



BOAZ
ADHENO

VASHEITA

“True love is when they accept
your past, bless your present
and believe in your future”

BOAZ ADHENO

VASHEITA



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Printed in Great Britain by
Adhesh-Kapur Colour Press Ltd, Gosport, Hampshire

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Jahwar Amber Creative Enterprise collection of Adhengo's list of eBooks please go to www.adhengo.mizizi.com

eBook ISBN: 978-1-71632-357-7

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Design and typography: **Adhengo Boaz & Associates**



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This book is dedicated to you.

Rukia Weisheit.

*with all delicacy of your loving that transformed me
into a responsible , enthusiastic Nilotic-Father*

To the entire ancestry of Okumu Rawago
"The Descendants of a King"

*May your candle shine even brightly
to bring a worldwide transformation.*

In the busy city of Nairobi, a woman longs for love, not desperate but careful in plan, that somehow, she will meet her dream of motherhood. This is the story of Rukia Weisheit, a German name that in local Swahili dialect is pronounced as VASHEIT, for the vowels change in zone just as romance transcends the race.

The names used are real but the story conjoining the names is icy, slidden with a prose that makes the reader wonder if any of such novelty has a truth. Adhengo has done it again, and it is one of such moments when reality incites imaginations, whatsoever started as a dream. Enjoy!

Chapter One

Diana glanced up at the towering office block, then down at the pram, and the baby lying within.

'Here we are, darling!' she announced to the pretty blue-clad infant. *'Your daddy's workplace. Unfortunately, your daddy will be in a meeting all afternoon, according to his secretary. Didn't have time for any appointments. Which is just too bad, isn't it? Because he's going to see us today whether he likes it or not!'* Arching a well-plucked eyebrow, she angled the pram determinedly towards the revolving glass doors, hoping for more success than her encounter with the SGR train doors earlier on. Manoeuvring a pram, Diana had found, was as hazardous as one of those wayward shopping trolleys, the kind whose wheels had a mind of their own. Still, she'd only been doing it for a week, so she supposed there were excuses for her ineptitude.

It was a struggle, but she finally emerged unscathed into the cavernous semi-circular foyer with its acre or two of black granite flooring. Diana negotiated this pram-friendly surface with thankful ease, bypassing the busy reception desk and skirting several large lumps of marble masquerading as art, finally halting beneath the huge directory which hung on the wall beside the bank of lifts.

Adhengo Boaz & Associates, she swiftly noted, occupied floors nineteen and twenty. Diana also noted Adhengo & Associates carried no description of what services or utilities the company provided, other than to say 'Management' was on the twentieth floor.

This might have been a modest oversight, but Diana rather imagined it reflected its owner's character. Adhesh Adhengo arrogantly assumed everyone knew his company was one of Kenya's most successful creative economy consultancy and venture capitalist firms.

He had also arrogantly assumed his affair with his secretary last year would never rise up to bite him on his arrogant backside.

But he was wrong!

Vasheita might have been a softie. And a push-over where men were concerned. But Diana was not!

Vasheita's son deserved the very best. And Diana aimed to make sure he got it. She would give Adhesh Adhengo a second chance to be a proper father to his handsome little son. If he didn't come to the party willingly, then he would be made to pay. And pay beautifully. In this day of DNA testing, simply denying fatherhood was a thing of the past.

'Just let him try it, darling,' she informed the baby boy as she wheeled the pram into the lift. *'If he does, we're going to have his guts for garters!'*

Adhengo raised his eyes to the ceiling as he hung up the phone. *'Women!'* he muttered frustratedly, before standing up to gather his papers together for that afternoon's meeting, almost knocking over a cold, half-drunk cup of coffee in the process. Only a desperate lunge and grab prevented coffee spilling all over his desk.

He righted the mug and plonked it well to one side, his sigh carrying total exasperation. He was having a really bad day.

His colleagues might have thought it was the present economic crisis which was causing his tetchy mood. But that wasn't the case. Adhengo thrived on the challenges the financial arena kept throwing at him, finding great excitement and personal satisfaction in making money, both for himself and all his clients. He'd been called a creative art junkie more than once, and had to admit it was true.

No, Adhengo could always cope with business problems. It was the opposite sex which was irritating the death out of him.

Frankly, he just didn't understand the species, especially their obsession with marriage and babies. Couldn't they see that, in this present day and age, the world would actually be better off with less of both? There certainly wouldn't be as many divorces, or so many unhappy neglected children!

But, no! Such common sense views never seemed to cut the mustard with women. They went on wanting marriage and babies as though they were the panacea for all the world's ills, instead of adding to them.

The same thing applied to romantic love. Crazy, really. When had this unfortunate state ever brought women - *or men for that matter* - any happiness?

Adhengo had grown up in a household where that kind of love had caused nothing but emotional torment and misery.

He wanted none of it. Love or marriage or babies - a fact reinforced in his early twenties when a girlfriend had tried to trap him into marriage with a false pregnancy.

The thought of imminent fatherhood and marriage had horrified him.

Perhaps his panic had had something to do with own father being a lousy parent - as well as a faithless husband - producing a subconscious fear he might turn out to be just as big a jerk in that department. He'd already looked like the man.

Whatever, Adhengo's relief at discovering the pregnancy had been a lie had been very telling. It had also been his first intimate experience at just how far a female would go in pursuit of that old romantic fantasy called '*love and marriage*'.

After that sobering experience, Adhengo always took care of protection personally when having sex. He was never swayed by any female's assertion that she was on the pill, or that it was a '*safe*' time of the month. He also always made his position quite clear to every woman he became involved with. Marriage was not on his agenda, no matter what!

His mother found his views on the subject totally unfathomable. With typical female logic, she simply dismissed them as a temporary aberration.

'*You'll change your mind one day,*' she would say every now and then. '*When fall in love...*'

Now that was another romantic illusion his mother harboured. His falling in love! He'd never fallen in love in his life. And he had no intention of doing so. The very word '*falling*' suggested a lack - and

a loss - of control which he found quite distasteful, and which could only lead to one disastrous decision after another!

Fortunately for him, his mother had been able to channel her grandmotherly hopes up till now towards his younger brother, Aarun, who'd married a couple of years back. Adhengo had simply assumed Aarun and his wife would reproduce in time, thereby letting him permanently off the hook.

But a few months ago his one and only sibling had unexpectedly arrived home and announced he was leaving his wife to go off to Venezuela to become a Buddhist monk! To prove it, he'd promptly given all his considerable worldly goods to his rapidly recovering wife and taken off, his subsequent letters revealing he was happy as a lark living on some mountain-top monastery with only a yak for companionship!

It didn't take a genius to conclude there would be no imminent hope of a grandchild from that quarter!

Which had brought his widowed mother's focus right back on him, her only other offspring, and now her only other hope of providing her with a grandchild! She'd been driving him mad with her none too subtle pressure, inviting all sorts of unattached females home to dinner. All of them beautiful. All of them sexy. And all of them wanting - or pretending to want - the same thing his mother wanted. Marriage and babies.

She'd just rung to check that he wouldn't be too late home for dinner tonight, because she'd invited Rukia Vasheita over. She was aspiring to be a nurse but was currently studying *secretarial administration* at a city college. She hoped to manage a clinic in her future.

'The poor darling has been so lonely since moving to the city,' Ida had purred down the line.

Lonely? Rukia Vasheita? Dear God! The woman was a sexual vampire.

Even before getting enrolled to the college six months ago, she'd done her best to seduce him. As a merry single, there would be no holds barred!

Adhengo liked his sex, but he liked it unencumbered, thank you very much. And with women who held the same views as he did. His current lady-friend was an advertising account executive whose marriage had broken up because she'd been already married to her job. Adhengo saw her two or three times a week, either at her apartment after work or in a hotel room at lunchtimes, an arrangement which suited them both admirably.

Chantal Amani was twenty-two, an attractive brunette with a trim gym-honed body. She wasn't into endless foreplay or mindless chit-chat or sentimentality, the word *'love'* never entering what little conversation they had. She was also fanatical when it came to her health. If ever Adhengo might have been tempted to believe a woman when she said it was safe, it would have been Amani.

But long-ingrained habits died hard, and Adhengo maintained a cynical distrust of the female psyche. It would never surprise him to discover that his latest bed-partner, no matter how career-minded, had fallen victim to her infernal biological clock. In his experience, not even the most unlikely female was immune to that disease!

Take the case of Mbithe, his invaluable PA, who'd been with him for years and always said she wanted a career, not the role of wife and mother. So what happened? She'd turned twenty and in less

than twelve months had married and left to have a baby. On top of that, she'd refused to come back to work, abandoning him totally for the home front.

He'd been most put out!

Naturally he'd had to take steps to ensure such a thing wasn't going to become a regular occurrence, though at the time finding a replacement for Mbithe had been a right pain in the neck. There'd been no question of keeping the girl on who'd filled in during Mbithe's supposedly temporary maternity leave. As efficient and sweet as Rukia was, beautiful, young, unattached females were out - a decision reinforced by what had happened when he'd taken Rukia out for a thank-you meal on the last evening of her employ.

Adhengo shuddered to think that even he could become a temporary victim of his hormones, if the circumstances were right. He'd been between women at the time, and had drunk far too much wine with his meal. When he'd taken Vasheita home in a taxi and walked her to the door of her flat she'd unexpectedly started to cry. Her louse of a boyfriend, it seemed, had just the day before dumped her for some other woman.

Adhengo had only meant to comfort her, but somehow comfort had turned to something else and they'd ended up in bed together for the night. They'd both regretted it in the morning, both agreed not to mention it again.

Vasheita had gone back to her normal job as a secretary in Accounts on the floor below his, and he'd met Chantal at a dinner party that very weekend.

His new secretary, Elizabeth, had started the following Monday morning.

Thank God for Elizabeth.

Now Elizabeth would never cause him any worries. She was fifty-four, for starters, happily married, with a healthy, undemanding husband and grown-up children who didn't live at home. She didn't mind working late when required, and didn't object to making him coffee at all hours of the day. If his tendency to untidiness bothered her - and he suspected it did - she didn't say so to his face, just quietly cleaned up after him. A woman of great common sense and tact was Elizabeth.

The intercom on his desk buzzed and he flicked the switch. *'Yes, Elizabeth?'*

'The others are waiting for you in the boardroom, Mr Boaz.'

That was another thing he liked about Elizabeth.

She called him Mr Boaz, and not Adhengo. It had a nice, respectful ring about it, and made him feel older than his thirty-three years. *'Yes, yes, I'm coming. Hold all calls, will you, Elizabeth? Absolutely no interruptions. We have a lot of work to get through this afternoon.'*

The lift doors opened, and Diana steered the pram, along with the now sleeping infant, onto the twentieth floor. Straight ahead was a long glass wall with floorto-ceiling glass doors upon which was written in gold lettering *'Adhengo Boaz & Associates – Management Consultants'*.

Beyond was another sea of black granite, dominated by a shiny black reception desk.

Diana wondered caustically if the glossy Taveta lady perched behind the desk had been chosen personally by Adhesh Adhengo himself.

Maybe he had a penchant for dark-skinned. She recalled Vasheita saying something about the big boss being present at her second interview for Adhengo Boaz & Associates, after which she'd swiftly been hired.

Of course Vasheita hadn't just been any skinny Taveta. Though her long kinky hair had been her crowning glory, she'd been equally striking of face and figure. Her stunning looks had been a problem all her life, and hadn't brought her any happiness. Men hadn't been able to keep their eyes, or their hands, off.

Poor, sweet Vasheita had always believed the declarations of love which had poured forth from her current pursuer's mouth. After she'd become a nurse working in the city, she'd been especially susceptible to the smoothly suited variety of male, especially good-looking ones with dark kinky hair, bedroom eyes and a convincing line of patter to get her into the cot and keep her there without actually offering any solid commitment.

Vasheita had been a sucker for that combination every time, always believing herself in love. Once in love, Vasheita had become her latest lover's doormat, thinking that was the road to the wedding ring and the family of her own she'd always craved.

Naturally it had never turned out that way, and Vasheita had been dumped in the end. It had driven Diana mad to watch her friend being used and abused by one silver-tongued creep after another. Married, divorced or single, it hadn't mattered. If they'd told Vasheita they loved her, she'd been putty in their hands.

Diana had tried to give solace and advice after each break-up, but her patience had worn thin over the years. She'd finally seen red when, shortly after Vasheita had been promoted to the plum job of PA to Adhesh Adhengo, Vasheita had confessed to being in love again. When pressed, she'd admitted the object of her affections was her new boss. A terrible argument had ensued. Diana had told Vasheita that she'd sleep with any man if he said he loved her, and Vasheita had retaliated that Diana had a heart of stone, was incapable of really loving anything or anyone but herself.

They were the last words the two friends had said to each other. That had been just over a year ago.

And now Vasheita was long eloped into the German bliss; a world she knew nothing about. Diana's chin began to wobble. She had to swallow hard to stop herself from bursting into tears.

'I won't let you down, Vasheita,' she whispered as she gazed down at Vasheita's handsome little baby boy. 'Your Jahwar's going to have everything you would have wanted for her. Every possible advantage. There will be no feeling of not being loved or wanted. No hand-me-down clothes. No leaving school at fifteen. As for Welfare and foster homes! Never! Not as long as I've got breath in my body!'

Hardening herself for the fray which undoubtedly lay ahead, Diana pushed the glass door open with the pram and forged over to the desk.

'I'm here to see Adhesh Adhengo,' she announced firmly to the glamorous brown-eyed Tavetee. 'And, yes, before you ask, I do have an appointment,' came the bald lie.

Faint heart never won fat turkey, Diana always believed. She'd never have gained entry to the most prestigious drama school in Karen if she hadn't been confident of her acting ability. Admittedly, she'd auditioned for three consecutive years before she'd won one of the coveted positions of entry. But that wasn't a measure of ability, she'd always told herself. It was as hard to get into Cambridge!

The Tavetee directed her towards a long polished corridor which led into another smaller reception area covered in plush dark blue carpet. The pram wheels immediately floundered in the thick pile, then came to a rebellious halt.

'Can I help you?' came the puzzled but cool query.

Diana glanced up at the severely suited woman seated behind the now familiar shiny black desk.

Adhesh Adhengo's secretary, Diana concluded with much surprise. For the woman wasn't Taita. Or pretty. Or young.

Diana wondered cynically if Adhesh Adhengo had finally learned his lesson about mixing business and pleasure.

'I'm here to see Adhengo,' she returned, just as coolly.

The secretary frowned. *'Mr Boaz is in a meeting all afternoon. He specifically asked that I not disturb him for anything.'* Diana finally got the wheels straight and bulldozed the pram across the carpet.

'I doubt he meant me,' she said, stopping in front of the desk. *'Or his son, here.'*

The woman's eyes widened as she rose to peer over her desk, down into the pram. *'His...son?'* she repeated, startled.

'That's right,' Diana answered crisply. *'His name is Jahwar. He's nine months old. Could you please tell Adhengo that he's here and would like to meet his father at long last?'*

The secretary blinked, then cleared her throat. *'Er...perhaps you'd best come into Mr Boaz's office and I'll go get him.'* Diana's smile was icy. *'What a good idea.'*

Adhesh Adhengo's office was another surprise. Although the room was huge, the carpet still plush, and the view of Nairobi breath taking, it was an office laid out for working, not impressing. There were several work stations around the walls, each with its own computer, printer, phone, fax and swivel chair. Every computer was still on, winking figures at Diana. Every surface was messy, littered with papers of various kinds. The main desk wasn't much better.

The secretary made an exasperated sound at the sight of it, shaking her head as she lifted a half-drunk coffee mug from its glossy black surface, Snatching a tissue out of a nearby box, she vigorously rubbed at the stain left behind, muttering *'truly'* under her breath.

Meanwhile, Diana lowered herself into one of the two empty upright chairs facing the main desk, crossing her long legs and angling the pram closer so she could check that Jahwar was still sleeping.

'What a good little baby you are,' she crooned softly as she tucked the blue bunny rug tightly around the tiny feet. When she'd finished, and looked up, it was to find the secretary staring at her as though she'd just landed from Mars.

'I dare say Mr. Boaz will be with you shortly,' the woman said, and, shaking her head again, left the room, shutting the door behind her.

That same door burst open less than two minutes later, and Diana's head whipped round to encounter her first view of Jahwar's father.

Adhesh Adhengo was even more of a surprise than his secretary, or his office.

Yes, he was tall, as she'd anticipated. And dark kinky-haired. And handsome, in a hard-boned fashion. He even had black eyes.

But, despite all that, the man glaring at her across the room didn't fit the picture she'd formed of him in her imagination.

Vasheita's lovers had usually been suave and elegant, perfectly groomed and beautifully dressed. They'd oozed a smooth charm and sophisticated sex appeal which girls of Vasheita's upbringing seemed to find irresistibly attractive.

Adhesh Adhengo hardly fitted that description.

He marched into the room, a menacingly macho male with his big, broad shouldered body and close-cropped haircut. The sleeves of his blue shirt were rolled up as though ready for battle, his tie was missing, and the top button around his muscular neck undone. His scowl was such that his dark straight brows momentarily met above his nose.

Frankly, he looked more like a construction site foreman about to bawl out his labourers rather than a successful creative economist who should have been able to handle even this sticky situation with some aplomb.

Grinding to a halt next to the pram, he glowered, first down at Jahwar and then up at Diana again. *'I hear you're claiming this is my son!'* he snarled.

Diana refused to be intimidated by this macho bully. She wondered what on earth Vasheita had seen in the man. She could only speculate that he came up better in bed than out of it.

'That's right,' she said.

He gave her a look which would have sent poor Vasheita running for cover.

Diana began to understand why her friend hadn't approached Jahwar's biological father for help and support a second time. When this man finished with a woman, he would expect her to stay finished.

But she wasn't Vasheita, was she?

Diana almost smiled as she thought of what Mr Boaz was up against this time. Brother, was he in for a surprise or two of his own!

'Wait here,' he growled.

'I'm certainly not going anywhere,' she said in a calm voice, and received another of those blistering looks.

Diana didn't even blink, holding his killer gaze without the slightest waver. He stared hard at her for several more seconds, then whirled and left the room, slamming the door shut behind him.

Diana sat there, whistling and swinging her left foot. It was to be hoped Mr Macho was out there getting a grip on himself and

finding some manners. Or at least some common sense. Because she wasn't about to go away, not this side of Armageddon!

The minutes ticked steadily away.

Five...

Ten...

Her blood pressure began to rise a little, but she'd been mentally ready for this. She hadn't expected the man to come to the party willingly, not when he'd already denied paternity, given Vasheita money for a termination and sent her on her way.

Frankly, Diana had expected nothing from him, and he was living up to her low opinion of men of his ilk. Obviously she had a fight on her hands to get the financial support she needed to raise Vasheita's son in the manner Jahwar deserved.

But she enjoyed a good fight, didn't she? She was always at her best when her back was against the wall.

The sound of the door finally opening had her swivelling in her chair with an aggressive glint in her eye. How dared he keep her waiting this long?

The sight of two burly security guards entering startled her, then sent her blood pressure sky-high. So that was how he was going to play it, was it?

Gritting her teeth, she stood up and gave the approaching guards a haughty look of disdain. *'I gather Mr Boaz won't be returning?'*

'That's right, ma'am,' the bigger and older of the two informed her. *'He said to tell you that next time he'd be calling the police.'*

‘Really? Well, we’ll see about that, won’t we? No, that’s not necessary!’ she snapped when the guard who’d spoken forcibly took her by the elbow. *‘I’ll go quietly.’*

Despite her protests, the two guards still escorted her till she was outside the building. She stood there on the pavement for several moments, glaring up at the top floors, struggling to get her temper under control. She imagined the bastard peering back down at her from his lofty position, smug and smirking with triumph.

‘You’ll get yours, Adhesh Adhengo,’ she threatened under her breath. *‘I’m going to take you to the cleaners!’*

Scoping in several deep breaths, Diana forcibly slowed her pounding heart and found some much-needed composure. Her brain finally began ticking over, and she started wondering why Jahwar’s father was so sure of his ground that he would dare have her thrown out. It was a stupid move to bluff about paternity in this day and age.

No matter what else he might be, Adhesh Adhengo was not stupid.

It suddenly dawned on Diana that he probably believed Vasheita had had her employment termination because of the pregnancy, and eventually replaced, which meant he might not have realised Jahwar was the baby Vasheita had come to see him about, despite him being the right age. He possibly thought Jahwar was another baby entirely, and she, Diana, was the mother. When he’d stared so hard at her it could have been because he was trying to recall if he’d ever slept with her or not. Since he hadn’t, naturally he’d assumed she was trying to pull off some kind of false paternity suit.

That had to be it!

Diana could have kicked herself. She should have said straight up that she wasn't the biological mother.

'Your new mummy's an idiot,' she told the now wide-awake infant as she wheeled the pram towards the taxi rank on the corner. 'But don't worry, I have a contingency plan. Since I've temporarily blotted my copybook with your father, we'll go see your grandmother and gain entry that way. Yes, I know you're getting hungry and wet. I'll feed and change you in the taxi. I've brought everything with me. Bottles. Nappies. Spare clothes. Aren't you impressed?'

Several passers-by glanced over their shoulders at the tall, striking Caucasian female wheeling the brand-new navy pram along the pavement, oblivious of everything but the baby to whom she was talking fifteen to the dozen.

'Just wait till your nanna sees how handsome you are. And how good. She won't be able to resist you. I couldn't, could I? And look at me? A hard-nosed piece if ever there was one. Or so your real mummy says. And she is probably right. But she wasn't right about my not being able to love anything or anybody. No, my darling, she was quite wrong about that...'

The nerve of the woman! The darned nerve!

Adhengo fumed as he glared down at the pavement below and watched her pushing the pram down the street. What on earth did she think she was playing at? How did she think she was going to get away with such an outrageous claim?

Even if he was one of the unlucky few whose condom had failed, did she honestly imagine that he wouldn't remember sleeping with someone like her?

She wasn't the sort of female he would forget in a hurry. For one thing, she was exactly his type. Adhengo had always been attracted to tall, slim brunettes with interesting faces and dark, glittering eyes who made it obvious from their first meeting that men were not their favourite species. He liked the challenge of getting them into bed, then watching them abandon their feminist aggression for the short time his sexual know-how and their own basic needs, overcame their natural antagonism. He'd had several rather lengthy involvements with such women, and prided himself on keeping them as friends afterwards.

Oh, yes, he would have remembered having sex with...damn it all, he didn't even know her name! She'd only supplied Elizabeth with the name of her baby.

Jahwar.

As if that would mean anything to him!

He watched till she disappeared under a street awning, certain that that would be the last he'd see of her.

Perversely, he almost regretted having had her thrown out so hastily. He should have questioned her further, listened to her tall tale, found out what it was she wanted from him.

Money, he supposed, as he turned from the window and strode across his office towards the door. What else could she possibly have wanted?

He ground to a halt with his hand reaching for the doorknob, his forehead creasing into a frown.

But why had he been the target of her attempted con? It wasn't as though he had a reputation for indiscriminate and promiscuous behaviour. He certainly wasn't the sort of man who could be convinced he'd slept with some stranger whilst drunk or under the influence of drugs. He never drank to that much excess and he never took drugs!

Maybe she'd mixed him up with someone else, he speculated. Maybe she was the one who'd forgotten who it was she'd slept with. Maybe the father of her baby was someone else working at Adhengo Boaz & Associates. Or a creative economist from another firm? Someone who looked like him, perhaps?

Chapter Two

Adhengo stepped under a deliberately cold shower, all the breath rushing from his lungs as the icy spray hit his seriously overheated flesh. Swearing, he gritted his teeth and stood there staunchly while the freezing water achieved what his willpower could not.

Finally, he turned the taps onto a warmer setting and reached for the shower gel, squirting several dollops into his hands, then lathering it all over his body, finding some satisfaction in having his hormones under control once again. But for how long, with that female living under his roof?

Diana had managed to break the news about Vasheita to his mother, and with the desperation of being a grandmother, Diana was invited to live in the house, to help raise Jahwar. This was news!

Hell! He hadn't been the victim of such a wayward and unwanted burst of lust since he was fourteen!

Don't even think about her, he warned himself, when his flesh prickled once more. But he had to think about her, and the situation. Okay, so maybe it wasn't a scam, and maybe Diana wasn't a con-artist, but she was seriously deluded.

She had to be if she believed he was that baby's father.

Because it was impossible!

Well...not a hundred per cent impossible, he conceded reluctantly. Diana was right. Condoms had been known to fail. But the likelihood was extremely low. Besides, if Vasheita had believed

even for a moment he could be Jahwar's father, she would have come to see him.

But she hadn't!

No, Jahwar wasn't his child. Vasheita had known that.

Yet Diana believed he was.

Which meant Vasheita had lied to her best friend.

Why did people lie? he speculated. Because of shame? To protect someone? Perhaps the baby's father was a married man, someone who worked at Adhengo Boaz & Associates...

Adhengo frowned as he tipped his head back into the shower to let the soap wash free. He needed to find out the real father's identity - and quickly - before his own mother had time to get too attached to the child. And before he went stark raving mad!

My God, the thought of having that female under his roof for the next two weeks or more was too awful to contemplate. Those fantastic eyes of hers. That sulky, pouting mouth. Those small, high, firm breasts.

Adhengo groaned. It seemed he only had to think about her now and he was in trouble. Reaching up, he snapped off the hot water tap and braced himself for more torture.

This time, the cold water didn't work nearly as quickly.

Twenty minutes later, dressed in too tight jeans and a basketball sinklet, a still agitated Adhengo clomped downstairs. He hadn't bothered to shave, and a five o'clock shadow was beginning to

sprout. His kinky hair was still wet from his elongated shower and his tan loafers covered feet which looked like prunes, they'd been wet for so long.

At least dinner shouldn't be too bad, he conceded grudgingly as he strode along the hallway. He'd be sitting down, hidden from view. But he didn't fancy driving Diana anywhere afterwards. He didn't fancy being anywhere within touching distance of that woman!

He also didn't fancy having to keep defending himself to her when he was innocent. Damn it all, what had he done to deserve any of this? He'd been a good guy all his life, hadn't he? He'd been a good son. A good brother. A good friend. He didn't take drugs; didn't drink to excess; didn't cheat on his clients. He even took the famous biblical herb, Maror on occasion when observing Sabbath.

He worked hard and he gave money to charity.

Most important of all, he didn't indulge in heartless seductions and he hadn't impregnated any of his secretaries!

Hearing female voices coming from the kitchen on the right, Adhengo turned left into the dining room, where he marched over to the sideboard and proceeded to pour himself a stiff shot of scotch. There were times when only a drink would do!

'Don't drink that, Adhengo.'

The glass froze just short of his mouth. He glared over at his mother as she walked in carrying a steaming soup tureen. *'Why?'* he demanded to know. *'You have to drive after dinner, remember? And there's a bottle of your favourite red to have with the meal. You can't have both and be under the limit.'*

'Then I'll only have one glass of wine,' he grated out, and took a deep swallow.

The alcohol hadn't had time to hit when Diana entered the room. She'd put her hair up while he'd been upstairs, he noted. And glossed her mouth a tantalising black. She looked as deliciously inviting to him as fairy-floss to a sugar-addicted child.

Her dark eyes glittered in his direction as she made her way to her seat at the table, their expression just short of scathing. Perversely, that seemed to be just what his body was waiting for. Despairingly, Adhengo jerked his eyes away from her and downed the rest of the whisky.

Diana watched him quaff back the drink as if he really needed it, but felt not the slightest twinge of sympathy for him. If ever there was a man who was acting guilty, it was Adhesh Adhengo.

His eyes were getting a hunted look to them, his body language betraying extreme annoyance which was way beyond the justified anger of the innocent. He was acting like some wild beast backed into a corner, practically quivering with the effort of controlling his frustration and suppressing his simmering fury.

Whenever he looked at her, Diana had the feeling he'd like nothing better than to grab hold of her and shake her till her teeth rattled. His appearance tonight didn't lessen his threatening air, either.

Out of his business suit he looked more like a construction foreman than ever. When he'd lifted that glass to his lips just now, his muscular bicep had bulged underneath the short sleeve. In fact, in that chest-hugging basketball singlet and in those tight blue jeans, his whole body seemed to be bulging with menacing muscle.

The thought of being alone with him later was not a pleasant one. Not that Diana seriously thought he would lay a finger on her. It was her own disquieting reaction to his macho size which was bothering her. Again. Why couldn't he have been more like Vasheita's usual boyfriends? came the irritable thought.

Chapter Three

In this village of Agwara, the shores of Lake Victoria plunged with waves of warm water, hitting the rocks of Bondo plains; not a single family enjoyed this breezy spectacle. Most were worried with the outbreak of tsetse fly disease, they said it caused night blindness or others perceived it as the urge to have sex at odd times, beriberi it was called. The European settlers living nearby in Eldoret were fond of calling it *beriberi* and this name became the market brand, imposing panic and prompting migrations even unto the nearby country of Uganda.

Bishop Ndayi was a wealthy traditionalist; he had the only automobile in the village, a big lorry that served in multipurpose errands including carrying passengers and agricultural products to the market or other places where business beckoned. He was counting his blessings but soon the cows were all sleepy and much sooner, they will be sleeping for eternity. The beriberi disease was a curse and he too felt the need to migrate to a safer location; Bondo was not a conducive atmosphere, especially for a polygamous tycoon. There had to be a place he could habitate, a place with cleaner air, a place not infested by these symptoms. Sad enough, there was also this curse of elephant foot, a disease caused by mosquitos. This land needed prayers, perhaps the village of Agwara had bulged its list of abominations and the gods were retaliating in anger, destroying the generation and building a new start. Ndayi had to decide how to save his kin.

His wife Priscah, the daughter of the legendary Luanda Magere was happy with Bondo. Somehow, her body was resistant to this beriberi decay and her heart did not want to migrate. However, she was excited about the ordeal and wanted her eldest son to experience

maturity through travel, this opportunity to explore a new land would expose Jajuok to enterprise skills and with the blessings from the gods, he would soon follow the footsteps of Bishop Ndayi, his father.

On the contrary, Jajuok was illiterate but very sexually active. The fame of his father's wealth and tales from her mother's village made him an attraction to most girls whom he devoured, left as pregnant and stood as uncaring. His mother didn't even bother whether accepting grandchildren was favourable for her village; it simply made no issue what Jajuok was doing. Life was filled with plenty of issues to start rebuking the minor complains, besides, sex was mutual and many agreed it climaxed with enjoyment. The pregnant girls must have enjoyed or still enjoyed, and they had to carry their own burden. Non had even proposed to be married and it seemed that they were collecting trophy's in the name of babies, feeling proud to be impregnated by Jajuok. This son of Ndayi saw himself as some sort of *Moses in Exodus*, preferred leader to a new generation, and so they nicknamed him Musa.

Ouru, the other noble son was calm. He was keen to studies, always developing some crude inventions and teaching others new English words. His village nickname was Okumu, literary meaning "*a judge*" for he was well educated. Ouru was not to be part of the Uganda itinerary, his mother needed him around, for she thought he was not yet ready for the world. He was vulnerable.

His grandfather and his father had both been uncommon men, each uncommonly needed by his time, each great in the way of those countless and unrecorded souls whose names are too bright for history but are written dimly in the long, dark furrow, the ribboned steel of railways triumphantly overtaking the sun, the pluming smoke of Nairobi sky-lines where once the Kericho tea fields dreamt its age-long, vacant dream. His grandfather, Doctor Kungu,

and his father, Bishop Ndayi, had each been needed by his time. That was the difference - Jajuok was not needed by his time. Nothing was needed now but robots who would respond to the pull of a lever or the push of a button. Even in higher education, the robot inscribed the diplomas with an expert hand. He resorted to study electricity should they arrive in Uganda, and become an electrician, perhaps his new importance would be defined.

He was unencumbered by any personal possessions outside Okumu's books. It would be a simple matter to get into his father's lorry - tomorrow would be as good a time as any - and strike out at random a direction towards Uganda, that route promising plenty of space ahead. He wanted to put behind him every reminder of his conscientious, devoted charcoal industry at Kapiyo and the infuriated chagrin that had been virtually his only reward. Even good old Radiala was a link between him and that immediate, incredible past, but Radiala would understand. He would not charge him with an ungrateful breach of friendship if he awoke some morning to find that Jajuok had followed his father into Uganda. Even though he had promised to marry his plump daughter.

His thoughts, out of their plunging chaos, settled again upon his grandfather as if there alone they could find any firm ground.

When Jajuok tried to reconstruct the character of his grandfather, it was upon his childhood memories of him that he drew, rather than upon the wealth of written testimony the old doctor had left behind him. He had been a lean, ruddy-cheeked, knotty man, never old, who smelled tangily of winesap apples and burning *mwarubaini* leaves, and who never tired of thinking up new games to amuse a small boy. Jajuok was five when his grandfather, then seventy-six, rescued three children from drowning in the *aora* dam near Yala River that month of November 1962.

The family strain, being devoutly, biblically accustomed to propagation in the rural space of Bondo, must have felt thwarted in Agwara. The begetting had not, Jajuok reflected, gone on as it should have done. In his middle thirties, the doctor had married a pioneer woman much older than himself, who had with some difficulty given him one son. The son was named, appropriately, Bishop Ndayi, and in later years married a pretty young girl from Kano plains the settlement near Nandi hills, who almost died giving birth to Okumu. And that had been the sum and substance of it. Kungu, with some mysterious, ill-starred romance in his past, despised all women. This was perhaps the root to his great-grandchild Adhengo, who was stubbornly avoiding marriage and children.

The distance they had travelled today could not be computed in miles, nor the time in hours. The lidless, wintry eye of the sun had gone down. Over this strong land of ploughed fields or grass-pale stubble, the bleak, greenish November twilight belonged to the marginless, tranced region of his boyhood imagination, to a lost and gold-dark time. It was to this age, this luminous space strangely droning with faint, forlorn winds, that he had become transported, it seemed without his own volition. He had struggled against a sentimental surrender to this nostalgia of the past dreams, yet had found himself overwhelmed to it becoming real.

The land in Uganda was a slow tumult of gentle, overlapping hills, small, reedy, secret lakes, and wood-deep watercourses. The groves that sheltered the once opulent farmsteads dotted the rich prairie lake like brooding islands. They had a few miles still to go - across the broad flank of Museveni's cornfield, then over the bridge of Entebe River. The isolated life meant a new venture for the preacher father, who would easily build a congregation and eventually set up

his *tentmaking* business. There were no colleges, non that was visible but the act of apprenticeship was common and this is how Moses of Exodus, this son of Ndayi, this boy named Jajuok would eventually learn the craft of relaying electricity. The gods were alive, the church was being constructed and all the skills were within the congregation, yet, the only college existing was miles away. With the church as a building, it would be easy to convince the school to start a local branch. This was the new life.

The Indians were onto their living, doing their pagan development but filled with morals that never infringed upon any of the neighbours. The co-existence was peaceful until the military tasted the true quality of consented sex outside the barracks; this was when Milton Obote and General Iddi Amin started exploring the outskirts of Entebe, with all the civilisation that order had brought to families; yet this sex was not enough, some few more varieties of European and Asian would finalise this pussy tasting experience. Eventually, Iddi Amin decided the kinky-haired ladies with glossy dark skins were sweeter; this other varieties were too juicy, perhaps too much; they were only good when they brought alive offspring's from a cross-conjugation with the locals, and this they never wanted. So, it meant war, and they had to go. The war started and soon fertilisation was the norm; raping Indian women to create the better offsprings, even worse was raping European women, especially the old mothers who already knew how to give births. The traumatizing rumour forced many to migrate into Kenya; Bishop Ndayi had a congregation that was predominantly European, and when they decided to migrate into Kenya, he felt the joy of a new blessing.

Back at home, the tsetse disease had been contained and the lands remained unoccupied because a few villagers were very superstitious of returning to a cursed village. The entire exodus settled in Agwara, and adding to the ecstasy of his father's success,

Bishop Ndayi would establish local factories, build schools and champion for organised development. Jajuok had reformed, however still not very literate, he was useful and knew the importance of having a loving congregation. In their return, Radiala had insisted for his daughter to be married, and this was a youthful blessing, for Atieno was a well-mannered girl. Father Benedict was the new overseer, leading all the European congregants who gave handsomely towards developing Agwara village and Bondo town; they wanted to start a denominational farm in Usenge, and they would call it Dominion Farm.

Things started to fall apart at home when Jajuok's brother, Ouru, did not go to communion and Bishop Ndayi flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère. They had just returned from church. Nyakano placed the fresh palm fronds, which were wet with holy water, on the dining table and then went upstairs to change. Later, she would knot the palm fronds into sagging cross shapes and hang them on the wall beside our gold-framed family photo. They would stay there until next Ash Wednesday, when the family would take the fronds to church, to have them burned for ash. Bishop Ndayi, wearing a long grey robe like the rest of the oblates, helped distribute ash every year. His line moved the slowest because he pressed hard on each forehead to make a perfect cross with his ash-covered thumb and slowly, meaningfully enunciated every word of "*dust and unto dust you shall return.*"

Bishop always sat in the front pew for Mass, at the end beside the middle aisle, with Nyakano, Jajuok, Achieng and Ouru next to him. He was first to receive communion. Most people did not kneel to receive communion at the marble altar, with the blond life size Virgin Mary mounted nearby, but Bishop did. He would hold his

eyes shut so hard that his face tightened into a grimace, and then he would stick his tongue out as far as it could go. Afterward, he sat back on his seat and watched the rest of the congregation troop to the altar, palms pressed together and extended, like a saucer held sideways, just as Father Benedict had taught them to do. Even though Father Benedict had been at St. Paul for seven years, people still referred to him as “*our new priest.*” Perhaps they would not have if he had not been white. He still looked new.

So when Ndayi did not see Ouru go to the altar that Palm Sunday when everything changed, he banged his leather bound missal, with the red and green ribbons peeking out, down on the dining table when we got home. The table was glass, heavy glass. It shook, as did the palm fronds on it.

“*Ouru, you did not go to communion,*” Bishop said quietly, almost a question. Ouru stared at the missal on the table as though he were addressing it. “*The wafer gives me bad breath.*”

Jajuok stared at Ouru. Had something come loose in his head? Bishop insisted we call it the host because “*host*” came close to capturing the essence, the sacredness, of Christ’s body. “*Wafer*” was too secular, wafer was what one of grandpa’s factories made - chocolate wafer, banana wafer, what people bought their children to give them a treat better than biscuits.

“*And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me,*” Ouru said. He knew Jajuok was looking at him, that his shocked eyes begged him to seal his mouth, but he did not look at him.

“*It is the body of our Lord.*” Ndayi’s voice was low, very low. His face looked swollen already, with pus-tipped rashes spread across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more. “*You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that.*”

“Then I will die.” Fear had darkened Ouru’s eyes to the colour of coal tar, but he looked Papa in the face now. *“Then I will die, dad.”*

Bishop looked around the room quickly, as if searching for proof that something had fallen from the high ceiling, something he had never thought would fall. He picked up the missal and flung it across the room, toward Ouru. It missed Ouru completely, but it hit the glass *étagère*, which Nyakano polished often. It cracked the top shelf, swept the beige, finger-size ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor and then landed after them. Or rather it landed on their many pieces. It lay there, a huge leather bound missal that contained the readings for all three cycles of the church year.

Ouru did not move. Bishop swayed from side to side. Jajuok stood at the door, watching them. The ceiling fan spun round and round, and the light bulbs attached to it clinked against one another. Then Nyakano came in, her rubber slippers making slap-slap sounds on the marble floor. She had changed from her sequined Sunday wrapper and the blouse with puffy sleeves. Now she had a plain tie-dye wrapper tied loosely around her waist and that white T-shirt she wore every other day. It was a souvenir from a spiritual retreat she and Ndayi had attended; the words GOD IS LOVE crawled over her sagging breasts. She stared at the figurine pieces on the floor and then knelt and started to pick them up with her bare hands.

The silence was broken only by the whir of the ceiling fan as it sliced through the still air. Although their spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, it felt suffocated. The off-white walls with the framed photos of grandfather Kungu were narrowing, bearing down on them. Even the glass dining table seemed like it was moving. This was the day that Ouru missed his favours and henceforth, it was to be Jajuok who would carry on this

mantle of family priesthood, even with all his shortcomings of being illiterate and a renowned fornicator. The family culture had to be preserved and the best sign was participating in communion, which Ouru decided was tasteless and without meaning. The best remedy to tame Jajuok would be to seek help from Bishop Oludhe, like a partnership to induct appetites of church administration to this lost son and eventually, his ways would be polished to regain honourable name. Perhaps he could start as a treasurer, even though in Uganda, Jajuok had taken courses for electrical maintenance and could help with various construction projects around town, the church remained the core culture of the family.

The major challenge was Bishop Oludhe's cunning daughter, who was becoming talk of the village; that she was a slippery slut. Maybe a mutual teamwork would help rescue both bishops from shame, by introducing their children, they could mend their past. Jajuok was now married, but was still as stubborn to his old habits and in as much as no evidence was raised, his name was tainted to shame and this made him only good as a church accountant, he could not preach at the pulpit but pastoral care was a journey and it starts by knowing we are a priesthood. That is how Jajuok became a pastor, through his role as an accountant in Oludhes church which was the western branch of the mission plants supported by Father Benedict.

Dust-laden winds of harmattan came with December. They brought the scent of the Sahara and Christmas, and yanked the slender, ovate leaves down from the frangipani and the needle-like leaves from the whistling pines, covering everything in a film of brown. The Ndayi's spent every Christmas in their home village of Agwara.

Oludhe was hosting a birthday celebration for his daughter who had turned twenty-five.

The morning winds were swift on this day, pulling and pushing the whistling pine trees so that they bent and twisted, as if bowing to a dusty god, their leaves and branches making the same sound as a football referee's whistle. The cars were parked in the driveway, doors and boots open, waiting to be off-loaded.

As a third generation preacher, Oludhe didn't have to build a congregation because he inherited one from his father. As his father did before that. Akinyi's father's grandfather was a legendary fire-and-brimstone preacher who soared to national fame before suffering a heart attack at the peak of his power. His eloquence apparently skipped a generation, but it somehow stuck in Akinyi's father. Marrying her father guaranteed her mother lifelong financial security. Never guessing how miserable and bitter her marriage would make her. Jajuok had been the treasure at her father's church for ten years now, and he wasn't a bad tease. A man in a suit is like a woman in lingerie.

The birthday party was as boring as she feared, but at least her parents continued chatting with the guests outside. She knew her easiest conquest was Jajuok, a balding right-wing kook in his early forties who condemned everyone who contradicted Bishop Ndayi's literal interpretation of the Bible. Rumour had it that he cheated on his plump wife of ten years, but no one had ever caught him at anything. The thought of destroying his reputation elated Akinyi. A man can hate a woman and still love the sex, but that does not mean his feelings don't colour the experience?

It was the precise moment when Jajuok was transversing the hallway, getting a glimpse of the family pictures that Akinyi lured him to an isolated space that was next to Oludhe's library, in there,

she promised more family treasure of pictures and cultural artefacts. Was this so?

"Today I gave my virginity to a boy I really liked, but he didn't last a minute." Which, strictly speaking, was all true. "Now I'm hornier than ever. I'm gonna explode unless I find a real man who can teach me what I so desperately need to learn. The boy even said my breasts are too small." Having already removed her bra, Akinyi nimbly unbuttoned her blouse. "Mr. Jajuok, please tell me my breasts are not too small to satisfy a real man!"

She studied him, tall, hard, and naked. They say the bigger the feet, the larger the penis, but if anything, his feet looked small compared to the axe he swung between his legs.

They had little time, and she wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible, so she loosened his belt and fell to her knees, knowing he would love her submissive position. The move surprised him, but he quickly got with the program as she took it out and gobbled it up. His thin penis hid in bushes so thick that real *Moses of Exodus* would have torched them. Once he started moaning, she scooted a little to her left spit his dick out and begged him to fuck her. She got up and pretended he threw her onto the bed. Her fucked up self-image, lousy self-esteem, and miles of psychological baggage got off on punishment. Her father's authoritarian dominance demanded it. That's why she wanted to get caught. She wanted everyone to know she was a total slut, a cheap whore, a piece of shit. The prospect of public humiliation revved her engine like a foot on the gas pedal. She needed to destroy herself in order to save herself.

A part of her wanted to destroy her father's reputation, but the rest of her wanted to destroy herself. To do both was killing two birds with one stone. Jajuok slid between her legs and she grabbed his staff like Moses and parted the Pink Sea. Every inch seemed to

animate her. He couldn't seem to get the right angle due to his height, so he pinned her legs against her body and thrust the rest of it in. Something huge pushed against her vagina and her eyes blew up to twice their normal size. Then it slipped in and surpassed everything she had just experienced. In and out, in and out. Akinyi howled in joy wishing someone would walk in and catch them in the act.

Jajuok leaned down to kiss her on the lips, but her knee-jerk reaction was to turn away in obvious disgust. That didn't require any acting. *"You came so quick,"* she threw at him. *"You left me unsatisfied. I guess you're not a real man, after all. You better leave before I scream. And leave me your best credit card and whatever cash you are carrying."*

That is when the finances of Oludhe's church began to crumble, all in the name of fidelity. Akinyi squeezed every inch of Jajuok's incompetency, through seduction and threats; that when the annual audit was done, some huge chunk of money was unaccounted for and it all pointed to Jajuok. Eventually, at a disgraceful church council meeting, he was found guilty, not only of siphoning finances of the church but of having an extra-marital affair with Akinyi, the daughter to Bishop Oludhe. This meant he would never be a pastor. This was shame.

His wife was loyal, and with emotional comfort, Jajuok would reclaim his old charcoal business in the forest of Kapiyo, chopping trees and burning charcoal; this would double up with becoming a renowned herbalist, a new trade that was not related to the family. Bishop Ndayi was seeing hell; and it was time to acknowledge that Ouru was still the mantle bearer in this family, it was his calling.

The best predictor of good sex was the kiss because kissing measures personal chemistry, as opposed to just mutual attraction. Their tongues met and she kissed him like a Taser. Electricity shot down his spine. Wow! He hadn't felt this alive since her story of lost virginity. Kissing Akinyi was like biting into a ripe peach. He drank her like a cold beer on a hot beach in Kapiyo.

“Kissing you is addictive. If you go just a day without kissing me, I'll end up in rehab.”

She always wanted to get caught. She wanted everyone to know she was a total slut, a cheap whore, a piece of shit. The prospect of public humiliation revved her engine like a foot on the gas pedal. If Akinyi was only happy when it rained, then there must be a shit storm coming because she never felt better. Walking on a tightrope wasn't enough. She needed to tempt fate until she fell in an orgy of public destruction. Men cannot fall in love with women they do not find attractive, and women cannot fall in love with a man they do not respect. Success in a man is like youth in a woman.

Ouru had planned to get married to this girl from Nyamonye village, they called her Emma and they had been fornicating for some while, though not as an act of public destruction, it was ethically correct for love was in the atmosphere. In most days, the sex would be oral, but on occasion, it was sparked with works of the waist.

When it comes to eating pussy, men hope for guidance while women expect mind reading. Ouru tried different tactics to win over her clit, adjusting according to her grunts, until he discovered the winning combination and spanked that baby until she screamed.

Emma's hands explored his body with the urgency of an Indian attack. When the huge cock fell out, it smacked her face with such a

thud that she screamed in delight. *“I didn’t know God made them this big. Was your father an elephant?”* *“No. But sometimes he was a donkey’s ass.”*

Every time her lips pulled back on the rim of his penis head, his toes curled. Every time her nose dove into his pubis, he forgot to breathe. Every time her suction power threatened to peel off his foreskin, he thanked God.

A spasm warped his body. Something squeezed his head like too small a hat. He sucked his chest down into his stomach. His eyes bulged, then he couldn’t see for the tears. His hair stood up and his arms flapped like spaghetti. Then he blew a wad of cum in her mouth with enough force to knock a cowboy off his horse. He looked at her like a lizard who spent too much time in the sun. He knew his tongue couldn’t do the aerobatics that hers performed so easily, as she licked up one spot of jism after another on her face. Finally, she resorted to fingers to brush it off.

The women of Emma’s village lived away from civilisation and were not pleasant to admire, even with such change of traditions; they all looked alike, in ill-fitting blouses, threadbare wrappers, and scarves tied around their heads. They all had the same wide smile, the same chalk-coloured teeth, the same sundried skin the colour and texture of groundnut husks.

“Akinyi, see the boy that will inherit his father’s riches!” one woman said, hooting even more loudly, her mouth shaped like a narrow tunnel. Little did they know the two were already acquainted to each other.

“If we did not have the same blood in our veins, I would sell you my daughter,” another said to Ouru. She was squatting near the fire, arranging the firewood underneath the tripod. The others laughed.

“The girl is a ripe ngenge! Very soon a strong young man will bring us brewed busaa!” another said. Her dirty wrapper was not knotted properly, and one end trailed in the dirt as she walked, carrying a tray mounded with bits of fried beef. This was the moment that Ouru noticed Emma after two days of not meeting. Together they left the company of the old to drive away towards an isolated view of the lake, up towards the hill of Kapiyo.

Emma’s Peugeot 504 station wagon was white and rusted to an unpleasant brown at the fenders. Ouru was seated in the front; no one was in the back seat. The car made rattling sounds as if some bolts had come loose and were shaking with every rise and fall of the bumpy road. There were gaping rectangular spaces on the dashboard instead of air-conditioner vents, so the windows were kept down. Dust sailed across their mouth, into their eyes and nose.

They had been talking for long enough, and it was one of those moments when Emma signalled for intimacy. Not stupid enough to argue, he leaned over the passenger seat to gain access to her safe. Instead of unbuttoning her shorts with one hand, he simply slid it down and whistled when he discovered she wasn't wearing underwear. Emma swivelled around to stick both feet out, legs spread as wide as the car window allowed, then arched her back to raise her ass as high as possible with her ankles on his shoulders giving Ouru a lot more easier access, breathing heavily through her nose like a snorkeler. He found the Promised Land promising, and soaking wet. He sank his middle finger in, and it felt like a toe in a Jacuzzi. *“Impregnate me, you sexy bastard. Give me a kid that looks like you and thinks like me.”* That did it. She may as well have

pressed a detonator button. No sooner did he get it in, than it kept slipping out. It was like trying to kiss someone on a trampoline.

Emma didn't make a sound when he slid it in, so he pulled her entire body towards him so he could get the best angle. Then, her ankles on his shoulders, he fucking nailed her to a cross. Lost in a sea of confusing emotions, he pulled almost all the way out before shoving it all the way in. Over and over, at bee speed. He heard her cry out, but didn't care.

"Oh, fuck, shit, fuck. Shit, fuck, shit. Ohhhhhh!"

She came like a thundershower, complete with a big fart. Time does not pass everyone evenly. Some experiences use up more time than others. Fascinated, Ouru watched her recover in slow motion. It seemed to take forever, although his watch didn't agree. An eternity later, just as his muscles started locking up, something unexpected happened. His dick betrayed him. He crossed the point of no return. Startled, he opened his eyes to see Emma looking at him like he was a magician. The sheer amazement and gratitude in her eyes overwhelmed him. She was just so fucking beautiful. The smile on her face melted him. Ouru forgot to breathe. His cock coughed, then coughed again, like shotgun blasts, each recoil staggering him. His strength unexpectedly left him. His head grew dizzy and the light got dim. He fell forward like a corpse, only for Emma to catch him in her arms and hug him tightly. Her vagina really did need time to heal and in such need for memory, Emma promised to name the child, whether male or female, the name will be Adhengo, meaning, *sweet loving*. This was the genesis of Adhengo Boaz, the would be bankrupt millionaire of the millennium.

Finally, Father Benedict and part of the European missionaries decided to leave Agwara village, to reconnect with their motherland, England but not to erase their mark. Their children would remain with the village of Agwara.

Bishop Ndayi had become more vigil with the practice of the church, and because of his committed faith in worship, his wisdom was respected. In fear of mentioning his name, the villagers decided to call him “*Roar Go*” because whatever he said was implemented, he was like the local chief and everyone loved him. Eventually, the name roar-go became pronounced as RAWAGO and this was the beginning of a strong generation of wise descendants, committed to the church and of service to the community. Even Jajuok, with his short-comings, was ultimately respected because of his charcoal business and traditional knowledge of the local herbs, he was still a *rawago*. His wife decided that the name Jajuok was not respectable, and soon he was to be known as Otieno, Otieno Rawago.

Chapter *Four*

The long grass shivered once more. It was only a faint movement but there was no wind to cause it - as the hanging clouds of steam from the donkeys' breath clearly showed. Otieno shrugged his shoulders slightly, ensuring that his quiver was clear. His massive longbow lay across his knees, ready strung. Kamba hunters didn't travel with their bows slung across their shoulders. They carried them ready for instant use. Always.

His heart was beating slightly faster than normal. The movement in the grass was barely thirty meters away by now. He recalled Rawago's teaching: Don't concentrate on the obvious. They may want you to miss something else. Ouru had migrated too far, and his new enterprise would be helpful if only his son Adhengo would agree to meet with Jajuok, the now named Otieno.

He realized that his total attention had become focused on the long grass beside the road. Quickly, his eyes scanned left and right again, reaching out to the tree line some forty meters back from the road on either side. Perhaps there were men hiding in the shadows, ready to charge out while his attention was distracted by whatever it was that was lying in the grass at the road's edge. Robbers, outlaws, mercenaries, who knew?

It took another half hour to reach the palace. The road wound upward toward the centre of the island, through well-spaced, wind-swept trees. There was plenty of light, unlike in the thick forests around Adhengo Palace, or the dark pine forests of Agwara that Otieno remembered all too well.

The leaves had turned, but so far most of them remained on the branches. All in all, it was pleasant country. As he rode the donkey, Otieno saw plenty of evidence of game - rabbits, of course, and wild turkey. Once he caught a quick flash of white when a deer showed him its hindquarters as it bounded away. Poaching would probably be rife here, he thought. Otieno had a basic sympathy for the villagers who sought occasionally to augment their diet with venison or game birds. Fortunately, poaching was a matter of local law and would be policed by the Bondo's gamekeepers. As a matter of policy, though, Otieno would need to discover the identities of the local professionals. Poachers could be a prime source of information about goings-on. And information was a hunter's stock-in-trade.

The trees eventually thinned and he rode out into the sunlight again. The winding uphill road had brought him to a natural plateau, a wide plain perhaps a kilometer across. In the centre of the plain stood Palace Adhengo Lakecliff and its dependent village - a huddle of thatched cottages set close to the palace walls.

The palace itself, to one used to the impressive mass of Jaramogi Palace or the soaring beauty of the Raila Riat Palace, was something of a disappointment. It was little more than a fort, Otieno realized, with the surrounding walls barely topping five meters in height. As he looked more closely, he could see that at least one section of the wall was constructed from timber - large tree trunks set vertically into the ground and bound together with iron brackets. It was an effective enough barrier, he thought, but it lacked the dramatic impact of Jaramogi's massive ironstone walls. Yet there were solidly buttressed towers at each corner and a central keep, which would provide a haven of last resort in the event of an attack. Over the keep, he could see the stag's head banner of Bondo County as it stirred on the light afternoon lake breeze.

There were a few workers in the fields and they stopped to stare at the cloaked figure as he rode toward the palace. He nodded to one or two of those who were closest to him and they nodded back, cautiously, raising their hands in salute. Simple farm people didn't understand hunters and as a result, they didn't wholly trust them either. Of course, Otieno knew, in times of war or danger, they would look to the hunters for help and protection and leadership. But now, with no threatening danger, they would keep their distance from him.

Otieno was eager to know the details of his mission but he knew that there was no sense in hurrying things. Emma and Ouru would tell him in their own time, and nothing he did or said would make them do so any sooner than they planned to. A few years earlier, he would have been in a fever of anticipation, fidgeting and unable to relax. But, along with the other skills of a hunter, he had learned patience. As he sat and waited for his superiors to broach the subject, he felt Ambajo's approving eye on him from time to time as his former teacher assessed this newfound quality. Otieno looked up once, caught his fathers's eyes on him and allowed a grin to touch his features. He was pleased that he was able to demonstrate his forbearance. Even as a war chaplain, Bishop Ndayi was prayerful but as a transformation of his traditionalist son, Jajuok from a forest dweller to a hunter capable of protecting the village, it was an added blessing.

Something was missing, Jajuok thought. Then he realized: there was none of the usual buzz of conversation, no sudden bursts of laughter or raised voices as people greeted companions, sharing a joke or a story. The people of Agwara were quiet, moving with their eyes cast down, seemingly disinterested in what was going on around them. It was an unfamiliar experience for him. As a hunter, he was accustomed to drawing attention - albeit guarded - whenever he arrived in a new place. And in the past weeks as a *jaduar*, he had

experienced the same surge of interest - although for a different reason.

It was fear, he realized. People in Agwara were living close to a dangerous border. Their leader, Bishop Ndayi had been struck down by a mysterious ailment and there was a distinct belief among them that it was the work of a sorcerer. Small wonder that they would not show interest in or greet a stranger arriving in their midst. He hesitated, uncertain whether or not he should dismount. Then the question was answered for him as a rotund man, with a seneschal's chain and keys and a look of perpetual worry, emerged from the keep. The seneschal - basically the person who managed the day-to-day domestic affairs of the palace for its chief - saw him and moved toward him.

That is when Otieno decided to visit the isolate mansion by the lake. After twenty paces, Otieno looked behind him and could no longer see the way out of the wood. The path twisted so much and the undergrowth and creepers and trees twined together so closely that his world had become confined to a space of a few meters. He continued on, with his hand holding firmly a Nilotic knife hilt. Years of hunter training meant that he moved with virtually no sound and now he began instinctively to use the shadow patterns as cover for his movement.

There was no further sign of lights among the trees. Perhaps, he thought, the light bearers had been scared off when he entered the wood. The thought made him a little more relaxed. Maybe he wasn't the only one in this wood feeling nervous. He smiled at the thought and moved on.

Then the whispering started.

It was right at the limit of hearing, so that at first he wasn't totally sure he could actually hear anything. Then, he thought that perhaps it was the wind through the leaves - except there was no wind. It was an almost imperceptible susurrant that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere. Otieno looked at the dog, Arctic was its name. The dog stopped, one forepaw raised, head cocked to one side, listening. So the sound was there. But it was impossible to determine where it came from, and that made it impossible to make out whether it was voices or just a sound. It ebbed and flowed at the very edge of his senses, sometimes drowned by the accelerated sound of his own heartbeat, sometimes becoming almost clear, almost comprehensible. And then, in the middle of the indeterminate muttering, he began to make out individual words.

Unpleasantly evocative words. Once, he thought he clearly heard a voice say: pain. And then the muttering died until he heard, or thought he heard, the word death. And suffering, darkness and terror. Then more meaningless, wordless whispering. What was happening to the Rawago heritage?

With much searching, the visible Adhengo Lakecliff Palace was not visible when he speculated to have reached. Was he losing his conscious? Where was Ouru when the village needed a leader?

Chapter Five

Ouru and Emma had decided that village life was not their calling and so, Dancun, the son to Father Benedict became the rightful replacement of Bishop Ndayi, he would help manage the church as an overseer. Ouru wanted to focus on his father's factories and other social projects he had initiated including that of village judicial institute that was training Christian soldiers capable of protecting the Agwara village and borders of Bondo. To this, Otieno had been a good leader. His knowledge of the forest from years of charcoal burning business made him the best candidate, besides, he was also a respected hunter trained by our very own father, Bishop Ndayi.

Nairobi was a remote village but different from Agwara. There were a lot of Asian and European business families and this was a good beginning to introduce Adhengo to what would be the legacy of "Roar-Go" the mighty bishop who dreamt of establishing a dynasty to retain the family glory. Perhaps, Adhengo, if well exposed, would help make this vision a reality, that of having our family counted as part of development enforcers in this fast growing city of Nairobi. This is how Adhengo Boaz & Associates was born, a company established by Emma and Ouru for their son who was still young, almost to join college, with hopes that it will form part of his own dreams. Eventually it did and the generational blessings still remain uncounted, for Adhesh Adhengo besides not becoming a bishop like his grandfather, has become a successful businessman.

In Germany, the conversation was not honourable, the new husband that Rukia Vasheita had eloped to marry, forcing Diana to adopt his son, Jahwar; this man turned to be a wreck. He was an alcoholic and egoistic maniac. Perhaps the only advantage of ever travelling this far was the quality education in nursing that came handy, and with the skills at heart, it was time to connect with Kenya.

Jahwar was now ten years old and Adhesh Adhengo was still unmarried, committed to his business which he called a dynasty. His mother had been ailing for a while and was always said to be travelling abroad for treatment; as a widow, this was those difficult moments for her. This was one of the entry points that Vasheita would use to gain access back to Adhengo's life. Helping with raising Jahwar, who knew not that she was the mother and also helping the old lady, for the skills she pursued were just perfect within the practice of Rukia. And yes, the hospital build by Adhesh Adhengo would need an administrator, and this will be her point of practice. Indeed it became, and all was not fitting into place. Even forced vacations brought no remedy to the lust Rukia felt for Adhengo; how would she ever be forgiven for leaving her very own baby for adoption? What did Adhesh Adhengo think of her?

Rukia Vasheita drove her little car off the ferry, hearing the familiar clunk as the wheels left the ramp and hit the concrete of the quay. She waved at Owuor, the ferryman, and then drove a little way down *Luang'ni* before pulling into a vacant parking space overlooking the port.

The city had been hot and sticky, the air trapped between the tall buildings with not a breath of wind to lighten the atmosphere, and she'd crawled through holiday traffic for hours to reach the ferry. She was hot, tired and desperate for the peaceful haven provided by

her cottage on the cliffs. But first she had things to do. She was meeting a Adhesh Adhengo and she was already late.

Climbing out of her car, Vasheita breathed a sigh of relief as she felt the wind lift her hair and cool her skin. At last.

Home.

Mageta Island was the place that Adhengo had moved into, away from Agwara village and here stood the Lakecliff Palace. The hospital was a few miles from its vicinity.

Being a practice nurse on a remote Nilotic island had its challenges, but she loved it and she could never imagine living anywhere else. She'd only been away for a month but it felt like longer.

She was still smiling when she pushed open the door of the café and joined Adhesh Adhengo at the large round table by the window. It had a view of the harbour and was a perfect place from which to observe the various comings and goings of Mageta Island. *“You know, if you’re going to eat that artery-clogging gloop you should at least do it behind a newspaper or at a table around the back. Eating it in the window is just asking for trouble”*.

‘You’re late.’ Adhengo dropped the spoon and stood up to give her a quick hug. *‘You saw the Chihuahua? He’s a cheeky dog. With most of the December holiday still ahead of us, I wouldn’t be surprised if we’re pulling him out of another hole soon. It’s so good to have you back. We’ve missed you.’*

‘It’s too hot.’ Vasheita ran a hand over the back of her neck. *‘And the only reason I’m looking sultry is because we’re in the middle of a heat wave. I’m boiling.’*

'Was it hot in Frankfurt?'

'Unbelievable. I honestly don't know how people can live their lives in a place like that. It's all so -' Vasheita frowned as she searched for the word ' - closed in. There's no air. It's like being in a forest of buildings and everyone is busy, busy, busy. There's no room to breathe, whereas in Mageta there's just so much space.' She shuddered at the memory and Adhengo smiled.

'So you didn't enjoy yourself?'

'I enjoyed the work. It was fantastic to be back on the labour ward. You know I loved my midwifery and I don't exactly get the chance to practise much here in Mageta.'

'What are you complaining about? It's like a rabbit colony here.' Adhengo waved the spoon. *'Both Adhiambo and Akinyi are pregnant. And Wambui Kamau's baby is only four days old, so you'll be visiting her for a while.'*

'I know.' Vasheita gave a soft smile. *'I actually delivered Wambui in the labour ward on the mainland of Bondo. It was amazing and, of course, it's great that Adhiambo and Akinyi are pregnant. But it's hardly enough to make up an entire workload.'*

Yvonne was a plump woman with a generous smile and a mass of curling blonde hair. *'Good to have you home, Vasheita.'* She wiped her hands on her apron and reached for a pad. *'What can I get you? Same as Adhengo?'*

'Just a coffee, thanks. Americano. Decaff, no milk.'

'That's all? I've a chocolate cake that's enough to make a woman cry.'

Vasheita ignored temptation. *'Just coffee.'*

'And how's that going to give you energy through a long day?'
Yvonne tutted her disapproval as she put the pad back in her pocket.
'You need flesh on your bones, lass.'

'I have flesh on my bones,' Vasheita said dryly. *'I can't lecture people on losing weight if I'm overweight myself. At the moment I can still fit into my clothes and that's the way I want it to stay, especially given that it's the swimsuit season.'*

'Could you stop being so perfect? You're ruining my enjoyment of this ice cream.' Adhengo licked his spoon and looked regretfully at the empty dish as Meg removed it and walked back towards the kitchen. *'So - did you think of me while you were away?'*

Vasheita blew on her coffee to cool it and waited for Meg to walk away before she spoke. *'I'm not doing this anymore, Adhesh Adhengo.'* Her voice was firm and steady. *'I'm not wasting any more of my life pining after a man who doesn't even notice me.'*

Adhengo's smile went out like a light bulb in a power cut. *'You're talking about me.'*

'Of course. Who else? Who else has there ever been for me?'
Vasheita shook her head and gave a derisive laugh. *'Ever since we played kiss chase in the playground, it's been you, Adhengo. I've never even been able to see another man if you're in the same room as me. And when you're not in the same room as me, you are in my head. Even when I close my eyes I can still see you. I can see your smile, I can see that wicked gleam in your brown eyes. I can see the way you walk as if you own the world. And it's a crazy waste of time, because somehow, you don't even know that I exist.'*

'I don't know you exist?'

'I mean as a woman. When it comes to writing your books, making your dinner or caring for your child, you know I exist,' Vasheita said flatly. 'When it comes to anything more personal, I'm invisible.'

'I have been heart broken before.'

'I know that. And I also know that it was years ago when you met Diana and tried something which didn't work for you; and, sooner or later, you're going to find someone else to share your life with. And no matter how much I dream that it might be, that someone is never going to be me. So I'm over this thinking.' She said it for herself as much as Adhengo. To remind herself of all the promises she'd made to herself while she'd been away in Frankfurt. *'No more moping. No more pining. No more wishing for something that is never going to happen. I'm putting plan A into action. I'm moving on.'*

'I don't want to spend the rest of my life by myself,' Vasheita said softly, resting her cup carefully back in the saucer. *'You asked me if I was broody and the answer is, yes, I'm broody. But not for a baby in isolation. I want so much more than that. I want to have a home and a family and a man who loves me, and I'm not going to find that while I'm blinded by your charms. I've been stupid about you, I can see that now. The way I feel about you has stopped me even noticing other men, but that's going to change. When I was away, I managed to talk some sense into myself. I went out with the people from the Church your father planted in Machakos and we had fun. It was good. And I realise now that it's up to me to build a proper life here and I'm going to do exactly that. No more waiting around*

and hoping. No more deluding myself. I'm really, really over these feelings. Honestly.'

The road clung to the coast, winding high above tiny bays that were accessible only by foot, bays that had once been fiercely defended against Acholi invasion. Vasheita drove carefully, alert for tourists too busy admiring the view to watch the road. To her right she could see the ruins of the castle where young Raila had hidden himself during the eighty-two elope. To her left was the sparkling water of Lake Victoria, waves crashing onto jagged rocks and, in the distance, the outline of the mainland.

There was nowhere like Mageta, but today the excitement of being home was missing and she felt frustrated and cross with herself. And disappointed. She'd spent a month lecturing herself about the futility of being in love with Adhesh Adhengo and she'd genuinely thought that finally she had her feelings under control, so the intensity of her reaction in the café was disheartening.

She'd wanted so badly to feel indifferent.

Her spirits lifted slightly as she parked outside her little white cottage with its blue shutters and views of the lake. Buying it had stretched her budget to snapping point but there was never a single moment when she regretted the extravagance. As a child she'd walked past the same cottage with her parents and had stared in wonder. To her it had always looked like the gingerbread house from the fairy tale. Roses clustered around the door and snaked under the windows. It was a friendly house and the fact that it was small had never bothered her. It was hers. And she'd made it her home.

She'd thrown cheerful rugs onto the polished wooden floors, hung filmy white curtains from the windows and filled tall vases with

flowers from the garden and glass bowls with shells that she'd found on the beach. And if the second bedroom was so tiny there was barely room for a bed, did it really matter? All the people she knew lived on the island anyway, so she rarely had to find room for overnight guests. Her own bedroom was large enough, and that was what counted. Light streamed through the window and she'd placed the bed so that the first thing she saw when she opened her eyes was the lake. It was a perfect place to sleep, dream and wake up. A room built for lovers.

It was just a shame that she didn't have a lover.

Letting herself into her cottage, Vasheita picked up a pile of post and walked into the sunny yellow kitchen that she'd painted herself over a gloomy February weekend earlier in the year. Usually the view from the window across the cliffs cheered her up but today she found it hard to smile.

Telling herself off for being pathetic, she sifted through her post, binning all the junk mail and putting the bills neatly to one side. Then she opened a white envelope and found a quote for redoing her bathroom.

Five minutes later she'd confirmed it all and written out a cheque for the down payment. It would be wonderfully indulgent to have a new bathroom and it was long overdue. The bathroom was the only room that hadn't been touched since she'd bought the cottage three years earlier. It would use the last of her savings but she decided that it was worth it.

Resolving to throw open all the doors and windows at the weekend to freshen the place, Vasheita showered, changed and then climbed back into her little car and made her way to the surgery in time for her afternoon surgery.

'I gather you had a drama on the beach. You've a big list, Vasheita.' Chantal, the receptionist, handed her a computer printout and a pile of letters. *'Plenty of people have been holding on, waiting to see you. And Wambui wanted to know if you could call on your way home to check on the baby because the cord is looking a bit sticky and she's worried. You can tell it's her first. Every time the little one blinks, she rings Adhengo. He's incredibly patient with her.'*

Adhesh Adhengo was patient with everyone. *'I'll call, of course I will. I was going to anyway.'*

'Who do I have first?'

'Akinyi. She's sitting in the waiting room with a dopey look on her face so I think we all know the reason for her appointment.' Chantal winked and Vasheita regretted on how truthful she had opened up to Adhengo.

'Let's hope so. Is she first?'

'Yes.' Chantal leaned forward and lowered her voice. *'I made it a double appointment, just to be on the safe side. I had one of my feelings. If I'm wrong, you can use the time to catch up on some of the paperwork that your replacement didn't touch.'*

'Good thinking.' Vasheita walked through to her room and sat down at her desk. It felt good to be back. She turned her head and glanced around the room. In the corner was a basket stuffed with toys that she'd selected herself and the walls were covered in posters that she'd chosen from the wide selection available to her. Everything was just as she'd left it. The heaviness that had settled inside her lifted and she switched on her computer and pressed the buzzer.

Akinyi tapped on the door a few seconds later, her husband by her side. *'I'm pregnant, Nurse Rukia.'* She was bursting to tell the news, her smile dominating her pretty face. *'I missed a period and I did the test yesterday and it was positive.'*

Saturday evening arrived and Vasheita hovered outside Logan's house, feeling ridiculously self-conscious. She'd walked through his garden gate at least a thousand times in her life and never even hesitated. So why should a glamorous dress and a pair of high heels suddenly make her nervous?

The answer, of course, was because she felt...different.

Normally, when she joined Adhengo for one of the frequent barbecues at his house, she pulled on her oldest pair of jeans and pushed her feet into a pair of trainers. It was true that occasionally she'd worn a dress in the hope that he'd notice her, but it had never worked. But she'd never worn a dress as glamorous or feminine as the one she was wearing now.

Lifting a hand to her hair, she drew in a breath and opened the gate.

'Vasheita, you look wonderful!' Yvonne, Adhengo's aunt who owned the café in Mageta beach, stepped forward, a drink in her hand. *'I've never seen your hair down like that! It looks amazing.'*

'I—I thought I'd have a change from curls.' Vasheita's eyes slid nervously around the garden, which was already crowded with Logan's friends and family. *'Where's Jahwar?'*

It was ridiculous, she thought to herself, hiding behind a child. But suddenly that was what she wanted to do.

'Last seen clinging adoringly to his father, but you don't want to play with him while you're wearing that gorgeous dress. He was squashing raspberries into her mouth a moment ago and most of the juice was stuck to him.'

Vasheita laughed. *'He loves fruit.'*

'There she is.' Yvonne smiled benignly across the garden. *'And Adhengo is looking well, don't you think? That blue shirt with his eyes - it's no wonder the girls all trip over themselves when he passes. He's not going to be on his own for long, that's for sure. Someone is going to snap him up really soon.'*

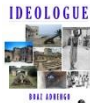
Were they?

Wondering how she'd cope with that, Vasheita kept her smile fixed firmly in Place.

Did Yvonne even feel the remorse of a desperate woman, who wanted to be with the father of her child; this child who never even for once called her mommy. Surely, Yvonne, for how long will my heart ache in this love; even if Diana my friend had broken Adhesh Adhengo's heart by choosing to go for studies instead of marriage, myself am ready. I wouldn't mind sharing him with Diana, should she ever land back from America. How do I make it simple for my soul?

Vasheita decided it was relaxing to spent more time with Jahwar, after all, she was his biological mother. If Adhesh Adhengo will keep ignoring her, she will keep doing her best. And when Diana returns, things would change for the better.

Also by Boaz Adhengo



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