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A Fatal Destiny

Sometimes I wish God would punish me differently. But no man deserves this slow decay of hope, this hollow ache that keeps laughter at bay. It all started one evening in Dzorwulu, in that shabby chop bar where life smelled of fried chicken and regret. I was eating, Angela beside me, when one of Pato's boys thought it was his right to touch her, to ask her for a lap dance in his limousine. Pato—a smuggler with golden guns and a hotel room that reeked of corruption—didn't scare me. His men didn't scare me. I bow to no one but God.

I thought I had to act like a man and defend Angela's dignity when the opportunity presented itself so casually. Seeing how uncomfortable she was, I decided to step up. I landed the first punch. Then another. And then I was immediately attacked from behind. The last thing that I could recall was how they took her away from me, and how no one dared to intervene. Her screams still haunted me at night, as I was left with scars in my forehead and some bruises on my abdomen. I laid down on the floor like a defeated cockroach. Then two gentlemen came to my aid. They then took me into a house in Osu, and both treated me with great care until I could finally walk again.

Accra was a big city. Thousands of cars passed by on each street, moving like snails due to the infinite traffic caused by our people. Thankfully I had a motorcycle, which made traffic feel like nothing. But being a poor black African was no good. The police could steal all my money from my pockets and I wouldn't be able to do anything about it. I was nobody yet; I was broke. Two days after the incident, when I went to the police department at Labone, they asked me for money to look for my Angela.

“Chale, this case be difficult. You say them Pato boys took her, huh?” asked the officer.

“Yes, boss.”

“By this time, they would have sold her into prostitution or something. Regardless, we will inform all stations in Accra,” the officer said.

Those were words that gave me reassurance at first, but when I left the police station, I knew I was living in my own delusion. No one was going to look for my Angela, not when corruption stood out within the department. I was 18 when all of this happened. I had no money. My family had left me to starve when they heard that I fought them Pato boys. All I had now was the street and Balo’s roof. “My house is your house for now, until you become somebody”, Balo said. “Good luck in the streets. We all gotta start somewhere,” he added.

In just a few days from that incident, I became a ‘street child.’ I could only hope that Angela’s soul was put into rest, so that she could suffer no longer. I decided to sell items to the passing cars like any other child or teenager in these streets. I always faked a smile to get the driver’s sympathy and sell them some dark chocolate bars that I took from a local market next to Marina Mall. At the end of the day, I was just trying to get enough money to buy a meal and repay Balo and Francis for their help.

One day, I decided to wander Jamestown alone—a fishing town known for its poverty, criminality and castle that was built by early colonizers. During my little trip, the local gym caught my attention. I saw how two shredded warriors exchanged blows between one another. Each blow was followed by sparks of sweat that flew up and down, left to right. If lucky, a tooth would come out with fresh blood. When the round was over, the coach had a look at me.

“Mosquito, come here! Where do you think you are?”

“I’m not a mosquito. I was just curious,” I said.

“Heh,” the coach chuckled. “Hop in the ring. We have a fighter who’s having a match in a few days. You know how to fight? Do you have experience?”

“Yeah, but I’ve never boxed before.” I wasn’t afraid to fight and I wasn’t anyone’s bait. Back during the incident at the chop bar, I was able to hold my ground with a few elbows and kicks of my own, until someone from behind hit me with the butt of their gun.

“Every fight is a boxing match,” the coach said. “Get in, Mosquito, see how far you survive before being hit.”

I removed my holed gray shirt and put my gloves and headgear on. The equipment was sweaty and smelled like dry skin. When I had placed the head gear on me, it was as if my face was being glued to it, the horrendous smell somewhat infesting itself around my nose and mouth. It smelled like piss, but its scent was better than some of the wasted waters that passed through our sewers and were left on the side of the streets.

I started the match being a bit nervous. I was hitting jab after jab. Then double jabs and a cross. My opponent was younger than me, but I could tell he was experienced. He had great head movement, but even so, I was the one maintaining constant pressure over him. I then gave him a left hook and then a knee to the liver. The entire gym shouted at me and even the coach jumped to the ring.

“What do you think you are doing?! Ah?!”

“I thought I could use my knees,” I said innocently.

“Massa, this is not kickboxing! Before I chew your face, go and do 200 pushups and 200 sit ups now, *kwasia!* You foolish boy!”

After doing my coach’s commands, I went to apologize to my opponent, who refused to shake hands with me.

“Tobiah, shake his hand. Boxing is a sport, so show some sportsmanship before I slap you! Be a man!” the coach said. My opponent and I finally shook hands, even if we didn't look into each other's eyes.

“Now, as for you, mosquito boy. I see why you used your knees; you were fighting for your life. I can tell you have power within those tiny bones of yours, and you were just eager to use them knuckles. You have good leg movement as well, Mosquito.”

“Thank you, coach.”

“Tobiah's an experienced amateur boxer, but you still managed to keep the pressure on him. Maybe you should train for kickboxing. It may get you far.”

“Where do I sign, coach?” I said.

“Meet me tomorrow morning at 6:00 AM at the gym. Coach Kwesi Osei will train kickboxing with some of the town's teenagers. You'll have a free trial. If you're good enough, you'll come for free, but with a cost. You'd be responsible for cleaning the gym morning and night, unless you dey chop money, hmm?”

“Yes, boss. Thank you, coach,” I said.

After grabbing my shirt, I went straight to Balo's football game that was taking place in Polo Club's football field, next to the airport, where rich people lived. I sat next to the guarded grassfield where the horses galloped in freedom. Balo was doing okay as a center back. He was tall enough to intimidate his opponents, but he lacked talent and skill. He was clumsy with the ball, but one kick was enough to send shivers to an injured body. The man facing him in a race had a durag on and was muscular. He was fast as a gazelle and strong like a gorilla. I may have seen him before... somewhere. Maybe on the road? I couldn't recall, but I do remember waiting in an intersection in Cantonments and seeing a biker wearing a durag. Perhaps that was him? I had to take a closer look.

After the game was over, the durag man went to his bike, which was a Harley Davidson, quite a luxury for a Ghanaian to afford. He must've been a famous rapper or bodyguard. He had a big smile on his face and a positive attitude, but something about his eyes and that particular smile showed greed, a similar look those Pato men had in Dzorwulu. Balo shook hands with him. The durag man and I just exchanged glances for a bit. He then went on his way. Balo was sweating like a cascade and breathed as if he were just about to drown.

"You mind if we dey chop Banku with Francis at my place? I need energy, oh! Francis just left Ecobank's office, so he should be there in half an hour. Sounds good?" he asked.

"Sure," I said.

As I took a shower, Balo and Francis were preparing the meal. The smell of the grilled tilapia was flavoury, and the addition of shito and other chili spices were augmenting my appetite. When I came out, we slowly devoured the magic taste out of our plates. Our right fingers were jerky as they pierced the fish's skin. The pieces came out juicy and even smelled like our prey. We all knew the acrid scent wouldn't go away for the next couple of hours, but it was still worth every piece of it.

"If I'm ever gonna face dem Pato boys again, I wanna make sure I kill them with my fists," I said, breaking the silence.

"Hmm, be careful. Dem boys got shiny toys, oh!" Francis replied.

"I know, but even them toys didn't crush my skull."

"Hehe, I remember seeing you take one down. POW! You got power!" Francis added.

"Have you taken kickboxing before?" asked Balo.

"No."

“Oh, ok. The reason I asked,” Balo said before pausing, swallowing his Banku’s portion, “is because you may get a good reputation out of the sport,” he continued. “You may coach *oborɔnyi* people in need for cardiovascular activity. They will contact dem other white folks and make good business deals with house coaches. The more people suggest you, the more expensive the courses get. Think about it, hmm?”

“Sure, I’ll consider it. How do you know about this?”

“Remember that durag man?”

“Yes, the one with the bike?”

“Yeah. He’s a fitness coach. 200 Ghana cedis per class. Three to five clients a day. He makes around 7 000 Ghana cedis in a week.”

“Eish, the guy be rich, oh!” Francis remarked.

“What’s the man’s name?” I asked.

“Alfred, I think. He works for the Spanish embassy people. Sometimes even as a part-time bodyguard. The guy can drive motorcycles and cars,” said Balo.

That was all that Balo had to say about Alfred. Interesting fellow that man, perhaps it was just his smile. No matter, from this day onward, I took Balo’s advice to the grave. I had nothing going on with my life, and this shift from street guy to kickboxer was a new hope in my life. Hope that will hide the burden of what I have lost in the past.

“You came early, Mosquito. Start doing pushups. No rest in between,” said Kwesi Osei, whose mustache showed enough authority already.

The first training session was a rough one. I had good conditioning and stamina, which helped me when hitting the coach’s pads. Surprisingly enough, I was sharp and efficient in my punching and kicking skills. The coach was impressed and therefore gave me more challenges during training to see a weakness in me.

“Seems that no repellent can kill you, huh? Keep grinding, Mosquito! Keep ya blood in!” said the coach.

I was furious with what God and life took from me. My Angela was taken away from me and my family left me to die a poor man. How can you spot a weakness in a man who has lost everything he'd ever loved? The burden wasn't going to disappear, the flame wasn't going to fade yet. I was bringing my all to every session. My mind and heart became unstoppable. By the time I was becoming someone, I had become a completely calculated striker. My African name was long and boring, and hard to remember by most. Balo and Francis didn't even know my name yet, well... they never cared to ask. Somehow, I demanded myself to find a new identity; an identity that will somewhat fit with my persistent determination. I was a man who didn't give up despite some of God's punishments.

After those sweaty tears ran down my body, when watching DSTV Sports with Francis at Balo's place, I remember seeing the iconic Shannon Briggs promo, where he asked in consistent fashion to fight an Ukrainian champion. He had three words after every sentence: “Let's go, Champ! Let's go, Champ!” At first, I was called Mosquito in Jamestown, a name I hated being called for because of my appearance. But after gaining some experience in the sport and after being 13-0 in pro-Kickboxing and 5-0 in street fighting, people around started to call me Champ, which quite frankly, sounded better than Mosquito. So anytime I met new people, I always went by Champ; a name easy to remember.

My popularity in local tournaments gained me some media attention. I won local championships and people and the media finally regarded me as Champ. Then, through coach Osei's contacts, I was called to represent the national team, which certified an unknown prophecy, like if I was destined to achieve these great things God brought to me despite my tragic losses. During this period, I represented the country in Egypt, in Nigeria and even in Paris, where I met my wife, Celine. My life with Angela was long forgotten at this point. I

couldn't bring her back. I could search her for countless days, but I knew I wasn't going to find her no matter how hard I tried. I had to move on. She probably did too at this point. I blindly hoped she was safe, whether on Earth or in heaven.

Celine was a pretty French upper middle class lady, and a fan of Black Africans. She had a thick, yet cute French accent where her beauty relied on that blonde hair of hers. I never got to see blue eyes before I met her; but hers were angelic at first glance. When getting with her, I didn't care about the benefits of living in Europe, I just needed something new, and Celine was part of the journey.

I followed Balo's advice and created social media accounts to promote a few lessons for both Boxing and Kickboxing disciplines. Suddenly, my phone rang endlessly for days. I had at least six sessions a day, whether it was for cardio, for kickboxing or even self-defense. I was making a lot of money to the point that my wife and I bought a house in East Legon within eight months. I also bought myself a black Toyota Corolla, which I decided to showcase during a football match at Accra Sports Stadium. With me came Balo and Francis. Our team, Accra Heart of Oaks, were facing Ashanti Kotoko, a good rival that was just second in the league. Football in Ghana was like a war between cults, but I never cared about football, I was just here to hang out with the boys.

"So, how is Celine doing?" asked Balo.

"She's fine. She's going to see the doctor, she's been having a lot of cramps lately. She thinks she's pregnant."

"Eish, massa! We gonna be uncles!" Francis said.

"Congrats, chale," said Balo before the game started.

Not even five minutes into the game, one big foul from our rival's captain infuriated the entire stadium. Vuvuzuelas erupted from everywhere, which thankfully reminded me of

clicking the lock button on my car keys, just in case I had forgotten to do so at the stadium's parking lot. The game ended 2-1 in our favor. We had a last minute penalty, and it was very controversial. I wouldn't be surprised if the referees were paid big money for our team to win. After all, this is Ghana, oh!

When the boys and I were walking back into the parking lot, I saw a random man seated inside my car. He seemed nervous and had the eyes of a troublemaker. Balo and Francis got their phones' camera ready; they knew what was coming for the bastard. What the fuck was he doing inside? Was he trying to rob me and then I locked him for about an hour? When I unlocked the car, the man was already sweating and was praying for his life. I gently opened the door for him, and he slowly stood out.

"Are you ok? What happened?" I asked calmly. My intent was to play with him like a Lion does to its prey before devouring it.

"Massa, I beg. I dropped my phone, and I had... I had to look for it," the thief said.

"Oh ok, but how did your phone get into my car?"

"Eh... Your windows were... Massa, please," he begged.

"Let's talk about it like men," I said. Little did he know that this was going to be the biggest ass whooping of his entire existence. I grabbed the back of his neck and then played with him as if he were a puppet; a defenseless mannequin. I broke his orbital bone with one punch, then I proceeded to give him several elbow strikes. I looked around and saw everyone clapping, recording me, shouting slurs at the thief, and a few minutes later, the police arrived and asked me what happened. While turning around from my victim, I simply answered that he was a thief and that I was just teaching him a lesson. The policemen then took the thief into custody and took him out of the stadium and people asked me for pictures and autographs. I almost murdered a man, and I had become a celebrity in this city. My status as an international fighter made me *untouchable*.

During the midst of this aftermath, I spotted Alfred clapping in the distance, next to him was Balo and Francis. His smile shown alongside his recently cleaned bike.

“Let’s go Champ! Let’s go Champ! Hahaha! Look at you, you’ve become famous!” he said.

“Hmm, somehow,” I said.

“Damn, you have power within those knuckles!” he added.

“Anything to beat up a thief,” I replied, as he slowly approached me.

“Is that so? Hmm... Chale, I beg your time. Let’s talk somewhere private,” he proposed. “I may have something of great importance for you.”

“Hmm? What are you talking about?” I said.

“This may help your troubles, Champ. I’ve been there, I’ve seen it all.”

“Eish, Alfred, is it money?” asked Balo.

“Money can’t buy love,” said Alfred.

By then, I was intrigued by the look Alfred gave me. If I didn’t know him, I would’ve broken his nose. He looked like he was ready to throw hands with me, or... about to give me a reality check, but his proposal seemed serious and gave me so much curiosity that I was tempted to find out what was of such great importance. I then nodded to Alfred and then got back into my car. He then led the way with his expensive bike. He was way too fast to catch up, but I think I knew what the purpose of this meeting was after a couple of minutes. The roads... the compounds... we were going to Dzorwulu. My heart skipped a beat as I recalled the entire incident with Angela. He was leading me right into that chop bar! *Did he know about this? Was he even there? Did Balo share too much?* I kept asking myself. As I parked my car on the side of the road, Alfred leaned on my window.

“Why are we here?” I inquired.

“I saw how they took your girl. What was her name?”

“Angela. Angela Bamfort, why?”

“Hmm... If I speak to you about this, there’s no word coming out from your mouth, ok?” he said, his smile masking the threatening message behind his words. “I know of an Angela who works as a prostitute for one of them Pato boys,” he said.

“How do you know about this?”

“I work for a dangerous, rich business man. His name is Mr. Mint, and you must address him as such if you ever meet him.”

“Why would I meet him?” I retorted.

“Because he’s the only gate that prevents you from being with Angela. And I am the only key that will lead you to your happiness.”

“How do you know that my happiness belongs with hers? I’m a married man.”

“C’mon Champ, you should look at your face. True love never goes away,” he said.

I paused for a second, reflecting on my own emotions. Alfred was right, although I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt. He has clearly read me like a witch doctor. The guy wasn’t dumb. If he was the key to my supposed happiness, he must’ve wanted me to comply with an ultimate favor.

“You said you were my key to happiness,” I said, breaking the awkward silence between us.

“Yes, that I am,” he admitted.

“How so?”

“You said you’ll do anything to a thief, correct?”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Then, I need you to dirt your hands for me. Heh... you see? A thief has stolen something of great value to me, and I want it back through pain,” he said. “At 8:00 PM near Palm Court apartments, check for a woman in a red dress and be her shadow. A man will

surely strike, and then, you will end his life. Hurt him real bad and then take his belongings. Check well inside his jacket..." he continued.

"What did he steal?" I asked.

"Someone's trust and dignity. He's no danger at all, especially considering someone of your aura. Make sure you grab the jewelry he has stolen," he said.

"Hmm... and why would I do this for you?" I asked.

"Because... if you do me this one favor, I'll grant you the unique opportunity to see Angela through a wealthy mafia party in Cantonments, and plan your escape with her tonight. What ends up happening afterwards, it is not my problem," he said.

"Hmm... I'll think about it," I said.

"You don't care about Angela, do you?" he said as he returned to his bike. I was about to get out of the car and make him beg for mercy. "There's no thinking to be done. This is your only chance, Champ," he added while leaving in a rush, too quick to catch him back. Something fishy was happening that was out of my control, yet... I'll catch up to it when the time comes. As the noise of his bike's motor faded away, I took a quick moment to stare at the chop bar. The incessant noises of Angela came back into my mind, as well as the mocking giggles of the kidnappers.

"What do you mean? I thought you were coming to Charlotte's party with me!"

Celine said as she stood from our bed.

"Celine, lower your voice. I can't go, I have a job to do. I... I need to save someone," I said.

"Ohlala! So, now you've become an African superhero at night? Who are you, Ghana Iron Fist? Black Batman? Who are you saving?"

She was being very hysterical, and my one way to be a family man seemed to be in jeopardy with her attitude. I had to be very cautious with my words, but I had to be honest.

“Who are you saving?” she asked, again.

“A very dear person to me,” I said. The person who made me the man I am today. The same person who’s made me a killing machine, the very same reason why I had become so successful at surviving within the utter world of violence and combat sports,” I paused. “Her name is Angela Bamfort, and they had kidnapped her when I was 18 years old.

“Throughout these last years, I’ve been constantly thinking about her fate. Eventually, I decided to forget about it and hope that she was safe... and that’s where I met you. I had forgotten about her and had lost hope in her case, but recently a... ‘friend’ of mine told me that she currently works as a prostitute for the same people that had kidnapped her long ago. She’s too kind of a soul to endure in a lifestyle she hadn’t chosen to be in,” I paused as I grabbed her arms. “I cannot forgive myself if I don’t help her, Celine. I hope that you’ll understand and respect my decision,” I said.

“What is she to you?” she questioned, viciously.

“A good friend,” I said. “If you were in danger, I would burn the entire world just to make sure that you are safe.”

This seemed to shock her, or even convince her in the lightest of ways. She didn’t say anything and just stared at our pictures on the desk. Her back faced me as she delivered her damaged, dramatic whispers:

“Do what you must...”

It was 8:13 PM, and still no sign of a woman with cheap heels and a red vibrant dress. I was waiting beside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, in between banana trees and a long passageway, right next to the gutters near Palm Court. I was leaning into my bike,

checking corner to corner. I remembered stepping into a rusted claw when getting out of my vehicle. I had taken a good look at it and then I put it in my pocket for whatever reason.

Eventually, two men passed by in the opposite direction and somewhat hid in the bushes far away from the nearest apartment complex. Funny enough, one of them wore a durag, but he was too tall to be Alfred. Was Alfred counting on a second man? *What the fuck was going on?* I asked myself.

Toc Toc Toc Toc. A woman's walk was suddenly heard from the end of the street, each step sounding confidently after the upcoming one. Her dress shone in these dark streets; her elegant purse making her a suitable victim for the criminals. *I hope she lived nearby,* I said to myself. *Who was she to Alfred? How did he know about all of this?* As she approached the two men, I knew what was about to occur. The tall man looked nervous, whereas the shorter one looked calm and collected, not keeping his eyes away from his prey. He was holding something in his hand; a pocket knife presumably.

I watched the whole interaction come about; both men threatening the poor woman to take her belongings. I walked stealthily around the bushes to find myself behind the big man. The tall durag man had spotted me long ago, but kept quiet. He then put his hands up and fell into his knees, thus giving me a way to confront the thief with the knife. I simply nodded, and then suddenly grabbed the guy's neck tightly from behind to the point that I almost crushed it.

"What do you think you are doing?" I asked.

"Ah! Chale, help me, na?!" he said to the other thief.

"Let me be at your mercy," I said before headbutting him. As he fell backwards, I took the claw from my pocket and then pierced it on the top of his hairless head. He then remained on the floor, half-dead from the impact. The woman was almost about to scream, so I gave her quick comfort and asked her to go somewhere safe while 'I called for the police.' As she removed her heels to run faster, I then checked on the robber. I grabbed his

belongings, just as Alfred requested. I found lots of cash and several pieces of jewelry on him. When I was done, I confronted the other robber.

“You look familiar,” I said.

“I’m glad you’re not blind,” he said while removing the durag.

“Balo? Ah, what are you doing here?” I said.

“Chale, Alfred dey send me here.”

“Ah! What kind of games are these, *kwasia*? Be real before I break your face,” I said.

“Eish massa, hear me, na? Mr. Mint was robbed by this foolish boy named Emmanuel Mensah. He talked to me about this inside job several months ago. The things I had to do for him and for you, for money... I regret some stuff, rough stuff, kraa... but I’ll do anything to win in life, financially anyways. Alfred wanted him dead without dirtying his hands,” he confessed.

“Hmm, and how’s this supposed to be connected with Angela?”

“Chale, I beg, don’t be angry at me. If you hadn’t shown up, I would’ve had to kill him. Alfred wanted to make sure that you were committed to seeing Angela. I took a picture of you during your confrontation. I sent it to Alfred, and it will serve as a ticket for the party,” Balo paused, witnessing my skeptical reaction before continuing: “I have some clothes for you in the trunk of my car. Elegant ones. Wear them so you go undetected inside the gates of hell, as Alfred likes to call it,” he said.

“Does Francis know about this?” I asked.

“He’ll help with the extraction. Are you willing to rescue her?”

“I’ve killed a man for a reason and Alfred is waiting for us. This might be my only chance to do something right in my eyes, so yeah, let’s go,” I said.

“What’s the plan?” I said while adjusting my coat.

“Eish, since when can you do a coat?” Francis asked while driving.

“Celine taught me,” I said.

“Nice one,” Francis said.

“Does your wife know about this?” Balo asked.

“Somewhat,” I said.

“So, what’s the plan?” I repeated.

“Alfred said that in these types of parties women wear bunny masks, so it’s gonna be tough to recognize Angela at first glance. He thinks she is dancing with one of Pato’s boys, named Boateng,” Balo said.

“How does he know his name?”

“Mr. Mint and Pato are accomplices. Alfred is aware of everyone and their murky businesses. But anyways, once inside, he will introduce you to Mr. Mint and Mr. Pato. Act natural, but don’t be hostile, ok? Otherwise you’ll get kicked out, you understand?”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Be quick, chale. We don’t want to get in trouble,” Francis insisted.

“If there’s trouble, we’ll be prepared,” Balo said while showing me his gun.

A few seconds later, right after passing an intersection, police cars and men dressed in suits could be seen holding their weapons under their jackets.

“We’re here, eish... People everywhere, oh!” Francis said.

“By the way, go by Champ. Tell them that Alfred Dappah Ofori invited you, ok? Search for him near the small bar. You got this, chale.”

“Thanks guys for helping me with this. I’ll forever be grateful for all of your troubles,” I said.

“We’ve been in this since the beginning, broski. Go get your Angela,” Balo cheered.

As I left the car, I could see the gates of the mansion. Two security guards and two armed policemen blocked the entry. They asked who I was and informed me that this was a private party. I told them what Balo had told me to say, and they simply nodded and let me in. People were all around the garden: swimming in the pool, some were snorting cocaine, others were opening up champagne bottles and letting the alcohol drip down a girl's chubby ass.

When I climbed up the stairs to the heart of the party, two bodyguards opened the doors for me and I entered the supposed "gates of hell." The music was so loud that I felt like my eardrums were about to snap at any time. They were playing *Ayoo* from Shatta Wale, and people were going mad with their snowy noses. I had to push some people that were blocking my way to the bar. Thankfully they were all drunk to mind their business. Once at the bar, the bartender asked me if I wanted something. I simply looked away and told him that I wasn't thirsty. Looking at all these people, I knew they had put some sort of drug inside their drinks. *How am I going to find Angela?* I asked myself. Suddenly, I felt a tap in my shoulder.

"You made it, Champ. I'm happy to see you," Alfred said with his iconic smile.

"Where's Angela?"

"Don't rush, chale. First we have to talk with Mr. Mint and Mr. Pato, they are waiting for you," Alfred said.

"Why?"

"They know of your success. They are big fans of yours. I'm showing off, basically. Once we're done with presentations, I'll search for Angela with you. And that's when you decide what to do with her."

I didn't speak a word and simply nodded. As I followed him, we went upstairs towards the balcony, where Mr. Mint and Pato were smoking some ganja with some of Ghana's presidential folks. Mr. Mint was a normal, short and bald 30 year-old guy with yellow eyes. He looked smart with his white suit; like he was calculating any opportunity to

be richer. Mr. Pato wore orange sunglasses in a leopard suit; his pistol could be seen from where I was standing.

“Mr. Mint. Here’s the man who has brought glory to Ghana in the world of combat sports,” Alfred said.

“Pleasure to meet you,” I said while shaking his hand.

“The pleasure is ours, Mr. Champion. By the way, this is Mr. Pato,” Mr. Mint said.

Mr. Pato simply nodded and kept looking at his phone.

“What do you desire, Mr. Champion?” Mr. Mint.

I didn’t know what to answer, I looked at Alfred and he just smiled at me. I came up with something truthful.

“A sexy woman who can dance,” I said.

“Haha, I see! There are plenty of options here, Mr. Champion. All the bunny girls are available. Go get yourself one!” Mr. Mint said.

“Francis’s girl might be a fitting option for Mr. Champ,” Alfred said.

“Ouh, I agree! Angela!” said Mr. Mint excitedly. Mr. Pato dropped his phone to look at him.

“That’s Francis’s girl. If Mr. Champ wants her, he should ask for permission first,” he warned.

“No problem,” I said.

“Seems like a deal, Mr. Champion. Enjoy!” cheered Mr. Mint as he waved his hands.

“Follow me,” said Alfred. “Don’t be fooled by Mr. Mint’s excitement and easy going appearance. He can be ruthless and demonic sometimes. I think he likes you.”

I didn’t reply and simply followed him into a dark room with neon lights. Strippers danced atop men, and a couple of orgies were happening in some rooms of this crazy place.

Almost no privacy around here. At the end of the hall, a woman with a bunny mask was dancing for Francis and three other henchmen. *That could be my Angela.*

“Leave the talking to me,” Alfred whispered. “Mr. Francis, how come?”

“Alfred, sup? Do you like the view?” Francis said with a smirk.

“Meh... I’m used to seeing better.”

“Mtc Chew, you and your dry answers. Anyhow, who’s the guy behind you?”

“This is Champ, the best kickboxer of our homeland. He wishes to have a great personal lap dance with your girl. Angela, right?”

“Yeah,” Francis said.

“Mr. Pato and Mr. Mint are expecting that you’ll be generous in lending Angela’s services and quality time to him. Now.”

“If the bosses said so, then I’ll do so. Enjoy your time with her, Mr. Champ. She’s a bit... clumsy, hehe,” said Francis.

I wanted to punch him so badly to the point of putting him to rest. In other and safer circumstances, I would’ve transformed his smirk into a solid bowl to pick up shit from the gutters. What had he done to my Angela? The poor girl leaned towards me, smelling like sweat and other manly odors, most notably skin and perfume; not bodily fluids I hoped.

“I’ll see you down the road, Francis” said Alfred as we left the area.

As we left and walked through the corridor, Alfred opened a room with a key. He told me we shouldn’t take long. I nodded and seated Angela on the table. She was responsive, but I felt like she wasn’t there with me. I then removed her mask and saw what horrendous fate had chased her. She still had a pretty face, but it had scars, cuts, and the tip of her nose was filled with white dust.

“Do you want me to suck it, Mr. Champ?” she asked me.

“Angela, it’s me, Ato. Do you remember me?”

“Were you in my bed three months ago?” Angela said. At this moment, doubts were rising in both my body and mind. *Was this my Angela?*

“Ah? Angela, what’s wrong with you? I’ve been looking for you since they kidnapped you! Look me in the eyes!” I said while grabbing her cheeks. “Don’t you remember me?”

“Ah, what’s wrong with you?” she said while removing my hands from her face.

“Who dey kidnapped me? Are you mad?! You want to fuck or no?” asked Angela.

“What’s your full name?” I asked, soon realizing that this was all a big mistake.

“Angela ain’t my name, dear. They gave me Angela after they killed that bitch who didn’t do her job well. So naive and stupid she was, I tell you. She died four years ago, and I took her place. Thanks to her dead body, my reputation is off the roof in da streets!” she said. I remember feeling dizzy. My vision started to blur.

“I can’t tell you my real name, but I can share a great experience with you. Is this your first time? Are you a virgin?” she said.

This was just an ordinary prostitute. Was my Angela that *bitch* she was talking about? Was she making fun of my dear Angela? *Oh my dear Angela... my dear Celine... I’m sorry.* The girl’s face became distorted, I could only see red in her body. Some liquid stained the floor. Every step I made, felt like I was stepping on a small pond. Alfred knocked on the door; his smile slowly fading away. He just stared me down, pointed something metallic at me and said the following words:

“What have you done, Champ? Why? Wasn’t this your Angela?” he asked shockingly.

“No... she’s dead,” I said.

“You fucked up big time... You’ve truly gone mad in the search of love.”

“Destiny has a funny way of doing things, Alfred. Only God loves to award fools, and I’m not one of them.”

“Hmm, such a shame. I genuinely tried to help. I truly thought she was the one. Such a pity,” said Alfred as he caressed his goatee in thoughtful disbelief.

“What now?” I said.

“What now? Heh... We all have a duty to fulfill, Champ. You got your hands dirty, and now it’s my turn to clean them while dirtying mine,” he said with a finger on the trigger. “Your actions leave me no choice. Perhaps this will bring you back with both Angelas... and perhaps I can afford gaining back my clients that you once stole from me with your rising popularity.”

“What? I trusted you.”

“Nah nah nah, I trusted you and you fucked everything up by murdering Francis’s girl. You could have left the party unharmed, but now I have to make this seem like a suicide fest. Just so you know, this is nothing personal. Just business, Champ.”

BANG *BANG*

The End