the glass of milk into the sink and flushing it.

Pearl did not say anything but carried the chair back to the fridge and brought out a malt drink.

“If you don’t want me to beat the hell out of you drop that drink back” he commanded but she defiantly opened it and started drinking daring him.

This was Africa, Nigeria to be precise, kids were flogged to correct their disobedience but from what he could see, Pearl had allowed her run wild, there was no discipline. He had no plans of keeping her but if she was going to stay even a day with him, she must learn her manners. He took the malt from her and dropped it in the sink. Before she could go back to the fridge, he picked her up and placed her on top of the table but just when he was removing his hand she tried to slip away but he just knew what she was going to do, he pulled her back and carried her to the sitting room while she kicked at him. He dropped her on top of the round glass table.

“I see your useless mother did not

“Don’t you ever call my mum useless” she attacked him screaming.

He pushed her back to the table but this time she succeeded in slipping away, she jump to the ground and positioned herself for a karate fight. She wanted to fight him. She wanted to fight the wolf. But there was something wrong. Her positioning was perfect, it was triggering a memory that he could not grasp. She was trained. He would dissect that later.

“You want to fight me” he stated.

She did not respond but repositioned herself and flipped her fingers to him in challenge. That was actually her respond. He noticed she was wearing a pink hand band on her left wrist.

“So your mum could not train a seven years old girl the little things about respect and manners. This is my house and as long as you are here, I will instill what your mother could not do.”

“My mum taught me everything about respect. Greet your seniors and elders when you meet them, always say thank you to anyone who gives you something, be obedient to those you are under, and most importantly respect everyone. She taught me very well.”

She was still positioned to fight him and her eyes were still sparkling.

“If you knew all that, why did you disobey my instruction to stay with my brother?”

“My mummy said I should never follow anybody apart from the man she showed me, if that happens I should try fight my way out because the person must be a kidnapper.”

“Then the milk?”

“My mum taught me very well, anything you think I’m not doing well is because of you.”

“Me?”

“Yes. It’s because you hurt my mum and made her cry, I don’t obey those that hurt my mum, I fight them”

She was damn serious. She fought those that hurt her mum? He did not want to dwell on the fact that she meant what she was saying, he did not care anyway.

“I don’t give a fu..damn what your mum said about me. I will find a way to send you back to her but until then, I make the rules and don’t piss me off”

“Or what?”

He raised his hand to hit her but she dodged.

“I don’t mind beating you with my bare hands, and I may end up strangling you. I will beat you if you disobey me again” he was getting pissed on a high level.

“Like you obeyed your mother? My mum told me everything you and John did to your parents, you caused so much trouble and made them police customers. My mum always shouted that I’m a product of your mother’s blessing. She said you will have a child like you. And my mum said the F word is bad.”

This is second for the night, Tega just said that. Could she also be the result of the curse his mother gave him? He was suddenly feeling headache, he could not take this.

“Pearl please, if its money your mum needs, I will give her, I will give you anything a little girl can ever dream of, even if it’s Disney world.”

She relapsed her pose. She was already excited.

“Really, Disney world?”

“Yes, I promise but I need you to do something for me.”

“What?”

“Do you know the address back home?”

She nodded. There was hope. It would soon be over.

“Give me the address, I will take you home, I will give your mum anything she wants and send you to Disney world.”

She did not answer, she went to pick her bag and brought out a small brown envelop. He could not believe he was free, he had somehow found a way to restore things back to order. He opened the small envelop and brought out the paper inside.

‘Rules and Regulations for Pearl’s one month stay’ was printed in capital letter.

He looked at Pearl, she was cutting her right finger nail with her left thumb finger nail. She dropped the nail on the table.

“Nice try, that’s for number one, the earlier the better.”

He glanced at the paper.

1) DNA test.

2) She starts school immediately.

3) Get her clothes

They were numerous. He raised his head to look at her but she was already opening the door to his room.

“What are you doing young lady?” he shouted moving to stop her.

“I want to sleep” she answered like she was stating the obvious.

She closed the door on his face and locked it inside.

“Oh my gosh! So cool” she shouted excitedly.

“Open this door right now young lady” he commanded
pounding on the door.

“Good morning dad” was her reply.

“I’m not your fucking dad” he shouted, his anger had turned to
fury.

“Stop using the F word, I am seven” she shouted back but he
just knew she was on his very expensive white bed. It was a
\$30,000 dollar waterbed that vibrated with music and the pillow
was stuffed with sensors that made one sleep.

“Pearl open this door or I will give you the beating you should
have received a long time ago” he shouted.

The door could not be opened by someone outside as long as it
was locked by someone inside, it was also a bullet proof door,

and it would take a whole day to destroy it. He did it for himself but a very tiny thing had locked him out of his own damn room.

“Good morning Wolf” she answered and made a loud snoring sound.

He was really going to strangle her, good thing his punching bag was close by, he was going to start with it.

CHAPTER THREE {Day 30}

What was that scent permeating his nostrils? He opened his eyes and first thing he noticed was that he was lying down on his artificial golf grass field instead of his room. That had never happened. Second thing he noticed was his phone

vibrating close to him. He sat up and immediately, the night's event flashed through his mind. Pearl! She had locked him out of his own room and what was that scent? His phone vibrated again. He saw the time before he saw Johnny's call. He stood up immediately.

“What the heck happened? 9:13AM!” he exclaimed.

He knew why Johnny was calling.

“Sir I've been calling your line but you did not pick, that made me worry.”

“Why will you be worried I did not pick my call?” he asked getting annoyed.

“I thought she must have done something to you sir. You are never late.”

Exactly why he was getting annoyed because he knew that was what Johnny was going to say.

“I will be on my way soon. I will sign later. Hope they’ve started work?”

“Yes Sir.”

“Johnny I don’t want a word of what happened outside, warn them. I won’t just fire them if I hear about Pearl from someone else” he said standing up to locate the source of the scent.

“Yes sir. I have emailed you the details of the group of drug sellers. There is a problem.”

Pearl had made egg sauce and she had set it on the dining table.

She was toasting some of it and reading a bible as the toaster did its work. She was really reading a bible.

“What is it?”

“It’s a clan sir, our Intel traced them to Lagos and he said there is a dreaded man named Agege at the top of the chain.”

“That will be more interesting, the Wolf have been resting for too long. I will study the details, tell him to withdraw immediately till I say otherwise.”

“Yes Sir.”

“And send the details of the video record to Hacker, take the full carton to him. Tell him to try trace to the origin.”

“I’ve already done that sir. I met him around 7:AM. He said he will contact you.”

Johnny was always proactive and knew what to do.

“Good.”

“Sir should I wait for you at the restaurant or I should get going?”

“Wait for me” he answered cutting the call.

“Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” Pearl read aloud as he came close to her.

She had even made tea. She was on her pajamas and scented like baby soap. How did he even know that?

“Are you reading out your crime in the hope I will not punish you?”

“Honor your father and mother that your days may be long” she continued reading ignoring him.

“I can’t believe you go to church and you know the bible but you do the opposite of it” he said taking her tea away from the dinning.

She tried pulling it from him but he had thrown it to the sink breaking the glass and spilling the tea. He went and switched off the toaster.

“I am talking to you young lady” he shouted.

“Fathers provoke not your children to wrath” she continued reading but making her voice louder.

She stood up and positioned herself for a fight.

There was nothing like that there. She had quoted from her head. He knew Ephesians 6:1 and 2 because they had been forced to attend children Sunday school. He picked the bible and she followed his movement still positioned to fight him, her eyes sparkling.

Shit, the stuff was there, she was not reading from her head. He looked at her and understood her warning. She had deliberately

started reading very loud as soon as he came close because of the last part. A justification for her anger but that did not change the fact that he was angry.

“You are going to show me the way back to your mother right now” but she responded by pulling her nose up and flipping her fingers for him to come fight her.

That was it. He was going to beat sense into her. He tried to pick her up like the night before but she was really prepared because she blocked him with the dining stool and was on the table. How did she climb that so fast? She flipped her fingers at him again making him send a punch her way but she was already on the ground and then was on the kitchen counter. That went on and on but he could not catch her, she was too calculative and fast, and stealth with her movement.

“Who trained you?” but she flipped her fingers at him.

He was tired of the game. He went and picked the egg sauce and tried pouring them into the sink but she rushed at him and tried kicking his head but he dodged and pulled her back before she fell using her head. He reacted on instinct and almost regretted his actions. He did not care if she broke her head. He held on to her as she tried to fight him. He placed her on his shoulders, one hand holding down her hands, the other preventing her legs from kicking him.

“Let me down” she shouted.

He dropped her on the sitting room table then raised his hands to hit her but could not. Her elbow was already covering her head to take the punch. He wanted to beat her but it did not feel right using his fist. He was going to get a cane but was it necessary? She would be gone either before midnight or early morning the next day. He left her and went to his room expecting to see a

scattered mattress but everything was properly arranged, like someone disciplined. That reminded him that she was seven and had made egg sauce on her own. He ran back to the kitchen to check the gas. It was off. Not just that, but the kitchen was very neat. She was already making another tea. Who taught her all these?

He was ready for work within thirty minutes. He had glanced through the update about the drug dealers invading his territory and they were really not just a group, but a clan with different suspected criminal activities and that was too big a threat. It was making him excited, the bigger the challenge, the better.

“Where are you going?”

He had almost forgotten about her. And he had been thinking life was terrible, how would he manage the situation?

She was shooting the tiny golf balls into the holes. He almost forgot she was his big problem because she was not missing and she was shooting them simultaneously without pausing. There were twelve holes and many balls were placed from a distance. The holes were very tiny that instead of it falling inside, there was a gum that trapped it if one hit the target. It was his creation, he just called it mini golf field. None in his gyms had been able to hit target up to six times simultaneously. But she just sent the twelfth ball without stopping or missing.

“Who trained you?”

“I have masters.”

“Masters?”

“My mum allowed them because she said I was already out of control.”

Why would a normal lady give out her seven years old daughter to whatever she called masters? That was not his business.

“I am going out, stay one place and don’t touch anything, just so you know, I’m coming back with a cane.”

Even before he finished his statement he knew that was a bad idea. She had left the golf and had switched on the treadmill machine. She knew how to use it. He was not sure she had listened to his last statement. He noticed she was still wearing her pink hand band.

“Pearl I’m talking to you” he shouted.

“You are not following the rule, did you not read what will happen if you fail to obey the rule?” she shouted back but continued running on the treadmill.

The rule. He had almost forgotten about the letter. He had dropped it on the tiles. He looked around and saw it under the table.

‘Extension of stay by a week for each broken rule’ was written in bold letters at the end of the rules and regulations, after that, there were things she must not eat. But he was not interested in that.

“How will she know I broke the rules?”

“I will call.”

“You have her number” he shouted walking towards the treadmill.

“Rule number six” she said.

He checked the paper.

6. Don't ever force her to disclose any information, she can call with a payphone, the line will be disposed after her call.

He checked rule number one and two again then read number three and four. There was no way he was going to take her to school. The DNA test was the only thing he would do. There could be hope she was not his. It was written there that she would be taken away if it showed they were not related, he would use Tejiri, Mena's brother who was a doctor to help. He would dare not tell Mena. But the rule also said she must start school immediately, he could not do that. Her nail was still on the table. He would do the DNA but school would not work because Hacker was the best in tracking people, he could hack into anything and trace anyone. He picked the nail and put it in his pocket.

“I don’t give a damn about the rule. If you don’t want me to break your tiny neck, leave that machine.”

“Okay” she said but she was now using the bike.

This was trouble, he could not deal with it.

“Get out of my mini gym” he shouted.

“Okay” she said coming down but walked to the room and before he could stop her she had closed the door. How was he supposed to leave her in the house? His phone started ringing and he was relieved it was Hacker.

“Tell me only good news” he said.

“It depends on what you see as good news” Hacker replied.

“Where you able to trace them?”

“Then there is no good news bros.”

“What do you mean?”

“First the car had a fake number, second I was able to zoom the men’s face and even though they were on dark glasses, I could have still traced them.”

“Then what is the problem?”

“Bros those people dey give me chills oh. The faces looked real but not real. It was obvious they were wearing a silicone mask which I never knew existed in Nigeria. When I zoomed it, I could see the end of the mask at their back, but something is off bros. Silicone mask cannot easily be detected and the way the camera picked it made me believe they intentionally did not fully cover the mask and they intentionally looked at the camera, like a message for you not to waste your time.”

“So?”

“Bros eh, wetin dey the carton? You sure say he nor relate to our new target, Agege?”

“Hacker” he shouted.

“They can’t be traced because they are faceless, and they were aware there are cameras. Nothing on the carton, just plain.”

“Hacker, so what you mean is there is no way to locate the two men?”

“Yes but I could try if I know what was in the.....”

He cut the call. If Hacker said he could not do a work it meant there was no other person he knew that could do it. He should be surprised by Hacker’s revelation but somehow he was not. Pearl was just seven yet she could do things his trained security personal could not do and some would never achieve. And she had mentioned masters.....

“Just give up, you can’t trace my masters” Pearl said.

She was close to him and he had not sensed her.

“This is a nightmare” he let out his frustration.

“It’s only for a month but if you want to extend it, don’t send me to school today” she said jumping on top of his expensive white cushion chairs.

“Pearl come down now before I fling you away.”

“Okay” but she dived to the table and landed without falling.

He could not send her to school, it would ruin everything. She could only use a payphone if he let her out. He would not allow her go out.

“Don’t even think of locking me in, because if you do, I will blow everything before you come back.”

“And I will skin you alive.”

She sniffed her nose at him.

“I am not afraid of you, and you can beat me all you want, I am already used to it” she was now around his newspaper shelf which was adjacent his TV.

The shelf was large and tall that he would have to climb to touch the top. It also contained magazines and books. That may be the only trait he inherited from his old man. He loved to read and store newspapers and he had always waited for his old man to finish so he could read. He had not yet dropped the day before newspaper. She tried pulling out a book about guns, it was within her reach.

“Don’t touch that” he shouted.

“Okay” she said picking the remote from the TV set.

She switched on the TV but it did not work, he had disconnected it from the socket because he had no time for TV. She located the socket, plugged the extension, connected both the TV and decoder and switched everything on. There was no way she was seven and if that was true, there was hope she was not his child. Good thing he did not recharge. He remembered something she had said as the decoder booted. She said she was used to being beaten. Somehow it disturbed him, he wanted to ask her for an explanation but he did not care, why should he bother? He needed a way out. Pearl meant what she said, she was definitely not afraid of his threats, and there was no doubt she would carry out her threat. She switched on the DVD after discovering he had not recharged. She located the codes and connected it to the TV using a stool by the wall.

“If you lock me up how will you get rid of me after a month? If you take me back to the bar, and they pick me, I will tell them all the rules you broke and they will drop me back at a place you will never expect. Then I will stay another three months.”

She had selected a DVD and inserted it and it was already loading. No those contents were plus eighteen. He switched off the socket.

“No” she shouted smashing the remote on the ground. The remote was gone. The headache was back.

“Go dress up and come with me” he said.

“Yeah!” she shouted running to his room.

“Not my room young lady.”

“Okay, then I will take my bath and poopoo in the swimming pool” she said pulling her top pajamas.

“Get inside” he said rubbing his forehead.

She entered the room without saying another word. He kicked the table and instantly felt the pain. He held his leg and sat down on a cushion.

“What kind of a nightmare is this? Is this not too much for my crime?” he shouted.

Whoever was working with Pearl, no Ese. He could not be calling both of them Pearl. Ese was her mother’s native name.

Whoever was working with Ese to torment him with Pearl was good. This should be the first time Hacker was giving up on an assignment even before he had started. It was like they knew him very well and had plan A to Z on how to counter all the actions he might take. He dialed Tega’s line.

“Bros thank God you still dey alife, what of baby Pearl?”

“Why are you asking after her?”

“Because if she nor kill you, you go don kill am, and if you dey call me to take the case eh, I get case full ground, I get court...”

“Tega I need your help.”

“Please don’t tell me to take her.”

“I need you to take her to your children’s school and register her.”

“Unbelievable, so soon? You don accept am...”

“Tega” he shouted.

“Nor ves, but that one nor fit work oh, I fit send you the school address but I nor fit take am go. I have a court case now, tomorrow till next year, no single time. I go send the school address bros no ves” Tega said cutting the call.

Almost immediately, he received a text from him. That made him realize how damned he was. This was not happening, not now. He needed to strategize, he was the wolf.

“I’m ready” Pearl said.

She was wearing a straight white gown and the black shoe she had worn when she was delivered. The pink hand band was still on her left wrist.

“Why are you wearing a band?”

“My mum said she is always with me as long as I’m with the band. I will never take it off” she said with defiance.

He did not care what her mum said, the school might not allow it anyway.

He got to his restaurant by 10:05AM. It was half full. Those that came for early morning coffee and breakfast had left. The

restaurant was all filled up from 6:45 to around 8:30AM because he had introduced a breakfast meal where people on the rush could take simple meals. He had told Pearl to wait in the car. He nodded to the greetings from his staffs and from the girls trying to get his attention. There was one who was a rich man's daughter who always came every Monday because she knew he visited the restaurant every Monday, in the morning. She waved at him all smiles. She must have drank a drum of coffee waiting for him. When would she get the idea that he would never be interested? He had already called Tejiri to meet him at the restaurant before he drove out of the compound. Tejiri entered his office as he was signing the needed documents.

“I hope nothing is wrong?” Tejiri asked.

“Take this samples and help conduct a DNA test. I want to find out if they are related. He had added his hair to a waterproof he kept Pearl’s nails after entering his office.

“Bros wetin dey happen?”

“Just do it and make sure nobody is aware.”

“Okay oh.”

“How long do I have to wait?”

“Two days. I’m going back to work” Tejiri said leaving his office.

“Sir, you really believe she is not yours?” Johnny asked after Tejiri left the office.

“I don’t ever want you to discuss her with me again.”

“Yes sir. What about the gang issue?”

“I will read the full file today, then I will have to pay them a visit. Let me first understand who I’m dealing with. Have you told him to withdraw?”

“Yes sir, he is on his way back to Warri.”

“Don’t withdraw the person on the gangs’ trail” he said leaving his office.

The restaurant manager, Mr Okoro’s office was adjacent his office. He was standing by his door waiting for him.

“I’ve signed the documents. Pick them up and lock my office.”

“Yes sir.” Mr Okoro said.

He should not be surprised by the sight that greeted him as soon as he entered the restaurant. How was he even expecting her to obey him? Pearl was sitting by the girl’s table. What was her name? She had told him several times but he could not

remember. She was eating akara and pap. Worse thing was some of his staffs were drooling around her. What had she told them?

“Sir, your eyes are red” Johnny cautioned same time Pearl looked his way.

The girl followed her movement and waved at him to come over. He was definitely going over and whether he would keep his cool would be determined by what Pearl had told them.

“Hi Wolf, your niece is so cute, she has your eyes” she said rubbing Pearl’s shoulders.

“Sir you never brought this one to the restaurant, she so adorable.” Fego, one of his staffs said.

The others started talking at the same time but he was not listening to them. Niece? It had not helped anything, he hated

lying. His staffs knew him for that. What kind of trouble did he get himself in?

“Niece?” he did not know if he was asking or making a statement.

“She said she is related to you, I guess she is your niece” the girl said clearing the air.

“Get to work” Johnny shouted at the staffs.

God bless Johnny, he now had only the girl to deal with.

“Good morning Mr. Johnny” Pearl said looking all soft and breakable.

Johnny shook his head in surprise, almost like he was saying she was nowhere near cute and soft. He wanted to ask her how she knew his name but he remembered he had called his name the other night.

“Let’s go” he said taking Pearl’s hand.

“I’m not through” she said.

Did she have multiple personality? How come her voice was sounding different?

“Helen thanks for the food” he said carrying her out of the chair and firmly holding her hand.

“It’s Helena” she responded but he was already on the move.

“I told you to stay inside the car” he said putting enough anger in his voice.

They were already inside the car. She did not answer.

“I am talking to you” he shouted.

“Why do you always take away my food?” she asked.

He wanted to slap away that defiance from her face. He breathed in and counted from one to ten, then ignited the car.

“I wanted to weewee, that’s why I came out, and they kept asking me about who brought me, was I supposed to lie? My masters don’t permit lying” she said.

Masters again.

“Who are these masters you keep talking about? What do they do?”

“I am not to tell you” she answered.

He stopped the car and turned to look at her. Johnny had mentioned Agege, Hacker had mentioned Agege. He had even said they knew him and they made him feel chills. Could there be a connection between Ese, Pearl and the said Agege? He had forgotten Ese hated him as much as he hated her. Why would a

group sell hard drugs in his territory where he was notorious?
Why was this happening same time Pearl was delivered to him?
Was this Ese's form of revenge? Was Pearl trained by the said
Agege and sent to him to find his weakness so he could take
over his territory? There was no doubt about her skill, and she
had just shown she was a good actor. No seven years behaved
like her. There was something wrong and he had been looking at
things the wrong way. If Pearl was a sent to ruin his life, then
there was still hope. She was under his care, and Ese must have
forgotten he was trained too. He was going to change his
approach and turn the table. Ese was playing with fire.

CHAPTER FOUR {Day 30}

He kept saying she was a nightmare, she knew what nightmares meant, it meant someone was having a bad dream, it hurt her a lot to hear him say that. He had even said he was not her father. He did not want her to call him dad. Mum and Wild had told her what to expect but it still hurt. Sabrina had said DNA was used to confirm if someone was related to another person. Mum was sure Wolf was her dad. She only wanted the DNA because of Wolf, that was the only way he would believe. She had seen fathers take their children to school and also pick them up after closing and she had wanted her father to do the same but at the moment, she wanted to go home. It was already three months they took her in. She missed Halima, Cindy, Beast, Jason, Major and Hadiya, Sabrina, Mark, Fast, Wild and she so missed Ghost. She also missed puppy. It was now big, Cindy

said her baby would soon come out. She said she would come back to meet baby. They had all betted on what the baby would be. Mark and Fast made her know what betting meant. Only Pastor Sam's wife knew if the baby would be a boy or a girl, she was her doctor. They both wanted a boy but Wild, Beast and Major wanted a girl, the others were on Cindy's side. She just wanted a sibling. She was the only sibling and they were too focused on her. But now she wanted the focus. School from Monday to Friday, then one of them came to pick her up to the Circle house even during holiday because she had holiday lessons organized by her school so she could meet up. Her mum was taken care of, they had even made her hospital room to look like a normal room and they always made her laugh and cry with joy. She missed them so much. She missed the rides with Fast. He was already teaching her how to ride a car but she was made to use a small car, not children's car, not adult's car. The big

battery had to be charged. Beast built it for her. He said he studied mechanical engineering. But Jason had to do some wiring stuff. Jason was her mathematics teacher, she could now solve secondary school mathematics. The rule was she would not go for her weekend training if she scored less than eighty percent in any class work or assignment. She never missed any weekend. Mark taught her how to swim and she was already learning how to fight under water. Sometimes, he taught her computers but Jason was the best teacher on how to hack someone's phone. Sabrina took her shopping and they always dressed to match and parade Abuja, she kept telling people she was her aunt. She taught her the language of deception in a female's dress. She said many did not fear her when she dressed girly and she always took them by surprise just like she did last night. Wild taught her a lot, how to study someone's reaction and possible actions, fear, strength, weakness, when to fight,

when to withdraw, when to run, and when to strike while Beast taught her where. As for Ghost, she could now open a car, building and safe doors. She could move without making a noise, she could pick out what Ghost called blind spots and stay stiff as long as possible. Major was training her on how to use her fearlessness as an advantage. He said some people only attacked those they feel were weak. He also said some people would withdraw if they saw no fear in their victim's action because they always wanted their victim to fear them. He taught her what victim, prey, predator, target, culprit, undercover, mission, tailing meant. Sabrina was working but was always around throughout the weekend so she never noticed her absence, and her drama with Mark was always confusing her. As for Cindy and Halima, and Pastor Sam, they were the only normal people in her life, that was if she minus Halima's childish behavior, sometimes she felt she was older than her. She was always

acting as if she was noticing and hearing some things for the first time and Beast always surprised her by explaining even what a two year old knew to Halima. She was not supposed to call them miss or Mrs. or Mr. or uncle or aunt, just their name which was weird.

Wolf was driving into a school. She had been distracted. The gateman looked surprised to see him, like he knew him but he must be in the wrong place.

She had been waiting in the car, because Wolf told her to wait. She did not feel like coming out, if not, she would have loved to test the swing. The school was okay, it looked better than her school in Benin. She looked at her band. Should she press it or just wait?

Wolf came to the car before she could make a decision.

“Come out Pearl” he commanded in his deep voice.

Did he have to put command in all his talks? She felt like sitting back. She did not know what was wrong with her, she just felt like doing the opposite of what he said. Maybe it was because of what he said about her mum, because he hated her when she did nothing wrong.

“Pearl did you not hear me?”

She slowly opened the door, daring him to hit her in public. He should be ready to hit her till his hands break because it would not be worse than the beatings she had received before Beast saved her or the pain and hunger she had suffered because there was no money and food. But her father was living in a big house, enjoying himself, he did not even bother to look for her mum.

He did not even say thank you to her mum for taking care of her for seven years, instead he wanted to send her back. What if Beast never saved her? She would have been sold as house girl

to one Agege, but from things she had heard Sabrina talk with The Circle, it was something worse. But his father was all okay why she suffered with her mum. She would never obey him, he did not deserve her obedience. She could see the anger in his eyes but she hoped he was looking at her eyes too, because he was not the only one angry. She loved making him angry, because she already knew people feared him, let him have a taste of himself. She started closing the door very slowly, but he pulled her hand off the door handle and closed it with force, but who cared? He would destroy his car.

“Follow me.”

The way he said it showed he was trying his best to control his anger, and she had not even started.

The headmaster’s office was very large. It even had a mini fountain. She could create a local one. Mark taught her.

“Children are always attracted to the fountain” the headmaster said.

But hers was definitely for a different reason, she was seven but she was nowhere a child, unlike Halima. The headmaster was really fat, didn't he do any exercise? His jaws were all folded, it would soon get to his throat which was already full like it would soon blow. She could not see his belly but she could guess it was a full drum, maybe tank as Halima usually grouped them, pot, drum and tank bellies. Halima was really funny.

“So you want her to begin school immediately?” the headmaster asked Wolf who had sat down on a chair opposite the headmaster.

Have they not talked about it already?

“I thought we've settled that” Wolf said.

That was exactly what she was thinking.

“But you did not state her former class and we need a result to be sure.”

Oh that! She searched her bag and brought out her report card. She was hundred percent ready. She gave it to the headmaster.

“Oh mine! One hundred in math and English. Her lowest score is ninety eight, social studies” the headmaster said.

That was because of the family question. She had intentionally ticked the wrong answer. She had ticked option B, which stated that a family consist of a mother, children and water. She also ticked the wrong answer for another question about family.

“So you are entering primary four. Wait Wolf...”

“Mr James” Wolf corrected.

Was there any place where nobody knew him?

“Oh Mr James, you said she is seven?”

Oh not again. They must have talked about that, she hated repetition, she hit her palm on her forehead but noticed Wolf had done the same.

“Oh sorry, the average age for primary four is nine and ten, few eight" the headmaster said.

He should have a name, she looked around the table. There it was. His name was Mr. Millions. Unbelievable! Her mum had said Urhobo and Isoko people sometimes gave their children funny names. She just saw one.

“I will soon be eight.”

“She will soon be eight.”

She and Wolf said at the same time. She glared at Wolf, same time Wolf looked at her. The message was clear. Stop doing things I want to do, we are not related. But he was the one doing and saying things she wanted to do and say. Mr. Millions couldn't wait to be through with the weirdoes in his office. And she could not wait for the remaining days she would turn eight, then she would start telling people she would soon be nine, then ten till she get to eighteen when she could join the armed forces and nobody would be surprised anymore. But she had not yet decided if she would start as a navy, air force or an army officer.

“Okay, I have sent a message to the primary four class teacher to come give you a test, if you pass, you will be admitted to primary four.”

“But it's that necessary? I don't have that time. Her result is good enough.” Wolf complained.

“I’m sorry for the inconvenience but that’s the procedure.”

“And I must be around?”

“Yes Wo.. Mr James” the headmaster said same time a lady entered the office.

She gasp when she saw Wolf. Oh no! Another one. She looked at her left fingers, there was no ring. She was definitely another one. She wondered how many times Helena most have told Wolf her name.

“What do we have here! Wolf who is she?”

“He is her guardian, just be fast with the test” Mr. Millions answered.

Ghost would have something to say about the Principal’s name.

The lady had some papers and pen with her.

“Okay Sir. She is cute Wolf” the lady said batting her eyes.

They always did that to Mark and he liked it but it never ended well if Sabrina was around. She had never understood them.

Halima had said it was okay, because she was seven, it's only what adults should understand.

“Hi, pretty lady, I'm Miss Esther and you are?”

She had pronounced Miss too long.

“I'm Pearl.”

At least she was not ugly and she had a good smile, unlike Helena who had too many makeups.

“Okay, fill in your details in this papers, and tick the correct answers to the math and English questions, here is a counting book, we don't use calculators in this school....”

And blab la bla bla because she was already ticking and was now past the ten questions for math, she was now ticking the

English questions. The questions looked like a joke, class was going to be boring.

“Done” she said giving her paper to a surprised Miss Esther.

“Wow! Pearl you are very intelligent, I’m not seeing any wrong answers.”

That was because they were like KG one questions.

“Wow! You did not write your name” Miss Esther said placing back the paper on the table.

She wrote her full name and her age and gave it back to her.

“Ovie Pearl Oghenefome. Wait, she is your niece? But she looks familiar. I know your brother’s children...”

“Miss Esther, did she pass the test?” Mr. Millions asked interrupting her.

Why was everyone thinking that?

“Yes Sir.”

“Then create a space in your class, she is starting now. I will send her over after she collects all the things she needs.”

“Okay Sir. Bye Wolf” she said excitedly.

“Bye Miss Esther” Wolf waved back at her making her increase her smile.

Mark would say she was blushing. She looked at Wolf and discovered Miss Esther did not understand Wolf meant he was relieved she was leaving. Why could people not see what was there in other people’s faces.

“Are you making a full payment or...”

“Full payment.”

He was filling in a check. That was current account. She knew because of Halima and her fashion business which was booming

as Cindy would call it. People just like Halima, she had a way of attracting everyone. He gave the check to Mr. Millions but added loads of money from his wallet. That was enough to pay their rent for a year. But it was nothing to Wolf, she felt hurt.

“That’s for the stress” Wolf told the headmaster.

“Oh, thanks a lot Mr. James, you can be well assured she will taken care of” Mr. Millions said grabbing the money more than the check.

He brought out a file from the side locker of the table.

“You just need to fill this form and you can go. I know you are a very busy man. I will handle the rest” Mr. Millions said.

Wolf filled the form while she studied the mini fountain.

“Pearl, your date of birth” Wolf said.

She took the form from him and filled it herself. Her eyes caught what he filled on the space for relationship. He had written guardian. It hurts. She gave the form back to Wolf.

“Unbelievable! Of all dates, it had to be this date” Wolf said shaking his head.

She knew what he meant, but it was not her fault she was born on the day John died. Mum said so. She said she was a consolation, a shining pearl in the midst of her darkness. But it was not so for Wolf, he looked like he was about to burst in anger and hatred. It hurts. If she knew she would be hurting like this, she wouldn't have come.

“Mr. Millions, I indicated my brother and my personal assistant as possible people to pick her up. My brother's wife may also be among, that is whoever comes to pick my niece and nephew, will pick her up.”

“I understand Mr. James.”

It really hurt that he even called the others his niece and nephew but he was just her guardian. What was her crime? She shouldn't have come. She wanted to tell him there was no way she would allow any other person to pick her up apart from him but she changed her mind. He would find out from whoever would try pick her.

Just like she thought, class was very boring, she was almost the smallest in size and she knew she would be the youngest in age. The others were either chubby, fat or big. This was what Ghost would call Ajebota school. She was Ajekpako in the midst of Ajebotas who she knew their parents would still be brushing their teeth and they had no idea how to hold a knife or switch on a gas, just eat, watch cartoon, go to school, cry and sleep. Miss Esther was not even noticing the way his colleague was looking

at her, just as she was looking at Wolf. She had made the class unbearable for her by asking questions about Wolf. Who was he to her? Would she be staying around? Would Mr. Wolf always bring her to school? Did Wolf have another brother she did not know about? Why was she looking like one Eseoghene who was once a fiancée to John, James' best friend? They were so popular in Warri especially in Effurun. Was John her father? It was possible because they both had same surname. As weird as it sounded, it was true. John was Ovie, Wolf was also Ovie. She was driving her crazy and the math and other subjects was bringing down her IQ. She had learnt everything during the holiday, it was compulsory for her. She tried to act as a seven years old cute girl but Miss Esther was making life difficult for her. Was this what she would face in a month? She was already thinking of the best way to knock her out, she could use Beast's

method of putting someone to sleep, although it never worked on her, it only tickled.

She did not know how, but she survived the day. No one told her to pull off her band and that had saved her from a long explanation. Just when she thought she was free, Miss Esther called her for lesson. She said Wolf paid for everything.

“I don’t want lesson, I will rather pull out my hairs from my head” she said but Miss Esther laughed.

She had learnt the word from Fast.

“I understand young Ovie, I’m even thinking of asking the headmaster to give you primary five exam. You are too intelligent for this class.”

“Really?” she asked excitedly.

“Yes, but that will mean you won’t be in my class, but Miss Cynthia’s class. Let me just observe you more sweetheart.”

Her heart just broke, Miss Esther just broke it. She felt like demonstrating it the way Mark used to do every time Sabrina gave him eyebrow or eyepunch as Ghost usually called it. He would hold his chest and fall to the ground or the big and deep and scaring swimming pool. Even though she was just seven, she made up her mind never to become Miss Esther, Helena and those girls that used to follow Mark. They did not follow Ghost because they never saw him to follow. As for Fast, he was too busy with everything. She would never forget the day he rode a bull. The bull had sent him flying in the air and if he was not abnormal, the bull would have killed him, but he had ended up killing the innocent bull, not riding it. The bull was no longer innocent after their fridge was filled with loads of bull meat.

They were watching it life from Beast's house. They were all weird.

“Did you hear me?” Miss Esther asked.

Oh thank God she had been too distracted to hear what she had said.

“I said, it's okay, you can sit over there and read something or do anything or...”

“I will sleep” she helped her.

“Okay, but make sure you tell me when your guardian is around.”

How come she forgot parents or guardians only came twice a day? Anyway, she nodded and slept off, she was tired.

“Pearl” Miss Esther called her.

She opened her eyes to see a disappointed face of Miss Esther.

“Your Uncle is here to pick you. You know his children are in KG one and primary one, so sad he is already taken. Wolf did not come.”

Did she know she was just seven? She carried her bag and walked to the corridor where Uncle Tega was fearfully waiting for her. He was carrying his daughter and holding his son. His daughter gave him a peck on his cheek, he gave her back.

“Good afternoon Uncle Tega” she said.

He looked at her like he was about to run.

“Hi Pearl, meet your cousins. This is Vona he is five and this is Fego, she is three. Vona and Fego go greet your senior cousin” he said dropping Fego.

She was so cute. They ran towards her, hugging her. She did not expect them to do that. She returned the hug.

“Are you my big sister?” Vona asked holding her hands as they walked to the car.

Uncle Tega had carried Fego back and she was resting her head on his shoulder. It hurt that she never had something like that.

“Yes, just call me Pearl cutie” she said making Vona laugh.

She stood behind as Uncle Tega safely tucked them on the back seat.

“Come on Pearl, you can enter.”

She shook her head.

“First I’m sorry for what I did this early morning, second I cannot follow you.”

“But why? Your dad said I should pick you up, he will come pick you from my house later in the evening. He is very busy.”

“My mum said my dad must pick me up, I’m also his business. I must follow everything my mum said.”

“Na wa, akpoki cinema. This one na really bros pikin. Mama why you nor live see wetin bros born” he said entering the driver’s seat.

“This world is a cinema” she tried interpreting what he said.

“You hear Urhobo?” he asked her in Urhobo.

She nodded.

“Wow! I will call my brother and tell him to come pick his business, I’m going with my businesses” he said making her laugh.

He was somehow funny. She walked over to the gateman’s watch house or office, told him she was going to wait for Wolf,

then sat down on one of the chairs. It worked because the man allowed her.

The school soon became empty but Wolf had not shown himself. The gateman said the penalty for the delay was a thousand naira. She told him Wolf would pay. At a point, she pitied the gateman. She was the only person keeping him back. She told the man she would wait outside the gate but he had shouted a loud no. Soon it became dark, she asked for the time and the gateman said it was already past 7:PM. She would wait. It hurt but she would wait, she would follow her mum's instruction. The gateman switched on his torch as soon as there was a power outage. Soon he slept off but she must wait.

She thought of something to distract her, she could not activate her hand band because of the gateman. Jason had customized the hand band especially for her. She was grateful to

him for so many things. She was grateful to all The Circle, she would not feel much hurt from Wolf's treatment because of them, they made she and her mum so happy. Ghost had always brought flowers. Every Friday, she always tried guessing who would come pick her up, Fast was the best ride. She felt happy flying the helicopter with Fast, she could not understand what was scary for Halima and Cindy. Maybe she too was not normal. Some of the weekends, the whole family was complete at the Circle house, she had two born fire night, and two family dinners.

She would never forget one of the dinners. That Saturday, Halima had decided to display her designs, she was used to display children clothes both male and female, Sabrina wore for females, Mark for males and Cindy for pregnant women.

Ghost lied down on his back and asked Fast to shoot him.

“Since when did Circle house become a fashion show? Wild save us” Ghost said.

“Sssh, you are supposed to save me, she is your sister” Wild replied.

But others had found the show interesting but that was not the main thing.

It all started when Sabrina said she had an announcement to make.

“I have decided to upgrade Sabrina status due to circumstances beyond my control.”

Nobody talked, they waited for her to continue.

“See it happened so sudden, Agege was asking me out and I blurted out that I have a boyfriend and I am very faithful to him.

I also said, he will soon propose and he will know if I cheat on him because he can easily read me.”

Still no one said anything, they were all looking at her.

“So right now Sabrina has a fiancée she is loyal to but there is a problem” Sabrina continued.

“Exactly what we have been waiting for” Mark said.

She looked at Mark making Mark raise his hands up.

“Sorry continue please” Mark said.

“He asked me to come with him on Monday, at least let him greet my boyfriend.”

“So who do you want to join you on your undercover?” Wild asked picking each word slowly.

“I know you are all occupied but it’s just on Monday night.”

“My question is still hanging” Wild said.

“Ghost.”

“Hell no, that is sodomy” Ghost said.

“Saheed are you mad? You don’t know what undercover means?” Sabrina shouted.

And now her craziness had started. She quickly washed her hands and used her tab to search the internet to find out the meaning of sodomy but the word was part of the blocked words she could not access. Adult things.

“Sabrina Ghost has rejected you, who else?” Wild asked.

Major and wife were silent, they were weird. You could hardly know Sabrina was their daughter. They were busy eating their towu shikanfi, some ate fried rice, some eguisi soup, there were different foods and the table was big enough to accommodate

them. She was eating eguisi and eba with her nuclear family, Halima and Beast. The others were extended family.

“I don’t have anyone else because you all are aware of how Agege operates. If my boyfriend visits me, he is supposed to spend the night with me and he always tail some of his workers. My house is a bedsitter, it makes it appropriate I use my brother.”

“Exactly my point sister, it’s not real, we don’t need appropriate. So anyone can go, I’m busy. No” Ghost said.

“Right now your options are Ghost, Fast or Mark. The rest are married” Wild said.

He was very weird, he kept saying he was married but she had never seen his wife.

“I will be on my mission field. No” Fast said.

“Who am I to say no? I’m all available baby” Mark said.

“No” Major, Sabrina and her mum said at the same time.

“Major this is Circle not family. You have to maintain your emotional distance, you made the rule” Wild said.

“There is also the voting rule” Jason spoke for the first time.

That was because Cindy was close to him. Cindy was always with him or around him any time he had taught her. Jason was the only person who had not given her a peck, or who had not carried her with his bare hands. Cindy explained everything but Jason later made her understand that autism did not affect people same way, some could talk, some could not talk, some were very sensitive, some were not too sensitive, some were physically balanced, some were not and those category of people had autism written on their face. But it was not so for Jason, so he had partial autism. He could control his sensitivity, but there

were those who had overload of it and they were always screaming from the sensation, so she understood Jason very well. Cindy was really his miracle. He only touched Cindy.

“Let’s vote” Beast said after swallowing a big lump of eba.

“Okay, but couples have one vote, that’s my decision” Wild said.

He was the commander in charge of the Circle but Major was in charge of all the Special Force teams.

“That’s a no for me” Major said.

“Yes” Halima said

“No” Beast said.

“We are going for yes” Halima repeated and Beast just continued with his food.

“Another robot spotted” Sabrina said.

That was same thing they called Jason.

“Yes” Cindy said.

Jason kept quiet.

“No” Ghost said and Mark looked shock.

“I don’t want to lose a friend, and my mum is glaring at me”

Ghost said.

“No” Fast said.

“I seriously don’t understand you guys, who will go?” Halima asked.

“The robots are already too much” Fast replied Halima.

“I go for a yes” Wild said.

She did a quick calculation, there was trouble in paradise as

Ghost usually said. It was three for and three against.

“And now we are back to where we started” Sabrina said.

“No we are not, one member has not yet voted” Wild said.

Everyone looked at her.

“Wild no, she is a kid, we can’t involve her” Major’s wife said.

She always said that, but she always forgot a kid had sold pure water to take care of her mother.

“Pearl do you know what weddings are?” Wild asked.

She nodded.

“Do you want Sabrina and Mark to have a wedding?” Wild asked.

“This is unbelievable” Major said.

He also always said that.

She looked at Sabrina, she was shaking her head and mouthing no but Mark was nodding and mouthing yes. She was confused. The weddings she had attended, including the last one at Pastor Sam's church where she was among the flower girls, the man and woman had both said yes I do before Pastor Sam made them husband and wife, but Sabrina did not want. She travelled back to Abuja after the wedding. Fast had picked her.

“Pearl don't stress yourself, you have from now till tomorrow afternoon before we travel back to answer” Beast said saving her.

She nodded. That night, she was promised heaven on earth by both Mark and Sabrina. But that was not the grand show.

Halima had ended the night with a shocking news no one was aware of.

“I have a very important announcement.”

“Oh no, not another fashion show, we do guns here” Ghost protested.

“Not that, I am pregnant.”

And Beast had choked on his food, thank God Sabrina and her mother were both doctors.

The loud sound of a horn brought her back to reality. The gateman jumped up and ran to the gate. Wolf was very furious.

“Pearl, I told you Tega will pick you up, why did you not follow him” he shouted after coming out of the car. No that was a jeep.

“My mum said only my guardian must pick me up.”

“I don’t give a fuck what your stupid mother said.”

The gate man ran inside his office. He forgot to ask for his money.

“Stop using the F word, penalty is two thousand bucks and stop calling my mother stupid” she screamed.

She felt like crying not because he was still using the F word, but because he called her mum stupid, he had no idea what her mum went through because of her.

“Get in the car right now” he commanded.

She pulled her nose up at him and wished he saw it, the light of the jeep was bright enough. She entered the back seat holding back her tears.

“Oga come take” Wolf called at the gateman.

He gave him loads of money.

“Thank you Wolf, thank you sir, thank you thank you” the gateman shouted, jumping and saluting at the same time.

The money was much, might be his salary for a month from the way he was too excited. Money that could have fed them for months. It hurts. She held back her tears as Wolf drove out of the school.

“This is a nightmare, one month is too much, abortion could have saved both of us, Ese is so stupid” Wolf said hitting the steering wheel.

A tear dropped from her eyes, but she forced back another from coming out. She had no idea what abortion meant, but she was sure it was not a good word. She would ask The Circle later. He did not even give her money for feeding, he did not even say anything about her school uniform or ask her about her first day in school, he did not ask if she had eaten. But he had called her his nightmares and kept insulting her mum. But she was not

going to cry, that was what he wanted her to do, to break down, he did not deserve her tears.

He was still fuming even after they had entered the house. She went to the fridge to find something to eat but he stopped her.

“We need to talk” he said.

“I am hungry, normal children are already in bed, but my irresponsible guardian just picked me up. I have nothing to say to him” she shouted pulling her hand away from him.

He pushed her back with force, carried her out of the kitchen and threw her on the couch. If the couch was a strong surface, she would have broken her head but she still felt the impact, she felt there was something liquid flowing into her nose. It was painful but she would not cry. She pulled her nose at him and endured the pain, she had felt worse.

“There is nothing you will do to me that is new” she said.

Her head was pounding and she knew she was not saying the complete truth, his words were hurting her.

“Right now I’m too angry to talk to you, I may end up strangling you” he said moving over to the fridge.

He brought out an eva wine, opened and started drinking it direct from the bottle. She was hungry but she did not feel like eating anymore, she wanted to look for somewhere to cry, somewhere Wolf would not see her.

“Don’t you dare enter that room” he shouted running over to overtake her.

“Where will I sleep?”

“Sleep on that artificial field.”

“I want to weewee” she said.

“I don’t give a damn.”

She went to the swimming pool and started pulling her clothes.

“Don’t you dare.”

“What do you want me to do?” she shouted.

“Get inside and take your bath or do whatever you want to do.

You have ten minutes and don’t try any tricks” he said.

She entered with her bag and locked the door. She did not want him to come inside and hear her talking. She dropped her bag on the bed and ran to the rest room. She burst into tears after she shot the door. She activated her hand band and searched for mum and dialed it.

“Mummy” she cried.

“Pearl, you are sad. Why are you sad?”

“I hate Wolf, I hate him so much” she cried.

“You are crying, don’t cry. I will cry if you cry. Please don’t cry.

You are my shining Pearl in my darkness.”

“I miss you so much mum. Mum I want to come home, I don’t want to stay with Wolf anymore.”

“Oh I’m so sorry, I wish I can hold you right now so you can cry on my shoulder, you have to stay with him, he is your father.

But if you want to come home call Jason and his family. I want you to be happy, if you are sad I’m sad.”

“I miss you mum, so so much.”

“I miss you more my Pearl. Are you still crying?”

“I miss you.”

“I miss you more. Call Jason and call me back, let me know when you are happy so I won’t be sad anymore.”

“No mummy, I’m happy now, you can’t be sad, I have stopped crying.”

“No you are still crying.”

“I will call Jason.”

“Ok.”

“Bye mum.”

“Bye bye Pearl.”

The call ended. Before she could call Jason, her wrist watch vibrated, he was calling her.

“Pearl you activated your band and your wavelength is not encouraging, are you okay?” Jason said.

He must be with Cindy.

“No I’m not okay, I hate Wolf, he keeps insulting my mum” she cried.

“You called your mum?”

“Yes, thank you so much Jason, thank you, thank you.”

“I’m connecting the call to the app, do you want to speak with everybody?”

“Yes. Thank you.”

“Pearl you are crying, what happened?” Cindy asked.

“Cindy, I miss you, how is baby?”

“You’ve not answered Cindy, did he hurt you?” Halima asked.

“Halima, I miss you so much, I want to come home.”

“What did Wolf do?” Beast asked.

She tried narrating everything that had happened. Cindy and Halima called Fast to go bring her out immediately.

“I don’t think that is the best solution, your mum would not have wanted you to come back” Jason said.

“Wild permission to pull her out, I need to meet this Wolf one on one, is he so weak that he is showing his strength to a seven year old” Fast said.

“Fast let me tell you something, you are on your own, OYO.

They ordinary bull throw you put for ground, you want to fight mad man you are not permitted to kill. You know he won’t fight you for show of strength, he will just see you as an enemy and he might kill you. He won’t know you just want a fight, he can kill you but you cannot kill him because he is not a target. Mark see eh let me just warn you, after Fast’s burial, that latest bike in

Fast collection is mine, don't dare take it, you can take his shoes" Ghost said.

She started laughing, she forgot she was supposed to be crying.

"Ghost you are not normal" Sabrina joined the laughter with others, even Fast was laughing.

"I never said I am" Ghost said.

"Pearl do you really want to come back?" Major asked.

"Yes" she answered.

"Wait, Pearl I'm also angry but please don't tell me you were too angry and forgot our deal. Any show?" Ghost asked.

Her laughter increased. Wolf might hear her.

"I forgot, but I saw one, but she is not pretty like mum" she said.

“Unbelievable. Ghost you need to be reported to child care service. You really made her look for a pretty girl like her mum? I thought you were joking” Major’s wife said.

“Mum, I’m not getting any younger, I want to marry from Pearl’s tribe, Isoko or Urhobo, how is that a crime? I won born fine girl like Pearl, or you want ugly granddaughter? Pearl so who is she?”

But she laughed.

“Just forget that one, I will find another one” she answered.

“Wait, I thought you want to come home?” Mark asked.

“I don’t know.”

“Pearl, you know I told you what to expect from Wolf, he is still suffering from memory problems and relapse. You remember what I called it?” Wild asked.

“Traumas” she answered.

“Good but if you want to quit, it’s okay, I will send Fast to pick you. But quitting means you lost. I know it’s tough for you, but it was what you and your mum decided and you know what tough times means?”

“It never last but tough people do.”

“And quitting?” Wild asked.

“Quitters never win and winners never quit.”

“And are you tough?”

“Yes.”

“Are you a quitter?”

“Never.”

“Who are you?”

“A winner.”

“Wolf and the Pearl ladies who wins?”

“Pearl ladies.”

“What must you do?”

“Show him the stuff I’m made of.”

“Why?”

“Because my mum and I want him to take responsibility for a month. We started it and I must finish it.”

“So should I send Fast to pick you?”

“No.”

“Great, please find my wife for me. A beautiful one please. I am tailing someone, I need to go, bye” Ghost said.

“I will find one for you” she said laughing.

“Thank you Ghost” Jason said.

All of them were thanking Ghost instead of Wild, she just did not understand them sometimes. They were weird. Wolf had started kicking the door.

“Time up Pearl” he shouted.

She pressed a tiny button by the side of the phone watch and it closed up. There was no time for goodbye. She turned the band so the round place was covered. The side people could see was just plain pink. She would find a way to activate it under the sun, but the battery was still full. She felt happy, she did not feel like crying anymore. She quickly took her bath and changed to her pajamas, she carried her bag and opened the door.

“I thought I said you had ten minutes.”

She ignored him and went to lie down on the field, she would eat something later. Wolf came out of his room few minutes later with a blanket which he threw at her, then he closed his door with force. She had forgotten to ask them what abortion meant. She was not going to quit.

“Tough times never last but tough people do” she said aloud.

And she just had a month. She had so many people who loved her, she was the lucky one. She had a mother, three aunties, a father and five big uncles. How many people could boast of that?

Wolf was not the only one having a nightmare, she also had one month of nightmare with him, but she was now ready, because she was tough and she was not a quitter.

NIGTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER FIVE {Day 29}

Why couldn't he sleep? Why was he feeling bad? He had not done anything wrong, he had been lenient with her compared to the beatings he had received from his parents. Slippers, spatula, pots, shoes, and others were their mothers' favorite. Both John and his mother used it on them and their crime was only protecting their family from bullies. But he was feeling bad, maybe it was because of the pains he noticed even though she tried to hide it or it was because she said she was used to it. But from who? It was clearly not Ese, then was it her masters? He did not even care.

His alarm woke him up by 5:00AM. He was supposed to do his daily exercise but he was not ready to encounter Pearl, he was still pissed off. He picked up his phone and started reading the files on Agege. His boys did not do much of a dangerous

work, they just summarized from rumors because that was all he needed. After reading the file, he tried to understand if the said Agege, a night club owner in Lagos who was a popular drug dealer and also a sex trafficker did not study his territory before sending his boys. Agege did not need to go too far to know drugs and arms dealers were not welcome. There was a big sign board with drug and arms marked with a big red bad symbol. Except Pearl was really the link he was missing but not anymore. It had been long someone threatened his territory, the last battle with a drug lord had sent the other petty dealers packing. The drug dealer had wanted to expand his operations in his territory just months after he had started his night club. Lord Kaka as he was popularly called had his operations in different parts of Warri and Sapele but had decided he wanted to encroach his land even after learning of how he had dealt with others. He must have felt the others were petty and he had many men

unlike him who was just an ex-soldier, a lone Wolf. Too bad for Kaka because it was the full moon, when the Wolf was more dangerous, it was around the death anniversary of John. After ten of his men failed to kill him but were sent back to Lord Kaka as dead bodies, Kaka had taken the coward way out. He had kidnapped Tega and demanded for a big ransom and also for him to quit his own territory but what Kaka did not know was before he struck or once he noticed a threat, he did his own investigations, just as Kaka knew Tega was related to him, he knew all Kaka's relatives and friends. He did not end there, he had planted bombs in all Kaka's territory and kidnapped Kaka's brothers and sister. When Kaka called him again to show him the picture of Tega, he sent the pictures of the bombs and his siblings and for kidnapping Tega, he shot one of Kaka's men and sent the picture to him. Before then, he had reported the kidnap of Tega to the police. He had no plans of killing Kaka's

sister but he would have killed his brothers if Tega was not released. But it was a wrong time because he still trailed Kaka and killed him. Of course he had to go through lots of his men to get to him, he never counted, he just killed, then blew up the place. That night, before visiting John's grave, he made Tega follow him to the police station to report that he had rescued his brother after a shootout. They were definitely suspicious, but what could they have done? That had ended any more encroachment but Agege was a different case. If he was working with Ese and had trained Pearl to use her as bait, then it was a bigger problem. He sent back an email to Hacker to inform Ray to go back and discreetly find out Agege's weakness through rumors. He would never endanger the life of his boys. He needed to act fast, he could endanger Tega's family. That made him jump out of his bed. Pearl must have met them. He was

going to get an answer immediately. Wild's method would be the best approach.

Although, he did not expect her to still be sleeping because if she was trained, she would be awake by six, he also did not expect she will be doing backstroke in his mini swimming pool. It was still neat and he would change the water in three days.

“Good morning Wolf, this swimming pool is so cool” she shouted.

He wanted to tell her to get out, but remembered he was supposed to use Wild’s method. He dropped his phone on the tiles by his door, the glass opened as he came close to the swimming pool. She had splashed water to the tiles, maybe to annoy him. Good thing everything was demarcated with glass, she would have mobbed it before going to school. Control your anger, be patient, go straight to the point, were some of Wild’s

method. He entered the pool in his pajamas. She was opposite him in the breadth side of the pool.

“I came here first, Wolf” she said.

‘Don’t get angry, calm down Wolf’ he silently told himself.

The DNA test would be out soon and he would be free, he could also turn the table on Agege.

“This is my house, my pool.”

“My master said, everything my dad has belongs to me. It is my right.”

“I am not your father” he said calmly.

There was no need to shout, the DNA would prove it.

“Whatever” she said going under water.

“Pearl who taught you how to swim?”

She swam up to the surface.

“One of my masters.”

“How many masters do you have?”

“I’m not supposed to tell.”

“Your superior master is Agege right?”

God bless Wild. The impact of mentioning Agege was very obvious. She had gasped when he mentioned Agege, she knew him. Damn Ese.

“Capital NO, he is my masters’ enemies and also my enemy” she shouted.

He studied her face, either she was telling the truth or she was a very good liar. Which was the correct one?

“Your masters sell drugs?”

“You are a bad detective, you are so far off. My masters are not pharmacists nor chemist, why will they sell drugs” she said going under the water.

She was confusing him, he was not sure if she was lying about Agege but she definitely did not know the meaning of hard drugs. Then who were her masters? He had one more question to ask.

“Pearl did your mother send you to help your masters harm me?”

She came to the surface and looked at him like he was crazy.

She shook her head and climbed out of the pool.

“If my masters wanted to harm you, you would have been dead a long time ago, my mother sent me because I’m also your responsibility, even a two year old would have guessed better than you” she said.

The only thing he had succeeded using Wild's method was Agege. She knew Agege but he was not convinced Agege was not her master. From what Ray sent, there were rumors Agege usually kidnapped girls of different ages and trafficked them as sex slave but he never mentioned child soldiers. Was Pearl right? Was Agege her masters' enemies? She was not lying because he could easily detect a lie but she could be a good actor. One step at a time then.

“Where the heck are you going?” he shouted.

She was about leaving the room without cleaning herself, it was not that there were no towels.

“To prepare for school.”

“If you don't want me to beat the hell out of you, get back and clean yourself.”

“Whatever.”

He must stay cool, he could not get angry, not when he had not yet gotten the information he needed.

“What am I eating?” she asked after cleaning herself.

He understood the shower cap, but how did she even know to have a swimsuit?

“I am not your mother, if you are not ready to go to school, I could lock you up in my gen house.”

“I am seven” she shouted leaving.

But would be eight in about three weeks’ time. A day he was supposed to mourn in peace. Ese had to give birth to an unwanted child on the day her late fiancée was killed. She could not resist giving birth on that day. How was he going to face

John, what would he tell him, that he had slept with Ese and Ese had given birth and desecrated his death day?

The DNA must set him free, there was no way he could face John.

She got ready all by herself and by 7:15, they were already close to her school.

“When are you taking me out for shopping?” she asked as he drove into the school.

“Never.”

“I don’t have clothes” she shouted.

“But you have swimsuit, and the two gowns you have worn, plus your pajamas. Wear them.”

“They are dirty.”

“Wash it, don’t even dare use the washing machine in my bathroom, use your hands.”

She opened the door and slammed it.

“Pearl” he called winding down his windscreen.

“Follow Tega...”

“Never” she said interrupting him and running away before he could retaliate.

He hit his steering wheel. What kind of trouble did Ese put him?

He sighted Miss Esther coming towards his car and quickly reversed and drove out of the school.

He had been trained by Major on how to control his anger and use it as an advantage but Pearl was testing his limit. Major was the commander in charge of the special Force then. Who knew if he was still the commander.

He had so many inspections to do and he also had to prepare for his visit. He was going to visit the group later in the night. His five storey hotel was almost finished and there were some materials he was supposed to inspect. And he also wanted to supervise their progress and the quality of building materials they were using. Then he had to visit his supermarkets both in Sapele and lastly, the bar.

He was through by 6:11PM. He drove back to his bar to pick up some weapons. He loved his Remington 700 riffle, he loved the sound it made when cocking it. He loved placing the riffle under his armpit and cocking it with one hand while cocking his River SR9 handgun with the other hand at the same time. Most times, he was close enough for his victims to hear the sounds. The ones at home were too sophisticated for what he wanted to do. Of course they were all legally acquired. His night vision goggle he

had bought from Amazon was in place. He paid a visit to his second mother, John's mother and gave her some money, then he drove to meet Hacker. He was briefed about the place the gang normally operated. They were really fearless, they were not far from his club. Their fearlessness was what Wild would have called stupid.

“Fear is for the brave, it is a personality cowards can never stare in the eyes.” Wild had always said.

But Wild could not place him and John because they were fearless but knew their fears, it was as confusing as it sounded. He was called Wolf by his old man, even before he had joined the military. That was because of many reasons, first he had anger issues although never used it on his family, many people were missing part of their tooth because of him and John. The combination of two of them made his old man call them sons of

thunder. Second was his instinct, which was what attracted him to John. He had thought he was abnormal until he met John. He always had a tingling feeling when danger was nearby. At first, he had thought it was a universal thing but discovered it was just him. Then he had thought it was a curse because people had found him weird after he had warned his uncle's wife that he had a bad feeling about her journey. He was an Anglican Priest in Lagos. They were travelling back to Lagos that day.

Everybody heard him and they had laughed it off thinking he did not want his Uncle and wife to travel back, but they were involved in a ghastly accident. His Uncle's wife died on the spot, in fact his uncle was the only survivor but he had broken his leg, he was still limping till date. He had relocated to Warri and was still a Priest at the Anglican Church. He never remarried, but people had blamed him. He had ran to the river to avoid his family and joined the children swimming. The feeling had

started again, it was too overwhelming, he immediately left the water same time John left. They lived adjacent each other, attended the same school, same class, same age, same surname but were never friends.

“Do you feel something?” John had asked.

He had nodded and soon enough, the reason for their instinct struck. It was a stray crocodile which had never happened. Three children were killed that day. His family accepted him the way he was the day he had locked his mother in her room preventing her from going to buy garri from Obiaruku, a community in the same Delta state as Warri. He had received the beaten of his life from both parents after he had opened the door and she had missed the early morning bus. He had opened the door because the feeling had stopped. That bus had an accident although just one person died, others were seriously injured. It was his mother

who came back to testify of what happened to the bus she had missed. As time went by, he and John became inseparable punishing anybody who trampled on any of their family members and making their parents visit the police almost every week. His mother had one day shouted that he would give birth to himself so he could feel the stress he was giving them. Now he had Pearl, no Pearl was not his. Major had done a lot on him, he had made them to hone their skills, and with time they were able to know where a danger was coming from, how long it would take and it had saved their life many times except on that day their cover was blown and a local bomb was thrown at them. He had felt something was wrong and it was too heavy and he had known he had just few seconds. John had pushed him down and remained on top of him as the bomb blew him to pieces. They had left thinking the both of them were dead. He did not cry, he had gathered the scattered remains of John and pushed

him one side, then he had waited till night. The full moon had known the wolf was sad. Mission was over the moment John died, the one thing needed was to wipe out everyone still breathing around him. And he had called on his instinct and his anger as backup, then he had shot on sight and instinct for he felt someone before the person could shoot and he did not need to turn to shoot, he just followed his instinct and threw local bombs when necessary. It was only when he woke up on a hospital bed, he knew some bullets had touched him.

It was past time to pick Pearl but there was no way he would take her to his house and leave her to his things. Fuck that letter. He would never read it, if they didn't pick her up in a month, he would send her to the orphanage. He should have thought of that earlier. She would have to wait longer this time, it was his money that was suffering not Pearl.

By seven, he was already at their site patiently waiting for them and their customers. Soon they surfaced, then their customers, then just the group waiting for more customers. They were amateurs, they did not notice him even with their torches. Okay it was because he was very stealth like a Wolf on the hunt, he was his own pack.

“I will need a good explanation on why you are encroaching my territory” he said cocking his guns.

He loved that sound. One pulled out his gun and he fired at the gun then shot the hand of the other one trying to put his hand in his pocket, he pointed at another one who raised his hand up.

They had chosen a dark area, which was good for him.

“Who are you?” the fourth one who had not done anything to trigger him asked.

“Wolf.”

“Oh! We are not encroaching on your territory, we did our investigation and there is no other drug dealer around here” the fifth and last person said.

The other man’s scream was pissing him off, he only shot his damn hand.

“Go back and tell Agege, this territory is occupied and owned by the Wolf, thank your stars today is not a full moon.”

He could see the shock on their faces. Agege was really the man at the top of the chain. He was the man he wanted not his boys, he needed a better challenge.

“Yes I know who Agege is, and you will be surprised how much I already know. You can leave now, I hope we don’t meet again” he said.

“But...”

He fired at the fourth man's shoulders, a clean shot.

"I don't miss, don't let me fire another one. And you scream like a baby. Anyone else want a clean shot?"

"We will leave" the first one said raising his hand.

"Good decision, just know you will never see me again, but you will definitely feel my bullets if you come back. Don't forget to tell Agege, there was no full moon. Also tell him that the Wolf is a mad Wolf. The case will be easily dismissed in court."

They scurried away, those of them with bullets groaning like babies. Anyone using a gun should at least know there were chances he would taste a bullet and must be ready to bear the pain. They even had no idea how to use their gun. James hoped Agege would withdraw but Wolf wished Agege came himself, his weapons had been frozen for too long.

The time was already 9:01PM. Pearl! Shit, she would still be stubbornly waiting for him. He just pitied the gateman.

There was something off as he drove into the school. The gateman was visibly shaking, more of afraid of him. He could easily read people's emotion like he was breathing. He knelt down as he came out of his car.

“Oga I swear nor be my fault” he said.

“Oga stand and talk to me, where is Pearl? What is wrong?”

Pearl was not around for sure.

“Chai, nor beat me, I nor know who get pikin, people don dey talk say she be your pikin or John pikin, I swear she resemble two of you, nor be my fault”

“Oga” he shouted.

“Chia!” he said shifting back.

“Where the heck is Pearl?” he shouted.

“She don go.”

“What do you mean?”

“She say she go go house by herself, say she know road. I try stop am but she fight me, she say this is between me and Wolf stay out of it, see my head. She open gate comot as I dey for ground. Nor be my fault.”

Shit. Pearl was getting him pissed off. How did she know the way back and how would she open the gate? The remote was with him. He searched his pockets but came out only with his phone. How did she pickpocket him, when? He ran to his car but came back to the gateman. He gave him some money.

“I don’t want to hear about anything that happened this night from anybody, use this to take care of head.”

The gateman was still thanking him as he drove off. He remembered what the man said about the rumors, but that was not the problem on ground. Pearl had somehow pickedpocketed the Wolf and she was in his house probably blowing up some of his expensive equipment. He was going to strangle her.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER SIX {Day 29}

She had no plans of going home but the gateman had pissed her off. He was at first very excited she was going to be waiting for Wolf. He kept shouting another full salary. The more Wolf delayed, the more he had become so excited because he had believed he would get more money. She could not take it anymore when he had said he wished Wolf stayed till twelve, then he might give him his salary for two months. That was it!

She told the man she was leaving but he had told her to sit back on her seat but it was not like the other night, he was threatening her and she didn't take threats. She had carried her bag and walked to the gate and the man had hit her with his shoe, something sharp under the shoe had grazed her arm. She had told him to stay away because it was between her and Wolf.

“You silly child you want make pepper when I don count nor reach my hand, go carry your yeye self go sit down” he had shouted raising the shoe to hit her for the second time. She had responded and she hopped his head would be swollen and visible the next day.

Getting home was not difficult, she did not bother stopping a taxi. She ran and trekked and ran. She tried sensing for danger but did not feel any. Some people glanced at her like where was she running to? Within an hour thirty minutes, she was home.

Wolf was so going to be pissed up when he would discover his remote was missing. She had sniffed it out of his pocket as he drove, exactly when he was answering her questions. First thing she did was to get the small kit from her bag to treat the cut under her left arm. Then she went to the fridge, there were no more eggs nor bread, just drinks. She had bought lunch using from the money Halima had given her. She was not that hungry, she just picked a malt drink. She switched on her band but did not dial mum, she wanted to call her when she was happy. She called Jason.

“Is the baby out?”

“Not yet. You sound better today” Jason said.

“For now, Wolf is going to be very pissed”

“Why?” Jason asked

“I pickpocketed his remote key and went home by myself.”

“Pearl you are not going according to the plan. I’m connecting to the app” Jason said.

“I did not want to leave but the gateman started it first and he attacked me first and tried it again, I had to defend myself. What was I supposed to do?” she shouted.

“But you took his remote before the gateman offended you” Jason said.

“Yes, it was just a prank I wanted to pull on Wolf, I had no plan of going home. The gateman pissed me off and he also injured my arm.”

“Wild this thing is getting out of hand, I never supported this and I never liked this” Major said.

“Jason wrote that you left for home by yourself and you took the key from Wolf. I heard the gateman’s part but you should have just knocked him out, I thought I told you Wolf may still be mentally unstable, he can harm you by accident” Wild said.

“You shouldn’t have agreed to send her there in the first place” Halima shouted.

“Halima, I miss you so much” she said.

“I miss you more Pearl” Halima said.

“Let her come back and let’s look for another alternative” Cindy said.

“There is no other alternative. That mail may never be read in the next five years. I hate that she is there but Wolf is still her father and it was her mum’s decision, she was very sure of a success.”

“Pearl” Beast called.

“Yes” she answered.

“Stay away from him and try not to piss him further okay?”

Beast said.

“Yes. I miss you.”

She had not heard the others’ voices. Maybe they were busy.

“Pearl hope you are careful with the hand band?” Wild asked.

“Yes but he keeps looking at it and keeps asking questions about it and about you people”

She wanted to add Agege but stopped. Mark and Sabrina were quarreling because of what she had done and it was because Sabrina was doing an undercover work in Agege’s territory. She could not also tell them because they would be afraid that she

was in danger and pull her out when she had not yet finished her mission. She must complete the mission for her mum.

“Then be very careful, Wolf sensitivity is very high, he can sense danger as far as two thousand yards and know where it is coming from. He can also sense something not right. You know that because you have it too. Before you do anything place yourself in his shoes, if you can sense it don’t do it, if you will get mad, don’t do it. I have never seen any resemblance in character like the both of you before. Do you understand me?”

Major said.

“Copy” she said.

“But how can he sense something about the band when she did not activate it? Pearl are you sure you did not activate it in his presence?” Mark joined them.

“No Mark, but he keeps looking at it.”

“Mark you should also be asking why you can be underwater for a long time or why Beast can easily pick up a weight nobody can lift especially when he is mad, or why Fast doesn’t lose concentration, and can multi-task while driving with full speed, or why Ghost can turn off anybody’s sensitivity and can stand close to someone’s shirt without the person feeling he is there, you think it’s because he is too stealth? Ask Jason who is hyper sensitive, then don’t forget to ask why Doc is very balanced on the ground. For all I know the only medical explanation we have is Jason. Doctors are yet to explain you so is Wolf and late John. It was what saved James not because they knew their cover was blown. John had acted before Wolf. Just know Wolf’s instinct is higher than the normal person. I know Pearl is still little but she already have that instinct and she can handle Wolf as long as she follows my instructions. We cannot love her more than her mum who wanted her to come now” Wild said.

He did not talk about his own, hardly did, he was one big math she could never solve.

“What is up? What did I miss?” Sabrina joined them but Ghost and Fast were still missing.

“Doc you sound excited” Wild said.

“Cause I’ve recovered ninety percent of traces from Agege. I can’t wait for this mission to be over. Pearl hope you are showing Wolf what you are made of?”

“Yes, but I think I went too far”

“Wild...”

“She will be fine” Wild interrupted Sabrina.

“Stay safe Pearl” Jason said disconnecting the call.

She did not get to speak with Ghost and Fast. She knew what Sabrina meant. She had heard her update Wild before. Her first

stage of her mission was complete but they would not be able to carry out the already omega order on Agege because she must recover all the traces of people Agege had kidnapped. They always mentioned alpha and omega but nobody had explained what they meant. Wild had said it was not yet time for her to know. She could not wait to become an adult, she would be eight soon and that was progress. They even knew Agege was spreading his territory, at least she knew the meaning of that word. But she did not think they knew part of the territory belonged to Wolf making wolf suspect Agege as her master. They were not even bothered about his expansion because Sabrina said all of them would be history once she had the documents on all the people he had kidnapped. She too could not wait for her mission to be over, maybe she and Mark would settle. She did not like the fact that she had caused their quarrel.

As she drank her malt, she remembered what had happened in one of the weekend she was at the circle house.

That was the next weekend after she had voted a yes for Mark and it was filled with lots of memories. First, that Friday night, someone named Stud visited the Circle house. She had just arrived the house with Fast. She looked for the others after arranging her things in her room. They were in the big parlor but she did not want to enter because of the new face, she just stood by the door.

“Stud I understand your point, don’t forget I’m Hausa too”

Ghost said.

“Yeah, that’s why I’m grateful for Wild’s debriefing, he remain small make I craze, na Tiger I for turn to. I swear those people nor deserve our protection. Star just die like that. He could not fulfill his dream of joining the Circle. See na small thing hold

me back from wiping that family. Make person nor send me go boko haram mission again, until they have been oriented and pulled out of their ignorance, Boko Haram go still dey, you go dey kill, dem go dey increase” Stud said.

She could easily read the pains in her eyes and that was all she understood.

“Star did what was best for his team, the president had told him to make sure everyone returned alive, it’s part of what we know could happen, I know he was a close friend but I’m thanking you Stud, thank you for not killing them like Tiger. Jason hardly trust anyone but he said he trusted you. I apologize on behalf of my fellow northerners” Major said.

“Yea, it’s Wild you should thank more. I’ve let everything go. It was a pity we could not captured Shakau, we just had to make do with killing him which did not change anything because they

have a new Shakau. See eh I have said it, I hate going for a mission that has no end. I prefer straightforward missions like Ojogolo arms dealers, hired killers, drug dealers, kidnappers and other crime syndicates. E smooth, they no longer exist after mission and that's all. Anyway, what to do, life goes on, one love" Stud said.

"That's why you are here. Wild told me he will end the briefing today in his farm office. Are you sure you are ready? You are going north Stud. This mission is very critical. The police man who sent us the tip is missing. I am asking for the last time. Stud are you sure what happened a month ago with Boko Haram will not hinder your police undercover mission?" Major asked.

"I stud will not let sentiment hinder my mission of becoming a member of the Circle. Only that is enough to keep me in check.

If I pass this mission, I just know I have two more to go” Stud said.

“But why did you boycott the U.S test? You just had one failed trial. You should have tried passing that test first” Mark said.

She just could not understand them.

“Mark you na narrow escape. You just leave our team join Circle when U.S.A start this their rubbish. Make Major address that situation first” Stud said.

“I’m trying my best but things are now worse after Ojogolo’s life TV battle. You know all the ten Special Force that went during Nick’s time passed? They started feeling threatened since then and now they are bringing their best to fight Nigerian soldiers” Major said.

“That’s like sending a marine to fight all of us in the Circle”

Fast said.

“Fast na just one Naval SEAL defeat all six of us. That guy na bomb oh. He nor just get joy I swear” Stud said.

“It’s the same thing Fast is saying. The Naval SEAL are ranked the best military force in the whole world, the Nigerian Special Force plus the Circle are the best forces in Africa as a whole although we are more than that, but the thing is that, it’s wrong to send one of the best SEAL to fight with a Special force soldier which is like their marine. That’s called bullying” Sabrina said.

“I might have to visit U.S.A soon. Talking won’t do. They are like that, they can’t stand the fact that another country’s soldier is beating six to ten marines in a physical combat. There is no one here in the Circle they did not offer citizenship” Wild said.

"And you said he is a Naval SEAL officer. I would have loved to go underwater with him" Mark said.

"And you won't believe the guy na naija guy" Stud said.

Ghost who was lying down on the couch stood up.

"You serious?" Ghost asked.

"I dey tell you, na half cast but na naija. He nor dey talk at all. Na one of his black American friends that told us he is half Nigerian. He don even visit Nigeria before. So me go greet am as one love you know, but the guy just look me, stand up comot. Mark you nor even fine for were he dey" Stud said.

"Is he autistic?" Fast asked.

"I don't think so, he nor wear hand glove, but the guy is good.

Top ten best Naval SEAL. But the combat trainings were

wonderful sha, na only that combat spoil everything” Stud answered.

But Jason said not all of them needed hand glove.

“And Chief of Defense Staff will not allow us meet him. I would have wanted to dance with him” Sabrina said.

“U.S.A will not allow any circle member do another combat.

They are not ready to risk the fact that one of us can defeat that guy in face to face combat. SEALs are trained on water, air and land same as Circle” Wild said.

“I believe you hundred percent men. Them still dey remember all of una. I swear for the six week we stay, I was so proud to be a Nigerian. We were up to fifty countries, Nigerian and surprisingly Ghana were the only African countries for the program. Many of the commanders were just asking about you people. Ghost you nor well at all. You pick pocket all the

commanders and you break into their most secured room in the arena. How you take do am? Dem ask Star say what of that Ghost guy. They just had names for all of you. Underwater guy, that tech guy. Shit! Jason hack into their system and George remolded one new weapon them say na only them get. Una na baddo."

"Jason said that was his biggest mistake because he is still getting offers" Major said.

"If only Star knew he would be dead a month later" Stud said.

She was so sad.

"I feel you Stud" Ghost said.

"But I don't get why people feel there is something unique in staying underwater for a long time, it's normal where I come from, and other riverine areas. A child there knows how to swim

before he knows how to sit down. Some can cross the river without coming to the surface, the only difference is that I can fight” Mark said.

“I was very relieved you never mentioned that to them. U.S.A are very sensitive to talents. They want to possess all” Major said.

“Is it not better than Nigerian that kills talent. They Stud you meet many black gifted soldiers there, some in tech and medicine. If not for Major Special Force nor for exist” Ghost said.

“Major you know that was the reason Nick and co rejected their offer. Nick told me he is not a possession or a prize trophy. Now they just want to stop us because it’s not good for their soldiers' psychology that Nigerian Special Force are just defeating them so easily. It’s all about the state of one’s mind

because it's an irony. Some of their best soldiers have origin with African and Nigeria. They just changed them to Americans but it still remains the same. If we had accepted their offer, we would be called Americans, but that won't change the fact that we are Nigerians. They should keep deceiving themselves" Wild said.

"Don't forget we've lost ten to them" Major said.

"But I hail you guys for leaving an everlasting mark on them. Them no go ever forget Fast with the race competition, air, land, sea, horse join. The black commander told us that Fast was sleeping when the others got to the finish line. They called him speed guy, then Beast na world of him own. That weight he lifted is still there, no one is yet to move it from there. It's almost a tradition. I tried too but that thing nor shift at all.

People kept asking who was king of the beast. Major you nor get joy oh. You carved King of the beast on it.” Stud said.

“He also painted Nigerian flag” Wild said.

“I nor see flag oh, them go don clean am or he don wash. Na when people ask the meaning dem go talk. I suspect say na Beast that first time but na the black commander na him confirm am during the bonfire night when everyone try lift the heavy stone. That day I raise my flag go up make them see say I come from Nigeria, my body just dey sweet me eh. Guy una finish work, make we nor even start Wild, your name too plenty, one say you be psychic when dey read mind. Make una nor mind our fuck up, I hail I hail” Stud stood up and started shaking all of them.

"Na book wey I nor too know dey treat my fuck up so" Stud said.

He was owing four thousand bucks. The F word was banned and she was the treasurer. The money would be used to buy a toy for Cindy's baby. There was a way he talked like he was rapping and he walked up and down like he was bouncing and kept packing his trousers.

“You know say I come believe the story about Wolf. He get one commander when don retire when visit. He come dey ask about the two friends. He hear about one death. He called them sensor guys. Me nor understand but na Star come ask am if na James and John he dey ask of. So them be real” Stud said making her gasps.

“No one mentioned them during my program” Mark said.

“You are talking of Major Chase?” Major asked.

“Correct, he say he lost him left hand on duty. So this Wolf end first Boko Haram. I for like meet am ask am how he take survive?” Stud said sitting down.

“It’s different now Stud. Star did well. Then, it was easier because there would be no civilian casualties unlike now that you can’t separate civilians from the terrorists. John died too you know?” Major said.

“Star did well Stud. Wolf sensitivity is very high and that was what kept him alive not his skills. Every fallen Special Force soldier related to Boko Haram are all heroes, the normal soldiers dying almost daily are heroes and as Jason calculated, it would take twenty five Ghost’s clones to temporally end them for now, because Ghost can easily fit and he can sneak in anywhere, and he is the only one that can avoid civilian casualties if the mission is as massive as Wolf’s own. And even after that, they will still

come up again, except they are all oriented and the extremist rich among them stop sponsoring them using religion, our work with Boko Haram will never end. Star is a hero that will never be forgotten. What he did was a sacrifice, exactly what John did. Star saved his whole team. Stud Star is a hero” Wild said.

“Peace, thanks Wild” Stud said crossing his heart.

She was tired of all the confusing things they were saying, she entered the parlor.

“Oh mine! Who born pikin?” Stud asked running over to her.

She stood waiting for her.

“Mark you feel am? She nor move one inch, no fear at all.

Whose daughter?” Stud asked studying her.

“Wolf” Mark said.

“You know say joke nor fit you” Stud said looking at the others.

“You serious oh. Major?”

“You heard Mark, that’s Wolf’s daughter” Major said.

“Wow! But how she take end up here?” Stud asked.

“Stud is too long a story” Mark said.

“Belle how are you?” Stud asked squatting to be same height with her.

“I’m fine, good evening Sir” she said and all of them started laughing that even Ghost fell on the ground holding his stomach.

“Nothing dey, all na same human. My name is Stud, what’s yours?” Stud asked but they were still laughing.

“Pearl.”

“Pearl don’t mind them, you can call me anything you want but I’m a girl like you not a boy” Stud said making her gasp.

She looked at her very well, her chest was flat and she was not a kid. She had low cut like a boy and she sounded like a boy. She was wearing a black band on her head. She looked at Major and others to confirm but they increased their laughter.

“How old are you?”

“I’m seven, I will soon be eight.”

“Great, do you know how to rap and dance hip hop?” Stud asked.

She shook her head.

“I am staying here this night, a rare opportunity, you ready to learn some steps?”

She nodded.

“Great. High five.”

“Chop knuckles” Stud said after they did high five.

Her chop knuckles was different.

“I will soon pack to this place” Stud said.

“When?”

“I don’t know yet.”

“But you are a soldier.”

“I am a police office... oh boy. Wild you don twist my head finish” she said jumping up.

“I don believe say I be police officer. You too much, I hail” she ran to Wild giving him chop knuckles.

“Briefing is easy Stud, na debriefing problem take dey start”
Ghost said.

“He nor matter Ghost, as long as I go move one step to this place of my dream, I ready. Mark shey we go swim today” Stud said.

She liked her, she was just something she could not explain but just loved her way of talking and walking and her free styles.

“Hurricane dey sure but Stud you fit collect Sabrina sexy clothes wear first, I won check something” Mark said.

“Mark you never change, there is no difference from what you’ve already seen. Jerk” Sabrina shouted walking out of the parlor.

That was how the trouble started.

That night was so cool. It was all girls night and the three of them had all danced till they got tired. Sabrina taught Stud some dance tricks same with Stud. They all slept at Sabrina's Circle house and her big bed.

Mark said he wanted to take Sabrina out for dinner the next day after Stud had left dressed like a police officer. She said she is

an Air Force officer but she had passed the land and sea trainings and tests.

She had said yes to Mark because Ghost had said it was not real, and so there was nothing wrong for them to pretend. They had been looking at each other like something was wrong since she arrived on Friday. That evening, during her rest period, Sabrina had made her dress same thing with her and took her along to the dinner. Mark had booked a place far from people's view. It was Sabrina who made the order. She had ordered a chocolate ice cream for her and some foreign food for them including wine but everything felt weird, they were acting like strangers.

“Did you bring her along to avoid facing what we must discuss?” Mark asked after eating half of his food.

“Mark, let's not go there” Sabrina replied.

“Stop avoiding me then.”

“I’m not avoiding you.”

“Yes you are and we need to talk about this, stop avoiding what must happen.”

“There is nothing to talk about, we shouldn’t have done the undercover together.”

“Balikis, it was just a kiss, it’s not enough reason to avoid me.”

Sabrina poured her wine on a glass but instead of drinking it, she poured it on Mark’s face shocking both she and Mark. She was crazy.

“What the heck was that for?” Mark shouted.

The wine had messed up his white T-shirt. Sabrina stood up. She was very angry, no mad.

“That was my first kiss” she said walking out of the dinner.

She left her alone with Mark forgetting she was the one who brought her. She just did not understand what just happened.

Mark looked shocked too, he too was as confused as she was, or shocked. She knew what a kiss meant, she was living with crazy Halima and Beast. They were always gross, not to forget Cindy and Jason. Halima always said it was what married adults do that she would understand when she grew up. The only thing she wanted to do when she grew up, was to handle guns and other weapons and join the Special Force and the Circle. She had no plans of being gross. But Mark and Sabrina were not married. That too was confusing her, except they married without her knowing. She would be mad if that was what happened.

It was Mark who took her back and she had looked for Wild. He always had answers to any question. She did not want to ask Cindy or Halima, they would just say it was adults stuff.

Wild was in his farm, the place where her car was built. Fast and Wild had helped and the equipment there were too much and confusing. He was fixing an AK47 riffle, they had refused to teach her about guns. They only allowed her do some target shooting with rubber bullets. She had already passed one hundred and fifty yards target. They also forgot to block it in her Google engine search. Ghost had said Wild's farm was the most secured place in the circle house. He had another smaller farm in Lagos.

“Pearl you know you are not supposed to be here except I call you.”

He had known she was around even before she said anything.

“It's important.”

“What is it?”

“I’m confused about some stuffs. Are Mark and Sabrina married?”

“No Pearl. They won’t get married and you will not be in their wedding. They adore you too much to forget you.”

“But Halima said kissing is what married adults do.”

He stopped what he was fixing, dropped it on the table and turned to look at her.

“Okay Pearl, here is what you are going to do. Tell me everything.”

So she told him everything that happened at the dinner. Wild picked a clock 39 hand gun from a shelf and left the farm without saying anything to her after she finished. She followed closely and was there in time to meet Wild pointing the gun at Mark and Sabrina. Fast, Ghost, Major was with them at the big

parlor, it looked like there was going to be an online briefing because the others were not at the Circle house.

“We have hundreds of trafficked children and adults praying and hoping that one day they will be rescued. Can both of you tell me why you want to fuck up this mission?” Wild asked.

He was going to pay two thousand bucks for that.

But she felt chills all over. Wild did not shout but the command in his voice was fearful. Jason and Beast came up on the screen.

Mark and Sabrina had their hands raised up. She was so confused, they were too difficult to understand.

“Wild, there will be no treatment of anybody, not this time.

Drop that gun” Major commanded.

“Stay out of my team Major” Wild replied him.

The gun made a sound making her shift back.

Wild just cocked it.

“Wild don’t” Beast said from TV.

“The next sound will be the bullet hitting your shoulders, the clinic is just one elevator step up. Start talking” Wild said pointing the gun at Mark.

“It was a mistake Wild” Mark said.

“A mistake? Sabrina reported that Agege still wants to see you on Monday and you are telling me it was a mistake” Wild said.

“Mark you deliberately kissed me” Sabrina said.

“And you kissed me back” Mark replied.

Ghost placed his hands on his head. Major suddenly rushed Mark but was blocked by Fast.

“I told you to keep your dirty hands off my daughter” Major shouted trying to get to Mark.

Suddenly, a bullet hit the wall very close to Mark, must have touched his hair. They had forgotten Wild but the bullet made them remember.

“I am still in charge here. Major you are breaking your own rules. I’m getting pissed, don’t let me go gaga on you” Wild said.

Everyone went back to their seat apart from Mark and Sabrina who still had their hands up.

“I don’t care what happened between the two of you, you can go beyond a kiss, that is your damn business as long as it does not affect the mission. Am I clear?” Wild shouted.

“Copy” Mark and Sabrina answered.

“Good, time for briefing” Wild said sitting down and acting like nothing happened.

“Mark I won’t warn you again. Don’t ever lay your filthy hands on Balikis. Let the mission remain Mark and Sabrina, I will never accept Richmond and Balikis” Major said.

Ghost said Mark and Sabrina were their undercover names.

“Then tell Balikis to also lay her hands off me, she kissed Richmond back” Mark replied.

“That was because you took advantage of me” Sabrina replied.

“Can you come out with a better excuse? How is it possible for anyone to take advantage of you?” Mark said.

And she was so surprised no one stopped them and Wild who had pointed a gun at them was just sitting down looking at them. They were more than weird.

“You took advantage of my inno....”

“How was I supposed to know that was your first kiss? You are like twenty five” Mark shouted.

“Mark” Sabrina shouted standing up.

Why was everyone looking shocked?

“I can’t wait for this mission to be over, so I will be rid of you. I hate you Mark” Sabrina shouted.

“I don’t care and just so you know, you are a terrible kisser”

Mark said walking out of the parlor and briefing.

No one stopped him, Major was very angry, she could easily read people. For the first time ever, she saw Sabrina cry.

“Balikis” Ghost called Sabrina, he was still sitting down.

That was the first time she heard Ghost pronounce her name correctly. Sabrina went to meet Ghost. She hugged Ghost like a baby and Ghost patted her back as she cried on his shoulder.

“Let’s begin” Wild said.

Wild was the weirdest among all of them. She crawled out of the parlor. She felt bad. All these was because of her. She shouldn’t have said yes. She should have said no and they wouldn’t be quarrelling. She knew where Mark went to.

She was already at stage two on learning how to swim but the pool was still scaring. Okay the Circle house was a bit confusing too. It was a six storey building, five times the size of a football field. There was a very tall fence, as tall as the roof. It did not stop there, it had underground that was very deep. A part of which was Wild’s farm. There were many tunnels that could lead outside without someone using the elevator. Each of them had their self-contained house inside the Circle house. It was like room and parlor. An elevator took one to any of the buildings. Ghost said they had sponsors apart from government.

Many of them were rich Hausa's. Jason with Sabrina's uncle were their current biggest sponsor. He said Jason was good with one stuff he called stock market and he reduced his money by pumping it to the circle house. Ghost told her lots of things, many she was not supposed to know. He also said it was built to accommodate over a hundred and fifty Circles but for some time, Special Force soldiers were not meeting up to their requirements. Most were being sent back by a particular US SEAL soldier like what happened to Stud. The others failed in different stages. There was also the big farm, which was separated from the circle house by a long tunnel, they had intelligent workers who were civilians. They don't live there, they just worked there, just that they could not cross over to the circle house which was at the outskirts of town or village Abuja as Ghost called it. The swimming pool was scary because the water started from the third floor building and ended at the first floor, and the length

was the size of a football field. It was used for their training. She had to use floater and the smaller swimming pool outside, close to their garden which was maintained mostly by Wild. All of them were supposed to live there. They would go for missions then come back to their house and their self-contained. But Beast and Jason and Major did not. But their house was still there. She had never used that pool because they said she was not ready but Mark was there, she wanted to apologize for the troubles she caused so she dived in. She was okay at first but things turned bad when the hurricane started. Mark must have switched it on. It was like there was an angry wind running around the water, up, down, front and back. The wind sent her down the pool with force. Thank God Mark saved her from dying.

“Pearl, what the heck are you doing here?” Mark asked after pulling her to the surface.

The hurricane was still there but he was not noticing it. He pressed something on his android watch and the hurricane stopped.

“I wanted to apologize” she said.

“For what?”

“I shouldn’t have said yes, you will not be quarrelling with Sabrina. It’s my fault.”

“It’s not your fault. That’s how adults behave.”

“But Halima said only married adults kissed.”

“Oh no, not Halima again. What should I say now? Pearl just ignore us. Halima is right, we did the wrong thing.”

“But will you still hate Sabrina?”

“I don’t hate her, I love her too much to hate her. I want us to be married adults that was why I did what I was not supposed to do. Don’t be like us when you grow up.”

“Then why can’t you marry her.”

“You won’t understand, you are still a kid.”

Now he was playing the kid card.

“But I know what love is. Halima always tell Beast, Beast always tell Halima same with Jason and Cindy, just tell her and do your wedding. I want to be a flower girl. Cindy said I am too big to be little bridesmaid.”

But Mark laughed.

“I wished it was that easy. Pearl don’t worry about us and it was not your fault okay?”

She nodded.

“Go up before Wild finds another reason to shoot” Mark said giving her a peck on her cheek.

That night, she also went to visit Sabrina in her room. She was not there but she knew where to find her. There was an empty room she usually practiced her death dance. It looked like a ballet, the only difference was Sabrina danced with a high heel boot and a long blade, but Sabrina said it was death dance.

Who was she to argue with weirdoes?

“Sabrina I’m sorry I said yes” she shouted from the door.

There was no way she was going to go near crazy Sabrina with blade. She stopped the music that was playing, sat down on the ground and called her to join her.

“It’s not your fault” Sabrina said patting her hair.

That was same thing Mark said.

“But you hate Mark.”

“No I don’t.”

“You do. You said it yourself.”

“So you saw what happened?”

She nodded.

“I don’t hate Mark, I hate myself for falling for him even when I knew he is just a flirt and a pervert.”

“Sabrina, I am seven, please can you speak my language.”

But Sabrina laughed.

“I’m sorry, I’m not supposed to say that in front of you. I don’t hate Mark, I love him but he does not love me, he treats me like any other girl he goes out with. Nothing is special to him. So I hate myself for becoming like them. I hate myself that I can’t

stop thinking about him. That's why I did not want him to go with me" Sabrina said.

But she became more confused. Both of them love each other. Why couldn't they just tell each other and do a wedding. Why were adults' things so complicated? She was just going to be a soldier after her eighteenth birthday. She would just ignore other adult stuffs because if that was the only option, she would just want to remain a kid.

The continuous sound of a car horn brought her back to Wolf's house. From the way Wolf was blowing the horn, she just knew there was trouble in paradise.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER SEVEN {Day 28}

She was sitting down on one of his white couch when he entered the house. He tried controlling his temper because he felt like throwing her away. How was he sure the gateman would keep quiet. She just stared at him but there was something different, she was not looking like she was about to defy him.

“Pearl why did you take my remote?”

“It was just a prank.”

“And the gateman too was a prank?”

“He hit me first.”

“And you want me to believe that”

“I’m sorry.”

That was a first, she had just cancelled all his plans. How was he supposed to beat her when she just apologized? She was just acting outside her script.

“Don’t you ever dare pickpocket me again and stay in your school and wait for me, you don’t want anyone else to pick you up, then wait even if it’s 12:AM.”

She nodded, which was surprising. What was with her? He noticed she was rubbing her hand band. That hand band was disturbing him, might be because it was from Ese. He left her and entered his room. He should have asked how she got home and what happened to her arm. But that was not his damn business, tomorrow, the DNA would vindicate him. He saw the blanket he had given her the other night, she had returned it. He picked it to take to her. She was already lying down on the grass field.

“Pearl.”

She turned. Was she crying?

“Take and don’t return it” he said dropping it close to her.

She was still rubbing the band as he went back to his room.

He felt disturbed in ways he could not fathom. What was with her all yes instead of the all no he knew? He could not wait for the next day.

She was back to the normal Pearl the next morning. As early as 6:AM, she was already running on the treadmill. She was not just running, she was screaming.

“Wolf, come and exercise” she shouted.

“I thought I told you to get out of my gym” he shouted.

“It’s also my gym” she replied still running on the treadmill.

He moved very close to her.

“I won’t say this twice Pearl, this is not useless mum’s gym and house” he said.

She jumped down from the treadmill without switching it off.

“Don’t call my mum useless” she shouted positioning herself for a fight.

“Then give me her number and let me send you back to her.”

“Never.”

“That’s why she is stupid and useless.”

He wanted her to attack him, he needed a good reason to discipline her or frustrate her enough to reveal Ese’s number.

There was no way he would let her stay till Mena came back to Warri. She did not attack him as he planned. She ran away and entered his room maybe to cry.

“Get out of my room” he shouted but she did not reply.

This was not the result he wanted, he wanted her to fight him not cry. But soon, he heard more than what he wanted. That was the sound of his weapons door being opened, except his senses were failing him. How did she open it? First, one needed to open the wardrobe, then push out his clothes, then remove an unopened T-shirt, then a button would open to a another one were four digits would be typed correctly which would open to his weapons. How did she do that?

That question would have to wait because she was hitting something. That should be his bed.

“I told you not to insult my mum again” she shouted as she destroyed his stuff.

“Pearl open the door right now” he shouted.

But she replied by shooting a gun to the door. Then shooting sporadically. That should be his Sig P226 pistol, it was fully loaded.

He saw himself on the ground, a memory flashed through his mind. Papa had just been bailed from prison after he and John had beaten a lawyer who slapped Papa for not repairing his car the way he wanted it. Papa was a mechanic. They were sixteen then and he could not understand why they were being scolded for protecting them.

“James one day, you go grow up and you go born pikin like you” Mama shouted.

“Is that a curse?”

“Which one be curse, your mama dey bless you. Shey you say you dey protect us. You go born Wolf pup when go protect

people whey he love, the way you dey protect us” Papa joined Mama.

Ese was sure Pearl was his child, he understood it now. She was not trying to be sure the child belonged to him, she asked for the DNA test because of him, so he would not have a reason to deny Pearl. He just wasted his money and Tejiri’s time to do a DNA test. This was when he should accept defeat. Pearl was the curse or the blessing from his parents. But nemesis did not allow him make a choice, it had to be from the woman he hated so much and a girl. How was that even the blessing. He was supposed to give birth to himself, a boy not his traits. She was protecting Ese not him because Ese was the one she loved. Mama never mentioned family, she only said loved once. Another shot hit the door.

“My mum is not useless, my mum is not stupid” she shouted and must have pulled the trigger but no more bullets.

Just when he should be relieved, she starting hitting the wardrobe, was she trying to destroy his weapons or clothes?

The doorbell rang. He had forgotten the cleaner came every Wednesday. He went to the door and opened it after he did not sense danger, he did not need a peephole.

“Good morning Wolf” Mama Bridget greeted as she entered.

He nodded. Just when she got past the parlor about to enter the kitchen, there was another shot. She ran back to the door. That was his desert eagle pistol.

“Wolf, gun, you hear am?” she asked standing at his back.

He checked his pajamas but there was no money.

“Mama Bridget please can you come back tomorrow, I promise to pay you twice your amount.”

She nodded but was still shaking.

“But you dey safe so?”

“I’m fine” he said escorting her to the door.

He ran the small distance to the door of his room. Panic took over when he remembered he had some dangerous weapons which could blow the house.

“Pearl, let’s talk” he shouted.

But she fired at the door.

“Think, if it’s me what will I do? What will calm me down?” he said to himself.

“Pearl my hands are up? It means I surrender, you win. I agree with you, your mother is not useless and stupid. I promise not to insult her again” he shouted.

There was absolute silence. He waited knowing it would work.

“You promise?”

She was by the door, which was progress.

“I promise. Now can you open the door let’s talk? Let’s make a rule for both of us.”

“What rule?”

“Open the door.”

“What rule?”

“I promise not to insult your mum again and you can tell me other things you want me to promise, but you must promise never to destroy my stuff again, never to fight outside again.”

“That’s all?”

“Yes.”

“Okay.”

“So what other things do you want?”

He was definitely going shopping.

“Nothing, I’m okay as long as you don’t insult my mum again, I don’t want anything else.”

Okay, that was so unexpected. She opened the door. His desert pistol was still with her. She threw it to him.

“Who taught you to shoot?”

“Nobody, they never allowed me near real gun, they only permitted target shooting, but I studied.”

He nodded, as if someone taught him to shoot.

“And my weapons, how did you know it was there and who taught you how to open it?”

“I could sense something was dangerous there, and my master taught me how to open safes, but yours did not take time. Your password is Pearl in numbers without the L. I would have saved mine with someone I don't like.”

“And that's me.”

She did not answer. Did she just say sense?

“Pearl you can sense danger?”

“I am going to prepare for school” she said going to pick her bag.

“You know you are very bold, you opened the door without making me promise not to beat you up for destroying my stuffs.”

She was already back to the door and he was still sitting down.

“I don’t care, you can beat me all you want but leave my mum out of it” she replied jamming the door.

There were too many information to dissect. She was his blood, no doubt about that. He had started sensing danger from age six.

He remembered he never sensed danger when Pearl was delivered, neither did he sense he was being watched, but how?

He was going to check the damage later, he went to the fridge to drink water. The fridge was almost empty, there was no food and just few drinks. What had she been eating? He dialed Johnny’s number.

“Johnny I’m going to set a password for you to load food in my fridge.”

“What kind of food?”

“Normal food from the restaurant” he said cutting the call.

He took his bottled water and sat down on the stool waiting for her to be ready for school. His mind was not settled. What was with Pearl that he could not get? She was not afraid of being beaten and there was the part where she said she could sense danger. She was really his blood.

“I’m ready Wolf” she called.

“My cleaner will dry clean your clothes tomorrow” he said going to his room to change.

“Don’t worry I will wash them when I come back” she replied leaving the house.

A quarter of his weapons were on the ground and the switch plus the gadgets for his bed were damaged. He would access everything later.

“You did not eat anything?” he asked as he got close to her school.

“There is no food.”

“What have you been eating since, when did the bread and egg finish?”

She did not answer. He reversed the car.

“Where are you driving to, it’s almost eight” she shouted.

“How did you know time?” he glanced her way to look at her hand band, it was plain, he had not seen any wrong thing.

“Your car has time, I have a wrist watch in my bag. I am going to be late, gate closes by 8:15” she said.

“You need to eat something, I did not know there was no food.”

“See food, akara and bread” she shouted.

He did not like buying cooked food from street traders, he could not tell the process and kind of water they used. He was driving her to his restaurant. He checked the time. They would be late and he was not a babysitter.

He called her back as she came out of the car, with her half eaten akara and bread. He gave her a thousand naira and she looked shocked.

“That’s for lunch, there would be food in the fridge waiting for you. Don’t go home by yourself.”

He checked to confirm his remote. It wouldn’t work anyway, he had reset everything to password for the sake of Johnny, he would change it later.

She nodded and took off and he drove off before Miss Esther noticed him.

He sent the password to Johnny as soon as he parked his car by Hacker's store. Hacker was Tejiri's cousin, same age, including Tega. They were triangles. Not up to two years seperated them from him and John. Part of the money from John's compensation for John's family was given to him to start an electronic shop, but he had moved him to a bigger building, they sold electronics and also installed and repaired but beyond the store was their main office. At the moment, he had about ten boys working for him excluding Hacker. Mena was their last born.

"Bros I safe?" Hacker asked as he entered his control room.

The room was just filled with computers. Some of his boys were around. One was doing the sales.

"I need you to follow me to my house."

"Like now?"

“Yes” he said standing up.

“But bro eh why you nor tell me say Pearl send your pikin for carton?”

He looked at Hacker.

“You nor know say news dey spread? Come join your popularity.

But na Tega tell me the carton part. Why you never tell Mama?

She go soon hear”

“Hacker keep quiet and follow me.”

“Okay bro.”

“Agege reach your room?” Hacker asked as soon as he entered his room.

“Just tell me if you can fix it” he said placing his weapons back in their positions.

“I go try, but I need go back to take wetin I need.”

“Good. Any news about Agege?”

“Nothing bros, even Ray never see anything. Oliver say he see them dey leave this morning, he follow them, dem don comot for Warri, you finish work bros.”

“It’s too early to say that. Just tell Ray to be careful, Agege will become alert and suspicious of anyone. He is aware I know about him”

“Okay bros, food dey?”

“Get out of my house.”

“Okay oh, but na true? She be your pikin?”

“Hacker” he shouted.

“I don comot, abeg send me password make I fit enter” Hacker said leaving the house.

He went to check the fridge, Johnny had not yet delivered the food.

After taking his bath, he drove straight to his restaurant, Tejiri had sent message that he was coming. God thing Pearl did nothing to the bathroom.

It did not take long after he had entered when Tejiri came in.

“How far? I know you are tensed.”

“I don’t want the result anymore.”

“But it’s out and you must pay.”

“Drop it and go.”

He did not, instead he brought out a paper and opened it.

“You won’t understand the content. Let me help you. DNA says both samples are related, you know my hospital has one of the

best lab? One is a female, one is a male, father and daughter.

What do you have to say?"

"Tejiri, leave."

"So it's true Pearl had your daughter and she had been with you since early morning Monday after being delivered in a carton which you cannot trace because they are faceless with fake vehicle number."

"What is wrong with Tega and Hacker, can't they keep their mouth shut" he shouted.

"Tega did not tell me, it was all Hacker, Tega told Hacker, Hacker told me. Why is Mama not aware?"

"Because I'm still looking for a way to send her back and don't you ever dare tell her."

"Send her back? Why?"

“Are you really asking me that stupid question? She can’t be here when Mena comes back, you should know that?”

“She is your child bro, Mena is going to know whether you like it or not.”

“This is all Ese’s fault, she should have....”

“Don’t say it, bro don’t say it please don’t. Abortion is forbidden in our family. That is murder.”

“Then she should not involve me in this. I did not ask for her, she seduced me and ruined my life. Why me? She made the choice herself and she should bear the consequence. Do you even know her date of birth, she was born exactly a year after John died. I did not ask for this, I can’t be responsible for what I did not ask for” he said.

Tejiri was shaking his head as he spoke like he was saying the wrong thing.

“What?” he shouted at Tejiri.

“You are still blaming her for the mistake both of you made.”

“It was my mistake but it was her plan. You were there when she said it.”

“I can’t believe you and Mena did not get the sarcasm in her statement. What is wrong with both of you?” Tejiri shouted standing up.

He was angry, he hardly got angry.

“What is your problem?” he asked.

“My problem? You have no idea do you?”

“What?”

“Mama, and both Papas begged Hacker to look for Ese just few months after she ran away. Mama have been trying to bring her back bro. She told Hacker to keep it away from you but you should be aware by now.”

“Why was she looking for her?”

He too was getting angry.

“Because Ese is also her daughter, while you and Mena heard something else from what she said that day, we understood what she meant. Mama cried because of what she said. It was true.

John was my brother but it was you and Ese who felt the impact more, in fact it was Ese. You were very close to John but Ese was dependent on John, her life was all John and you could have sought peace with Mena and continue but she was done for, yet we had treated her like an outsider and for Mena to blame her for everything even after all the begging was too much. She was

too hateful. For Christ sake, we all knew it was a mistake, there was no way you loved Ese, Mena knew that but her pride did not let her forgive. Leave Ese out of your issue with Mena. And you better tell Mama about Ese's child or I will tell her. Hacker believes the reason he could not find Pearl was because she was hiding, for more than eight years Pearl was hiding from you, no bank account, nothing to track her with. There was nothing Mama and Papa did not do to change Mena's hardened mind but she was just too unforgiving, while you are expecting Mena, Mama can't wait for her to come back. She said Mena will not enter her house without Ese. If you don't want her, please send her to Mama, she will be pleased to meet her granddaughter" Tejiri said working to the door.

"Tejiri, please don't tell Mama yet, you don't understand, the whole thing is complex, I'm trying to work something out."

“I will give you some time” Tejiri said leaving the office.

This was bad, very bad. Who else knew Mama was looking for Ese? They had kept it from him. Who else knew about Pearl?

Probably the whole town. Mama must not know. She would leave soon but if Mama knew about her, she would want her to stay and he just did not want that. He was not denying he had fathered Pearl, it was just that he could not take responsibility for Pearl. He needed to find another way. Another way to send her back as soon as possible. He had other problems at hand.

Agege was a problem he needed to focus on without any distraction. There must be something he was missing, something that could lead him to Ese.

CHAPTER EIGHT (Day 20)

Wolf had been acting strangely since on Wednesday, after they had made their rule, which was already a week and a week and two days since she arrived. Her birthday was getting closer and she was still far from fulfilling her goal. Time was running out for she and her mummy. She had not even contacted the Circle apart from school break where she had sent a message to Jason that she would not be activating it except it was very important because Wolf was becoming too suspicious. But she always sent I'm fine every day. Apart from him staring at her hand band as if he wanted to figure it out, why it was thicker and larger than the normal hand band, they hardly communicated or talked. She could not get to him which was bad. He was no longer denying he was her father. They just followed a regular way of living. She woke up very early in the morning, did her assignment, chose any of his gym equipment to exercise with, then she would take food from the fridge and warm. After eating,

she would go use the bathroom after Wolf had come out, then he would take her to school, then he would come pick her at night, the earliest had been 7:PM. He never took her shopping or followed any other rule. But his actions kept hurting her. He acted as if he could not wait for the thirty days to be over so she could disappear, it made her cry all the time. He never helped her with her assignments, she did all by herself, he never asked her about school, or about her seven years of life, he just ignored her. It really hurts. Apart from playing with Vona and sometimes Fego, school was extremely boring. Sometimes Vona's mummy came to pick them, but on Monday Uncle Tega had come with two men who were very happy to meet her. They said they were her uncles. One was called Hacker and the other was called Tejiri. Her mum had told her about them.

Miss Esther had started finding fault with her. She had told her people were saying she was Wolf's child, she was the reason Wolf did not marry Mena, but she had ignored her. She said it was good for her because it gave her the opportunity to win Wolf but she had to help her. She had finally replied her after so many disturbances. She told her it would never happen and Miss Esther had tried finding any reason to punish her in class.

Sometimes, she would say she was not listening and asked her to repeat what she said which she always did. She would look for a difficult math problems for primary four and ask her to solve it, but sometimes she had to correct the questions before solving. A particular day, she had flogged everybody in the class for noise making just because of her. The teachers were not allowed to flog except the offence was much, and they only flogged with a rule and on their palm. What was funny was her classmates, they always cried whenever the rule touched their palm even if it was

one stroke, she hardly felt hers but Miss Esther was the least of her problem. Wolf did not want her and she felt lonely, she did not know if Cindy had given birth, she missed Halima and Cindy so much. Although Halima sometimes acted like a child, she was better than all the ladies she had met, including Miss Cynthia the primary five teacher. As for the gateman, they sat their separate ways, no talking but she hated the money Wolf kept giving him, even the money Wolf kept giving her. That was not what she wanted, she wanted her father, she wanted to get to him but it was not working. On Saturday and Sunday were the worst. The decoder was not recharged and Wolf had stayed back to monitor her and she could not even contact Jason. He spent most of his time on his laptop and his mini gym.

It was break period and she was on the first floor of the school three storey building, it was very big. The second and third floor

were for junior and senior secondary school while her floor was for primary, then the first floor were for nursery and pre nursery and crèche. Then the offices of the principal, headmaster and others. Primary went for break before secondary to reduce the crowd but nursery were allowed to play outside for few minutes before primary break. The school was quite populated. As she watched children play around the playground including Vona, she wished she could go back to meet Halima who used to drive Beast crazy with her activities. She just could not understand Beast. She understood Jason because Cindy acted okay and Jason always liked holding her and kissing her which was gross but it was because she gave him peace but Beast did not scold Halima and her hyper behavior. She had seen how neighbors who did not even have Ghost statue beat their wives. There was one they called Papa Success who used to wake them every morning with the sound of him beating his wife. They were so

many of them and their reasons were nothing compared to how Halima acted. One even said his wife did not fetch water for him to bath, which meant Halima would have been dead if any of them had married her. But Beast was very big, he could just easily break Halima but throughout her stay, he never complained or shouted at her, he only begged her to help his heart. Imagine Halima would want to climb the Mango and other trees, then she would fall but Beast would be there to catch her. Beast would tell her not to try it when he was not around. She would climb the rails of the swimming pool and try walking on it knowing fully well that she might fall on the other side which was the hard concrete. But Beast would beg her to come down, she would be shouting freedom as if she was never free. Then those questions she used to ask. Are the shooters on TV real? Did the person acting really die? What was film trick? How come a Kung Fu fighter was flying that was after Beast had

explained film trick. Why were there so many cars on the road unlike years back? Were ATM machines not magic? Was it not possible to count the stars? and so on but Beast always answered. She always covered Beast eyes and asked him to guess who she was, she did not know she was not supposed to talk. Some days, she would hear about someone being kidnapped in a news or even a film and she would climb Beast like a kid and shout that they should switch off the TV even if it was a cartoon.

“It’s okay, Obim, I’m here, you are safe” Beast always said when she acted strange.

Halima said Obim meant my heart, she said she was with Beast’s heart, weirdoes. And they could be so gross. At a point she believed they called him Beast because of his size, he was just too soft and Halima always pressed him like a robot, but Ghost had told her that Beast meant he was being likened to the

Lion who was King of all the beasts because of the way he fought like mad. Ghost always told her stuff. He even played a record of a man he called Ibe telling a story of Beast childhood but it sounded like he was describing another person not the beast she knew. Apart from the trainings she had every evening, at the gym, the mini ring, the field, Beast was just soft. She knew Beast could fight, he was one of her trainers but he did not have the behavior of an angry lion. The only fight she had witnessed was when beast had punched one of the men she was fighting, that was the first time they met, but it was just she and Sabrina that fought the guys who kidnapped her and wanted to send her to Agege, Beast had just watched. The way he treated Halima said it all. She would never forget the day Mama Favour, one of the deaconess in Pastor Sam's church called Halima to sit down after evening service, it was on a Wednesday. She did not attend Church there on Sundays because she was always at the

circle house. Madam F was one of the women who always wore hat and eyeglasses that fell to their nose and she was always correcting people's dressing, speech, manner of greeting, behavior and behaved like she knew all the right stuffs. Madam F had told Halima that she needed to act like a married woman. She said a lot of things that was supposed to make Halima cry but she had ended up crying when Halima answered her.

“Are you happy?” Halima had asked her.

“That is not what we are talking about Mrs Justice” Madam F had answered looking shocked, like of all what I said, no one got to your ears.

“We? You were the only one talking and happiness is everything Madam F. You have too many people in your world, your world is too large and it would pull you down and you will soon crash trying to please everybody. How do you even cope with that?”

You have to look at what people will say about you, do what is right and proper for a lady in the society and so many other things. See my society and world is not as large as your own, just my family and they are not up to twenty, the whole of my customers are just one group and that's all. And I promise you, they are not complaining because I'm living the proper way for God and my small society, that's why I'm happy. My husband is okay with me and he doesn't care what people inside his world think, not to talk of the outside world, he calls it bullshit. If you are acting the proper way for a lady in your world and you are not happy. It is written all over your face, you are not happy Madam F. Just reduce your world and you will not have to please too many people and you will be happy, trust me, it works. Happiness is everything" Halima had said.

Madam F was still crying as they left and when they had gotten home, Beast was back from wherever he went to, Halima had sat on his lap.

“Beast are you happy?” she had asked.

“As long as you are happy” Beast had answered.

“You see I said it, I told her I’m happy.”

“Told who?”

“One Madam F, she said I’m not acting like a proper lady and it’s not good for my husband.”

“Bullshit.”

“Exactly what I told her you will say.”

And they were gross, she had to leave them to her room. Then they had gone outside to look at the stars because of Halima and she had slept off on Beast. Beast had looked at her like she was

a Christmas gift he had always wished for and could not believe he finally got it. He did that all the time. That day, she had called Ghost to tell him that the person Ibe was talking about could never be Beast but everything had changed the next day. The day she and Halima had gone to the bank, the day many armed robbers attacked the bank. That was the first day she sensed danger and that was also the first day she feared someone and it was not the robbers she feared, it was Beast. It took Wild, Ghost and even Beast before she stopped fearing him. Minus Halima, there was nothing soft about him.

Vona being pushed brought her back to the school.

“Vona” she shouted running down the stairs.

He was still crying on the ground when she got to him. His hand had scraped a stone as he fell and he was bleeding. The little boy

who pushed him down from the swing was even shouting for Vona to get out because he was no longer his friend.

“Vona it’s okay, let me see your hand” she said same time one of the teachers got to the scene.

“What happened?” the teacher asked taking Vona from her.

“He pushed him from the swing” she said pointing at the overfed fat boy who was not afraid of the teacher. She could easily read people. Something was not right.

“Oh, it was an accident. Vona sorry let me take you to the clinic” the teacher said.

What the heck?

“Ma, it was not an accident, I saw him push him intentionally” she protested as the teacher held Vona to leave.

“Oh it’s you, the supposed Wolf’s kid. Listen, children play all the time, I’m their teacher and Victor is his friend, it was just a mistake. Okay?” the teacher said.

Victor and two other kids were back on the swing as if nothing happened. She knew what a mistake was.

“Vona, what happened?” she asked.

“He said I did not give him my fine pencil daddy bought and because of that I should not play with him again and I should not come to his swing, he now pushed me” Vona said gasping from tears.

She quickly looked at the kids on the swing, they were the only ones there. Other children were using the other stuffs like the tube slides, merry go round but no other kids were close to the swing, some just stood at a distance and watched.

“Did you hear him?” she asked.

“Let’s just go treat your hand, it was an accident. They are just five years, he won’t remember much” the teacher insisted.

Wild had always told her to learn how to study her environment and the people around it, she looked at the teacher. She knew the truth but was trying to avoid trouble, there was no way children would avoid somewhere except punishment came with going there. Victor’s parents must be powerful but she did not care.

“Give me my brother I am going to report him to the headmaster” she said.

“Pearl I’m not asking you, I’m telling you. Go back to your class, everything is fine” the teacher said still holding on to Vona.

“Vona let’s go” she said surprising the teacher by pulling Vona’s hand from her hold.

She was not expecting it.

“How dare.. see this girl oh. Come back here” the teacher shouted following them but she ran with Vona, let her pursue them with her high heel and tight skirt.

The headmaster was not around. She was confused on what to do.

“Pearl if you don’t want me to punish you and Vona, go back to your class, his hand needs to be treated and you can’t see the headmaster and others because they are in a meeting” the teacher said.

She looked around, the principal’s office was opened, he was higher than the headmaster and Vona must get justice.

“Vona do you want Victor to tell you sorry?”

Vona nodded.

“Okay, let’s go and report to the principal.”

“Is this girl normal?” the teacher said.

“No I’m not” she answered as she took Vona towards the principal office.

The teacher pulled Vona’s other hand which had the injury making Vona scream. She removed her hand immediately.

The scream hit her chest making her angry.

“Sorry” the teacher told Vona as they entered the principal’s office.

It must be the primary school that were having a meeting because the principal was around.

The principal’s office had two desk, one belonged to the receptionist, it was written there. There was another door with the proprietor written on the top. There was no fountain like the

headmaster's office and the principal was not that fat, he only had too much beards that would soon touch his mouth.

“What is going on here? Miss Blessing who are they?” the principal asked.

His name was Mr Ayo, that was not Isoko or urhobo name.

“Sir the little boy's hand is bleeding” the receptionist said.

“Why is he not at the clinic?” the principal asked standing up to look at Vona's hand.

“Sir, that was what I wanted to do but she took him and ran straight to your office” Miss Blessing stammered.

What a terrible liar.

“Mrs Juliet, call the nurse” Mr Ayo said.

“Good afternoon Sir” she said.

“Good afternoon young lady. Why did you run to my office with your brother, this is not the clinic?”

“My brother was pushed from the swing, the boy injured his hand.”

“Miss Blessing, I need you to explain what is going on. This is a simple thing supposed to be handled by you, are you telling me you are incompetent?”

“Sir, it was an accident. He was playing with Victor and it was a mistake. I told her but she surprised me by running away with her brother” Miss Blessing stammered.

“Young lady, the nurse will come take your brother okay? It was an accident” Mr Ayo said.

“Why is everybody saying that, she is lying, it was not an accident” she shouted.

The principal, Mrs Juliet and Miss Blessing looked shocked.

What was wrong with what she said?

“Sir, I’m very sorry, I will take care of it. She is just an over protective sister” Miss Blessing pleaded.

“Just take yourself and the kids out of my office” Mr Ayo said same time the nurse entered with first aid.

She rushed at Vona.

“Oh mine” she said raising Vona’s hand.

“Treat him outside my office” Mr Ayo said.

“Okay Sir” the woman said bring out a bandage and taking Vona with her.

There was no way Vona would not get justice, the break was still on. She ran outside to the swing where Victor was playing

with his two friends. She lifted Victor and placed him on the ground, then started dragging him to the principal's office.

“Who are you? Leave me alone” Victor shouted.

“Shut up” she shouted back but he continued trying to pull back shouting leave me alone.

The nurse was about disinfecting the wound when they got to the office. She pulled Vona away from her and entered the office with both of them.

“Look at them. Ask them what happened” she said.

“Is this girl normal?” the principal said.

“No I'm not” she answered and he looked shocked like she was not supposed to answer.

“Why did you push him?” she asked Victor but before Victor could answer, three boys entered the office with a male teacher, two were shouting, one was quiet.

“What is it again?” Mr Ayo asked like it was something that always happened.

“They tore Okoro’s math textbook after slapping him right under my nose. Mr Principal don’t you think this must stop. I am tired of this” the teacher said.

“Then resign, it’s not a must you must teach in my father’s school and...”

“Frank” Mr Ayo shouted.

“What is it? Did I say anything wrong? You should ask what he did. How can this stupid idiot be insulting my father” Frank responded.

“I did not insult your father. I only said it’s not fair how you were bullying Keno because your father is the owner of the school and because your father is the commissioner of education” Okoro said pointing at Frank, then the other guy.

“And you forgot the part where you said, your father might be richer than my father because he is the general manager of one stupid Wolf’s restaurant?” Frank shouted.

“Can you imagine? Your head is too empty to be in SSS two, that’s why you don’t know math. No use for your textbook go learn hand work” the other boy said.

"Same stupid restaurant you've been boasting of eating with the VIP ticket every morning before school"

"Shut up your dirty mouth" Frank shouted.

Things were getting interesting.

“And what is my cousin doing here?” Frank asked pointing at Victor.

“What is my brother doing here? Victor what is wrong?” the second guy asked.

Oh so they were family. One’s father was the commissioner and the other was the proprietor. No wonder everything was about to be put under the carpet as Ghost normally said.

“Joseph I told him he is no longer my friend that he should leave the swing but he refused” Victor said running over to his family.

“So you pushed him and injured his hand” she said.

“It’s my swing, it’s because he refused to come down” Victor shouted pulling his tongue at her.

Why were the adults silent?

“Apologize to him right now” she said.

“Which apology. Who is this girl?” Joseph asked.

“Victor you owe no one an apology, his father did not put the swing there, it’s your swing” Frank said.

“I read all the school rules, and I only know playground for primary and playground for secondary are different because the equipment is not strong for secondary. There is nowhere in the rule that says it belongs to anyone. Vona has right as Victor” she said.

“See this rat oh, she is talking back to me. If I slap you” Frank said raising his hand and coming over to her.

She stood and watched him, guess he was expecting her to run.

Yeah! The category of people who preyed on their victim’s fear and who bullied the weak ones. The teacher who brought them prevented him from striking her, although she wouldn’t have let

that happen. She saw the confusion on Frank's face, even if it was for a second, he was surprised she did not caw in fear.

“If you don't want your spoilt little brother to apologize, then both of you will apologize on his behalf and just so you know, I am related to the owner of the stupid Wolf restaurant and that makes two apologies, for Vona and Okoro” she said.

“See this rat oh, I can just fling you away with my finger”

Joseph said.

“I will like you to try” she said.

The both of them tried coming over to her but the principal had joined the other teacher to stop them.

“Are you the Wolf's rumored daughter?” the other teacher asked.

In conclusion, everybody knew Wolf. She did not answer but took Vona's hand.

“Vona let’s go I will treat your hand myself, it won’t pain you much, okay?”

Vona nodded. The nurse tried taking Vona.

“Don’t touch my brother” she shouted pushing Vona the other way.

“As for both of you, you are going to apologize or get served, no one touches my family or insult my family’s business” she said as they got to the door.

“This rat is still talking” Frank said trying to get to the door but was pushed back by the other teacher.

“You now want to beat a child? Has it gotten to this? Do you know whose child she is? You want to bring war to this school?”

Mr Ayo shouted.

“Who cares, my father is bigger than her whole generation”

Joseph was saying as they walked out of earshot.

“Vona do you know what last man standing is?” she asked.

Vona shook his head, he was sniffing.

“Don’t worry, you are going to watch one today. Make sure you stand here during lunch break okay?”

He nodded. They were at the exact place she had stood before Vona was pushed. Break was over for primary and it was time for secondary. She told Vona to wait as she entered her class to take her bag.

“You are late Pearl” Miss Esther shouted.

She ignored her and carried her bag. Miss Esther followed her and gasped when she saw Vona’s hand.

“What happened?”

But she ignored her. Lunch break was by 2:00PM to 2:30PM.

That was the period everyone could come outside, both primary and secondary. Those not staying for lesson were picked by their guardians and those staying were allowed to play around till lesson time. That was the best time for last man standing. She was going to sit on that swing, they would surely come because she would make Victor go call his brothers and they would surely take the bait. She had been so pissed for a long time but no one to pour out her anger on. She wasn't even allowed to practice all she had learnt on anybody because there had not been a reason to, but some boys just offered themselves for practice. There was no way she was going to allow Vona fear those bullies. No one touches her family and go free and she was not the one who started it. She just could not wait for 2:00PM. Like Ghost always said.

“Trouble dey him own, person go find am.”

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER NINE {Day 20}

It felt like it was ten days before the closing bell was rang. She went to the rest room with a thick black handkerchief. She activated her hand band and sent I'm okay to Jason. Without deactivating it, she used the handkerchief to wrap the hand band and tied the edge using her mouth and right hand. She went to Miss Esther who was having her lunch and asked to use a pair scissors in the home economics bucket. She did not wait for an answer, she collected one of the pairs of scissors and took a novel from her bag. She carried her bag and then ran down to the playground. Nobody was on the swing, which was good. She sat on the swing and started reading her novel. Soon Victor and his chosen friends ran down to meet her.

“That is my swing” Victor shouted.

She turned her head around the swing.

“I don’t see your name here. It’s school swing, it’s big enough for five.”

“No, get out of my swing or I will call my brothers for you” he shouted.

“I’m not coming down and please hurry up and call them, tell them I’m waiting.”

“Let’s go” Victor said to his friends.

“You will soon cry” he said pulling his tongue at her.

They were very fast in responding. She took a glance away from her book and saw four boys running towards the swing, two were Joseph and Frank the others were unknown. She sighted

Okoro, he was signaling for her to run away. She smiled and waved at him.

“Will you fly out of that swing?” Frank shouted.

She slowly raised her head from her book. Victor had his hands folded few meters from his family, looking very happy that she was about to cry. She dropped her bag and came down but did not move away. She took the scissors and cut both sides of her school gown, she needed to be very flexible. She cut it in a way that it could easily be sowed back, she had watched Halima many times. She climbed back on the swing and continued reading her book.

“See this rat oh, did she hear what you said?” one of the new boys asked.

Couldn't they find another word apart from rat?

“If I count one to five you are still sitting down there, I will make you cry till your mummy or daddy gets here” Joseph shouted.

First invitation. They were making progress. She looked up and smiled. Vona was there and he had brought many of his classmate probably Victor’s victims. The last man standing was about to start. It was Ghost who allowed her watch wrestling in his circle house. Her favorite were John Cena and you can’t smell what the Rock is cooking. Even though they were not that friends, she just loved their styles. The rock always served those who tried to mess him up. Ghost let her do so many things.

“Did you not hear him” the second unknown boy shouted moving closer.

Second invitation; who was she to refuse? She came down holding her book. She was going with combination of some of

her trainings. Although she just started learning Sabrina's death dance before she was sent to Wolf, she would add it. All she needed was a propeller, something in her hand to help balance her movement. Sabrina used sword or gun or anything, just don't let her hold something in her hand. If she used the scissors they might be scared and give credit to the scissors, the book would do. She did a Kung Fu one-foot stance. She raised her right foot to touch her left knee, then she placed her right hand on her waist and she raised her left hand above her shoulders but the difference was her left toe was raised up and she strained her body to her full height.

“What is she doing?” Frank asked.

They did not understand. She changed her position to karate but with Sabrina's style. Her left toe behind her right toes, she bent her waist, then curved her left hand which had the book towards

her chest, then pushed her right hand forward and flipped her fingers for them to come.

“Last man standing takes the swing.”

She wished she had a music to go with it.

That was the only word they would hear from her. But they must be the first to strike. The first unknown boy came at her with his right hand raised to hit her. She shifted and he hit the air, the force making him stumble. The fight would not last long.

She flipped her fingers at them and the second boy came at her but she dodged same time the first boy came for another strike, she calculated the time well because they jammed into each other. Frank and Joseph came at her. Fast had taught her how someone could use speed to step on a wall or any vertical surface and use it as a lift for a summersault. Between Frank and Joseph, she chose Joseph. She jumped on Joseph's stomach and

summersaulted backwards knowing fully well she would land on the second boy who was bending down rubbing his forehead, she got him on his shoulders, the force sending him flying very far. She immediately rushed at Frank who lifted her to slam her on the ground exactly the way she wanted. She used his own force to spin him round and sent both of them to the ground but her hands was on his neck to give him a smack down. She was up immediately but did not give the others the option of attacking or running, they were in for a great death dance. They helped by not running away but running to attack her from two sides. She lowered herself like she was squatting but with her right leg stretched forward, she spun round and fast brushing them off their feet and sending them to each other. She immediately stood up and started kicking them with her legs while spinning, the first two did not stand up. The voices of students screaming and cheering were deafening. They were

shouting last man standing. Vona and his classmate must have started it.

“Stop that” she heard the voice of the teacher who brought them to the principal’s office.

She stopped, picked her book from the ground and went back to the swing. It was not just the teacher, so many of them were running to the ring. She raised her head to see Vona and his classmates jumping. They were very happy and she felt so good. Wild had once told her that only cowards showed their strength to the weak and she just served the cowards.

“What did I just witness?” one of the teachers shouted.

She ignored them and opened the second chapter of her book.

The four idiots were still down, maybe ashamed to face the students.

“All of you to the principal's office now” the teacher shouted.

They all stood up and she was so happy none of them escaped injury.

“Your father and your whole family will pay for this, just wait and see” Joseph said.

There was no sign to show they were ashamed a seven year old just served them.

“Be careful what you wish for” she said smiling at him.

“You too, follow me. Teachers go back to your work, the principal will handle this” the man shouted.

She really loved the look on the teachers' faces, like they could not believe if their eyes really saw what they saw.

She carried her bag, bent her back a bit to greet the crowd shouting last man standing, then blew a kiss towards Vona and

Okoro who was waving at her the way Mark and Ghost usually did to people. The teachers were chasing them to their classes as they got to the principal's office.

“There is trouble Mr. Ayo” the teacher said.

“Mr. Famous what is going on?” Mr. Ayo shouted coming out of his seat.

“Please can you help us call the headmaster to come over” Mr. Famous said to Mrs. Juliet who nodded and dialed the school telephone.

“Joseph, Frank, Taga, Voke, why are you all injured and why is she here?” the principal asked.

“Your father will pay for this” Voke said.

“Answer me” the principal shouted.

“Answer what?” a man spoke from the door.

“Sir” Mr. Ayo and Mr. Famous said.

“Dad see my body, see” Frank ran to the man.

The other ones showed him their own injuries. They really had no shame. He must be the proprietor.

“Who did this to my son and nephew?” He was furious and his belly danced with him.

“Sir they just arrived at my office. Mr. Famous just brought them” Mr. Ayo spoke very fast.

The proprietor looked at Mr. Famous for an explanation. She look at the door to check if his name was there. Yes, his name was Dr. London. Another funny name, why not America?

“Sir, a student called me that there was a fight going on, but before I could get to the scene they were on the floor and she

was kicking them, so I brought them to the principal” Mr.

Famous stammered.

They were afraid of the man.

“You mean this small rat did this to my sons?”

She was not the only one shocked, both Mr. Ayo, Mr. Famous and Mrs. Juliet were also shocked, like he too was not ashamed that a little girl beat up his sons in SSS2.

“Yes, she is a witch, dad she also beat up Victor” Joseph said.

“Sir that is not true” Mr. Famous said.

“Are you saying my son is lying? How is it even possible that a little girl beat up my children?” Dr. London shouted.

That was what he should have asked earlier, he should have asked them what they were doing, that they could not fight a

little girl but that was not what he meant, the look on his face showed he believed Joseph.

“Sir that’s what I’m trying to ascertain, I saw part of what happened” Mr. Famous said.

“Who is she?” he asked pointing at her.

“The headmaster will soon be here but I believe she is Wolf’s rumored daughter” Mr. Famous said.

Why did everybody know Wolf?

“Wolf again? I see. He went too far this time. There is nothing to ascertain, my brother is around and I’m sending a text for him to come. Mr. Ayo send a message to her parents and the parents of Jo’s friend. I need them now. I won’t let this case slid just like that” Dr. London said.

What was he saying? Nobody sent her, in fact Wolf would not be happy with her.

“With all due respect Sir, I’m surprised a matured father is acting like this. How can you be even considering what you want to do? Are you not seeing her? A small girl who is not up to nine beat up four SSS two boys, and you as a father, you are not ashamed of your children but you want to discipline the little girl because of personal issues. I’m ashamed if you are not.

Unbelievable”

“Excuse me. Mr. Famous are you talking to me?” Dr. London asked.

What a funny question.

“Don’t bother about firing me, because I’m quitting. I can’t stay in a school where the proprietor and family are terrors to teachers and students. Just so you know, today is my happiest day. I

watched everything and you missed the jubilation. Your children will soon become a thorn in your flesh. Arrant nonsense” Mr. Famous said walking out of the office.

He made her smile and the look on Dr. London’s face was priceless.

“You called me” Mr. Millions said from the door.

Miss Esther had followed him.

“Sir I have sent message to them but she is in primary...”

“Mr. Millions contact her father to come over right now” Dr. London said interrupting Mr. Ayo.

“Sir it’s better we settle this....”

“Mr. Ayo, do you want to go with Mr. Famous?” Dr. London shouted.

“No Sir.”

“Sir I sent message to her uncle. I don’t have her father’s number” Miss Esther said but Dr. London looked at her like he was about to fire her.

“Okay, I will tell him to come with her father immediately”

Miss Esther said typing on her phone.

“Go and sit down” Dr. London said to the four boys.

They both stumbled towards the long cushion chair close to the door that led to Dr. London’s office.

“Sir, I heard the little girl beat them up but they were the first to attack her. Sir is it not possible to just treat this internally without involving their parents? She is just a little girl” Mr. Millions said.

“A little girl with no home training, a little girl that injured my children is no little girl, she is just like her father, trouble and

nothing else, look at her eyes. I know Wolf sent her. I don't play with my children. What is a street girl doing in my school?" Dr. London said looking at her.

She was getting angry. She knew what he said was an insult.

Wild had said people's reaction could be based on two things, out of shame from being disgraced or out of fear from the effect if nothing was done. But Dr. London was both. It was clear he was ashamed but he wanted to make sure he dealt with her so people will not look down on him and his sons. From the way he looked at Mr. Millions he could read that he was already losing respect. And he must be Wolf's enemy.

"What will you tell the parents? That their children were beaten up by a small girl?" Mr. Ayo joined Mr. Millions.

He was going to burst in the next two seconds.

“So I should not punish someone who beat up another because she is a small girl. Do you know how toxic her father is and how terrible he and his dead friend was? I am the proprietor and I decide who stays in my school or not. If I let this slide, the school will become lawless” he shouted.

She already knew that was why he could not hide in shame, he just said it too late. He had not even asked her anything.

“Call the nurse to treat them and call me when my brother comes” Dr. London said entering his office.

Frank and Joseph followed him inside why the others remained.

“Mr. Ayo, this is ridiculous. I will be ashamed too” Mrs. Juliet said but Mr. Ayo gave her a warning look.

“Sorry Sir.”

“So the parents are going to come and they would be told that their children were beaten up by a seven year old girl. This is embarrassing” Mr. Millions said sitting down.

“Who taught you how to fight?” Mr. Ayo asked.

Finally someone remembered her.

“I had Kung Fu and Karate training on how to defend myself” she answered.

“Makes sense. I’m registering my girl next week. I heard your father has a karate class in his famous gym” Mrs. Juliet said.

She wanted to tell her it was not her father but she kept quiet.

“I’m not that surprised, your father and his late best friend are legends here. I’m one of his victims. Makes sense his daughter is like him. I just noticed you have his eyes” Mr. Ayo said.

Everybody kept saying that. The nurse entered minutes later with her first aid and was not surprised, she knew what happened. She was even smiling.

“I guess your work is done Mr. Millions and Miss. Esther” Mr. Ayo said.

“I hope things turn out well. I love my job” Mr. Millions said standing up. The both of them left.

“Where are your friends?” She asked Voke.

He was holding his head while Taga was holding his right arm.

“They are inside.” It was Taga who answered.

She knocked at the door.

“It’s the nurse Sir” she shouted.

Frank and Joseph came out looking angry.

“Come sit and show me your wound” she was still smiling.

“What’s funny?” Frank asked.

“I have only been treating your victims including Keno my niece, it’s so nice to do something new. What a disgrace” the nurse said pointing for them to sit down on the cushion.

“What a disgrace that your mates are married and you are still single” Taga said.

“Taga, watch your mouth” Mr. Ayo shouted.

“Mr. Ayo, leave them, their reign has just ended. They have no respect for anybody including Mr. Famous who is old enough to be their father. So you ran to daddy after being beaten by a small girl, children for sale” the nurse said pouring mutilated spirit on Frank’s bruised face.

“What is wrong with you? Is that how to treat someone” Frank shouted touching his face but removing his hand immediately.

“What are you going to do? Ask your dad to fire me?” the nurse said same time another man entered the office.

“Sir” all of them chorused and Joseph ran to him.

“What is this? Who did this to my son? Which teacher hit my son?”

That must be the commissioner. There were two soldiers with Ak47 riffle behind him. But they were supposed to be police officers, that was what Ghost told her. Dr. London came out of his office.

“The headmaster admitted an uncultured street girl into my school. You won’t believe whose child she is. She attacked them but I’ve sent for her parents” Dr. London said.

“A girl?” the commissioner asked but two women prevented anybody from answering.

Voke and Taga ran to them.

“What is going on? Who injured my son?” Voke’s mother shouted.

“Is this school safe anymore, how can a teacher do this to my son” Taga’s mum shouted.

“It was a fight ma” Mr. Ayo said.

“Does this look like a fight?” the commissioner shouted.

She just could not take it anymore. The school had up to five cameras outside, there was also one in her class and maybe all the classes. They were disturbing her ears. As they all shouted angrily at the principal, she opened her bag and brought out two flash drives. She walked to the second computer at the

receptionist desk. It had so many split screens. That was what she was looking for. She inserted the first flash drive and started searching for 2PM record.

“What are you doing?” Mrs. Juliet asked.

“Searching for evidence. Please ma.”

She did not say anything, she just looked at her with confusion written all over her face. She saw what she was looking for and copied it, then she inserted the second flash drive. She went to the flat screen TV, removed the remote on the stool and climbed it, then inserted the flash drive. She took the remote and pressed play after she had located what she needed. She forwarded it to the fight and shouted for them to watch. All the shouts ended, they all turned to the screen. As they watched, she went to check the second flash drive, the light had changed from red to green.

She pulled it out. Nobody spoke until the fight ended. She paused the record.

“Who is this girl? Who told you there are cameras?”

That was Dr. London’s major concern.

“It’s obvious, you have five outside, one in this office, one in my class and one by the corridor of my classroom.”

“Who is she?” the commissioner asked again.

“Voke so it was a small child that beat you up and you are not ashamed” Voke’s mum shouted pulling his ears.

“How is that even possible?” the commissioner asked.

“She is trained Sir, Kung Fu and Karate. That’s..”

“I don’t care if she was trained and what if she had killed my only son? I demand to see her parents now” Taga’s mum shouted interrupting Mr. Ayo.

“Then this is assault no matter who did this, my son is not trained and she took advantage to use her training on them, her parents need to be sued for this” the commissioner said.

Only Voke’s mum knew shame.

“Who needs to be sued?” Uncle Tega asked entering the office.

“Is she your daughter?” the commissioner asked.

He knew Uncle Tega.

“What is going on here? Who did she beat up?”

That was Wolf. He was looking angry. He was angry at her, she had broken the rule.

“Wolf” all of them chorused but with different tone.

The principal looked at the commissioner like that was what I was trying to tell you. Wolf came to meet her.

“I thought we had a deal?”

“They started it.”

“Don’t give me any excuse. If they make me pay any compensation, I will make sure your mum gives me back my money” Wolf spoke to her ears.

She felt like crying.

“I never knew I will meet you like this Mr. London” Wolf said.

“Dr.” he corrected.

“Oh! And your brother Barrister Caleb. I heard you were appointed the commissioner of Education. Congrats.” There was spite in his voice like he did not mean it.

“Your daughter beat up four boys in my school” Dr. London said.

“Oh, I never knew you own a school. That’s children for you but I’m really busy. Forward any compensation I should pay to my brother. My apologies” Wolf said.

“Oh no, that is not good enough, I demand she should also be expelled. I can’t have my son go to a school where he is not safe” Taga’s mum said pulling her son close to her.

Wolf turned round to study the office, Tega was doing the same.

“I don’t understand. Your son, as in the boy you are holding, not her classmates?” Wolf asked.

“Sir, your daughter fought with them and injured them in the process” Mr. Ayo explained.

Wolf started rubbing his head like he was having headache. She noticed the soldiers were looking at him in awe like he was one celebrity.

“So Mr. London called me from a very important meeting I was having, to come to school because my daughter beat up four big boys not little boys?” Wolf asked.

Did he just say daughter?

“Like father like daughter, your family will never change from violence. I’m no longer surprised” Barrister Caleb said.

“See what your violent daughter did to these boys, Frank come here. See. I’m not going to let this slide like last time, your family has gone too far” Barrister Caleb continued.

Frank had joined Joseph. Wolf walked close to them.

“How old are you?” he pointed at Frank.

“Fifteen” Frank answered.

“Fifteen” Joseph answered.

“Sixteen” Taga answered.

“Fourteen” Voke answered.

“Pearl how old are you?” Wolf asked.

“Seven” she said.

“Did the four of you hear her? She is seven. I know my daughter enough to know she wouldn’t have been the one to strike first, but right now I don’t give a damn if she did or if she attacked you by surprise but if I have a son who gets beaten up by even his age mate, I will sell him for the cheapest pistol, that’s if I don’t strangle him first.”

“Wolf” Barrister Caleb shouted but Wolf raised his hand up.

“I’m not done. I’m still on the boys, I will come to you later.

You should be too ashamed to even talk about it. I can’t stand people like you. Mr. Ayo says it was a fight, it’s not that you did not want to strike back because she was a girl, you were not

ashamed to fight a seven year old, like four of you actually fought with a seven year old girl, and you are bold enough to say it. I will rather have my daughter than having a thousand of you, am I mad? What a waste.”

“How dare you” Taga’s mum shouted.

“Watch your word, your case is increasing, I won’t let this slide. I’m warning you” Barrister Caleb said.

“What case? Suitcase or what? Wait you think it’s like before. Shebi because we nor get lawyer you arrest my parents because of my brother. Who you be? You dey craze?” Uncle Tega shouted.

“Is any of them your son? I guess so. I don’t know what to say to you, but all the parents of these boys here are as useless as them and the proprietor is an idiot to disturb my meeting, go and hide in shame” Wolf said.

“Are you talking to me? Do you know whose wife I am?”

Taga’s mum shouted.

“I don’t give a damn” Wolf answered.

“I see you’ve have not changed at all. I warned your family never to cross my path again. Do you know what I can do to you now?” Barrister Caleb shouted.

“Based on what? I can’t believe I left the case I was preparing for this arrant nonsense” Uncle Tega shouted.

“I am going to sue you and make sure you pay for damages for my son” Dr. London who had been silent spoke.

“Wait, Akpoki cinema. Sue wetin? See this people oh” Uncle Tega said.

“We shall see in court, that’s after I’ve dealt with you, do you know who I am?” Barrister Caleb shouted.

Wolf moved closed to him. He turned expecting the soldiers to cock their gun but they were afraid.

“I don’t take threats likely” Wolf said

“No bros wait first, we will discuss that later” Tega said blocking Wolf.

“If you are not ashamed of your sons and you want to fight on their behalf, we can do that now. In fact Pearl will beat you to stupor. How did a daft become the commissioner?”

“You think everything is by fight and muzzle, how far with John? I’ve become successful more than your late father could ever be”

“Nice try, I was trained about that, you can’t provoke me to hit you, I don’t strike first. And hell no, there is nothing successful about being a boy to the governor. I knew this was never about

the fight. But don't piss me off further. If you still have issue with my family then come straight and stop embarrassing your generation. John's death is worth more than your past, present and future miserable life. And for disrupting my meeting, fuck you" Wolf used the F word again.

"Just get ready for me in court, we shall see" Barrister Caleb shouted.

He was the one trying to make Wolf angry, but he ended up being angry.

"Let's start the court now. Pearl what happened? Who attacked first?" Uncle Tega asked.

She pressed the remote and rewind it. Then she went close to the TV and pulled out her flash drive when the fight ended. She took the drive to Uncle Tega.

“Uncle that’s not all. His brother injured Vona and they said it was just an accident, the video is inside.”

“Which Vona?” Uncle Tega said running outside.

“I’m not a lawyer but I just know I’m the one to sue the school and if you want to cock that gun, make your choice now. I can load a bullet and fire even before you get a shot. It is called self-defense. You are irritating me with your indecisiveness” Wolf said to the soldiers.

“All correct Sir” the both saluted to a confused Wolf.

“We were told about you during our training. I’m happy to meet you in person” one of them said.

“Me too Sir” the other said.

Everybody knew Wolf. She would have to find where he was not known.

“You are not Special Force” Wolf said.

“No Sir but we were told stories about the sons of thunder.

Major Ahmed visited our camp Sir, he was hunting for talents.

He told us about the legends” the first one said.

“Is this the work you are supposed to do?” Barrister Caleb shouted.

“Sorry Oga, we must salute our senior. It’s part of our training whether ex or not, he is a legend” the other soldier said excitedly like he could not wait to tell his friends he met Wolf. It was really Akpoki cinema.

“And why are you escorting ordinary commissioner, this is abuse of power” Wolf said.

“How dare you” Barrister Caleb shouted but Wolf and the soldiers ignored him.

“Oga, it’s order from our commander” the second one said.

Barrister Caleb was visibly boiling, he would soon explode.

The others have been so silent especially Voke’s mum.

“Wolf I don’t have any issue with you. I love what I watched.

Imagine what would have happened if she is not like you. I am ashamed too. I wanted to remove him from this school because the complains I was receiving were too much but I change my mind. Let him stay so his mates will laugh at him. I’m sorry.

Proprietor I’m leaving, I’m very busy. Oya go and carry your bag” Voke’s mum said dragging his ears as they left the office.

Uncle Tega entered the office carrying Vona.

“Bros see Vona hand.”

Wold carried Vona from him.

“You want to sue? I will sue this school first” Uncle Tega said.

“Make sure you take your family along with you as you go, you are not welcomed here. She broke the school rule” Dr. London said.

“Take who? I’m bringing my daughter to school tomorrow and I will stop her when I want to. You have no legal right to excommunicate her. Self-defense is permitted in the law. I would want to see who will send her out” Wolf said.

“And if you like be commissioner for anything I don’t care. Pearl you say the video is there?” Uncle Tega asked.

She nodded.

“Bros make we dey go. See you in court” Uncle Tega said.

“You think is like the other time you and John got away with assaulting me? Don’t start a fight you cannot finish” Barrister Caleb said.

“I don’t start a fight, I finish it” Wolf said looking at Barrister Caleb, he was afraid but was hiding it with a laugh.

Barrister Caleb’s phone rang as Wolf came to her after dropping Vona on the ground.

"You cut your gown for flexibility?" Wolf asked.

Finally someone noticed. She nodded.

“Next time, if someone attacks you, make sure you beat them enough that they can’t talk. You hear me?”

She nodded.

“I’m proud of my daughter. I’m sure your sons won’t try it again” Wolf told Dr. London.

She had never been this happy since she came.

“Let’s go” Wolf said.

But he stopped at Taga's mum.

“Imagine having a mum like you, I will rather not be born. Is your child for sale?” Wolf asked.

“What! Do you know you are talking to the Chairman's wife? I am going to sue you for this” Taga's mum shouted.

But Wolf and Taga looked at each other.

“Now I know where your son's stupidity came from” Wolf said.

“Wait you are Mrs. Ivie, I never knew. Gussed I should drop your husband's election case. You want to sue his lead lawyer for a case he is almost winning. I should switch to the other party. I am going to bring him down in just one sitting. Now you can sue your husband's lawyer” Uncle Tega said.

“Wait no, what are you saying?” Taga's mum said.

“Vona go call your sister. This school is going down, let’s see who will send their children to this school when I’m done. Mr. Commissioner, you don’t know you are supposed to be careful? Na your job you won loose so? You think say na that time when all my family kneel down dey beg you. You never see anything” Tega said leaving the office but Mrs. Ivie ran after him.

Akpoki cinema!

Wolf held her hand for the first time and after looking at Dr. London and his brother, he led her away from the office. Mrs. Ivie was begging Uncle Tega as he tucked Vona and Fego on the back seat of his car.

Wolf took her to his car.

“My novel” she said pulling her hand off and running over to the office.

She left her book deliberately.

“Bros Caleb are you sure you have everything under control.

You know they are crazy and he is known to have never lost a case. Are you sure we should not.....”

“Don’t worry, I’m very close to the governor. With just a call I will destroy them. I’ve been waiting for a time to pay that arrogant Wolf for what he and John did to me” Barrister Caleb interrupted his brother as she entered the office.

“I forgot my novel” she said smiling.

“See the small rat” Dr. London said.

She slowly picked her book still smiling. They just did not know what was about to hit them. If only they knew they had a bigger trouble coming their way. They were finished the moment that second flash drive touched their system. She had deactivated her

hand band immediately Uncle Tega entered. They would soon be hearing from Jason and he would soon be hearing from the governor.

“Why is she smiling? Come take your book and get out” Dr. London shouted.

“I just hate their guts, arrogant jerks” Barrister Caleb said.

She blew a kiss at Frank and Joseph.

“Thank you” she shouted as she got to the door.

They had done so much for her. Because of them Wolf just told everyone she is his daughter. She ran to the car very happy and also wondering what Jason and the Circle would do.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TEN {Day 20}

He was still very pissed as he drove back to his restaurant. He had so many issues to deal with and Barrister Caleb was just trying to stress him. He had no case and he knew he was going to use his connection against him. If he were to guess, it would be his bar and he would be waiting for what he had planned. “Pearl, so it’s no longer your mum you are protecting, you’ve added Vona” he said as he drove home.

He had already told Johnny to finish the meeting with all his general manager on his behalf. He did not want Pearl going there with him.

“It was not only Vona, they called your restaurant stupid” she answered.

He took a glance her way. If he had known a mother's blessing or curse was very powerful, he would have been careful with his childhood. It was not just that, history was definitely repeating itself. But the difference was he was now the parent. Thinking about the fact that his seven year old daughter, not son fought with four boys twice her age was scaring the shit out of him.

What if she had been the victim, what would he had explained to Ese?

“What fight injured your hand?”

“I did not fight, I told you it was the gateman that started it. He hit me with his shoes and something sharp grazed my hand.”

He stopped the car.

“The gateman? He hit you?”

She nodded.

How dare he touch his daughter? And he had been giving him money. He didn't take any attack on any member of his family lightly, whether he wanted Pearl or not, no one dared touch her. He reversed his car.

“Where are you going to?” she asked.

“To have a talk with the gateman.”

“But I injured him back and....”

She did not finished her statement but gasped. She felt it too.

How could someone resemble another that much. She started looking through the back windscreen. He had started having the feeling that something was off few hours ago. Not that dangerous but he had that tingling feeling that he was being watched.

“You feel that too?” he asked after he had stopped the car for the second time.

She nodded and pointed towards the back windscreen. It was not too serious, he was not having a dread just a sense of being watched. He ignited the car and drove past the school straight to his bar.

“Where are you going to?” she asked.

“I can’t go to your school now and we can’t go home now. I think someone wants to follow us to where we live. I’m driving to the bar and I want to have a one on one talk with the person or persons.”

He could not see her reactions because he was driving fast.

“They are still watching us, are they following us?” she asked as he got close to the bar.

“Yes, they must be driving and following from afar.”

“But I can’t see them, I am just feeling uncomfortable” she said.

“You are not feeling uncomfortable, you are having a sensation.

Everybody has it but almost everybody’s own is dormant or they don’t know it’s a warning.”

“What is dormant?”

“Like it’s not active, like it’s not showing. But it comes and go” he answered.

Many people had always had something to say after something bad must have happened. Some said they knew something would happen because they had woken up on the wrong side of the bed, or they had kicked a bucket with their left foot, or they just had that feeling something was wrong. But his own was in overload. He parked by his bar. It was half full, it was not yet

time for crowd. There was no need hiding Pearl in the car, they must have already known and it was too dangerous.

“Follow me and don’t talk to anybody and don’t look towards where the feeling is coming from.”

“I already know that. My master said they will know I know they are watching me and I will not be able to take them by surprise.”

“What now? Your masters know you can sense danger?”

She did not nod or shake her head, she was acting like she had mistakenly said the wrong thing.

“My mum knows about you and I started sensing danger few months ago, it helped save my master’s wife and..”

She gasped and covered her mouth.

‘I’m not supposed to say’ she said opening the door.

He would soon put the puzzles in place, but he was beginning to feel angry because one puzzle was already solved, instead of being happy, he was angry. He locked his car with the remote control and met up with Pearl as she got to the bar entrance. She had really been trained on what to do because she was looking the other way. He held her hand as they entered the bar and ignored the knowing stares, some already typing on their phone to broadcast what they had just confirmed.

Oke ran to him before he could open his office.

“Oga we nor expect you today. Hi” Oke waved at Pearl keeping a distance.

She just smiled at him.

“Just ignore me and continue what you were doing okay?”

“Okay Oga” he said going back to the bar.

He closed the door immediately they entered.

“Wow your office is cool” Pearl said jumping on his black chair with wheels and spinning round with her hands outstretched.

The already faded injury was annoying him.

“What are we going to do about your torn gown?” he asked as he opened the shelf that led to his weapons.

“Wow. Are you going to shoot them?” she asked looking awed.

“Are you sure you are seven? Seven year olds don’t act like you” he said bringing out his Barrett M95 sniper rifle.

That thing cost him a fortune.

“Says someone who started fighting others at seven” she answered.

Good answer. He was the one saying the stupid thing. But he did not know gun at seven, which could be because there was no opportunity.

‘Thank you Mama’ he thought.

“Stay here and don’t open the door for anybody” he said opening the other door that would lead him outside but back of the bar. He came back after closing the door. He breathed a sigh of relieve. She was not trying to open the safe.

“Pearl promise you won’t touch anything.”

“Just go, the feeling is still there, I don’t like it. I will be spinning and doing my assignments.”

He nodded and closed the door, his worries disappearing. A Wolf didn’t lie.

He needed somewhere high and he had made sure of that before using that area as his bar, that tree was good to climb but someone was building a two storey building not far from the tree. Good thing there were no construction workers at the sight. It wouldn't have changed anything anyway. He climbed the steps which was still being constructed to the top floor. It was not yet roofed but he did not need the roof. He balanced his sniper scope, and increased the focal length to 1.5 and determined the range. They were not too far from the bar. They were in a red Camry and they had powerful cameras with them. Just three of them. All were focused on the bar and the environment. Two were snapping the environment while one was trying to see the bar through a telescope. He dialed the elevation of his optic, not ignoring the wind and gravity. They were trained on how to shoot simultaneously. It was all thanks to Master who told them Kung Fu speed could be applied on more than combat. No

wonder USA had offered them citizenship. The boys were all relaxed. They had no idea they were being watched. Okay they were good, very discreet and there was no way he would have known if not for his high instinct.

“What do I shoot first? I can’t kill them? They are not yet pointing a gun and I need a chat with them” he said.

“Let’s stop their escape weapon” he said same time firing at the front and back tires in sight.

He tuned his focal view to the windscreen and hit one on his shoulder. They all opened their door to run away.

“I take back my praise, you guys are stupid” he said firing at the shoe of one of them, then at the camera of one who was already few yards from the car. He fired a foot distance in front of the guy making him run back. Now they were back in the car. He waited, he could not come down yet. He had to make sure they

would remain in the car. One opened the door to come out and he shot at the door and he closed it back. Good, they now knew he wanted them in the car. All the cars driving to or coming from that area fled. His Bar was safe because they were about two hundred and twenty yards from his bar. Only the restaurant close to where the guys parked he pitied, some people might never go back there. He quickly climbed down and went back to his office. They wouldn't come out of their car for long. He had enough time. Pearl was really working on her assignment when he opened the door.

“I heard the gunshot, the feeling has stopped. Did you kill them?” she asked as he dropped back his rifle and picked his pistol.

“What do you know about death?” he asked picking a head band with a camera at the center.

“Everybody will die, good people will go to heaven, bad people will go to hell fire. Like Lazarus and the rich man” she answered.

“Sunday school?”

“Yes” she answered going back to her book.

“I did not kill them, you don’t kill someone except it’s very important, except you will die if you don’t kill them” he explained but she ignored him.

“Stay here. Don’t touch anything” he said as he opened the main door.

“Okay Wolf” she shouted after him.

He made a glossary look at the people in the bar. From what he could read, they had no idea he was behind the shooting. They thought he wanted to go find out what was happening. He nodded towards some waving at him with their half empty drink.

He drove very fast, he did not want them to decide it was safe to open the door before he got to them. He was in time because one was opening his door as he parked by the opposite side. He quickly switched on the camera and wore the band. There was no one else on the road or around, they were all hiding.

He dialed the police emergency line as he came out of his car.

“How may the police help you” a frustrated male answered his call.

He was so embarrassed of the Nigerian police.

“This is Wolf, I just shot at some would be assassins close to my bar. Should I bring them to you or you want to pick them yourself?”

“Wolf. You should have reported them first not shoot at them, you are breaking the law?”

“I think you were too frustrated to study the law yourself. You better come fast” he said ending the call.

Idiots. They just knew the language of money. He shot at the first one to a point gun at him from the front seat, hitting him on his head.

He said it, assassins. He was grateful to him for making his police report easier. Nothing from the other guys as he got a foot close to the car, which was surprising.

“Come out with your hands raised” he said.

The other two came out as instructed, the one he had shot was the one he must have shot his leg. The one with a bullet in his shoulder had just one hand raised and might bite off his tongue from trying to bear the pain. They were new faces except the dead one.

“Down. You know the process” he said.

They both knelt down with their fear too visible.

“Okay so start talking. I ask, you answer, you refuse I kill you, I will still find answers. Don’t look too surprised how I knew you were watching me, although I won’t tell you. So Agege sent you to study me right?”

They did not answer. They were faithful servants, but it did not matter. He did not want to hear their voices anyway.

“Good, I got your yes” he said.

They looked at him like how? Can you read mind? Are you a psychic?

“I’m none of the above. And I can’t tell you how. You bring out your phone, unlock it and throw it to me” he said pointing his gun at the one with no bullet, the other was too busy bearing his

pain to take advantage. He did not want them to bring out their weapons, let it remain with them. It would help him with the police. He searched for his call history and dialed the last person he called. It was not saved with any name. Yeah that was Agege for sure.

“Hi Agege, I’m just Wolf and ex-special force soldier. I’m a very peaceful person and I never start something, I finish it.

There must be someone that can tell you about Lord Kaka, with just a thousand box you will know what happens when you touch my brother or any member of my family. I am not warning you, I am not threatening you. I am telling you what you wanted to find out for free. The full moon is approaching and this season the Wolf is already angry.”

The man at the other side of the line started laughing. He just knew what he would say.

“I guess you don’t know Agege. You are playing with fire. I don’t care what you call yourself and what you believe you must have done. I have come to stay and I don’t like it when someone mess up my plan. You are making me interested in you and your bar, they told me it’s very large and flashy, just missing strippers to spice everything up. I don’t take threats.”

“Are you dumb? I said I don’t make threats. I hate dealing with cowards and fools and you are a combination of both. That’s the reason you might die by my hands. Let’s end it here” he said cutting the call.

He heard the police siren as he signaled for them to stand up.

“You are always late” he said to them.

They were just two and they were so relaxed because they believed Wolf had everything under control.

“I guess you must have gotten calls about shootings around here but you are coming now.”

“Bros we just guess it’s you and if it’s you everything is under control” the older man, should be corporal Pius said.

He pulled out the camera he had worn on his forehead and gave it to them.

“I shot him before he could shoot me” he said.

“And these ones?” Pius asked as he handcuffed them.

“That’s not my job, I’m just a civilian who just defended himself.”

“Oga any show?” Pius shouted at him as he walked to his car.

“Get lost” he shouted back.

News would soon break out. In fact, people’s mouth would be too full, they wouldn’t know where to start, whether his

daughter or Agege's men. Pius would be the spokesperson for Agege's men. Pearl was through with her assignments when he entered, she had slept off.

“Pearl wake up let's go.”

But she did not answer. He never slept deep, she must have heard him. He shook her but she continued sleeping. What game was she playing? She turned the other side and started snoring. It was too fake. He was not ready for her drama. He picked up her bag and carried her. He her head was on his shoulders as he walked past the bar to his car. No one talked to him, they just looked, but they now knew he was behind the shooting. News travelled fast. That was one reason people patronized his bar and why the very rich wanted him around during their party. They believed his bar was the safest.

She was still sleeping when he parked his car at the garage, he had to carry her inside and just after he had placed her on his long couch she jumped up and took her bag.

“Thanks for the lift” she said running to the room.

“What the heck?” he shouted.

She just made him carry her from the bar and from the car for no damn reason.

“Just stay calm, offense not strong enough to react” he said going back to his car to collect the newspaper.

He glanced through the headline and saw something that made him pause from keeping it for a later time.

‘ARMY KILLS 31 BOKO HARAM SECTS’

He sat down and read further, then he looked at the pictures.

They had reported it was a combination of air force and army

raid based on the fact that most of the bodies were found on roofs of houses as they tried to escape the soldiers on the ground. But the news was all wrong. The only correct information was the confirmation by the Chief of Defense Staff that they had been informed they were about to raid a small Christian community and had swung into action. They had written no casualty from the army. That was the only thing he believed from the report because it was no air raid, it was just one dangerous guy, the one he had tagged ghost.

He had been following the Special Force for quite a long time and had tried separating the Special Force Team A, the best of the best from others. The Special Force consisted of the best of the three armed forces. They were grouped into teams according to how good they were but the Special Force Team A were neither of the three armed forces because they were trained on

both air, land and sea. He had followed Lord Nero's destruction and even though their names were not mentioned, he knew the beast guy did most of the work if not all, even the supposed bombing at Onitsha was half-truth. They had lost one of them, George. There was so many army activities that he could bet his life on that they were the ones. From his calculations, they would not be more than seven, and there was a girl. She was the one who had ended Lord Brown in Port Harcourt but the newspaper had written that she killed them after a failed attempt to rape her. Then there was another who must have originally been an air force officer, he was good. He killed with car, bike, helicopter and he had seen what he did with Ojogolo arms dealers. That was the first ever life all-out battle in Nigeria. It happened in other countries but that was a first for Nigeria and he just knew that would also be the president biggest mistake. Other countries wouldn't find it funny especially the U.S.A.

Major Ahmed was the commander then but he was not sure he was still the commander because the President had referred to him as the commander of The Special Force but the people he saw fighting on life TV were all from Team A. Then there was the sea guy, who was tagged Escravos male mermaid. He was definitely same guy during Ojologo battle. Then that guy with the sniper rifle was too accurate, he was a math too difficult to solve. Then the bank robbery, the beast guy was still the same or more. Back then, during their six weeks program with the U.S.A and other country's armed forces, there was a big stone five from all countries were told to lift and the distance they could cover was calculated and the winning country emerged after the calculations but when it had gotten to Nigerian's turn, Obinna which was his name had said he was carrying it himself in memory of his mother and just like that, he lifted it himself. The bad thing was the no camera rule. He did not just carry it himself,

he also broke the longest distance held by U.S.A and Israel which was just five feet. He beat it by a damn mile. Major who had travelled with them had proposed a change in tradition, after carving king of the beast on it. Major said they could scrap it out only if just one person could lift it. Tiger had been dormant for a long time, he wouldn't be surprised if he was among the defectors during the attempt to end another Civil war which the news had wrote as an attempted bomb attack. As long as Biafra was involved, it was not just a bomb attack. Then Wild was the most difficult and dangerous of all of them. He started killing before he was twelve, the son of a dangerous drug Lord and he was heir to his father's business. Major had done a lot of work on him. He hardly spoke about himself, he just knew he had been looking for a girl he had called his wife, he might have found her. But this one he had tagged Ghost was also mysterious. The newspaper had written that they were killed in different

places as they tried to escape but that was not true. They were hunted by someone they could not see. Those people would not run even if they saw twenty military men, they would rather engage screaming in their language, glad to die for Allah. But these ones ran. And the only reason was fear, the fear of what they could not see. Same thing with that Mallam Umaru's case and Musa. Musa had claimed it was the messenger of death who showed him mercy and told him to confess the truth so he could be forgiven. Newspapers had found it funny but he had not. The Ghost guy was dangerous. People would rather know what killed them than dying from the hand of a ghost.

His phone rang as he kept the newspaper in the special shelf where he kept newspapers with headlines he suspected to be from Special Force Team A. He picked his call.

“Bros wahala dey. There is fire on the mountain on our enemy’s camp and it is not my handwork” Tega said.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER ELEVEN {Day 16}

“Tega what is wrong?” he asked.

“Barrister Caleb is begging to meet you.”

“I still don’t understand.”

“I also don’t understand bros. He kept begging me to tell you not to release the video to the public that he was ready to settle on any demand. Not just Barrister Caleb because London also called and begged me to tell you he would do anything. He said Pearl should come to school tomorrow.”

“I don’t know of any video.”

“Same here bros. I had to take the flash drive to Hacker before contacting you. I’m with hacker right now. He said the drive is clean, just today’s video record. And you know they’ve seen it already, it’s something else, something we don’t know, done by someone else who knew what happened today.”

“And I’m sure you can guess bros” Hacker said.

“Pearl’s masters” he said.

“Masters?” Tega and Hacker chorused.

“That is what she calls them, but I did not sense anything out of the ordinary” he said.

“I wanted to ask you but you just answered it. So how come?

Who are they? How powerful are they? That drive is very clean, just the video and different soft copies of primary and secondary textbooks. That’s all. How did they know what happened? And

what is the video all about that a whole Barrister Caleb is begging?” Hacker said.

“At first I thought she might be connected to Agege but no more. She wouldn’t have sensed danger today and Agege is too stupid to be this organize.”

“Wait, bros you say she can sense danger?” Tega asked.

“Are you not the one who said she was Mama’s curse come true?”

“No, never mentioned curse. And Mama never cursed you, she blessed you Wolf” Tega answered.

“Let’s focus here, this needs to be solved. Whoever they are, we are just sure of one thing which is their perfection and organized system. Somehow they knew what happened and had responded almost immediately” Hacker said.

“And well done bros, we hear wetin you do hours ago” Tega said.

“That was what I was talking about. She was able to sense them and wanted the feeling to stop. Her masters are likely an organized crime group and if I were to guess, top assassins and there is the probability they are involved in child soldier” he said hoping he was wrong.

“Bros you better be wrong oh. That is a dangerous ground. That was almost your military work and no no, na no go area” Hacker said.

“I’m hoping I’m wrong too but her precision, her skills, the destruction you saw in my room was her doing and she knew guns. Then see what she did to those boys. They are not drug dealers, she confirmed that herself. She is also very organized, too organized for a seven year old” he said.

“So right now they have sent a video that can ruin those idiots’ life, enough for them to want a meeting” Tega said.

“And we have no idea what the video is all about and they want to meet this night” Hacker said.

“This is serious” he said.

“More than you can ever think of” Pearl said.

He never felt her presence and he was almost shocked. She was on her swim suit.

“What?” he asked.

“Just give up, you can never find them, they find you not the other way round” she said jumping on his couch

“Stop jumping on my expensive couch” he shouted.

She jumped to the table and continued jumping.

“I know they must have done something to Dr. London and Barrister Caleb. I so love my masters” she said jumping down and running to the swimming pool.

“Bros wahala dey. I hear everything” Tega said.

“See you and Hacker do the meeting. You are my lawyer” he said cutting the call.

Pearl was already practicing underwater combat when he got to his mini swimming pool. He watched her for some time and felt what looked like fear. He might be right.

“Pearl will you like to visit the gym with me on Saturday and join the karate class?” he asked.

She ran out of the water, good thing there was a demarcation.

“Really? Like for real?”

He nodded.

“Thank you” she said hugging his legs.

What was that strange feeling?

“You will get me wet” he said pulling her away from him.

She ran back to the swimming pool and started her water fight.

As he drove to her school the next morning, he remembered he did not call Tega to find out what happened. Good thing Thursday was their sport day. He would give the uniform to Johnny to help fix it. It was already in his car.

“No, I don’t want, I have money I have not spent” she said when he gave her a thousand box.

He had come down from the car with her. He had not forgotten the gateman. He was waving at him excitedly but stopped immediately he noticed his expression. The school was filled with normal early morning rush. Parents dropping their children

and hurrying to work but they were enough hornings that could wake the dead. His car had prevented some from reversing.

“Give me a reason why I won’t collect all my money from you?”

“Sir” the gateman said already afraid but confused.

“My daughter said you hit her with your shoe and grazed her arm. Are you mad or you are just stupid enough to tempt me.”

“Sir I beg you, na mistake, devil’s work” he said already on his knees, his two palms clapped together.

“I am not going to hit you, she already did that if not you would have woken up on a hospital bed. You have just two options. Give her back all the money I’ve been giving you or don’t ever let me see your fucking face.”

“You are now owing up to ten thousand box, I told you the F word was banned, mum said it is wrong” Pearl said holding his hand but the message on her face was clear. You are embarrassing me, everyone is watching. Yeah he got it.

And what kind of crime syndicate didn't use the F word?

“I'm done with you” he said to the gateman.

“Chia, I beg you Sir. Small madam I beg, beg Wolf for me” the gateman shouted still on his knees as he walked to his car.

The small madam was already running to her class.

He called Tega immediately he got to his first supermarket's office.

“So what happened?” he asked as soon as Tega picked the call.

“Yeah, we went there and I told them to play the video so we could all watch their crime, so they could understand why they were really in trouble.”

“And what was on the video?”

“I felt like strangling them. It was their inner office, the principal and the receptionist were not around, I’m sure of that. Barrister Caleb had called one of his boys to visit your club this night and plant cocaine inside. He was planning on making someone contact Drug and Law agencies today. I guessed he forgot he had planted a camera in his office or maybe did not know he wasn’t in control anymore.”

“I should have come for the meeting.”

“Bros never ves, make I finish. They said you made someone hack into their school system and all data related to money had been wiped out and there is no hard copy for some of them, then

their system is no longer working. So many documents are missing. The video was sent to them and they were given five hours ultimatum before it will be sent straight to the governor and the public. I did not tell you he had mocked the governor in the video, he said the governor was too easy. Now ask me how they received the video.”

“How?”

“Someone sent them a message to check their VLC. That was after their phone was frozen, then later, the message was deleted. Just when we finished watching the video, Barrister Caleb’s phone crashed. London’s own had crashed hours ago. Hacker said he can’t fix it. The virus they used on it is a new programming language worse than what he called python. You dey feel am?”

He had nothing to say.

“So what did you conclude?”

“Well those that sent the video know what to do with it. I only asked them to make their children offer public apology and return Mr. Famous. That was what they said the person who sent the video had demanded. I did not want to add or remove anything.

“Who is Mr. Famous?”

“He resigned in protest of what the boys were doing to other students, and there was Okoro who is the son of your restaurant manager. He was part of the reason Pearl fought them.”

“Tell Mr. Famous to come see me. I would need a manager for my hotel.”

“See as one man’s poison don turn another man meat” Tega said.

“But don’t you think that would make those guys publish the video?” Tega asked.

“I don’t think so, I don’t even feel so. I think they’ve gotten what they want and I don’t even care if they publish the video.”

“But how we won do those people?”

“I don’t know yet but I’m working on something” he said cutting the call.

Every master had their unique stance, unique signature one could use to identify who they were. Master had taught them so. He was going to make her participate in all the combat exercises in his gym and he was going to watch keenly, somehow he would have something or someone to start with.

He dialed Hacker’s line.

“Hacker, I need you to help me with something.”

“Okay?”

“Help me take Pearl to the gym.”

“Why me?”

“I will go with you but I don’t want people to give her special treatment because she is my daughter. You pick one of our boys to register her, I want her to participate in all the combat trainings including boxing. I want to watch how far she has been trained and if there is something to link her with.”

“Okay, assignment accepted.”

He cut the call and hoped he would have a clue because he knew he did not like the already solved puzzle.

Friday came and Agege was still silent but there was something bigger and almost scary. Those masters were not through with Barrister Caleb. They had kept to their promise of

not publishing the video but there was another thing they must have never mentioned to Barrister Caleb. He was sleeping with his brother's wife. Not London but their younger brother who was a Chancellor. Their chat and different exchanges of nude pictures were all splattered on the internet and newspaper, although newspapers had covered their junks. Of course, the government had already distanced themselves from him by firing him. Now it was family problem. Tega called to say Barrister Caleb had called to rain curses on him, accusing him of betraying their agreement. He had said what was the 'no one messes with our family' message for? That meant they had sent him the message after he was fired. Things were getting out of hand. At the moment, London had even denied his brother and had posted that he was no longer his brother. These masters knew how to give someone a checkmate. Hacker had tried tracking the source of the pictures but it had led back to his

office. They were dangerous and not just that, they were possessive of Pearl but why was he feeling the message was also meant for him? And that was pissing him off because he didn't take threats and he was beginning to feel they would be the match he had always wanted not Agege.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWELVE {Day 16}

It was very obvious Pearl was waiting for Saturday, only she did not know he too was waiting. She was up very early in the morning. He had actually forgotten to lock his door, he had just closed it and she had surprised the Wolf. Nobody had ever taken him by surprised not even John.

“Wake up, wake up” she shouted jumping on top of his bed splashing water on him, the way they did when he was in Special Force. He hated that, but had to allow them splash water on his face so he would not always be the odd one out, John did the same. But Pearl needed her manners. He wanted to grab her hand but she jumped to the bed before he could touch her.

“You are really getting old Wolf, you are too slow” she said laughing.

That was it, he was going to teach her a lesson.

He pursued her down to the golf field but she always dodged whenever he was at arm’s length.

“Fast Wolf” she shouted climbing the glass using a special hand climbing tools that magnate the glass as she climbed. He had never seen that before.

“Where did you get that?” he shouted at her.

“My master.”

What was he expecting her to say? But why had he not thought about searching her bag.

“Don’t even think about it, you will be surprised what will shock you” she shouted.

Yeah she could read him.

“You know you’ve not been properly taught how to escape because you are now trapped up.”

“Who says I’m trapped?”

“Cause I can easily catch you there, there is nowhere after up.”

“I will like you to try old Wolf.”

“Okay you are now pissing the Wolf” he said entering his room to get his climbing tools.

Only for him to come out and she was nowhere to be found but someone hit him on his back before he could turn.

He never sensed her and she was also very stealth because even though his senses did not work, he could have heard her footsteps. She was pointing a very small toy gun at him.

“I won. I won” she shouted jumping round the room.

He ran stealthily and caught her. She was not expecting him.

“Now who is the winner?”

“Me.”

He turned her upside down.

“Okay you are not yet old. But I still won” she said refusing to surrender.

“Okay then let me make my stand” he said running to the swimming and diving in with her.

He raised her with one hand balancing her using her stomach, then he sank in again and up and down, but she was laughing.

“I still won” she squealed.

He dropped her.

“Okay your turn.”

“Turn for what?”

“To lift me. Then I will accept defeat.”

She surprisingly accepted the challenge and he could see she was trying her best to push him.

“That is cheating. You cheated” she said giving up and going underwater.

“Now we have a champion and he is still the undefeated and undisputed champion, the Wolf” he said raising his hands.

But Pearl kicked him on his leg and swam away before he could catch her. She ran to the room and shut it.

He went to the kitchen after cleaning himself as best as he could.

He had to pull off his top. There was just rice that Johnny brought the day before. He had told him he would cook. He loved cooking especially when he was less busy. Most times, he was the chef preparing the yam porridge in his restaurant. Mama always prepared her own separate from theirs because she was allergic to ikewu, a native spice that looked like a dark chalk but added a sweet taste to the porridge. He was going to prepare that very soon.

“Wow, that’s a first” Pearl said coming over to the dinning.

He had already served their food. She was also already prepared for their outing.

“I do cook” he said placing two bottled water on the table.

She did not answer but looked at him. Like really? Are you sure?

“Don’t worry you will soon experience my cooking skill life and direct.”

“My masters can all cook apart from one, he just knows how to fight but he is a terrible cook” he said pouring her rice on his plate.

Good, she was talking gradually and he had learnt not to push her.

“What are you doing?”

“It’s no fun eating alone” she said taking her spoon and eating from his plate.

He joined her.

“Back in the days when I was still in the military, we had one who could not cook anything apart from pepper soup with bush meat, then he used to pour it into a native pot he said was his late mum’s gift” he said after taking some spoonful.

He could not interpret her expression, it looked like she was surprised he was telling her about his military life.

“You don’t know I was a soldier?”

“I know that, mum told me everything she knew about you” she answered recovering from her shock.

“Is she married?”

She shook her head.

“There was a time she almost got married when I was five. The man was living with us.”

“What happened?”

“I never liked him. He always used the F word and he smoked and drank a lot. One day he had a fight with mum and mum told him to move out.”

“Why?”

“He said he liked me, that I was hotter than mum and he likes hot girls and mum heard him, that’s all. Mum sent him packing.”

He never knew he was suddenly holding his spoon too tight and he had bent it in two until Pearl shouted.

“Wolf why are you mad, what did the spoon do?” she shouted.

“He is damned lucky I may never meet him, I would have loved to give him something hot” he said.

“Weird” she said leaving the table.

At least there was still some sense left in Ese's brain. But what the heck was she doing with a pedophilia in the first place? She was lucky that man didn't touch Pearl. He was so pissed off with her stupidity.

The doorbell rang as he tried calming his temper. Before he could get there, Pearl ran to open the door without asking who was there.

Hacker with Onome entered inside and Pearl surprisingly hugged him shouting Uncle Hacker.

He looked at Hacker.

"Which kind look be that this morning. Na just once we go see am" Hacker said.

"Good morning oga" Onome said.

"We?" he asked.

“Ouch, me and Teji. Wetin you dey expect before. Make I nor go see my niece?”

He ignored him and entered his room to prepare.

Pearl had a way of flowing with anybody. Hacker was carrying her and she was operating a phone when he came out of his room.

“Wow! Onome you see? She don hack the phone.

Unbelievable!” Hacker was exclaiming as he got to the sitting room.

“Who taught you?” Onome asked.

“I told you I have master, he can hack into anything. I was already good in math and numbers so I’m very easy to teach”

Pearl responded.

“Like your school system?” he asked sitting down on one of the couch.

“That’s a child’s play for the other one who is still learning” she answered carrying her bag and walking towards the door.

Hacker could not even hide his surprise at her answer.

“Can we go now?” she shouted opening the door.

“Bros, I give am IMEI of this phone. Make she use this phone hack am. She finish work. Wetin I still dey teach some of our boys” Hacker said.

Onome was equally surprised, but as of him, he had already made up his mind to expect worse. And he was about to find out how much she knew.

“Let’s go” he said to the still surprised Hacker and Onome.

He could almost feel her excitement when they got to the gym.

“Pearl follow Hacker and Onome, they will register you and be your guardian” he said as he parked his car by his gym.

“Why?”

“Because If I take you there, they will be afraid to fight you.”

“Because I’m your daughter.”

“You got it.”

“Okay, take my bag, don’t open it. You promise?”

That promise was a bit difficult.

“Okay” he said taking her bag and leaving the car.

It took more than fifteen minutes to greet all the people he could not avoid. He was supposed to do some boxing but he wanted to watch Pearl from his office.

Hacker joined him few minutes after he had settled down.

He took over the system used for the camera.

“I told him to start from the karate class and you know they will have to test her to find out her stage” Hacker said putting the TV to a full screen for the karate class. Pearl was already dressed and she had tied the white belt which was the beginner belt around her waist. Her excitement was contagious. Her glee was visible for all to see. It was like she was being presented with her favorite game.

“Bros good morning” Tejiri said entering his office without closing the door. Tega was behind him.

“I did not call for family meeting” he said.

“Na Saturday bros, time to hit the gym like before” Tega said.

“This is my office not the gym.”

“Hacker told us and we came to watch too, she is my niece”

Tejiri said sitting down.

He looked at Hacker.

“Bros it was a slip of tongue” Hacker said.

But that would have to wait because Pearl was already on the fourth boy for stage one karate. It took just two minutes and all the twenty boys who should be her age were on the ground. Mr. Li the Chinese instructor was dazed. Nobody spoke in the office. It was not yet what he was looking for. The man called someone on red belt, stage three to continue with the children while he took her to stage two, the red belt 10th Kyu. Soon it was red belt Senior, stage three which he was waiting for. Stage three was not about age but skills, although it was not for all stages, children were more in stage one and the bigger ones who were just starting had another class. Pearl was the youngest by far in

stage three. He had been told the youngest before Pearl was seventeen and their best was twenty one. Only few were now in stage four. From stage three was where special signature was needed, that was how someone could easily know who one's master was because your ability to beat an opponent would be determined by the little surprises you had in stock because everyone knew the styles and positions at that stage.

Others sat down and Pearl was told to stand in the center. The less skilled was called first and Pearl defeated him in seconds, then it increased to two and three and five and the last person. It was now a balanced fight and she was handling the six of them very well. If it was Kung Fu, it would have been easier to know the Master of her masters but karate was different. Li would be able to help because all her personal additional skills were mixed up and confusing. But there was a style that flashed him a

memory of Wild but it was not fully Wild, like it was half of it but combined with something else. There was one thing he was already sure of, some of her borrowed strikes were not for sports, they were meant for life and death situation when necessary and Mr. Li had ignored that she broke some rules when it came to sports. Either he was too awed to notice or he just didn't care this time around. The fight never produced a winner. Li ended it with a whistle and while the others fell on the ground from exhaustion, Pearl ran to give Onome high five. Onome gave her bottled water. Next would be the boxing ring but in two hours' time. She needed to rest. He sent a message for Li to come to his office. The others were still silent.

“Wolf” Li greeted with his English still manageable.

“What kind of karate is that girl being trained for? Sports or combat?”

Mr. Li looked at him for some seconds before answering.

“You already know the answer Wolf. All for combat” Li answered gulping water from his legendary ancient iron water can with a tiny tip.

“I don’t see any reason for the boxing anymore” Hacker said.

“You know her. Is she your rumored daughter, your eyes are the same?” Li asked.

“Yes, her mum sent her to me but I’m wondering who trained her.”

There was nothing there to hide, he needed his help.

“I can tell you they were not training her for fun or sport. I can tell you she is too good for a seven year old and this is not just because she is being trained but also because of two additional things.”

“Which is?” Tega asked before he could ask.

“First if the stories I’ve heard about you even from soldiers who come here are true, then she has your traits, I mean instincts.”

Okay that was out of the blues. He was shocked like his brothers.

“Don’t be surprised, I learnt Kung Fu too although we don’t teach it here. I was taught so many things by my master. I just made the conclusion by myself, it was not that you had superpowers to fight so many armed people. It could just be your sense and instinct to pick out danger is more pronounced. We had one then who could fight ten of us without getting hit. He just knew where his body will get hurt. That must have been the same for you. You just knew where you will get hit and where it was coming from. I saw that in her as she fought and with the eyes, I just knew she was your daughter.”

“And the second?” Hacker asked.

“She loves what she is doing, her passion is in full scale and she just doesn’t like defeat. I could see that she was tired but she would have continued fighting till she collapsed. The combination of these two things is lethal. So whoever is training her Kung Fu and Karate because I saw both elements on display, that person or persons have concentrated more on her strength which are the two things I mentioned. Instinct and talent. That is what they are more interested in. Any other combat training will go smoothly when she has completely fuse the two together.”

“Does any master come in mind?” he asked.

Li took another gulp of water.

“I tried as I watched but there is something unique about her stance, sometimes it’s almost as if she is dancing. It’s only easy to point out who trained who if there is one master, or one master with disciples exactly like him. But there are too many

masters involved, and she has somehow combined their signatures to form her own. And I can tell you they are all good. Your daughter is a lethal weapon. That's all I can tell you Wolf. I need to go back to training" Li said leaving his office.

"Bros this is serious" Hacker said.

"What did Ese do? Why? What does she hope to achieve? How can she hand over Pearl to a dangerous group?" Tejiri said.

"Bros don't forget the current issue about Barrister Caleb. These people are dangerous" Tega said.

"I said it that first time, they give me chills. They are untraceable and she can even hack a phone" Hacker said surprising the others.

“She can open safes, she can shoot a gun, she can climb a surface like she was participating in a military exercise and she can be very stealth” he added.

“Where do we start from? I now understand why you did not tell Mama” Tejiri said.

“Agege?” Hacker asked but he shook his head at his question.

“It’s not possible. Agege is not this organized and not professional like this. I hate to tell you but you might be correct. Ese had handed over her daughter to professional assassins and crime syndicates and to say they are dangerous is making it look like I’m not serious” Hacker answered his own question.

“They must have paid her a lot but why did she send her to you?” Tega asked.

“Because she is through with Pearl and she wants to be free”

Hacker said.

“You are too wrong Hacker. They are coming back to pick her up in seventeen days’ time. I’m not sure they are taking her back to Ese but they will surely come. I’m very sure of that” he said.

“How sure are you?” Tejiri asked.

Because Pearl was a rear treasure. If they trained children Pearl might be the only one willingly being trained and she was too good a price to abandon. He had not seen any whip mark on her to indicate coercion. She was the exact person they wanted and they would not give up on her easily. Ese might have sent her to him before she disappeared completely.

“I am very sure” he said.

The boxing would soon start but he had already gotten the answer he wanted. Even though he could not trace her origin, he knew she was not being trained for sport but for combat and some place far or near, a group of deadly assassins were planning to pick up his daughter in seventeen days. That was pissing him off. Pearl was his own, just for him and nobody would dare take her away from him. The Wolf would not let it happen. Never.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER THIRTEEN {Day 14}

Everything had suddenly changed from being boring to being fun and exciting. Wolf was changing so fast and she was happy she might be able to fulfill her goal before her birthday which was in eleven days' time, few days before her deadline.

Frank and friends and surprisingly the proprietor had apologized to the school on Thursday and then later to her but they did not mean it except on Friday when they had smiled at her.

It was on Monday the second week since she arrived. The gym outing had been so fun, she did not see Wolf but she knew Wolf had watched her karate fight, then the boxing. She and Wolf and all her uncles had all gone out for ice cream at his big restaurant which was filled up with people including white men. That was after they had used the swimming pool. Uncle Tega's wife had come with Fego and Vona to meet them. People stared at them especially at her like they were trying to figure her out.

Sunday was also fun because Wolf taught her how to dodge a punch she could not see. They used the golf field for training and they had played in the swimming pool and Wolf had cooked beans which was surprisingly delicious. He was becoming

something more than she expected. The only thing left was he had not told her to call him dad.

She woke up early in the morning to jump Wolf before preparing for school but Wolf caught her midair.

“Catch you” he said.

“You pretended to be sleeping” she shouted trying to free herself but he was already carrying her to the swimming pool.

“No, it’s too early” she said.

“Same way you pretended to be sleeping and made me carry you from the bar and from the car” he said entering the swimming pool room.

“Please, my hair will get all wet.”

But he did not listen. He soaked her inside and her hair also got soaked.

“Now you know how I felt” he said.

She splashed water on him and tried swimming away but he caught her and their water combat started and he was just a bully.

“You are a big bully” she shouted accepting defeat and running out of the water to prepare for school.

Wolf had made tea and toasted bread sandwich when she got to the dinning.

“Food is ready” he said as she climbed their only stool.

Her mind was filled up with so many things she wanted to ask.

Just that she did not know where to start and how to ask.

“What is it?” Wolf asked.

He must have noticed her hesitation.

“Please I don’t want lesson. I have covered my textbooks already and I don’t want to sit down waiting for you. I don’t also like the new gateman” she begged.

“That’s why you should follow Tega. You know him enough now. Pearl I’m very busy.”

“Vona and Fego gets picked up by 4:PM. School closes by 2:00PM. I can go home by myself.”

“Never.”

“Okay, what if you pick me and drop me at home, I can stay home by myself.”

“Still no. I can’t let you stay here by yourself.”

“I promise I won’t touch anything.”

“It’s too dangerous.”

“No it’s the safest, the doors are first class doors with bulletproof and not easy to open locks.”

“I’m not going to ask how you know that, but no Pearl and that’s final. I will be reading the papers. Hurry up and prepare for school” Wolf said leaving the kitchen.

She really wanted to speak with her family. The baby must have come out and she had no way of confirming. Wolf dropped her in school as usual, he gave her a thousand box. Time crawled slower than a snail and it felt like forever waiting for Wolf.

Although there was the part were the whole school loved her and even Frank and friends were now her friends. She had heard a teacher discussing that Barrister Caleb and Dr. London were quarrelling. They even said Joseph had packed out of his father’s house and had taken Victor his half brother with him.

Their mother was not excluded. Whatever. She did not care. But

she did care during break when Frank and friends including Okoro and Keno came to ask her for a favor. It surprised her at first but Frank said the proprietor had approved it. She was so happy about what she would be doing on Thursday. Victor and Vona were back as friends and two additional swings had been installed and it was first come, first serve. The school was now feeling like a school but she was still bored and homesick. Jason never replied her but she knew all her messages were read. She had no access to the internet and she was not permitted to use the hard copy dictionary because it contained words she was not supposed to know. It was a truth she had to follow for herself. So she had not yet find out the meaning of abortion. By 4:PM, Uncle Vona came to pick Vona and Fego who were playing with her. The surprise of the day was when Dr. London shook hands with Uncle Tega like they were friends. Wolf came by 7:40PM

and the only thing she felt like doing as soon as her feet stepped in the house was sleeping.

The next day, she was woken up from her sleep by the sweet scent of Banga soup. She rushed to the kitchen and Wolf was already making eba.

“Wow!” she exclaimed.

“You overslept, what’s up with you?” Wolf asked touching her forehead.

She wanted to tell him that she was going to be sick if she did not contact the Circle but she kept her mouth shut.

She had to prepare for school with a cheetah speed. Her food was set when she got to the dinning.

“No no no. Wear this” Wolf said handing her an apron.

“Banga is my favorite” she said closing her eyes after swallowing a lump of eba.

“Your grandma too.”

“I know. My mum told me.”

“Is there anything your mum did not tell you?”

“I was her best friend” she answered.

“Was?” he asked.

She ignored him and continued eating.

School was the same thing, just the addition of greeting too many people was the extra stress. By 2:PM, an excited miss Cynthia who was on duty ran to her class to call her that her father was waiting for her.

She ran outside to confirm it. He was really there. He was resting his back by the driver door of his Prado jeep. One hand

in his pocket, the other on his phone which he was operating.

His legs were crossed too and he looked like someone peaceful, like a Wolf resting lazily on the ground after a hunt. She studied wolfs many times.

“He is so hot” Miss Esther said from her side.

When did she get to here? Even Miss Cynthia. What was wrong with some adult? There was no wife for Ghost. She had not seen any.

She ran all the way to him and stood just a feet apart.

“Let’s go home” Wolf said raising his head.

She could not believe Wolf had changed. She threw herself on him but she was not sure her head got to his waist.

“Thank you, thank you” she said releasing him and opening the passenger door.

She saw Wolf wave at the adults staring at him from the first floor before entering the driver's seat.

Her surprises were not over as Wolf gave her a wrapped box to open. She almost burst with joy when she saw it was children android tablet.

“That's for you to call me when something is wrong. My SIM is inside and I saved my number with Wolf.”

“Thank you” she shouted hugging his legs.

“Okay, enough hug for the day. I have to go. Don't open the door for anybody. I will call you if anyone is coming do you understand?”

She nodded.

“And you can use the TV now. I've recharged the decoder”

Wolf said walking to the door but she ran and hugged his legs.

“Thank you, thank you.”

“Okay, Pearl I need to go” Wolf said gently pulling her away.

She waited for just ten minutes before activating her hand band.

She was not yet interested in any other thing. She would call Mum after calling Jason.

“Hello” she shouted in excitement as soon as Jason picked the call.

“Finally. I hope it’s safe to call?” Jason asked.

He was sounding tired.

“Yes. You won’t believe how Wolf has changed. Is the baby out?”

“You almost missed out on everything. We are about leaving the hospital. Everyone is my escort” Cindy answered.

“Really? Is it a boy or a girl” she shouted jumping on the table.

But before anyone could answer, she heard a baby's cry, then babies' cry.

"They are two?" she shouted.

"Yea Pearl. Dr. Sam played all of us" Ghost said.

"Ghost. I miss you so much" she shouted jumping on the couch.

"We miss you too sweetheart" Sabrina said.

"Are they boys or girls or boy and girl?"

"All boys. Beast carry" Halima answered.

"Yeah! I have two brothers" she shouted jumping back on the table.

"Nope, too tiny. I may break him" Beast answered.

"Beast, Wild, Major, Fast, Mark" she shouted.

"Pearl" they chorused making her laugh.

“Carry, you need to practice ahead of Ifeoma” Halima said.

“Lady I’ve told you to stop joking. There is no Ifeoma. My family only have boys” Beast answered a laughing Halima.

She wished she could see them. One was no longer crying.

“Doc you sure I’m holding him well?” Beast asked.

But Sabrina laughed.

“I’ve never seen you so scared. Chill you are doing well ahead of Ifeoma” Sabrina said.

“Doc” Beast said.

The other was still crying.

“Mark give him to me. Baby George is scared of you” Ghost said.

“You must be joking. How can anyone be scared of me?” Mark said.

“My turn. Beast hand over” Wild said.

“What’s the other’s name?” she asked.

“Geoffrey, Jason’s father’s name. His name is Geoffrey Ifeanyichukwu, then George Ebuka” Cindy answered.

“I want to come home.”

“Stay there” all of them shouted.

“We have two big missions on our hand now” Fast said.

She started laughing.

“But I can help. I’m now a big sister.”

“Remain there big sister until mission is cleared” Wild answered.

“Jason you should try resting. Cindy is fine” Major’s wife Hadiya said.

“So after all your show of strength during missions, just a woman in labor defeated you” Wild said.

“Just? I never knew it would be that painful” Jason answered.

“And at the end Cindy lost. They all came out as Jason’s little clone” Major said.

“Are they autistic?” she asked.

“Too early to tell Pearl” Jason answered.

“I’m just looking at George and imagining a lot of things” Ghost said.

“Please don’t share it” Jason said.

“Yea, Jason returning from mission or Cindy returning from work and the G’s screaming their name from the top of the tree

pointing a rubber bullet at them and they are just two years” Fast said.

“Seriously?” Jason and Cindy chorused.

“Here is a better one. Imagine Beast and Halima start hearing someone shouting power, I’m the beast and they run to the parlor and Ifeoma has the table on her head and she is two years” Ghost said making everybody laugh.

“Ghost you are not normal. There will be no Ifeoma and he will be gentle like... okay, he won’t do that” Beast said.

“Let’s look further into the future. Imagine how little Ghost will behave. Ghost will have to be looking for him every day and one of the days he will call them from the roof where he is relaxing and watching the stars” Mark said.

“Mark seriously?” Ghost said.

“What of you Mark? Baby will be playing hide and sick under water” she said.

“Pearl...” Mark said.

“Yeah and Sabrina’s daughter will be dancing with sword and flying before she turns two” Halima said.

“That’s why Mark and Sabrina is a taboo. I won’t die before my time” Hadiya said making everybody laugh.

“Major would be begging baby Sabrina to stop doing a death dance underwater because the weather is cold” Cindy added.

“That’s why you should live peaceful childhood, so you will not be scared of giving birth to yourself. I can’t imagine what Wolf is going through” Hadiya said.

“But I am not that bad. I am not disturbing Wolf that much” she said.

“Really? Mark asked.

“Yes” she answered.

“Pearl you beat up four big boys in your school, don’t you know the scare you gave Wolf?” Major asked.

“But I can fight” she answered.

“She will not understand” Dr. Sam said.

“So apart from that, you have been very quiet and not active?” Ghost asked.

“Just the time I went home by myself and the time I opened his safe for weapon and fired at the door and destroyed his bed....”

They did not let her finish but started shouting and talking at the same time.

“It was because he made me angry” she tried explaining.

“Please Pearl, for the sake of Jason and Cindy who are right now very scared, please let’s pity them and say the grace” Ghost said making all of them laugh.

“Ha, my chest. I can just imagine Wolf’s current predicament” Hadiya said.

“Ma, it’s not really our fault” Fast said.

“Oh Fast let’s not just start yours. You may have to travel to an island without locomotives until he is old enough to handle locomotives” Wild said.

“Then he would meet bulls and other animals and still ride them” Halima said.

“Wild, please it’s better you become a monk” Ghost said.

He always made everyone laugh. She knew the meaning of Monk.

“Ghost I am not afraid. I know what I did and I’m preparing to face the consequences” Wild said.

“Trust me Wild, you can never be prepared” Dr. Sam said.

One of the baby started crying.

“Ssh, mum is tired. Please don’t cry” Fast said.

He must have carried one of them.

“So are we flying or going by car?” Fast asked.

“Hell no” Hadiya, Cindy and Halima shouted.

Her phone started ringing.

“I need to go, Wolf is calling me.”

“Wait. How?” Major asked.

“He bought me a tab, he has changed a lot after the school fight” she said.

“School fight or school beating. Pearl my wife please” Ghost said.

“Ghost” Hadiya shouted.

“I did not find any. And Jason I heard little of what you did. You gave them a checkmate” she said.

“Not my idea, Wild did” Jason said.

“I will call again, Wolf now allows me stay home” she said cutting the call.

The tab was ringing for the second time when she picked.

“Why did you not answer your call?” Wolf asked all bossy.

“I was busy. Why are you calling? Are you afraid someone is around?”

“Nope, I’m more afraid you might have blown my TV and other stuffs.”

“Relax big man. Pearl is fine” she said cutting the call.

She immediately dialed Mum. She had so many things to tell her.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER FOURTEEN {Day 13}

Another sweet smell woke her up the next morning.

Was that yam porridge? Yes it was. Wolf was preparing yam porridge.

“Good morning Wolf” she said jumping and running round the kitchen.

“You are over excited. What is cooking?”

“Yam porridge is cooking. It smells so nice”

Wolf laughed.

“You did not understand me. Anyway you are not eating yam porridge this morning.”

“But why?”

“Because it’s not good for your developing stomach, so I will put it in a flask for your lunch.”

“Yeah” she shouted excitedly.

“Something is happening in my school on Thursday” she said.

“Please no fighting” he said making her laugh.

“Don’t worry it’s something good.”

“And you don’t want to tell me” Wolf said.

“Not yet.”

The doorbell started ringing.

“Mama Bridget” the two of them chorused.

School was too slow and lunch break by 12PM was delaying. Okay it was she who felt the time was not running fast. She could not wait to eat her yam porridge. She rushed to the rest room immediately they rang the bell for break. She quickly sent she was fine to Jason but just before she opened the door, she heard Mr. Anayo, her second class teacher discussing from the male rest room.

“I told you it was a mistake, which one is you are pregnant?” he paused.

“I don’t want a baby, I am not yet ready to be a father. Abortion is better” he paused.

“I will find the money, just abort the baby, remove it from your stomach because you will just be the one to suffer because I’m never going to marry you” he said.

She stood frozen by the door. That was what abortion meant.

Wolf did not want her. He wanted Mum to remove her when she was in her stomach. She did not stop the tears that started flowing from her eyes. She cried for long and break was almost over when she went back to her seat. She had lost appetite but still wanted to eat it, so her mouth would be busy, so she would not cry in class. She tasted ikewu after putting a spoon full in her mouth. Did Wolf not read the letter? She wanted to stop but changed her mind. Wolf knew she was allergic to ikewu but still put it in her food. He must have put it there because he did not want her. She finished everything, she did not care what would happen, she was not even afraid. Wolf did not want her.

Her birthday and her last day was approaching at a fast speed yet he still had no clue about her masters or Ese. Apart

from his deduction on what they did, there was no trace and Pearl had refused to say anything. There was one thing he was certain, no group or gang would take his daughter away from him. He did not care if Ese had made a deal with them, the deal was off as far as he was concerned.

He was on his way to the police station. That was because he had received a call from Corporal Job, must be the one who came with Pius. Agege had somehow succeeded in breaking his men out of police cell which was unique because they normally sent someone to kill them. Pius and two other policemen had been killed in the process. He knew that already, the whole town and Nigeria must have heard it on the news because it happened around 3:AM on Sunday. What he did not know was the reason the D.P.O wanted to see him. Job had said the D.P.O had arrived from Asaba not long ago. At first, he told them he was busy but

they kept calling. He had picked to warn Job but the D.P.O was the one on the line. He had asked him to fix anywhere for the meeting and he would come. He had wanted to make him come to his bar but changed his mind. He did not want any additional rumor but he had told them he would come when he was through with some signings but they kept calling him making him to put his phone in silence.

He parked his car close to the station and Job with another man were out before he could open his car door.

“I’m the D.P.O” the second man said bringing his hand for a handshake.

His name was Muhammad, Hausa. He nodded and followed them inside.

“Shoot, why am I here? I am very busy” he said.

“Thanks for coming. We need your help” Muhammad said.

“What help?”

“You know about what happened, somehow you are connected to this case.”

“You have not yet said anything.”

“Pius and Job had a deal with Agege. If you look at the cell where the men were kept, it was not broken, someone let them out. Job told me that Agege made a deal of two million with them. Someone was supposed to come pick them up and I seriously don't know how Pius planned on reporting the case.”

“Then why is Job sitting down here?” he asked.

“I did not accept the deal, I thought it was same with Pius that he was playing along. But by 3: AM, Pius opened the cell but things went wrong because it was not one but three armed men.

They shot Pius and two other men. They also injured two men”

Job answered for himself.

“And where were you then?” he asked.

“I went to ease myself. By the time I ran back after hearing the gunshots, they were already gone. I had to follow them from a distance and they are still around, in fact, they are now up to twelve” Pius said.

He looked at Pius to study him.

“Your story sounds ridiculous that a normal person won’t believe you but surprisingly you are not lying or you might be a good liar” he said.

“Wolf, he is not lying, I wouldn’t have believed him myself, but he is a family friend. He had informed me about what was going on before the shooting” Mohammed said.

“Okay, so why am I here?”

“I’ve heard so much about you. The IG called me to contact you because someone recommended you can help”

“I don’t understand.”

“We need you to help us with our raid. Be our eye in the sky.”

“No, I mean I don’t understand the part where I was recommended.”

“Even me, I don’t understand. I called for backup because we have our hands full but I got a reply to contact you” Mohammed said.

“I am a civilian and hell no, I don’t help the police. I’m a lone Wolf.”

“But I’ve been briefed on this case and it’s all connected to you. The said Agege wants to take over your bar” Mohammed said.

“That’s where it’s my business. I will defend myself when that time comes” he said standing up.

“Wolf they are right now behind your hotel” Job said making him turn.

“There is an old house there and they are outside arranging drugs for distribution, our man there sent a message that they have sophisticated weapons” Job continued.

“We wanted to apprehend them but I don’t think it will go smoothly so we are planning to shoot till they surrender even if there is just one left. We need you to back us as the sniper” Mohammed said.

He had told Oliver to stay away and he had also not felt a danger and that could be because they were not after him at the moment but just trying to establish their clan. His hotel though not yet opened was his territory and he was getting pissed off with

Agege, he was neither here nor there, almost like he was playing a game. He nodded at them.

“I use my weapon” he said.

“That’s okay with me. Thanks. We move now” Mohammed said.

“Why?”

“Because they won’t be expecting us and even though they have the mind that we may come, I don’t think they will be expecting you because the hotel is not yet functioning and they won’t know it’s your territory” Job said.

“How many officers will be on ground?”

“Six” Mohammed answered.

Job had to follow him to his bar so he could pick his weapon.

But he knew that could never be the ultimate solution to the current problem. And he hated playing games. He might have to

pay Agege a visit, he had already texted Ray to find his way back to Warri.

The guys where really there. The old building was facing a fenced wall and their car was parked by the demarcation of the side of the building with another fence, it was a form of protection but at the same time, it could be dangerous because it could hinder their escape if all did not go well, but from what he was seeing, they were very sure of themselves.

He had told the workers on his site to ignore him and continue with their work. He set his riffle and waited for the police. But some things were disturbing him. How come they had large amount of drugs for distribution? How did they gather much customers? Could it be that they had been operating but not his territories? Like they were starting from somewhere he had not marked? It could be the reason why Agege had been silent, why

Agege had not attacked yet. He was building his own territory before he encroached on his own. They had someone on top of the car who was supposed to be their watchman. He mounted his suppressor and shot at the man's head. Then he used the beam of his sniper to signal to Job and the men not far from targets to move in. They were really taken aback that their watchman had not alerted them but it was just for some seconds because they did not surrender but fired at the officers. He started picking them one by one starting from the ones not likely to surrender and the ones who posed as death threats to the officers, he could just tell from their body language. By the time they discovered that there was someone else shooting from up, it was too late and the police officers looked like they did not want to arrest any of them. He understood them. There was one remaining and he had surrendered. His work was done but a dread hit him on his chest straight at his heart just when he was about to stand up.

There was something wrong, it felt as dangerous as death, like that first feeling, like the time John had died. He tried tuning in to determine where the threat was coming from but could not. He tried standing up but the feeling knocked him back to the ground. Something was wrong with someone in his family, he had felt this when Mama died. A new dread not related to the usual one he felt overwhelmed him. He quickly brought out his phone from his pocket and saw thirty missed calls from Tega and Hacker.

“No, not Mama. She had not yet met Pearl” he said dialing Tega’s line.

“Tega tell me Mama is alright” he said fearing the worse.

“Now you see your calls. So you feel it” Tega said, his voice was making him shake.

“Talk to me” he shouted.

“I’m at Teji’s hospital, I’ve been calling your line but you won’t pick, Hacker also tried.....”

“Tega who is there? What happened? How is Mama?”

“It’s not Mama.”

“Vona, Fego, Reverend, Teji, please what is wrong, I almost can’t breathe.”

“So of all the people in your life you don’t even know the most important person to you, even your body knows but bro why? Why did you put Ikewu in her food, did.....”

“Pearl. No no no. What happened? Where is Pearl?”

He did not want to hear, he did not want to know.

“Even Teji has given up, nothing is working bro. I called a call that she was gasping for breath after vomiting profusely, after eating her lunch. There was too much delay... the ikewu was too

much in her system... she was white when we got here, why did you put...”

The phone fell from his hands, he could not hear or see anymore, the world felt like it was spinning, he felt dizzy, he could not breathe.

“No” he screamed.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER FIFTEEN {Day 12}

He did not know how but he saw himself driving as fast as he could to Tejiri’s hospital. He could hardly think of anything, just the dread that would never leave. What had he done? It was on that list he never read. Things she should not eat was there, his only work was just to read it, just that. He should

have known, at least she loved Mama's favorite food, he should have known. He hoped he was having a nightmare, he wished he could wake up, he could not lose Pearl not when he had accepted her. The dread was stronger almost choking him. He was close but traffic was holding him back. The dread increased with time and his hands started shaking. Aunt, Mama, the two Papas had died when he felt that but this was worse. He was by the side of the road with a street. He drove his car into the street and few seconds later, he was running, but his mind told him it was a waste of time, what could he do? But he still ran, people might be watching but he didn't care. Everything could not be real, or it might be what nemesis had in store for him. Pearl couldn't have been the punishment he had expected, nemesis had a way of giving him a checkmate. It just had to wait for when he had accepted her, when he couldn't bear losing her, but it was too cruel, just too cruel. He wouldn't be able to bear the

pain of losing Pearl. She did not deserve the punishment, she was very innocent, she did nothing wrong. Why her?

Tega was the first person he sighted as he entered the emergency ward. He was being held back by a male nurse. He did not need to look for Pearl, he just followed the pull, a CPR machine was being used on her, the doctor was trying to recharge after the first one did not work. Tejiri was there but he was visibly shaking and shouting her name. His breath was failing again, he could almost taste his dread in his tongue.

“Bros wetin happen?” Hacker asked.

He was by his side and Tega was running to meet him.

“Why, was there no instruction on her allergy? She has Mama’s allergy James. Why?” Tega shouted.

He could not find any strength in him and he used his hands to support his knees. He raised his head to look at Pearl on the bed.

The doctor had stopped the CPR and he was not dumb not to know that machine that looked like a computer was not reading.

Tejiri picked the CPR machine from the doctor and recharged it again, he shocked her with it but no response.

“Doctor Teji, it’s too late” the doctor said tapping Tejiri’s back.

He did not even know he was already by the bed, he did not noticed he had pushed away the nurse trying to stop him.

“No. Pearl you can fight this. Please don’t do this to Ese. Pearl please. God please save her, please Pearl, remember Ese, your mum” Tejiri said shocking her again.

The machine beeped and picked a reading.

“Doc she is back” a nurse shouted.

They immediately started doing things he did not understand, at least he knew she was put on oxygen but the others like the drip, he did not know. He was not close to being relieved, the dread had even increased.

Another doctor ran to them with a paper.

“She lost a lot of blood from the hypovolemic shock, she needs blood now. I’ve never seen this kind of hypovolemic shock before” the doctor said.

“This is bad, her pulse is very weak. She may go into another shock” the first doctor said. He was wearing a stethoscope and he had placed the mouth on the center of her left wrist.

Something was missing but he could not place it.

“It will be too late before we find out her blood group and we don’t have blood group OO” the doctor continued.

“Take my blood” he said his body moving closer to the bed on its own.

“I’m OO positive. Take what you need” his voice sounded strange to him. Was he panting?

“Sir it doesn’t work like that, we need to scan your....”

“Take my blood” he said interrupting the doctor who came with the paper.

“Now” he said.

“Wolf stop” he heard Tejiri. He was trying to free his grip on the doctor’s collar.

“You are choking him” Tejiri shouted.

He pulled his hands away when he noticed he was actually choking him.

“I will sign any paper, just give her the blood she needs, I’m clean” he said.

He could still taste the dread in his tongue.

“Do as he said, now. I will take responsibility” Tejiri said.

“Follow him” Tejiri told him.

Even after his blood had been taken, two pints to be exact, he was still feeling the dread. It did not increase but was still very pronounced. He watched her being transferred to a private room and wished he could just wake up. He was not a doctor, but he knew the doctors were through with what they could do. Just she was not forthcoming, still unconscious and still on oxygen. He sat down beside Tega and Hacker and tried to breathe.

No one spoke, they just waited for Tejiri, just sat there hopeless.

Pearl was suffering because of him. He was not fit to be a father.

“Please tell me your dread is gone. You are shaking” Tega asked.

He had no answer, the dread was still there.

They all rushed Tejiri as soon as they sighted him. No one spoke, they waited for him to say something. He walked past them and sat down on that seat he hated so much.

“Teji, say something” Tega said.

But Tejiri raised his head to look at him, he could read the questions in his mind. He remembered their conversation, how he had wished Ese had aborted Pearl, how he had wished Pearl was a solved problem. The accusation was clear in his eyes.

“Your wish may come true” Tejiri said standing up to leave.

“Wait, what is all these? How is Pearl? What wish?” Hacker said blocking Tejiri.

“Saying it’s a miracle that she is still alive is an understatement. She is barely gripping on to life. It’s almost like she is fighting the doctors like she does not want to survive. Right now, it all depends on a miracle not even her. Her pulse is still very faint and she is not yet out of danger. Wolf never wanted her. What are we going to tell Pearl? Just few days of her life here and see where she is. I could not even do anything at first, I was too afraid” Teijiri said.

He had nothing to say. Tejiri was right, he was being granted his wish only when he did not want it to come true. He found himself back on his chair, his head supported by his palm.

“Teji, you have not yet spoken my language. What are you saying in essence?” Tega asked.

“I am saying she needs a miracle. I do not know how to explain it, but the ikewu was too much in her body, the prolonged

vomiting led to hypovolemic shock making her lose a lot of blood, leading to cardiac arrest or you can call it shock and weak pulse, which is very rare. She is still in a critical...”

But Tejiri was not allowed to finish his statement as a nurse ran to him.

“Doc Teji, room seven, she is having another cardiac arrest” the nurse shouted.

They all ran with Tejiri but the door was closed after Tejiri entered.

He knew it, the dread never left. He saw himself squatting, the doctors’ voices and shouts sounding as if from a distance. His world was spinning. His punishment was about to begin.

“Take me, please take me. I can’t watch her die. Just punish me” he screamed.

He was feeling a serious headache and he felt like screaming.

Why was nemesis using him for target practice? Why not when he did not know her? Why now that Pearl had become his world.

The headache spread to his chest, then his heart. It felt like it was being squeezed. His hand automatically located his heart.

“James, Wolf. I am not doing another CPR, is this how you want to fight for her?”

It was Tejiri, he was shouting, it was not just him. Hacker and Tega too. They were trying to pull him up.

“Pearl?” he asked coming back to his environment.

“She survived the arrest but still not out of danger. She needs you strong Wolf” Tejiri said.

He freed himself and opened the door. No one stopped him as he entered and stood by her left side. She was so little, she was just

a kid, a kid he had been treating like an adult. He felt a chair being pushed to him and someone pulling him to sit down. He held her tiny hands which was swallowed in his hand. It was then he noticed what had been missing. Her hand band.

“Tega where is her hand band?” he asked.

“I don’t know. Didn’t see it in her hands. Her bag is in my car”

Tega said. He was standing close to him.

He was afraid to look at the drip, the machine, the oxygen on her.

It was scaring the shit out of him.

“I had thought she was the punishment for my crime but for some time, I have been worried because I’ve been so happy. I was too happy and I just knew she was not the punishment that there was something else. Make me love her, make her become the most important person in my life, then take her away from me.”

“James stop, just stop. She is not dead and she can hear you.

Stop this self-blame” Tega said.

“I put her in this state. There was a paper, and on it were things she should not eat, but I never read it, I don’t even have an idea where the paper is. I should have known. Now my daughter is dying by my hands.”

“James stop na, stop this. What are you expecting Pearl to do when you are like this? She needs you” Hacker said.

“Let’s be positive, let’s hope” Tejiri said.

“You know I don’t hope, I follow my instinct. The dread is still there.”

“James she is still alive. The dread is there because you are not helping” Tejiri said.

“What can I do?”

“Talk to her, the doctors have done their work, I’ve done my work. Somehow a miracle happened when I mentioned her mum. You are her father. She needs you James” Tejiri said.

“I believe Mama’s blessing is also the reason she is still breathing” Hacker said making them look at him.

“We were all there that day after Papa had been released. She said you will give birth to yourself. The blessing just started. You started reigning at seven James. This is just the beginning. She must live to show you how you stressed them. She has to” Hacker said.

It sounded somehow but he felt strength from what Hacker said.

“See. Miss Esther just sent me this. Watch” Tega said.

The video was confusing at first but he felt tears drop from his eyes immediately he understood what was happening.

“That is Okoro, your manager’s son” Tega said pointing at the boy leading prayers for Pearl. They were all kneeling down at the playground. He saw Vona, Fego and their mum joining the prayer. It was like the whole school. But most of them were rather crying with their hands all clasped in prayer.

“You know she is supposed to teach some of them karate tomorrow. The headmaster and principal permitted it because Thursday is sport day. You are not the only one who wants her back. Pearl did you hear that? The people you promised to teach karate are praying for you. Please come back. You are the strongest kid I know. Wolfs don’t give up easily” Tega said.

More of the children joined the prayers and the video showed parents waiting for their children, some joining them. Then the video stopped. His eyes were really wet.

He robbed her hands with his palms and kissed her palm.

“Pearl I’m sorry. I know I am not a good father, I know I did not treat you well, I did not follow all the instructions. You wouldn’t be lying down here if I did. I’m sorry. Please come back to me, come back to Ese. There are people I want you to meet. Your grandma and granduncle will be so pleased to meet you. Your mum must have said something about them. I promise we will go shopping and I will do all the things you want but just come back to me. Vona and Fego are praying for you, your school love you. Please come back and fulfill Mama’s blessing.”

Hacker rested his head on his back, Tejiri was holding his left shoulder and Tega was holding his right shoulder. He wished he could pray. He had not prayed for a long time and he did not know if God would even answer him. But that was the only available option. In his mind he prayed, he promised to love her, he promised to cherish the most precious gift before him. He had

not realized then but it was clear now. She was a shining Pearl in his darkness. Ever since she arrived, he had not experienced any trauma nor nightmare. How did he not notice that until now? How did he even think she was a nightmare when she was a dream came true? He hoped it was not too late. And even though he knew the chances were slim, he dared to dream again, to dream of a Pearl lightning his darkest night.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER SIXTEEN {Day 11}

The pain was too much, her body felt like it was being fried, she needed to escape but she also could not breathe. She could hear voices she did not understand. Suddenly, she felt peace but she noticed she could feel heat from her back, she turned when she heard Mum's name being called but saw fire making her run

further away from it. As she ran, she saw familiar faces, Wolf and his family, the circle and they just stared at her as she ran. She burst into a large river no, that should be a sea. Someone was sitting down there, someone she hadn't seen when she was running.

“Mum” she called.

She turned at the mention of her name. It was really mum. She ran and embraced her.

“What are you doing here my Pearl?” Mum asked.

“I just came, I don't know but what are you doing here?” she asked.

“Sitting and watching the sea, waiting to come home. Have you met Mama? Have you spoken to your dad? I'm I allowed to come home now?” Mum asked.

“I told you yesterday, I told you everything. Wolf is acting better now, there is hope. I will tell him later but not now, I’m following Wild’s instruction. Don’t worry Wolf is....” She paused.

She remembered something and started crying.

“My Pearl why are you crying. You make me cry when you cry” Mum said crying.

“It’s Wolf Mum. Wolf does not want me. He said you should have aborted me” she cried.

“That’s bad, very bad” Mum said holding her close as they both cried.

“But you said I will soon come home, you said Wolf is changing fast” Mum said.

“Yes but he does not want me” she said.

“It does not make sense my Pearl. Wolf I know does not pretend, he is very straightforward. When did he say so?” Mum asked.

“The first day I came” she answered.

“Oh. Pearl that is so long. I’m not sure he would say that now.

You told me everything. Wolf loves you now except you lied to me.”

She shook her head.

“Then just know he wants you now.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Now go back, you are not supposed to be here” Mum said.

“What of you? Here is too lonely. I don’t want to go back without you.”

“Sssh. Don’t say that. You just need to bring me home and be happy that’s all my Pearl. We are not supposed to be here but I’m here already, you have to go back.”

“No, I will stay here.”

“Then how will I come home? Who will bring me home? Please I want to come home” Mum said crying making her start crying all over again.

“Mum please stop crying.”

“Then please go back. The babies are waiting for you too. Wolf is waiting for you, listen” Mum said.

Suddenly she could hear Wolf, she could hear her school mates praying for her. She heard Wolf begging her to come back. It felt real.

“It’s real Pearl. You have to go back. If two of us are here it will be bad.”

“But I hate it. It burns my body.”

“But you are a Wolf pup and you fear nothing and you are tough and you are not a quitter. You can run though the fire. Open your eyes and you will feel better. Okay.”

She nodded and threw herself against Mum.

“I miss you so much. I promise to bring you home. Okay? Just wait. Wild’s instruction will work. Okay Mum?”

Mum nodded.

“Thank you, thank you. Greet Mama and everybody okay. Tell Tega he married without me and tell Hacker and Teji to find a wife before I come back. Greet Reverend too. I will be waiting. Always stay with the Circle and listen to them. Okay. Never

leave the Circle. Look at you. I'm always happy knowing you are in safe hands. It helps me relax. I love you" Mum said kissing her forehead.

"I love you too Mum."

"Now go before it's late" Mum said gently pushing her back.

Without looking back, so she wouldn't change her mind, she ran and ran. She saw them cheering at her to run. She almost turned back from the flame but she remembered she was a Wolf pup, she was no loser and no quitter and she was tough. She could not leave Mum there. Mum must come home. She rushed into the flame, closed her eyes and opened it.

"Pearl. She is back. Call Teji fast" Wolf said to someone.

The sharp light was making her blink her eyes many times. She closed it back.

“No Pearl, stay with me. Stay with me” Wolf said touching her cheek.

“Look at me” he commanded all bossy.

She opened her eyes to tell him not to be always bossy but felt weak, something she did not like was on her nose.

“That’s it. I can see the defiance in your eyes. Good, just stay”

Wolf said same time men on white jacket rushed into the room.

Uncle Tejiri was among them.

“Pearl can you hear me?” Uncle Tejiri asked as someone removed the disturbance from her nose.

She nodded feeling better just that she still felt weak.

“Okay follow my fingers” Uncle Tejiri said moving his finger left, then right, then left again, then up, then right, then down.

The movement of her eyes made her feel tired. Another doctor was holding her wrist with something on his ears as she closed her eyes.

“No, Pearl don’t.”

Wolf again with his command.

“James is okay, let her sleep. Her pulse is okay. A miracle just happened. She is okay James. She is just tired” Tejiri was saying as she drifted away.

She did not like that she always felt like sleeping after just waking up for few hours. At times, a nurse carried her to wee wee. She was still too tired to talk. Wolf was holding her hand and looking at her as she woke up for the fourth time. She wanted to ask what day it was but she still felt weak. Uncle Hacker and Tega was not around when she woke up for the fifth time.

“Time to eat Pearl” Uncle Tejiri said.

He had a flask in his hands but Wolf took it from him.

“You think her stomach can take much?” Wolf asked.

“Not much, I checked. The custard is okay” Uncle Tejiri answered.

Wolf gently raised her up and made her rest on his chest as he sat on the bed.

“You feeling hungry?” Wolf asked.

She shook her head.

“You feeling tired?”

She nodded.

“Then you need food to get stronger okay?”

She nodded. But the reason she nodded was because she felt if she refused, Wolf would go back to his chair. She liked resting her head on his chest, she felt safe and okay in Wolf's arm.

She slept off again in Wolf's arm few minutes after eating her food. In her sleep, she felt Wolf trying to pull her back to the bed but she refused. She used the hand without drip to try hold him back. Wolf stopped and held her closer. There was something cool about Wolf's arms.

"I'm here Pearl, you can sleep. I'm will still be here when you wake up" Wolf whispered to her ears.

She believed him and drifted further away, safe in Wolf's arms.

"This is really a miracle. Her pulse is back to normal, her blood count is normal, and there is no sign of further blood lose and the most important part is she did not vomit. She just need rest and she will be back to Pearl" she heard Uncle Tejiri's voice.

“But you cannot discharge her now” Wolf said.

“Yes we can. Once this drip is all in, she is good to go. She would get better in a place like your house. You know you don’t like being withheld. Put yourself in her shoe” Uncle Tejiri said.

“This is amazing. It’s almost like she did not want to come back at the emergency ward hence nothing was working and now it’s like she decided to come back and everything is back to normal” an unknown voice said.

“Wolf did you two fight before she was rushed here?” Uncle Tejiri asked.

“No, nothing happened” Wolf answered.

“Wolf your daughter is good to go and I can’t take credit for it. She is very tough Wolf and you made us do something that can make us lose our license. Good thing it’s your blood. It did a lot

of work. Just don't let a pretty lady come back here from another allergy" that unknown voice said.

"I don't think it's okay. Can't she stay till tomorrow?" Wolf asked forcing her to open her eyes.

"I want to go home" she said.

She felt happy she could now talk. She felt Wolf breathe a sigh of relief.

"Hey pup, you okay?" Wolf asked.

She nodded. She was still in his arms.

"I want to go home" she repeated raising her head to look at Wolf.

He looked so tired and older.

"Okay, let the drip finish, then we can go home. Okay?" Wolf said.

He did not understand her.

“No, not here. I want to go back to Mum and my family. I want to go home” she said tears gathering in her eyes.

But the tears stopped when she saw Wolf’s face. He was very sad. She could feel his sadness, maybe because she was resting on his chest. What did she say to make him so sad?

“Okay, I heard you Pearl. You will go home soon. Just wait a little” Wolf said but it sounded like he was forcing himself to say those words like it made him sad to say it.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

But Wolf smiled at her.

“If you are okay” he said trying to hide his sadness.

“Pearl” she heard Vona’s voice making her turn. Fego was with him.

“Vona” she replied smiling.

Wolf lifted Fego to the bed as Vona held her hand.

“Are you okay?” Vona asked.

He was worried. He looked at the drip running into her hand.

“I’m fine Vona, I’m going home soon” she said smiling happy to see them.

Vona was still on his uniform. It was sports day. Something told her she was forgetting something important. Uncle Tega who had left earlier entered the room with his wife. Hacker was with them too. He had followed Uncle Tega out. Fego was touching her cheek making her laugh.

“My niece is back” Uncle Hacker said smiling and looking relieved.

Was she that bad? Because Uncle Tega looked the same.

“Good evening Uncle Tega, Hacker and...”

“Bridget” Uncle Tega’s wife said smiling.

Fego tried standing on the bed and tried climbing Wolf. Wolf held her from falling.

“Uncle James” Fego said to Wolf’s ears.

“Yes?” Wolf said.

“My doll? You did not bring my doll” she said.

“Can you wait a little, let big sister recover and I will bring your doll” Wolf whispered back.

“Promise” she said.

“I promise” Wolf answered.

She was so cute and a child unlike her who was neither a child nor an adult. She smiled at the two of them wishing she had Wolf when she was small.

“Teji can they come in now?” Aunt Bridget asked.

“Who?” she and Wolf asked at the same time.

“Pearl you have visitors who have been sitting down waiting for close to two hours. Let them in” Uncle Tejiri said.

In less than a minute, she saw them. Frank, Okoro, Joseph, Keno, Voke, Taga, Victor and lots of them, the room was crowded.

They came with fruits and drinks and teddy bears but they were all pink. There was no flowers. If it were the Circle, Ghost and Mark would have brought large bouquets with different scents.

Fast would have come with a guitar to play for her listening ears.

Halima would have held her hand and give her peace, Mum had said that she gave her peace. Then she would go back to cling to

Beast as if someone would snatch him away. Jason would have been standing close to a chatty Cindy, and Sabrina would have been trying to make her feel like it was normal, like it was just a picnic and not that serious. Wild, well Wild would just be there adding to the others talk when necessary and Major would never talk except it was necessary same with his wife. Then Ghost would always say something that would make everyone laugh and make her mum cry from laughing and it was always boring after they had left. She never had any reason to be admitted in the hospital because Mum had told them her allergies. She said she had reacted to ikewu when she was two. She had just given her a spoon of beans when she remembered her grandma had same allergy. She immediately carried her and ran to the hospital and explained to the doctors who laughed at her joke. They told her it did not follow that she would have her grandma's allergy but just then, she started coughing and

vomiting and they had responded and things did not get worse because of that.

As much as she wanted her other family, she still felt so happy.

Her enemies were now her friends and they came to see her.

“Thank God you came back. Hope we will see you in school soon” Okoro said.

She wanted to tell them she knew they prayed for her but they would think she was weird.

“Unicorn” Fego shouted climbing down from the bed.

“That’s not for you” Aunt Bridget said.

“Daddy” Fego called to her dad.

There was something sweet about the two of them. What she never had.

“Leave her Aunt Bridget, we can share” she said.

Her dad had already carried her.

“Thank you” she told them.

“When will you be coming back?” Keno asked.

Then she remembered, she was supposed to teach them karate during break.

“Let’s hope she will be back as soon as possible” Uncle Tejiri said.

Wolf had been looking at Joseph who was holding his brother.

Their wounds were now faint. She felt bad she had put it there.

“Joseph you know you must talk with him. Stop punishing yourself and your brother. Talk it out” Wolf told Joseph.

He was really looking stressed.

“I don’t want to, I hate him” Joseph said.

“Then tell him you hate him, start from there. You are overdoing it. He is still your father, renouncing him won’t remove him from your blood. I can see you are draining yourself and you are too young to drink” Wolf said and Joseph nodded.

“Thank you” Joseph said looking shy.

Whatever that meant. She was already tired and they were all talking when she slept off again.

“Time to go home Pearl” Wolf said to her ears making her open her eyes.

He had left the bed and it was just her uncles that were around.

The drip was no longer there and they had already removed the needle from her hand.

She wanted to protest, she wanted to tell him she could walk but she did not, there was joy in being carried by Wolf.

Her other uncles all followed her to Wolf's car. She saw her bag on the back seat where Wolf had placed her.

“Don't worry, no one opened your bag” Wolf said reading her thoughts.

They wouldn't have found anything anyway. They would have just seen a rubber covered steel box they would not be able to open except they used motor saw. She would put on her hand band later. She had removed it after eating the food.

Wolf still carried her inside but straight to his room.

It was already night, the clock showed 7:39PM. She tried standing up but Wolf held her back.

“I want to use the rest room” she said.

She carried her bag and put back her hand band. She did not dare activate it. She came out to take her pajamas but Wolf was already with it.

Wolf called her to eat after she had taken her bath.

It was rice and not that much.

“You are looking tired and you have hairs on your face” she told Wolf who was watching her as she ate.

“Thanks for your observation, just finish your food and take your drugs” Wolf said leaving to his room.

She was also tired after eating and she went straight to her golf room. The blanket was still there. She slept off immediately her body touched the blanket. But suddenly, she opened her eyes because she was being lifted. It was Wolf. He carried her to his bed and touched her forehead with his palm.

She wanted to ask where he would sleep but he joined her and pulled her to his chest.

“Just sleep” Wolf said wrapping her with his strong hands.

Ghost had held her like that many times, in fact almost all of them but Wolf’s hands were different. It made her happy, safe, warm, protected and other things she could not explain. She felt special like she was his, like she belonged to Wolf. There was one song she hated so much. They had always played it in her school every year for father’s day. Even though she hated it, she knew the musician was Dolly Parton and she knew every lyrics of the song. Now she understood everything. There was always love in daddy’s hand.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN {Day 10}

His heart felt like it was being squeezed by tiny fingers, might be because her tiny fingers were subconsciously robbing his chest. This was a feeling he had never felt before, he just could not explain it. A thought came to his mind, what if it was signs of a heart attack. He picked his phone and goggled about heart attack but none was related to what he was feeling. Then he remembered Tega and Fego. Their bond was something that baffled him. It always took a lot of begging and bribery before Fego allowed her mum to be picking her up from school some of the days. Before, she would not go if her dad did not come or she would not stay in school if her dad did not drop her. Tega had asked Teji if he was okay because he had felt a little pain in his heart after carrying Fego for the first time which he did not feel when Vona was born. Fego had grabbed his fingers and

refused to let go. Teji had said it was normal, that it was part of the effect of a high release of oxytocin, which he called love hormone. He had called it bonding. He had also explain that there was something unique about the heart, that the same pain someone felt from getting hurt is almost same pain that person would feel from love, that was why excess love or hatred could worsen the situation of someone with weak heart. He had said love sometimes was even stronger. Was that what was happening to him? He had missed out on Pearl's birth and toddler period and he was just bonding with her for the first time? He stared at her as she slept on his chest, she looked so peaceful and little and tiny. How could he ever think she was a nightmare? How could he ever imagine Ese should have aborted her? The thought alone was making him taste fear like it was real. That Pearl would have not been existing was scaring the shit out of him. He did not choose her, neither did Pearl choose him. He

was just the luckiest bastard in the world. There was no debate about his love for his family but Pearl felt like the only one he owned, the only person that belonged to him and for some reason, he was grateful he did the DNA test, because he would have been wondering and scared that she might not be his. She was his and he welcomed that tiny squeeze in his chest. He loved Mena, still loved her but he just knew who he would have to choose if it came to that. He just hoped Mena would not make him choose. If she did, he would just know his nemesis was to never marry because there was no way he was ever letting Pearl go, Mena would have to accept Pearl. Even if she would not forgive Ese, she would have to know Pearl had no choice in what happened and she did nothing wrong by being born. The big issues on ground was Agege, then Pearl's masters, then Ese. He would know how to handle Agege when the time came but the complicated problem was Ese and those masters he was yet

to figure out. Did Ese sell Pearl to them? If so, why did Ese make them send her over for a month? Why making him aware of his daughter? Time was running out for him and he was at loss on what to do. He was already a bad father and he had no idea how a father should behave. First, he would start seeing Pearl as just a kid. But she was a kid who must have been beaten so many times that she was no longer afraid to be beaten. But by who? It was not Ese, and not her Masters. There was something he was missing. He wanted to check her bag but did not, he needed to make Pearl trust him enough to tell him herself. Pearl was the biggest puzzle and though a child, she had the mind of an adult and he knew he himself would never like to be sniffed on. Her birthday was so close which was seven days' time, same as John' memorial and he just needed to have it out with John. John needed to know there was nothing he could do. Pearl had come to stay and Mena and John just must forgive both of them.

Even if they wouldn't forgive them, they would have to forgive Pearl because she was not an option. He had been wondering how he would face John but he just knew he would have to talk it out.

“John you can be pissed out but you need to understand she had no part in this. Because you and Mena hated her, okay I'm guilty too, but I just got a second chance and I'm not going to mess it up. I am going to keep her and if you feel bad about my decision, then fuck you” he said closing his eyes.

Okay, since Pearl arrived, he had never had any nightmare or trauma but this must be the first time he had slept deep. Pearl was not on the bed when he woke up. It was past six and how did the alarm not wake him up. He stood up to look for her and unbelievable! She was using the treadmill, looking like she was not almost dying two days back.

“Pearl please come down, you are not strong enough” he shouted.

“Nope, I’m fine Wolf” she shouted back.

Why couldn’t she just say dad. What was the Wolf calling for?
She called Ese Mum, why not call him dad?

He went to meet her on the treadmill and raised her up to his shoulders and started running. Her laughter was doing a lot of things to him.

“Okay that’s enough for the day. You still need to rest” he said putting her down after switching off the machine.

“School time” she said running to the room.

“No Pearl, you cannot go to school today.”

“Why?”

“Because you are not strong enough.”

“I’m fine, stop acting like Mum” she shouted.

“How am I acting like Ese?”

“Any little thing, are you okay? Your body is warm, are you sure you don’t have a fever? Please don’t ever fall sick. Too much this will make you sick. You know it will be bad if anything happen to you, you have to meet Wolf and my family and so on. She worried so much about me and forgot to worry about herself. You are looking tired yourself but you will still go to work” she shouted running to the room and shutting the door.

Was she crying? What was all that for? Was he really looking tired? The mirror was in the bathroom and she had shut the door.

Good thing his phone was in his pocket. He dialed Tejiri’s line.

“Is it okay for her to go to school? She was running on my treadmill when I woke up.”

Tejiri was laughing, like he was asking something funny.

“What?”

“You are acting like an over worried parent?”

“Tejiri, answer me.”

“James do you remember that time you went down with typhoid and malaria and Mama had begged you to stay one place and take your drugs and let the drip stay in your wrist? How you never listened? You were ten then. I can’t forget that because we had all gathered and tied you to the bed and then you became worse and almost died. Then we had to let you free against doctor’s order and took you home. That was when you got better. John was already falling sick from fear that you were going to die and he too had felt better when you got home, and the two of you had ran for a swim even with your body still hot making our mothers worried and they could not beat the two of you up when

you wondered back at night because you were sick. Did you forget Pearl is your daughter and did you forget Mama said your child will resemble you in behavior? Leave her alone jo” Tejiri said cutting the call.

Yea, he too had not forgotten that because they still fought for space at the river. Actually some group were swimming at their space and they were also injured because the people they fought were twice their age but they won their space back, that was the important part not the injuries. So this was how Mamas and Papas felt. They should have lived so he could properly apologize to them. He went to make tea for her.

“You know you are picking me up by two” Pearl said after sipping from her tea.

“I know that Pearl and you know you are not supposed to touch anything?”

She nodded.

“Pearl I’m sorry about the ikewu I put in your food.”

“But you had the letter. They wrote it there” she accused him.

It was understandable that she was angry.

“I did not read it and I’m looking for the paper. Do you know where it is?”

“In your shelf.”

“What other things are you allergic to?”

“Pork meat and too much of garlic.”

“Great, in conclusion, every of your grandma’s allergy.”

She nodded.

“How did your mum know?”

“She just guessed and I had ikweu when I was two, then when she told my masters, they asked me if I knew how ikweu, pork meat and garlic tasted, I said no, so they made me taste them.”

“What now?”

“Calm down Wolf, I did not swallow it and they gave me injection, they said it was to help me know not to eat them.”

“Pearl, you knew there was ikewu in that food. Why did you eat it” he shouted making her gasps.

Her reaction showed how angry he was.

She ran out of the dinning without answering. What was he missing? Why did she eat the food even after tasting ikewu? He was suddenly feeling headache.

“I’m ready Wolf” he heard her from the door.

He looked at her hoping he could figure out what was wrong?

He could not be mad at her, not when he was trying to win her over, he just had to cool down and use a different approach, he did not like coercion and it would be same with Pearl.

He drove her to school after making sure she took the last of her drugs. It was very obvious no one was expecting her to be in school. He could feel the piercing and glaring look some parents and teachers gave him. They would never understand even if he explained. The students were excitedly gathering her when he drove off. It was Friday and there was going to be a big event in his bar and club on Saturday. The rich guy was paying double to have him stay around and he had no idea what he would do with Pearl. But there was something he wanted to do at the moment. He picked up his phone to call Hacker but Tega was calling him. “Yes?” he asked.

“Bros just dey run come your house abeg. I cannot die on your behalf” Tega said.

“What is wrong?” he asked.

He had not felt any thing off. Before Tega could answer, a voice replaced him and shit, he was in damn trouble.

“If you nor want make I find you now, waka dey come and make sure my granddaughter follow you for body” Mama shouted.

How on earth did Mama know? People would not just mind their business. And he was about telling her. He knew the trouble was bigger when he sighted Reverend, Tega, Hacker, Tejiri with Mama, waiting for him by his gate. It was a quiet area but he had neighbors and there were passersby. He opened the gate with the remote but Mama blocked him from driving inside, damn it.

“Where my granddaughter?” Mama shouted as he came out of his car.

She already had her two slippers on her hand and one landed on him before he could answer. How come she was not aware they were now big?

“Mama let me explain” he said raising his hands up but Mama stoned him the second one and they just never missed.

“So, my granddaughter have been in Warri for more than two weeks and you kept it from us?” Reverend shouted.

“Mama I told you...”

“Hold that your mouth, hold am” Mama shouted hitting Tejiri on his shoulders.

“Were am?” Mama shouted.

“I just dropped her in her school” he answered pleading with his eyes.

“Oya, make we dey go her school. Enter inside now, carry her bag come out. My baby dey follow me” Mama said opening the passenger door and entering inside.

He looked at Reverend and others for help but he was on his own.

“How could you send her to school? How could you put ikewu in her food? What kind of father are you?” Reverend shouted joining Mama in the car.

“Wetin you dey wait for?” Mama shouted.

“Mama please, it was Ese’s instructions” he pleaded in Urhobo.

Mama came out of the car.

“Which instruction. Did Ese say she should not meet her grandma?”

“No Mama, she did not want to follow anybody except me.”

What was he even saying?

“See Mama the whole thing is complicated. I’m sorry I did not tell you Pearl sent my daughter to me, it’s because she was supposed to stay for only a month and I had wanted to send her back but then I changed my mind but also I don’t have an idea where Ese is” he spoke as fast as he could in Urhobo.

But she would have known if Pearl had agreed to follow Tega.

“Hacker told us everything. He said she was delivered in a carton and you’ve not been able to trace Ese and Pearl has refused to tell you” Reverend said coming out of the car.

“It is because Ese is still afraid of you, she has been hiding for almost nine years now because of you” Mama shouted hitting him anywhere her hand could reach then she started crying.

He preferred the hitting.

“Mama please, it’s not good for your health” Tega pleaded.

“What is so bad that you and Mena can’t forgive her? What is so bad that she had to send my granddaughter in a carton? Go and bring my granddaughter for me, go and bring my daughter”

Mama said in Urhobo.

She was still crying.

“Mama, I promise I will do everything to bring Ese back, please Mama” he pleaded.

“James, my granddaughter” Mama shouted.

“Mama she is like me. You remember Mama’s blessing. She is just like me Mama. I have to prepare her to meet you. I promise to bring her tomorrow.”

“So you will put pork and garlic in her food and kill her before tomorrow. Enter this car now” Mama shouted.

“Mama, if I take her away from school now, I will still have to take her back in the evening but if you wait till tomorrow, I promise to drop her very early tomorrow morning and take her back on Sunday evening. Just let me explain it to her, please Mama.”

Mama calmed down immediately.

“You promise?”

He nodded.

“Tega, Oya carry me dey go back” Mama said walking over to Tega’s car.

“You better fulfill your promise” Reverend said walking over to join Mama.

“Did you have to tell her about the carton part” he shouted at Hacker.

“You know the beaten I received from her? Wetin dey there to hide again. See as my body dey pain me, how person go dey beat grown up like this” Hacker said.

“You are talking as if you don’t know Mama. I knew it was only a matter of time before she hear it from an outsider” Tejiri said walking to his car. Hacker followed him.

“Hacker please I need your help. I will drop you” he said.

Everything was already set before he drove to pick her up from school. Hacker and his boys would begin work on Saturday morning. It was as if Pearl had doubts he would come because she was over excited to see him. He felt he was missing something when he drove to his hotel to do inspection.

By 7:27PM, he was through for the day but before he could leave his bar, he got a text message from Hacker. Ray was in Tejiri's hospital seriously battered. He drove as fast as he could regretting ever sending Ray to Agege's territory. But he had told him to leave Lagos on Wednesday. How come he never bothered to find out if he had arrived?

Hacker was waiting to take him to the private room Ray was being treated. He just did not like what he was seeing. He had bandages in his legs and arms. Tega and Tejiri were there with him. They were all friends although he was not that close to

them. He had a wife and a son. He should be grateful that whatever happened, he was still alive.

“What happened?” he asked Hacker.

“He was driven here by a good Samaritan. He had told us Ray had begged him to help convey him to this place” Hacker said.

“I don’t understand” he said.

“Me too, the man said he had seen Ray resting on his steering wheel on his way to Warri from Lagos, so he had stopped his car to find out what was happening and he had seen Ray’s injuries although someone had roughly bandaged him. Ray had pleaded with him to drive him to this place before he went completely unconscious. At first he said he wanted to run but he just could not. He is the new Priest. He introduced himself as Reverend Jacob.”

All of them went to church except him, so they must have been expecting a particular Priest.

“Did he say what happened to him?” he asked.

“No, Reverend Jacob said he did not say anything else, but Ray was calling for you when he woke up few hours ago, he said he has a message for you” Tejiri said.

“Few hours ago?” he asked.

“He was brought here this morning. I could not call you yet”

Hacker said same time Ray opened his eyes.

“Ray” all of them chorused.

He looked at them for a long time.

“Okay, so I’m still alive” Ray said making him feel relieved.

“Ray what the heck happened?” Tega said.

“I told you to leave immediately, and that was two days ago” he said.

“Yea but I was at the peak of getting a needed information and I was planning to leave the next morning” Ray answered.

“What happened?” Tejiri asked.

“If I tell you, you won’t believe me.”

“Ray” he said.

“I cheated death twice okay. First was something I think was an illusion, second was an angel that came to my car when I could no longer drive” Ray said.

There was something about his eyes, like he was trying to believe what he saw.

“You wanted to see me” he said.

“Yes, but if I tell you, you won’t believe me.”

“You keep saying that” Tejiri said.

“Ray tell me everything that happened” he said.

“Okay, but you have to believe me” he said looking at them.

“Agege had a son who is more cruel and evil. Rumor has it that he raped the women being trafficked before selling them and he was Agege’s chief executioner. Someone promised to take me to show me his house but I never knew an orange seller was their worker, so I got captured. They kept me in a room without light or window and I was almost dead when the son came with other boys. He did not even ask me who sent me because another road side beggar I gave money had told them I came from Warri. So he just knew it was you. He had no plan of using me for ransom, he just wanted to give me what they called ultimate penalty. He even explained it to me, he was going to slice me bit by bit and send you the video. You killed his cousin you know. It was

about this time his boys, about five of them dragged me outside to their killing field where they tied me to a pole. I was not the only one, there was a police officer. Another police officer had blown his cover but he was also working for both sides, the police and Agege. They had started with him. The scream of that man will never leave my mind, they cut him bit by bit until he died. They were up to twenty plus Aja they were twenty one. Just when they had started with me. I tried to bear it but they sliced my hands, my legs and my screams fell on deaf ears. But something happened I'm still trying to comprehend" Ray said.

They waited for him to compose himself.

"She had landed from the roof. Their execution field was the back of Aja's house. She was like a warrior princess, on red short flexible skirt and a red top that barely covered her belly,

she had a long hair and she was wearing a booth that had heels and most importantly, she was damn beautiful.”

Tejiri checked his temperature.

“I told you won’t believe me” Ray said.

“How did you see her so vividly?” Tega asked.

“The whole place was lighted up” Ray answered.

“Ray continue, ignore them” he said.

“Thank you Wolf. I just told you what I saw. There was something that was spinning close to her, it would fly up and down, it was cylindrical in shape. She caught everyone’s attention. First thing she did was to slice through the throat of the first person close to her when she landed. That was when they knew she was not a friend and fired at her but the bullets were deflected, I swore it was because of that stuff close to her.

She called them lazy fools. She said every one of them were in for a great death dance and guns were not allowed and just like that, she brought out a sword. If I tell you that I could hardly follow her movement, you won't believe me. It was not karate or Kung Fu, but a mixture of them plus something else like she was dancing..."

"Wait" all of them said at the same time.

"Like she was dancing?" he asked.

Ray looked at them like what did he say wrong, like they thought he was joking. He looked at the others and yeah he was sure Pearl at the gym came to their mind.

"What?" Ray asked.

"Continue" Hacker said.

“I’m serious, it was like she was dancing and she was handling all of them so easily. They all had their knife but some were still trying to fire with their gun which was still deflected. She did not strike twice Wolf, it was as if she knew where to strike because once that sword touched anyone, that person did not stand a chance of surviving and she also fought with rope, I don’t know how but she was using it for deflection and the sword was for the kill. But I just could not understand how she could fight with a booth. Forget that warrior princess film, this was life and direct. It did not take time and only Aja was still standing. He actually was staying safe. He tried to run but ran into another one who killed him with a knife he pushed to his chest. Wolf you won’t believe that one was around throughout. I saw him watching and I thought he was not real because he did not join the fight, just watched the girl fight. They are not normal Wolf. But I soon understood why he did not participate

because the girl had gotten mad that he intervened and fired at him, like really fired at him. But he was out of the way. That thing had stopped spinning then. She told him she did not need his help. Wolf this is where there is trouble” Ray said.

He was hesitating but he could guess what he would say.

“Continue Ray” he said.

“I thought they came to save me but the guy swore to shoot me the moment she touches me. I just did not understand them. The guy walked close to me. He said they should allow me die. He was angry with you Wolf. He said the only reason he was going to let me live is because of Ese. He knew my name, knew all of us. He said Ese would not be happy if he killed me, he called Ese Pearl. He said as for you, he was anticipating a fight with you and the only reason you were still breathing was because Pearl junior was still alive. He said I should tell you that if Pearl

dies, you die. Bros what happened? Did anything happened to Pearl?" Ray asked.

"Ray continue"

"The lady had to plead with him to allow her bandage my body because I was dying and Ese would not want me to die. So the guy allowed her. I tried asking her who she was and a bullet crazed my ears, meaning no questions. The girl told me to tell you that Pearl is part of their family and they don't joke with family, she does not care if you poisoned her food by mistake but I should tell you once Pearl gets to the deadline, their deal is off and she would like a death dance with you and just like that they left. What is going on? What did you not tell me?" Ray asked what he could not answer.

"How did they know what happened?" Tega asked.

"Her school for a start" Hacker said.

“Then how did they know she survived?” Tejiri asked.

The headache was back.

“Wait, there is something” Tega said.

“What?” all of them chorused.

“Miss Esther, she came to meet me when I went to pick Fego and Vona. She wanted to find out if Hacker can repair her phone, because it was always freezing and some things disappear when it comes back to normal. She also said Nurse had transferred the video of the fight but it had disappeared, including the video of the school prayer” Tega said.

“Damn, now we know” Hacker said.

“Ray describe them” he said.

“I already described her, the guy was very fair, you will never mistake him for a killer, because he was handsome like he was

supposed to be in movies. And he was very precise and calculative. There was something else, Aja knew her. He called her Sabrina” Ray said.

“Bros what deal are they talking about?” Tega asked.

“I have no idea, but they are definitely high ranked assassins, and they are almost none existence in Nigerian, that is people with such equipment and skills. Just that there is something I know I’m supposed to know but I can’t just grasp it” he said.

“Did anything happen to Ese’s child?” Ray asked but no one answered.

“Wolf are you not afraid?” Hacker asked.

“Of what?” he asked.

“Of them, whoever they are” Hacker answered.

He looked at Hacker to understand him, because he did not understand the fear he meant, he might get something from looking at him, then he saw it, not just Hacker, all of them.

“I was a trained assassin too, although I was a soldier, it was almost the same so I’m trying to understand why you are all afraid” he said.

“You are really a Wolf, are you sure a wolf spirit did not possess you the day you were born? You mean after all Ray said, you are not afraid that she wants to have a death dance with you and the guy also and maybe the others who feel you intentionally hurt Pearl a member of their family” Tejiri said.

If only they knew after what happened to Pearl he had finally felt fear, he hated the feeling.

“I will like them to try. I don’t care about their threats. I will just be worried about Pearl when I kill them. Agege clan just

understand the power of numbers and guns, remove that from them they are nothing. I'm not easy to kill, you should know that by now. I know I made a big mistake and they won't hate me more than I hated myself but I don't give a damn what deal Ese had with them, Pearl is going nowhere. The deal was off the very moment Ese sent Pearl to me. Who knew if that was why she sent her to me. But I still don't care about her reason. Now I know that they will not come until the deadline, I'm going to try focus on Agege, then wait for them to try take Pearl. She wants a death dance, she gets it. Let me see who will try take her from me" he said walking out of the room.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN {Day 9}

As he drove back home, he could not just figure out what he was missing. He was not afraid of them but he was worried about Ese and Pearl. If only he could figure out what deal they meant. They were way ahead of him except he joined their game which he had already done. They saw Pearl as family and they seem to be sure of who Pearl saw as family too but he was going to change that. No matter how complex the situation was, he had a great advantage, Pearl was with him and she was his.

When he entered the house, she was watching an action movie in Universal channel which was not normal for a seven year old. Vona and Fego always watched cartoon and others were forced to watch with them, except they had ear plug to deal with the screams that followed changing the channel. He had no idea what to do as a father. Tega, Johnny, Ray were out of the question. Their method would not work on Pearl.

“Wolf come join me, things are about to get tough” Pearl said pointing at the space close to where she was sitting down.

“You know this is rated plus eighteen Pearl. You need to be eighteen before you can watch this” he said joining her but carrying her.

“But I watch wrestling and I can fight and some of their moves are so fake” he said resting on his chest.

“Your masters allow you watch wrestling?”

“No, just one, I love him so much.”

“Is he fair?”

“No he is chocolate and...” she paused and looked at him.

He tried his best to keep his mind blank, it was not yet time to push his lucky card.

“I’m not supposed to tell” she said resting back on his chest.

So he was definitely not the one Ray saw. How many masters did she have?

“The film is so boring” she said turning sideways and falling asleep almost immediately.

The film was really boring, how could someone just be standing and waiting for his turn to hit the main character when he had the opportunity. In normal life it happened only when the fight had just started, when one of them would try to take out the guy because he believed he could just handle him, then they all attacked when they discovered the man they were about to fight was not an easy target, although sometimes, they attacked once. But in most movies, all of them would be coming one by one, even when they knew it was a fight till death. Who did that? No wonder Pearl had slept off. He looked at his most precious gift and wondered if it was okay to be happy or relaxed. This was

what it felt like to be a father, a parent. He switched off the TV and carried her to his bed. He joined her later after eating and refreshing himself. It was as if she knew the time he entered the bed because she grabbed his neck almost choking him, it was okay.

“Pearl.”

“Yes?”

Good, she was not sleeping, he had almost forgotten about his deal with Mama.

“You know you are choking me, can I breathe please?”

But she held him tighter.

“I was beaten up today.”

That caught her attention because she sat down.

“How? Who? Where?”

“With slippers and hand....”

“Mama?” she asked interrupting him.

“Ese really told you so much.”

She nodded.

“Slippers, shoes, buckets, spoons, spatula, plates, cover of pots, brooms, sticks were their favorite. What did you do?”

“She found out about you and came to beat me up for not telling her about her granddaughter. I’m sure Ese told you about Reverend?”

She nodded.

“Well, they wanted to take you away from me. Mama said I should pack your clothes and take her to your school, she is mad I put ikewu in your food, she even beat Hacker and Tega and Tejiri.”

“She wants to see me?”

She sounded surprised. What did Ese tell her?”

“Yes, she even want to take you. So I begged her that I will take you to her tomorrow morning and pick you up on Sunday that’s if you want to...”

“Thank you, thank you” she shouted throwing herself against him and choking him again.

“Pearl I can’t breathe.”

He had to make a choking sound before she relaxed her hold.

But her excitement still boiled down to what Ese told her.

“So I take it that you want to go.”

“Yes.”

“No gym and training.”

“Bye bye.”

“Seriously?”

But she started laughing and it was sounding on his chest.

“We can’t be late, I don’t want my daughter to see her father getting beat up.”

“Speak for yourself Wolf” she said falling back to sleep.

How was it so easy for children? They just had to close their eyes and they were in wonderland.

Speaking about how easy their life was. She was already ready by 6:15AM. Her bag on her back. In fact she was done with her tea.

“Like seriously?”

“Yes. I can’t wait to meet grandma and Reverend” she shouted excitedly from the door.

“Well I’m not ready yet.”

“Then I will drive myself, I know the address” she said waving the car key and opening the door.

He tried to catch up and he had almost not met up. She was damn serious about driving. He held the driver seat door before she could close it.

“Do you have to do everything I did?” he shouted.

“Yep, but I can drive unlike you who crashed into a neighbors wall making the four parents to pay heavily after they were arrested” she answered.

He could not even beat her, what would be his reason.

“Okay please Pearl can I hurry up to change from my pajamas and wear my shoes?”

“How long?”

“Five minutes.”

“Okay.”

That was better than shouting or using force. He could handle this father stuff, just needed to negotiate and not use force. Just needed to avoid doing things he would have rebelled to.

She kept to her word. Mama and others were waiting outside when they got to the compound. The two houses were now fenced round and they had both been renovated even before the two fathers died. His mother had died even before John died.

Mama said Hacker and Tejiri would only leave the house when they got married but as for Tega, he had the second house to himself that was if one removed the others' constant invasion.

Good thing he married a good wife who was very accommodating. Tega had promised to pay him back the money he spent to install world class doors and equipment in the house

which he was yet to pay even a kobo. Fego and Vona were riding their children bicycle with the new doll he bought for Fego on her carrier. While Fego and Vona rushed at him, Pearl surprisingly rushed at Mama like she had known her for long. If Mama was surprised at her actions, she did not show it.

“My granddaughter, Reverend see her face like her mother. My baby” Mama said in Urhobo as she wrapped Pearl to her.

She pulled away and dived at Reverend, good thing Reverend was still strong.

“My granddaughter.” Reverend was crying. He was expecting Mama to cry and he was not surprised she was also crying.

“Mum told me about you. I’m so happy to see you” Pearl said going back to hug Mama.

“She did, I know know Ese go tell you, I know, see as you be like your mummy” Mama said.

“Good morning Reverend and Mama” he said trying to make them know he was around too.

“Oya enter your car dey comot now. Just dey go” Mama said removing her slippers from her legs.

He entered his car as fast as he could and Pearl was laughing when he drove off. He shouldn't have kept her from them. He could almost feel their excitement.

Hacker was already in his house when he got back, he ignored them and after doing some computer work, he went to his gym.

Agege had not yet responded but he was sure Agege already believed he was behind his son's death, if only he knew he was not his only enemy. He wouldn't attack him immediately, he

would try to regroup but one thing he was sure of was before Agege would strike, he would know. He stayed in his office throughout the clubbing and dancing and drinking, of course no drug was allowed in his club. The VIP guest had requested he stayed where he could see him and he had told him he could only protect him if no one could see him. He just couldn't understand how they reasoned. They just believed in bodyguard who were the first to die during an attack, and that was actually what their name meant.

Hacker had called to tell him they had worked till 11:PM and they were through with everything.

The house felt empty as he entered around 4:34AM. He was already used to a presence which was not there. Even his room was not comforting and the punching bags did not do anything, TV did not help and sleep eluded him. He sat up and went to

collect the newspapers from the Special shelf and went through them trying to study how his former team had improved. The one person he had always fought was Beast. Wild had said they were cat and dog which was correct. The title king of the beast was connected to the lion who people believed was the king of all dangerous beast and the lion is a cat same with Wolf being a dog. They never agreed on anything and their fight had always been bloody. He had so many bullet wounds from Major. He shot at them when they fought. Major had said he knew the danger of putting together alphas in their own rights and he was going to treat them like beast. Now as he read through the news report on how a clan, Lord Nero, a wanted criminal were dying one by one with the police and military keeping silent on the issue, he wondered what he had fought beast for. Okay he knew just that he did not understand why it had to lead to a fight. They had different approaches on missions and he liked following

rules unlike Beast who actually hunted like an angry lion. John had tried to stay away from their fights but had joined the day Beast had stoned him with a heavy log of wood which could have instantly killed him on impact, it was just his instinct that saved him. Wild said he started it but he did not see anything wrong with what he said. They were having a field training in the forest and Beast had prepared his legendary bush meat pepper soup and had turned it into that native pot like a bush man. He had told Beast to stop being a Mum's boy and act mature not like someone from the cave and that was all. If not for his instinct, he wouldn't have even known what killed him. John had attacked him but he was too angry that he had forgotten no one makes direct contact with the beast. Beast had broken someone's waste effortlessly in his presence and he was going for John's neck and he had intervened by shooting at Beast shoulders which was also a fucking thing to do. Once

Beast was pissed off, he would not react to any injury till his target was down and out. He stoned him with John but John had landed well without hitting him. Then, they had attacked him together. That was the day he would have known the limit of Beast endurance if Wild had not intervened. He was Beast friend, birds of same feather, had same ideology of killing people and far twisted than he and John. Tiger had just watched from a distance.

“Now the fight is even, let’s begin” Wild had said without even finding out what caused the fight.

And if not for Major, he would have really found out who was best. Major just had to come at that time, but the good news was he had used robber bullet on them. Then few days later, Tiger had provoked Wild and got the beaten of his life. Tiger was good, for anyone to become Special force Team A, it meant that

person was dangerous. Among so many rules, one had to beat at least six U.S.A marines at once in a face to face combat that was after defeating at least thirteen Nigerian soldiers. So Tiger was good, he could track someone out of their hidden spot and shoot at their position killing them where they thought they were safe from enemies and he had strength plus speed but Wild was just Wild. It was after he watched what Wild had done to Tiger, he was happy Major had ended that almost fight. Okay, he could sense danger and know where it was coming from and stop it, meaning he could dodge a bullet before he was hit but Wild could stop someone before the person released the bullet which meant he could sense the dangerous person not the danger itself. He had first thought he was a psychic and Beast had once warned him to get out of his head but Wild said he was not. He played a cassette of a blind man who could cook and do other house chores by himself. He said that did not mean the man had

superpowers, but his situation had forced him to heighten his four other senses which he wouldn't have done if he could see.

That was just the explanation he gave which did not explain anything because he was not blind. Then there was a mission Wild had worked on and he was sent as backup when the omega order was given. He would never forget the question the main target had asked or rather accused Wild.

“I thought you were a friend” Kiko had said.

“I never said that” Wild had responded.

“The first time you came here, I asked you who you were and you said you were a soldier on an undercover mission and you came to find evidence to kill me” Kiko had said.

“Exactly the truth and what I'm about to do, I found the evidence and I'm here to kill you” Wild had answered.

“I thought you were being sarcastic, who does that? Who tells a dangerous man he is an undercover agent and wants to kill him? Undercover means hiding” Kiko shouted.

The shock in Kiko’s face was very clear, he thought Wild abnormal. Kiko was not the only one, he wanted to ask Wild that same question. Like who does that?

“You laughed and told me I must be joking and I told you I was serious, yet you trusted me. And you are looking at me like I’m the crazy one” Wild said shooting the man’s head.

“Who does that Wild?” he had asked as they were leaving.

“How do you sense danger? How do you read people’s emotions?” Wild had asked.

“I don’t know. I just feel” he had answered.

“Good answer. You know there is something called nonverbal communication? People display their emotions through their lips, eyes, hands, legs and composure. You notice it more than the average person and you know what they mean, that’s why you can tell if someone is lying, afraid, or telling the truth. But mine is different. I don’t read them, I listen to them and that’s all you need to know.”

And he had still ended up not saying anything. Major who had given him a lifeline after preventing him from getting caught by the police after he had killed the kingpins involved in the murder of his father who Wild believed they took away his chance to kill, he just could not even explain Wild. Wild was as confusing as a confusing sentence. He just knew Wild had wiped out three kingpins who had combined to end his father’s reign and Major had saved him from being arrested by the police. That was all.

He would never speak about himself, only just his wife and the little things Major said they knew, until John's burial. Papa Ufuoma had seen him during the burial. Or rather Wild had seen him and walked up to a shaking Papa Ufuoma. He was his father's worker and he did not like the vibe of fear he was displaying as Wild spoke to him and so he had gone there to find out what was happening.

"You changed your native bead" Wild was saying when he got close.

"How did you know, they are the same thing" Papa Ufuoma said.

"No they are not, the other was darker" Wild said leaving Papa Ufuoma who took his first breath after a long time.

"What is wrong?"

“What is Ola doing here? Why is he here?” Papa Ufuoma had asked still shaking.

He knew it was going to be a long story so he had saved it for a later day. Papa Ufoma had lived in Lagos and knew Ola and his father. He said Ola had started killing as young as eleven, then he used to run errands for his father. Ola had been brutally raised by his father and he had used him as a bargain to keep his mother. If she left Ola would be killed and Ola had sworn to kill his father. But he joined his father after he had brought a girl he said he was going to marry and right in front of him and others, Ola had shot three of his father’s trusted men to prove his worth. Then the fourth one he did not kill was forced to take the drink Ola’s father would have drunk and they had watch him die few seconds later from poison. Ola had said their body language gave them away. That was how Ola was baptized in his father’s

business on the deal that the girl would stay with them and as weird as it sounded Ola had paid the bride price to the girl's father who later became Ola's father's man. Papa Ufuoma said people feared Ola more than his dad because Ola could read mind and his father used him to fish out the bad eggs and Ola killed some himself. Then three kingpins had attacked their castle with the aid of the police. Papa Ufuoma said he had cheated death that day because he was on his way to purchase some drinks when it happened. They had all thought Ola was dead too because the place was set ablaze after the massacre, but just about four years later, the new ruling clan started losing their men mysteriously. Most of them had looked like they committed suicide but there was always a note with just few words. 'You could have left my mum' just that. Soon they knew it must be Ola who they thought was dead because the message was clear. A bounty was put on his head by the kingpins and

also the corrupt police officers but no one even saw him. They only knew he was still around because someone died every day. All of them were killed mysteriously and the three kingpins were one day seen hanging on a tree all naked and a knife was used to draw out the words on their body. Papa Ufuoma said only God knew what they went through before they died. Then the police were next and that was when government became interested but suddenly Ola disappeared and no one ever saw him again except for the owner of a tattoo shop who said Ola had paid him a visit few days before he totally disappeared, no one even saw him physically, they only knew through the killings. He had packed his things and ran back to Warri to start all over. That had explained his shock to see Ola wearing a military uniform and he was afraid Ola would think he was among those who betrayed his family but he was also surprised that Ola had just told him his bead he wore on his hand was not

the same bead he had said he would never remove. Papa Ufuoma called him a freak and a mind reader and someone who could make someone feel fear. That had explained Wild a little and Major had called him Wild because he was wild in thinking, behavior, action and out of control. Nigeria as a whole owed Major a lot. The people they would have become if not for him? Not just the Special Force Team A but the special people in the Special Force as a whole. He wondered if Beast was still a freak with his native pot. They had somehow become normal, neither friends nor enemy few weeks before John died. Pearl and Mena had visited the house for the fifth time and it was just Beast that was around because Wild and Tiger were on a mission. John had warned Beast not to stare at Pearl if he wanted to live.

“You don’t need to worry about that, I can still hear my Mum screaming hell fire from my last escapade” Beast had answered.

“Escapade means illegal activities right?” John asked.

“Don’t tell me your mum forced you to Sunday school and always preached about hell fire?” Beast asked.

“Yes” he and John chorused.

“And Sunday school was torture” he said.

“Except it’s David killing Goliath” Beast said.

“Samson’s exploits” he and John chorused.

They all laughed. Yeah, they had something in common with their mums.

“But don’t you think there is no justification for your illegal activities? Or you don’t want to marry her? Mums are always right you know” Beast said leaving the parlor.

Somehow that word had touched John because the quarrel that ensued between him and Pearl was evidence that nothing

happened and Pearl was suspicious John was cheating on her. She was appeased when John officially proposed a wedding to her and he felt like strangling John because he had put him under pressure to do the same. Later, after they had travelled back, he saw John reading the bible. He said he was going through all those quotes both Mamas used to say. Something had changed about John that day but he had no part in it. He told John he should keep his sudden change to himself. He never married Pearl, in fact that was the last time he saw Pearl because they had gone for that mission and a special force Hausa soldier had suddenly betrayed them. If he had done it early, they would have known something was off but it was so sudden and the sect's reaction was equally immediate. Beast had prevented him from hunting that soldier. Wild had told him it was Beast who beheaded the man. Why was he missing the good and bad old days?

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER NINETEEN {Day 8}

Finally, he started feeling sleepy and only woke up by 12PM on Sunday. He had slept that long. He did some cleaning and punching and swimming to whirl away time and boredom. He was missing someone who was supposed to be disturbing him. He did not even know why he said he would pick her up in the evening. Maybe it was so the surprise would dry off. He prepared fried rice after making sure there was no ikewu, garlic around. He even made sure the chicken was not pork meat. Then he looked for the letter and read the remaining rules.

It was 8:10PM when he drove inside their family compound and he had to knock for long before someone family opened the door for him and it was Mama.

“She get her school clothe for here, just go do your business, I go take am go school” Mama said blocking the entrance.

“No Mama, let’s not even go there please. She will come back.”

“When?”

“Let’s see this weekend.”

“Her birthday?” Mama asked.

“She told you.”

“Wetin dey wrong with that. You nor see how God dey work?

God say make Him show us say He dey, come turn our tears to

joy, see as God bless us for the day we suppose cry. James God

dey oo” Mama said.

And he never thought of that? Even John’s mother saw it as

God’s blessing.

“Mama can I enter now?”

“Wolf” Pearl shouted running to meet him.

Yeah, that feeling was so soothing, feeling of having someone that belonged to him in his arms was unexplainable.

“I have a very big surprise for you” he said rubbing her head.

“I can’t wait” she said running to carry her bag.

He waved at Reverend who was looking at him like he was a kidnapper. He must have forgotten he too was supposed to be in the vicarage.

“You finally made your hair” he said.

“Na me make am. You nor know say pikin hair go cut if you nor make am?”

He kept quiet. It was there in the rules.

“Reverend will you come pick me up for church next Sunday?”

Pearl asked hugging Reverend.

“Definitely, I will be there for your birthday, and I will make sure you come to church on Sunday” Reverend answered her looking at him.

He got it. He wanted to tell him not to drag his granddaughter to hell with him. Yeah he got it.

“Where are the others?”

“Dem dey watch match for the other house. Pearl you nor go go tell Vona and Fego bye bye?” Mama asked.

“No need, I will see them in school tomorrow” Pearl said hugging Mama.

“I will miss you Mama” Pearl said.

“Me too. I could not even convince her to tell me where her mother is. She is afraid I will tell you and you will find her James. James do something. Let her know Ese can come home. I

miss Ese. I don't want to die without seeing Ese. James please make her know Ese can come home" Mama begged him in Urhobo but Pearl gasps.

"You are not angry with my mum? Can she come home? Like really?" Pearl asked holding Mama's hand.

"You hear Urbobo?" Mama asked before he could ask.

She nodded.

"Can she?" Pearl asked again.

"How come you never responded all this while we had been speaking Urhobo?" Reverend asked.

"Because you were not talking to me. Mama can my mum come home? For real?" Pearl asked.

She was holding Mama too tight.

“Yes now. I wanted Pearl to come home long ago” Mama said in Urhobo.

“More than eight years, I don search for Ese, make she come home, we nor see am. Wolf nor fit do anything to am, as long as life dey my body, he nor try am. Tell Ese say we dey miss am, make she come home, Mama is missing her” Mama said.

Pearl hugged her and started crying.

“Thank you, thank you. She did not know, she thought you don’t want her, she did not know you wanted her to come home since. Mum did not know” Pearl said crying and Mama joined her.

“Ogheneme, James and Mena see wetin una don do? Ese won come home since, una make am think say we nor go accept am. Chia, my daughter won come home since. James why? James why? Na so John for do am? We nor do well. I dey find my

daughter since, my daughter dey hide dey think say me, her mother nor want am” Mama wailed.

The others entered the parlor to meet the scene.

“Mama what is it again?” Tejiri asked.

“Teji she say Ese won come home since, but she dey think say I still dey ves for am. Ese won come home since but because she dey fear na him make am nor come” Mama cried and Pearl increased hers.

“Thank you” Pearl said.

“Nor thank me, nor thank me. Na me go thank you. Abeg if you go back drag Ese follow you come back to Warri you hear, bring Ese follow body. Tell am make she come, Mama dey wait for am you hear?”

Pearl nodded.

“Thank you. Mum can finally come home, thank you” Pearl said.

It was just too much to bear. He went and gently pulled her away from Mama who was already being hugged by Tega and Tejiri. Hacker was sitting close to Reverend who was wiping tears from his eyes. He had nothing to say, he just carried Pearl. Her bag was already on her back. He dropped her at the back seat and without saying goodbye, he drove out of the compound.

“Eyes closed or should I cover with my hands?” he asked as they got to the door.

“I promise not to peek” Pearl said covering her eyes.

“Good girl. Okay just continue walking, we are almost there.

Open” he said.

He expected her to be excited but he did not plan for the hyper excitement. Her scream was deafening.

“Wow” she shouted jumping on her bed.

She jumped down and ran to the rest room made of opaque glass.

“Wow” she shouted running out and jumping on the love couch that could spin.

“This is so cool” she shouted and ran back to the bed.

“How did you know my colors are black and white” she shouted excitedly.

“My colors are white and black too. Ese is the one who loved pink and she always bought pink stuff to everybody without bothering if they loved pink. John had a lot of pink pajamas” he said.

She laughed and fell on the bed.

“She always did that, she bought too many pink stuffs for me and it is my worst color” she said.

“Me too” he said joining her on the bed.

“Thank you” she said jumping on him.

“But you’ve lost your golf room and what happens when I go back in few days’ time?” she asked.

It would be a wrong time to tell her he had no plans of letting her go especially when Ese was coming home.

“You are more important than the golf room. Time for food” he said lifting her.

“I’m full. I ate eba and banga soup” she said.

“But I cooked fried rice and chicken.”

“I’m full. Go eat yourself, you are looking tired” she said.

“Am I?”

She did not answer but stretched herself on the bed.

He went to check up on her room few hours later. She was already on her pajamas fast asleep.

“Wolf” she called as he got to the now opaque glass door which needed to be manually opened.

“Yes?”

“I want a bed time story.”

He joined her on the bed.

“Your mum used to do that?”

“Yes” she answered wrapping her arms on his throat.

He balanced her on his chest.

“Like Alice in Wonderland?”

“No, that’s for white people. Like tortoise story.”

“Oh. We did that during full moons. We would sit outside....”

“I know. Mum told me.”

“So what story should I tell? Okay I will tell you why the tortoise has a rough shell.”

“I know that one.”

“The race between the hare and the tortoise?”

“It was rabbit not hare.”

“It was hare. We argued that one then.”

“Yeah Mum told me. You said hare, John said rabbit.”

“Okay, I don't think I have a new one, the animal kingdom no longer exist and the hunter who used to visit there is no more”
he said making Pearl laugh.

“Okay I will just sleep.”

“Pearl how much do your masters hate me?”

“They don’t hate you.”

“They do. Mum must have told you about Ray. They saved Ray from Agege and sent him a message for me.”

“What message?”

“There was a girl. Sabrina and another fair one. She said they were angry with me that I tried to kill you.”

“But you did not, it was a mistake.”

“And you will not tell me why you ate that food you knew had ikewu?”

She shook her head.

“What did they say?”

“She said when the deadline ends, the deal with Ese will be over and she is going to have a death dance with me, the other one too”

She raised her head in shock.

“How do you know about her death dance?”

“I told you they told Ray to tell me.”

“But she is not supposed to do that. She is not supposed to fight you” she shouted.

“I’m not afraid Pearl. I’m just worried you won’t be happy if I hurt them.”

“Promise you won’t?”

“Pearl what did I tell you about killing someone?”

“You don’t except you will die.”

“Yeah, to some extent. So what do you think I will do if I sense her death dance or any of them around me? You should know I will never be the first to strike, I finish it.”

She threw herself back at him and held him too tight. She would soon cut off his air bag.

“No, they are not supposed to fight you. No, that’s not part of the deal. It was a mistake. I don’t want anything to happen to you.”

That was all he needed. She had chosen him. She was more worried for him, not just her speech but her body language said it all.

They were playing a dangerous game they would lose. They forgot a vital point about who Pearl was. Pearl was his pup, his blood. His only worry had been how Pearl would react but he had dealt a big blow to that. They thought to put him on the edge not knowing they have given him a card to use against them.

They wanted to take his pup from him? Let them come, let them come and see the power of a Wolf’s blood, a wolf clan. Pearl

was his pack, the only one in his pack and it was like a lion sending a Wolf to hurt a Wolf, never. Blood is very powerful and those damn masters must have forgotten that. He would wait and see who would dare take a pup from the alpha Wolf.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY {Day 7}

He had tried to go back to his room when he thought she had finally slept but could not. Anytime he tried to pull her off him, she held on to him, but she was really sleeping. He just had to stay back till she stood up the next morning.

She was riding the bike when he joined her using the treadmill.

“Good morning Wolf” she shouted.

Couldn't she just call him dad? What did he have to do to make her call him dad?

"I have a surprise for you today" he said.

"Another one?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Nope, can't tell you until after school."

"Okay I won't tell you mine until after school" she said jumping down and running to her room.

He went to warm the remaining fried rice for her. She came out with her sport uniform instead of the normal school uniform.

"Seriously?" he asked.

"What?"

“Today is Monday, what’s with the uniform?”

“I won’t tell.”

He already knew. So they had turned his daughter to their karate trainer. Yeah! The whole school were on their sport uniform.

And was Pearl supposed to train all of them. How did the school let a seven year old influence them?

“Can I send help?” he asked as she tried opening the door.

“Help for what?”

“Your karate training?”

“You knew?” she shouted.

“Lady I’m older than you. I’m not too easy to trick.”

“Will you?”

“I have already sent Li to come with five others.”

“Thank you” she said grabbing him from the back.

He had received a call from the Tega because the school did not have his number. They needed his permission for Pearl to train some selected students on Karate Monday and Thursday after assembly for one hour. And he had already told Li to come join Pearl.

The first thing he did after dropping her in school was to check on Ray. Oliver was with him when he entered the private ward. He instructed Hacker to send some of them to be around their family and to report any suspicious activities. He was not taking any chances and he would not want to just count on his instinct. He was going to strike if Agege’s men came ten miles close to his family. He was also relieved Ray was recovering fast. He paid visits to his business centers but did not go to Sapele. He

was not missing on picking Pearl by two. He was even there before two.

“How was it?” he asked as she entered his car.

“Awesome. Miss Esther said I’m a celebrity. That’s I’m popular.”

“Keep deceiving yourself.”

“Stop being jealous that you were not popular like me when you were my age.”

“Good for you Miss popular.”

“Where are we going? That’s not the way home.”

“It’s a surprise. Just be patient.”

“Okay.”

Bridget was already waiting outside when he stopped at her big boutique. She ran out of the car to hug Bridget.

“Aunty Bridget” she shouted.

He had almost forgotten she had stayed two days with them.

That could explain the familiarity.

“Are you ready?” Bridget was asking when he got close.

“Ready for what?” she asked but gasp when she saw where they really were.

She turned to look at him.

“You can take anything you want” he said answering her unasked question.

“Really?” she shouted running inside.

“Wolf, I guess you did not tell her she was going shopping?”

Bridget asked as they entered inside.

“Told her it was a surprise.”

Pearl was already at the rolls of children section. She was not considerate at all. She took him literally because she was picking shoes, clothes, caps and other accessories with reckless abandon.

“My hands are full, hold this Wolf” she said placing loads of clothes on his hands.

“You shouldn’t have told her she could take anything she wanted. You look shocked” Bridget said laughing.

“Take this too Wolf” she said dropping four pairs of black and white canvas and she was off before he could protest.

She had already attracted all customers and staffs and Bridget was holding her stomach from laughing. Bridget signaled for a staff to come with shopping bags.

“Seriously?” he asked.

“You want to carry it on your hands?” she asked but Pearl was back before he could answer.

This time she came with different styles of shoes, white and black.

“Pause young lady. You don’t shop like this. You check if something is your size then...”

“I already did. I know my sizes for clothes, shoes and others. I can even tell by looking at it. Take” she said but changed her mind when she saw his full hands.

She placed them in one of the bags and ran off again.

“Pearl” he shouted making her stop and turn.

“Yes?”

“Are these not enough?”

“You said I can take anything, that you will pay.”

“I know what I said.”

“Then?” she asked running off.

Now others had join Bridget to laugh. Bridget took the clothes and shoes from him and started fixing them in bags. Pearl ran back again with loads of eyeglasses. He wanted to tell her it was not for kids but stopped. The glasses were fancy enough and would fit her.

“This is fashion” Pearl said dropping it on his hands and off she went again.

“How on earth do children have fancy glasses Bridget?” he asked but was answered with laughter. There must be something in his eyes.

She came back with different hand bags.

“Do you still have money?” she asked.

But she did not wait for his answer. She ran off again and this time around she came back with loads of babies clothes.

“Pearl these are for babies” Bridget said before he could protest.

“I know aunt. They are not for me” she answered and ran off again.

He looked at Bridget for help.

“I have no idea Wolf” Bridget said relieving him of the loads.

More baby stuffs came and also teddy bears.

“Okay I’m done.”

He looked sternly at her.

“What is that look for?” she asked feigning innocence.

“Next time I will not tell you to take anything”

“Thank God I took more than enough” she answered.

“What are the baby clothes for?”

“I will tell you later” she answered running outside.

“Pearl where are you going to?” he shouted.

“To wait in the car.”

“Who are you leaving your clothes for?”

“I am seven” she answered disappearing from sight.

“This was a bad idea” he said.

“No. It was just bad that the Ts did not witness this. I will gist them later” Bridget said.

As twisted as it sounded, Hacker’s name was Tega, that was the real reason his nickname was more popular because it was difficult living with two people bearing the same name. He and

John were called the Js or sons of thunder and they were generally called the Ovies. Second Papa had once said they were one family that were split in half and nature had made it clear that he and Mena were the fated ones to bridge the family and make them whole. One big reason he never got any opposition from any of the parents, they had even been anticipating it. If only they knew this would happen?

Pearl really spent more than he had budgeted. If only he had a foresight of what would happen.

“Shoot, the baby clothes are for?” he asked as soon as they entered the house.

“My master has twins.”

“And you used my money to buy clothes for my enemies?”

She turned and looked at him.

“The baby twins are your enemies?”

The question left him speechless and defenseless and he just stood there watching her carry her things to her room. A seven year old girl just thought him a lesson he would never forget.

“Are you not going out?” she asked standing close to him.

“Do you want me to?”

“Nope, stay. Let’s watch film” she answered switching on the TV.

“Or we could cook first” he said.

“Yeah! What are we cooking?”

“Eguisi soup” he said.

He had already told Johnny to drop the ingredients in his house in the morning. Pearl was removing them from the bag when he joined her in the kitchen.

The time was 7:15 PM and they were long done with their dinner and were watching another boring action movie.

“It’s boring” Pearl said climbing him.

“I know.”

“Wolf are you still mad at my mum?”

That was unexpected.

“No.”

“Will you allow her to come home?”

“Yes.”

There was more and he had no idea where she was going.

“You know it was a mistake?”

“What did she tell you?”

“That she hurt you and Mena, that she got drunk and messed up.

But I entered her belly from her mistake.”

“You are not a mistake Pearl.”

“I know, she said it was her mistake not me. I was the forgiveness for her mistake because I was born the day John died and it gave her a lot of peace.”

“She said that?”

She nodded.

“I’m not mad at her again. I want her to come home.”

“Thank you” she said throwing herself on him.

He robbed her back.

“Wolf.”

“Yes.”

“What is the most important thing in your life?”

Another unexpected question. He did not need to think far to know.

“You tell me first. Wait. I already know. Ese”

“No.”

That was surprising.

“This” she said showing him her hand band.

“How?”

“Is a gift from Mum.”

“You chose your mum’s gift to your mum?”

“You won’t understand.”

“Explain Pearl.”

“Mum is here. She will always be here. I can never miss her as long as I’m wearing this. I can tell her when I’m sad, happy, sick and many things.”

“Pearl it’s just a band.”

“No. It’s not just a band. She is inside. She will always be here.”

“Why do I feel there is something you are not telling me?”

“This band...” she was interrupted by a call for him.

He picked the call when he saw it was Johnny.

“Sir, you won’t believe who is here at the bar asking to see you immediately” Johnny said.

“Who?”

“Mena.”

He stood up lifting Pearl with him.

“I don’t understand.”

“She just came here. She said she just arrived Warri but drove straight to your bar after getting directions. She said she must see you now, that it is very important.”

“Take her to my office. I’m on my way.”

“Already did that” Johnny said.

“Pearl can you stay home for few minutes. There is somebody I need to see now. Or should I drive you to grandma...”

“No. I can stay by myself” she said coming down.

“Is it adult things?” she asked climbing the table.

There was no need shouting anymore. This was a general problem. Johnny and Tega said so. Children loved jumping on chairs and couch.

“Something like that.”

“Is she pretty?” she asked as he got to the door.

What was he supposed to say?

“You tell me when you see her. You know we are not through with our discussion.”

“Just go. I will not open the door for anybody” she answered jumping to the couch.

As he drove to his bar, he could not even guess why Mena had to see him first. He was the last person she should want to see. The bar was full when he got there. Party started by 9:00PM. He did not look for Johnny but went straight to his office. She was sitting on the visitor’s seat which was facing his big seat. She turned as soon as she heard the door being shut. He felt hot immediately their eyes met. The feeling was still there, nothing had changed, even though she had changed a lot. She looked lean and stressed.

“Are you sick?”

Of all the questions to ask, that was the first thing to come out as soon as he opened his mouth.

“Wolf” she said forcing a smile.

Something was wrong with her and that thing was still wrong with her. He walked close to her. He felt like wrapping her in him. He could not stand the sadness she was displaying. It was affecting him.

“Mena, what is wrong?” he asked raising his hand to touch her but stopped midway.

He did not know if he was permitted.

“You did not change Wolf, you are still looking the same.”

“Mena talk to me, your sadness it’s tearing me. What is it? Is it your late husband? Teji told...”

He could not finish his question because she was already on him. Holding him like she would faint in few minutes' time. She was crying. Her face was on his chest and her tears were piercing him.

“Mena” was all he could say as he pulled her closer.

He ignored the feeling the closeness was resurrecting in him. There were more important things. He allowed her to cry. He had been happy her husband was dead because of his own selfish reason. He never thought about how Mena would feel.

“Mena I’m sorry about your loss.”

Slowly, she pulled away.

“He is lucky he died. He saved me from committing murder. He died in an accident in Paris where in went to groove with his side chic” she said sitting down.

Who on earth would leave someone like Mena for another girl?

“Mena then what is wrong? Why are you sad?” he asked squatting by her chair.

“Wolf what did we do? What did I do? How did I end up ruining my life like this? How did I end up leaving the one person meant for me to a wife beater? How?” she cried.

Mena hardly cried, it was Ese who cried easily.

“Mena you are killing me.”

“Wolf you need to sit down. You are about to be shocked, just sit down and I will talk” Mena said.

He quickly went to his sit making him opposite Mena, although he would have preferred where he was.

“Mena I’m all ears.”

“Promise to listen, just promise.”

“I promise.”

“Ese had always contacted me” Mena said.

“What now?”

“You promised to listen.”

She must have misinterpreted his reaction. She was definitely not aware of Pearl.

“Okay” he said.

“She started sending me emails four months after I got to Maryland U.S.A. I never changed email you know. I never read them nor deleted them. Okay I was deleting them but at a point, I stopped, just ignored it. That would be two months after she started sending the messages. She never stopped sending and I never read them. Just the period my husband died, I discovered

she had stopped. There was one last one after a long pause, then she never sent again. I got curious and opened the last one.”

She started crying.

“Mena.”

“Wolf, I read that last email over and over again. Wolf, Ese is dead” Mena wailed.

He started laughing.

“Stop joking Mena. Ese is not dead, someone is playing a prank on you” he said.

“Wolf I’m not joking. I’m just coming from Benin where I have been for the past two weeks Wolf. Pearl is dead. Ese is dead. I went to the mortuary and saw her corpse with my two eyes. She died a month ago from breast cancer. I saw her. She is dead Wolf.”

“No, it’s not true. You won’t understand Mena. It’s not true. I will explain...”

“Wolf that’s not all. This will shock you but there is no way else I can sugarcoat it. Wolf, Ese had a child. She gave birth to your child Wolf.”

He did not notice he was standing until he sat back.

“I know you are shocked but you need to know” Mena said.

This was not happening. If Ese was dead why would Pearl ask for her to come home?

“Wolf are you listening to me” Mena shouted.

“What did you say?”

“She is missing. Her daughter is missing. No trace. I’ve been trying to find her for the past two weeks but it’s almost like she never existed.”

“You are confusing me Mena.”

“Wolf listen carefully to what I’m about to say. When I read that last email, I quickly ran through all her emails. She used me as her diary Wolf. She wrote about the delivery of the child, about how she had used up the money she saved from selling pumpkin leaf at Port Harcourt, about how she was owing depth, about how she had to start her business when the baby was just a month, she wrote about her fears that she might kill the baby from her actions, she wrote about how the baby was strong like her father. Then she would write about how she had written about her abortion plans, that must be the parts I deleted. She said anytime she thought of abortion within the first three months, that she became seriously sick and that was how she postponed it till she could no longer abort the baby, then it had been a shock that the baby chose the day John died to come out.

She said she had resisted giving birth on that day but gave up. But once the baby had touched her arms she felt peace and then she started writing about little Pearl. Her name is Pearl Oghenefome. She said she just knew John had forgiven her and Pearl gave her unexplainable joy, she wrote about her character being all yours, she said she was the blessing Mama gave you. And so on. Then she wrote about moving to Benin because she was tired of the looks men in her area gave her. She wrote about her new life in Benin. Then she wrote about Pearl having Mama's allergy. Things were working fine but Pearl went ill when she was four and she spent all her money to save her, her business crashed and she needed money to pay her bills but all the men she asked for help wanted to sleep with her, the women did not because she was already owing them. She even begged me for money. Wolf she begged me for money but I never read her email" Mena cried.

He allowed her to cry and waited for her to continue.

“She had to give the men what they wanted to save Pearl, then she wrote about a man who came to live with them but she later threw him away because he was a pedophilia. She wrote about how Pearl was acting like you, fighting people in school and outside because they called her mum ashawo. Then she became sick, and she was told she had cancer on her left breast. She begged me for money for operation, but I never read it. She was not afraid of dying but leaving Pearl alone. She said you were not an option. She said she would have contacted Teji or Tega or Tega second or Ray but she had no means of contacting them without exposing her location. She only knew my email, of course John’s email had been deleted. She said you might strike her if she revealed her location. Then she wrote about her fears, that Pearl was fighting men who had slept with her without

paying fully, no matter what she did, Pearl still fought. There was no money and she and Pearl were starving, eating once a day. Then she wrote that their rent had expired and she was afraid they would be thrown out. She wrote their address. Then she wrote that she was going to use the last money to go to the hospital because the pain was too much but she was worried about Pearl. She said Pearl was now her mother, she had been forced to become an adult at an early age. That Pearl was selling pure water on the main road and fighting men at night. Then the letter stopped. She said she might not be able to go to cyber café anymore to write to me. Then after two months the last letter came. She told me she had a day to live and she was begging me for a favor. She said she won't ask me to take Pearl, that she won't burden me with that. The only thing she wanted was for her to come back home. She said she wanted to sleep close to John. She begged me to read the email, to help send her home.

She begged for forgiveness, she always begged for forgiveness at the end of her letter. She told me where I will find her corpse and she had made it possible for me to take her home. She never talked about her daughter in the last letter. When I got to Benin, I went straight to the mortuary. Ese was there Wolf. She was there. They had no idea about her daughter and the hospital she was treated. But they said everything had been paid for, up to a year but they had no way of telling who paid. I ran to her address and met an empty land. I asked around and they confirmed there was a building there but it was destroyed after government discovered the building was in danger of collapsing. I asked about the landlord and they told me he was in jail, he was busted for selling hard drugs. So I went to see him to ask about Pearl and the man was crying. He said he was being punished for his sins. He said he knew her mother was suffering from cancer yet he threw the little girl outside with their

properties which rain destroyed. He said he was into drugs and he was caught the same day his building was declared uninhabitable. I asked if he had an idea where I could find Ese's daughter and he shook his head. He said no one saw her a day or two after he threw her out. She just disappeared but he described her school to me. I went to her school and they said the same thing, that she had quit after she could not pay school fees but they had always seen her around but she suddenly disappeared. But there was a teacher who said there was a possibility she was still around, that she sometimes saw her but before she will call her she had disappeared from sight. She mentioned a school uniform she thought she saw her on. So I decided to try the school but someone was already in my car when I entered. I did not noticed and I was not allowed to see him. He told me to start going back, it was already past 4:PM and schools were already closing for the day. He told me I was putting the people I met in

danger. Every single person I met was mentioned to me. He warned me that I was also putting myself in danger by asking around about Pearl. He said my work is just to take Ese's corpse and bury her close to John and that was all. He warned me to leave immediately, then he was off. I turned to check but I did not see him, I had no idea where he dived to but I knew he was watching me. Wolf I know it sounds insane but I swear she is real and she is in danger, your daughter needs your help. Ese always sent me pictures, she looks like Ese but has your eyes....”

He was in his car within seconds, he did not wait for Mena to finish. What if Pearl was just an illusion, what if she was no more? He dialed her line as he sped to his house. She did not pick, even after four rings. He hit the steering in frustration.

“Pick up Pearl” he said calling her for the fifth time.

Was that not what she was trying to tell her? Ese had given her that hand band as her final gift. No wonder she believed her mum was inside which meant she was aware her mum was dead.

Was that the deal Ese made with them? Did they take care of Ese's last months on earth and also Ese must have made them to send Pearl to him for a month before they finally took her away.

Everything was beginning to make sense. Pearl might have been the alternative to Mena. Mena was not reading her email and Pearl must have been sent to help bring Ese home because Mena was not responding. He now understood why she was crying when Mama said Ese could come home. What had he done?

What had he and Mena done?

“Pick your call” he shouted.

That was the seventh call and she had not picked. His phone started ringing but he cut the call when he saw it was Johnny.

That was not his primary concern. At the moment, Pearl was and she was not picking her phone.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE {Day 6}

He had to open the door himself using the password. He had made it possible in case he had to enter to save her. Her tab was the first thing he saw on the table but there was no sign of Pearl.

“Pearl” he shouted running to her room. She was not there.

He ran to his room as he screamed her name. She was also not in his room, the bathroom door was open; she was not there. Every other place had transparent door and Pearl was not there. He checked the last place which was his pool but it was clear. He

tried breathing but could not. What was going on? Did they come for her knowing Mena would do the needful about Ese? But it was not yet the deadline. He needed Pearl, no one dared take Pearl from him. He was going to kill each one of them, good thing Mena had a little clue. He entered her room and yeah; she was gone, her bag was not there. But he saw all the other things she had shopped. What if it was Agege, no, it couldn't be. He would have felt something was wrong. He did not feel anything and the door was not broken, but there was no way Pearl would abandon her goods, he wouldn't do that so would Pearl. What was he missing? Or was she an illusion? That would be worse than being taken by her masters. That would drive him mad. Such things do not exist. He had heard of ghost stories. Okay, his grandma had a personal experience. She said her aged mother had visited her from Ozoro, and it was so sudden. When they had told her to come inside she had said she was just

passing and wanted to greet her daughter and it had sounded weird but few minutes after her mother left, a family member had arrived to tell them of grandma's demise. She had ran out to meet up with Mama but she was nowhere to be found, people had even confirmed they saw her coming inside the compound and going outside. This could not be the same for Pearl, she could not be dead. No she must not be dead, let it be that her masters had taken her, he could get her back but if she was a ghost and...

"Wolf what's up" he heard Pearl's voice.

It was coming from up. He had not known he was outside. He raised his head and she was sitting on the roof of the building.

"I saw you run inside like you were being chased and you ran out like you saw a ghost. Did she reject you?" she shouted.

“Okay be calm Wolf, don’t be mad, just be calm” he whispered to himself.

“Did she reject you, I won’t be a flower girl again?” she asked trying to stand on the roof.

“Pearl don’t move. Stay there” he shouted.

She was going to fall and break her neck. He was supposed to be relieved but this scare Pearl was giving him was worse. What seven year old climb the roof of a building?

“Relax Wolf, my master taught me how to climb, we will climb the roof and sit there for hours watching the stars.”

That was the first master he was going to kill, then followed by the one who taught her how to pickpocket, then the one who allowed her watch wrestling.

“Just wait there, I will get you down.”

“I can come down” she said already climbing down with a climbing rope which could lead someone down in seconds.

He watched in fear hoping the rope would not cut. It looked like a jumping rope but with a switch which opened the handles to something like a carabiner which was used for climbing.

“I love that my master, he taught me how to pickpocket, how to be very stealth and he allowed me do lots of stuffs” she said after her foot touched the ground.

So it was the same person.

“So who was chasing....”

He did not allow her finish her statement. He pulled her against himself and allowed the closeness to calm his fear, his dread and his worries.

“I can’t breathe” she protested coughing.

He relaxed his grip and carried her inside. Then pulled her back again in his arms.

“Thank God you are here, I was scared you are not real.”

“Like seriously? Why won’t I be real?”

“I love you so much Pearl, please don’t ever scare me like that again. I was almost having a heart attack when I did not see you in the house” he said looking at her to make sure she understood him.

But there was something different about her expression.

“You love me?” she asked looking at him like she must have heard the wrong thing.

“More than anything in this world. You are a shining Pearl lightning up my darkness, my one and only pup.”

She threw herself on him and started crying.

“I’m sorry, I did not know it will scare you, but I can climb” she protested in tears.

If only she knew she was misinterpreting everything. He carried her and her bag to her room. Good thing she was already on her pajamas.

“Are you telling me a story tonight” she said holding his hand to prevent him from leaving the bed.

“Nope, you are the one telling.”

“It doesn’t work like that.”

“I know but you were supposed to tell me about your mum inside your hand band” he said lifting her to rest on his chest.

“Oh that” she said trying to turn away but he blocked her.

“No no no, don’t tell me you won’t tell anymore.”

“You won’t even understand, it’s even a sad story. I am not supposed to tell now. Maybe later but I want to sleep” she said snoring.

“Pearl what is sad about your hand band, please tell me.”

“Please can I tell you when I’m ready? Please Wolf?” she pleaded looking at him.

“Okay my Pearl, you can tell me anytime you are ready” he said kissing her forehead.

He shouldn’t have even pressed her, good thing she did not talk because she would have started crying. He was not ready for that at the moment. His heart was already aching and his head was pounding and he did not think he had the strength to watch Pearl cry. He was the worst person on earth. To think he had been worried about how he was going to approach John’s grave because of Pearl, not knowing he was supposed to be worried

for another reason. How would he face John? What explanation or excuse would he give? He was the reason John was lying down in the ground. John had left Ese to him, knowing he would take care and protect his woman. Tejiri was right, Ese was the worst hit, in fact Ese was the most important person to John not him. And what had he done? He had let his anger rule him for more than eight years. He had abandoned John's fiancée and even became the one she feared. She had to run away from the one who was supposed to protect her. And he just did not want to relieve everything Mena said, he would not be able to take it, he would break down if he thought of what his daughter had been through, of what his daughter's mother had passed through.

“Are you okay Wolf? You are shaking” Pearl asked raising her head.

Of course she would know something was wrong.

“I’m okay sweetheart, just go back to sleep” he said kissing her hair.

“Is it the lady? She did not want to marry you?” she asked looking concerned.

He jerked up with her. He had forgotten Mena. He placed her on the bed.

“Wait here. I will be back” he said rushing outside to his car where he had left his phone.

There was already forty one missed calls, some from unknown number. He quickly dialed Johnny’s line.

“Sir what happened? I’ve been....”

“Is she still there?”

“Yes, she is even begging me to bring her to your house but I cannot. You know why.”

“Give her the phone.”

After some seconds he heard Mena’s voice.

“Wolf, I’m sorry I told you like that, I know you must have been shocked and...”

“Mena.”

“Wolf.”

“I’m the one to apologize, I shouldn’t have run off like that. You need to go home and...”

“No we need to...”

“Mena listen to me. I heard everything you said and I also have something very important to tell and show you but that will be tomorrow. I promise to come over tomorrow morning to explain, please, you need rest. Please I’m begging you. Please go home please.”

“You promised to come tomorrow morning?”

“Have I ever failed to fulfill a promise?”

He had forgotten his betrayal. He shouldn't have asked that question.

“No, I will go home, just come tomorrow, let's finish this okay?”

He heaved a sigh of relieve.

“Thank you Mena, make sure you sleep. We will try start sorting everything tomorrow okay?”

“Okay Wolf.”

He cut the call and as he went back inside, he knew tomorrow was going to be tough. He did not join her immediately, he had to take his bath and put on his night wears. It was clear she was

waiting for him because she sat up immediately he entered the room.

“You look better now” she said as he joined her.

“Pearl.”

“Yes?”

“Will your masters come pick you up before the deadline?”

“Never. Rules must be followed. We keep to rules and a deal must not be broken. They will come pick me after the deadline, don't worry we still have time together.”

“Do you really want to go back? Do you still hate me that much?”

She sat up and looked at him. He had no idea what she was trying to figure out.

“What?” he asked after she did not say anything.

“Don’t you want me to go back? You said I’m a nightmare, I know what nightmares...”

He pulled her to him. He could not take the pains he saw in her eyes. He was an idiot, a big one. He had said it out loud.

“I thought you were my nightmare and I’m sorry. I was wrong, you are a dream, a beautiful dream I don’t want to wake up from. I don’t ever want you out of my sight. I’m sorry Pearl.”

She started crying and robbing her face on his chest. He tried figuring what he said wrong.

“Pearl I don’t feel well when you cry. You want me to be sick?”

She shook her head.

“Then stop, if you feel sad just talk to be, run to my arms and I will hold you but don’t cry okay?”

She nodded.

“But I can’t stay” she said in between tears.

“Why?”

“Because it’s the deal. I’m not supposed to stay and they are not supposed to fight you. I shouldn’t have taken the ikewu, it’s because of me.”

“Pearl what deal is that? I am your father and I don’t care about any deal. I’m keeping you.”

“You won’t understand.”

“Then make me or should I search your bag?”

“Don’t you dare?” she shouted sitting up.

“Exactly, I won’t want anyone to sniff on me too but you have to tell me yourself, so I can protect you.”

“They will never hurt me.”

And she was very sure of that.

“But they will try to hurt me and others.”

“The leader won’t let them because it’s part of the deal, but they will come for me, that is a must. It’s the deal.”

“Pearl do you want to go?”

She did not answer, she just rested back on his chest and grabbed his neck. But he could feel her response, it was neither yes nor no. That was progress.

After dropping Pearl in school, he got a call from Teji. He was already on his way to their house. Damn it! he had forgotten Mena was actually going to the family house.

“Wolf you better be here now” Teji said cutting the call.

His voice said it all. They all knew about Ese. He increased his speed.

Mama's scream hit his chest the moment he got close to the door. He had seen Bridget driving Fego and Vona to school so Tega would be around.

The sight before him was worse. Mama was wailing on the ground while Mena was begging on her knees. Tears was visible in the others' eyes.

“Ewo, my pikin don die, Ese is dead oo. Ha, death you leave me collect my pikin. John nor reach you collect” Mama screamed.

“Mama please, you've been like this since last night, please na” Hacker pleaded holding her hand.

He was not helping issues because he too was crying. Oliver and some of the boys were in the parlor. Reverend was weeping.

“Mama I’m sorry, please...”

“You are still here, I told you to get out, get out. You and James killed Ese, you killed my daughter. Just get out, go and bring back Ese, the living Ese, don’t call me Mama, get out” Mama shouted in Urhobo rushing at Mena but was held back.

She hardly spoke her language, just Urhobo. Did she not see how Mena was looking ill? She too was in pain.

“Tega, Teji, Hacker, Reverend shay you were here when my granddaughter was begging me to let her mother come home.

Oh see how she was crying when I told her Ese can come home, she was crying and I was thinking she was just happy. I never knew they were tears of sorrow, of pain, of sadness. She was crying and begging for her dead mum to come home. A little girl made to go through all this pain. She is too young but she must have watched her mother suffer and Ese must have told her she

wanted to come back home. She wants to be buried close to John. And I've been rejoicing my daughter was finally coming home, only to find out it's her corpse they will be bringing. Chia, what will I tell them, what will I tell John when I go there what will I say, that we could not take care of his woman. Ha, Ese why, Ese why will you send your mum to her grave with sorrow, you could have just come back home, you would have ignored James and Mena, how I'm I supposed to bury you? Ogheneme.”

Mama wailed in Urhobo.

Everybody was crying and he could not just stand it.

“Mama, please now, please get up and take something, you have to think of us” Tejiri pleaded.

“Take what? My daughter have been in the mortuary for a month and you are telling me to eat. Eat what. Mena I have told

you I don't want to see you, go and bring back Ese" Mama screamed.

"Mama stop" he shouted.

"Mena has suffered enough, just stop" he continued.

That was when everybody noticed him. Mama suddenly stood up and rushed at him. She gripped his T-shirt and started punching him.

"Where is my granddaughter? You are not fit to be her father.

Bring her now and take Mena and disappear. Go and enjoy your life and leave us to our sorrow. Evil heart, wicked and unforgiving heart, the two of you fit each other. Are you now satisfied? You wanted to kill her? Are you now happy she is dead? Answer me" she shouted.

No one stopped her and he did not even want her to stop as long as she stopped attacking Mena, he would take the blame.

“Bring my granddaughter to me now” Mama screamed.

She left him and threw herself on the ground. He tried to pull her up but she fought him.

“Leave me alone, Warri come and see me oo, this my white hair has witnessed a lot of sorrow. John is dead and now Ese. Warri tell James to go and bring my granddaughter, Teji, Tega what are you doing? Go bring Pearl now” Mama shouted.

She stood up to fight him again but fell making everyone to rush to her.

“Teji what’s wrong?” he asked as he carried Mama to a bed they had put in the parlor.

“You are asking me what is wrong with an old woman wailing the death of a daughter she had been waiting to come home?”

Tejiri shouted.

Tejiri took the soaked towel Hacker was giving him and placed it on Mama’s head.

“You know she collapsed when it really dawn on her that Ese’s corpse was coming home not Ese?” Hacker said.

“She had refused Mena inside but later agreed after we made her remember Ese will be coming home soon after Pearl goes back.

But Mena had been confused with our statement, then gradually things started unravelling and Mama fainted. It’s not long she woke up” Tega said.

“I’m sorry” Mena cried.

He turned to look at her. She was still on her clothes and he could bet with his life that she had not eaten since the day before.

“Even if you are all mad at her, do you have to treat her this way? Are you all mad?” he asked moving over to Mena.

He pulled her to him.

“Both of you are the mad ones here. The reason Ese is dead is because of both of you” Reverend spoke for the first time.

“They are still here” Mama shouted.

She had sat up again.

“Get out, bring my granddaughter and get out.”

“Mama do you want to bury two daughters? Can’t you see Mena?”

“I will even bury you with her. Get out” Mama shouted.

“Mena please stop crying. You need to rest” he said pulling her up.

“Let’s go to my place” he said.

“Go where?” Mama shouted.

“You said we should leave.”

“You dey craze for your head. I said you should bring my granddaughter and disappear. Where is she?”

“Mama that will never happen. Pearl is going nowhere.”

Everybody started shouting at him. They accused him of having no remorse. If only they knew the turmoil he was going through.

They would never be able to hate them more than they hated themselves. They should have noticed that in Mena at least. She was suffering from regret and self-blame.

“Teji go and bring my granddaughter now” Mama shouted.

“You know nobody will dare try it. I want to see who will try take her from me” he said using his warning voice and from their reactions he knew they got it.

“Are you now threatening your family? Wolf why are you this heartless?” Reverend shouted.

“Yes I’m heartless. I agree with you. But look at Mena, does she look heartless to you. You can’t hate her more than she hate herself. For two weeks now she had been running around looking for Pearl to the extent she was threatened. Does she look like the Mena we know? She is hurt too. She is suffering too. Even more than you Mama. I realize it now. Teji was right. Ese was the worst hit when John died and all of us had failed to realize that then and we are all repeating the same mistake. Right now Mena is worst hit because she knows she should have done something. I hate myself now. Try increase your hatred for

us, it won't be near what we are feeling right now. You want Mena to die before you know she is suffering from the choices she made?" he shouted at them.

"You want us to leave, fine. But no one dares touch my daughter. She has gone through a lot and I will never allow her witness a scene like this. She woke up smiling this morning and I left her in a state of happiness and that is how it will be. She does not even want to talk about her mum. She was trying to tell me herself but she stopped. She said it's a sad story and she is not ready. I'm not bringing her to see Mama in this state" he continued.

"What are we going to do about Ese? What are we going to do Wolf, now that you have succeeded in killing her" Mama shouted.

“Better Mama, attack me all you want, but leave Mena out of this. I’m the one Ese was running from not Mena.”

And Mama started wailing again. Did she realize what her screams were doing to him? She should have sliced him with a knife, that would have been better.

“Mena stay here” he said walking over to Mama.

Mama tried to fight him as he tried embracing her but he overpowered her and she succumbed and wailed on his shoulders.

“Mama listen to me very carefully. As much as I want to hide the truth from you, it’s not possible anymore. You are free to be mad at me and Mena but can you suspend that for now? We cannot bring Ese home right now. Listen to me first. I don’t know how much Mena and Hacker has told you but Mama I am going explain the situation in a way you will understand.”

“Wolf stop. Don’t” Hacker protested.

He still held on to Mama and continued.

“You know John and I were among the best soldiers?”

Mama’s reaction showed she was listening.

“We are more of executioners; that is we kill criminals who most times will have a death sentence in court. We make sure they don’t stress the government in court but Mama we carry out our investigation; that is, we follow them to make sure they are criminals and to make sure we are not being used to kill innocent citizens or political enemies. Now for a soldier to get to my team, the person must be able to fight on air, water and land. The person can shoot someone who is at the market. You know how market is far from here?”

Mama nodded.

“But we can shoot and kill someone at the market from here and so many other things. There is another name for the criminal side of what we do, they call it assassins. That is people who do what we do but they do not care who they kill as long as they are paid well. Mama we have many but most are very useless and not well organized. But Mama I just discovered that there may be a group who is as organized as my team, Mama they are top assassins. People watch them in films and they exist in great countries. But this is the first time I’m noticing a group that may be as deadly as my team. I know that Mama because of Pearl. Pearl was sent in a carton and Hacker cannot trace them. They are aware of what is happening to Pearl in school. Pearl can fight very well and she beat up four big boys in her school and not even a scratch touched her body. I watched the fight and I took her to the gym and Mama even my gym trainer confirmed it that whoever is training Pearl is dangerous and she is a lethal

weapon. What that means is that Pearl is like a gun, a very powerful one. And they are training her to become like them and you need to see what she can do and she is just seven. She has gadgets I have no idea are existing. I met her on the roof of my building yesterday night, and her climbing skills are perfect.

Mama I cannot fully tell you what is going on but I have added one plus one together. Ese went through a lot and I know I caused everything. They must have discovered Pearl and made a deal with Ese, making me believe Ese was well taken care of during the last months of her life because these trainings she already know can't be taught in a month. I think the deal is for Pearl to come here for a month to find a way to bring Ese home because Mena was not responding to her email, then after Ese is buried or after the deadline, they will come pick her up. And she had succeeded already because you already told her Ese can come home. Right now, she is not sure if she wants to stay or go

back. I cannot use force on Pearl because she is me and I know I hate force. I'm trying my best to make her know I don't want her to go back, she wants to stay but she keep insisting on a deal. That's why I said they are deadly and organized. No one will hire an assassin they cannot trust. They always keep to a deal and they eliminate, I mean they won't hesitate to kill anyone who prevents them. Mena has already been warned."

Mama's reaction showed Mena had not told them.

"Yes, you need to understand Mama, she has been in Benin trying to locate Pearl but she was warned. They told her to fulfill Ese's wish and disappear or she might get hurt. So listen to me Mama. Right now we can't get Ese out of Benin because once that happens, your granddaughter will be taken away."

"No.."

“Mama I know, me too but you all have to listen to me if you want Pearl to stay. We are not dealing with petty criminals or dangerous drug Lords or arms dealer. These are highly trained and Pearl says they will surely come for her but I will not let that happen. I also know they are aware Mena will tell me what happened with the hope I will track them to Benin but that will also not happen. We were trained to map out our circle and defend it. That is what I’m going to do. My circle right now is Pearl and I won’t let her out of my sight.”

“But what if they come for you? You heard what Ray said. They are dangerous Wolf” Hacker said.

“My pikin ooo” Mama said resuming her cry.

He gently pulled her to face him.

“Mama do you trust me?”

Mama nodded.

“Then you should know I told you all these so you will know I’m like them too. I’m not easy to kill. Let me handle this. I just need all of you to do one thing. Just try and act as if everything is normal for the sake of Pearl please. She does not know we are aware of her mum’s death and she said she will tell me when she is ready and I want it to remain like that.”

“What if they come before the time?” Tega asked.

“They will not, they won’t break the rule they have installed in Pearl. It will destroy everything they had taught her. They have never used force on her and so far, they had taught her about rules, trust and deal and they will not want a situation where they will have to force her to learn because you heard what Li said. They are using her zeal and gift and they won’t want to

mess it. But they will surely come for her after the deadline” he answered.

“How are you going to stop them? Wolf this is bad” Tejiri asked.

“I need everything to return to normal so I can focus. I can’t focus when Mama and Mena are looking like they will be admitted soon. Pearl is like me, she can easily read emotions and I don’t want her to see this. Mama and Mena you are going to take your bath, eat and rest. Let’s focus on making sure Pearl stays. Okay?”

Mena walked over to Mama afraid of another rejection. Mama was now noticing her for the first time. Mama allowed her to hug her and they resumed their tears. So much for his long speech. All of them joined in the group hug, even Reverend joined them. At least their tears was for a different reasons.

Pearl's masters were playing a game he was all too aware of and he would not be trapped. There was no way he would go to Benin when his Circle was in Warri. He was the one with the baton and he was not passing, the race was over. Pearl was gradually accepting him and they were not the only one who knew coercion did not work on Pearl. They might have been thinking he would use force on her, but they had no idea Pearl was him hundred percent him. He was going to make them talk to him. Even if it might not help his plan, they would surely respond to what he was planning to do and then when they came for Pearl, when they would come to dare him, he was going make sure every bullet would count because he was playing no games when it came to Pearl, he was going to shoot to kill.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO {Day 6}

Mama and Mena had finally slept off after he made them take their bath and eat the yam pepper soup he had prepared. That was progress. Even Reverend had slept off in one of the rooms. Apart from Bridget, others were sleeping when he drove off to pick Pearl from school. She ran into his open arms all smiles and laughter.

“What’s the happiness for?” he asked still holding her.

“I’m just happy to see you.”

This was what he wanted, he would not let her see the sadness in family house.

“Me too” he said kissing her forehead and placing her down.

He knew Mena would have to meet her but he wanted to go on with his plan before that.

“Hey pup, don’t open the door and don’t climb the roof except you want me to be picking you up by 7:PM” he warned as he got to the door.

“Don’t worry Wolf, I will use the gym and watch TV” she answered.

The guys were already awake and were eating eba with banga soup when he entered. Bridget was not around.

“Where is Mena?” he asked.

“In her room” Tega answered.

She was looking a bit relaxed in her sleep. She looked like a burden had been lifted from her shoulder. After seeing the pain of rejection Mena faced, he understood a little of what Ese must have gone through. His heart ached just thinking about it. He sat

down on the bed and she opened her eyes immediately he held her hands.

“You are looking better” he said touching her forehead.

He let her pull him to her and tried not to crush her with his weight but she actually wanted it that way.

“All this while I thought I was hurting you and Ese. I thought I was hurting you when I got married. I made sure Teji told you but I was actually hurting myself. I can't believe I left you for a beast. I should have let go, I should have....”

“Sssh Mena let's not go there okay. It's past, I hate dwelling on the past. He is dead and I won't be able to kill him myself but that's over. You know Wild my ex comrade. He always said the past cannot be rewritten, it's past. Instead we have to know how to handle the consequences from the past. Ese is not coming

back but she left us with Pearl. Let's face the consequences and move on" he said trying to shift away.

Reason being he might be suffocating her and most importantly, the feelings and reactions from his groins due to the close contact but she held on.

"Mena, I'm crushing you."

"I want you to."

"I may do more than crush you."

"I don't care. I can feel it" she said rubbing his back.

"This is not the right time" he said finally pulling away.

"You did not get married, why?"

"You know the answer to that question Mena."

Then she started crying. What was with the new Mena?

“Not again Mena.”

“I’m a fool, a big one. I keep thinking of how life would have been if I had forgiven and let go, even when I knew it was a mistake, my mind could not take it that you slept with Ese. Even when I knew it was a drunken mistake, I should have let go, Ese won’t be dead...”

He pulled her to him and ignore his body’s reaction.

“I thought we’ve settled the issue of the past. If you don’t let it go, we can’t face the consequences.”

“Can I meet her? Please?”

“No, except you promise to rule your emotions, I can’t let her see you like this.”

“Okay, I promise I will not cry in her presence. Please let me see her, so I can believe she is real.”

“I thought you said you have her pictures?”

“Yes, but it just looks like a small version of Ese having your eyes, I need to see her Wolf.”

“You will do that but I need access to your email. Your email address and your password.”

“Why?”

“Do you trust me?”

She nodded.

“Just give me the address and password” he said leaving the bed before he did something stupid at the wrong time.

He left her in the room and entered the parlor. They were through with their food and Mama was already awake but she was resting on Hacker’s chest which must have been from force

to prevent her from standing up. She seemed a bit better and she was not crying.

“Hacker you need to do something for me” he said.

“What is it?”

“That will be in your office, let’s go” he said.

Mena entered the room with a paper which she gave to him.

She was standing very close to the couch Tega was sitting and she was pulled to him.

“You still need to sleep, I don’t know why Wolf had to wake you up” Tega said, his hands on her back as she rested her head on his shoulder.

“I’m fine Tega” Mena replied.

“Hacker let’s go” he said same time Bridget entered with Vona and Fego.

Vona ran to grandma and of course Fego ran to her dad. Tega now had two ladies in his arms.

Bridget was a woman Tega did not deserve, he was just lucky to have her. Most women would have reacted with suspicion if they saw another woman in the arms of their husband. Even though most would also try to hide that they did not care, their non-verbal language always exposed them but Bridget was just natural with her I-don't-suspect-you expression. She trusted Tega enough and that was all. Tejiri relieved Hacker of his position as Hacker joined him.

“I’m coming with you” Mena said.

“No” everybody shouted, including Mama.

“Mena, you are looking too lean, still sleep, go and sleep” Mama spoke in Isoko, which was actually her tribe.

She used Urhobo when she was angry or very sad.

“Wolf, you promised?” Mena said.

“I will come pick you up when I’m through with Hacker” he said.

“But that will be a waste of time. Let me just follow you and we can go from wherever you are going to with Hacker, then I can finally come home to rest. Please” Mena pleaded.

He nodded.

“You’ve never said no to her before, nothing has changed”

Mama said still in Isoko and closed her eyes.

As they came outside Bridget ran to him and pulled him aside.

“Wolf thank you, I don’t know how you did it but the chaos I left this morning is no longer there when I came back. Thank you Wolf” Bridget said hugging him.

“Just make sure they are better before I come back” he said hugging her back.

“I will try my best” she said going back to the house.

“Log into this email and let’s see if we can contact Ese” he told Hacker as soon as they entered his office.

There was just one person outside because of the assignment he had given them. One of them should be some kilometers from his house.

“Bros you hear wetin you talk just now?” Hacker asked.

“Yes, I have a feeling her email may still be active. First send a message to her then I will tell you what to do if no one responds.”

“Okay” Hacker said logging in Mena’s email using one of his systems.

“Wait Hacker, disconnect this laptop from all your gadgets.”

Hacker did not question him but did as he said.

“I’m in” Hacker said.

Mena directed him to Ese’s email address.

“Okay?” Hacker asked.

He took the system from Hacker and typed a message.

‘I am writing hoping Pearl’s master will see this. I am grateful for what you did for Ese and I’m willing to pay back every dime you spent but that will be all. I am not going to let Pearl out of my sight. Wolf’ Then he pressed send.

“Let’s wait for five minutes” he said.

“Bros that’s too short na” Hacker said.

“No, it’s even too long. This people are very active” he answered.

“You are right somehow, the email has been sent meaning her email account is still active” Hacker said.

“Then they must have already seen what I sent” he said.

“I am not sure they will answer you” Mena said.

He took the system and typed another message.

‘I got the message you sent through Mena, thanks for the invitation but I’m not coming to Benin. I will be waiting for who will enter my territory to take Pearl. I’m playing no games. I’m sure you must have done your investigation very well and Ese must have told you a lot. So let’s not make this difficult for Pearl. She does not want her masters to die but that will not change the fact that I will kill anyone who will come to pick her up. I’m not

warning you, I'm telling you what I'm going to do.' He pressed send and waited.

"If they don't respond in the next five minutes, you are going to try hack Ese's email."

"Bros nor too hype me na, you know say me nor reach their levels" Hacker protested.

"I know, but they will respond and they may crash your system. That's all. I want to make sure they got my message" he said.

"Shay you go buy am back?" Hacker asked.

"Deal" he said.

Five minutes came, yet no response.

"Do it" he told Hacker.

He tried to follow Hacker's operation and tried to understand those many numbers flowing with speed, some red, some green some blue but just felt headache.

"Damn" Hacker said.

"What is it?" he asked.

He looked at the system, there was something off. The numbers were running down before but it was now running up like someone was reversing what Hacker has done. Soon, the running stopped but almost immediately, it started running down again.

"Shit. Damn it. This was a bad idea" Hacker shouted trying to counter it.

"Teg, what is it?"

That was what Mena called him.

“They are not trying to hack my system but Mena’s email.”

“No” he and Mena shouted.

“Can you stop it?” he asked.

“I’m trying to” Hacker answered.

“They have it Wolf” Hacker said after some seconds.

This was not what he wanted. Yes; he now knew they got his message but he never planned Mena’s email was the collateral damage.

“I understand Wolf” Mena said resting on his back.

“Wolf see” Hacker said.

There was a message from Ese to Mena. They responded.

‘Wolf’ was written in capital letter.

Another message came.

‘You and Mena should do the needful. Bury Ese close to John, get married and enjoy your life. Pearl is leaving after the deadline and there is nothing you can do about it.’

‘Then get ready to die’ he sent back.

‘You won’t even see us coming Wolf. It was all Ese’s wish. She wanted her daughter to be with us and that is how is gonna be. Stop feeling like a father, you are not one. You wouldn't even have known Pearl if we had not rescued her from Agege’s men. She would have been with a Pedophilia or dead. I won’t start giving you details of their life and suffering but if you have any humanity in you, you won’t start claiming Pearl all because you donated the sperm for her existence. Pearl belongs to us now and you can only kill who you see. You have no idea how many of us want to meet you. Mena’s email account is the only favor she will get. Don’t dare try it again.’

He read the message twice and also for the third time. Mena had already resumed her tears. A video came into the system before he could reply.

Hacker played the video and he wished he did not watch.

It was a room, should be a private hospital room. It was made to look like a normal room with lots of flowers. Ese was lying down on the bed with Pearl in her arms. His eyes caught the machine and he just knew Ese was gone. There was a song playing in the background. The lyrics sounded sorrowful.

‘Put a candle in your window, cause I feel I’ve got to move.

Then I’m gone, I will be coming home soon. Long as I can see the light. Pack my bags let’s get moving, cause I’m bound to drift away, then I’m gone, you don’t have to worry. Long as I can see the light.....’

A doctor whose face had been cut off came to wake Pearl up.

Pearl looked at the doctor and there was knowledge in her eyes.

She did not cry, she kissed her mum.

“Don’t worry mum, just hold on okay? I promise to take you

home. I promise to take you to John, so you can rest well there

okay? I promise that you will rest with John on my birthday

okay? I promise to make sure it’s my birthday, then I can never

forget the day, then I will always know you started resting on

my birthday. Just wait okay?” she said kissing her forehead.

But she started crying when Ese was being covered with a white cloth.

“Mummy, mummy, I will miss you mummy” she said in

between tears.

Her tears was heart breaking. She kissed the covered cloth and Ese was lifted out of the bed. Someone held her, should be a female. She cried on the female.

“Mummy I will bring you home. I will bring mummy home” she said as the lady consoled her. The video stopped.

Hacker and Mena were crying and he felt tears run down his eyes. Watching that video was more painful than John’s death.

What had he done? What had Pearl gone through? She was just seven, just seven and not supposed to even know death not to talk of making promises adults made. While he had been safe in Warri, his daughter was going through hunger and things he did not want to think about. Mena was not responding to her email and Ese was now forced to make her daughter do what adults were supposed to do as an alternative. Then she had finally find her way to Warri just a week after her mum’s death, to her dad

but what had he done? He had rejected her and insulted her mum in her presence, her mum who just died few days before her arrival. How many times had she told him to stop insulting her mum? Then he had even thrown her to the couch and she had acted like she was not hurt, then on few occasions he had seen her cry but he didn't care. Until she had attacked his bed and shot at his door, he never stop bringing Ese to the forefront. No wonder she did not care if he chose to beat her as long as her mum was not insulted and all this while, he never knew that a little girl had been forced to go through a lot and he could imagine Ese's fears, knowing she could die and Pearl would have to wonder on her own, yet her father had money, enough money that could have saved her at the early stage of cancer. This was the result of his anger, bitterness and unforgiving heart. What if Ese was never pregnant? She would have died just like that. This was the woman his best friend left behind. What had

he done? Mama would not be able to survive this video. If only Mena had let go, if only he had let go and not try to kill Ese, he wouldn't be in this mess, he wouldn't be feeling the piercing stabbing pain in his heart. He wouldn't watch his daughter cry for her dead mum. This was the result of their decision, and right now, he was jealous of John and Ese, because they were the ones at rest. He and Mena would have to live with the guilt, the consequence of their actions. How would he now be able to beg Ese for mercy, how? What if those masters did not find Pearl? No, he could not even think about it? He got their message. He understood everything. He was not fit to be a father. They were right, he should not be dragging Pearl with them because they had been a better father to her but they were also wrong. Even though he was not qualified to be a father, Pearl was fit to be a daughter. He felt guilty but he also knew letting Pearl go was not the solution. That would be making Pearl lose her parents

twice. Pearl did not deserve to go through another torture of losing another parent. If he let her go because he wanted to punish himself, he would end up punishing Pearl and he would never let that happen. It was clear she had always wanted her father and their case was unique because she was a replica of his childhood. Even though he pretended not to notice, he had seen how Pearl stared at Tega and Fego, how she looked at fathers dropping their children in school and how she was now clinging to him. He would find another punishment for his crime but releasing Pearl was not it. He was going to make sure she kept smiling the way she had been when he had picked her up and their emotional blackmail was not going to work. Nobody was taking Pearl away from him. Who knew if that was why Ese let Pearl come. Maybe she wanted him to have his pup, she wanted him to find forgiveness through Pearl. Ese was not dumb, she knew what she was doing and he was grateful to her because it

worked, he loved Pearl so much and he was not letting go. He did not fully know the kind of people he would be fighting but he was not dumb not to know how dangerous they were. They might overwhelm him because he had more to lose, his whole family could be in danger because of his decision. They were now his fears. Wild had said it was necessary to understand what one should fear because it was only then one could face it. Wild always said fear is for the brave, it is a personality cowards can never stare in the eye. Now that he had identified the obstacle, he knew he might need help because he could only focus on Pearl and his family was large. He might have to contact Wild.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE {Day 6}

Wolf was sad. She could feel it but did not know why.

Maybe because he really did not want her to go and she did not want to leave Wolf's hand. She was very happy and she was experiencing everything she had ever dreamt of about a dad but she knew she promised to follow the deal. It made her sad too.

Her last call to the Circle had not ended well. She was so mad at Sabrina and Mark. They had threatened to fight Wolf which was not part of the deal. Sabrina was begging and trying to explain when she cut the call. But she knew she had to call them; to sort things out as Major usually put it. TV was boring so she went to the shelf to check for books. Her eyes sighted where Wolf had written special. She took the stool and climbed to check what was special. The shelf was filled with newspapers. She threw them down, then jumped down to check them but gasped. Wolf knew them, he marked any news about the army with Special Force Team A. Beast said that was what they were called then.

Beast also said he and Wolf were cat and dog and they never agreed on anything, that was when he was out of control as if he was now under control. If not for Halima, there was nothing controllable about Beast. Wolf gave all of them names, Ghost was still ghost. As she glanced through the newspapers, she activated her hand band. They started calling her almost immediately.

“Yes?” she said after picking.

There was no sound for some seconds.

“Are you angry with me?” Cindy asked.

“No” she answered.

“What of me?” Halima asked.

“No” she answered.

“Then why did you cut us off? Pearl why?” Halima asked like she was about to cry.

“Because Sabrina shouldn’t have threatened Wolf” she said almost at the brink of tears too.

“Pearl do you have an idea of the scare you gave us? How were you expecting us not to be angry that you almost died?” Fast asked.

“But it was not Wolf’s fault.”

“He put ikewu in your food even when it was written in the paper” Cindy shouted.

“But he did not know, it’s my fault, I shouldn’t have eaten it.”

“That’s another issue. Pearl why did you eat the food after tasting the ikewu?” Wild asked.

“I can’t tell”

“Why?” Beast asked.

“Because you will be mad at Wolf and he did not mean it. Wolf has changed a lot and Sabrina shouldn’t have threatened him.”

“Was that enough reason to cut the call on us? Sabrina was apologizing but you deactivated the band. Do you not know how Sabrina loves you? She was angry with Wolf but that was not enough reason to cut us off” Major said.

“But she said she will have a death dance with Wolf, and Mark wants to fight Wolf. No one touches Wolf” she shouted.

“Damn. In conclusion she is now officially the Wolf’s pup. Mark did you feel it? Sabrina you are warned, don’t dare touch Wolf or else...wait or else what? Pearl you did not finish your threat, I’m stocked please help me out” Ghost said.

She started laughing. Ghost was just too funny.

“I will fight back I guess” she said.

“Pearl?” Ghost called.

“Yes Ghost.”

“You do me wrong, I’m sad.”

“What did I do? I was only mad at Sabrina and Mark.”

“Should I really tell you?” Ghost asked.

“Yes.”

“Okay, Sabrina threatened Wolf with death dance and you told us that Wolf wants to fight back, but instead of you to be worried about Sabrina who is your aunt, you were angry at her” Ghost said.

“I don’t understand” she said.

“Who do you think will win between Wolf and Sabrina? Then you want to join Wolf to fight her. I am still planning Fast’s burial you want me to add Sabrina? Kia that is not fair, who will wear her clothes?” Ghost asked making her laugh.

“Saheed are you mad? If you think Wolf is better than you, don’t rub it on my face” Sabrina shouted.

“Sabrina Wolf will beat you” she said.

“Don’t be too sure pup” Sabrina said.

“Don’t worry, I now pity you. I should have pitied you since because Wolf will just finish you. Ghost is right” she said.

“See this small pup, since when did she become this Wolfy” Mark said.

“Mark how far na, shebi you join follow the burial?” Ghost asked.

“Ghost I might bury you first” Mark warned.

They had started again.

“Chill, I’m not the reason Sabrina rejected you. Sabrina nor reach you show strength na ghost you won bury. Go find one fine girl cool down small. Why your blood dey hot? ” Ghost replied Mark and they started laughing but she did not understand what was funny.

“So the pup we sent to Wolf has been initiated into the pack.” Major said.

“And that was faster than I expected” Beast said.

“Does this means she won’t come back?” Mark asked.

“She has to” Wild said.

“No, I don’t want to. I like it with Wolf, I want to come and visit then come back to Wolf” she said.

“That’s not an option Pearl. Not now Pearl, you have to finish what you started” Wild said.

“What if it does not work?” she asked already crying.

“Do you trust your Mum?” Wild asked.

She nodded but remembered they could not see her.

“Yes.”

“Did you believe Wolf will accept you the way he had accepted you?” Wild asked.

“No.”

“What did you ask on your first day?” Wild asked.

“I wanted to come home” she answered.

“What if I had listened to you, would it have been better?” Wild asked.

“No” she shouted almost panicking.

“Then why do you think it will not work? Even if you don’t trust me, can you trust your mum?” Wild asked.

“But I don’t want to lose Wolf” she cried.

“Pearl do you trust your mum enough to follow on with the deal?” Wild asked.

“Yes” she cried.

“Then think about the decision you want to make and contact us when you are ready” Wild said.

“No, I’m ready, I will go with the deal” she said crying.

“I don’t like the fact that you are crying Pearl” Cindy said.

“I’m sorry, how are the babies? Where is Jason” she asked.

“Babies are asleep and Jason is here” Cindy answered.

“Pearl, don’t worry everything will be sorted out, your mum is coming home” Jason said.

“I know, thank you Jason.”

“Did you call your mum?” Jason asked.

“No, I don’t want to call her now, maybe when I’m happy.”

“Pearl please I’m sorry. I was angry and I’m sorry please don’t be mad at me” Sabrina said.

“Okay.”

“Pearl I’m sorry too. I hope Ray is okay?” Mark asked.

“I think so. Bye.”

“No Pearl, not in this state. Your tears is making Halima cry.

You need to stop crying please” Beast said.

“Okay. Halima I’m fine. I will see you soon” she said

deactivating the band.

She wiped the tears from her eyes and tried to smile, she was going to talk to Wolf and hope he would let Mum come home on Friday which was her birthday. Her eyes caught something on the newspaper she was currently holding. She gasped when she read the headline. It was about the bank robbery at Benin, the one Beast had gone mad and berserk. The one she would never forget.

It was Halima again. It was Thursday and Halima had picked her from school, she did not take lessons because she had a lot of lessons to do at home or at Halima’s Fashion store.

Thank God Halima had used her car because she hardly used it. She said she liked following the bus because it was very exciting.

When they went to new Benin market to purchase foodstuffs,

Halima would want to browse through all the shops before buying anything, she would take University of Benin shuttle knowing fully well it stopped at Main Gate. Then she would pass through the complex and come out of the gate, then enter a Bus shouting Oluku, Isihor. It was always hectic with Halima and she always had to do more work avoiding people she knew. The bank was worse, Halima would only use the ATM if the queue was very long. She said it felt better waiting for her turn and if she asked why, she would say it was because she was free. She had once asked her why she had faint mark on her body and she said it was her warrior's scar and she also said when she grew up she would explain everything to her. Weirdo.

That day, they had to enter the bank because Halima was going to deposit money paid by one of her customers and to Halima's joy, the bank was full and the line was long. She wanted to wee

wee and one of the security men had shown her where to wee
wee. Just when she was coming out of the rest room, she first
felt chills on her neck then it moved all over her body, it was so
uncomfortable. Something was wrong and it was getting worse.
It felt like danger. She rushed back to Halima on the line to tell
her she was not okay but felt very bad immediately she held
Halima. Then she remembered Beast had told her how her father
could sense danger and most times stopped it. She just knew
Halima was in danger. The line was long and curved that they
were by the receptionist desk. She dragged Halima with her.

“What is it Pearl?” Halima asked.

“Danger, I don’t know but let’s hide under this table please” she
pleaded.

There were many things she loved Halima for but this was one
of her top reasons. She listened a lot and Halima would prefer to

look stupid and be safe than to look brave and die. Halima followed her under the table which was big enough to take them. It was just when their full body had entered it happened. There was not enough time for people to even notice or question them; that was how slim they had escaped death. The robbers had entered through the normal door, the door Jason called emergency door, in case the glass door was faulty and people had to run outside. They opened fire anyhow and the person who had unconsciously shifted to Halima's position was hit on his head. That was the first time she saw a dead person. The gunshots were also heard outside, she had no idea who they were shooting.

She and Halima quickly activated their hand band. Halima was shaking so badly that she became the adult. She loosened the long hijab Halima had worn which was sometimes funny

because the day she did not wear it, no one recognized her. She always said people will recognize her for something she did not know. They kept too many secrets unlike Ghost. She used the hijab to cover Halima and told her to lie down. The gunshots had increased and people were screaming and groaning while the robbers shouted for everybody to lie down. The table was long and Halima was able to lie down using the length, the breadth was not that big. She lied down but could still somehow peep at the robbers' feet, because they would be the only one standing. She knew she was supposed to shake like Halima but she just could not. Her body did not shake and she was not afraid. Major said the thing always baffled him. She understood what fear was because she could see and know it from peoples' faces. She tried to count but could not count all, just twenty which was much.

“Chineye no” one of the robbers shouted same time a gunshot was fired. It was close to the counter.

“She dey make call, na she kill herself. Who be next” It must be Chineye because it was a girl’s voice she heard.

Another gunshot but fired up.

“Face down” one of them shouted.

He was kicking somebody.

“Oya, the money, fast now now” another one said.

She could hear the panic noise of a man.

“Go check with the bullion” one of them said.

Jason said bullion van was used to take money to the bank. Yes she had seen the van outside before they entered the bank. There was nothing like silence, either they were shouting and kicking and shooting or they were cursing using the F word.

“Oya all of you as I dey talk so, dey remove your phone, dey ready am, once my guy come, drop am with all all money and ATM for the bag. I nor go repeat myself, any fuckup go collect” another with deep voice shouted.

Halima might die from shaking too much. Jason was not around but Beast had called that he was on his way home and he was close by. Halima had been so excited like they had not seen each other for long. She would not be able to fight them and this people loved the fear they were seeing from people. They had started moving the bags and they kicked and hit those they thought were slow but more of those who were terrible afraid. Just when they got close to their side, the door burst open. It made her sit up under the table, the robbers were all wearing mask, which meant someone would recognize them. The door burst open not like it was opened with force, it was burst, like

broken, like pushed out of the wall and it landed on one of the robbers. It was not the fact that Beast was the person at the door, it was the fact that he had a car door with him that disturbed her. Two things happened at first before the other things followed. There was another robber standing close to the person the door hit, as the door was hitting that one, Beast was already on the one close to him. He stoned one who was about firing at him with the car door and same time used that one in his grasp to cover himself, Major said it was alternative bulletproof, it was his fellow robbers who killed him. Beast was very fast because he was already firing at them, same time running to the target he was not firing but using the dead robber to receive the bullet of the one he was running to, he met up with her, it must be the girl. He took her gun and shot another one. She was out with a knife but Beast had dropped that other one and use her to block a bullet which hit her on her stomach. Beast shot, ran and covered

himself with the girl. He was not running away, he was running to another one. With that same pattern he had the third and fourth bulletproof and it looked like the ones with gun were no more. He was just too fast and did not miss his target. She did not even notice she had sat up by the corner of the table to watch what was going on. Ghost had said a stray bullet could have hit her but she was not afraid. She counted four of them, they had knife and had their eyes towards the exit. They ran towards Beast who was blocking their escape. She almost screamed because they were four against one and they had knives and daggers and Beast should have at least shot like three before they got to him so he would only fight one, but he did not, neither did he bring out any knife, instead he threw his gun down and picked the first one to get to him. They all got to him same time but one was closer and Beast was fast, because as he was lifting the man, he was spinning him and the man received

the stabbing from his friends, he was still alive when Beast threw him very far stoning him to the wall, that was also the same time about two of them cut Beast, one on his shoulder and the other at his back. She was so worried but Beast turned to look at them making them pause their next strike. He looked at them like they just pissed him off. Their pause was just for a second because they attacked him at once but Beast blocked their attack with his elbow defense method. Fast taught her how to do that. As he blocked, he punched another, then blocked and punched and as the two on the ground tried gathering their strength, Beast picked the last one, pulled the knife away from his hand, raised him high with both hands, held his leg and hand and broke him, like he was breaking a broom stick, the man's scream was deafening but short. Beast took away the knives of the other two, picked them up, placed them by his sides and they really struggled to get out but she was the only one feeling and

noticing their struggle, Beast was not. He just used his arms on their neck and she heard the sound of their neck breaking, they could not even scream but the shock and pain was very clear in their eyes and mouth. She was not even sure Beast knew he was bleeding. Beast raised them and threw them to the wall.

His face even though with mask, did not look like the Beast she knew, it was making her feel like she was under a heavy rain with too many lightning and thunder making her shake for the first time since the robbers entered. She knew he was trying to find Halima among those on the ground, she wanted to call him but she was afraid he would break her neck or her waist.

“Don’t move yet, remain still” Beast commanded.

They remained more than still, they looked like log of wood.

“Any military or police or security here?” Beast asked but his voice was still thunder.

Someone stood up, then followed by another. The last one started touching some of the people on the ground. He shook his head.

“They are dead” the man said very sad.

“You should know the procedure but if you don’t know, you are going to stand by the door and everyone alive must come out with their hands up. You, search them and stop any one with weapon. You, search and collect every single phone on the body of the dead robbers” Beast instructed.

He looked at her and he immediately breathed a sigh of relieve.

Although she could not see his face, she knew he must have calmed down a little.

“Sir, I think there are some robbers outside guiding the bullion van and keeping watch....”

“All have been eliminated, I used a suppressor. It’s safe now, just follow the normal proceeding” Beast said interrupting the first man.

“Sir, I am privileged to witness one of the best of the Special force in action, thanks for helping my incompetence, you are a hero” the second man said.

“Do it now” Beast commanded walking outside.

She knew why he could not get to Halima, because Halima and her must not be known to relate to him. Everybody alive were told to raise their head and hand with their bag and move in a single file. Many were still afraid to stand up so she pulled Halima and whispered to her ears.

“He is waiting, lets’ go.”

Halima nodded and they were among the first group to go out.

There was blood everywhere. So many soldiers had arrived when they got outside. The soldiers saluted Beast who pretended not to see them as they passed to their car.

“Are you sure you can drive?” she asked Halima as she tried igniting the car because her hands were shaking.

Halima nodded. Soon they were on the road and not too long, she saw Beast’s pickup which he had changed from white to blue. He followed from a distance but sped up when they entered the street.

Immediately Halima stopped the car inside the compound, Beast was already opening the door and pulling her to him. Cindy was running out to meet her with her big stomach. She ran to hug Cindy and Cindy must have thought she was afraid

because of the robbery not knowing it was because of Beast.

Beast was shaking as he almost crushed Halima in a bear hug.

“Beast, I’m fine, calm down, Beast Halima is fine, it’s okay”

Halima kept saying.

She was not even protesting or fighting Beast’s hold. She could

see Halima was struggling to breathe and she would faint if

Beast did not release her but Halima did not fight him. She was

not even afraid, she allowed him crush her and even pulled

herself closer.

“Come back to me Beast, you got me on time, you got me, I’m

here with you Beast. I’m very much alive, Sssh calm down.

Calm down. It’s Halima” Halima continued saying but she was

struggling this time.

Slowly Beast stopped shaking and released his death grip on

Halima.

“That is great, just like that, I’m here” Halima said touching his chest and cheek.

“Halima, I thought I had lost you, I couldn’t have taken it” Beast said with too many emotions she could not interpret.

“Pearl helped, she pushed me down before they entered and the person standing close to me was shot, but I’m fine, God did it”

Halima said.

Beast turned to look at her making her push her face to Cindy.

He did not say any word to her, he just lifted Halima to him and started kissing her, like the way adults do. He carried her like that to the house.

“It’s okay Pearl, you have nothing to fear” Cindy said taking her inside with her.

Halima cried so much the next morning, she even had fever. It was because the woman Chineye, the female armed robber killed was supposed to get married on Saturday and the wife of the man that was shot instead of Halima, just had a baby girl, then one of the military men that died was married for just three months before the robbery. It was really sad and Beast had said that was what broke their heart. He told Halima that he did not regret anybody that died in his hands but he only had regrets for those he could not save.

It was later she was told she could sense danger like Wolf, then they started training her on how to manage her sensitivity but the major problem was her fear of Beast. Even after Ghost and Wild had talked to her she still could not go near him. Then one night, Beast had entered her room and made her sleep on his chest and told her stories of his fight with Wolf. That was how

the fear stopped but she was surprised it was Wild Halima was thanking the next day. Beast's picture on the newspaper must have been taken by the bank security camera. It was when he was still with the car door.

‘ONE MAN ARMY DESTROYS THIRTY FIVE ARMED ROBBERS’ the newspaper wrote.

They said the robbers came in their numbers because of the bullion van which had billions of Naira and their numbers was supposed to make them go scot free with maybe few casualties but they had met their end when the Unknown Soldier raged towards them like an enraged beast rendering them incapacitated.

They wrote that the picture seen on the newspaper was the only image they could rescue from the bank's crashed system. If only they knew he was actually called Beast. She did not have the time to open another newspaper because Wolf was around.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR {Day 5}

She had wanted to put them back but changed her mind. She arranged the newspapers and was reading the bank robbery news when Wolf entered inside. He was looking so sad.

“Are you okay?” she asked but he did not answer.

He came to her chair and placed her on his lap.

“Seven year olds don’t read newspaper and they are not interested in news like this.

His voice also sounded sad. What was going on?

“But Mum said you and John loved reading newspapers.”

“I know, that’s why I’m not surprised. I know him.”

“Know who?”

“This soldier with his covered face. He was one of the best and he was part of my team.”

“The paper said he fought many armed robbers. But how do you know it’s him?”

“I don’t need to see his face to know. His name is Obinna, we called him Beast because he behaved like an angry lion.”

“Where you friends?”

“No. We were like cat and dog but we became non enemies before I left.”

She wanted to know more.

“Did you fight him? Who won?”

“Nobody, we never got to the end because we had a commander, we called him Major, he used to shoot us with guns when we

misbehaved. He made sure he gave us a clean shot, that is, it will not kill us.”

She gasped. Sabrina always did that. So she took it from her dad.

“I can see you are surprised, that was how crazy he was and I don’t blame him, we too were crazy. We were just five but very difficult to control.”

He had no idea why she gasped but she still wanted to know more. Beast had said Wolf always liked to provoke him by making fun of his mum’s gift to him.

“What of females?”

“Nope, all males.”

“Who was the best?”

“You seem interested. I don’t know but there was just one I never wanted to have any issue with.”

“Was it the beast guy?”

“Nope, his name is Wild.”

She gasped again. Wild was not that dangerous. Okay he had a way of making everyone fear if he wanted to but Wild was not that bad.

“You are shocked again. His name is not really Wild, his name is Ola, but I don’t know what follows after Ola. Major called him Wild because he was out of control.”

“Was he your leader?”

“Nope, we had none, just Major. We were all leaders in our own right.”

So Wild became Circle leader but not Special Force Team A.

“Was he that bad?” she asked.

“Yes, he had a way of twisting someone’s mind.”

“I don’t understand.”

“That is he can make someone believe anything. But that is not all. He was bad from when he was small. He killed.... I mean hurt a lot of people before he became an adult.”

She looked at him and hoped he got the message. He should keep deceiving himself and believe she did not know he meant kill and not hurt. But the news was shocking to her. Wild never spoke of himself apart from the wife she had never seen.

“Is he married?”

“He did child marriage, that is, when someone gets married when he is not yet an adult but he told us she is missing and he was still looking for her when I left the military, he must have found her by now.”

No he hasn’t. He is still searching.

“There were so many marks on his back and he never told us exactly what they were for, he would just say they were trophy marks, but later, I got to know it was the number of people he hurt, that is those who hurt his family, he hurt them back and marked the number on his back” Wolf said making her gasp again.

She had seen it and it was much, almost all his back. Wild was really dangerous, how did he kill so much before he turned eighteen.

"That's enough scary story for the day" Wolf said taking the newspaper from her hands.

“But why do you have all these in a special place and why are you marking them?”

“I’m following up my team. They should be seven in number with one crazy female.”

She gasped again. If only the Circle knew Wolf knew them. He even knew Sabrina was crazy. Wolf was really dangerous and she must be very careful.

“Can you do it?” she asked jumping on the table.

Wolf was putting the newspapers back. He looked at her like he was about to shout but stopped. He did not know it was cool jumping on tables and couch.

“Do what?”

“Destroy those armed robbers like the beast guy?” she asked jumping to the couch.

“The Beast guy is very powerful, he can carry things ten of me can't raise but most times it is when he is pissed off, he almost killed me, then John with a log of wood.”

She knew that. Wild told her.

“We are all dangerous when we are pissed. I destroyed more than hundred after John died because I was pissed off” Wolf said raising her as she tried jumping back to the table.

“I read everything and I think something more than that happened. I don’t know if he is married. I followed one of his mission where he rescued one Halima from captivity but I don’t know if he is married. He liked chubby, tall and fair women then but I just know someone he loved or care about was in that bank.”

She was very happy she was on Wolf’s shoulder, her cover would have been blown. She had almost mentioned that she knew Halima but stopped and listened. Nobody told her that. Nobody told her Halima was captured and Beast had rescued her and then married her. But Wolf just described the opposite of Halima because Halima was slim, short and dark and beautiful

with pretty big eyes. She wanted to ask more but knew she would disgrace herself. She was almost composed when Wolf dropped her down.

“We never know how dangerous we are until something dangerous threatens our loved ones or we want to make someone pay. I don’t know who Beast was protecting but he had done something like that before, he had slowly hunted some people and it looked more like a revenge, but that bank robbery was different, there was someone there, someone very special to him who lives in Benin. I can do more if I’m in that situation, like if someone tries to hurt you. I will do more than that” Wolf said kissing her forehead.

But she knew he was also saying he would not allow the Circle take her back. She hoped Wild was right.

“Enough of my former life Pearl. I want you to meet someone.”

“Who?”

“A friend and a family member. She is Mama’s last born and Teji’s younger sister.”

“Mena?” she shouted.

Wolf was shocked for a second.

“Where is she? She wants to meet me? Like meet me for good not bad?”

She really wanted to know. Mum told her so much about Mena, more than she even told her about Wolf. Mena was the one she hurt the most.

“I guess your mum told you about her. Wait here let me call her in” Wolf said walking to the door.

She waited and feared what Mena would do. Mum said Mena might not want to see her and Mena might not want her to be

with Wolf. Mum said Mena belonged to Wolf but it was because of her that Mena did not marry Wolf. What if Mena asked Wolf to send her away? She was still thinking when Mena entered the house. She looked better in the pictures Mum showed her. She was looking too lean and too sad and she could almost feel her sadness. She slowly walked towards her like she could not believe she was looking at Ese's daughter. There was no hatred or anger in her eyes just too much sadness that was almost making her cry. Why was she and Wolf so sad?

“Hi, I can't believe you are real, like I'm finally meeting you. You are so pretty like your mum” Mena said squatting to her height and holding her hands.

“Mum said you are mad at her and you will be angry to see me, but Mum is sorry, she is very....”

Mena did not allow her finish, she pulled her against her and held her so tight.

“No no no. I am not mad anymore, I’m so happy to meet you. I love you so much to be angry with you. I love you so much”

Mena said crying.

“You do?” she asked joining her to cry.

“Yes, so so much. I’m so sorry I let your mum believe I hated her and I will hate you. I’m so sorry.”

She was now weeping and very sad.

“Mena...” Wolf called.

His voice sounded like a warning. Why was he getting mad at her?

“I’m sorry Wolf, I did not want to, it’s just that she is so much like her mum and....”

“Mena” Wolf called again making her to stop talking.

“Can I use the rest room?” Mena asked as Wolf pulled her away from her.

Wolf nodded and pointed towards his room. As Mena went to Wolf’s room, Wolf started cleaning her tears.

“Why is she sad?” she asked Wolf but he did not answer.

“Why are you sad? I know you are sad, why?” but Wolf did not still answer, he just kissed her cheek and carried her like she was a baby.

“I hate seeing you cry Pup” Wolf whispered to her ears.

She just grabbed his neck and rested her head on his chest and allowed herself to feel safe in her father’s arm.

“Is she staying?” she asked Wolf.

“No I’m not. I don’t want to ruin father and daughter time. But I hope you allow me stay one day?” Mena answered making her turn to look at her.

She was back and she was forcing out a fake smile.

“Mum said you belong to Wolf” she answered.

“Right now, I’m second in line. You belong to Wolf more than me. I know Wolf will not let me in if his pup says no. You are now the one in charge.”

“You mean it?”

“She does not need to pup, you are the one in charge” Wolf answered.

She looked at both of them, she was not lying and Wolf meant it.

She did not know if she should smile or cry.

“Will you let my mum come home?” she asked Mena.

“With all my heart Pearl. I want her home more than you think.”

She did not want to but she started crying. She could not wait to activate her band and call Mum and tell her everything. She would tell her that even Mena wanted her home. Jason did it for her. Jason made it that she can call Mum anytime. For a long time Jason visited Mum in the hospital, he said he and Mum were preparing a gift for her. Mum gave it to her before her last day. Mum told her she should just dial Mum when she was sad or happy. Jason was the best.

“Thank you” she said.

“Pearl I thought we settled you crying” Wolf said.

She held him very tight as the tears stopped.

“I need to go, I’m happy to see you Pearl” Mena said.

“Will you come back?” she asked.

“Yes. When Wolf wants me to.”

“I thought I’m in charge. I want you to.”

“Yes ma’am” Mena said making her laugh.

Supper was rice and stew and she kept thinking of how she would tell Wolf to let Mum come home on Friday. She thought she had the courage but she could not. Even when Wolf asked her what was wrong, she could not tell him. It was past twelve but she could not sleep. Friday was very close and Wolf needed to know. She summoned on courage and went to knock on Wolf’s door. He did not answer. She opened the door and was happy he did not lock it. She got close to the bed and just stood there. Suddenly, Wolf flipped her and she saw herself on the bed.

“What is it?” Wolf asked.

“I have something to tell you but I’m afraid you will not agree.”

Wolf switched on the light and looked at her. Then he pulled her to him and held her so tight.

“Pearl I know” Wolf said after some time.

There was sadness in his voice.

“You know about my mum?”

“Mena knew, then she told me.”

“How?”

“Ese always sent messages to Mena via email but she never read it until recently. Pearl I can't imagine everything you and your mum went through and I am the worst person on earth because I caused everything. I am going mad thinking about the things Ese told Mena, that you sold pure water, that you had to fight men to get money to take care of your mum. I am sorry Pearl, I am so sorry about your mum. I am so sorry that you had to grow up so

early. I'm sorry you were not allowed to be a kid, I'm sorry I lived in money while my daughter was suffering. I wish I can go back and change everything, Pearl please forgive this crazy Wolf.”

Wolf was crying, like real tears. He was the one who told her not to cry. How was she now supposed to listen when he was crying and when he was so sad, she could feel his sadness. She had never felt sadness like that before not even when Mum died.

“It's okay Wolf. It's okay. Just let Mum come home on Friday please” she said crying.

“I know Pearl. I saw the video. I saw you making promises adults are supposed to make, I'm sorry you had to promise your mum that. I'm sorry. Let's bring her home on Friday okay?”

She nodded.

“You are so sad Wolf.”

“Because I hurt your mum so much, I hurt the person who gave me the most precious gift. I was supposed to protect her.”

“But she said she hurt you too.”

“No she did not, we both hurt Mena but she did not hurt me. I’m sorry Pearl. I wish I can go back and change everything but I won’t want to change everything because you are too precious to change” Wolf said kissing her forehead.

“Thank you Wolf, I can fulfill my promise.”

“But it’s your birthday Pearl.”

“I know, but I want it that day” she cried.

“Okay let’s do that. I wish your mum forgave me. I can’t face her Pearl. I made her suffer and she would have been alive if I was not mad at her.”

She raised her head and looked at Wolf.

“That is not true. Mum needed to go, she needed to rest.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Mum was always sad, she said I made her sadness go away but I know she was still sad, some days she would wake up calling John’s name. She never stopped missing John. She said I was the only thing keeping her. I know she suffered because her breast swelled up and she was in pains but that was it. She said the pain will go and she will meet John. She was only afraid because of me but my masters saved me from Agege’s men and they helped us, they helped my mum. She hardly felt pain till she died. She was very happy from the day they started helping her. She had the best time of her life and she said she will go and rest. I really miss her and I cried even when she had told me not to cry because it hurt to lose her but it was the best for her. She

was not happy and she needed to rest. Some things happen that we cannot explain but God always have a way of giving his children an expected end. The doctor said that. Mum wanted you to be happy, she was not angry with you. She wants all of you to know it was what she wanted, that she is happy. She wrote letters for all of you, she said you need to know she is happy wherever she is. So don't be sad okay? Please Mum does not like it. Please.”

“I'm looking at you and I'm wondering if you are seven.”

“Mum taught me a lot.”

“Thanks Pearl, I needed this, Mena needs this” Wolf said holding her tight.

“I will give you the letter on Friday.”

“Pearl.”

“Yes Wolf.”

“That day I threw you on the couch, I saw it. I hurt you bad, I let you sleep on the ground and I starved you and I insulted your mum. I’m sorry I hurt you.”

“Mum said you were not stable that you might hurt me but you will not kill me. It’s okay Wolf. I know you are sorry.”

She could feel it, he was getting better.

“Pearl if you’ve forgiven me why do you want to leave? I can’t let you go.”

“But I have to.”

“Why? Do you know what you mean to me Pearl? You made me stable Pearl and I don’t want to lose you. I know I hurt you but I will never do that again.”

“I know, I’m sorry about the ikewu, I thought you did not want me.”

“Why will you think that?”

“You said mum should have aborted me. I later got to know the meaning of abortion.”

Wolf became still, he did not talk and she just knew she shouldn’t have told him.

“You heard that” Wolf said after some time.

He released his hold on her, like he was rejecting her. He sat down on the bed and used his palm to support his bent head. She rested on his shoulder.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have taken it. Don’t be sad” she cried.

She pulled him back and he allowed her.

“I have said too many sorries and I don’t know what to say again” Wolf said pulling her back to his chest.

“But I am still keeping you Pearl. I am not going to release you to those masters. I won’t survive it if I lose you.”

This was the bad thing she hated about the deal, she did not want to leave Wolf. She raised her head to look at him.

“Wolf do you trust me?”

But he chuckled.

“What?”

“I always ask that and you are not supposed to ask me that. Its questions adults ask.”

“I know but you have to trust me. Mum made another deal and it also involves you.”

“What deal was that?”

‘I can’t tell you. That’s where you have to trust me. Promise you will trust me.’

Wolf looked at her for a long time.

“Okay, I trust you.”

“Then please don’t fight my masters.”

“Not happening.”

“You promised.”

“Not that kind of promise.”

“Part of the deal is that they meet you one on one on Monday night. Please just trust me. I love you Wolf and I never want to leave you but you need to find out what the second deal means. It’s all about you and please no matter what I say or do just know I love you so much.”

He just looked at her.

“So you are saying there is a puzzle I have to figure out myself before your masters come?”

She nodded.

“And what if I can’t figure it out?”

“You will after. Just know my masters keep to a deal. They will have a meeting with you and tell you the deal themselves. No fighting.”

“But one of them wants to fight me.”

“She won’t dare, you will beat her.”

Wolf started laughing.

“What?”

“You are a feisty little pup.”

“I’m serious, they don’t play with a deal, she knows it. They were just angry about the ikewu. Please.”

“I can’t believe I’m doing this. But you’ve never really asked me something serious, and since you are the one in charge I am going to trust you Pearl. I wanted to call my friends but I am going to trust my seven year old daughter. Is that okay? You say Monday evening is meeting day right?”

“Thank you Wolf” she said holding him tight.

But she knew she had already made her decision, she felt so sad because of what she was going to do. But Mum was always right. She just hope Mum was right this time, because she would not forgive herself if she lost Wolf because of the deal.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE {Day 1. D-day}

He could not believe what he had promised Pearl. He should have not but he had already done that and he would not break his promise. She had said she loved him but yet to call him dad. Wednesday saw him in the family house after dropping Pearl in school. He called a meeting and told them the plan. There was no way he could stop Mama and others from crying but they all agreed to grant Pearl's wish to bring Ese home on Friday. When they were fencing their house, there was a land behind it which they had bought and that was where both Papas and John were buried. That was where they would bury Ese, very close to John's grave. Nothing much happened till Friday. He took Mena and Pearl out for dinner on Wednesday and Thursday and Pearl had always sneaked to his room every night, her reason was she wanted to be with Wolf. Very early on

Friday morning, Oliver, Teji, Hacker and Mena travelled to Benin to bring Ese home. Pearl had refused everyone from wearing black, instead they were all forced to wear a pink T-shirt and white trousers, which made them look ridiculous. Pearl wore same pink gown she wore the day she was delivered to him. The grave had been dug and it was made in a way that John's wall was extended to pass through Ese's grave and the last picture they had taken together was pasted on the wall. Pearl said Ese wanted just her family members and few friends and no food. But he did not take that last part. He made a birthday cake for Pearl. By 2:PM, Ese was laid to rest and surprisingly, only Pearl did not cry. She was smiling and radiating joy. She was the first to pour the sand and before they cemented it, she climbed the filled up grave. Then asked him for her cake.

“Mum I did it. Told you. What is heaven like? Is it beautiful like Cindy said? Are the streets really made of pure gold? Have you seen John? Did he recognize you? I know you are happy now. You have to because you deserve it. You were never happy here and you had to stay because of me but don't worry, Wolf is now my best friend. I know you won't believe it but it's true. And Mena is happy to see me. You were so wrong that she will be angry. She said she is sorry. Wolf too is sorry. They are still sad but I will give them your letters so Mama can stop crying and know this was what you wanted. You told me to do just one thing, you said I should be happy, I promise to be happy. Just don't be too happy and forget about me. I trusted you before and I will trust you now hoping that everything will work out fine. I am going to eat my birthday cake. Sorry I can't give you because it's not enough to go round and it will not taste like the

food in heaven. I promise to always check on you. I love you Mum.”

She climbed down and eat a chunk from her cake. Her words were soothing but it still brought tears. But for the first time, they were tears of relieve. He could see it in their faces. The kind of tears you shed and you are not sure if it's tears of joy or sadness. Everyone ate her cake, even Mama who was diabetic ate little.

After giving everyone their letter, she said she wanted to go to the gym but he had a better plan. He did not want to read his until later.

“Pearl how much can you swim” he whispered to her ears as he took her to his car.

“I am not bad” she whispered back.

“Okay, how about we skip gym and go to real waters?”

From the look on her face, he just knew he did the right thing.

“Yeah, let’s go get my swimsuit” she shouted running into the car.

He waved at them, to alert them they were leaving but they were concentrating on their letters. She even wrote to Oliver and Ray. Someone would have to read Mama’s own for her.

An hour later, they were at Warri River, the river of his childhood. Not a single soul was there because Friday was still a busy day for children and even adults. He stripped to his boxers and dived in without asking Pearl to follow. She did not waste time before joining him. He allowed her swim further, staying at her back to know her limit. She was pretty good, she could get to the middle and that was all. He taught her more and by the time they were tired, she could go a little past the middle. They

swam back to the surface and set up their picnic mat with their food exactly under the tree he and John used to visit. He did not say anything to John. What was he going to say? Ese joining him was more than words.

“I can’t believe I am sitting down here again. It’s been nine years I stopped visiting” he said as he took a bite from his roasted chicken.

“Do you feel sad?” she asked looking concerned.

“What do you think?”

She shook her head.

“You don’t look sad. Mum said you and John fought a lot in this river.”

“Yea, your principal was one of them. We found him and his group of friends lying down here and they had refused to leave

even after we told them it was our space. I was sick then, my body was still hot but we still fought them and won our space back.”

“And both of you always returned home with injuries and not just that, it was a normal thing.”

“Ese really told you a lot, well we always won. We used our sense to our advantage.”

“Is it bad?”

“Pearl, what do you mean?”

“I am sad that I did not meet John but I’m happy that it was not you.”

She really looked worried about what she felt. He pulled her over.

“It’s not bad Pearl. I can’t imagine you not existing.”

“Existing?”

“I mean I can’t imagine that you are not real. There is nothing wrong with thinking about that.”

“Okay” she said resting on his shoulder.

“Pearl.”

“Yes Wolf.”

“Who is Cindy?”

She gasped and raised her head.

“You mentioned her when you were talking to Ese.”

“She is my master’s wife. The one that made this hand band with Mum.”

“Can you tell me more about your masters?”

“On Monday.”

“What about Monday?”

“You will find out on Monday” she said closing her eyes.

He hoped he was right trusting his now eight years old daughter.

As she slept, he brought out Ese’s letter from his jean pocket. He had changed as soon as they went back to take Pearl’s swimsuit.

‘Dear James, the Wolf,

If you are reading this letter, just know I’m the happiest lady in the world. It means I’m lying down close to John. Don’t ever cry for me. Only those who hate me will want me to stay back and be sad. I know you’ve met your daughter. I don’t want to say our daughter because once you remove my face from her, she is just you in everything. You must have heard about the despicable things I did to survive, please forgive me for exposing your daughter to that. I know she is a handful but I still know it’s good seeing yourself when you were young. I have

one advice for you. Just live with her like you are living with yourself and you will never have a scare, okay.. let's say you won't have much scare. Hope you find peace with Mena and live a happy life because this Ese is very happy. May you find peace and purpose...

Forever Ese, Pearl senior.'

"Are you crying?" Pearl asked making him realize some tear drops had escaped from his eyes.

"But you are not sad?"

"Your Mum is the best. When next you talk to her, please tell her that I'm grateful to her for giving me the most precious gift I don't deserve."

"That's me?"

He nodded. She threw herself against him.

“I will tell her.”

They stayed there till evening. People came, stared at them and left to gossip. It was getting dark when they left the river. For the first time in nine years, he felt peace. He was supposed to be sad but he felt serene.

Saturday was family outing, even Mama was forced to follow them to the gym. She was given a Barcelona and Real Madrid sportswear. Teji and Tega were at it again. To appease them, Mama had to wear Barcelona top from Teji and Real Madrid sport trouser from Tega. Mama ended up running little on the treadmill and dipping her legs inside the swimming pool. She attracted so many confused stares because of her dangerous combination of sportswear of two rival clubs. He had no idea what Ese wrote in their letters but their faces said enough. The happiness was back. Mena looked free and healthier. They were

yet to discuss their future but he surely would do that once the issue about Pearl's masters was settled.

Reverend was at his house as early as 6:AM on Sunday morning. Pearl who was already waiting for him, ran out to meet him and they refused to return her. When he went to pick her by 8:PM, Mama refused to let him take her. It was Pearl who saved him. Mama had asked her if she wanted to stay but Pearl had clung to his shirt. One good reason he would not agree to anything her masters would say about any deal. Before going to school they did all her outstanding assignments and updated her note.

The D-day came and he was skeptical about sending Pearl to school. But he had given his promise to trust her and he was going to be in her school before 2:PM.

“You know today is free day?” Pearl asked as he drove into her school.

“What is that?”

“It’s an open day parents come to check on their children and take them home, there is no closing time.”

He had lots of outstanding work.

“Can I follow Uncle Tega or Aunt Bridget home?” Pearl asked saving him from answering.

“Wow, you’ve really changed” he said turning to look at her.

She just smiled. Parents were beginning to blow their horns.

“Okay, that’s if Tega or Bridget comes before 2:PM.”

“Okay” she said kissing his cheek.

He watched her run to her class and wondered what he did to deserve her.

Trouble started as soon as he got to his restaurant. He received a call from his first Sapele supermarket. His supermarkets had been attacked in the night and one of his sales boy was dead with two injured. The police needed his presence immediately. He had an idea of who did it but the reason was what he did not know. It was something he could not sent Johnny to take care of. He told Johnny to take care of business and drove as fast as he could to Sapele. It did not take long before he had an idea of what the invasion was all about. It took less than an hour to get to Sapele but just after thirty minutes' drive he sensed them. It was all a trap. They were waiting for him ahead and from the way he was feeling, they were there to shoot to kill. It became intense as he came closer to the danger. He had to change tactics

because they must have prepared something that could kill him without them having to engage in a long battle. His rifle was in his booth, he parked his car close to a tall flame of the forest tree with its red leaves already blooming. His climbing tools were in his bag. He first of all mounted his Barrett M95 sniper rifle before climbing up.

“What the fuck!” he said.

They were really ready for him, about twelve of them. What’s with the number twelve? Where on earth did Agege get an MKII gun? It was used to fire explosive rounds which exploded on contact. Agege was really pissed and he was ready for him. Just that he had no idea who he was trying to kill. He was not letting anyone go free. He could shoot a target at 750 yards and they were just about 150 yards, all waiting in ambush, gun cocked with the hope of using that rounds as the last way out. He did

not waste time at all. His first target was the one with the explosives. He hit him on his head and was on the second target almost immediately. They started firing at the direction they thought the bullet came from but none would ever get to him. They started running after he had hit six of them. It did not change anything because he continued picking them till they were no more. The danger disappeared after the last one stopped breathing. He drove to the first one he had killed, picked his phone and dialed his last call.

“Is he dead?” he heard Agege’s voice.

“You want me to show you their dead pictures?” he answered.

“Fucking shit. Damn it” Agege shouted.

“I’m not letting this slide. I told you to leave before it’s full moon. Now it’s too late because this mad Wolf is pissed.”

“Never. You killed my son. I swear you will weep and beg me.”

“Although I will like to take the credit but nope I did not kill your son, just his cousin but I’m sure I am going to kill you.”

He started laughing. The kind of laughter he knew so well.

“I thought to kill you first and finish the rest later but good. Stay alive, it’s better that way. I change I my mind, you should die last after you’ve begged me. You will beg me, you will beg me to take all your wealth and your properties and I am going to enjoy your tears” he said cutting the call.

No, it did not happen that way. He was supposed to be the one cutting the call. And what the heck was he talking about?

He went back to his car but did not drive up to seventeen minutes when another wave hit him on his chest. Something was wrong, he could taste danger. He tried to hone into where the

danger was coming from but it was not him. Someone he loved was in danger. But who? Teji was in the hospital, nobody invaded the hospital. Even Mena was there with Mama for a checkup. Tega had a meeting with his client and it was a public figure with security. But he would be through soon. Hacker was not an easy target, same with others. Pearl was in school with Vona and Fego, Bridget was in her boutique and Reverend in vicarage. He reversed and started driving back to Warri. He dialed Tega's line but he busied it and sent a message that he was still in his meeting. He dialed Hacker's line but he said nothing unusual from all sides. Oliver and the others had not called to tell him they sighted anything unusual and he was still tracking them, in fact, they had all updated him just few minutes ago. But he knew something was wrong. Just when he got about twenty minutes distance from Warri, the dread hit him again in his chest. He stopped his car and once again practiced what

Major had taught him, even Wild had helped. He closed his eyes and tried to follow the pull, the direction. Damn! Agege had said it. He should have known. Pearl or Vona or Fego or all of them were in danger. He had no idea how Agege would achieve his goal when they were in school but he knew it was coming from that side. He sped up as he dialed Mr Li's line.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX {Day 1. D-day}

She kept thinking about the deal and the fact that she might lose Wolf. She loved him so much and she loved the way students looked at them like they wished Wolf was their dad. But she must trust Mum that everything would work out fine. Their notes and textbooks were placed on the table so that parents could see them. She hardly spoke to anyone in her class

because they were too childish. The moment she sat down after assembly, a tingling sensation started at her neck. Miss Esther came to her seat as she tried to figure out what was wrong.

“Pearl how are you doing?”

She looked at her without answering. Miss Esther made a this-is-going-to-be-difficult face.

“I just wanted to find out about Tega, that’s the one who can repair phone. He promised to take me out...I mean he promised to help fix my phone but I have not heard from him.”

Like she did not understand she meant the first one. She saw them together on Saturday, during their family time out. Thank God she did not want to marry Wolf again. It might be because of Mena.

“Pearl.”

“Yes Miss Esther” she answered giving her her best smile.

“Can you help me do something?”

“What Miss Esther?”

“Stop acting like one cute little obedient child.”

“Okay Miss Esther.”

“See, can you help me. Can you talk about me around your Uncle?”

“Yes Miss Esther.”

That was if she saw him. Miss Esther looked shocked. Why would she even ask if she knew she would say no?

“I don’t believe you.”

“I don’t lie, if I see Uncle Tega, I will ask him. Don’t worry, you will make him run away if you continue acting like that.”

Sabrina said so.

“What?”

“Miss Esther, Uncle Hacker already likes you, just allow him ask you to marry him himself, he is busy now.”

How come she did not notice the way Uncle Hacker looked at her?

“Really?”

She hit her hand on her forehead. She wouldn't have told her because she was now too hyper for her liking.

She nodded.

“Thank you” Miss Esther said kissing her cheek.

“Gross” she said scrubbing her cheek.

A parent saved her from Miss Esther's torture. The sensation was still there and she closed her eyes to follow the pull but nothing. It just stayed with her. She changed her tactics to Wild's trainings. The class had like three parents and the two teachers were occupied. She stood up to walk around the class. Wild said except the feeling was all over her body, there was a possibility that the dangerous person was the problem. She stealthily moved round the class but paused when she came close to Mr. Anayo. He had a bad vibe, Jason called it that. There was something wrong. She quickly went back to her seat and tried to figure out what was wrong. Just as the parents left, Mr. Anayo told the class to sit for a picture but she knew the camera was focused on her. What was wrong? After taking the picture, Mr. Anoya came to her seat.

“Pearl how are you?”

What is wrong with her teachers today?

“I’m fine.” She did not like his closeness.

“Is your dad not coming for inspection?”

What would Wild do? She shook her head.

“Oh! So he will come to pick you up by two?”

She knew what Wild would do.

“Nope. I am going to follow Uncle Tega or Aunty Bridget, when they come for Vona and Fego.”

Major said this was the time to enhance her ability to understand non-verbal communication. She studied his face.

“Oh! I had wanted to ask Wolf about a party in his club. No problem, I will just go there” he said, then left to welcome another parent.

But what he actually meant was, he was happy Wolf was not coming. Something was definitely off. Time to switch to Ghost training. She was going to tail him.

Ghost said “most people are subconsciously absent when their mind is occupied. They can be looking at something without actually seeing it, and sometimes you will know because they react indifferent to their environment.”

Mr. Anoya was excited about something but subconsciously absent that he did not know someone was on his trail. He entered the male restroom. Thank God nobody was in the female rest room. She entered and pushed her ears to the wall.

“Hello, I have good news” Mr. Anayo whispered.

“The good news is that, you will be able to get his daughter, you can now kidnap the three kids and Tega their dad, jackpot” a pause.

“Yes, Tega is coming to pick his children very soon. I already confirmed that from Vona’s teacher. Hope you saw their picture?” a pause.

“Wolf is still in Sapele right? I am very sure Tega will be here before he gets here. You already have her picture. Just know your money is double” a pause.

“I won’t tell you except you transfer the money...”

She was out and back in her class. She opened her bag and her box and brought out the things she would need. She bent down and fix the parker on her hair without activating it. She put the others inside the pocket of her small knickers-pant, then she pulled off her hand band and put it in the box after scribbling something on a paper. She brought out her small circle band and activated it, she had never had any reason to use it until now. The Circle might not be aware of what was going on because

Jason said it was difficult to track someone with a Nokia torchlight phone especially if the line was not registered by the person using it. But they should be already aware from the picture Mr. Anayo had snapped and sent to Agege, but it could also be difficult because the android phone Mr. Anayo used was different from the one she had been seeing. What she was sure of was they now knew something was off with her danger alert just that they would not be able to get to Warri on time because they were supposed to come in the evening.

She locked the box, then quickly came out from under the table and went to meet Miss Esther. She was standing very close to a parent who was going through her daughter's notebooks. She pulled at her hand and was happy Miss Esther followed her to her desk.

“What is it? Is it about Tega? That’s the one that is not married?”

“Miss Esther can you act?”

“What?”

“I need your help. Uncle Hacker will be very grateful.”

“I’m all ears.”

“Take my bag, keep it with you and don’t give it to anybody apart from Uncle Hacker or Wolf. Don’t trust Mr. Anayo.”

“Why?”

“There is no time, but he will enter the class soon. I want you to help me to distract him. I need to go, it’s very important.”

“At least tell me something Pearl, I’m confused.”

“You will soon find out. But if you don’t help me, my cousins and I will be in serious danger. Now Miss Esther” she said running back to her seat.

Miss Esther just won her heart because she hid her bag under her seat and walked up to Mr. Anayo all smiles, something she had never done. He was now very focused on Miss Esther that he did not notice she had pickpocketed his Nokia phone. She quickly sneaked out of the classroom and ran to Vona’s class. The dread hit her on her chest immediately she entered the class. She was running out of time. Uncle Tega should be on his way the school. She told his teacher she wanted to give Vona something. She was not too attentive because she was occupied with a parent.

“Vona put this phone in your pocket and give it only to Wolf. Okay?” she said switching off the phone.

Vona nodded. He put the phone in the inner zip of his bag. She quickly took off. She was still with Ghost tactics. Parents were driving in and going out, so the gateman was much occupied. She pulled off her cardigan and placed it on her head. She slipped to the side of a car going out and perched her body close to it and ran with it, till it was out of the school and had sped off. No one noticed a pupil had left the school. Now it was all Sabrina. This was the only way out because she could not fight them and even if she could, Agege would just send another group. She closed her eyes and followed the pull. It was very strong because she could feel pains in her chest and her whole body was almost shaking from the sensation like the bank robbery. The pull was coming from the side Uncle Tega would come from. She sped off towards the direction. She had to raise her gown to increase her speed. She wanted to pause for breathe but Major said a second can separate the dead from the living

and soldiers needed to train themselves to be self-disciplined. She ignored her body and ran. She ran till she could sight the white car. She paused, then continued running.

Sabrina was the mistress of deception and she taught her a lot and they practiced it many times. Sabrina said girls were seen as the most vulnerable but that was their strength. She started hitting the door as soon as she got to them after removing the cardigan on her head. The shock from recognition was thrilling. They thought they were dreaming. Time to be vulnerable.

“Please help me, please help me, someone wants to kill me, please help me” she cried.

They looked at each other, three of them. One had his AK47 on his lap. After looking at each other, they looked at her.

Like is this for real?

“I want you to help me, take me to Wolf, he is my dad. Someone wants to kill me please, please” she cried holding one of their hands.

“Call am fast fast. I dey see double” the one with gun said to the third one.

“Please now, Wolf will reward you, please help” she wailed this time.

“Calm down little girl. You hear am? Okay” the one with the phone said.

They started speaking Yoruba but she just started learning and could not follow, she only had her heightened sense as advantage. They were definitely speaking with Agege. He too could not believe it. The one with the phone ended the call, pressed something, then after few seconds focused the phone camera on her. That would be Agege.

“Little girl you are shaking so badly, calm down okay? We will help you” Ak47 guy said.

She nodded.

“Who wants to kill you and how did you run out?”

She did not answer.

“You sure say she nor go die from fear, she as her body dey shake” the third one answer.

“If you don’t talk we can’t help you, don’t worry, we will protect you” the one with the phone said.

“Mr Anayo....I went to rest room, I.. I heard Mr Anayo saying that they should pay him before the people that will come to kidnap me and my cousins come...he called Wolf...he is my father. I know what kidnap... means....Mum said I should run from bad people....I sneaked out when the gateman was opening

gate for..parents...then I run...run..but Wolf's bar is still far...they may catch me but I saw this car..mum said I can call for help from good people and...." she paused and stared at the gun.

"Gun...gun..no.." she shouted and started running.

She stumbled and was caught from falling by one of them. He quickly carried her inside the car to prevent suspicion.

"No...leave me alone" she screamed but they tied her mouth.

The third one ignited the car and they drove off.

They started laughing.

"This girl smart die. She really escape before" AK47 said.

"But na this same girl na him Anoya say beat four boys come say he get the video but say the person wen supposed give am nor get am again?" the man with phone asked.

“He just wanted to collect more money. But he was right.

Wolf’s daughter is very smart. She was able to know she should run away and run to her dad for help, only she ran to the wrong person. I have never been this happy since Aja died. Blood for blood but I’m going to dry this Wolf before I kill her” the man in the camera who should be Agege said.

Time to act more. She started shaking to get free and muttering help.

“She might die from fear and shock that she ran to her killers’ hands. Oko give her the injection. I don’t need the others. I was going to make do with his niece and nephew but Ogun is with me. I have his daughter which is pure gold. I don’t want her dying before I start what I want to do.”

“Yes sir” Oko who was the guy with the phone said.

She was still shaking when the video call ended. She was immediately injected on her shoulder, same time the dread stopped. Normal dose of sleeping drugs did not work on her. Sabrina experimented on her to find out what could knock her out. The normal one just made her a bit dizzy and when she was made to fight karate, she was able to manage. Major said it did not also work on Wolf. But she was still acting so she gradually stopped struggling and closed her eyes and let her body free. Her head hit the shoulder of the one with AK47.

“I never do any clean job like this before. Her smartness come help us. I go so enjoy to watch that fool beg” AK47 said.

“Na only you? I nor even sure say that him niece and nephew for work, but this one sure” Driver said.

“And the girl come fine. Agege go use am do show. I want my own share” Oko said.

“But wetin dey inside small pikin self. I nor feel lie you, he dey disgusting” Driver said.

“Me too, na the only thing wen I nor like when you and Agege dey do. But I go enjoy watch this one. I go even do the video. Payback time” AK47 said.

“And the fool don dey think say he don win after he don kill Afar and the others. I nor just won believe say Afar don die. I go really scatter this him pikin eh and he go watch am life. I swear, he go even beg us make we kill am, make she nor suffer again” Okoh said.

“Na that him bar I go enjoy party” Ak47 said.

“Na so we won go carry silver, we jam gold. See as Agege dey happy” Driver said.

He was very wrong. Agege wanted to catch a dog but ended up picking a wolf's pup. They had no idea what was coming. They thought Wolf their only enemy not knowing seven of Wolf was coming for them, plus Major eight. Sabrina was the best teacher. She said it always worked and she was right. Sabrina once told her of when she had to pretend to be a vulnerable girl in the middle of the night to catch some men who were hurting girls and women. She said they killed them after hurting them badly. So she was sent to fish them out. She said it was the third day, they attacked her. They were four and she had made them excited by giving them what they wanted to see which was fear. They kept saying she was the prettiest of all the girls not knowing she was a poison. She was a red venus flytrap flower that is very beautiful and attract flies but the flies always find out too late that it is all deception because once they touch the flower, it closes in on them and that was Sabrina. She said she

gave them all the doses of fear they had taken from the women they hurt and the last one had begged to die. Sabrina would be proud of her. She thought she would start practicing when she was eighteen but she never knew it was closer than she expected. Ghost was right, there was a satisfaction knowing someone was safe because of her. The dread for Vona and Fego was no longer there, they were safe. Wolf would be able to figure things out but at the moment, she wanted to save her energy and sleep. Let them keep believing they had the upper hand until the Wolf's pup woke up. And she was going to strike like Fast and Ghost, then hell will be let loose as Mark usually put it and all would have a death dance with Sabrina. And if they were very very unlucky they would run from the beast and fall into the hands of a ghost who sent bad people to the underworld. Even the water would not be safe. They should watch out because the mad Wolf was coming for his pup.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN {D-day}

He was now close to her school. He hoped Mr. Li had informed the soldiers in his gym to help get to her school. He did not have the time to confirm if they were there already, he could not waste a single second.

It was bad, very bad because there was too much confusion in the principal's office when he got to the school. Three soldiers were there including the two soldiers that were guarding Caleb the other day. They had introduced themselves to him on Saturday. One was Adamu, the other was Dike. They had told him the commander who placed them with Caleb was in soup. He did not need anyone to tell him something was off.

“Wolf” Li said as he entered the office.

Apart from them, Miss Esther, Tega, Oliver, Mr. Millions, the gateman and another young man was there.

The expression on Tega and Oliver’s face said it all.

“What the heck is going on?” he asked fearing the worst.

“I just got here and they are telling me they can’t find Pearl”

Tega said.

He thought he had experienced his dosage of fear but this one just beat the last one.

“Someone talk to me now before I explode” he warned looking at Miss Esther who shifted backwards.

“That’s the issue, Esther and Mr. Anayo are yet to make us understand.” Mr. Ayo said.

Mr. Millions just sat down looking confused.

He looked at Esther and who Ayo had referred to as Anayo.

There was something off about Anayo.

“Somebody say something” he thundered.

“I don’t know, she was in class.....I thought she went to the rest room and I was busy with some parents, it was only when Tega came for Vona that we discovered she was really missing”

Anayo stammered but he was lying.

“Why are you lying? What do you know?” he shouted grabbing Anayo’s shirt.

All of them started pulling him.

“Stop it Wolf it’s not him, it’s the gateman that needs to answer what happened. She did not just disappear” Tega pleaded.

He released his hold on Anayo and looked at the gateman who went on his knees.

“I swear, I dey gate since morning dey open for parents, I nor see am at all. Na normal parents when they come every day I see. I nor see Pearl I swear?” the gateman said.

He was saying the truth. He looked at Miss Esther who shifted back again.

“You don’t have anything to tell me?” he shouted at her.

She shook her head from fear but there was something she was not saying.

“Only the gateman is saying the truth, the both of you better tell me where my daughter is. Where is Pearl?” he shouted.

“If the gateman is telling the truth, then how come we’ve combed everywhere and she cannot be found?” Dike asked.

Could she be hiding because she felt danger?

“Tega, what of Vona and Fego?”

“They are around” Tega answered.

No, if Pearl was hiding, she would have taken them along. What was wrong?

“Oliver, you were supposed to monitor her?”

“Bros I swear, there was nothing when I left to get something to eat. When I came back to my position, I got a call from Hacker to quickly check the school to confirm their safety same time I saw Mr. Li driving into the school with soldiers.

“Excuse me?” a woman said from the door.

They all turned to look at her.

“I just heard that a girl is missing. I think I saw her.”

He moved close to the woman and waited in dread.

“As I was driving to the market, I saw a girl on this school uniform, she was struggling to free herself from a man’s grasp. He carried her into a white car” the woman said.

He found himself squatting his hands on his head.

“What happened?” Hacker asked entering the office.

“Pearl has been kidnapped” Tega answered.

“How? Vona and Fego?” Hacker asked.

“They are safe” Oliver answered.

He stood up and looked at Esther and Anayo. Esther moved over to Hacker and grabbed his hand.

“Please just here me out please” she pleaded.

“I know you are hiding something and Anayo is not saying the truth but my patience is already exhausted” he said to Esther.

“Esther what is it?” Hacker asked.

“She came to tell me that she was in danger and she needs to escape. She begged me to just do as she said except I wanted her and her cousins to be in danger.”

“What was it?”

Good let Hacker do the questions because he was not in the mood to talk.

“She gave me her bag to give to either Wolf or you and she begged me to help distract Mr. Anayo and not to trust him.”

The soldiers got to Anayo before him. His back was already on the ground and there was already one punch to his cheek which swelled up instantly.

“Oya start talking” the new soldier shouted.

“Please, I swear I’m innocent” Anayo pleaded.

“Another fucking lie” he shouted moving over to him but was distracted by another female teacher who entered the office holding Vona who was crying.

“Miss Joy what is it” Mr. Ayo asked.

Tega pulled Vona to him.

“He kept on crying that he had something to give his dad to give Wolf, he said he forgot when his dad came to his class” Miss Joy said.

“Vona what is it?” he and Tega asked at the same time.

Vona opened his bag and opened another zip in his bag, his hand came out with a Nokia torchlight phone.

“Pearl said I must give this to you” Vona said giving him the phone.

“Oh my God!” Esther exclaimed.

“That’s your phone Anayo” she continued.

Another punch landed on Anayo, followed by another. Trust Nigerian soldiers with criminals, he was freed from doing it.

“Dey talk?” Dike shouted.

“I...I..”

“You what?” shouted Adamu.

“Wait!” he said switching on the phone.

He immediately dialed his last call. It was most times the last call.

“Anayo” he heard Agege’s voice.

“Shit! No. How dare you?” he shouted looking at Anayo.

He quickly put the call on loudspeaker. Agege was laughing.

“Wow, that your little girl is too smart, so you’ve found out she ran for help after she heard Anayo discussing about people that wanted to kidnap her and her cousins” Agege said laughing.

He did not raise his head to see everyone’s reaction. He just knew.

“Where is my daughter?”

“The usual question. Next thing you will say is I am going to kill you if you touch my daughter. What should I say? You know your daughter saved me from paying a lot to Anayo, I just decided to use him as the sacrificial lamb. Check his Facebook and you will see the video. Just hold this line, I will call you so we can discuss” Agege said cutting the call.

The soldiers were already searching his pocket. They came out with his android phone. Hacker took it from Adamu.

“I don’t have the time to hack your phone, open everything now” Hacker shouted giving the phone to Anayo who was already looking Chinese.

One of the soldiers smacked him to be fast. He gave the phone back to Hacker who played the video and gave him the phone same time Tejiri entered.

They watched in silence as Pearl begged to be taken to him, then ran when she saw a gun. They watched everything. He looked at Li who was looking at him, same with Tega, Tejiri, Hacker and surprisingly Adamu and Dike who had left Anayo to watch.

They were thinking the same thing. Something was absolutely off. The little girl was Pearl but same time not Pearl. He shook his head at them, meaning they should keep shut. He had no idea how many informant Agege had, although it was likely just Anayo but he was not willing to take his chances.

“I nor see am comot for school, I swear” the gateman said.

He did not watch but heard everything same with others.

“Esther get me my daughter’s bag.”

“Okay Wolf” Esther said leaving the office.

Corporal Job entered with two other police officers.

“We got a call from Hacker” Job said.

“Take care of him” he said to Job walking out of the office.

“Sir, the school..”

“Mr. Ayo, I understand, I need to focus on getting my daughter back, just limit the spread of the news.”

“Okay, please bring back Pearl” he said.

“Here” Esther said giving him Pearl’s bag.

“Thank you” he said saluting the Soldiers who saluted back. Mr. Li threw his car key to them.

“I will meet you back soon” Li said.

The madness started not long ago. Mr. Li had told him on Saturday during their family outing that some soldiers were registered by the army to learn Kung Fu and karate. He did not care as long as they paid in full. The only problem was the fact that someone in the army was getting on his nerve. He hoped it was not Major.

“Thank you ma. Please can you keep it a secret, I need to get her back and rumors may put her in more danger” he said to the woman who came to report what she saw.

“No problem Wolf. I did not know she was your rumored daughter. I’m happy I could help a little” she answered.

“She is my pup not rumored.”

“Okay Wolf” she said forcing herself not to smile.

“To the bar” he said to others.

Anayo was already handcuffed and was being dragged to the police van when he drove out of the school.

He switched off the Nokia phone as soon as he entered his office.

He needed to delay another talk with Agege. They entered through the back door.

Tega was the first to talk as soon as they entered his office.

“Bros I am confused. That did not sound like Pearl”

Good thing the office was big enough.

“Vona and Fego love, just sit down on the couch” Teji said.

Vona ran to the couch and Hacker switched on his TV. He took the channel to Cartoon Network. Good thing Johnny remembered to recharge. He was not around, should be at the hotel site. Fego did not join Vona which was not surprising. Tega had to carry her, then backed her while she immediately slept off on his back.

“Your daughter was exhibiting fear. That is not possible” Li said.

He played the video again. Hacker had to reduce the TV volume so they could hear Pearl and the others.

“Unbelievable. How did she come up with that?” Teji said.

“So you understood what she was doing?” he asked raising his head to look at them.

“She knew either she did this or Vona...let me not think about this” Tega said.

“And she pickpocketed his Nokia phone to prevent phone call contact with Agege and to give you easy access to Agege and Agege just played along” Tejirir said.

“I’m more afraid of her masters. They did a good job on her. If I had not witnessed her exploits myself, I wouldn’t have believe she intentionally ran to them. She must have located them following the pull and I know she must have left a trail for you to follow” Li said in awe.

“I’m beginning to think you have your own gift of figuring people’s skills” he said to Li.

Li just smiled.

“She did this to protect Vona and Fego and whoever was coming to pick them” Oliver said.

He had been silent. He was also awed. Pearl was a jewel and he was damn proud of her. No wonder the dread was gone, just a little tense feeling but not like when he discovered who Agege's targets were. She knew she had a better chance of getting out alive and they might even kill Tega and kidnap just the kids. She knew him and her masters would come for her. She had distracted them by presenting herself to them and they had fallen to her game and she was a good actor.

“So what’s the clue?” Tega asked.

He opened her bag thinking he would see a paper but just some of her books and a box looking like a lunch box and it was pink.

He pulled it out and tried to open it but there was no place to open. He turned it round but just saw key puzzle. Four of it.

“That is not a lunch box” Hacker said.

“I know” he answered setting the numbers with his name but it did not open.

Pearl did not hate him? Or did she change the number after their bonding? Who did she hate?

Tega took the bag and started pouring her things out.

“What are you looking for?” Tejiri asked.

“She must have written the password”

“No she won’t” Hacker and Li answered.

“That girl is too smart to leave a password. I guess she believes you can figure it out” Li continued.

“Agege” he said setting it again.

“Agege what?” Hacker asked.

The thing clicked and opened the moment he got to the last ‘g.

They all rushed to his side to see what was in the box. Damn! A lot of things including her band and a paper.

He brought out the paper.

‘Had to save Vona and Fego, activate the band, call Circle. Love you’

He was in a dire situation and he was smiling. What kind of father smiled when his eight years old daughter had just been kidnapped by his enemy?

“After we get her back, I’m going to borrow her for a month” Li said.

“Who is circle?” Tega asked.

“Her masters’ group name” Li answered before he could answer.

He studied the band. It was very unusual and very thick. Like four bands gummed together, then it was larger and that was all.

“Hacker?” he called.

Hacker took it from him but gave him back.

“I have no idea.”

“Activate the band” he said pressing the middle, nothing happened.

He pressed every side, still nothing happened.

“Why don’t you turn it?” Li said.

He turned it and started pressing it and damn, it started opening.

“This is crazy” Hacker said in awe.

The thing revealed a round wristwatch-like device but the tiny things on it’s screen showed it was a phone. He saw Mum sad, Mum happy and Circle, then message symbol.

“She said she can still talk to her mum. I’m beginning to fear these her masters” he said.

“We are about to find out who they are. Right now the enemy of our enemy is our friend” Li said.

He dialed Circle and clicked the symbol for loud speaker. He waited wondering who would be at the other end of the line.

The call was picked but no noise.

“Hello, Pearl said I should call you. You can trace her right?” he asked after no one spoke.

“Wolf it’s been a long time.”

Was he dreaming or someone had same voice with Wild.

“You just had to keep her safe for a month Wolf.”

Was that Beast? Was this for real?

“Are you shit, damn, fucking kidding me” he shouted.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARLS

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT {D- Day}

“Language” so many voices shouted including females.

“What the fuck was that for? Don’t tell me Pearl knew I knew you guys...what the heck am I saying. You guys were having fun at my expense. Beast I am going to strangle you. Fuck you all.” he shouted standing up.

“Wolf” Tega, Tejiri, Hacker and even Li shouted pointing him to Vona who was looking at him.

“Shit” he said sitting down.

“The F word is forbidden and penalty is two thousand bucks and right now you owe six thousand” Major spoke.

Unbelievable! All this while he had been thinking Pearl’s masters were as dangerous as his team not knowing they were his damn ex team. He and Pearl had a lot to discuss, she had played him for a whole damn month.

“So you guys just could not contact me that you have my daughter and Ese. You just had to make a fool out of me” he shouted.

“Nope, Pearl was the smart one. She is damn too good for a seven year old. Undercover mission completed without discovery she is better than some in Special Force” Wild said.

“Special Force? What are you people?”

“You saw it before you called us” Major said.

“We are the Circle” someone else spoke.

His pistol was out and pointing at the person sitting down very close to Vona, legs crossed. The others including Li were in shock.

“How the heck did you enter my office?” he asked his gun still pointed at the guy who was already putting a tab in front of Vona.

“You like this better than TV?” the guy asked Vona ignoring him.

Vona nodded all smiles. He plugged the ear piece and put it on Vona’s ears. He had not felt him enter the office from the back door which was closed. How the heck did he do that?

“I entered through the door, the mind and the eyes sometimes don’t work with each other. You are not the only one who can

listen to non-verbal communication. I also listen to subconscious communication” the tall guy answered.

“You are the ghost guy?”

“Pearl betrayed me?” he feigned shocked.

“The massacre on the roofs, Musa who saw messenger of death, what else would your name tag be” he said dropping his pistol.

“Wow, did you guys feel that? He knows us” Ghost said bringing out a mini system from a black bag.

“Now you have to pay up. Jason won the bet” a lady said entering the office. Ghost did not lock the door.

“Sabrina” his brothers chorused, Oliver was not exempted.

She was on a red short flare gown, her hair parked in ponytail.

Ray was right, she was stunning and a death trap to men just that she did not affect him.

“Pay up Fast and Mark, I told you I’m the most popular. Hi guys” she waved sitting at the other side of Vona. Even Vona was staring at her. How many men had she trapped? She patted Vona’s hair smiling at him. Vona was smiling back. Like seriously?

“So you are the one who wants a death dance with me?” he asked studying her.

“Wolf we’ve concluded that since. I’ve convinced her to stay alive a bit more so no death dance” Ghost who was already working on his TV with the mini system and some cords said.

And almost immediately, Sabrina fired a stun gun at him but he dodged and it hit his wall almost touching the TV.

“Are you mad? Don’t piss me off” she said.

Vona thought it was a game because he was laughing.

“Don’t tell me you are Major’s daughter” he said.

“Damn!” Wild said.

“How did you know” Sabrina asked.

“Like father like daughter. And I can see some resemblance to your mum. I thought your name is Balikis?” he asked.

“When I’m off duty” she answered.

“How did you come so fast? Is Abuja no longer the base?” he asked.

“You already answered your question” Ghost said.

“Hi, hope I’ve not missed anything. Wolf you are not making use of that car at all” a not huge not slim muscled guy said entering the room.

“What the heck did you do with my car?”

“Relax Wolf, I only tested it. Hi dude. What’s up?” he asked
Vona raising his hand for a high five. Vona obliged him. What
was wrong with Vona recently?

“The speed guy from air force?” he asked.

“Why you dey cut my money now. Which kind thing be this.
You know I’m losing money as you are figuring us out. Why I
go bet with Jason self? You just dey pour sand sand for my garri.
Are you a monitoring spirit? Whalia” Ghost said.

He found himself laughing with others. No wonder Pearl was all
about him.

“We even came late. Fast had to pick me up. It’s almost an hour
we knew something was off” Beast said entering the office.

“Coast is clear. Ghost connect now, Jason is set” Beast said.

Now Vona had reason to fear, he was very huge and his deep voice never helped. His brothers should not be around. Beast had made the environment tense.

“You know I have a fight with you. How dare you Beast and Wild?” he shouted.

“Relax Wolf, I don’t fight any more. I’ve changed a lot” Beast answered replacing Ghost in his seat. Vona clung to Sabrina.

“And the bank robbery was not you, or Lord Nero or Esigie and Halima saga? You’ve really changed.”

Fast and Ghost started clapping, even Sabrina.

“I give up, Jason you win” Fast said.

“I guess my work is done here” Li said.

“Thank you Mr. Li.”

He shook Mr. Li's hand and nodded at his brothers and Oliver.

They had to leave using the front door. Vona almost did not want to leave because of whatever he was watching using the tab.

“By the way who were you trying to protect during that bank robbery?” he asked Beast.

“My wife and Pearl.”

“What the heck? And Pearl pretended like she did not know much about it.”

“That is my girl” Beast said.

He wanted to correct him but no need. So Beast was now married. Even though it was past, he hated that Pearl was caught up in that robbery.

“I thought you’ve been monitoring activities in her school. How could you let that happen?” he was all business.

“It’s not easy to track a Nokia torchlight phone and a Sim card not bearing the owners name and fake Facebook accounts. We knew something was off when Vona’s teacher sent a message to Tega to find out who was coming to pick the kids, then we were able to get Intel that something went off in your supermarket in Sapele and you were on your way to meet the police. Agege hardly uses a line twice and uses fake accounts all the time.

Very hectic to track, then Pearl signaled us but we were already on our way” Wild said but from the TV.

It was split into three. Major, Wild and the sea port.

“Two persons are missing” he said.

“I’m here, what’s up Wolf?”

Ray was right in all his descriptions. He was really handsome.

He emerged from the water like he was shooting a movie.

“Escravos male mermaid.”

“Wow, even me. But I hate that tag. Just call me Mark.”

“Wolf how come you kept track on us because Pearl kept you in the loop for thirty days?” Major asked.

“How was I supposed to know it was you guys? She had only gasped when I mentioned you people and I thought she was shocked at the revelation not knowing it was for another reason. Then you acted like you would kill me.”

“That part of killing you was not acted. Just look at how you have handled Pearl for just a month. World worst father” Beast said.

“Have your own kids before you act perfect. I guess you will have to be paying fine for broken bones and legs and you will have to make sure your tables and chairs are installed to the ground if that will even work. I am not giving myself a pass but you are the least person to judge me.”

“Damn, and Ifeoma is on her way to earth. Let’s pray she takes after Halima” Ghost said.

“Halima? You fucking married the lady you saved?”

“Language Wolf. Please tell me you’ve not been saying that word in front of Pearl?”

That was Hadiya’s voice. Her face came up beside Major.

“Hadiya” was all he could say.

“You see why I’m a better father? And also know Pearl stayed with me throughout” Beast retaliated.

“Because she had someone normal around you dimwit. And how was she better? You want me to list all the things she did? How am I responsible for her climbing the roof of my building or knocking people out with karate or her pickpocketing and preferring action movies to children cartoons? I had it in mind to kill the person who taught her all these first before killing any other person.”

“Ghost” they chorused.

“I’m guilty as charged” Ghost said raising his hands up.

“And who had the twins that made me spend five times more than I budgeted when I took her shopping?”

“Jason” they chorused.

“The tech and sniper guy? He is the only one missing.”

“Na wa for you oo? Haba. Jason show face first make we discuss this bet” Ghost said.

“What bet?” he asked same time Jason came up screen.

He was on a couch, a baby sleeping in his arms like he was taking a break from work. There was nothing military in their behavior.

“We betted on how many of us you may know through Pearl’s description but Jason said he was sure you may just know about us without the help of Pearl” Fast said.

“And it sounded ridiculous. He did not explain why he thought so” Mark said.

“So we all betted against him because we did not understand how you may know us without the aid of Pearl. For once we

thought Jason will lose but you just spoil show, even with my signal you nor help at all? Ghost said.

“Jason make we just cancel the bet now?” Fast begged but the screen went back to Wild, Major and Mark.

“I’m seeing no military discipline. Why?”

“Because this is better than when you guys were around. We are one big family now. Jason made that happen without even knowing it will unite us as one. Before you ask why he is not talking. He is autistic or slightly autistic and only talks when he is in contact with Cindy, his wife, who is currently not around”

Major explained.

“Now let’s discuss other things later. Where is Pearl? I’m stalling Agege by switching off the phone he will be using to communicate with me. But I’m running out of time.”

“Pearl is right now not far from the sea port. Agege was given an omega order about a month ago but we needed to recover the files of trafficked people for easy rescue but Agege had moved out of Lagos yesterday and from the images from Flight C, many have joined him in their numbers. And coincidentally, the omega mission was supposed to be carried out this night. It was one reason we knew there was trouble because we had followed his trail to Sapele but we never knew his destination is Warri. I’m not far from his territory in Lagos. Special Force python team will handle them. They are to shoot to kill, a change from their normal mission were they kill and arrest. They are to leave no one alive. They are using it as their training to enter the Special force. Right now, Flight C is showing us exactly fifty two Agege warriors and the audio it sent back was not good. The president had said we should work with the Police on this mission but it still turned out bad. Agege is aware he was

officially declared wanted this morning. He is planning on escaping using the port. So he has no more plans on your bar but he will definitely demand money from you and you should know he won't release Pearl. That's why Mark is there to make sure no one escapes."

"What's Flight C and how is it that there is a good aerial view of Mark?"

"Flight C is the new official Circle bird" Major said.

"Still not cleared."

"Don't worry, seeing is believing" Mark said.

"Where exactly is Pearl?"

"That's what we are waiting for. She has not giving us the signal..."

Wild was interrupted by Pearl's voice.

“9 and 23 +9 + 12 + 12 and 2 + 5 and 7+15+9+14+7 and 21+16
and 9+14 and 6+9+6+20+5+5+14 = 78,15,20.”

“Pearl?” he called.

“She can’t hear you. She has activated the hair parker” Mark
said.

“What is she saying?”

“I hate this thing that Pearl caused. I’m not a math student
please I can’t kill myself. Jason tell us when you are done”
Ghost said.

His words attracted laughter but he had no idea what was going
on. The screen split to four again and words started appearing.

“I will be going up in fifteen-Ghost” he read aloud.

“That means there is no time. Jason her exact point please?”

Major said.

“Someone say something?” he asked.

“Pearl brought one quantitative reasoning assignment of changing numbers to words. That’s how she told Jason if they could communicate with numbers. Major got to know because Jason got it as an idea now we have to learn communication with numbers” Fast said giving him a watch.

“Damn, I love my pup. What’s it for?” he asked.

“It’s an android watch. For now all you need to know is the red dot is Pearl. The green dot is you” Mark answered.

“Don’t your device get damaged in water and who is creating all this?”

“The story is too long. We need to move now so we can get there on time” Beast said installing communication devices on top of his shirt and in his ear. He also gave him a spec.

“I still don’t like the idea of all of you going, this has never happened. We execute not massacre. I don’t support it” Major protested.

He had thought of that too. He could handle it himself. But why was Major not commanding?

“That’s what we are going for. I am going there to kill not execute. This is personal” Sabrina who had been silent said standing up.

“Major you already lost. I wanted to come but that will be too much. No one touches family. Should I explain to you that Agege is a pedophilia? You already know. I don’t need to see him to enter his already damaged mind. Wolf switch on the phone. And better get knives and other weapons because there will be no guns. Agege does not deserve that honour. We are going ancient. Fast on the sky for emergency. All command

position but maintain the safety of the Circle. She said she is going ghost meaning they won't find her till mission is clear.

Even the tracker will be off" Wild said.

"Roger that, but I would have preferred bike na. I will just be on air monitoring everything" Fast protested.

"I brought enough bow and arrow" Ghost said.

"That's why we are friends. I'm off. Meet you on the other side"

Fast said leaving the office.

"I don't understand...oh Ray said something."

"That is Flights 57 to 70. Fast will send them from the sky. It deflects bullets. Jason is yet to find out what can magnate a bullet, but that will do. Just take your gun but we are not using it.

Jason will be our eyes. Switch on the phone let's hear from

Agege" Beast said.

“While you do that, we are off” Sabrina said.

“Sabrina. You taught Pearl what she did right?”

“You mean acting like the Venus flytrap? I’m the mistress of sweet but poison” she said smiling, then left.

“You guys turned a seven year old to a lethal weapon. I hope you understand that she is becoming all of you?” he asked.

“Choose between her being a lethal weapon and normal. Just imagine what she came up with. I’m still stunned. And you know I’m hardly surprised” Wild said.

“She did one month undercover without being discovered and she fooled a whole Agege” Major said.

He raised his head to look at Ghost but he had already left. How? He hated who he could not sense and who he could not figure out.

“I know, don’t try to understand Ghost. Nobody can sense him, even Jason who is hyper sensitive can’t. He is as noiseless as silence when he wants to” Wild said.

“And quite funny. No wonder Pearl likes him. He looks like the opposite of what I have followed about him on newspapers.”

“Don’t ever mistake him as fun, he is more dangerous than what you read” Wild said.

“You know I can hear you” Ghost said.

“Stopping hyping him Wild. He does not know how to handle it like me” Mark said.

“I agree with you Mark” Sabrina said.

“Are we together...”

“Get lost” Sabrina said interrupting Mark.

The phone started ringing.

“Where is my daughter?”

He did not want Agege to feel suspicious.

“So Anayo couldn’t even charge a Nokia phone. I don’t talk much. I’m sending an account number. Five million, if I don’t see it in five minutes you will watch another video.”

“I’m playing no games with you. If you want money tell me the total amount and I will bring it in exchange for my daughter.”

“You think you have a say in this? I ask, you do it. But it’s okay. You will start begging when I send you the video.”

“How do I know she is still alive?” he shouted.

“Sweetheart, your dad. Say hi to daddy” Agege said.

“What’s sweetheart?” Pearl asked using the sweetest voice.

“It means you are special to me.”

“Where is he?” Pearl asked.

“Just say hi, he is listening to you.”

“Wolf.”

“Pearl how are you? Did he touch you?” he said.

“Don’t worry he said I will be fine if I behave and he will not kill you if I don’t cry and scream. Don’t worry. I told him I want to be ghost but he said it’s only people who die that become ghost. I don’t know how Fast a Ghost can be but I know a Beast is very fast and once Venus flytrap goes against a Mark, then there is trouble. So I’m fine, he is not bad Wolf.”

“That’s enough sweetheart” Agege said.

“But my aunt said not everything sweet is good it can be poison, it will choke the person and the person will die” Pearl said.

“Yes but I know how to give the poison and take the sweet things without dying. The money” Agege said cutting the call.

Then laughter followed. If they were acting a movie people would think it was a comedy and not something serious.

“Pearl has no respect for elders. See the way she is fooling Agege same time passing out her message to him and us” Ghost said.

“And she was so accurate, she knew who was coming” Major said.

“I’m a good aunt” Sabrina said.

“Four minutes more” Major said.

Beast snapped the message from Agege with his android phone.

“Let’s move Wolf? Have any weapon?” Beast asked.

He was already opening his safe.

“How is she going to go up? She did not take her bag.”

“I thought her inner wears too” Sabrina said.

“Once the signal goes off we know she is now ghost” Wild said.

“Still using that Pick-up?” he asked as Beast joined him in his car.

“Yes of course.”

“How come your taste for women changed? You married the girl you saved.”

“The stories are too long Wolf. Let’s catch up later.”

“You are twenty minutes away, that’s if you are on top speed” he heard a new voice.

“Yeah! Cindy is back” Ghost said.

“Is the signal off already?”

“Yes. Pearl is now ghost. I think she used the toilet. Agege left immediately after the call. Although not necessary, Pearl knocked the two guys out before leaving. The door should be locked to stall Agege. I guess Pearl knew you’ve not yet moved. I concluded based on the sounds heard” Jason said.

“I’m there and in position but yet to fly the helicopter.

Permission to launch Bullet deflectors?” Fast asked.

“Hmm” he said.

“Not granted. I need Ghost and Sabrina in position” Wild said.

“That’s in three minutes’ time from their speed” Jason said.

“Like seriously? Do you have math in your brain?” he asked.

“You have not seen anything” Fast said.

“Flight 15 now in position. Agege is yet to know, wait. He is trying to open the door” Jason said.

“What’s that?”

“A wall gecko. It has been around the house waiting for Pearl to activate her band so it can track her position” Major said.

“Hmm” he said.

“The account number he sent belongs to a ship company. Agege wants to escape by ship and you are the one to pay the man.

That ship is worth twenty five million. His game plan is just five times before he kills Pearl then escape with the ship” Jason said.

“Hmm” he said.

They started laughing.

“Wolf please can you pause the hmm, make I concentrate”

Ghost said.

“Okay Wild” Jason said

“Fast permission to launch granted. Wolf and Beast can join the fight later” Wild said.

“Roger that” Fast said.

“Cindy please I need to concentrate, stop doing that in front of me” Jason said.

“Doing what Jason?” Mark asked.

“Mark mind your business” Jason answered.

“Sabrina you heard Jason” Mark said.

“If you want to die, you are free” Sabrina answered.

He did not need anybody to explain what was going on with the two.

“Please allow Agege come to me. I need to take him to the marine water to visit the water goddess who eats manhood”

Mark said.

“Show time” Jason said, same time he heard sounds of gunshots.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

{Day 1}

“They will soon find out bullets are useless” Wild said.

The moment they got to the area, he just knew Agege most have hijacked it. There were many hotels but there was one old flat hotel a bit far from the port. People were running to take cover as they got there. Beast wore his mask. He gave him one but he shook his head.

“I don’t need one. The whole town needs to see Wolf came for his daughter.”

He checked to confirm his pistols, then brought out the word he never thought he would use for battle. He normally practiced with it for balance.

“That’s cool” Beast said joining him outside.

“No weapon?”

“I am the weapon” Beast said taking off.

He followed suit and the first person to feel his sword was one of the guys he had seen that first time he confronted them. Good thing the hotel was fenced. They had chosen to escape the time they entered making them try to defend themselves. No one was passing that gate. Without even noticing, he and Beast were backing and circling, moving in perfect harmony. One still tried to use his gun but it was deflected. He turned and had a less than a second glance of the device. It was by their side. No wonder Jason was good. The thing followed them as they moved further.

If he were to describe what he saw, he would just say it looked spherical and alien like in the movies where a round thing would be falling from the sky, emitting light, flying but spinning. He felt being watched and looked up. It was a bird.

He pushed his sword to one of the men's heart and was on another even before the man fell on the ground. They started running back to the bungalow but one was hit by an arrow from a helicopter. How could he fly and shoot? He was too busy to follow Beast but their screams told him enough. Many kept firing hoping a miracle will happen until his sword or Beast got to them. He was breaking their neck. What a shit way to die.

One ran at him with a cutlass but he ignored him to concentrate on a new target who was trying to escape. He used his senses to dodge the cutlass same time cutting his target's back then turned to hit the one with the cutlass.

He did not see another one outside. He ran to the entrance but it was locked. He could hear screams inside. He looked at Beast.

“Ghost used the roof, same with Sabrina” Beast said as he started cutting the door with a laser knife. There were other dead bodies that was not connected to him and Beast. Blood was flowing freely symbolizing justice. There were still sounds of gunshots as they entered the reception room. Shit. There was almost nothing to do apart from the ones that were trying to escape, there were also many dead bodies there, their life liquid escaping from their body. He had no pity for them, in fact he hated them for making people like him to kill.

“Ghost and Sabrina are dangerous combination. Ghost is very dangerous when he is with Sabrina, he always feel he must protect his sister.”

“I can protect myself Beast” Sabrina said but from the way she spoke, she might be killing someone.

“Sister?” he asked but no time to answer, Beast was already on the move.

He followed another corridor tracking Pearl. He did not need any bug to know where she was. His sense was already heightened and there was still the danger pull. She was not yet out of danger. He got to the end of the corridor and felt another pull, someone dangerous was nearby. That must be where Agege was hiding. The room was the last room in the corridor. He brought out the laser knife Beast gave him and used it to slice through the iron door handle. He pushed the door after removing the handle and it gave way. Agege was not there instead there was a hole in the ceiling. No wonder he chose this kind of hotel. He was going to escape using the ceiling.

Suddenly, he saw a man falling from the ceiling. Pearl used him to land on the ground. The ceiling was not high so the fall did not do much damage to him.

“You are going nowhere” Pearl shouted positioning herself for a fight.

She had not yet noticed him. He just did not want to imagine what Pearl would be at Sabrina’s age.

“Pup” he called.

“Wolf” Pearl shouted excitedly running to him.

He picked her up and kissed her cheek. He did not look, he just brought out his pistol and fired. The bullet hit Agege’s right hand tearing it as the gun fell from Agege’s hand. He had already guessed that stuff needed to be a bit close before it worked and it had followed Beast.

Agege was more shocked about how he knew than the shock he was supposed to have from the bullet tearing his skin. He had the how look.

“Why do you think I’m called Wolf?”

He dropped Pearl and moved towards Agege who was now beginning to feel the impact of the bullet. For the first time, the rage he had been looking for came. Just thinking of what Agege wanted to do with Pearl fueled his rage.

“Targets have been neutralized Wolf, let Pearl go to Beast” Wild said.

“Pearl I don’t want you to see this. Go look for Beast” he said.

Pearl left without arguing.

“You wanted to rape my daughter and send me the video” he thundered his anger making him shake.

Good thing he could read emotions. Agege was not afraid but he was filled with dread. There must be something in his eyes.

“Let’s negotiate” he stammered.

“How had the mighty fallen. I know you are shocked at how Pearl must have fooled you. That an eight years old girl trapped you. A mighty Agege brought down by an eight years old girl.”

“Please, I will give you all my wealth.”

“How many children? How many little girls did you damage? I’m beginning to believe in nemesis. You never would have believed that your end will come from a little girl. As you enter hell, remember to tell them that your fall came from an eight years old girl. The most disgraceful death. I won’t touch you. You are going to bleed to death knowing what killed you.”

“Tell him, his empire is all gone. And it has been blown up”

Wild said.

“Also know that there is nothing left, your empire has been blown up, your last seconds on earth will be used to debrief those you’ve hurt. They will watch how the man who tormented them died begging for his life and they will know it was just one eight years old girl that ended you. May you be welcomed by satan himself for dying a shameful death. Burn in pieces.”

Agege breathed his last. He knew it because he felt it.

“How did you know?” Major asked.

“I’m not suffering from memory loss. I know that’s why there is a bird in the room. An ordinary bird cannot fly inside the room same time Pearl left. How can I forget Wild’s wild method of debriefing” he said leaving the room.

“The police have a hell of a cleaning job” Fast said.

“Wolf” Pearl called running back to him.

He held her so close.

“You are the smartest girl in the world. The best and thanks for fooling me for thirty days.”

“I know you must have been shocked” she said laughing.

Either she did not know the bodies on the ground were dead or she pretended not to notice them.

“Take your band. I saw mum sad and mum happy. They programmed Ese’s voice for you?” he asked wearing it on her hand.

She nodded.

“Jason did it” she said.

He was not surprised.

“I was more than shocked. Thanks for saving your cousins and uncle. They can’t wait to see you. Let’s go home.”

“Nope, she is going with us” Beast said.

He was out with his gun and he pointed it at Beast.

“I was not joking when I said no one is taking her from me. It has not changed” he warned.

“Wolf don’t. I want to go back with them” Pearl cried.

“Pearl that was not our deal, you said...”

“I know what I said, I said you will talk it out but I want to go. I don’t want to stay” she said running to Beast.

“Let’s go home” she said to Beast crying.

She was sad. He could tell there was something wrong.

“Pearl if you want to go with them then why are you sad?”

She did not answer but clung to Beast.

“I know she does not want to go with you guys. What deal did Ese make that I can’t figure out that she has to follow you people against her will?” he shouted.

His gun was still pointed at Beast.

“No one is forcing me. You caused everything. You said I am a nightmare and Mum should have aborted me. I can’t stay with you because you suddenly want me to stay when Beast and Circle accepted and took care of me from the first day. He was the one who saved me from Agege. I don’t want to stay with you” she shouted crying, tearing his heart and breaking him in pieces.

“Fast can you pick me up, I want to go now” she said running outside.

He could not protest. There was no will left in him. He found himself on his knees holding his chest. This was it. The punishment. He had to say those words for her to hear. He had thought she had forgiven him but she was still hurt. He was the architect of his own misfortune.

He did not know how he got home or how he entered her room an hour later. He had given them the password to his house to pick her things. He also told them to pick her bag from the bar. The house felt empty. His heart felt empty. He climbed her bed and allowed the tears to flow freely.

He did not know how long he laid down on the bed but his phone was ringing.

“Wolf please come open the door” Mena said.

He checked the time, it was 10:54PM. He had been on the bed that long. He stood up and felt a heavy bang on his head. He struggled to the door and almost all his family were outside.

“Wolf we’ve been calling you and we’ve been ringing the bell for long” Tega said.

“You are scaring me with your look. Please where is Pearl? The news of the fight is everywhere, police is not allowing newsmen close to the hotel” Mena said.

“She is gone, she has gone home” he said walking over to the fridge to take water.

“What are you saying? I don’t understand. I thought you said you won’t allow her go” Hacker accused him.

“I don’t deserve to have her. Now if you will excuse me I want to sleep.”

But Mena blocked his path.

“Wolf this was not the plan. How can you allow her go with strangers?”

“They are not strangers. They are my ex-team okay?”

She still blocked him. She was already crying.

“I know they are your ex-team but you are her father. Ese sent her to you to take over as her parent not for strangers to train, why will you just let her go like that?” she shouted.

“You really want to know? Okay, because she chose them.

Because I made her first week here a living hell, because I called

her my nightmare, because I had said Ese should have aborted her and she heard everything. Because I hurt her so much and it will be wickedness for me to force her to stay with me. I don't deserve her, she chose who accepted her from the beginning. Do you now understand?"

No one blocked him again. He went to his room with his heart feeling like it was being pierced by a thousand needles.

NIGHTMARES OF PEARL

CHAPTER THIRTY {End}

He could not sleep, he felt melancholic, helpless and hopeless. He tried imagining how life would be without Pearl but felt empty. All he had to do was just accept her. She had been hurt to the extent she decided to eat what would have killed

her. It was all because of him and suddenly, he felt he could just reap what he did not sow.

Sleep eluded him throughout the night. He saw himself back in her room the next morning. He just couldn't live without her. The emptiness was gnawing at him and he felt like not existing, he needed help before he did something stupid.

Without changing clothes, he drove to the vicarage. He did not know what he was doing there, he just needed to talk to someone and Reverend was the best person because he needed forgiveness, he needed to find out how hopeless he was. The people at the vicarage said he was in the cathedral. He walked the few steps to the cathedral and saw Reverend kneeling before the big cross. He stood close to him and just looked at the cross but with nothing in his mind.

“I knew one day you will come here” Reverend said sitting on the ground. It was covered with a red rug. He sat down close to him.

“They told you why she left?”

Reverend nodded.

“I’m the worst dad ever, I know I don’t deserve her but I still want her. I still feel that I won’t survive without her.”

“You know, we all in one point in our life, have what we don’t deserve and we do things that we will forever regret.”

“I don’t think you’ve ever felt what I’m feeling now.”

Reverend chuckled.

“You remember when you were six and had insisted that something bad would happen to my wife if we travelled but I told my wife to ignore you”

“How can I forget that.”

“My wife had a mixed feeling when we got to the park. She said God might be speaking through you but I almost got angry. How will God leave a priest to speak to a small child? And even if that is possible, it was not God that spoke to you because you were acting like a soothsayer. So she believed and trusted me. After the incident, when I had regained consciousness and discovered my wife was dead, I asked God to kill me. I was at first angry with God. Three months later, I told my story to an old priest and he was the one who opened my eyes that I have been reading the bible as a fiction. He told me to go back and read about David and his mighty men, Samson and others, then I should come back when I get it. So I did as he told me. He was right, many Christians believe the bible as fiction and they are not even aware. I cried when I realized it. It was not that God

spoke through you James, it was the fact that God gave you a gift from birth.”

“I don’t understand, I thought you said I’m diabolical, you even organized deliverance prayers for me. That was two months after your wife’s death.”

“Yes, and a month later, I wanted to leave the church because I felt wronged. I remember how you used to make me tell you Samson’s story over and over again when I visited. You were five then. You believed everything and I just told it to you like it was a fiction. That old Priest told me the moment I realize that those stories were actual events of complete humans who actually once existed here on earth will be the day my perspective about people like you will change. And it’s true. One of David’s mighty men could kill a lion with his bare hands. Of course you know all Samson’s story, how he carried the gate

of a city, killed a thousand with a fox bone and so on. If they existed during those time why not now? I remember what Papa Ufuoma said, I was there that day. But my mindset had already changed. There is nothing weird about that man, he was born gifted and more exist but our society fear people like you, they tag and call you names and if they have the choice they would attack you and even kill people like you, yet this same people will praise the Lord when their pastor preaches about Samson and David. Hypocrisy and unbelief. You and John thought me a lesson. If the bible had not been a fiction to me, I would have quickly noticed you have a gift and I would have listened. Every day, I live in regret because I indirectly killed my wife. It's what I will live with till I die. But as for you, you felt angry that John died few days after repenting. I remember you asked me if God actually kills his own, you were the sinner but John had died, then to show your rebellion, you opened a night club, you even

blamed Him for your escapade with Ese and because of that, you abandoned your true calling.”

“True calling?”

“Yes Wolf. Your father did not call you Wolf for no reason and you know that. Your gift is not meant to be used in a bar and run a business. Your true calling is a warrior, a guardian and protector of civilians. You were selected James, but you got mad and decided to live your life just to make God understand your anger.”

“But this is not why I’m here Rev. My reactions to John’s death is justified.”

“How?”

“You know how. At least He could have protected John.”

“You came seeking for two answers James. It’s just that you don’t know it.”

“Then tell me.”

“You tell me. Who was supposed to die on that day?”

“Me, I was in front, ahead of John...”

He shook his head.

“Both of us.”

“How come you did not understand why John threw himself on you? You think it’s because you are friends and he could not bear losing you?”

“Why?”

“Because he knew where he was going to. He was sure he would make heaven but not you.”

“And how will you know that?”

“Because John had emailed me to tell me about his new heart, he told me you were making mockery of him but he hoped your eyes would be opened like him. That was almost two weeks before the incident. It was John who chose to go to give you another chance but for nine years it looked like John died for nothing.”

And he had to keep that from him.

“Why are you telling me now?”

“Because you came for answers James, because for the first time in nine years you are faced with a similar situation just the position is somehow reversed.”

‘How is this similar? They are not similar Rev?’

“Why are you here in the first place? Why are you sad Pearl left? Why did you not exercise your parental right on her? You have every right to keep her Wolf. Why did you allow her go?” he shouted.

“Because I don’t deserve her, I thought you said they told you. I don’t deserve to be her father. I hurt her so much. She passed through a lot and just few days after losing her mother, she came to her father but I rejected her, I hated her, I made her my nightmare, I said she should have been aborted. I hurt her Rev, how do you want me to still force her to stay? I don’t deserve her”

“And yet you still want her even when you know you don’t deserve her.”

“That’s why I am here Reverend. I came for help not for accusations. I’m lost Reverend. How do I get what I don’t deserve?”

“Good question.”

He looked at Reverend and followed his eyes. He was staring at the cross.

“How do you get what you don’t deserve? Can you tell me something you have ever done to deserve her? Anything can help.”

“I don’t have any, the more I think, the more I discover more reasons why I can’t have her. I even hurt her mum.”

“Are you sure? Think Wolf, there must be something that makes you very special, too special that you deserve her love. Think more, think harder. Think of something that can help your

course, because when you find that reason you can get angry at her, you can feel rejected, you can feel she has no reason not to choose you. Think.”

“If I even find one thing I did to deserve her, I will use it to go and beg her but none”

“Then how come you are hurt, how come you feel empty. You are not supposed to be hurt that something that was not yours was taken from you. Why are you hurt?”

“That’s what I came to ask. Why this emptiness? Why is it that in just thirty days I found out I can’t go back to nine years of my life. Why?”

“If you are this hurt for getting rejected from having something you did not work for, what will you say about Pearl? About how she felt for getting rejected by her father, by the person she deserves to have? You are not the only one hurt James, someone

else is hurt that even after all the love she deserved, she was rejected, yet she will still take you even after all the rejections, she is still waiting for you Wolf.”

And then he understood everything. The cross, he was talking about Pearl but all he could see was the cross. What right did he have to force God’s love? What had he ever done to deserve his attention? He had even gifted him from birth, a gift that had saved his life countless times. But he had rejected Him. God did not even take away his gift even after he had rejected Him. He got it. This was how it felt to be rejected but their hurt was worse than the way he was hurting because they did not deserve the rejection.

“What should I do? I know I don’t deserve Pearl, I don’t deserve God’s love. I know Reverend, I understand that now but what should I do? I want her love, I want God’s love.”

There must be something.

“Good question. What do you do if you need something you can’t afford? James, that you don’t deserve them does not mean you can’t have them. God did not make a mistake in creating you or any of those in your team, they are there and somehow, they understand the reason for their existence. Wolf what will you do to have that thing that is available but you can’t afford?”

“I will beg” he answered but Reverend stood up and left.

The answer had been there. All this while, he had been saying he did not deserve her but he was just understanding he really did not deserve her. Now that he just discovered what he had to do, the whole puzzle was solved. The deal was him. From the beginning the major reason Wild sent Pearl was for him. The gift Ese had given him was his life, his true self. Pearl had said it that night, that whatever she did, he should not forget she loved

him. No wonder she had told him earlier about the nightmare and abortion so it would not come too much as a surprise to him when she would say it the second time. How come he never understood until now? Ese wanted him to go back to where he belong and Pearl was brought to awaken him to who he was, the Wolf.

The wrist watch was still on his wrist. He switched it on as he left the cathedral few minutes later. He saw Circle and dialed. The call was picked as he got his car.

“What should I do?” he asked.

A MONTH MONTH LATER.....

It was already a month since she broke Wolf's heart.

She had felt his pain as she told him she did not want him.

Everything was supposed to return to normal but she still missed Wolf. The four weekends she had gone to the Circle house, she had searched for Wolf but he wasn't there. She had lost Wolf, she shouldn't have listened to Wild, it made her so sad.

Everybody knew she was no longer Pearl they used to know, they tried engaging her in so many activities but nothing worked, only the twins could distract her. They were very identical and she still had a hard time figuring who was George or Geoffrey.

They were just Jason in resemblance and nothing to show Cindy was their mother. Once she was done with her assignment after coming back from school, she always spent her remaining time with them. They were exhausting to take care of and one of them always cried but everything had changed two weeks ago.

One Mama Sunday had paid Beast a visit because Beast had told

her Halima was pregnant. Everybody was in Jason's house and they were trying to bath the babies when she arrived. She just took over from Cindy and Halima and Jason had begged her to stay. She had first refused but Jason promised to pay her more than what she normally earned from her shop, then Beast had joined to plead with her. He told her to stay, so she could also look after Halima. She was now the twins' third grandmother. Everything became so easy. She kept laughing at Cindy's unskillfulness when it came to handling the twins. She said she had twin daughters who were now married. Jason also promised to help Sunday, her son. Right now, Sunday was being rehabilitated from drug addiction. She did not know what that meant. Cindy said she would go to law school later. She had just graduated from University of Benin but she was not yet ready to go to law school. Halima was doing very well in her fashion business. She had so many workers under her. Things were okay

for everybody except her. She could not even understand why she was missing him so much exactly a month after she left. She was resting on top one of the branches of a mango tree watching how the bad house very close to Jason's house had been transferred to something beautiful in just a month. She had noticed the workers worked from morning till night that they had to use generator. There was another big compound almost beautiful like Jason's own, but it was looking unused, like someone had not been there for years. Jason said he had no idea who owned it and he had no reason to find out. Those were the only houses in that street, the rest were vast land and bushes and Jason owned most of the land. Jason said it should be just three family owning the whole land. But only Jason had been making use of his until recently that they started working on that other house. It was like this. Jason's street was a closed street, beside it were lands belonging to Jason, then you would just drive into

Jason's house which was the end of the street. The other beautiful compound was behind Jason's house and another far away street led to the house. Except someone crossed through Jason's fence, one would have to drive like ten minutes to get there, then the third house was almost adjacent the other beautiful house but closer to Jason's fence. It was not that big but it was okay. The house extended from Jason's fence but the bush part would prevent someone from going there through Jason's street except one opened the smaller gate which they had never opened.

Today was going to be exciting because the Circle were all coming for Halima's pot breaking party. Halima said Beast saved her after seeing the message she crafted and inserted inside a native pot. So once in a while, with no particular fixed

time, Halima did a pot breaking party, where she would break a native pot. No one argued with Halima once her mind was made up. And everybody must come. So the compound would be full. Hopefully she would watch another American football and she would referee.

“Hey Pearl what are you doing there, the roof is better” she heard Ghost’s voice.

They were around, how come she did not realize it was getting late?

She came them immediately. Ghost was carrying one of the twins, should be George.

“I’ve told her only cats climb trees not wolfs” Fast said entering the orchard.

Their orchard had one each of mango, Pear, Pepper fruit, local apple, avocado, shower shop, cherry, papaw, cashew, grape, lemon, ebelebo, lime, tangerine and orange trees neatly arranged and spaced. But the orange trees were many. Jason's late mum loved oranges. The ground was maintained to look like a field. The oranges were always sent to Pastor Sam's church for further distribution to orphanage and motherless babies' home, same with other fruits during their season. Before the orchard, was their vegetable garden. It had tomatoes, pepper, pumpkin, spinach, water leaf, Uziza, bitter leaf and many other vegetables. Separating the orchard and the garden was a small poultry for personal consumption. Before the garden was Beast house. Then adjacent Beast's house, the garden and the orchard was the big field for sports and running. The swimming pool was by the side of Jason's house before the field, then their mini gym was opposite Jason's house almost by the gate with the car

park after the gym. The boxing ring was end of Jason's house and behind it was the small gate that one could use to cross over to the other two houses but the new house was closer.

They set a bonfire at the brick cemented open space. It was fun because everyone came just that she still felt empty. There were so many different types of raw meats and fishes and drinks. Just when Major was about to declare the bonfire opened, Wild told him to wait for them to be fully complete. She had to count them to make sure they were complete. Sometimes, it was difficult to understand Wild.

“Hello pup” she heard a familiar voice.

She turned and saw Wolf with aunty Mena. They had come into the compound from the other gate that was behind the mini ring. She could not believe it.

“Wolf” she shouted running towards him.

Wolf ran to meet her too and she had so really missed Wolf's warm hold. It was so soothing.

"I missed you so much pup" Wolf said holding her tight and kissing her cheek.

"Don't I need a hug too?" Mena asked.

She had to forcefully free herself from Wolf so she could hug Mena.

He could not believe he had survived a month without his Pup. The feeling of holding her again was so soothing. He had to go through so many of their dumb qualification test they said they had added in his absence. He just knew Wild was trying to punish him and Beast must have brought the idea. He had met

Jason who told him he contacted the owner of the third part of the massive land and he had agreed to sell it with his house. He had to sell off his house in Warri, then closed down the club after transferring all the staffs to his newly opened hotel. He was going to make Mena the name owner after their wedding which was coming up on Saturday. Jason's father had a construction company and they had handled the renovation. He was marveled at what they did in just a month. The dude was really swimming in money and a big evidence was the Circle house. He could not believe their former Special Force Team A house was now used to store junks which was few kilometers from the current one. He had bought the land and house because he wanted Pearl to still live with her family and also Mena's application to University of Benin Teaching hospital was approved even before she came to Nigeria. She was a nurse lecturer.

“Pup” he called pulling her away from Mena.

He squatted to her heights.

“I did not get your message earlier, I thought you hated me until I remembered when you said you love me no matter what you do. I solved the puzzle pup, Reverend helped. I found the gift Ese left for me pup, she wants me to go back to who I was. I’m back Pearl, I’m officially a Circle.”

“For real?”

“Yes. I was made to be absent on weekends because Wild wanted it to be a surprise. We are together pup. You just have to cross using the smaller gate and we are planning on connecting them by making a tunnel.”

“You are serious?”

He nodded.

She looked at Mena, then turned to the others before turning back to him.

“That house was really you?”

“It’s for all of us, Mena will permanently join us on Saturday.”

“A wedding?” she shouted excitedly.

“Yes, except you don’t want” Mena said.

“That’s so cool. I can’t believe it? Like is this for real?”

She was crying.

“Pup, I know I’m the worst father but can you give this Wolf another chance to make it up to you?”

She did not answer but threw herself against him.

“Can I call you dad now?” she asked.

What the heck? She had been waiting for his permission while he had been hoping she would call him dad.

“Please say it again.”

“Dad.”

The tiny squeeze in his heart was a bit painful. A tear drop fell from his eyes. He felt so many emotions he could not explain.

“Yes pup.”

“When am I moving in dad?”

“This night.”

“Hell no. When I agree” Beast said.

He had seen him and Ghost coming towards them.

“Beast today is not fight fire but bonfire, please just consider the way they are both looking at you and back out” Ghost said.

“As much as I enjoyed the father daughter reunion show, please can you continue that later? The meat is almost getting spoilt, and I fasted just for this bonfire night. I came on behalf of the meats and fishes who are waiting to fill my stomach. Let’s go”

Ghost continued.

There was no way he could hold his laughter, the guy was funny but deadly. He had somehow gotten acquitted with all of them.

Ghost said he could not fully explain the reason people did not feel him. He said his body flowed with his mind but Wild had been able to explain a little of how Ghost’s sensitivity turn off worked. Wild said people were supposed to know when

someone came close to them but for Ghost, people felt nothing at all. Even when Ghost had placed his hands in his pocket, he did not feel it. It also had its effect on Ghost because Ghost was almost the opposite of Jason. While Jason had overload of

sensations, Ghost had none but it only happened when he decide to switch it off. Most times, his body went auto mode if he was pissed off and it took a lot to get back to normal especially if his targets were not eliminated. That was why Wild said Ghost and Jason were two unifying agents of the Circle. Jason made them look like family by eliminating so many rules and Ghost brought normalcy through his funny behavior because if one listened to Ghost and others during a mission, it helped them feel they were just going to remove an obstacle. Someone like Vona and his brothers would have a hard time believing Ghost was a deadly killer because he calmed a tensed environment, it made it clear that if someone died at the hands of Ghost, that person was definitely at fault. No wonder Ghost always said those he killed could never make paradise, they went straight to hell. The women too were helpful hence he had met a family instead of a military team where members fought each other and were

nothing close to normal. He did not mean the Circle were normal people, it was not easy to kill and still be normal but they were far better than what he imagined. Even their little fights and quarrels were things that made up a family. And he just could not believe the native pot he and John had always mocked Beast about was actually what led him to Halima. He even had to apologize to Beast because if he had listened to them to throw away the pot, Halima would have still been in captivity.

He held his two ladies' hands as they walked towards the others.

“Hope you have not forgotten American football, I don't want you to use it as an excuse to make your team loose” Beast said.

“Game on, I will use it as an excuse to beat your team” he answered.

“What if you pick the same team?” Ghost asked.

“Never” he and Beast chorused.

“It has never happened. We’ve never picked the same team”

Beast said.

As they walked to join the others, he could not believe his life had changed in just two months. The most twisted part was the positive change came through what he had once dreaded, for what had now become a dream come through, was once what he had seen as his nightmares of Pearl.

{THE END}

But the Circle series (standalone novels) continues....

FORGET EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT GHOST.....

outside the circle, this is the real Ghost;

I was an empty shell... until I felt his presence. Now all I have is fear and terror and dread of a man I cannot see but can only feel. He is always watching me. During the day he is the man in my shadow, at night he becomes my shadow, a ghost who terrifies my night and follows my every step. I can't get away from him, I can't outrun this terror....this shadow.....this pull...this burning desire...this dangerous feeling....so I let it burn...I let this terror, this danger to linger....to take me...to wrap me...to lead me to a place where I can feel his touch...beyond my imaginations. I forgot the danger, the fear of who he really is...a ghost.

Then he is gone....just as he came.....never knew him, never saw his face but he left this emptiness.....this longing.....this yearning to be watched again...to fear again..to feel another touch of a GHOST {The Shadow in the Dark}

[A mystery/thriller, romance novel.]

Get ready to be suspended.

Coming Soon....

(I will be glad to read your comments. Thanks and I love you
all.)

