

NYSC MYSTERIOUS MAN

{The Story of a Kidnapped Survivor}

By Oma Holly

PART ONE

I knew the meaning of fear, I had experienced it several times but I had always believed fear was an abstract noun which could not be felt nor touched until I tasted fear during and after my National Youth Service Corps orientation camp. It had a very bitter state, liquid in texture. If only I knew that my life was about to be changed forever.

I was posted to one of the most dangerous states in Southern Nigeria. A state I cannot mention for security reasons. It was also a state full of opportunities so I was excited because I was finally escaping the prison I had lived in, I was leaving my aunty and her family and I was never going to go home, I never actually had a home. I had plans of starting my home at

the state I was posted to. As I travelled to the camp, I swore to myself to do everything to make it, to be posted to a good primary place of assignment, to get a job after my service, to make friends, to be happy and to be free. I had entered the camp full of hope, smiled to everyone I met, smiled at the security officers at the gate, smiled at the health clearance officer. I was still smiling as I followed some group of people who had been cleared to the hall for the last stage of clearance. That was when I first saw him. I should have seen the other one but my eyes like everyone's eyes including males were glued to him. I had heard about foreign students coming to serve in Nigeria but never heard about a white corper. He was not totally white, there was a little difference from the pure white. One could tell he had a little African blood in him but he was more white and not even near black. He was sitting down by the right side of the end of the big hall, there were two chairs ahead of him but no one was sitting there. It was as

if nobody wanted to sit in front of him because they would not be able to look at him. He was not just attracting stares because he was different in terms of color but because he was every girls dream man. He was very handsome and looking both energetic and athletic. He was neither huge nor lanky nor in between. He was just the normal built. First thing I had noticed was his brown t-shirt that clung to him, his arms were very muscled and he was just too fit. I should have noticed the other man, I should have noticed my doom but I did not. I only knew I was among the foolish girls when a girl sat down on the sit directly in front of the white man. I was not close enough to hear her conversation but I was close enough to see that even after she had turned her seat to face him and moved her lips many times, the white man never raised his head. I felt the girl's embarrassment when people started laughing. I mentally slapped myself on the head and dragged myself to a

seat at the back. It was when I sat down I noticed the other man.

I did not actually notice him, it was the scent that permeated from him that made me to turn. He had used a very powerful and should be an expensive perfume to cover it up but I could scent a cocaine or Indian hemp anywhere. My auntie's sons were both drug addicts and I had been the one to always clean the mess they made with their friends in their rooms. He had about five boys sitting close to him. There was nothing alarming about a guy sitting down with expensive clothes and having boys sitting so close to him, but I felt alarmed.

I was distracted when one of the clearance officer asked for foreign students. I had stood up because I did not hear him clearly but sat back when the officer repeated himself. I turned my attention to the front. Of course the white guy stood

up alongside about five people. I turned when I heard the sound of chairs being shuffled. The man and his friends also stood up to join the others. Immediately they were a little distance from me, the tension left me. Soon the white guy was out of the hall and the other man with his friends.

I was attended to after about an hour later. I was given a code and later I got to know about platoons. I was told that the last number on my code was my platoon so I was automatically in platoon two. My warning alarm came back when I located my platoon officer to do my platoon clearance. He was with his friends and they were selecting their kits. The first thought that came to me was how was it possible that all of them entered the same platoon? I turned around the hall to look around but I did not see the white man. I turned my attention back to my platoon. And for no reason my warning system kept ringing just the way it has always helped me to avoid my cousin's friends anytime they were around. But I

could not just walk away from my platoon because my body seemed to be alarmed because of a guy and his group of friends in a place surrounded by soldiers. I just waved it off as stress from my long journey because it never made sense and this became another of my biggest mistakes.

The platoon officer was helping them get their kits and told me to wait for my turn but it sounded weird because other platoon officers were sitting down and someone was appointed to share the kits. The man I should have noticed raised his head and our eyes met and my heart skipped, not with butterflies nor excitement but with fear which shouldn't be because he was handsome, a black beauty. I noticed his cross chain before his smile which must have melted many girl's heart but it was as if living with my cousins and his friends who visited frequently had taught my body to know evil on the spot. I never knew he was talking to me until he stretched his hand for a handshake which my mind wanted to

but my body refused to acknowledge till he dropped his hands. I later got to know that was my open invitation to be noticed by a guy like him.

Everything happened without my brain recording it. I only remember I was attended to due to the young man's request while others in my peripheral vision waited till we were done. I knew I submitted something and filled a form or something but this thing had always been part of me. Once I have any of those alarms I normally leave that place till the warning has stopped and I can think straight, so that day was no different. I was off as soon as I was done with an excuse that I was going to the restroom which was actually true.

It is not important to give details of the hostels or the restroom but it was far better than I expected but it only lasted for few hours because once the hostel started getting filled up,

the toilet and bathroom were messed up, good thing I had my potty and bailer.

My troubles resumed the next morning after being forced to be ready before 5:00am for morning drills. According to the soldiers calling us to come out, coming outside by 4:55am was lateness so other defaulters and I were told to double up which meant run to the field without stopping. I was out of breath as soon as I stopped running after I had located my platoon but my breath actually stopped when I sighted the white man. Girls talked about him all night but I had put on my earpiece and had forgotten the next morning because I was hurrying to meet up. I quickly counted the platoons from the arrangement and he was in platoon five. The fact that he did not go for Muslims prayers meant he was a Christian, that was my thought and I did not even know why I was even thinking that and not remembering a particular man that alarmed my warning system. Throughout the devotion, and drills, I did not

think of him because he was actually not on the field. It was when platoon one to five were told to run to the hall that I remembered him and then saw him after I got to the hall with his group of friends. Before he would notice me, I quickly went far away from where he was sitting down not knowing I would end up coming back because platoons sat and were stocked together. I sat far back where I wouldn't feel alarmed but because he was turning backward as if he was searching for something, he found me and smiled. I did not smile back hoping that would give him the hint that I was not interested in him, I rather turned my own search for the white man. His platoon was sitting at the extreme end of the hall but I still found him because he was the odd one out and there was no surprise that at his left, right, front, back, he was surrounded by girls of different sizes and shapes and colors both artificial and natural.

I refused to look at the speaker orienting us for fear of staring at the handsome black guy but I had to after the man shouted on the mic that girls should stop embarrassing their village people by staring at the white man like otondos and look at him. Otondo meant idiots or fools. So I looked at the speaker and pretended the other guy had not changed seat and was not staring at me. And I was off after I had joined everyone to mumble the National Youth Service Corps anthem. It was time for breakfast but I was not allowed to get to my hostel to take my flask because somebody stopped me. I was happy for my retentive memory because I recognized him as one of the guys following the man I was running away from for a reason I did not know.

“Girl why you dey run like say them dey pursue you” the guy said grabbing my hands.

I should have answered immediately but the first thing ringing in my mind was he was supposed to be a foreign student so what was with the Nigerian pidgin.

“You nor dey talk.”

“Excuse me. I’m on my way to my hostel and you are obstructing my view” I responded same time trying to find a way to escape.

“Calm down first. Samson wants to see you. You are the first girl to turn him down like that. I know you want to go and take food, forget that trash they are calling food. Samson has it girl. You won’t be eating that trash.”

And not because I was afraid but because I was very curious, I followed him to meet Samson who was already at the popular mami market. There were lot of things to notice but too much description might give out the camp which I promised to keep a secret. Samson was not just feeding his boys but it looked

like he was hosting a lot of girls. One was literally sitting on top of him and what amused me most was a camp official greeted him and continued to wherever he was going to. I decided to tick off the no-immoral-act rule or maybe Samson was just the exception.

I felt no sense of sadness for the girl sitting on his lap who was pushed away as soon as I entered with the one I later got to know as Samuel because Samson made a general introduction as soon as I sat down. The weirdest thing was all their names started with s even though some were native names. And his excitement to know my name was Stella was alarming. Samson was not the kind of guy to play around. He went straight to the point.

“Stella you are a pretty lady and I have chosen you to be my queen in this camp.”

It was not what he said that provoked me nor how he said it but the fact that he felt it was okay to even make such a statement was what pissed me off. I had forced the alarm system to stay low but it did not prevent me from smelling Indian hemp from all of them and from one of the girls.

“I don’t want to be your queen. I am not interested in you and if you ever disturb me again I will report you” I said then walked away but met the white man at the door but he did not even look my way. He was ignoring everyone anyway so I did not feel bad.

Just one thing kept disturbing me as I walked to my hostel. Samson did not feel threatened by my statement but had smiled you-are-a-silly-girl kind of smile. I had been able to notice details from my childhood yet I did not make use of it instead I disregarded it and went on with my life and plans.

After breakfast, we had to go back to the hall for long boring lectures that had many sleeping off. Luckily for me, there were no rules on sitting with platoon mates so I sat far away from Samson who was surrounded by girls. Surprisingly and not surprisingly the white man was losing suitors because they were beginning to accept that he would never talk. I knew because news travelled fast in that camp. He had not spoken a single word to anybody. Even heard he ordered a drink with paper. So Samson was having all the girls but I still felt eyes borrowing my back. Good news was he did not harass me that day nor the next day nor days later.

I could now focus on the camp without fear of being harassed by Samson who I guessed had abundant of girls to choose from. Even after four, days I had not made a single friend. My hostel mates close to my bed had found me boring because I had nothing to contribute during a discussion and argument and I knew nothing about boys and I did not answer

them on the rumor that I rejected a billionaire's advances.

Those on my platoon had a look of contempt I could not comprehend. And as for Samson being that rich, it was quite tempting because I could actually not afford to spend money to get a better food. I had to see the camp food as delicious because I had just few thousands of naira to spend till I was paid my allowance which was usually the day we would be leaving camp. It was the hard drugs and the warning system that scared me off him not actually my morality which I was planning to lose. If only I knew I shouldn't have allowed him to notice me at all.

PART TWO

Another thing I noticed which should have troubled me was that any guy that showed interest in me whether for friendship or something more always avoided me after some

hours. They always got to the extent of blocking me on whatsapp. So I only had to concentrate on the drills and march past while stealing unnecessary glances at the white man who people were now calling Mr. Mysterious.

Swearing in ceremony came and gone and we were now officially corps members or corpers but the march past training continued to my dismay. I started loving the man o' war vigorous exercises and I enjoyed the dangerous things my platoon and also every other platoon were made to do. I squeezed out a thousand naira which was actually the money I was supposed to use to cut and shape my kaki which was way bigger than me. The tailors were all mentioning two thousand Naira which was something one could do for less than five hundred Naira back at home. And since they had crowds of customers, they all ignored me. I later gave up and gave one of the tailors to cut while thinking of a way to cut down my budget to accommodate the extra expenses. But when I went

to collect it before the swearing in, the tailor said somebody paid for me and she had refused to tell me who paid. So I could take few pictures both for the swearing in and the drill which I had initially cancelled. I was having fun even though I was yet to make a friend which I was already used to.

There was only that tiny bit of worry about where I would be posted to. The worrying started after we were oriented that some of us would be sent to extreme villages and some of us would have to cross the river to get to our primary place of assignment. I had no single connection neither did I have the courage to prepare a fake medical report which I was told to do before coming to camp. But when that was not part of what I was thinking I was having fun chatting with people although they never came close enough to be called friends but it was okay and the white man was yet to say a word and also could not march.

That was quite another surprise because if there was anyone looking fit, more than the soldiers in camp, he was the one yet he could not march. He had caused a lot of commotion making all other platoons practicing their march past to stop and watch when he was singled out by a female soldier in his platoon who wanted to show the camp captain that the white man in the camp could not march. So he was told to come out and the soldier spoke that gibberish I would never understand. I was always worried about the way they had to shout with all their throat muscles so I never understood what they were saying except left, right which had always sounded like let, rat. He was told to slow-march but he was so wrong, raising the left for the right and moving the right hand for the left that people started laughing. He was lucky the captain was very strict with corporals using phones during drills, he would have been videoed. But as he went back to join his platoon after receiving the common otondo,

olodo, mumu white man insults from the soldiers, I felt something was really off. One he was not shaking by the insult even after a soldier had interpreted it in English for him to understand, his reaction was the same as I first saw him, stone, no expression just that sad look on his face which I felt I must have been the only one to notice. Second, he was looking too fit and perfect to not know his right from left. Three, he walked with stability, agility, balanced and something I just could not place to not know anything. I just knew something was also off about him and it surprised me that no one noticed.

The next two days after my platoon had done our kitchen duties saw the otondo corpers being separated from the real corpers. Those who could not march were removed from each platoon and a soldier was appointed to help with training us to march. I was among the otondos of course. My platoon soldier said I was dancing and not marching.

Soon, all the otondos from all the ten platoons were united together and forced to march. Samson and his friends who were even greeted by the officials were surprisingly among the real deal and it was actually based on merit because no one would want to embarrass himself in front of the admiral during passing out parade so the soldiers wouldn't have chosen them if they were terrible. And from what I could see they were good. Unfortunately for my group, we were given the worst of the soldiers to handle us and he took fun in punishing us to raise one leg up and stay like that for as long as he wanted and it was a bad thing to fail. No one would want to remain with the soldiers when everybody was out of the field so we all tried to follow orders except for the white man who continued failing by dropping his legs. This actually provoked the soldier that he made the white man to come out and after insulting his laziness to being the kind of food he has been eating, he made the white man to squat.

“Oyibo man when nor fit even do left right. Just carry muscle full everywhere. What do you even know how to do in your life?” the soldier man I would call T which was the first letter of his name shouted as the white man squatted, his hands stretched out.

“I am talking to you and when I say something you answer yes sir. Do you understand me?” Soldier T shouted but silence was the response he got.

I was actually thinking I was going to hear his voice for the first time and from the look on everyone’s faces, we were all anticipating his voice but he did not answer.

“Are you deaf?” Soldier T shouted.

No answer.

“Are you dumb?”

No answer.

“I will rubbish you. Don’t think because you are oyibo you can misbehave. Don’t let me blow your fucking head off.”

Soldier T was now very angry and if I could feel his anger and threat which if you are a Nigerian would know it’s a dangerous thing to provoke a soldier. Although the ones in camp were learned and oriented, it did not change the fact that they were Nigerian soldiers and even in camp some of them were terrible and Soldier T was the worst of them. I was afraid for the white and I was also focused on him that even though it was very subtle, I noticed a change in the white man’s stony composure. I could not understand why a particular image flashed my mind. The image of a tiger and a lion sensing a threat to their territorial rule. Watching too much of National Geographic Wild must have been the reason I imagined that but it was all gone in a jiffy and I was very sure that once again I was the only one who noticed the

change in his demeanor which was now back to the stony expression.

“What is going on there?” the captain’s voice interrupted soldier T making me to heave a sigh of relief for the white man but it was as if my mind was saying the relief was for the soldier. Luckily for us we were dismissed and set free by the captain but the incident remained in my mind even now.

I was so tired that I had decided to take a thirty minutes sleep before eating which would prevent me from queuing up but when I woke up it was almost time for lights out. I was shocked beyond words because after evening food, we normally went back to the hall for different varieties or something they had prepared for our entertainment. The competitions amongst platoon had even started. No one woke me up, not even the annoying female soldier who responded to every excuse. If you told her you were having menstrual

cramps, she would respond that she too was having same, it did not matter the complaint you had she too had it yet she did not come to the hostel to drive us away to the hall. I had plans to deliberate on that later but I was hungry and I needed to get to mami market before lights out. So I took five hundred naira and ran to the market. I followed the short cut. It was after I was in the middle of my journey I noticed the darkness.

I normally did not walk there in the night because there was actually no light there, just during the day. But I was too far gone to turn back and the place was supposed to be safe, so I continued.

Till today I am yet to figure out what stopped me first, whether it was my warning alarm or the noises being made but I had stopped. It was such a horrible noise. Noises the girls my cousins and his friends made when they were being slept with. I had long ago prevented myself from hearing

those noises with my earpiece. Once I knew show was about to begin my earpiece would come to my rescue. I knew some guys were hooking up with some girls and I also knew who they were because of my warning system. The place was dark and my torch was on and I was frozen from what I was seeing.

I knew I was in serious trouble when Samson called my name same time flashing his torchlight towards me.

“Come and join us Stella” his voice was disgusting. He was on top of a girl. I felt angry but my anger turned to fear when he told one or two of his boys to go and bring me. I started running back towards my hostel and I knew something was definitely wrong when I could still hear footsteps behind me.

It did not make sense that I was being chased by some boys who might probably rape me inside where was supposed to be one of the most secured area in that state.

Suddenly I saw myself being pulled and my mouth was covered before I could scream. It was a male, a very masculine male who radiated a kind of heat that made me cling to him forgetting my predicament. There was something about the feeling of safety I had never known my entire life as I held on to him. Seconds later, that feeling changed to something else but there was no time to fully comprehend the sensation because my savior felt it was okay to release me.

“Thank you...”

My mouth was covered again. I nodded a sign that I knew he wanted me to be quiet. I could not see his face but there was something about him I could not place. Seconds later, he released me and was gone. Gone without saying a single word to me. There was something else. He was swift and stealth. I could not hear one single sound of his footstep. He did not walk away, he ran without a sound. I knew it was safe to go

back and luckily for me, I was not caught loitering about when the lights were off. I completely forgot about food. I just kept thinking about the guy who saved me. I had seen that behavior before. He reminded me of someone but it did not make sense that I was right and that feeling that made my heart beat faster than normal was still there.

The next morning, I had already made up my mind to ask him. The opportunity came during the evening drills where all the otondo corpers were gathered together. Soldier T had been swapped and replaced by one of the gentle soldiers who rather used his words to encourage us to learn how to march. Some rose up to try out while the others sat down. I quickly took a space close to the white guy. Girls were no longer clouding him.

“Thanks for yesterday night.”

There was no answer.

“I knew you helped me. Who are you?”

There was no answer.

I bent very close to his ears.

“Are you a spy or something?” I whispered.

I got exactly what I wanted because he turned to look at me.

Our eyes met and I found myself looking at the most beautiful eyes ever. I lost my bearings and thoughts and even what I was thinking to ask him. It was as if I was held captive by his eyes. My thinking faculty was restored back after he had left me to sit somewhere far. I wondered why the girls were giggling and the boys were calling me another idiot. They thought I was another suitor. My present worry was suspended when I saw the march past was over because of a sudden rain and others were already running to the pavilion. I ran along and ended up running into Samson. He grabbed my

hands and pulled me two steps up. I tried to free myself but his hold was too tight.

“Let me go. If I should scream you are going to be in serious trouble” I warned.

“You are already in serious trouble Stella.”

“Because I saw how you and your boys were breaking the rules yesterday?”

“No because you are getting on my nerve. I always have what I want. You are safe here because I promised my uncle that I will behave but I just want to tell you that I have decided to that make you my property from now on and you will regret refusing my offer once we are out of the camp.”

“I will make sure you never get to carry out your threat.”

I wished my voice was convincing but I was shaking.

“You mean you will report me to a soldier or a camp official?”

I will tell them you are one of the girls I rejected who feels

reporting me falsely is a way to punish me. Who do you think they will believe?”

There was that smirk in his face that I felt like slapping off.

“You can’t do anything to me.”

“Enjoy your freedom.” Samson was done with me and was climbing the pavilion as people gave him space to pass. I wanted to believe he could not do anything to me but I was nobody. Who could I turn to for help?

The rest of the activities passed by but I was confused by fear debating if I should talk to someone. I decided to speak with the first soldier I would see on my way to the hall after dinner but I stopped when I saw Samson and about three of his guys sitting on a military Hilux. The doors were opened. Two girls walked by discussing how his uncle was a vice admiral. I turned back my direction and escaped back to the hostel. Few people were still in the hostel and it was as if the

soldiers did not disturb much about people attending the night activities.

My phone blinked as soon as I climbed my bed.

‘You are trouble Stella.’

The next thing I noticed after the message was the number. I did not remember saving anyone’s name with Mysterious. I clicked on it but there was no number just the name. I dialed it but I was told I could not contact that number. I tried to reply, same thing. I ran outside straight to the hall to locate the white guy but he was not at the hall.

Because he was not also in my platoon, getting him was not easy until the next day but he still did not answer me when I met him.

Samson and his friends did not disturb me throughout the remaining days neither did I get another message from Mysterious. The evening before the passing out parade, the

evening people decided to party, I went to take my phone from the charging point. I could hear people screaming Samson's name at the market. He was occupied so I was safe. Just as I was about to get to my hostel, I got another message from Mysterious.

'Meet me at the place I saved you.'

I started running. I never stopped until I got to the place. I did not see him. I did not hear him coming. Only felt unfamiliar heat at my back.

"I knew it was you. But it doesn't make sense that you are pretending you can't mar..."

My mouth was covered. It was now clear that not only did he not talk, he hated talks.

He removed his hands after some seconds. Without saying any word to me, he gave me two bangles and a hair parker.

“What for?” I asked looking surprised but he was out with such speed I could not comprehend. I tried to chase him but had no idea the direction he followed. My phone blinked.

‘Press the black bead on your hair parker when you need help. If you can’t, press the round stuff on your bangles and if you can’t, rub the both bangles. Let’s hope we don’t meet again.’

If I had not confirmed that he was crazy, I just did because nothing he wrote made sense.

PART THREE

I tried to think about the significance of what Mysterious gave me but I was more worried of where I would be posted to.

The passing out parade activities was carried out smoothly. The otondos were gathered in one place and forced

to clap as those real corpses marched. I searched for
Mysterious but did not see him. I did not even get to ask him
how he got my number. A discussion between two girls and a
boy caught my attention. The girls were complaining or rather
accusing each other of deleting the picture of the white man
from their phone and the boy was asking why they had to snap
him in the first place. I brought out my phone to check his
messages but it was gone. I was very sure I did not delete his
message. I searched round to find him but he was gone.
Something was wrong. What if he was not real? I checked my
waist bag for the bangles and parker. They were intact. I
decided to wear them and park my hair to a ponytail. Soon we
were being dispersed to our primary place of assignment. I
was among the few going to riverine areas. I tried not to cry
but I cried for a long time. Our vehicle had a deadline of
12:00PM so I had to wipe my tears and gather my things. We

were about nine in number. The bus would take us to where we would get a boat to our destination.

One of the guys tried to make us laugh but most of the girls were sad. One of the boys tried making a conversation with me but later gave up when I did not respond. Soon we got to the river. The boat was waiting for us with other passengers and despite our fears, we entered the boat and we were on our way to our doom.

I had closed my eyes to prevent myself from fainting but I opened them when I heard panicked noises.

There were two big boats approaching us and the guys had red ribbons and paints running all over their forehead and bare chest and they had guns and a lot of ammunition.

“Guns. Who are they?” I shouted panicking like others.

The captain reversed direction and increased speed but we were no match for what was coming. Soon they caught up

with us and opened fire. We were screaming our lungs out. I had never been afraid like that before. I tasted that bitter liquid substance called fear. I closed my eyes because I did not want to see the bullet that would kill me but I did not die. They climbed into our boat and it seemed they were looking for somebody.

“Not that one” someone would say and the next thing would be a gunshot and more screams. Even their commands for us to keep quiet did not work. I felt someone pull me up. I could no longer scream, I was shaking from fear. What a way to end a life I never enjoyed.

“She is the deal. I found her” the person holding me shouted.

I shouldn't have opened my eyes. I wouldn't have seen so much blood, so many dead bodies amongst who were corpses, some already sinking below the river. I wouldn't have witnessed the massacre of the remaining corpses. They were

all shot at one by one their pleadings on deaf ears. One had his brain exploding out of his skull. It was a terrible thing to witness. I was blindfolded and my mouth was tied. Then I was injected. It took only seconds before I passed out.

I found myself lying on the cold floor of a place I had no knowledge of. I could not even tell why I was lying on the floor. It took minutes of struggling to untie myself before I recalled what happened. I wanted to scream for help I stopped. There was no way I was around a place where I could get help. I slowly opened my eyes. At least the blindfold was out but my mouth was still covered. My legs and hands too. My hands were tied forward. I looked round the room. It was very empty. Nothing inside except me. There was an iron door and a tiny window that was way up the tall room that it was impossible to climb.

Apart from panic and fear, the only thing ringing in my head was there must be a way out of this predicament. I started thinking and thinking. First there was a reason I was the only one they did not kill. I was sure it was not because they knew my family and they wanted to demand for ransom. There was something else I should remember but I could not. I was not expecting the door to open so soon so it was too late to pretend that I was asleep. Even if I wanted to do that I could no longer because of the voice I heard. Samson.

“Miss me?” Samson said.

I did not know I said his name out loud.

“What the heck is going on?”

“Your boat was attacked by a group of pirates and everyone was killed. As for you. I am yet to decide what to do with you. Should I make you a sex slave after I must have gotten tired of using you as my sex slave or will the government pay? No,

it may be traced back to us and put my uncle in trouble. I think remaining missing is the best option. And thank goodness that you are nobody.”

I heard what he said, I was afraid but I needed answers.

“I don’t understand. Who are you?”

“Should I tell her?” Samson asked the guys surrounding him.

“It’s your choice boss” one of them responded.

“I am the son of the most dreaded drug lord in Africa.

Someone used to run things around this river but my father now controls here. Or rather, I now control this areas. And you could have been my queen inside and outside the camp but you, a nonentity rejected me.”

“You killed people. All those that were in the boat were killed Samson, you can’t be this evil. This is not real. No it can’t be real. So many dead people. No this is a nightmare. It’s not possible...”

I felt like choking because he was kissing me. I struggled to get free but he was too powerful. I bit him and got released but got a slap that I felt all over my head. Another one came but no pain could be compared to what I had witnessed. I had been living in a cocooned peaceful world that I had no knowledge of a world someone could just decide the fate of another and just like that men born of a women could waste lives like that. I must have been thinking the news I was reading and listening to were fiction. I must have been thinking all those herdsmen and boko haram killings were not real. I had that belief that people could be evil but not to the extent of what I just witnessed. It never occurred to me that evil was real and I was looking at one. My warning system was right. I had refused a handshake with the devil and I had become his plaything. I was someone who would not be missed or looked for. I had read enough books to know I would never regain my freedom.

“You killed all those people Stella. You made me obsessed. I could only think of when I would have you. I could not stand any guy near you. I could not believe you rejected me but you were all around that white guy who had nothing to offer apart from his color. You are such an idiot.”

“Then why did you not just kidnap me and leave those people. Why did they have to die? Why” I shouted.

I was afraid. I was even shaking but I could not understand anything at that moment.

“Because I also wanted to send a message and make my papa proud. I run this place and every single one of them must know there is a new leader.”

“You forgot we are government properties. Nigeria will never rest until they find the pirates who did this. It would be international news.”

All I got was laughter as a response. He bent down to stare at me.

“You are looking for a way out but sweetheart there is none.

Just to make sure you give up that silly idea of the government caring shit and so you would stop worrying about me just know the pirates will be handed over to the police by soldiers who swung into action. Now it's my men and me their king since the last enemy has been eliminated. It's going to be ruled off as pirate attack and your body would be declared still missing in the river.”

“You are beyond redemption. You will never get away from this” I cried out.

“Why do they always say that?” Samson asked no one in particular.

“Although I have been dreaming of the things I'm going to do to you. I like my ladies all neat and fresh. So when I come

back, I need you to be naked, all clean and fresh. The bathroom is over there.”

He pointed to his left. I never noticed that door.

“I will rather be dead than allow you touch me.”

And I meant what I said. I knew from reading books and listening to documentary that sex slavery is a horror no girl should experience.

“Sweetheart, I own you now. I will decide that when you’ve pleased me enough. I’m giving you a choice lady. If you are not ready, you will wish you are dead but death will be so far from you. And you have been thoroughly searched. You are not getting away ever.”

He pulled me for another kiss. I did not dare bite him because I could feel the evidence of his arousal. I would rather postpone the evil day.

Once he was out after they had untied my hands and legs, I cried my eyes out. I was so afraid and confused on what to do. I was a virgin and the thought of Samson torturing and raping me was making me so sick. I remembered what I had mistakenly seen him do and remembered the Mysterious white man that saved me. That was when I remembered the bead and the bangles.

I quickly pulled off the hair parker and located that black bead, only it was not a bead. It was soft enough to be pressed. Nothing happened. I applied enough pressure but nothing rang or blinked. I threw it away and pressed the round stuff falling from the bangle, same thing. Nothing happened. Only one option was left. I rubbed the bangles making sure all sides were touched but nothing happened. I pulled the bangles and threw them away. What was I thinking? That something will magically happen like in fantasy novels or films? There was no help coming.

Samson had been planning this from the very day I rejected him. It was all clear at that moment. Samson had prevented any guy from coming close to me. I wondered if he had also threatened the white man. It was unlikely because Mr. Mysterious was not interested in me. Samson was also responsible for my primary place of assignment. If I had not looked at him that first day, if I had turned back when I saw him with the platoon officer then come back later and so many other ifs, there wouldn't have been a need for that first meeting. He would have noticed another girl before me who would have gladly become his queen. Then those innocent lives wouldn't have been lost. I knew my tears would not help anything but I still cried. I was so afraid of every passing seconds.

The door opened and a woman looking like a man came in with another armed guy.

“Lady your time has expired. Boss said to leave you if you were in the bathroom but to wash you myself if I found you outside crying like a baby.” She started coming towards me.

“What? No. I am entering the bathroom” I pleaded running to anywhere far from the woman and the man.

“Too late” the woman responded exactly when I got to a dead end. I screamed and struggled as I was dragged to the bathroom by the man with a big gun. I was pushed inside the bathroom. It was locked immediately the woman entered. She was big and muscled but it was still one on one. So I attacked her but I was no match for her.

“Boss also said I can beat you up if you misbehave but he would do the others. You know what the others mean? Rape and torture you to submission. I have faced stronger ones before and it all ended same way.”

The woman kicked me with her heavy boot. It hurt where it touched. She grabbed me and tore my crested vest with a sharp blade she brought out from her pocket.

“If you don’t want my baby to slice your skin stay still” she shouted kicking me on my waist. I felt the pain like my ribs were broken. I muffled a scream but tears flowed freely.

She sliced through my kaki. She could have just pulled it off but she was a psychopath who enjoyed her job. I thought of wrestling the knife from her but I knew how it would end.

“You want me to do the scrubbing and shaving?” She was licking her blade as she asked.

I was more than doomed. It was either I got scrubbed by the evil before me or I did it myself.

“Good girl. Your time starts now lady. Five minutes. Only because you need to shave off that bush. Boss likes his ladies clean shaven.”

I almost threw up from her statement but it made her laugh. There was also something repugnant about the way she was looking at my naked body.

For the first time in a long time, I stopped being angry at God for letting my parents and brother die in an accident and leaving me to my wicked aunty, I prayed as I did as the lady instructed. I prayed that it was all a nightmare and I would wake up and when I would wake up, I would make sure I got a medical report that would prevent me from being posted to the riverine area in that state. No, I would make sure to stroke out NYSC in my to-do list.

“Two minutes” her voice made me jerk and she laughed.

Soon the two minutes were over and my prayers were not answered.

“Let’s move.”

“Can’t I at least get a cloth?”

“Nope, Boss likes everyone seeing what is his so they will know they can’t touch.”

I stopped by the door and refused to move. What did I get myself involved in? How was I going to walk out naked for all to see and how was I going to allow Samson to touch me? The lady dragged me out against my struggles and pleadings.

But the scene in front of us was what none of us was expecting.

PART FOUR

The man with the gun that came with the lady was dead and there was someone on black on black and with a mask. It all happened in a split second. First was seeing the dead guy on the floor and in less than a second the lady was dead and my mouth was covered before I could scream.

“Sssh it’s Mysterious.”

I could not believe I was hearing his voice for the first time in the worst kind of situation. I had no idea who he was and how he got there but I knew I was safe even if it was going to be for some seconds. I grabbed him like my life depended on holding on to him because it did. Surprisingly, he hugged me back.

“Sssh, just breathe Stella. Breathe.”

That was when I realized how literally shaken I was and also that I was naked. But as if reading my mind, I found myself being wrapped by a black long-sleeve. It got past my knees explaining how short I was before him. He turned back to allow me button up. I was too shaken that I did not follow the buttons in an orderly manner.

“I’m done” I stammered.

He turned giving me a sport trouser. It was too long and big for my waist but it did not need a belt. I tied it and rolled the trousers up.

“Let’s go” Mr. Mysterious said walking towards the door. I rushed and grabbed his hands.

“Are you crazy? How did you get here? It’s Samson. You should know him. He said his father is a drug lord and he is the new ruler of this territory. He must have surrounded here with...”

I was not allowed to finish because Mr. Mysterious had gagged my mouth. Yes he did gag my mouth like I was a nuisance. And before I could remove it, he grabbed my hands using one of his strong hands.

The other hand was used to bring out a hand gun, then ammunitions he wore across his shoulders. He placed his gun under his armpit and brought out a mini bag from the big bag

he was carrying which was a back bag that looked like the ones military personnel used to wear. Just that the bag was hanging on one of his shoulders. He also brought out something else he installed in front of his handgun after using his legs to hold the bag. He brought out something from the bag and placed it on the wall. I watched in horror as I recognised it as a bomb, time bomb because the thing started a count down from 3:59 to 3:58. He did all these in less than A minute or lesser than what I thought.

“I am not going to repeat myself. Just do as I say. Okay?”

He did not wait for my response before opening the door. I never saw a single living soul as he dragged me as fast as he could out of so many lobbies. There were just so many dead bodies. How come I did not hear a single gunshot? Was the room soundproofed? I would never know. I had a lot of questions like the whereabouts of Samson but I was too afraid

to ask. I could not comprehend that I might be free. I just wanted the nightmare to be over.

Mr. Mysterious suddenly stopped, he pushed me to a wall. His gun which was already cocked was pointing at a direction. He fired but there was no sound. I did not understand why until later when I browsed about it and discovered that it was called a suppressor. He continued dragging me and time felt like eternity because my brain still remembered the time bomb. Just when we got to another lobby and another door, Mr. Mysterious stopped. Seconds later I heard men screaming for the entrance to be blocked.

Mr. Mysterious pulled me back. I was afraid because it meant one thing, trouble. Time was ticking and if we did not get out, we would all die. I just could not understand why he had to put a time bomb. He checked his watch, the wrist watch was

looking very weird but that was not the issue. He dragged me farther away from the door and pushed me down.

“Stay down.” I did as instructed but I raised my head to follow his movement. Even a dumb person could tell the men outside were trying to break in and we were terribly outnumbered. I saw him place something on the door, he looked at his wrist watch then ran towards me and covered me with his body.

“One, two” I heard him say and at the third count there was an explosion that shook the floor I was sitting on.

“Remain down.” His voice was far away. He had already left me. I shouldn't have raised my head. I wouldn't have seen many dead bodies and those struggling not to die. He shot at them straight on their head without missing like a pro. I saw him throw his gun away and I saw him pull off the long gun hanging on his left shoulder. Where did that gun come from?

His bag was big but not that big enough to contain that gun and when did he mount it? He was so fast with whatever he was doing like every millisecond counted. He was out in a jiffy and all I heard after that were gunshots and gunshots and gunshots that I had to close my ears.

And when it all ended and the whole place was dead silence, my eyes remained closed. Except he had backups, there was no way Mr. Mysterious could defeat them. I shook from fear waiting for the inevitable to happen knowing Samson would not take it lightly with me.

I did not hear any single footstep, I only felt being lifted.

“Run.”

One word and he was dragging me to the door that would lead me to freedom. Nothing made sense as I allowed him to pull me along as he raced towards freedom. Just when we were outside and I was still shocked that it was dark. The building

exploded. I could not tell the distance we had given neither could I tell if anyone was hurt. All I knew was that he covered me with his body as the building shook and collapsed. So all what felt like eternity was just less than four minutes. It was very dark except from the flashes from the burning building which somehow illuminated some dead bodies.

“Let’s go” Mr. Mysterious said dragging me towards the right.

It was not that I did not have a lot of questions on my mind but there were more pressing questions.

“For God sake tell me at least who you are. How can one single man do this damage? What are you? How did you trace me? Was it the bangles? The hair parker? Are you even human?” I asked as I allowed him drag me as fast as possible towards a destination I could no longer see because it was too dark. How on earth was he seeing so clearly because he

seemed to know exactly where he was going to? He did not answer me as expected but I needed answers.

“Thank you for saving me but you really need to say something. Where is Samson? He killed so many..”

“Sssh. You are still in shock. Not yet time for first aid.”

He brought out a big jacket from his bag and wore it on me. I was shaking like someone who had been soaked in a chilly water.

“Let’s hurry” he said running and pulling me along, sometimes lifting me against some obstacles. He stopped few minutes later and started removing something I guessed was a cloth used to cover something.

It was after he had led me to the door I got to know it was a car. And without switching on the lights, he ignited the car and started driving. It was really dark and the only way to save myself from going crazy on who I was with was to tell

myself he was wearing all those night vision goggles I've read about.

Suddenly all my fears turned to panic because he was driving too fast.

“Did you just rescue me to kill me by accident?” I shouted but it all fell on deaf ears. I did not know how I did not hyperventilate but I remained sane till he stopped driving.

I was still trying to recover from his maniac driving when he opened the door and pulled me out.

“Few minutes before dawn, a minute ahead of time” I heard his voice as he opened the booth to take something he needed.

“What do you mean by that and how long was I held captive?”

He did not even answer this time but took my hand and started dragging me.

“Just stop it. I am going crazy. Please tell me something.

Please. Where are we going to? Who are you? Please.”

He did not answer but continued dragging me. It was when my leg stepped on water that I knew we were now by the river.

“Stay here” he said moving further inside the water.

I started crying from overload of emotions. Within seconds he was back. He did not drag me this time but lifted me. After few steps, he placed me on a boat. Next few seconds, he had ignited the boat and we were speeding towards a destination only my rescuer knew about.

“At least say something. Please. I can’t take the suspense.” I cried. I had to shout to be heard.

“You are safe Stella. I hate seeing a lady cry.”

“Then say something.”

“What do you want to know?”

“Tell me who you are. How can one man do so much damage?

Did you just massacre over a hundred people? Where are we going to? And why the sadness radiating from you. I see you Mr. Mysterious. You looked so sad and devoid of any other expression throughout camp.” I wished I knew why I added the last part.

He did not answer.

“Are you a spy? Like a USA secret agent stuff?”

“You are very intelligent Stella and it attracts danger to you.”

“That’s it? That’s the answer I get? Please tell me I’m wrong.”

“I’m an ex-navy Seal so you are not far from the truth.”

“Wait like USA best military force in the world. Like navy S.E.A.L?”

“Ex Stella.”

It baffled me how just one statement could wipe away so many questions. I knew about the navy seal. I had once watched a top ten documentary on the world best military forces and what made them best. I knew that it was almost impossible to become one and they could fight on air, land and sea. And they were dangerous during rescue missions.

But there were other things still not making sense.

“Then what are you doing in Nigeria. Why are you a Corper?”

“I left the SEAL more than four years ago after I could not recover from an incident.”

“The reason you are so sad?”

“I was convinced by someone to come to my root. My mum is an half cast so also is my dad but both are Nigerians by nationality and my dad by birth. I’m a Nigerian by Nationality, USA by birth. I was convinced by a man I respect who had connection to another I’m beginning to respect to join the

military here as I go through the healing process. It took long before I was convinced the force I'm joining over here is worth joining."

I wished I understood what he was saying. I only understood the last statement.

"Worth joining? You mean Nigerian army. Like those you saw at the camp. I don't know who convinced you but he is lying. There is no way Nigerian military is worth joining. All the soldiers in that camp can't do what you did singlehandedly."

"I'm not talking about those. There is a Special Force in Nigeria."

"I know about it because I saw some group of army men on dark brown T-shirt with Special Force and something like a skull on the shirt."

“Those are on the bottom of the Special Force. There is a stage one gets to and they can’t wear that and there is a team at the top who are somehow independent from the Special Force and they are as dangerous as the navy SEAL but too few to be ranked because they are not even up to ten. It is almost impossible to enter. Difference with navy seal is that they allow females. They can fight on land, sea and air. They carry out rescue missions, they can act as undercover agents. They don’t do arrest just omega missions except an alpha mission that has been impossible for other teams to complete. They live on code names. But they can become the navy, the army or air force personnel and if possible the police and they will never use their real name. So they exist and at the same time don’t exist when needed. Even the soldiers in camp might be aware that a Special Force agent might be around but they would never be able to know who and the purpose.”

“If I tell you I am not confused, I am lying. What you just said is almost impossible to believe. You mean something like that is existing in Nigeria and we don’t know?”

“You are not supposed to know. Just knowing Special Force exist is enough.”

“So you were recruited into this team?”

“About. Still needed to undergo the protocols and finish my first mission.”

“Mission?”

“This is my first mission. I’m sorry I could not save the others. I was occupied.”

“Wait, wait. Just wait. You knew this would happen?”

I just could not believe what I was hearing.

PART FIVE

“There was a probability but except we have the ability to read mind we can only know from the Intels we have received and the phone of our targets. Samson was very paranoid and also smart just like you. He figured it in you and you were likely his target. I was really occupied with something else and I was also nearby when I received your signal. You waited too long.”

“The bangles and hair parker?”

“Yes and you activated all. Smart lady.”

“Phone. You hacked people’s phone in camp? My phone too? And what do you mean by Samson was paranoid. Samson is dead?”

“Stella can you swim?”

“No you need to answer me. Please tell me at least this one.”

“Stella apart from one person, you are the first person I have had a long conversation with for a long period of time. No more questions. Can you swim?”

“No but why are you asking?” I was definitely going to ask more questions later.

“Good, makes my mission easy.”

“What now?”

“We have guests.”

It was then I noticed darkness was disappearing and dawn was approaching. I could see what he was saying. Boats, like three of them and they had torchlights and there was nothing indicating they were guests instead they were coming at us with speed. It meant just one thing; trouble.

“Okay I know you are a navy seal..”

“Ex.”

“It doesn’t matter. I can’t die now. Not after everything. We are outnumbered and in the open. What the heck are you going to do?” I shouted.

If I was not hyperventilating before, I was now more than hyperventilating. The conversation had made me forget my phobia for water but apart from that, there were bigger issues like the approaching pirates who I knew were after us.

“I can’t swim if that’s your plan and we are still far from land.”

“I don’t need you to swim. It takes five minutes to die underwater for someone like you who can’t swim. All I need is less than three minutes.”

He held me and my smart brain was telling me he was going to do what I was thinking but I refused to believe he would even think of doing it.

“Wait no. You are joking.”

“Stella just breathe. Do you trust me?”

“Yes.”

And I meant it. Even though he was a mysterious stranger, I trusted him with my life, I trusted he would never do what I was thinking.

“Good. Then know I will come for you.”

“No don't do it..”

But he covered my mouth with his. My brain did not freeze it rather forgot about the danger before us. My body which had been so cold ignited and caught fire. It was liquid fire. I was melting from the sweet sensation. I opened up to allow him more access. Heat was beginning to pool in between my legs.

Then all of a sudden I saw myself under water. I could not even scream because I swallowed a lot of water as I opened my mouth. He really did it. After saving me, he did not just abandon me but he betrayed my trust. After escaping from

going through the worst kind of torture a girl should never experience, after escaping being killed by Samson or his men or his female psychopath, I was going to die by drowning in the hands of the man who actually risked his life and had to massacre up to a hundred people just to get me. I could not tell if it was the sounds of gun battles or explosion I was hearing or if it was the sound of death, but that sound continued for the short time I struggled to hold on to life. I felt as if my stomach was expanding, I could not breathe and any attempt to breathe through my mouth sent streams of water down my stomach. I could not fight off death this time and for some reasons I could not explain, I felt relieve as darkness flooded my vision and everything went black and blank.

Something was pressing my stomach, it was very painful. The only thing I love was when that thing touched my lips. It made me feel warm because I was very cold. It was as if I was frozen in a dark place.

After some time, I knew water was rushing out of my mouth and nose but I could not tell why. Suddenly, the pain in my stomach stopped, and I discovered I was really breathing. But why was I not breathing in the first place? I asked myself “Welcome back Stella.”

That voice. I knew that voice from somewhere. The ascent was not Nigeria. I remembered. Mr. Mysterious. The one who threw me into the river to drown. I jerked up with fury with the hope of attacking him but he stopped my attempt midway by holding my hand tenderly. He used the other hand to shine a torch at my eyes making me to blink and cover my eyes with my elbow.

“You don’t need much first aid nor debriefing. I love rescuing people like you.”

“Seriously? People like me? You kissed me and threw me to drown even after telling you I could not swim.”

“Would you rather be dead?”

I got confused by his question but just for a second.

“You could have told me your plans and allow me chose.”

“My plan was to rescue you Stella. Mission accomplished.”

“And the kiss. Do you do that to all the girls you’ve rescued?”

He did not answer but stared at me.

“You have not asked me how we got to the shore of the river and what happened to our guest but you ask about the kiss?”

I turned to look at the river. It was now bright enough to see clearly. All I could see was that from a distance, there was something that looked like a tsunami happened and washed away things to the river. I did not see any dead body floating but I could see debris of different kinds. I wanted to ask him how he defeated so many again but what was the need asking an ex-USA navy seal officer how he did his job. I was more concerned about the kiss, about my future.

“Why did you kiss me? Is it a normal thing for you?”

“In less than three minutes from now, someone is coming to pick me up. Then after about five minutes, Special Force officers. The ones at the bottom, like the ones you have seen will be arriving to pick you up. You are going to be taken back to Benin because that is the address on your file...”

“No no. I am not going to go back to that house. I will not..”

“Sssh Stella don’t panic on me. It’s the normal procedure, that is after you must have gone through check-ups and debriefing. Whatever the reason you don’t want to go back to that house can be taken care of because you are an adult Stella. You must not stay with them.”

He stood up when he had not explained everything I wanted to know.

“Wait you can’t leave me here.”

“You are safe Stella.”

I loved his ascent, I loved the way my name sounded on his tongue.

“You need to explain more. I’m still confused. Please stay with me. Can’t you go with me?”

“Stella my mission with you is over.”

“So it was just a kiss to you. But it was not normal for me.

From that first contact with you at the camp, I knew I had feelings for you. Not because of your color or something. It’s just..”

“Stella don’t.”

I started crying because I knew it was a waste of time. I must have been having that syndrome where someone falls in love with the rescuer but my body and brain was telling me it was not true that my feelings for him were genuine.

“Stella don’t.”

“Will I ever see you again?”

“When you get to Benin tell them you want to remain there. Tell them you would love to serve in the university because it’s a familiar environment for you. They will put you in a good office.”

He checked that his weird watch. I just knew time was running out for me.

“You did not answer my question.”

“Stella make sure to keep your smartness to yourself. Every one of The C has a special talent that distinguishes them from the regular military officer. They are trained to hone that talent making them look as if they are supernatural with the things they can do. The man I’m beginning to respect believes everybody has it just that some are dormant, while others did not get a proper honing. You have that talent of noticing what others will never see even though they were given a telescope and you are too quick witted. It can make you a target Stella.

Good thing you don't keep friends. It might have been the factor protecting you or maybe your warning system. You tend to notice evil from a distance. Just remain that way. I will not be always available to rescue you." (I have to write only C for security reasons and because of the promise I made)

He was now walking towards the road I never knew was there. My body and my brain reacted at the same time. I stood up to chase after him but I almost fell back from dizziness. He must have guessed my action because he turned.

"Stella stay down. You are not ready to stand."

"And you never answered my questions. Will I ever see you again?"

"I will see you Stella but you must promise me one thing."

"Which is?"

"You can never reveal this place and you must keep us a secret."

“What does that even mean?”

No answer.

“At least tell me your name.”

“I can’t Stella. But the first letter of my name is J.”

“J?”

He nodded.

“Thank you J. Thanks for rescuing me.”

He nodded.

And just like that without warning. There was a car and it had reversed without slowing down. I thought J was crazy with the wheel but whoever was on the wheel of that car was not human. I had never even seen such thing in movies. The car did not run. It flew. Before I could even blink from the shock of a car appearing from nowhere, someone was coming out of the car without switching it off. He was not huge

neither was he lanky. He was in between huge and lanky and all muscled. His brown shirt clung to him like a second skin.

He was not someone I would classify as handsome but he was not ugly. He was dark in complexion and well-muscled more than J. There was an aura of danger surrounding him. And he looked like someone on hyper mode. Like someone who had to be doing something. He looked at me and I found myself running to stay behind J.

I remembered J said someone was coming to pick him up which meant one of his colleague, which meant one of those people. The one he just called The C. My brain was telling me it was a secret J was not supposed to tell me. That it meant I was special to him but my body was afraid.

The ridiculous thing about that moment was that I had forgotten I always had a warning system that scared me away from evil and there was no alarm yet I was still afraid of that

guy. Maybe it was because of the way he looked at me or maybe because he became more interested when I ran to hide behind J.

There was something else I would never understand. The moment I ran to hide behind J and caught the guy's full attention, there was a sudden tension in the air like all the oxygen was sucked off. It was coming from both of them. They were supposed to be friends or at least comrades but they were staring at each other as if they were sizing up themselves, like they were going to fight. None was making a move. J held my hand from behind. It felt so warm but it increased the tension. They were yet to say anything to each other.

At that moment, I wanted to warn the guy to back off because if he attacked J, he would die. I had seen J in action. I wanted to tell him that if he was testing whether he could take

on J, he should forget it because he would lose even though it looked like he was bigger than J. But before I could open my smart mouth and cause trouble, I took another peep at him, then remembered all what J had said about them, how they were dangerous. His confidence was scaring the shit out of me. He was not in the bit intimidated by J. At least he must have known J was an ex-USA navy seal, yet he made me think he could take on J. The ease of his confidence was intimidating. I looked at J. It was same confidence that was radiating from him. But why would they be staring at each other like they were opponents about to wrestle in a live or die match? It did not make sense. There must have been something I did not notice because I was so tired. As if he knew I was peeping at him, he looked straight at me but J covered me from his view. J's movement was so swift but subtle that if one was not looking and concentrating at the same time, it would not be noticed. But I had already noticed my warning system was not

telling me to flee and I was also becoming intrigued by the guy that I took another peep. He was shaking his head at J like he was disapproving of J's action and he was pitying him for protecting me. It was as if he was saying I was trouble. It made me angry but I kept mute. I dared not talk because who knew if my warning system was not working properly. The both of them raised their head same time. I followed their movement to see a bird circling round us. That was no ordinary bird. I just knew but could not tell how it was no ordinary bird.

“Roger that.”

The both of them chorused as if responding to a command.

Then they saluted but were yet to talk to each other. The fast guy started walking to the driver's seat which was just like three step. J also started moving. I held on to his hand but he gently removed my hands. Without saying a single word to

me, he crossed over to the front seat and the two entered the car same time. And in a blink of an eye, the car was not even in my line of vision. Who the heck was that guy? And how could a car run that fast. If I was to give him a name, I mean a code name I would call him Fast.

I fell down as it dawned on me that J was gone. His mission had been accomplished and I would probably never see him again. I should be happy I was free, I should be happy my virginity was still intact. I should be a bit worried that I was beginning to feel the pains inflicted on my ribs by that psychopath lady but I was not. I was crying because J was gone. Then I was crying because amongst all the corpses that were sent with me, I was the only survivor.

It's been weeks but who is counting? As he predicted, I was taken for check-up, examined by a psychologist and after

some treatments I was allowed to choose where I would serve, then given three months break which I rejected because I had that stupid hope that J would come looking for me but there had not been anyone looking like J. It was almost as if he was a dream, a mirage. The newspaper had not helped. I had read so many of them including online articles and they all said the same thing although put in different ways.

‘Army rescues an abducted Female Corper After A Shootout with Pirates.’

‘Nigerian Military kills over a hundred Pirates/Kidnappers and Drug Dealers, Rescues a Female Corper.’

And so on their headlines read. And further details revealed that NYSC lost eight Corpers to the bandits and some other civilians with no loss to the Nigerian military. Some went ahead to write that it was a joint military action. Some called the Pirates notorious, some said human traffickers. There were

so many condolences from all works of life on the loss of the corps members and many accolades were given to the Nigerian Military for swinging into action.

Apart from J and his team, one more person knows the truth of what really happened, one more person knows the army or the military the newspapers were referring to was just one man. A man I hope would find me again.