

# **Goma Lake Victim**

**Goma Lake, #1**

**by Besa Mwaba**

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**Acknowledgements**

[NOTE: Two chapters were numbered “6”.]



Senior Detective Phil Chisha of the Zambian Police service leads a team into investigating the circumstances surrounding the discovery of a woman's corpse in the university of Zambia grounds. Each step along the way slides him deeper into a slippery world of obscene crime involving ordinary people while he also tries to manage his feelings for a newly recruited young police woman.

## Chapter 1

IT was a body of a middle aged black woman. Apart from being clad in a suggestive silky wet black dress which left a great deal of her breasts as well as her thighs exposed as it held her body tightly, there wasn't much else one could discern into her. Her wet soaked hair was long and dark and swept backwards further enhancing her large forehead. The blue eyebrow markings matched her blue lipstick but may have appeared awkward to those considering her dark complexion. She was lying on her left flank with her left leg slightly bent forward, thereby exposing her red, lacey pants.

"How long has she been in the water, Ray?" Senior police detective Phil Chisha asked the team pathologist who was kneeling near the body.

"Hard to tell so far. I need to conduct a autopsy first," replied Ray, drawing down her eyelids one after the other with a gloved finger. He then felt for her pulse by pressing the area around the front of her neck. As Ray was examining the woman, Phil noticed the gold chain around her neck. There was also a gold earring on her right ear. Her fingernails were painted blue.

Ray stood up and removed his white coat. He nodded to the two men in police uniform who were standing vigil nearby and they immediately moved to carry the body.

Phil looked at the woman again and noticed the wet patch of green grass beneath her. A few meters from where the woman lay was a body of water, a small pond. It was one among a group of ponds known collectively as the Goma Lakes. Beyond the ponds were trees and bush shrubs. Behind him stood a growing crowd of onlookers, and further beyond them—approximately a hundred meters away—stood the hostels of the University of Zambia, Great East road campus.

Phil regarded the crowd closely and landed his attention on a bald headed man wearing an old brown jacket who was loudly explaining the events to no one in

particular. Removing the dark sunglasses from his eyes, Phil walked over to the man and said, "Can you tell me what happened here sir?"

Shivering, the man stretched his arms sideways and replied, "Me *bwana* I know nothing, Me I just come from Kalingalinga and going to work in town. This is my short cut everyday. Me I see people standing here saying oh dead person, dead person so I run here to see. I swear *bwana* I know nothing."

Phil nodded and put his glasses back on. Cosmetically they matched his black sleeveless coat which he wore over his white shirt. He then walked away from the crowd and moved towards the old navy blue police van in which the body was since moved to. Ray and two other cops sat at the back of the van and Phil took the passenger seat in front.

Only after the police van had driven away did relative tranquility return to the Goma Lakes region of the university, whose name was derived from one of Africa's best academicians, Professor Lameck Goma.

"I wonder why such a beautiful woman would commit suicide," said Sub Inspector Nawa Nawa, his eyes fixed firmly on the meandering road ahead as he drove the van.

"We will find out," replied Phil. "But I have a bad feeling about it. Maybe it's the *nshima* and eggs I had for breakfast."

## Chapter 2

Later that day, Phil sat in his office on the first floor at Central police station. It was unusually hot on this April morning, and the air conditioning unit in his office was not functioning. Not that it ever did. Even though it was only 9 o'clock in the morning, Phil could feel sweat underneath his armpits.

"Let us quickly run through this together because the boss wants me to see him afterwards. I need your full attention on this one," started Phil as he addressed Nawa seated opposite him across his ageing desk. Dusty red and blue folders, a black desk phone and a half drank glass of water occupied the desk. On Phil's right side in the corner of the office stood a silver filing cabinet made of aluminum. Next to the cabinet was a forgotten pot of withering flowers.

"What we have on our hands is a suspected suicide case. We don't know who she is and when it happened. Ray is currently doing the autopsy and he will tell us what he will find. But we must find out who she is as soon as possible. For that we don't need his report. How do you suggest we approach this?"

Nawa cleared his throat and then said, "Obviously the first thing we need to do is to question the students and workers at the campus. By now, her fellow students must be aware of what has happened. The story is all over campus as we speak."

"Alright carry on. You may take the Corolla plus one more cop to assist you. I will sign the approval. Let us meet in the afternoon so that you update me. Is that understood?"

"Yes bwana it is clear. Which Corolla should we take? The blue one or white one?"

"The white one."

"That one has a faulty indicator on the right side sir. Also it makes noise when turning."

"It's the better of the two vehicles my friend. We have only two in our section and yes they are both in need of serious fixing. As for the blue one, it even has no brakes. You need to press hard to find the clutch. Take your pick."

Nawa nodded and then stood up.

"One more thing," Phil said. "No tempers out there in the field like last time."

Nawa then left the office with the key.

Phil then walked out of his office, turned left and followed the corridor to the end. He then scaled the stairs. Once on the floor above he went right and knocked on the first door. A female voice said come in. He entered.

"Is Fat Albert in?" Phil asked the secretary who fought unsuccessfully to hide her smile. She said, "The CID Commanding Officer is in. You may enter, sir."

Phil walked across the room and then opened the door without knocking. He let himself inside.

Commanding Officer Mwenda shot a stare at him and then continued reading the Post newspaper. Phil stood in the middle of the office awkwardly, all the while looking at Mwenda's face. He noted that Mwenda had added at least a pound more on his huge frame. His big tummy apparently was the reason Mwenda never tied his jacket buttons. Phil pulled at his thick moustache nervously as he waited.

"Sit down Phil," Mwenda said at last. Phil did so. Folding his newspaper at last, Mwenda told Phil to be coming as soon as he was called, to be knocking as soon as he reached the office, to be entering as soon as he was allowed in.

"Is that understood?" Mwenda asked in his hoarse voice.

"Understood sir."

"I am proceeding on leave next week. I intend to take a holiday. It's been long since I last rested. Is that clear?"

"Where are you taking your holiday sir?" Phil asked, trying to hide his joy at the pending absence of Mwenda.

"I am going to my village. I haven't been there since my mother passed away. They might start thinking that I don't have respect for them, not knowing that it is tough to get time off work here in town."

"I agree with you completely sir."

"I will leave you in charge here, is that clear? I shall sign the Delegation of Authority form on my last day. And it's imperative that the city of Lusaka remains quiet. Otherwise someone on top may cancel my leave. Is that clear?"

"I understand sir."

"How far are we on those vehicle criminals?" asked Mwenda finally loosening his necktie. He then wiped sweat off his face with his fat hand.

"We still haven't apprehended them sir. We are following some leads which are hopefully taking us to the big fish. An informer alerted us of a garage in Makeni area which strips stolen vehicles into parts which they then sell as spares at a huge profit. We intend to storm it as soon as we put together our logistics."

"How reliable is the source of that information?"

"He is someone who has assisted us with real leads in the past investigations. He helped us track down those foreign car thieves three years ago."

Mwenda nodded. He then took a sip from a glass of water.

"Any other investigations that you are pursuing?"

Phil explained to Mwenda the events of that morning at the university. Mwenda listened attentively without interrupting.

"How did the report reach us?" he asked at last.

"We received an anonymous call at around 06 30 o'clock and I led the team to pick the body."

"Do we know who she is?"

"Not yet sir. But as we speak my team is on the ground to establish her identity. We strongly suspect that she is one of the local prostitutes from those nearby compounds."

"Good. But this clearly is suicide, isn't it?"

"I am certain that it is, sir."

"In that case, establish her identity quickly and inform her relatives, then close the case. It is not in my tradition to commit resources into investigating a suicide case. That is misuse of public resources. I would rather we concentrate more on the vehicle criminals using the Makeni garage lead. That one sounds promising for our careers. The case of a hule who kills herself adds nothing of value to us."

Mwenda then reopened the newspaper and continued reading. From experience Phil knew that their conversation was over. He excused himself and left Mwenda's office.

He walked all the way back to his office with an unusual air of enthusiasm. He smiled as he entered his office.

"Next week, Acting CID Commanding Officer. In two years, what?" He said to himself as he threw a fist in the air. He sat down and then opened the second drawer of his desk. From there he took out his photo album.

## Chapter 3

"The photo you are looking at, who is in it?" Mercy asked Phil suspiciously. Her eyes were on his clean-shaven hard cheekbones which were a proper fit with his large forehead. By merely staring at his muscular body shape and broad shoulders, she could sense an air of authority inside the office.

"This is my mother, silly. The photo was taken in 1997. This was just before I went to watch the soccer match between Zambia and South Africa."

"That is like fifteen years ago right?"

"Right. My mother was young and pretty as you can see. Where were you in 1997 if I may ask?"

Letting out a girlish giggle, Mercy replied, "I was in grade seven."

"I am sure the boys were already all over you even at that time."

She smiled and looked down, and Phil noticed the dimples which formed on her round cheeks. Her pink painted lips were thin and her eyes were large. She had

natural well-trimmed eyebrows. She wore a silky beige dress which Phil found arousing as it matched her light complexion.

"And did you then have any idea that you would end up working for the Zambia police?" Phil asked with a smile in return.

"Not really. I wanted to be a doctor. But my dad guided me into IT. And he is the one who organized this internship job for me."

"Your father was a tough politician."

They allowed a few seconds of silence to pass before Phil said, "By the way I was in grade eleven in 1997. I too had no intentions of being a cop. I wanted to be a soccer player like Kalusha Bwalya or Lucky Ms'iska. Now those two were my favorite wingers. They made me love watching soccer. But my mother- the beautiful lady in this picture—wouldn't accept my ambition. She wanted me to be an accountant instead."

Putting the photo down, Phil continued, "You see, my mother was a single mom. She struggled for every little crumb of bread we had. Anything we ever came across was a result of her sweat. She used to work for a family in Northmead as a maid. We were staying in Garden compound then. And despite the little money that we were living on, she made sure that I went to school. She forced me to do my school assignment."

Mercy held his glance and then slowly asked, "What about your father?"

"I never met him. But my mom told me that my father was the husband of the lady that she was working for as a maid. That is how she became pregnant with me. Father never married mom. He stuck with his wife. Instead the family fired mom from her job. After I was born she looked for another job as a maid. And so on."

Mercy nodded but said nothing. Phil pulled at his moustache.

"The decision to be a policeman was made just after the match between Zambia and South Africa in 1997. I know it sounds funny but it's true. Mom had given me enough money for a ticket to watch Kalusha Bwalya live, but I decided to enter the stadium for free using illegal means so that I could use the money for something else," Phil said with a smile.

Then he continued, "But after climbing the fence and jumping in, a policeman saw and came running after me. I tried to run away but he caught me. Then he gave me one slap which made me fly to the ground. The slap made my head spin and I saw stars for a while. There and then my decision was made to be a cop. I wanted to be able to dish out such slaps as part of my job also. And so here I am."

Mercy let out a hearty laugh. Then she asked, "Did you even enjoy the game by the way?"

"Oh yes. Zambia assembled a very good side with players like Kalusha, Jonson, and Joel Bwalya. Then we had the giant Elijah Litana at the back alongside Wawa. In front we had Dennis Lota and Mwape Miti. It was exciting and we roared and cheered each time Zambia took possession."

"What about Lucky M'siska?"

"By that time he was no longer in the national team. His time had passed."

"And how did the South Africans play?"

"They were African champions when they came. But even then, we were not convinced that they could beat us. We all believed that their championship of

1996 was a mere fluke. They too knew what we thought and they appeared scared of us. But as the game progressed, they surprised us with their well co-ordinated passing style. They literally closed down Kalusha Bwalya. I think they put their captain Neil Tovey to do the job. It was a tough battle. Also, they added to their team a guy called Jerry Sikosana. That guy was literally released from jail in order to play against Zambia."

"Really? Why was he in jail?"

"Armed robbery."

Mercy shook her head and then asked, "How did he play?"

"He played very well. He was a master at dribbling and shooting at goal. He gave our defender, Aggrey Chiyangi a torrid time that day."

"So what were the scores?"

"Zero-Zero."

Mercy put up a face of surprise and said, "But still you maintain it was a good Zambian team?"

"It was a good team. The only obstacle was that there were problems in the team between Kalusha Bwalya and Charles Musonda. In the end, Musonda never even played in that match. He said he had suddenly pulled a muscle and was no longer fit to play. So I think we played as a divided unit. That was the last time the national team heard of Charles Musonda. He had been a brilliant midfielder by world standards."

Just then the phone on Phil's desk rang. He picked it and said hello.

"Hello? Am I talking to Detective Officer Phil?" the caller said.

"Speaking," replied Phil.

"Alright, this is Ray from Pathology."

"Yes Ray, I was waiting for your call. What do you have for me?"

"I am done with the initial examination of the woman that we found this morning at the university ponds. We found heroin in her blood."

"Heroin? She died of heroin overdose?"

"So far that is what we have."

"Alright we shall involve the narcotics section in this investigation to tackle the drug angle. Am not surprised though, most prostitutes use drugs."

There was silence for five seconds before Ray asked, "Have you established her identity?"

"My team is working on it as we speak. I hope we can establish her identity today."

"Good luck."

"Thanks Ray. By the way when can I have the full autopsy report?"

"By end of day today. Or latest tomorrow morning."

"Alright. I will wait. Bye."

"Bye."

Phil let out a sigh.

Mercy asked, "Was that the pathologist guy? The shy light skinned guy?"

"Yes that's Ray. So you like him right?"

"Ah you also, I was only asking," said Mercy defensively.

"He says she died of drug overdose."

"Meaning she didn't drown?"

"She took the drug and then strayed into the pond in a state of intoxication. That's my speculation. Let's wait for the full report from Ray."

Mercy excused herself and then stood up to leave. Phil watched her as she walked out of his office, his eyes fixed on her youthful swinging hips and bottom. He sniffed longingly as her perfume filled the air.

\* \* \* \* \*

Later that day, Phil sat next to Nawa at the counter at Goodies night club in Kalundu drinking Castle beer. The club was small but lively with overhead lights of various color illuminations shifting above them. Most of the seats were already taken and there were a few patrons already on the dance floor.

"So how did your investigations go earlier today?" Phil asked Nawa as he sipped his beer.

"We asked around campus. We talked to students and staff. They all don't know the woman."

"Did you also try the Registrar? Just in case one of the students..."

"Nothing. They don't know her either," replied Nawa gulping down his beer as Paul Ngozi's song "Ulemu" played through the loud speakers. Then he continued, "During our youthful days in the early eighties, Paul Ngozi was our main star. Just listen to his lyrics as he goes *Ulemu, Ulemu*."

Phil took another sip without replying. Then he asked, "What about the person who fished her out of the pond?"

"She was fished out by an old man. He is a cleaner at the campus. He said that two young fellows—a boy and a girl—were walking hand in hand early morning by the ponds. Then they saw a shoe protruding above the surface of the water. You know students boss. The girl wanted to get the shoe. But when she bent to pick it she realized that there was a dead person in the water. So they ran and reported to the cleaners. One of them, the old man, eventually fished her out of the pond."

"And they never saw or heard anything?"

"No they didn't. I took all their statements. It's part of my report sir."

Phil took a longer sip from his bottle. Then Nawa said, "It is like this woman is just from outside campus. Just these prostitutes. Like you know sir prostitutes travel far and wide. Maybe she is from another town."

"And how exactly did you know the behavior of prostitutes?"

"Ah boss, we are both men here."

Phil opened his mouth to reply but then stopped himself. Instead his eyes landed on two scantily dressed girls across the hall. Nawa followed his gaze and then said, "See what I mean? Can I get them for company boss?"

Phil nodded. As Nawa left the seat, Phil ordered another beer. He received his order at once and took a long sip. After about two minutes he shot a second stare at the girls, only to see Nawa dancing with one of them already. With a smile, Phil shook his head. He looked at his wrist watch. 22:13 o'clock.

He was about to take another sip when he felt a soft tap on his left shoulder. He turned sharply and found himself looking at a light skinned woman with heavy makeup. She had dreadlocked hair.

"Hello *ba* brother," the woman said in a hoarse voice.

"Hello sis. What are you taking?" Phil said, happy to be in charge.



"Smirnoff."

Phil ordered Smirnoff for the woman. She sat down next to him without waiting for an invitation. The waiter brought the Smirnoff and the woman removed the bottle top using her teeth. She immediately downed half a bottle at a go and started tapping her feet on the ground.

"So you come here a lot?" Phil asked her while tapping his foot also on the ground in sync with Sam Mangwana's "Zimbabwe My Love" song which was now playing.

"Yes, *ba* brother. Is good place this one."

"Why do you say so?"

"OK, no fighting here. Like you are fighting because of the man, *awe*."

She finished her drink on the second gulp. Phil clicked his fingers at the waiter. The waiter looked at Phil who raised three fingers and then pointed at the empty Smirnoff bottle in front of the woman. The waiter brought three more drinks for her and she beamed with a broad smile.

"Ah *ba* brother," she said with another soft tap on his shoulder.

"By the way you didn't tell me your name."

"Agnesi," she said, shifting in her high stool and revealing her thighs which her black mini dress could hardly cover.

"Nice to meet you Agnesi. My name is Phil."

"OK *ba* Fiwu. Are you married with wife at house?"

"Not yet."

"Oh *ba* brother *fye*."

"You said women don't fight here over men, *tefyo*? What about drugs?"

"Which drugs *ba* Fiwu?"

"I hear that one woman got so drunk here with drugs that she went and drowned in the campus ponds."

"I don't know," she replied and then sipped her Smirnoff beer.

Phil shot a glance at Nawa who was now sitting in a corner. The girl was on his laps.

"Your friend, can she know about the dead woman?" he asked, pointing at the girl on Nawa's laps with his head. Agnesi turned and looked at her friend. Then she shouted, "*Iwe* Estele, come just one minute."

The girl walked over to Phil and Agnesi. She stared at Phil, lit a cigarette and asked thoughtlessly, "Has he agreed?"

"He is *ba* Fiwu. He is asking if you have heard about the woman who died at campus?" said Agnesi.

"Yes I heard," replied Estele

"Please sit down," said Phil excitedly. "What are you drinking?"

"Buy me Amarula. Plus cigarettes."

Phil repeated the order to the bar man.

"So Estele, you know the woman?"

"I said I heard."

The waiter brought a bottle of Amarula to them and opened it.

"Where?" Phil asked.

"On radio. They said a prostitute had drowned at campus."

"Did they? Which radio station?"

"Almost all of them reported at 13 hours and also 18 hours."

"Which radio station ba sister?"

"I heard on Phoenix, on UNZA radio and ZNBC radio 2."

Phil shook his head. He gulped down the remaining beer and then stood up.

"Excuse me ladies, I am going to the loo," he said.

"Don't run away from us ka? We give special service," said Estele. Phil laughed loudly as Estele displayed her sexual skills by wriggling her bottom and waist vigorously. Nawa clapped and then raised his thumb.

Phil walked across the club and then exited. Once outside he took a deep breath of cool fresh air and said to himself, "So who the hell authorized the statement to the media and yet I am still investigating?"

## Chapter 4

The following day was Wednesday. Phil woke up with a terrible hangover from the previous night's drinking. He yawned and stretched himself several times while lying in his bed. He rubbed his eyes before reluctantly getting out of his bed after several postponements. Clad only in his boxer shorts, he walked out of the bedroom to the bathroom. Once there, he took off his shorts and stepped into the shower. The warm water streaming onto his head and shoulders to his buttocks and thighs gave him a pleasing awakening. He reached out for his toothbrush and began to brush his teeth while taking his shower.

He finished his bathing session and headed back to his bedroom where he picked out a pair of black trousers and a blue T-shirt. After putting on his clothes which included a pair of black boots, he combed his neat, short hair. Afterwards he put on his black sleeveless coat and then walked to the side drawer next to his bed. He opened it, removed his pistol and then placed it in the inner pocket of his coat.

Phil walked over to the bedroom window as was his habit and peeped outside through the curtains. He could see people rushing for work heading in all directions. School children in various uniform outfits were a noticeable feature on the street outside. Near his flat, he could see women already sweeping the surroundings. Across the road he saw a shop with an inscription, "Kabwata Fisheries". As much as he knew it was the oldest shop in Kabwata residential area, where Phil had lived for five years.

He left his bedroom with clothing items on the floor and then headed to the kitchen. He peeped into the kitchen and then changed his mind. He decided to go straight to work instead and eat later. As he passed through the sitting room, he stared with satisfaction at a wall picture of Christopher Katongo with the Africa cup trophy in his hands. He exited the house and locked the door behind him.

"Good morning neighbor, how are you today?" A fat woman from a flat across his asked him cheerfully. She had a broom in her hands and a baby on her back. Standing next to her was a light complexioned younger woman in a black T shirt and green party chitenge around her waist.

"Good morning Mrs. Thole," replied Phil. He looked at her and then at the young woman.

"Have you had your breakfast yet? You look tired, neighbor," she added.

Phil nodded with a smile. He said nothing.

With a warning finger she continued, "I knew it. You haven't eaten. Maybe you didn't even eat supper last night. It is not good. One day you will collapse at work."

"I had some biscuits and..."

"No, no, no. You should eat proper food, not biscuits. You need a woman to take care of that part."

Phil looked down and then smiled.

"By the way," she continued. "This is my niece Aisha. She is here to visit us. She lives in Kitwe with her parents."

Phil regarded the younger woman and immediately noted her thin oval face. Her hair was dark and wavy and she had a thin, pointed nose. Her body looked athletic in shape. Phil could make out her wide hips even though her body was covered in a chitenge from waist downwards.

"I am happy to meet you Aisha," said Phil with a slight nod.

"Same."

Mrs. Thole smiled broadly.

Phil looked at his wrist watch and said, "I will see you people later. I must run now."

"You will find us," she replied as she watched Phil disappear beyond the corridor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Phil was in his office at 11 30 o'clock. He sat down feeling tired from last night's drinking. He yawned and his eyes landed on a new file on his desk written for his attention. He had just opened the file to page one when he saw a note in familiar handwriting, "See me immediately."

He stood up, yawned loudly again as he stretched himself and then put on his black coat. He then took out a shoe brush and polished his boots to a shiny black look. He left his office and headed straight to the Commanding officer's office. He found the secretary looking at her face in a hand held mirror. He found it rather strange that a fifty three year old would constantly preoccupy herself with her looks.

"Good morning, is Fat Albert in? He said he wanted to see me," said Phil.

"Yes he said that, but that was over an hour ago. He is in the board room downstairs now. He said to follow him there."

"What is he doing there?"

"Journalists."

"Thanks," replied Phil before walking out of her office. Within two minutes he was in the board room. Commanding Officer Mwenda was addressing journalists. Phil took a seat at the back as Mwenda was speaking.

"The truth of the matter is that we don't favor anyone, is that understood? We are politically neutral. And we shall maintain law and order in Lusaka. We shall deal with anyone who breaks the law regardless of their political affiliation. Is that clear?"

"Why is it that so far, it's only cadres from the opposition parties that are getting arrested?" asked one reporter with a Daily Mirror I'd on his breast pocket.

Mwenda looked at the reporter and then said, "That is what I am saying my friend. If a cadre from the opposition breaks the law, I will not let him alone just because he is the opposition. We need peace in these campaigns. Whether MMD or PF or UPND whatever..."

"Sir," a reporter from TIMES stood up. "Of late we have witnessed street demonstrations by members of the ruling party around Lusaka. They make noise and generally disturb public peace. Last time they demonstrated all the way through Cairo road carrying coffins and demanding for the dismissal of Mr. Kabimba, the PF Secretary General. What are the police doing about it?"

"In certain circumstances, demonstrations are allowed. It is a democratic right. Is that clear? Besides what you are referring to is purely a PF matter."

"It is not, especially when public peace is being threatened."

"When was public peace threatened by the ruling party?"

"There have been incidences where cadres have used machetes on each other in public. We have seen cadres supporting Wynter Kabimba fighting with those supporting GBM. One cadre was hacked to death near the airport."

"It was an internal matter."

There were murmurs in the room. A reporter from The Post then stood up.

"My question relates to media reports concerning the Minister of Agriculture and the maize export scandal involving over 2 million dollars. Why hasn't police moved in to arrest the Minister yet?"

Mwenda cleared his throat and then said, "What evidence do you have against him? As police we move in only if there is proof of wrongdoing, not merely on suspicion. Is that clear? Otherwise if I were to base my decision on suspicion, I can lock up all of you in here."

There was a round of laughter in the room. The Post journalist stood up again.

"In fact, you do have facts. My newspaper carried out details of his ill-gotten wealth, complete with evidence of corrupt dealings of exporting maize to Zimbabwe. We even shared these with your office. I am prepared to lay the same evidence right here before you again."

"My friend," said Mwenda. "Let us not find faults in each other here. Proving a crime is not easy. You need concrete proof beyond reasonable doubt in order to convict a person..."

"Is it your job or the court's to convict a person?"

Mwenda cleared his throat and then shouted, "Next question please!"

A female reporter from ZNBC rose and said, "Commanding Officer, police released a statement yesterday about a woman found dead at the university of Zambia campus. How are the investigations proceeding?"

With a relaxed smile, Mwenda replied, "That is how a trained journalist asks a question. To answer your question madam, investigations are progressing well. We are on top of things."

"What was the cause of death?"

"Drowning."

"Was she drunk?"

"As police we have established that she was in fact high on illegal drugs. Is that clear?"

"Drugs? What type of drugs sir?"

We are not at liberty to disclose that because it may impact on our progress. But we understand that prostitutes use drugs a lot in order to sleep with strangers. Is that clear? But let me take advantage of this to warn the general public that drugs are bad. And as police we shall arrest anyone who abuses or traffics in drugs."

The Post reporter stood up and said, "Do you have her identity or where she is from?"

"Not yet my friend. I said that we are still investigation the matter. Next question!"

"If you are still investigating the matter and do not even know who she is, how come you are telling us that she was a prostitute?"

"Look here," said Mwenda in a high pitched voice. "We found her almost naked and so on. And we found drugs in her system. If it looks like a fish, swims like a fish and behaves like a fish, surely it must be a fish. Is that clear? I expect you to know that."

"Here is a hypothetical example. She takes drugs, gets high and walks into the street. She is then abducted by people who rape her and dump her body in the pond. Isn't that possible?"

Mwenda laughed out loudly and then clapped his hands twice. Then he said, "I can see that you are a fiction writer."

"Thank you sir. My question remain, is it possible that we may be dealing with a murder case instead of suicide?"

"That is pure speculation my friend, and it only works in your profession. As police we deal with facts, not speculations..."

"If we are together sir," insisted the same reporter, "the only person who has been speculating in this room is you. You have told us that you are investigating the matter. It means you obviously do not know who she is and what really happened. But on the other hand, you would have us believe that she was a prostitute who committed suicide while high on drugs..."

Mwenda stood up and banged his fist on the table. He then yelled, "Let us have some order here. You cannot tell us how to do our work as police. Otherwise if you are so clever, why aren't you a police officer yourself?"

"Answer my question sir."

Phil looked down in discomfort. Shortly afterwards he slipped out of the board room and then headed back to his office.

He sat down on his desk and finished the remaining water in his glass.

There was a knock at the door. Phil said come in.

"Good morning sir," offered Nawa, spotting his old khaki police uniform, with a small hole just below the breast pocket.

"Good afternoon. Actually it's already past 12 o'clock," corrected Phil pointing to his wristwatch.

"No wristwatch sir," said Nawa shrugging his shoulders. Phil closed the file in front of him and then stood up.

"Let's go to lunch at town Centre," he told Nawa.

"Boss, I was thinking of going home for lunch. I was hoping you would accompany me."

Phil nodded and then put on his black coat which he had been holding in his hands.

The two left the office together and exited the police station through the main reception area. They walked out of the premises and then turned left, taking the footpath parallel to Church road.

"It seems you had a good time with your *ka hule* at the bar last night my friend," said Phil with a smile.

"Boss, we continued after your left. We drank and danced until 02 o'clock."

"What happened next?"

"We ended up at her place in Kalingalinga compound. That is where I slept. Man, she has skill. Mamamama. I just couldn't leave her bed."

"What about your wife?"

"I haven't been home yet. That is why I have asked you to accompany me for lunch to apologize on my behalf."

"You are disgrace, you know that my dear friend?"

"Yes sir."

Phil smiled as he shook his head. They bypassed the Boma offices on their left. They began to walk up the flyover bridge. It was dusty as people walked up and down from both ends.

"So that woman was not a student after all," remarked Phil.

"Just another *hule*, maybe from out of town."

Phil quickly told him about the conference of that morning.

"Boss, *ka sample*. Neckties!" a dark young man with uncombed hair interrupted them, waving some neckties in their faces.

"No cash *mwana*," replied Phil as they continued walking.

"Boss, only thirty kwacha, no problem," he insisted as he followed along.

Phil waved him away.

"Ok, get it at twenty five boss. No problem."

Phil and Nawa ignored the street vendor. They reached the post office.

"Last price fifteen boss."

"Sorry *mwana* next time," said Phil, walking over to a parked taxi cab nearby.

"Get for ten kwacha only. Good quality."

Nawa shot a stern look at the vendor, who then noticed his police trousers and boots. The vendor waved at them and then ran back across the road.

They entered a blue cab and the driver started the engine.

"Where am I taking you?" asked the cab driver as he joined Cairo road.

"Sikanze Police camp," replied Nawa simply.

They traveled in silence through Cairo road, then went past the Kafue round about and then proceeded straight all the way South.

"So much infrastructure coming up here," remarked Phil as they passed the new shopping mall in Makeni.

In twenty minutes, they were at Nawa's house. The two cops got out of the cab. Nawa paid the driver and he drove off.

They found Nawa's wife washing clothes outside the house near the water tap.

“Good afternoon sweetie,” Nawa said to his wife. She looked at him and then continued washing without replying.

“How are you *mulamu*?” Phil asked her enthusiastically.

“I am not fine *mulamu*. Please get inside the house. I shall come soon,” she replied with a serious facial expression.

Phil and Nawa exchanged glances and then proceeded into the small two bedroom house. The sitting room was well cleaned. There were two old sofas and a wooden table in the middle of the room. On one end of the room was a display cabinet in the middle of which sat a TV. The walls required urgent painting, but the green curtains made the environment a little more decent. Nawa motioned to one of the seats with his open palm, and Phil sat down. There was a slight squeaky sound as he rested his weight into the sofa.

“Welcome to our humble abode,” said Nawa with a slight smile.

“It is a lovely place and thanks,” replied Phil. Just then two girls with uncombed hair and both clad in old chitenge cloth walked into the room and knelt as they greeted Phil. Nawa stared at them angrily as they left the room.

Nawa’s wife entered the room shortly afterwards. She unwrapped and then re-wrapped her chitenge tightly around her waist. She then sat down on the floor close to the door.

“How are the people at home, *mulamu*?” she asked Phil while slowly clapping her hands softly.

“Everybody is well. They send their greetings,” he replied.

She cleared her throat and then said, “*Mulamu*, you have come at the right time to hear this. We are not living well in this house. You found me washing those clothes and once they dry, I am going back to the village where my parents are.”

“No, no *mulamu*. Don’t talk like that. Why? What is the problem?”

“Ask your friend there,” she replied.

Phil turned to Nawa and asked, “Bo Nawa you have heard what our mother has said. What is the problem?”

Nawa cleared his throat and remained silent.

“He cannot even answer. Your friend does not take care of me the way a man should look after a woman. He doesn’t leave any money for food. He doesn’t leave any money for clothes.”

“Bo Nawa, is that so?” Phil shouted with feigned anger.

“In fact ask him where he slept last night,” she added with renewed vigor.

Phil turned to face Nawa and said, “You even slept out? I am very disappointed with you. How can you keep your good woman like this? It is very bad. Very bad indeed. See now she wants to leave you alone. Who do you think will look after you? Who will cook for you? Who will wash your clothes? Who will raise your five children?”

“Six children,” she interrupted.

“Please I don’t want to hear this story again from *mulamu* here. I have felt very bad,” Phil said, shaking his chest with his right hand. Nawa was looking at the floor.

“All he knows is sleeping with small girls and with prostitutes. He spends his money on beer. Me, I am tired,” she said while waving her hands in the air.

"You said he doesn't bring money home?" asked Phil as he thrust his hand into his breast pocket. He drew a bunch of notes and counted ten of them.

"Here *mulamu*, please use this money to buy food for the children," he said extending his hand with the money to her. She stood up and then walked over to Phil. She knelt as she accepted the money. Then she clapped softly again.

Turning to Nawa, Phil said, "I want to hear you apologize to her right now."

Nawa shifted in his chair as he cleared his throat.

"I am sorry my wife. I won't do it again. I promise," he said quietly.

Phil turned to Nawa's wife and said, "*Mulamu* my friend has apologized. He says that he is sorry. Please forgive him for his mistake. He loves you, it was just a mistake. And I will ensure that he gives you money every month. Please forgive us."

Nawa smiled. Then Phil said, "By the way *mulamu*, we are hungry. Are you not going to prepare *nshima* for us?"

"The *nshima* is almost ready. Just give me five minutes," she replied as she got up. She left the room with the money firmly clenched in her hand.

Nawa smiled at Phil and showed him a raised thumb. Phil smiled as he shook his head.

"By the way, has the informer come through on the Makeni garage?" Phil asked once they were alone in the room.

"He came through. He has given us a name of their supplier of stolen cars," replied Nawa.

"Who is the supplier?"

"James Tembo, the one called Big Joe," said Nawa.

"The same Big Joe criminal from three years ago?"

"Yes the same. Our informant says he controls all vehicle thefts in Kabulonga, Woodlands, Chilenje and Kabwata areas."

"So when are we moving in on him?"

"We need solid evidence. We have agreed that the informant phones us immediately Big Joe shows up with another stolen vehicle at Makeni garage. We don't want to disturb the trap by arresting him too early."

Nawa's wife brought a tray on which there were two covered plates. There was also a bowl of salt next to the plates. She placed the tray on the table and then disappeared back outside. She emerged a minute later carrying a dish of water in one hand and a container of cold water in the other. After placing everything on the wooden table, she knelt on the floor and invited them for the meal. They both said thank you and she left the room again.

Nawa held the dish as Phil washed his hands. Phil did the same when it was time for Nawa to wash his hands also.

It was *nshima* and fish on the plates.

"How reliable is our informer?" Phil asked as he threw a lump of *nshima* into his mouth, followed closely by a piece of fish.

"He works at the same garage. He handles the paperwork."

"What does he want in return?"

"He has a case of forgery against him. He wants it dropped."

Phil smiled.

"I see that nothing is for free nowadays," he said.



## Chapter 5

By 14 o'clock, Phil was dozing in his office. He stretched as he yawned. The phone on his desk rang. Phil allowed it to ring thrice before picking it.

"Hello sir, this is reception. There is a Ms. Banda to see you."

"Ms. Banda? What is this about?"

"She says that she is missing a relative and wants to... "

"Let her in at once," said Phil quickly. He then cut the line.

He yawned again. He then stared at the hole in the ceiling for the two minutes that it took for the woman to reach his office.

She entered nervously without knocking. Phil regarded her with curiosity as she slowly walked towards the empty chair opposite him. She was short and dark, and had short hair. A silver necklace ran round her neck. She was clad in a chitenge dress and fitting flowery colored shoes. Phil gave her one of those assuring smiles which he normally reserved for nervous clients. With his right hand he motioned towards the chair opposite him, and she sat down.

"Good afternoon madam," he began,

"Good afternoon sir."

"Well my name is Phil and I am the chief detective officer here. The receptionist informed me that you needed to see me."

"Yes sir, it is about Molly."

"Who?"

"Molly. My niece."

"Alright. I am following. What has Molly done?"

"She has disappeared from home."

Phil pulled at his moustache. He took his gaze off the woman and looked briefly through the window to his left side. To him, the visitor appeared too nervous.

"Your niece—how old is she?" Phil asked her.

"She is thirty four years old."

"Well, I am thirty four years old too. What a coincidence," he replied with a smile. She did not smile back.

"Excuse my asking madam, but at thirty-four isn't she married?"

"No."

"Maybe she is with her boyfriend,"

"No."

Phil reestablished eye contact and then asked, "For how long has she been missing?"

"Three days."

"Three days?" repeated Phil.

"Well I was in South Africa since last week. And I left Molly at home. I returned to Zambia this morning. Only for our maid to inform me that Molly is missing. She told me that Molly hasn't been home since Monday. I phoned all the people I know

but no one has seen her. So I thought of coming here. I am told that you picked a dead woman this week."

Phil nodded.

"It must be hard for you madam, but indeed we are still keeping a woman's body pending identification."

Her facial expressions changed to a show of anguish.

"I will let you see her and tell me if she is the one."

She nodded as she looked at her short trimmed fingernails.

"Would you describe your niece madam?"

"She is a bit dark and of medium height."

"Body size?"

"A little on the big size. She has big hips and a big behind."

Phil nodded. He wrote something in his notebook which he had opened as soon as the woman had entered his office.

"Like I said, I shall ask you to accompany me to the morgue to identify the body. I need you to be strong. But I must remind you again that the body might or might not be your niece's. Can we go now?"

She hesitated. Then slowly fighting back tears, she nodded her head.

\* \* \* \* \*

At quarter to five that afternoon, Phil knocked on the Commanding Officer's door. His secretary wasn't on her desk.

"Come in," Mwenda answered. Phil let himself inside.

"Sit down," said Mwenda. Phil sat.

"What can I do for you?" Mwenda asked Phil.

"I just needed to update you on the woman that we picked at campus sir."

"That prostitute you mean?"

"She has been identified," announced Phil.

"Her relatives turned up finally? Where were they all this time?"

"She was positively identified by her aunt this afternoon. Apparently the two stay together in Woodlands with a live-in maid. The woman has been out of the country and only returned this morning."

"Alright. It appears we are almost done. What is your next course of action?"

"Nawa and I will visit her tomorrow morning at her house. We shall also get a few details and then bring closure to this case."

"When will you close this case?"

"Tomorrow sir."

Mwenda nodded. Then he asked, "What about the vehicle theft case?"

"We have set a trap for the suspect. We are informed he controls northern Lusaka operations."

"Can you give me a date Phil?"

"No sir. This one is still very fluid."

Mwenda bit his lower lip. Then he asked, "Anything else?"

Phil hesitated a while and then said, "No sir. That will be all."

"Continue being on top of things Phil. I have a meeting with the minister of home affairs this evening to discuss the state of crime in Lusaka. Keep control of these thefts cases. Is that clear? I shall handle the political cases."

Phil nodded and then excused himself.

## Chapter 6

Next day at exactly 11 o'clock, Phil and Nawa arrived at Molly's house in Woodlands. They parked their white Corolla outside the gate and then quietly walked inside. There were four other cars inside the yard. From a distance they could hear loud wailing coming from the house.

A green military tent was erected near the fence in front of the house. There were only two men seated. One was smoking a cigarette while the other—a white man—was holding a bible. Phil and Nawa shook their hands as per tradition and then sat down too.

"This death has really shocked us mwe," said the old man with gray hair seated next to Nawa.

"Where someone is healthy and then pwaaah, you just hear that they are gone. *Awe* sure."

Nawa shook his head sympathetically.

"Some things are hard to explain. We need wisdom and strength from above," contributed the white man while pointing to the sky. Everyone agreed by nodding.

Just then a young woman clad in a chitenge on top of a black dress came over to the tent carrying a tray. On it were four bottles of coca cola. She knelt down as she distributed the drinks, following the order in which they were seated. Phil was served last. As she walked away, Phil stood up and followed her. He caught up and then whispered something in her ear. She went inside the house.

Phil took out sunglasses from his black coat and then put them on. About two minutes later the same young woman emerged from the house accompanied by Molly's aunt. She then pointed at Phil. Molly's aunt walked over to Phil. She was clad in a long black dress and her hair was covered in a black chitambala. Her eyes were a bit red and wet.

"My condolences once more madam," said Phil as he offered his hand to her.

"It's good to see you officer. And please just call me Jacqueline, not madam. It makes me feel old."

"I will try to remember that. As promised yesterday after you identified the body, I am here for a statement. If you are not in a situation to proceed, I can come another time."

"No officer, let us do it now. In fact I was hoping you could come yesterday itself."

Phil turned towards Nawa in the tent and beckoned to him. Nawa walked over and joined Phil and Jacqueline on the green lawn away from the tent.

"This is Nawa my partner," said Phil.

"You are welcome sir," said Jacqueline.

"Thank you, madam. And my condolences," replied Nawa.

"Alright let's proceed now. As you are aware, as police we are treating this as suicide. Are you aware of any reasons why she could commit suicide?" Phil asked.

"Officer I actually do not believe that Molly could commit suicide."

"Why not?"

"Suicide doesn't just happen from without. There are always signs. Signs of hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, guilt and so on. But she was very jovial right up to the day I left for South Africa."

"So what you are telling us is that she was acting normal all along?"

"Very normal."

"What was her social life like?"

"She never had any."

"Seriously?" Nawa asked.

"What made up her social life was watching TV here and also visiting her friend in Northmead."

"Did she drink?"

"Yeah a little. From home. We enjoy wine mostly. Red wine."

"What about partying or clubbing?" pursued Nawa.

"Zero."

Phil let out a cough and then said, "Please forgive us if we are failing to follow you Jacqueline. Are you saying she had no social life and was not into clubbing?"

"Never knew the inside of a club. That's what I am insisting on."

"You seem so sure."

"I am."

"Would you know if she was abusing drugs?"

"What are you getting at, officer?"

"We need to know if she was into drugs."

"I would have known. Where is that question coming from?"

"We found heroin in her system."

"What!?" Jacqueline yelled. The two men sitting in the tent turned to look in the direction of the raised voice.

"It may be hard to accept this madam Jacqueline. That is why we are looking at all angles." Nawa responded.

"Heroin? Molly?" she said and then clapped her hands once.

"How was her behavior towards men?"

"You are confusing me officer."

"Was she promiscuous?"

"Not in the least bit."

"Boyfriends?"

"None that I knew of."

"Please try to think more deeply if you can."

"She had no boyfriend..."

Phil and Nawa exchanged looks.

"You don't believe me? Maybe try to confirm with her best friend in Northmead," insisted Jacqueline.

Then Phil said, "What can you tell us about her working life?"

"Molly was the executive director at WEZ for three years."

"What is WEZ?" Nawa asked.

Jacqueline smiled a bit and then said, "It stands for Women Empowerment Zambia. It's an NGO in Roma residential area concerned with reforming and empowering a certain class of women."

"What class of women?" Phil asked.

"Commercial sex workers mostly. Also victims of gender based violence, former drug addicts and criminals."

"They reform them? How?"

"Yes they run programs to reform them. And then afterwards they are offered skills training and finances to start a new life. But you must talk to the NGO for details of what they actually do."

"Yes we shall need to talk to someone at the NGO too. Perhaps we can pick up clues which can help us close this case."

"In that case, talk to the board chairman- Father Pacciotti."

"Do you have his phone number?"

"You can ask him yourself. That is the man you were sitting next to in the tent."

Phil shot a quick glance at Father Pacciotti who was showing the other man something from his bible.

"That is great. You said Molly had a close friend. Can we talk to her as well?"

"Her name is Claire. She lives at 1523 Benekali road in Northmead. You can ask her about that boyfriend stuff."

Phil took out his notebook and wrote that down. Then he said, "Again madam, we offer our condolences. We are grateful that you found it possible to give us chance to talk to you at this time. Thank you."

"You are welcome."

She had just started to walk away when Phil stopped her.

"By the way, do you mind if we look into her wardrobe?"

## Chapter 6

Phil and Nawa were back at the station from Molly's house at 14 o'clock. Phil went straight to his office, leaving Nawa to attend to a visitor who was seated by the main reception.

He had just sat down on his desk and was about to make a phone call when he saw a new file on his desk. He had not left it there as he was leaving. He wondered what it was about.

He waved his hand dismissively as he opted to stand by the window instead. His eyes scanned the buildings beyond the station. A strong wind was blowing, and there was dust everywhere he could see. This made the people, structures and even vegetation to appear dirty grey mostly.

He walked back to his desk and sat down.

Finally he opened the file on his desk that had been delivered that morning in his absence.

It was the autopsy report from Ray. He quickly turned to the first page. There wasn't much there apart from a description of how the body had ended up on the

autopsy table, things that Phil already knew. The report mentioned that the woman was aged between 35 and 40, but Phil shrugged slightly and wrote "Molly Tembo 34" in his notebook. He went on to read that she had died approximately four hours before being picked. Phil wrote "7-4 =3 hrs". He flipped the page. Whenever he found a term that he had trouble understanding—which was often—he would underline it with the intention of following up on its meaning later.

He further read that there was no sign of injury on her body. Phil nodded vigorously. He then wrote on his piece of paper "*no injury, no force=suicide.*"

He then took a look at the photos which were in the report. They showed Molly lying on the grass from different angles. Looking closely he saw that the grass remained unscratched. He wrote "*grass unscratched = no struggle.*"

He then went further down and then suddenly opened his mouth. He stretched his hand and reached out for the desk phone. He dialed and waited. As he waited he continued reading the report.

"Hello?"

"Hello Ray. This is Phil."

"Yes boss."

"I am reading your autopsy report right now. Can I ask a few questions?"

"Sure."

"Under cause of death, you indicate "Arrhythmia". What is this?"

"It refers to a problem with the rate or rhythm of the heartbeat. During an arrhythmia, the heart may not be able to pump enough blood to the body, and lack of blood flow affects your brain, heart and other organs."

"So she died of organ failure?"

"Yes. As pressure in the blood vessels increases and fluid goes into the alveoli—the air spaces in the lungs—the normal flow of oxygen through your lungs is compromised, making it hard to breathe. This can give you a heart attack or lead to kidney failure."

"Was all that caused by the heroin overdose?"

"Yes most certainly. It shut down her heart basically."

"Would you think that she was a regular user?"

"No boss. Actually there is only one prick on her entire body. It looks like she did it only once."

"Oho, so maybe she got it wrong at first attempt?"

"It would seem so, yes."

There was silence. Then Ray said, "I seem to recall that in our conversation yesterday and even in the news on radio, they are referring to her as a prostitute."

"Most definitely Ray. She was a prostitute. You and I were there when we picked her. You saw her appearance."

"Well I may have something else to say on that."

"Yes Ray?"

"I examined her internal and external organs in detail. There was no evidence of sexual intercourse in her private parts."

"No sex? How!?" Phil shouted. He allowed thirty seconds to pass before he said, "So she could not have been a prostitute, you say?"

"No."

Phil scratched his head. Then he said, "I talked to her aunt earlier today. She told me the exact same thing, but I dismissed her claim."

"If she was a prostitute—which I doubt—then it was her first day at the office. And she hadn't met her first client yet."

"Ah mamamama! Where am I now?"

"She was a virgin."

Phil wrote down "*virgin, no sex, not prostituting investigate.*" He then reached out for his glass of water but it was empty.

"Reading further down, your report indicates that no fluid of any kind was found in her lungs. What does this mean?" Phil continued.

"Well boss, when someone drowns in a liquid such as water, the lungs and wind pipe would be full of water. As the victim struggles under water, they tend to use more energy and carbon dioxide accumulates rapidly. Involuntarily, they draw water into their lungs in their attempt to breathe. In her case she was clear."

"So you mean that water in the lungs is the sign that indicates drowning, right?"

"Yes and no. Let me explain further. The presence of water in the lungs may indicate drowning only when examined together with other signs. This is because water can find its way into the airways and lungs of a dead body, provided it is submerged long enough. On the other hand a person may drown in water but their larynx could have shut down early enough to prevent water from entering their lungs."

"I am getting confused here. When did this death take place?"

"The time is indicated in my report."

"Maybe let me ask differently. Did her death occur in the pond or outside?"

"It means that by the time she was getting into the water, she was long dead. She didn't drown. You see, I also looked out for signs of hemorrhaging—blood in the lungs where the sheer force could have caused them to bleed. I also looked for any remnants of the surroundings in which the deceased was found. These might include pieces of plant life only found underwater, stones or rocks and evidence of clawing on the fingers and hands as they try to escape. These were conspicuously missing. "

Phil shook his head. Then he said, "Thanks for your report Ray. Quite a mouthful. I surely will get back to you when I need further clarification."

"You are welcome. Bye."

Phil cut the line. He looked at his notebook and then looked at the report. Then he looked at his palms. They were sweating.

He stood up and walked away from his desk. He wrote imaginary words in the air with his finger as he did so. He reached the window and looked outside once more. Then he walked back to his desk and picked his notebook. He went for the door.

He had just reached the door when he suddenly stopped. He walked back to his desk and then picked up the earpiece of his desk phone. He dialed.

"Hello."

"Hello Nawa, let us go and talk to Molly's friend in Northmead right away."

## Chapter 7

Phil and Nawa disembarked from their Corolla as soon as they arrived at Claire's house in Northmead. They found flat 8 and Phil knocked at the door. They waited for a while in silence before he knocked again, louder than last time.

The door was opened and a tall light skinned woman in a red skirt and black blouse stood in the doorway looking at them curiously.

"Can I help you gentlemen?" she asked, looking first at Nawa and then at Phil.

"My name is Phil and this is my partner Nawa. We are officers from central police station," said Phil removing his identity card from the top pocket of his black coat and showing it to her.

She looked at it without taking it from Phil.

"What is this about?" she asked defensively.

"We want to discuss a recent suicide case with you madam."

"I see. In that case come inside," she said, opening the door wide for the two to enter. Once inside the simply furnished living room, Phil sat on a sofa facing the TV. Nawa sat next to him. Claire pulled a stool and sat close to Phil.

"I suppose this is about Molly," she said as she sat down. She rubbed her round cheeks as she spoke.

"Yes it is, we are hoping you can be of help in clearing a few things," replied Phil.

"Alright, you want to interrogate me?"

Phil let out a laugh. Nawa did so too. It clearly lightened the tension in the room.

"It sounds heavy when you talk of interrogation, as if we are dealing with a suspect. You are not a suspect so this is basically a friendly discussion between us," replied Phil.

"Alright."

"Jacqueline informed us that you and Molly were close."

"That is right."

"How close were you?"

"Closer than sisters. We were together from primary school all the way to university."

"What did you study?"

"Economics."

"How was she as a person?"

"She was a friendly and loving person, frank, quiet, open but stubborn."

"Stubborn?"

"Once Molly decided on something, she was impossible to change."

"How was her social life?"

"She had no social life."

"Did she have a boyfriend?"

"No."

"When was the last time you saw her?"



"She spent a night here on Sunday and on Monday she left for work in the morning."

"Can you remember what she was wearing?"

"Yes she actually picked a navy blue suit from my wardrobe here. She said she couldn't go all the way to Woodlands just to change her clothes."

"Did she have many enemies?"

"Enemies? Many?"

"Yes enemies, like at her place of work."

"Not really. She ran things pretty much as she pleased."

"Can't you recall any incidence where she was depressed?"

"Depressed?"

"Oh angry or something."

"Work related?"

"Yes."

Claire remained silent with her eyes facing the ceiling board of the roof. After a few seconds she said, "Hmm I really can't recall. To the contrary the last conversation she appeared happy. She said she had finally cracked a difficult puzzle and she was happy."

"What puzzle was it?"

"She didn't elaborate. She preferred to keep me in suspense. Also I didn't ask. But she mentioned the name "Jane". She said Jane had helped her crack a puzzle at work."

"Do you know who Jane is?"

"No, not at all. Like I said it was a small issue."

"Small talk?"

"Yeah like maybe Jane had announced her wedding day or something. Girl talk basically."

"Outside her office did Molly offend anyone else?"

"Such as?"

"A business partner for instance?"

"I am not aware of any of that."

"And she never belonged to other clubs or associations?"

"She belonged to the Red Cross."

"As what?"

"As a volunteer."

"One more thing. Did Jane take drugs?"

"No. Drugs? From where are you getting these ideas?"

"Actually we need to cover all angles, that's all."

"Well if you say so."

"Here is my card," Phil offered his business card to her. "In case you remember anything else that will help us in our investigations, please call."

Claire took it, looked at it carefully and then said, "Alright. I will."

They shook hands and then headed towards the door.

"From your line of questioning," said Claire, once the two cops were outside, "it would appear that you suspect something different from suicide. Is that correct?"

## Chapter 8

Nawa and Phil joined the Great East road from Benekali road in Northmead. They drove at a high speed until they reached the Manda Hill traffic lights. Some boys came to the car windows trying to sell airtime recharge vouchers to them. Nawa waved them away dismissively. The traffic lights turned green and they proceeded straight past Manda Hill shopping mall on their left. They increased their speed and in a minute they bypassed the Arcades shopping Mall on their right. They found a roundabout and they turned left into Katima-Mulilo road.

"What do you think sir?" Nawa asked.

"Concerning?"

"Are the ladies saying the truth? I mean they are painting only a good picture about her."

"We have to be cautious. But still they may have no reason to lie."

"We will see," replied Nawa. They turned right and joined Zambezi road. Public passenger minibuses kept disturbingly changing lanes ahead of them as they proceeded. Nawa stopped as another minibus joined the road into his lane suddenly. He jumped out of the car and rushed to the window of the minibus.

"Can I see your driving license?" he yelled at the driver. The driver hesitated. He had just opened his mouth to answer back when he noticed Nawa's khaki police trousers. He thrust his hand into his breast pocket and showed Nawa his license. Nawa looked at the license for a second before unleashing a mighty slap into the face of the astonished driver. The minibus passengers grasped in horror.

"Next time use your head when driving," he yelled at the driver.

He walked back to their car which he had stopped in the middle of the road thereby causing a minor traffic jam. Several motorists were already hooting impatiently. He got back into the car and continued driving, leaving the perplexed driver staring at him all the way.

"We were discussing the women sir," said Nawa, making no reference to the slapping incidence.

"Remember when we checked her wardrobe? All her clothes were decent. Not a single mini or hipster or hot pant- just suits, shoes and normal underwear," observed Phil.

"What are you getting at sir?"

"I am thinking that the dress she was found in was out of character."

"Out of character?"

"It means maybe secretly she had clothes that others were not aware of. And if that was the case then what else didn't the others know about her?"

They turned right into a building with a huge poster "*Women Empowerment Zambia*" by the gate. Even before driving inside the premises, they could feel the weight of grief.

They parked in between a Benz car and an Isuzu van. They disembarked and walked over to the reception. They entered the building. A young slim girl in glasses seated behind the reception desk looked at them curiously. Phil smiled and then said, "We are here to see Father Pacciotti."

"Concerning what sir?" she inquired in a calm voice.

"Just tell him that we want to see him," answered Nawa forcefully.

She looked at Nawa with apprehension and then picked her desk phone and dialed a number.

"Hello, two gentlemen to see Father Pacciotti with me at the reception..." she said before removing the phone from her ear.

Addressing Phil she said, "What's your name sir?"

"Police," Nawa snapped at her.

The girl hesitated, but when Phil did not say anything else she put the phone back to her ear and said, "They say that they are police officers. Yes... two... OK. Bye."

She put the phone on its cradle and then said, "Sir, follow the corridor, go straight. Last office on your left."

"Thank you."

Phil and Nawa followed her directions until they reached the last office on their left. Phil knocked softly. They were invited in.

Father Pacciotti rose from his desk as they walked in. He offered his hand for a hand shake.

"You are welcome here officers. I understand that we couldn't talk at the funeral house. Please take seats."

"Thank you," Phil and Nawa replied at the same time as they sat down opposite Father Pacciotti.

"It's a sad day for our organization. But what the lord gives, he takes away as well. Job said naked I was born and naked I will return, who are we to question what happens in our lives?"

"Indeed," replied Phil.

"Please let's start the discussion. I know you are very busy people," said Pacciotti.

"Thank you. Like we mentioned at the funeral house, we are hoping that you can shed light on Molly's personality and her life generally. That will help us close our investigations into her death quickly."

"She was a good girl. And hard working too. As far as I am concerned she didn't have worries related to work," he replied. "I may be wrong though. I am only human."

"How did you meet Molly?"

Pacciotti scratched his blonde hair a little and then said, "Ah how did we meet? Let's see... let's see... alright I got it now. We were looking for a new director here. She came in for interviews and impressed us. So we picked her."

"Who was 'we'?"

"I meant the board."

"Alright. And when was this?"

"Three years ago."

"What does this organization do? And what was Molly's role?"

Pacciotti rubbed his pale face and then bit his lower lip. He said, "This NGO was set on the objective—and I wish to believe that to still be the case—of humanitarian intervention in the lives of its beneficiaries. By beneficiaries, I am referring to vulnerable women and girls. Drug dealers, prostitutes and so on. To

rescue them from their unholy life and introduce them to light through the word of light and empowerment."

"How do you empower the women?"

"We train them in various skills and give them grants."

Phil nodded. He then paused and asked slowly, "Please excuse my asking but what are the sources of your income as an organization?"

"Well no need to apologize officer. This a police investigation, I shall tell you. Otherwise according to our organizational charter, I may not reveal unless compelled by the court."

"You may tell us then."

"We do not have one source of income. We have a number. One source comes from subscriptions by members. The other is through donors. Donors support different projects. Another source is from the sale of items that our girls produce here during their training. So it's an open field really."

"How much are we talking about roughly?"

"As you are probably aware officers, I am the chairman, not the executive director. I can talk on policy and strategy, but on the operational side, I shall require assistance from one of the managers," replied Pacciotti before picking his desk phone. He dialed without waiting for a response from Phil.

"Please come to my office immediately," he said and he replaced the phone on its cradle. As they waited Phil looked around the office. It was certainly better furnished than his own office at central police. This office was painted cream and the windows were covered by matching window blinds. The office had overhead air conditioning units as well as a beautiful red sofa made of leather. On his desk was a computer.

There was a knock on the door. Pacciotti said come in, and a short dark woman in a white suit walked in. She seemed almost uncomfortable in that suit, given her huge bosom and behind. She had her eyebrows and lips painted pink. She felt her round cheeks with her right palm as she stood quietly.

"Hello Thandi, these are officers from the Zambia Police. As you are aware, there has to be an investigation into any death. They want to find out about our finances."

Thandi looked at Phil and Nawa and then said, "Good day sirs."

"Good day," both replied.

"Alright, I am Thandi and am the Finance and Admin manager, reporting to the Executive Director. What exactly are you interested in knowing?"

"Your income and expenditures," replied Phil.

"How detailed?"

"Top page summary will do for now."

"Let me fetch my folder," said Thandi. She left the office and returned two minutes later with two black folders in her hands.

She then opened the first folder and said, "Alright, we currently are running different projects worth USD 6,500,000 broken down into 1,000,000 supporting tailoring and designing training, 500,000 supporting poultry and another 1,000,000 for nutrition and health. As from last year a further 860,000 was received to support research and outreach work. 1,705,000 goes to support crop

farming with a further 90,000 going into carpentry and woodwork. The rest is utilized for grant allocation. You can look through our books for finer details also."

"Not necessary. The budget was for 650,000?"

"No officer. I said six point five million."

"Where did it come from?"

Thandi opened the second folder. In it, she followed a line with her forefinger.

"We receive an annual grant of 2,500,000 from PCI and a further 1,775,000 from the government of Zambia under the ministry of social welfare. The rest we raised through sales of crops, poultry and furniture," she replied.

Phil turned to Pacciotti and said, "Who are the signatories to the NGO accounts?"

"Molly, Thandi and I are approved signatories. But for any transaction to be valid there must be at least two of us signing."

"I see. What about the beneficiaries?"

"What about them?"

"Where do they come from?"

"Well, from the community of course."

"How do you determine who qualifies for your assistance?"

Pacciotti turned to Thandi and said, "Well that is operational. Thandi can come in again here."

Thandi cleared her throat and then said, "We have outreach officers who interact directly with the community. They directly go on the streets to try and convert sex workers. They are also assigned to homes where known drug addicts stay."

"In my line of vocation as a priest," added Pacciotti, "there are a few people who I come across and they genuinely need help. I have recommended a few to Molly before."

Turning to Thandi, Phil asked, "What sort of boss was Molly?"

"She was tough. To me at least."

"Friendly?"

"Not really."

"Hostile?"

"Not hostile either. Just a little cold."

"Did she create enemies among coworkers or beneficiaries?"

"I don't think so. After all she was our boss."

Phil opened his notebook. He checked something and then asked:

"What can you tell us about Jane?"

"What about Jane?"

"Can we talk to her and her activities?" Phil pushed unexpectedly. Pacciotti shrugged in his swing chair and then asked, "Thandi, who is Jane?"

Thandi said, "One of our outreach workers. She was one of the team leaders."

Pacciotti nodded his head in understanding.

Turning to Phil, she said, "Jane left our NGO over a month ago."

"Where can we find her?"

"I have no idea officer. She was reporting to the Projects Manager. I just knew her from a distance really."

Pacciotti came in and said, "I think we can check for her address in the register."

Thandi turned and then opened the door. She then shouted into the corridor, "Esther!"

A few seconds later the girl from the reception joined them.

"Please bring the register," Thandi instructed her.

"It is in madam Molly's office."

"Alright thanks."

The receptionist left.

Pacciotti then looked at Phil and said, "Do you have any further questions for me?"

"No sir. I think we are done with you."

"In that case," said Pacciotti. "You must join Thandi who is going to get the register in Molly's office. Feel free to check through everything end to end. You never know what can be useful in these circumstances in which we are: all in the dark and terribly confused."

Phil and Nawa stood up and each in turn shook Pacciotti's hand warmly. They then followed Thandi out of the office into the corridor. Phil caught Nawa staring longingly at Thandi's bouncing behind as she walked in front of them. She turned right and they both followed. They reached the last office and Thandi opened it. They walked inside.

Thandi sat on Molly's desk and began to type furiously on the computer keyboard. Phil took the opportunity to look around the office. It was similar to Pacciotti's, except in addition it had a large bear doll seated in the corner. Next to it were rose flowers wrapped in pink foil and ribbon. The room had a characteristic feminine fragrance.

"This computer appears to have crashed," said Thandi as she tried one more time. Finally she threw her arms in the air. She then picked the desk phone and dialed a number.

"Hello sir, the computer has crashed... yes sir... yes."

She put down the phone and then shook her head in disappointment. They sat in silence for one minute until Pacciotti walked in. He was puffing and his face had turned red.

"Crashed?" he asked in disbelief.

"Yes sir, I have tried it twice. It can turn on but cannot load the operating system."

"Then call the IT guy immediately. Give these officers all the information that they need without fail."

Turning to Phil, Pacciotti said, "Officer, I apologize for this most embarrassing situation. Our IT will be here shortly to resolve the problem."

"That's alright," said Phil. "We must leave now. But should we find any need we shall come back later. By then the computer should be OK."

"What about the address for Janet? Have you found it?" Pacciotti asked with concern.

"Its Jane sir," corrected Thandi.

"Sorry, what about the address for Jane?" asked Pacciotti again.

Phil shrugged and then said, "We don't even know that she can tell us anything useful. For now let her be. Like I said, if for some reason we feel that we must talk to her, we shall come back for the address."

"Please go well. And may the lord guide you in your investigation," said Pacciotti as they shook hands again. The cops also shook Thandi's hand and then they let themselves out of the office. They reached the reception. The girl was reading a novel.

"Sweetheart," said Phil to the astonished girl. "Where does Jane live?"

"In Mtendere, next to the Shipwe Shipwe tavern. Second road, the house is a shrub fence. It's a yellow house."

"You are a darling."

## Chapter 9

"You mean she didn't drown?" Commanding Officer Mwenda asked Phil that Friday morning in his office.

"No sir. The autopsy report clearly indicates that Molly died before she was dumped in the water. Someone killed her. This is a murder case now."

"But I thought she died of drug overdose? Is it possible that her boyfriend could have panicked after she died thereby dumping her in the pond?"

"It is not possible sir. Why would he take such a risk anyway?"

"Maybe a client perhaps..." began Mwenda before drifting into silence. After about ten seconds he said, "So what else do we know?"

"From our investigations, she was a decent woman but tough and uncompromising in her work. She had no social life. And she definitely was not a prostitute."

"Not a prostitute? You told me last time that there was no doubt about it!" Mwenda protested.

"We have to move with facts sir. She wasn't a prostitute. She was actually a virgin."

Mwenda held his chin with his left fingers and then nodded slowly.

"So we know who she is and that she was murdered. Do we have any leads on who killed her or why?"

"At the moment we don't have sir."

"What is your next course of action?"

"We need to look more closely at the pond area. Maybe someone saw a car near the pond that night. We also need to find the source of the drugs that were found in her system. I have a feeling that this death has to do with a drug deal."

"You mean she was killed in the middle of a drug deal?"

"Yes something like that."

"Alright, but please close this case quickly. I need to go on leave."

"I will try my best sir. But one more thing, would you like me to enlist the assistance of the narcotics section on this?"

"Do you have anyone in mind?"

"Mercy."

"Approved."

"Thank you sir."

"Just make sure that stupid boy Dan isn't anywhere near this case. He once told me in a meeting that just because my office is on the top floor, I shouldn't think that I am god. He gets only inconsequential cases."

Phil smiled. He stood up to leave.

"One more thing. Now that we believe that she did not commit suicide but was murdered, should I release this update to the press? The journalists will be here this afternoon. What do you think Phil?"

Phil gave it a thought and then said. "Sir it will be better if you stick to the line that investigations are ongoing. The murderers are out there amongst us in the community and they also listen to the news. We don't want them to know that we know what is going on."

Mwenda nodded his head approvingly.

Phil walked out of the office and went straight to Mercy's office. He found her trying to make an old LaserJet printer work by smacking it with her hand.

"Does anything here work at all? No paper, no air conditioning unit and even the departmental computer is down," complained Mercy as she threw her hands in the air helplessly.

Phil smiled and then said, "Let us go."

"Where?"

"I am taking you out right now. I need you."

Mercy laughed shyly and dimples formed on her cheeks.

"Seriously?"

"Yeah seriously. Accompany me in the field."

"You and I?"

"Yes, but Nawa will be joining us."

Mercy left the printer and then walked towards her desk. Even in her khaki police trousers, her hips were clearly defined and outlined. Phil noticed that she always walked like a model in a beauty contest, placing one leg directly in front of the other at all times. She put on her green sweater and then said, "You need to talk to Dan about this. After all he is my boss here at Narcotics. I am just an intern. And I can't just leave my station without his knowledge."

"Don't worry about that, Flower. Fat Albert has already approved your involvement on my team for this case."

"Did you just call me Flower?" Mercy asked with a curious expression.

"Yes I did. You actually have a lot in common with a rose flower. Radiance, glamour, beauty..."

"Stop it you also ahhh," she responded with a measure of embarrassment. Dimples formed on her round cheeks. She then swept her long weave backwards with her right hand.

"You look even more gorgeous when you sweep your hair backwards like that," remarked Phil.

Mercy shook her head and waved a warning finger at Phil.



They walked downstairs close to each other and then exited the building through the main reception. In the car park, they found Nawa already in their car waiting. Phil sat in front beside Nawa whereas Mercy sat alone behind.

"To Mtendere sir?" Nawa asked Phil.

"Yes."

"Hello madam," Nawa addressed Mercy.

"Hi, just call me Mercy," she replied with a smile.

Nawa started the car. The engine started running and then stopped.

"It must be the battery," complained Nawa. He tried again and it ran this time. They drove out of the premises using Church road.

"What are we going to do in Mtendere?" Mercy inquired.

"We need to talk to a girl whom we feel knows something about Molly's murder."

"She is the drug supplier?"

"That is my suspicion."

"Based on what?"

"She was mentioned by Molly's closest friend in connection with resolving a certain unknown puzzle. I have a feeling that this has to do with a drug crime."

They were in Mtendere in ten minutes and Nawa noted the Shipwe Shipwe tavern—the one the receptionist at Women Empowerment Zambia had referred to.

"So where do we turn now?" asked Nawa, driving more slowly through the dusty gravel road which was full of potholes. The car made cranky sounds. People of all ages were walking on the road itself and only stepped aside upon hearing the sound of the car.

"She said second turn," replied Phil. They slowly drove past the first road off the main one. A dog ran in front of the car and Nawa braked suddenly. He opened the door and almost got out.

"It's just a dog bo Nawa," said Mercy with a laugh.

"And I suppose you want to slap the dog too?" asked Phil.

Nawa shut the door and continued driving, avoiding potholes on the gravel road.

"That should qualify as the second road," Phil pointed out. Nawa turned in that road and noticed a yellow house surrounded by shrubs.

"We are here," said Nawa as he parked the car about twenty meters away. Next to the house was parked a red Nissan Pickup.

"What is that Nissan doing in this area?" Phil wondered loudly.

"Why can't a Nissan be found in this area?" Mercy wanted to know.

"Well I am not segregating, but going by the girl's reputation am wondering what that vehicle is doing next to her house."

"You don't wanna know," replied Mercy with a laugh.

"Should we move in?" Nawa asked.

"Let's wait a while," said Phil.

They sat inside the car in silence for fifteen minutes. A number of people stared at their car curiously but said nothing.

Just after Phil sighed impatiently, a huge light skinned man in a black hat and dark glasses wearing a long brown coat emerged from the house.

"Mr. Client I presume?" Mercy remarked.

The man walked quickly to the Nissan Pickup van and opened the door. He started the vehicle, reversed a little and then made a U turn, thereby facing the

cops' car. He removed his hat and dark glasses and for the first time his face could clearly be seen by the cops inside the Toyota car.

"What!?" yelled Phil. The man drove along the bumpy street on a high speed past them, raising a cloud of dust.

"Am I dreaming or not?"

## Chapter 10

"Am I dreaming or not?" yelled Phil as they all turned their heads to follow the red Pickup as it sped past.

"Who is that?" Mercy asked.

"That is Idriss Kabongo, another notorious vehicle theft criminal," replied Phil. "We have been looking for him."

"Should we give chase?" asked Nawa, starting the engine of their car at the third attempt.

"No. We must maintain focus and do what we came here to do."

Nawa switched off the car engine. He watched desperately as Kabongo disappeared after turning into the main street.

"Let us maintain focus. We are on a specific assignment here. If we lose focus, the next thing we will find ourselves doing is trying to stop a riot just because we happen to be present in the area," explained Phil.

They all got out of their car and then walked towards the semidetached yellow house. Nawa knocked at the front door loudly. Within seconds he knocked loudly again.

"Which dog is knocking on my door like that? Do you want to break it? Are you on heat?" A female voice shouted from inside. The cops looked at each other and smiled. Nawa knocked again, this time louder.

"Which cunt is that? *Nyo nyo!*" She yelled as she reached the door. She opened the door and saw Nawa, Phil and Mercy.

"Police," said Nawa, staring at her loose *chitenge* wrapped around her armpits. Her skin was visibly bleached with lightening creams. Her face was sweaty. She had large eyes and pouted lips.

"Police?" She asked with a mock smile. Phil showed her his identity card. Her smile disappeared.

"Are you Jane?"

"Pardon?"

"We want to talk to you," said Phil.

"But what is problem?" She asked him, looking worried now.

"Just a small matter. We can explain once you allow us inside."

"You can come inside."

The three cops entered the house which had green sofas, a TV and a reed mat on the floor. Phil and Nawa took the sofa. Mercy sat on the floor next to Jane.

"My name is Mercy and these two are my colleagues Phil and Nawa. We work for Zambia police," said Mercy. Jane looked at her and said nothing.

"As you are aware, your boss Molly was found dead at campus on Tuesday. We want you to tell us what you know about it."

"Molly not my boss. I stop long back."

"You can tell us what you remember."

"I don't know nothing about killers," she said, looking down at the reed mat.

"The killers?"

"I know nothing please."

"How do you know that she was killed when the police announced that it was suicide?"

Jane remained silent.

"Who are the killers?"

"I don't know."

Mercy raised her voice and said, "Where did the drugs come from?"

"I said I don't know."

"We are going to detain you if you don't talk, Jane."

"What you want from me? Who told you that I know the killers?"

"Your name was mentioned in our investigations. You and Molly were working on a puzzle. We want you to tell us about it."

"Not me."

Mercy shrugged. Then Nawa said, "Your fellow woman has been asking you softly. Me I am rough. I will slap you if you become stupid."

"But what have I done to be slapped?" responded Jane.

"Just answer our questions and don't waste our time."

"But I answer you."

"What sort of person was Molly?" asked Nawa.

"All I know is that she was also prostitute and drugs."

"Did you personally see her doing prostitution?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In hotels."

"How much was she charging for her sexual services?"

"She was getting donor money in exchange for sex. She was sleeping with big people."

"So why did they kill her?"

"Maybe she was talking-talking."

Nawa sighed. He tried again.

"Why did you resign from the NGO?"

"She fired me."

"Why?"

"Because I discover her sex for donor money game."

Phil stood up and then said, "Get up woman, let us go to the station."

"Am I under arrest?"

"Yes definitely."

"Why? You said if I tell you what I know it shall be OK."

Phil looked at her sternly and then said, "Do we look stupid to you? What you have just fed us is a pile of bullshit."

"What do you mean?"

"You are telling us lies, foolish woman!"

"Stop insulting me. What lies?"

Phil sat down and said, "One more chance."

Jane looked at Phil. He raised his forefinger upwards.

"What proof do you have that Molly was exchanging sex for donor funding?"

"I caught her red handed several times."

"Describe what you saw."

"One day, I go to the office around 21 o'clock and I found her in sex act with a big man from Ministry of Social Welfare. Shortly after, the same ministry donated cash."

"Describe the sex act," said Phil as Mercy looked at him in shock.

"I should describe what?"

"How were they doing it? Lying on the floor or standing?"

Jane smiled a bit and remained quiet.

"I am waiting."

"She was bending over and he was standing behind her having sex."

Phil stood up and said, "If you are lying about this sex story of yours, how can we know that what else you have told us is not bullshit too?"

"I am not lying."

"Jane, I have the medical report for Molly at my office. Molly was a virgin so your story is a fake."

"Virgin? Maybe your doctor made mistake..."

"I am arresting you now."

"For what? I didn't kill her. And you can't arrest me for not knowing the truth," she dared Phil.

Phil sighed and then said, "That man who just left your house- do you know that he is wanted by police?"

"So why not arrest him?"

"We shall arrest you for being his accomplice in theft of motor vehicle and aggravated robbery cases. These cases are not boilable. We shall keep you in prison for five or more years while trial takes place. Think about it."

"But I am not involved, I swear!" She said, fear appearing in her eyes.

"Nawa, arrest her."

Nawa stood up and removed handcuffs from his black coat. Jane watched in disbelief as he said, "Miss Jane, we are formally arresting you on a charge of complicity in aggravated robbery."

## Chapter 11

"You guys arrested a *woman*?" Mwenda yelled once Phil had filled him in on their latest move to arrest Jane. He was in full police uniform this day.

"We believe that she is hiding important elements to our investigation. And besides she can be helpful on the case of motor vehicle thefts that have rocked Lusaka."

Mwenda cleared his throat and then said, "Phil I know you feel under pressure to close this case as soon as possible. It's good for your career. Understandable. But don't you think that perhaps you are now going overboard? From what you tell me, this woman is a simple low life incapable of stealing a vehicle, let alone staging a sophisticated murder cover up."

"I have no intention of charging her sir. I shall release her as soon as she cooperates with us."

Mwenda loosened the his tie. Then he said, "This Kasongo or Kabongo guy that you saw, did you identify him beyond doubt?"

"Yes sir."

"Why didn't you alert the police squad?"

"We still haven't tied him down to the thefts with hard evidence. We need him to make the wrong move into our trap. Otherwise our case will collapse in court."

Mwenda adjusted his tie again and then said, "Alright, I support you. Let me know what time you shall be interrogating the woman. I would like to sit in. That is, if it is alright with you."

"Certainly sir."

\* \* \* \* \*

The following day at around 18 o'clock, Mwenda joined Phil, Nawa and Mercy in room 218. It was a large room with a small chair and table as the only items in it. Seated on the chair was Jane. She appeared distraught and scared.

Mwenda took a hard look at her but said nothing.

"Would you like something to eat?" Phil asked.

Jane shook her head.

"I have slept here one day. I want to go home," she replied.

"Alright we shall start our interview now. If you talk we shall release you. Are you ready?"

Jane nodded.

"What is your name?"

"Jane Mulenga."

"What do you do for a living?"

"Businesswoman."

Phil and Mercy looked at each other but they allowed the comment to stand. Mercy wrote that down in her book.

"So Jane, for how long were you at Women Empowerment?"

"Four years."

"What was your role there?"

"Recruiting prostitutes."

"After recruiting prostitutes what was happening next?"

"They were trained and given money to do business."

"You told us that you found your boss Molly in her office having sex with one of the donors. Do you still maintain that statement?"

Jane remained silent.

"Do you wish to withdraw that statement?"

She nodded her head.

"Are you the one who started the false story that she was a sex addict?"

She nodded again.

"So now you have a chance to tell the truth. Tell us what you know about Molly."

"She was a good woman."

"Prostitute?"

"No."

"Drug addict?"

"No."

"Where did the drugs come from?"

"I don't know. I swear."

Phil then bent over the table and put his face closer to Jane's. She withdrew a little. Then he asked, "What was the problem between you and Molly?"

"Problem? No problem."

"Look Jane, you cannot create such a damaging story about another person unless there was a problem."

"She is the one who caught me."

"Caught you doing what?"

"She discovered that I was recruiting girls out of the NGO instead of bringing them in."

Phil looked at Mwenda, who nodded while watching with folded arms.

"Why were you doing that?"

"I was informed that there was a modelling agency that wanted girls."

"Any type of girl?"

"They wanted thin ones with nice bodies."

"Nice bodies?"

"Big buttocks. Big breasts. Good face. Like the officer there," she said pointing at Mercy using her chin.

"And how much were you paid for the service?"

"Two pin five hundred kwacha per person I delivered."

"Wait," interrupted Mwenda, punching some digits in his handheld calculator.

"That is, let's see, let's see—two hundred thirty US dollars per person."

Jane remained silent.

"How many girls did you recruit?" Phil asked.

"Almost thirty girls, somewhere there."

Then Phil asked slowly, "And who was the person paying you for this?"

"The same person you saw at my house earlier."

Mercy quickly scribbled some notes.

"And where were you delivering the girls?"

"He would pick them from my house and drive them to a house in Rhodes Park."

Mwenda raised his hand and asked, "Excuse me, I am a bit behind. Who are we referring to now?"

"Kabongo, sir," answered Phil.

"Which Kabo... you mean the car thief that you told me about earlier?"

"Yes sir," replied Phil. Then turning to Jane, Phil asked, "Is the modeling Centre in Rhodes Park?"

"Screening Centre."

"Screening Centre?"

"They were introduced to the big owners of the modelling agency there," replied Jane.

"Can you identify the men in charge of the agency?"

"No, I never met them. I only met Kabongo."

"Ok, what is the address of the agency?"

"I don't know these street names, but I can take you there."

Phil looked at Mwenda who nodded.

"Alright, you shall take us there. One more thing, how did Molly find out?"

"She found me at night at the NGO with the girls as we were waiting for Kabongo to bring transport."

"Did Kabongo turn up?"

"Yes."

"What did Molly do?"

"She was angry with me. She was angry with Kabongo. She was angry with the girls. She shouted at us and demanded to know what was going on."

"Then what happened?"

"Kabongo explained to her about the agency, but she didn't believe the story. So he offered to take her to the same modelling agency to meet the big bosses and iron out issues."

"Did she agree to a meeting?"

"Yes she did."

"And when did that meeting take place?"

"I am told that it was planned for Monday evening."

"Last Monday?"

"Yes."

"That's the night she was murdered!" Nawa shouted. Everyone remained silent for a full minute.

"Jane, I must say that you have really assisted us with these investigations. You are also guilty of complicity in this murder case, but"- he said turning to look at Mwenda- "my boss will release you in exchange for your further assistance as state witness."

Mwenda nodded in agreement. Jane let out a sigh of relief. Stretching his arms on both sides, Phil said, "Well you are free to go now."

Jane stood up and then rubbed her eyes slightly.

"Can you show us the house in Rhodes Park?" Phil requested.

"Sure. But I need to bathe first at home and eat a full meal. Is that OK?"

"Sure."

\* \* \* \* \*

They drove Jane back to her house in Mtendere in silence. Nawa was driving and Phil was seated beside him. Mercy and Jane sat behind.

"In which road is the modelling agency?" Mercy asked, trying to break the silence.

"In Addis Ababa road."

"Which part?"

"From Great East road, you leave Airtel building on your left and you look right. Road one, road two, now road three- you make a corner."

"Which house?"

"I am not sure."

Jane then leaned over and whispered in Mercy's ear. Mercy nodded.

They reached Mtendere compound and turned into the main road which like last time, was full of people walking and even standing on it. There was a procession of party cadres walking ahead of them. They were raising clenched fists in the air and singing loudly.

"Do you have children, Jane?" Mercy asked.

"Two."

"You stay with them?"

"They stay with their fathers."

They passed by the tavern and then turned into the second street where Jane's house was. Nawa stopped the car at the same spot that they had done earlier.

"Give me about twenty minutes," said Jane as she got off the car. She walked slowly towards her house, aware that her neighbors were staring at her with curious admiration.

Phil took the opportunity to step out of the car and look around. Mercy followed him, leaving Nawa alone in the car. People were staring at them.

"I am sure they are saying that I have a hot chick," said Phil as he waved at a small group of young men drinking opaque beer by the road side. They waved back at him.

"Liar," said Mercy, also putting on her dark glasses.

"It is true. You are hot. To me at least," insisted Phil.

"Uhhh."

"You are like a flower planted by the streams of water."

Mercy looked down. She then kicked an imaginary stone on the ground as they walked.

They toured the area around the tavern together and then returned to their car.

"Hasn't Jane come out yet?" Phil asked Nawa. Nawa shook his head.

"Let me check on her. It's getting late already," offered Mercy as she went to Jane's house. She disappeared inside the fence.

A loud piercing shout emanating from the house jerked Phil and Nawa. They ran and reached the house within ten seconds. Phil drew out his pistol. He pushed the door open using his shoulder. Nawa went in after him, pistol in his hand too.

They found Mercy holding her face in shock. Lying on the floor facing upwards was Jane. Beneath her was a fresh pool of blood.

## **Chapter 12**

By 20 o'clock the police pathology unit had completed examining the scene in Jane's sitting room. They had examined the body and taken photographs. They checked the other rooms too. Then they carried her body out into the waiting police van, where a huge rally of curious onlookers had formed. Some were talking loudly while others were holding their faces in disbelief. Every other second,



someone in the crowd would ask what had happened. Phil stood by the door and asked no one in particular, "Who lives next door?"

"She is not around. She went to village!" answered an elderly woman with a crying baby strapped to her back.

"When did she go?" Phil asked the woman.

"Maybe even one month now *mwe*. She went to visit sick mother."

Phil sighed. Then he asked the crowd again, "Did anyone see a person coming out of this house between 18 and 19 o'clock?"

No one answered.

"Did anyone hear anything?"

There was still no response. Phil walked away from the door of the house. He reached his car and found Mercy looking distraught.

"I am sorry my flower," he said covering her in his embrace. Mercy lowered her head into his chest. They stayed that way for a full minute.

He released her when he saw Ray walking towards them.

"I am sorry sir," Ray said to Phil. "I understand that she was your key witness to the Goma lake murder."

"Thanks Ray," replied Phil. Then he asked, "When will my autopsy report be ready?"

"It's a gunshot to the head, Phil. Clearly."

Phil nodded. Ray walked away from them. He went to his van where the body was. He got in and sat in front. Phil also walked over to his car while holding on to Mercy's arm. They got in and sat at the back together. Nawa then entered the car, passed a quick surprise look at the two cops in the back seat and then started the car engine. He then followed the police van ahead, careful to avoid hitting someone in the crowd.

"How is this even possible?" Mercy broke the silence once they were back on the main tarred road. .

"Obviously, someone was already in Jane's house waiting for her. It is someone who knew that Jane was talking to the police."

"Why don't you just say what we are thinking Phil?"

"What do you mean Mercy?"

"Well," said Mercy hesitantly. "There is an informant from amongst us. Someone who is updating the murderers on what we are doing."

There was a minute of silence following that statement.

"But," said Phil thoughtfully, "Only the three of us in this car know about this operation."

"Maybe Kabongo organized this killing," offered Nawa.

"Kabongo?" Phil asked.

"Yes, after all he saw us earlier near Jane's house. He must have guessed that we were closing in on them."

"That is probably the most plausible explanation."

"What is the next move sir?"

"We knock off for the day. We start our investigations all over again."

"I have a suggestion," added Mercy. "Why don't we jumpstart our investigations by ambushing the Agency in Rhodes Park?"

"And where shall we find them?"

"Jane whispered the address to me."

\* \* \* \* \*

Nosiku let out a puff as he exhaled a huge ball of smoke from his mouth. He put the long roll of marijuana back between his lips and inhaled. On this cold April night, the heightened sense of wellbeing that the marijuana raised him to was helping him to keep awake and alert as he guarded this house. He stood up and took his traditional walk around the premises. He walked around the main house, and then checked around the servant's quarters as well before going to the gate. Then he looked at his watch, which he was given as a gift by his former boss upon retiring. The wristwatch read 23 12 o'clock.

He had just walked past the verandah towards the east when he saw a stealthy movement underneath the gate. He paused and squinted in his left eye. He expected someone to knock at the gate. No one did.

When he saw another movement in the same area, he knelt down and then stealthily crawled to the shrub away from the house. He drew out his AK 47 gun and aimed it steadily at the gate. His heart was beating audibly as he lay motionless.

"In this military fatigue, the witchdoctor said I am invisible. I will blow off their heads one by one, then call the police," he whispered to himself.

When he heard whistling near the gate followed by a second whistle signal about ten meters along the frontal wall fence, he put his trembling finger on the trigger. Sweat flowed freely underneath his armpits.

"Show yourselves you buttocks," he dared them. He heard light movement as though someone was trying to scale the wall fence directly ahead of him. He waited, ready to pull the trigger as soon as he saw a human head above the wall fence.

"Drop your gun. Slowly!" ordered Phil, pressing his pistol firmly into Nosiku's neck from behind. Trembling visibly, Nosiku slowly laid his gun to the ground.

"Raise your hands and lock them behind your head."

Nosiku went onto his knees and did as he was told.

"How many are you here?"

"Alone," replied Nosiku. Phil whistled loudly and three armed cops jumped over the front fence into the premises. They immediately ran on the lawn towards the front door and waited with AK 47 guns in their hands. Phil joined them near and door and shouted, "This is the police! This is the police. This house is surrounded!"

There was dead silence.

"You are ordered to open the front door slowly and surrender!"

There was still no response. Phil looked at his men, one positioned on either side of the door. Nawa positioned himself near Nosiku, but his pistol was aimed at the windows of the house.

"I shall count up to 3 and if you don't open, we are moving in! I repeat, surrender!"

Phil looked at the two cops and they both nodded.

"3... 2..."

Phil shot one more look at Nawa whose eyes seemed to be relaying fear.

"1!"

There was a loud bang as Phil released a single shot into the lock of the door.

## Chapter 13

"Give us your names," said Phil wearily.

"Nosiku Lubinda," replied Nosiku.

Phil looked at his watch. It was half past nine on Sunday morning.

"Last night we arrested you at a house in Rhodes Park. What were you doing there?"

"Guard."

"You guard an empty house?"

"I am night guard. Yes empty house."

"Who employed you?"

"Big man Chileshe."

"Which Chileshe?"

"Mr. Chileshe. Don't know other name."

Phil stared at Mercy and she wrote that down.

"How long have you been guarding at the house?"

"Two years."

"How often do people come to the house at night?"

Nosiku scratched his head and then said, "Ah, one or two times in month."

"Can you recognize the people who come?"

"Yes."

Phil took a bunch of photos and then handed them over to Nosiku. They were a mixture of photos of criminals as well as of cops.

"Please look carefully and tell me if you recognize anyone."

Nosiku took the photos and started looking carefully at each one of them. He reached the fifteenth one and lifted up his finger. He almost pointed but then withdrew after shaking his head. Phil almost laughed after noticing the photo. It was the photo of Commanding Officer Mwenda.

Nosiku then went over a few more and then firmly pointed at one photo without hesitation. It was a photo of Kabongo. Phil removed the photo from the rest and kept it aside as Nosiku continued checking the rest.

He lifted one and smiled.

"This is you *bwana*, but young and handsome that time."

Phil did not smile. It was his old photo taken just after joining the police.

"Thank you *bo* Nosiku."

"Can I go now?"

"Yes you may go. You haven't been arrested. But we still need your help."

"I have said everything *bwana*," protested Nosiku. "What must I do?"

"Don't tell anyone anything. Just go back to work as normal. If anyone will ask you, just say that you were reporting a break-in to the police. Just say that you were attacked by armed criminals," said Phil.

He watched Nosiku as he got off his seat. Mercy held the door open for him as he left the office.

"Well," said Mercy. "I hope we don't end up with another Jane case on our hands after this interview with Nosiku."

"Let's hope not. Anyway I am planting two incognito cops to be watching the house for a week."

"That is a good idea. I am sure it will help."

She turned and then walked towards the window. Clad in black tight trousers, her hips and bums bounced as she walked. She was wearing a red blouse without a coat. She swept her hair backwards as she looked out of the window.

"I didn't have my breakfast today," said Phil with a yawn.

"Neither did I."

"So let's go across and grab a bite," offered Phil. He didn't wait for an answer. He got up and took a car key from one of the drawers on his desk.

"Is *bo* Nawa coming with us?" Mercy asked.

"No he isn't. He is off today," replied Phil as he led the way out of the office.

They walked through the corridors and stairs and left the building through the front reception door. They then walked to the white Corolla parked underneath the trees near the fence. Phil opened the front passenger door for Mercy. He closed it after she had sat inside. Then he walked round the car and opened the driver's door. He sat down, fastened his seat belt and then started the car. They drove out and headed into the business area using Church road.

"Yesterday in Mtendere, you said that there was no possibility of anyone among us tipping off the criminals," began Mercy.

"That's right," replied Phil. Mercy remained silent. They joined Cairo road and then turned right towards the north.

"What about *bo* Nawa?" Mercy asked.

"You mean Nawa being the informant?" Phil asked with a loud laugh.

"Please don't take it wrongly. I respect *bo* Nawa but I still strongly feel that someone from inside is feeding the criminals with data."

"The criminals that we are after are experienced and have been in the game for a long time. They have already worked out every possible scenario, including events that we haven't reached yet. What they are doing now is to watch every one of their people. They are eliminating anyone who appears to be in a compromised situation. They are probably watching us right now and wondering where we are going and what we know, not knowing that we are merely going for a bite."

They parked in front of Fajema Bakes and Phil continued, "To address your concern directly, no I don't think Nawa is the informant. I have worked many cases with him in the past and his integrity is unquestionable. On that I can risk my neck. But I appreciate your observations."

They got out of the car and entered the restaurant. They sat on the table nearest the window from where they could see their car outside.

"I shall take fresh orange juice and two muffins," said Mercy as the waiter stood at their table.

"And you sir?" he asked Phil.

"Give me Coca cola and a meat pie."

"Pepper?"

"What?" Phil asked.

"Do you want meat pie with pepper or plain?"

"Plain."

The waiter walked away.

"I can't stop staring at you," said Phil.

"Why?" Mercy asked, looking straight at his eyes.

"You mesmerize me with your beauty. Your eyes, your lips, your smile—it's a masterpiece of creation."

Mercy allowed herself a little smile. She turned her eyes away from him and looked at her fingers.

"Even those fingers, they look like extreme care was exercised in creating them," he continued.

The waiter brought their orders to their table and then left after Phil had paid the bill.

"Look at my fingers," he said raising them for Mercy to see. "You would think I created them myself in a hurry."

Mercy burst out in loud laughter thereby attracting the attention of other guests. She then covered her mouth with her left hand.

"Look what you have caused. People are now staring at us," she complained softly though with a smile still on her face.

Phil smiled back and then sipped his ice cold Coca cola.

"Your wife must be a happy one hey," she said, biting a piece of muffin.

"No wife."

"Not married?"

"Not yet. No one wants to marry a cop."

"Who says?"

They finished eating and then walked out of the restaurant. They reached the car and again Phil opened the door for Mercy. After making sure that she was comfortable, he went round the car and also took his seat. He put on his seat belt.

"You might want to do the same," he told her as he started the car. She did as told and the car started off.

"Can you drop me off at home?" Mercy asked once they were near the Kabwe roundabout.

"Sure."

They got into the Great East road and went up the flyover bridge. They bypassed the ZESCO offices on their right and beat the traffic lights by a second.

"So why aren't you married?" Mercy asked.

"Well maybe it's just time. I am yet to find a woman who will understand me and my work."

"Women are everywhere."

They passed by Northmead and Phil passed a quick glance at Claire's flat when they reached Benekali road. The drove on and reached the traffic lights at Manda Hill footbridge. This time the traffic lights were red. A young man knocked at Phil's door selling a bag of potatoes. He shook his head.

The traffic lights turned green. They went straight ahead and bypassed the Manda Hill shopping mall on their left. Then they turned left into Kwacha road. On the fourth house, Phil stopped the car.

"Here you are," he said.

"Home sweet home. I think dad is home. I can see his car from here," she responded as she tried hard without success to free herself from the seat belt.

"Let me help you," said Phil as he moved closer to press the seat belt cradle. It buckled after some effort.

"Thanks," she said looking at his hands which had strayed onto her thigh.

Phil breathed deeply and then stared into her eyes. They held each other's stare until Phil slowly moved his face closer to hers, hoping that she wouldn't pull away. She didn't. Slowly Phil's lips touched hers. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes. He held her face and kissed her deeply, sensually and slowly as their tongues engaged in some exotic wrestling.

## Chapter 14

By Wednesday morning, the weather had begun leaning on the cooler side with strong winds. Phil sat on his desk in his office reading his correspondence. He saw a note "See me" next to a new blue folder. Passing only a cursory glance at the note, Phil opened the folder and began to read its contents.

It was the autopsy report for the murder of Jane. Phil read slowly. He put his finger onto his tongue to wet it a little. He then used the wet finger to turn the pages more easily. At last he picked the phone and dialed Ray's number. After a few rings he changed his mind.

Phil put the receiver back onto its cradle. He closed the folder and then walked out of his office. In two minutes he was at Commanding Officer Mwenda's office. He caught the secretary staring at her own face in a hand mirror. She saw him and smiled shyly.

"You may enter, he is expecting you," she said to Phil. Phil did as he was told. He found Mwenda reclining in his chair with a glass of orange drink in his hand.

"Please sit down," he said. Phil sat down opposite him.

"Today is my last day just like I told you last week. I am proceeding on vacation until May 29<sup>th</sup>. I am leaving you in charge, as acting Commanding Officer for CID."

"Thank you sir," said Phil, beaming with a smile.

"I have prepared hand over notes for you. I want you to read them and ask any questions that you have. By the way, where are we on the murder at the university?" Mwenda inquired.

"You are aware sir that we have identified the dead woman as Molly Tembo of Woodlands. She was the executive director of Women Empowerment Zambia. It is clear that there was a problem at her work place, something to do with Jane—recently deceased. We followed up on this at their work place. And then we followed it up with an interview with Jane. We have established that Molly had discovered an illegal recruitment of women into some modelling agency. We do not know what she found out or why it infuriated her that much. Whatever the case, we believe that the same agency murdered her and dumped her body at campus.

The agency felt that they had solved their issue until they realized that Jane was speaking with the police."

"How could the agency know that Jane was cooperating with us?"

"We suspect that Kabongo alerted them. I say Kabongo because it was he who saw us earlier at Jane's house."

Mwenda rubbed his palms together and then said, "I am not implying anything Phil but has it occurred to you that maybe there is an informant from within the police service who could be alerting these criminals on our every move? What do you think?"

"We considered that possibility sir but we ruled it out."

"Why?"

"Because apart from Mercy, Nawa and myself there is no one else on the case. No one knows the details."

Mwenda nodded. Then he said, "Please proceed with the briefing."

Phil cleared his throat and then said, "So after Jane's murder, we stormed the agency premises at night but unfortunately we drew a blank."

"And you still insist that even on this occasion, it was Kabongo who alerted them of our surprise visit?"

"It could have been. But the truth could also be simply that the criminals weren't just scheduled to meet that night."

"Who owns the premises?"

"A businessman called Chileshe."

"Have you talked to him?"

"Not yet but we have put out a stakeout for him."

"OK. It looks like you are on top of things. Like I said earlier, you shall have my authority from tomorrow until I return from my leave. Here are my handover notes."

Mwenda handed a folder to Phil. Phil said thank you and then left the office. He closed the door behind him and walked past the secretary who was still looking into her hand mirror.

He reached his office thinking of what the next course of action would be. He opened the door and found himself staring at two women, one of whom seemed familiar though he couldn't place her properly. Even the perfume she was wearing was vaguely familiar to him. She was tall and slim and had a brown wig on. She was in a brown jacket and a short brown skirt that exposed her fleshy thighs and legs. She was wearing fitting brown shoes. Phil quickly moved his gaze towards her face and found himself facing a broad smile. He didn't even notice her hand which was extended for a hand shake.

"Hello," she offered.

"Hello madam," said Phil still struggling to remember her.

"Claire," she said at last.

"Claire?" Phil repeated.

"We talked last week. You came home in Northmead. I am—was—Molly's best friend."

"Of course!" Phil responded with a broad smile. "And how nice of you to have thought of visiting us! Please sit down, both of you."

As the two women sat Phil went round and then also took his usual seat.

"And by the way this is Rute," said Claire.

"Nice to meet you too, madam Rute. Please feel free."

"Thank you," said Rute. Phil regarded her full bosom, with her breasts resting well within her light green outfit. She too was slim with big hips. Turning his attention back to Claire, he asked, "So how are you coping?"

"It's been hard. Really hard."

"And how about her aunt Jacqueline?"

"She cries every day. We all cry all the time," she said as tears began to form in her eyes. Phil looked at his fingernails.

"I suppose you came to get an update on our investigations?" he asked at last.

"Yes. If it is alright with you."

"Of course it is. There are certain details that as police we obviously cannot divulge as these at times may interfere with our investigations. But in line with Molly's case we have questioned some people and have arrested two."

"Are those the murderers?"

"No, not murderers. We hope they shall lead us to the murderers though. But both are linked and it's a matter of time," Phil explained.

"Anyway," said Claire. "I brought this young lady with me. Her name is Rute. She says she knows Jane from Women Empowerment also."

Phil looked up at Rute and then said, "Good, good, thanks for coming. Tell me what you have."

Rute hesitated and then shifted in her seat.

"I knew Jane five years ago. We were both working on the streets at night those days," she told Phil.

"When you say working on the streets, do you mean as sex workers or as recruiters for Women Empowerment?" Phil asked.

"We were sex workers. One day madam Molly came out at night with a white priest. That is how they gave us their cards and asked us to join them. We went the following day and they enrolled us into their school."

"What were you doing there?"

"I was learning poultry. And the NGO would bring people to talk to us on life and business. Sometimes priests would come to pray for us."

"Please continue."

"So I graduated and they gave me money to start my business. I started but my business failed. I went back to Jane and she told me that there was another business I could try. So she introduced me to Kabongo, a Congolese businessman. He in turn also introduced me to a modelling agency in Rhodes Park. There I was introduced to the boss."

"Can you remember his name?"

"He didn't tell me. But he is a bit tall and fat. He is of mixed race, a colored."

"What happened next?"

"They enrolled me for another program to train as a beauty model. But the training was not good."

"Why?"

"We were staying at a lodge outside Lusaka and were eating once a day to remain slim. But it got worse when after a week they started adding drugs to our drinks and then men would come to our rooms to have sex with us."



"The agency runs a brothel as well?"

"Yes."

Phil shook his head.

"But the worst part was that the sex was never consensual. At times two men would sleep with you at once," she added.

"Two men? At once? Sorry, but how?" Phil asked waving his fingers. Claire looked down.

"The girl is on her knees and bends like a dog. One man does sex from behind and the other comes in front and the girl sucks his penis."

Phil scratched his head. Claire continued looking down at her brown shoes.

"Do you have more to add to this information?" he asked uneasily.

"Sometimes they would bring a dog and make the girl do sex with it. Then someone would video tape."

"Really?"

"I ended up running away from the lodge. I paid a guard to run away."

"How much did you pay the guard?"

"Sex. Three rounds."

Claire started to rub her eyes.

"What is the name of this lodge?" Phil asked.

"It's called Red Pepper lodge. It's in Chilanga just after Mundawanga."

"And so," interrupted Claire. "I thought of letting you know about this issue. It may not help Molly but it may save some girls being held hostage."

Phil nodded his head vigorously and then said, "Both of you have no idea how much this information will help us. Please keep it between yourselves."

He then stood up and the two women did the same. Then he said, "Claire I need a very big favor from you. Please listen to me."

## Chapter 15

Kabongo checked both sides of the vehicle before disembarking. He looked at his watch which showed him that it was sixteen minutes after midnight that Wednesday. Apart from the sound of dogs barking in the distance, it was quiet. The street was pitch dark with no sign of passing vehicles.

He parked outside 1523 on Benakali road in Northmead and waited. He peered into the yard and saw a block of flats inside the fence. There were two security lights facing the front lawn. He couldn't see any guard in the vicinity. In fact he didn't expect to.

He raised the side window up again and then got out but left the engine of his red Pajero running. He disembarked and casually walked inside the premises. He went round the block to the back doors.

His hands were in the pockets of his long brown coat and his head was covered by a black hat. He wore black boots. He reached flat 8 and knocked at the door. There was silence. He knocked again.

He looked around and still saw no one. All light bulbs were off except for the main security light which illuminated the front yard. He went over to the window and pressed his face into it, trying to see inside. He then walked back to the door and without hesitation took out a steel level from his coat pocket. He slid it between the door and its frame right next to the lock and gave it one mighty jerk. The lock shook. He again applied force on his lever and the lock broke, making the door swing open. He stood in the door way and checked behind him.

He sensed some crawling movement in the next room and took out his pistol from his coat.

"Police! Raise you hands!" shouted a voice from inside the room.

Kabongo immediately fired one shot in the direction of the voice through the door separating the kitchen and the sitting room. He then jumped out of the doorway and headed outside round the house. He heard footsteps in the house running after him. He increased his speed too.

At full speed he ran towards the fence, leaped on top and jumped over just as a gunshot missed his head. He landed outside the yard on his back. He at once got up and ran towards his Pajero. He jumped onto the driving seat and pressed hard on the accelerator. With a loud skid, the vehicle shot forward. Through his rear view mirror he saw two cops with guns aiming at him. He raced down Benekali road and swerved a little as a gunshot went off. He pressed harder and sped away. He crossed Paseli road without stopping to check either side and went straight up towards Manchinchi road. He remained focused ahead even as sweat was dripping off his forehead. He reached Manchinchi road and turned into it on his left side. He increased his speed and ignored a speed hump ahead of him. His vehicle hit the hump and landed on the wrong lane but he controlled it and sped on towards Makishi road ahead.

He breathed a sigh of relief. He wiped his forehead with his left palm. He turned right towards Garden.

He checked his rear view mirror and noticed a white Corolla as well as a blue police van following him at a distance in Manchinchi road.

He cruised as he passed the sewerage Waterworks on his right. The police van also turned towards Garden following him. He reached junction with Katima-Mulilo and drove off the road. He parked just after turning right and jumped out of the vehicle. A few vehicles were moving about. He lay on the road, took out his gun and shot at the police van coming towards him. The police van suddenly stopped about a hundred meters away and three cops jumped out. They immediately scampered away from the vehicle into different directions. After a while there was a burst of gun fire towards him. He hid behind a concrete pillar and released four shots towards the police officers. Within a minute, people started running away from the nearby night club shouting in panic. Most were running away towards Olympia with beer bottles still in their hands. Others were watching the fire exchange while lying on the ground. After a silence of one minute, Kabongo got up but a bullet scratched the pillar next to him. He fell down and looked in the direction of the attack. It was definitely coming from a new, nearer position. He fired in that new direction, only to attract fire from another point on his left. Realizing that he was getting surrounded, Kabongo rose and grabbed a drunken girl in a mini skirt who was attempting to run away. She froze on seeing his gun.

He dragged her along as his shield as he moved towards his Pajero. It worked. The police stopped shooting. Kabongo threw the girl to the ground and jumped into his waiting Pajero. He instantly sped off towards Olympia on Katima-Mulilo road. Two men with beer bottles in their hands were crossing the road trying to flee. He saw them less than five meters away and without bothering to slow down hit both of them in a loud violent impact. He saw in the rear view as they flew in the air before crashing heavily on the road side. Then he heard two gunshots behind him. He kept on driving straight ahead. As he reached the curve near the Kingdom hall on his right side, he heard another gunshot and this time his vehicle registered the impact. It produced a hissing sound before he lost control near the stream. The vehicle found itself off the road and into the bushes on the left before turning over and landing into the stream. Still trapped inside, he tried to open the door to no avail. He then kicked and shattered the side window and crawled outside into the muddy waters. He heard footsteps of people coming towards him.

"There he is," he heard someone shout.

Kabongo thrust his hand into his pocket to retrieve his gun. It wasn't there. He raised his hands in the air while still on his knees.

## Chapter 16

There was jubilation among the cops at Central police station that Thursday night. Each cop that heard the news of the capture of Kabongo took upon themselves to deliver at least a slap to him.

Phil arrived at the station at about two hours after midnight. He took Nawa and Mercy with him to interrogate Kabongo. He found him on the floor in handcuffs and still writhing in pain.

"Release the cuffs," he ordered Nawa as he stood by the door. Nawa went to Kabongo and knelt next to him. He unlocked the handcuffs and then stood up.

"I need a doctor. My car overturned last and I have internal pains," Kabongo complained to Phil. Phil looked at him and then said, "I need to ask you a few questions first. Afterwards I will decide whether you can see a doctor or you can die here."

"I know my rights. My lawyer will make sure I go to the hospital."

"That won't be possible because I am charging you for murder right away."

"Murder? Who did I kill?" Kabongo asked with a sneer.

"I am charging you with the murder of Molly, Jane and those two guys that you knocked over two hours ago in Garden as you were running away. And also for burglary at Claire's house in Northmead. Not forgetting the motor vehicle thefts that have rocked Lusaka of late. You stand no chance of leaving this place my friend."

Kabongo smiled and shook his head.

"So tell me, why did you kill Molly Tembo of Women Empowerment?"

"Where is my lawyer?"

"You have no lawyer."

"In that case I need legal aid. It is free and is constitutional."

"If you answer my questions, I shall arrange that for you."

"I didn't kill anybody."

"Yes you did. What were you doing in Northmead last night past midnight?"

"Me?"

"Yes you Kasongo the criminal. You broke her lock and then fled after being told to surrender. Why did you run away?"

"I am not Kasongo. You got a wrong guy."

"Kasongo or Kabongo or whatever—they are all criminal names."

"Maybe you should record this interview."

"Why were you running away my friend?"

"Because I didn't want to surrender."

"Because you were running away from your murder charges right?"

"No. Which murder charge? I haven't been charged with anything. Check your facts."

"So why were you in Northmead?"

"Now you are fishing for answers. I see your strategy. Catch a suspect and then get facts from him."

"Kabongo I am losing my patience. Don't try me."

"I was feeling like having sex."

"So if you want sex you break a woman's lock? Can't you talk to her nicely?"

"No."

"So why were you firing bullets at us if it was all about sex?"

"Because you were firing bullets at me, that's why. A man has a right to self-defense."

"We identified ourselves as police."

"I didn't see any police I'd. Even a thief can shout 'Police! We are police!'"

Phil walked closer to Kabongo who looked at him in alarm. He raised his heavy boot and then rested it on Kabongo's right shoulder.

"Oouch, it hurts there," cried Kabongo.

"Why did you kill Jane?"

"You have no idea who killed Jane."

"But we saw you there earlier in that same vehicle of yours."

"So?"

"You alone knew what was going on."

"Again, sex."

"You killed her because you knew that she was going to implicate you."

"Implicate me in what?"

"In the murder of Molly."

"You should write novels. Your imagination is good. But I don't know what you are talking about."

"What were you doing at Jane's place?"

"Having sex. I have told you."

"That is the only truthful answer you have given us today."

"Thank you."

"After sex then what?"

"Some more sex, this time doggy style."

Phil released a mighty kick into Kabongo's face. Kabongo fell backwards onto the floor. He took his hand and covered his nose and lips. When he checked his palm, it had blood.

"Let's start all over," said Phil walking away from him. Kabongo sat leaning against the wall to his back.

"Tell us why you killed Molly and who you are working with."

Kabongo smiled and then said, "You are talking to a wrong guy. And you have assaulted a wrong guy."

"Who should I be talking to?"

"Your father."

Phil took two heavy steps towards Kabongo who covered his head with his hands. He reached him, but decided not to kick him this time around after a stern look from Mercy. Mercy cleared her throat and then said, "Where did the drugs come from Kabongo?"

Kabongo looked at her and then said, "Nice chicks you have these days in police."

Mercy persisted and said, "The drugs. The ones you injected into Molly, who supplied?"

Kabongo smiled and shook his head.

Phil coughed and then said, "Kabongo, are you ready to talk to me or are you going to maintain your stupid statement?"

"I will maintain my stupid statement."

"Suit yourself then," said Phil as he walked away from the room, followed by Nawa.

"What next?" Nawa asked.

"Take him to the hospital but ensure that he is guarded twenty four seven."

"Charge?"

"Murder. Four counts."

Phil walked out of the station into the cool air outside. The front area was unusually dark as the security light had stopped functioning. He reached the car and opened the door. As he sat down to start the engine, he heard a knock on the passenger window. He brought the window down.

"Are you going home?" Mercy asked.

"Yes. I need to sleep for at least two hours. I shall be back by seven in the morning. What's your plan?"

"Well I am free also."

"Jump in," offered Phil. Mercy entered the car and sat down. They drove out of the station into Church road, then turned left into Dedan Kimathi road and sped up towards Kamwala. It was dark and there were no vehicles on the road. He turned the car lights at full beam.

"How did you know that Kabongo would turn up in Northmead?" Mercy asked.

"Well after our encounter with Jane, I felt strongly that whoever would speak with us would be in trouble with the criminals. And so after the visit earlier by Claire, I knew that she would be targeted."

"How long were you going to wait in her house?"

"Until morning."

They turned into Independence avenue and then turned right into the Kamwala shopping area.

"I see," replied Mercy. Phil stole a glance at her from the corner of his eye.

"Why?"

"Nothing."

They reached Kabwata and Phil turned to enter the second block of flats. He parked near the gate.

They exited the car and walked to the flats. They went up the stairs to the first floor. Phil put the key into the door lock and opened it. He stood aside and with an open palm, motioned Mercy inside.

"Please feel free," Phil told her. Mercy sat on the sofa and then switched on the TV using the remote control unit. Phil walked to the kitchen and fetched two soft drinks from the fridge. He found two glasses into which he poured the drinks. He took the two full glasses with him to the sitting room where Mercy was. He handed one to Mercy before sitting down close to her.

"Nice home," she remarked. Her eyes stared at the red curtains which matched the red carpet on the floor.

"Thanks, I am contented here."

"Who selected the curtains for you?"

"Myself."

"It looks like a woman did."

They sipped their drinks in silence. Then Mercy said, "Has Claire been here also?"

Phil smiled. He put down his glass and then held Mercy's chin. Looking into her eyes, he said, "Claire is my state witness. My only desire is you. Right now that's what really matters."

"Hmm liar."

She looked at the clean white walls and finally noticed a wall picture of a soccer player in a green jersey holding a golden trophy.

"Can I guess who that one is?" she asked, pointing at the picture.

"Please go ahead."

"Christopher Katongo."

"That is right. He is the first and so far only Zambian skipper to have lifted the Africa Cup trophy."

"That was a great moment indeed," she said.

"This is a great moment for me," he replied looking into her eyes.

Their lips touched. Phil held her face in both hands and kissed her tenderly. He sucked her lower lip and then thrust his tongue into her mouth. She responded hungrily. Her breathing became deeper and quicker. He released her from the kiss and looked deep into her eyes. He then licked her earlobes for a while before placing wet kisses down her throat. She sighed and closed her eyes.

"I love you," she whispered in his left ear.

"I love you very much," he whispered back.

They kissed again deeply, keeping their lips locked as they played with each other's tongue.

After a while, Phil led his hands to her thighs. He slowly ran his hands all over her thighs, feeling her soft skin from the knee to her pelvis. Then he reached for her knickers and pulled them down.

"Right here?" Mercy whispered in his ear. Phil then placed one hand under her upper back and the other underneath her buttocks. He then stood up, lifting her in the process with some effort. He stumbled with her in his arms through the sitting room into the bedroom. He slowly laid her on the bed and then started unbuttoning her dress. He unbuttoned his shirt. She ran her fingers on his hairy chest as they kissed again.

"Is it better here my love?" Phil whispered her, almost out of breath. She responded by raising her eyebrows up and then bringing them down. Yes.

## Chapter 17

Phil woke up at six in the morning. He was feeling tired but relaxed. With a smile of satisfaction, he looked at Mercy who was sleeping soundly beside him. He ran his fingers lovingly through her hair. Then he kissed her on the lips.

The phone on the drawer rang. Phil picked it and said hello sleepily.

"Sir, Kabongo has escaped," reported Nawa on the other end.

"What do you mean?" Phil asked in a raised voice. Mercy opened her eyes. She then shifted her position and laid her head on Phil's chest.

"Our unit escorted him to the hospital as planned. We placed one armed guy by his bedside. But shortly afterwards, three armed guys entered the ward. They ordered our guy to unlock Kabongo's handcuffs. Then they left the hospital with Kabongo and our guy."

"When did all this happen?"

"About one and half hours ago."

"And you are just telling me now? Why wasn't I told immediately?"

"We have been calling throughout but receiving no answer. I was thinking of sending someone to look for you at your house."

"No don't send anyone. We... I mean... I am on my way."

Phil slammed the phone on its cradle and then jumped out of bed. He put on his underwear and then his trousers. Then he knelt beside Mercy and kissed her.

"We must go my love. Kabongo has escaped."

"What?" she asked.

She then got off the bed and put on her knickers. Then she put on her bra. She caught Phil staring at her round buttocks. After putting on her dress, she left the bedroom. Phil completed putting on his clothes and also left the bedroom in an untidy state.

They rushed outside and got into the car. Then they sped off back to the police station.

They were at the station in twenty minutes. Phil went straight to Nawa's desk for a fuller briefing while Mercy disappeared to the Narcotics section.

Once back in his office, Phil looked at Kabongo's photo and shook his head. Then he got a plain sheet of paper and a pen.

"Dear sir," he wrote but then he paused. He put his pen between his lips for about a minute and then continued writing.

"I hereby would like to submit my resignation from my position with effect immediately. This has been necessitated by the escape..."

The phone rang on his desk. He ignored it.

"...of a high risk criminal from our custody. I am aware that as police we have become a laughing stock after allowing a cuffed criminal to escape from our custody, killing an officer in the process. I was leader of this case and I take responsibility for its failure."

The phone rang again. He looked at it. Then slowly he picked it.

"Hello," he said weakly.

"Hello sir, Mr. Chileshe would like to see you."

"Mr. Chileshe?" asked Phil with an air of astonishment.

"Yes sir, he is with another gentleman. They say you summoned them to appear before you today."

"Oh yes, that is right. Let him in."

Phil then sat staring at his letter for a minute. Finally there was a knock on the door. He hid his letter underneath a black folder. Then he said come in. Two middle aged men walked in. One was tall and was in a blue shirt and black trousers. He had wavy hair and was of mixed race.

"Please sit down gentlemen," said Phil as his eyes then turned to the other man, who was dark and quite short. He was in a blue suit. The two visitors took their seats opposite Phil.

"I am glad to you responded to our call out. We need to talk to you. Mr. Chileshe," said Phil.

"What do you need from me?" asked the tall man in a blue shirt.

"I sent a call out to Mr. Chileshe but I can see two men in front of me. Forgive me please but I do not know who is who here."

"I am John Chileshe. And this is my lawyer."

"Great. I am Detective Phil Chisha and I need clarification on an urgent matter of utmost importance."

"That is a funny coincidence because I was actually going to come here myself to lodge a complaint against you."

"Against me?"

"I will get straight to the point. I want to find out why my premises were stormed by your men."

"Which premises?"

"I am talking about plot 5563 Lagos road in Rhodes Park."

"What happened?"

"What happened? Well your men came in at night and damaged my lock, then searched and turned the place upside down. That is what happened officer."

"When did this happen?"

"Last Saturday night. You know that already."

Phil nodded and then said, "Why have you decided to come to us after being summoned? Why didn't you come the following day?"



The other man cut in and said, "Does that matter, officer? My client is reporting a crime all the same."

"And you are...?"

"My name is James Ng'andu. I am his lawyer just as he told you earlier."

Phil nodded and then turned back to Chileshe.

"And how exactly can you tell that the break in was done by police?"

"I just know," answered Chileshe.

"No, no sir, you just cannot walk into a police station and accuse the police of committing a crime. What is your proof?"

"People talk. We know these things."

"You will force me to take counter measures against you sir because of that accusation."

"What measures? What have I done?"

Phil cleared his throat and then said, "Can I ask you a few questions in relation to the same issue? I am sure you won't object since your lawyer is here with you."

The lawyer nodded his head.

"Good. Who is Kasongo?" Phil asked.

Chileshe jerked in his seat. He quickly composed himself and then responded, "I do not know any Kabongo."

"I deliberately said Kasongo but oh yes it's actually Kabongo," replied Phil triumphantly. "By the way, how did you know his correct name?"

"I... I... just guessed it. I am not even sure..."

Phil raised his hand and Chileshe stopped talking.

Then Phil said, "Since clearly both of us know Kabongo, perhaps you would like to tell us what he has been doing at your premises."

"Who mentioned this to you?"

"Look Chileshe, we are police and we carry out investigations. I am aware that men come to that house for meetings at night."

Chileshe remained silent.

"Well?" pushed Phil.

"Sorry what is your question again?"

"What do you discuss at those meetings at night?"

"Me? I never attend those meetings, ask Kabo...sorry I am lost again. Which meeting is attended by whom?"

"Chileshe you have the most disorganized strategy I have ever come across. You cannot even stick to your fabricated story."

"Where have I diverted from my fabricated story?" Chileshe asked his lawyer. The lawyer remained silent.

"I think you are not a criminal," stated Phil.

"Thanks officer," said Chileshe with a sigh of relief.

"However you are clearly protecting criminals and that will lead you into big problems."

"Can we go now?" Chileshe asked impatiently.

"Tell me about Molly."

"What about her? I need to go now. I am busy."

"Who killed her?"

"Who is Molly?" Chileshe tried. Phil smiled and then said, "The woman you murdered and dumped at the university of Zambia campus. You know that already."

"You mean that woman who committed suicide?"

"She didn't commit suicide. She was murdered. Let's be straight with each other."

"I thought you announced that..."

"Forget about what you thought. I want to hear about Molly."

Chileshe raised his hand and said, "OK, OK. Molly was my tenant. I leased that property to her. End of story."

"Really? And how much was Molly paying for renting the house?"

"Rent?" Chileshe asked slowly.

"Yes rent."

"You mean the rent she was paying me?"

"Yes."

"The amount she was paying?" asked Chileshe, wiping sweat from his forehead.

"You didn't think of this question, did you?"

"Six hundred dollars per month."

"Hmm, you finally remembered," remarked Phil mockingly.

"It is age. And these days it is getting worse."

"Can I see some receipts as well as the lease agreement between you and her?"

"Verbal."

"Pardon?"

"It was a verbal agreement."

"And rentals?"

"She paid cash, no receipts."

"I find that strange to believe, Chileshe."

"That is how she preferred it. She said the house would be used for discreet activities and she opted for cash and privacy."

Phil smiled. Then he took his pen and put it in between the thumb and forefinger.

"Did she say what sort of business she was conducting?"

"No, I didn't ask."

"And yet you paid an armed guard to watch the house at night?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It's my property, that's why."

"Protecting an unoccupied property?"

"Look officer, I didn't come here to exchange words with you. I came to file in a complaint about the action of your men on my premises."

The lawyer then said, "And we believe my client has done that. We are now leaving."

The two men stood up to leave. Then Phil said, "If we happen to have the need to question your client further, do you expect us to make a formal appointment with you?"

"What questions do you have for my client? I thought you have asked him what you wanted and he has answered you," protested the lawyer.

Phil remained in his seat. He said, "It's good that you are together. I am serving you a search warrant for Red Pepper lodge right away."

Chileshe opened his mouth but no words came out.

"Red Pepper Lodge? Why?" asked the lawyer.

"We have reason to believe that illegal activities are taking place there."

"Such as?" pressed the lawyer.

"You shall see for yourself. Let us go."

Phil rose and took the car keys from the side drawer of his desk. He then picked his resignation letter and tore it to pieces.

"Do you think it is really necessary for us to go to Red Pepper lodge?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes I do. Do you have any objections?"

"No. Of course not. My client has nothing to hide."

Phil led the two gentlemen out of the station through the main reception. He found Nawa chatting with a female cop at the reception. He beckoned for him to follow.

Chileshe and his lawyer entered a black Mercedes Benz and led the way. Phil and Nawa followed behind in their white Toyota Corolla.

They took Church road all the way up the flyover bridge into Cairo road. Then they drove along Cairo road with difficulty, often stopping to give way to other motorists. It took almost ten minutes to reach the Kafue roundabout at the south end of Cairo road. From there they got into Kafue road and increased speed.

"I am feeling terrible about Kabongo's escape. We had him in custody and now he is gone," complained Phil.

"I know how you feel sir but it's not your fault," replied Nawa.

"Perhaps I should not have allowed him to go to the hospital for treatment."

"You did the right thing to allow him treatment sir."

Phil focused his eyes on the black Benz ahead.

"What a number of cops are impressed with is how you managed to corner him in the first place. How did you know that he would be heading to Northmead on that night?" Nawa inquired. Phil smiled and said, "Well there was bait. Remember that he shot Jane just after she had been seen talking to the police? It follows that these murderers are eliminating anyone who talks to us. And so when Claire and Rute came to us, I knew that they would be targeted that night."

They reached Mundawanga and turned left into another road. They turned right twice before stopping in front of a high wall fenced building. There was a police van parked outside already. Chileshe and his lawyer got out of their vehicle and waited for Phil to park.

"What is all this now?" the lawyer shouted at Phil while pointing at the armed cops in the parked van.

Phil disembarked and beckoned to the armed cops to follow. They entered the gate and found no one at the reception.

"We want to search the rooms," announced Phil.

"Why? There is nothing illegal here." Chileshe protested. A young woman in a white shirt and blue skirt appeared from the direction of the dining hall and joined them.

"Are you the receptionist?" Phil asked her.

"Yes sir."

"Please join us. And bring the keys with you."

"Don't you think we should first hold a meeting and discuss whatever this is?" asked the lawyer.

Phil and Nawa followed the nicely decorated corridor to the interior rooms. Chileshe and his lawyer followed behind. Phil asked the receptionist to unlock the first room. She picked a key from the bunch and opened the door. They went inside and found no one. They looked carefully around and then walked out.

The next two rooms were also empty. The cops left only after thoroughly checking.

"You won't find anything here. This is harassment," complained Chileshe. Phil ignored him.

The cops knocked on the fourth door. This time there was a sound from inside. They waited until an old Indian man opened the door and then stared at them.

"How are you sir," said Phil.

"Is there anything wrong?" the Indian man asked with alarm as his eyes darted from one cop to the other.

"No sir," replied Phil. "But if there is, you can tell us."

"My wife and I are not aware of any trouble."

"in that case, enjoy your day sir," said Phil.

They closed the door and the cops went further along the corridor.

"You are clearly scaring my clients," complained Chileshe. "What exactly are you looking for?"

They reached a fifth door and Phil tried to open. It was locked too. He knocked. There was no reply.

"I shall be serving you with court sermons after this," announced the lawyer.

"Can you open this door please?" demanded Phil.

"How many doors must you open?" yelled Chileshe.

The receptionist went to the door and then tried all the keys on her bunch but still could not open the door.

"Chileshe where is the key?" Phil asked.

"Go and find the key in the reception. These cops want to see what we are hiding inside," Chileshe told the receptionist in a mocking tone.

"These are all the keys I have," she replied raising her shoulders a little.

There was silence for a while. Phil looked at the receptionist and she walked away back towards the reception.

"What is in this room?" Phil asked.

"Unoccupied too. Look if it really is..." began Chileshe but Phil pulled out his pistol. Chileshe gasped at the sight of the weapon.

"What do you think you are doing? You are now way out of line officer. I must speak with your superiors," the lawyer shouted with alarm.

"I am breaking this lock," he said, aiming his pistol at the door lock.

"You cannot fire a gun here when your life is not in danger and no one is resisting arrest. That is unlawful and a crime on its own," the lawyer pointed out.

"Yes I can."

"I dare you to fire that gun. I can guarantee that by the time you walk out of this place, you shall have no job at police."

"Then open this damn door so that we quickly move to the next one."

"There are no keys. The room is unoccupied. Surely we can leave it for now and come back later when the receptionist brings the key?"

Phil pulled at his moustache. He had just taken a step away from the room when the receptionist came back.

"Sir I cannot find it," she told Chileshe.

"Then we have no choice but to break the door," said Phil daringly.

"Put that weapon away otherwise you shall be in deep trouble," said the lawyer.

"You are right," said Phil putting his pistol back inside his coat. He moved back three steps and then ran at the door. With his shoulder he crashed into the door and it swung open.

Inside the room were seven girls dressed in bras and knickers only. They were all staring at the door with widened eyes full of fear.

## Chapter 18

Phil stared in disbelief at the girls. He shot a glance at Chileshe and then at his lawyer. They were silent. Then he looked at the girls again. None of them looked like they were above twenty years old.

"My name is Phil and am an officer at Zambia Police. I have come to talk to you," he said to the girls. None of them spoke.

Then he continued, "I am not going to arrest you. If you tell me the truth, I shall set you free right away. Right now."

He looked at the smallest in stature and asked, "What is your name?"

"Judy sir," she replied with a tremble in her voice.

"How old are you, Judy?"

"Fifteen years."

Phil shot a hard look at Chileshe and then at his lawyer. Then he said to him, "So Kabongo was right after all."

"Kabongo told you about this?" Chileshe protested.

Then Phil turned to Judy again and asked, "Why are you locked in this room?"

"They don't allow us to go out unless it is at night."

"Or if a customer comes then they get one of us," added a taller girl with long, dark natural hair.

"How much do they pay you?"

"Nothing," answered Judy.

"How did you get here? Who brought you?" Phil asked. A third girl responded, "Its madam Jane who picked me from street and introduce me to boss Kabongo. Boss Kabongo bring us here."

Phil nodded as he looked at the girls. They all seemed to have curvy and slim bodies.

"What exactly do you do here?" He asked cautiously.

Judy said, "Sleep with men."

Another added, "And dog also."

The light skinned one added, "Me they put beer bottle in my vagina for push in and out."

"Why?" Phil asked Chileshe. Chileshe remained silent. His lawyer was face fallen.

"They bring video camera and make film us doing sex," Judy added looking at the floor.

"One of our friends was forced to do sex with three men. They did it in vagina, in anus and in mouth. She cried but they don't stop. Next day she died in room," reported the light skinned girl. Phil looked at Chileshe again.

Then he said to Nawa, "Take down the details of these girls and their statements. Then release them from here. Let them go home."

The girls clapped and jumped. Then Phil said, "Girls, please dress up and go to the police car outside with bo Nawa here."

Then turning to Chileshe, Phil said, "Let's go to your office. I think you know where this is heading."

Chileshe meekly led Phil to his office at the far end of the corridor. The lawyer followed behind as did one armed cop. The receptionist went in the opposite direction. They walked in silence until they reached the office. Chileshe unlocked it and the four of them entered. Phil took the seat behind the table while the others sat on sofas opposite him.

"Why Chileshe? Mr. Lawyer, why?" began Phil sorrowfully. Then he continued, "Those are innocent lives you are destroying."

"You said Kabongo told you about this place?" Chileshe asked Phil again.

Phil did not respond. He opened the drawers on his right side and found a packet of condoms. He put that on the table. Then he found a sealed khaki envelope. He opened it and found three DVDs.

"Do you want us to watch these?" Phil asked Chileshe. There was no reply.

"I guess I know what movies are contained in them," he said turning the DVDs round. On one of the covers was Judy in the nude. He could identify the other girls too on the other covers.

There was total silence in the office.

Phil said, "Are you married Chileshe?"

There was no response.

"Are you?"

Chileshe nodded.

"Kids?"

Chileshe raised four fingers.

"All boys?"

"Two boys and two girls."

Phil shook his head sadly. Then he said, "You are facing a charge of murder, because a girl is reported to have died here. You are dealing in drugs at this lodge. You are running a brothel too. Not to mention production of pornographic videos. And you have imprisoned those girls."

He paused to allow that to sink in. Then he continued, "Let me simplify matters for you. With those girls giving evidence and with these video DVDs in my hands, you are in serious trouble. That's a mixture of long term as well as lifelong sentences in prison. Confirm with your lawyer."

Chileshe looked at his lawyer, who remained quiet.

Then Phil continued, "It also means you say goodbye to your businesses, your money, your friends, your relatives and to those four lovely kids of yours."

"They are not mine," Chileshe blurted out before breaking down in tears.

"You mean your kids are not yours?" Phil asked, losing track of the conversation.

"The girls in that room- they are not mine."

"Whose are they?"

"They belong to Kabongo's superiors."

"Kabongo's superiors?" Phil asked.

"Kabongo is only an agent. He runs errands for bigger guys and then gets fat commissions."

The lawyer raised his hand toward Chileshe and said, "Please, I think..."

"No," protested Chileshe, wiping tears from his eyes with a white handkerchief. "Let me spill it. I am the one going to prison for life over this. And yet the real owners remain outside enjoying."

The lawyer addressed Phil, "Officer is there any way my client can avoid prison?"

"No," replied Phil firmly.

"I shall instruct him to remain silent then. Otherwise if you are sure that he goes in no matter what, why must he talk to you? You have your proof, right?"

"Yes we do. And we shall nail him."

"Only it won't solve your problem. The real culprits that you are looking for are out there. This sex trade is bigger than you think and it continues. Those real culprits are the people you really need."

"What is your proposal?" Phil asked.

"My client hands over the real culprits and you close down the sex trade and punish them. That will obviously catch the attention of the higher authorities, perhaps even the president. Who knows what that can earn you?"

"In exchange for what?"

"You drop the charges against my client."

"That depends on the real extent to which Chileshe is involved in the crime. If he only provides premises and nothing else, I may consider slapping him with failure to report a crime. But even that is a stretch for me. Your client is an accomplice—at the very least."

"My client shall cooperate on those terms then," concluded the lawyer.

Turning to Chileshe, the lawyer said, "Tell him what you know. Everything."

Chileshe blew his nose loudly in the handkerchief. Then he said, "I was approached by Kabongo three years ago. I was running two nightclubs and three lodges. He had a multi-million dollar proposal for me. He told me that his superiors wanted a partner in the sex trade industry. He said the clients were well paying and discreet and that they needed fresh young girls with attractive bodies as well as pointed breasts. He proposed that this lodge be leased out to them for that purpose. I was to provide this lodge as a hidden brothel. Kabongo would run everything. So all the money from the prostitution going on was going into Kabongo's pockets to his bosses and I didn't get a damn penny. All I ever got paid was upfront rental payment for the lodge. That is why this place is off bounds for the public. They have booked it end to end. Which is why I am truly astonished

that Kabongo, of all people, would be the one to tell you about it and say I own the business. That is a pure lie."

"We have our ways of getting information. Please continue Chileshe."

"Anyway the business started off slowly. The clients were first of all locals- big businessmen, mostly married. It went on like that until one of them introduced a Portuguese friend to the brothel. Then it opened up to foreigners, mostly Europeans and Americans. These were paying very well and business boomed.

Greed came in. One foreign client proposed that the sex acts be video recorded and then later put on sale in Europe. He ran an illegal porn racket in his country. So the idea was incorporated. I protested and asked for a percentage of the business deals but Kasongo refused after consulting his superiors."

"Did you personally meet these superiors to discuss your interests?"

"No. Not once even. All my meetings were with Kabongo."

"Please continue. I am listening."

"So I reacted by increasing the rentals here instead. Doubled the rate. Kabongo was angry but there was nothing much he could do. His clients had known the place and they loved it. So out of duress he agreed to be paying double but also negotiated for the use of the office premises in Rhodes Park for the amount of money I was demanding as rent."

"Which premises in Rhodes Park?"

"The one in Lagos road. The one which your men broke into over the weekend at night."

"The one you earlier told me was rented out to Molly Tembo?"

Chileshe nodded. Then his lawyer added, "Obviously, my client wishes to change his earlier comment on that subject."

"Noted," said Phil.

"Can I continue?"

"Sure," replied Phil.

"About a year ago, Kabongo came to see me about another business idea. He was very excited. He told me that a big buyer in Greece had loved our videos and he was proposing that we sell the girls directly to him. He wanted black girls to be working in his brothels in Athens. So Kabongo tasked me to intensify security here and hire modelling agents to prepare them for Europe. The first batch was successfully modelled and exported to Greece in August last year. A lot of money was made. Kabongo even bought a brand new Pajero from his earnings. It arrived here on a carrier, zero mileage."

Phil nodded.

"Then," Chileshe continued. "A second batch was exported in December. Eventually we couldn't match the numbers that they wanted. They wanted twenty girls and more per batch but we could only manage ten or eleven after much stretching. We had to either step up the numbers or increase the frequency of exports."

"How were these girls going out?" Phil asked.

"Always using the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport. They always go out as students. We attach fake acceptance letters which are forwarded to us from Greece."

"Please go on."



"At some point the demand grew so we had to look for more sources of supply. Kabongo managed to convince Jane to supply girls cheaply. Jane supplied girls from her compound in Mtendere who were prostitutes already. Soon it became common knowledge in her area on what was going on. Too many girls turned up for recruitment. It was becoming a security risk. We feared that police would know. So we stopped recruiting from Jane's house. We opened up the offices in Rhode Park as a Screening Centre to filter out fake contestants. It worked.

„Unfortunately at some point, Kabongo tasked Jane to convince girls at the NGO to consider the lucrative life in Europe. This resulted in a massive exodus from the program at the NGO.

„Molly noticed this sudden change and started investigating the puzzle and finally found out what was happening. She confronted Jane who abruptly resigned from the NGO. The superiors were informed of the threat that Molly posed. Molly was powerful, connected and stubborn. She wasn't going to let it go. So a plan was hatched to eliminate her."

"How was this done?"

"Kabongo arranged a meeting with her pretending he wanted to negotiate and reveal everything to her. She agreed to meet him at my premises in Rhodes Park at 18 o'clock. I attended that meeting and I supplied the heroin. That's what happened."

"Who killed her?"

"We laced her drink with a sleeping pill. Once she was unconscious, we removed her suit and dressed her up in that sexy mini dress. Then we injected her with an overdose of the drug. We then waited until around 04 o'clock in the morning to dump her body in the ponds."

"How many were you in that house?"

"Just Molly, Kabongo and I."

"Who injected her with heroin?"

"Kabongo."

"And what was your role?"

"I supplied the drug and the sexy attire and then oversaw the operation. But afterwards Kabongo told me that my hands were equally dirty."

"There was a strong story going round that Molly was immoral and that she exchanged sex for contracts..."

"I came up with that story. Kabongo tasked Jane to plant it at the NGO days before she was killed."

"What was the idea?"

"The idea was to dent her image so that in case she raised the issue with the authorities, it would seem like she was doing it as revenge. After all she had no real proof apart from what Jane told her."

"What about Jane?"

"She knew too much. She was going to be eliminated sooner rather than later. And when she talked to you, it became the final straw."

"Who killed her?"

"Kabongo hired a gunman to eliminate her. While you were interrogating her at the station, the gunman was deployed to pose as a sex client. The only reason the plan worked was that as police you did not escort Jane to her house. You stopped

at a distance and started romancing with that nice female cop. Had you accompanied her to the house, the gunman would have excused himself and left. Had you insisted on searching him you would have found the gun. You would also have found out what was going on much earlier."

Phil nodded and then said, "So Molly was murdered because she discovered your international sex trade."

"Precisely."

Phil stood up to leave. Then the lawyer asked, "What is the conclusion now? You know the full story."

Phil shrugged and then said, "The story sounds true. I agree."

"It is true. I swear," protested Chileshe.

"Well except I still don't know who I am dealing with. I cannot close this case unless I arrest someone. The only person I can arrest is the one with whom there is proof of crime. Unfortunately that is you Chileshe."

"Is there another way we can look at resolving this issue without the hassle and tussle of trial? That may take years to conclude. So many things may change," said the lawyer.

"Be specific with what you mean," responded Phil.

"Well," said the lawyer looking at the armed cop standing by the door and then back at Phil. "We are all men in this office. We all know what has happened. My proposal is that we discuss as men and find an agreeable end to this issue here. At the end we should find a way so that there will be no need to take this matter beyond the four walls of this office."

"Money?"

"My client is open to settling this with both of you in this room plus your men waiting outside. Simply tell us what you want. Name the price."

"I know you have the money, but what good will it be if justice is not served? Molly will have died in vain. And so will have Jane, and the two men that Kabongo bashed to death in Garden. What about my officer who was killed at the hospital? Or the girl that died here? That is too much blood. We are not dealing with a minor traffic offense here. Not every African cop is after money. Some of us are loyal to the cause of justice," explained Phil.

"You want the big fish?" Chileshe asked.

Phil nodded.

"Then I have a plan."

## Chapter 19

It was a chilly Saturday night at the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport. An Ethiopian Airline plane was on the runway. Next to it stood a South African plane. Phil checked his time. 21 hours.

He looked across at the other end of the airport terminal and noticed Nawa talking to some woman. Like him, Nawa was clad in black trousers and a black

coat with a head cover, which only exposed his face. Nawa shot a quick glance at Phil and their eyes met for a second before Phil looked away.

An announcement was read on the loud speakers urging the passengers to start embarking. Phil quickly looked at the departure terminal and noticed a white couple emerging. Kneeling next to the exit and pretending to be doing some painting were two undercover cops.

"What if Chileshe is wrong about this?" Mercy asked Phil as she moved about with a broom pretending to be an airport cleaner.

"Let's hope not," replied Phil.

He again shot another discreet glance at the departure terminal and saw more people walking towards the plane.

"How many cops are we?" asked Mercy.

"I have deployed twelve cops for this operation and that doesn't include me, you or Nawa. They are all in position."

"I am sure they are tired of waiting. We have been here for the past two and a half hours."

Nawa lit a cigarette from his position. He stared at Phil.

"You are right Mercy," said Phil. "I can see and feel the tension myself. But you must continue sweeping now before people become suspicious."

Mercy moved away and began to sweep the area in front of them.

"I love you," he whispered to her.

He coughed as he saw more and more passengers heading towards the plane.

"Have we messed this up too?" He said to himself. He went and stood near the firefighters where six of his armed men were. He stared at them and they stared back. He moved on.

A cargo vehicle moved on the runway towards the plane. Phil noticed two of his cops clad in Airport coats in it next to the driver. They reached the plane and started offloading the luggage.

Phil saw Nawa throw away his cigarette as more and more people entered the plane. In the dark skies above he could see blinking lights as an incoming plane moved towards the airport.

He looked at his watch again and sighed loudly. In the distance he could see Mercy chatting with an airport worker, whose broad smile seemed permanent.

The movement of people out of the departure terminus stopped. Phil began to walk towards the plane. Then he turned back and scratched his head. He spat on the ground. In the distance Nawa lit another cigarette as the engines of the plane became more intensely loud.

Another announcement concerning late arrivals came through the speakers. Phil stared at the terminus. Then he saw them.

He could clearly recognize Judy as well as her six friends. They were accompanied by a white man in a gown as well as two huge African men in black suits and hats carrying suit cases. He could not recognize them as he couldn't see their faces at that distance in the artificial night light.

The seven girls and the three men walked casually towards the waiting plane in groups of threes and twos. They were about to reach the stairway of the plane when Phil made a dashing run towards them. Nawa also started running towards the plane. The other cops followed suit.

"Excuse me ladies and gentlemen! Police!" yelled Phil slightly out of breath. The whole group turned to see who was stopping them.

"Phil!? What's going on?" asked the huge dark man in glasses. Phil blinked twice. He hit his head with his palm once.

"Sir, what are you doing here?" Phil asked.

"I am travelling with my colleague here. Anything the matter?"

Phil looked at the man's colleague and then at the white man. He put his hand on his heart. He felt that he might succumb to a heart attack, and then thought that he actually could, but then feared that he might not.

"Tell me that I am dreaming. Tell me I am not seeing and hearing what is happening now," pleaded Phil.

"What is wrong?"

"Is there a mistake somewhere? It looks like a serious mix-up," said Phil.

"What is going on, Phil?"

"I am supposed to have all of you arrested," said Phil.

They all laughed loudly. Then the huge man said, "Look if this is somehow important, let us discuss it when I return in two weeks OK?"

"I know what is going on. I know what you have done. I know these girls by name and I know where you are taking them. It is just that I cannot believe what my eyes are seeing right now."

Phil turned to look at his twelve cops who had by now surrounded them. The airport staff as well as the airline staff had also approached the small crowd to witness the unfolding drama. Faces were seen on windows in the airport building as people peeped to witness the confusion near the plane.

"That is not only ridiculous but also it is also indiscipline on your part, Phil."

"There is no mix-up. This is what has been happening all along. You are the actors running the show."

"Which show? Have you started smoking dagga?"

"This show is over. The international sex trade is over. The court will determine the way forward."

The three men looked at each other. Phil did not move.

"If you take this right, you can go away as rich men tonight. In addition you shall all earn promotions on your ranks. You have my word, Phil."

"What about Molly? Will she emerge out of this with a promotion too? What about Jane? She has left behind two little children. What about bashed guys in Garden? Do you even know anything about them or the pain you have left behind? The girl who died at Red Pepper sex den? What about these girls with you?" Phil shouted.

"You have a conscience hey? Things are not as they seem. In every situation, there are casualties, collateral damage. But life moves on. You must be concerned about fearing poverty. My offer frees you from that fear forever. Do you want to pursue a meaningless ideology?"

"What did Molly do wrong to deserve what happened?"

"Molly poked her nose into our business. She didn't listen to our warning. And neither are you, Phil."

"Are you threatening me sir?"

"Phil, a stubborn fly accompanies a corpse to the grave. That word is enough to a wise person."

"You shock me."

Four men dressed in airport security uniform arrived on the scene.

"You managed to catch the criminals, sir?" the airport security team leader asked Phil. Phil looked at him and acknowledged his presence with a slight nod.

He then turned to face the three men again.

The huge man stretched his arm and said, "Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for you and your men."

Phil cleared his throat. Then he said, "I now understand why our investigations were going nowhere."

"Three hundred thousand dollars. Right here, right now."

Phil motioned with his left hand towards the terminal, and the girls began to follow one armed cop towards the airport buildings. None of the men moved.

"Alright, you have taken the girls away. Congratulations. Now it's only us. Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Take it and face the other way. You have earned it."

Phil turned and looked at Nawa. He nodded. He looked at Mercy and she nodded.

"Arrest them!" Phil ordered.

"Arrest us?" The huge man asked as he tried to move away.

At once, three cops moved in and there was a free for all scramble as they forced their Commanding Officer Mwenda's arms behind his back. They handcuffed him as the crowd of curious onlookers watched.

"You have made a terrible mistake Phil," shouted Mwenda as the cops led him away. "You have no idea what you are up against."

Three other cops moved on Kabongo and forced his arms behind. Kabongo resisted and pushed one cop away with a kick, for which he was struck with a baton on his head. He staggered and covered his left temple with his hand. When he let go, there was blood both on his temple as well as on his hand. The curious crowd gasped in horror. Another cop swept a kick across his legs, and Kabongo flew in the air before landing on his back. The cops then stepped onto his back and pinned him to the ground, thereby easily handcuffing him.

Two other cops forced a frightened Father Pacciotti's arms behind his back.

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