

Chameleon - Episode 1 – Gasping for Air

Naima stood outside room 147, in a hotel hallway.
She matched the room number to the digits written on the back of her hand.
147.

She knocked three times.
Then she waited.
Seconds later, she heard the door unlock, with a shift and click.
She breathed. In, out.
She was ready.

After 30 seconds, she pressed down the door handle, opened, and entered.
She shut the door behind her, twisting the Yale lock till it clicked to locked.

The room was dimly lit by a solitary bedside-lamp.
On the bed sat a man, middle aged, sweaty and plump.
He had only boxer shorts and socks on.
He had sandy blonde hair, balding on the crown.
Her quarry.

She approached, slowly, making no noise at all.

The man regarded her with small pig-eyes and mischievous smile.

He disgusted her, and yet she let the disgust evaporate.

Feelings stalled and confused her – she cast them out.

She stood in the hallway, half in shadow.
“How do you want me, dominant or submissive?”

The man’s voice was weak, almost shy. “Dominant baby. Bully me,” he answered,
excited as a child with a new toy.

She stepped forward once more, allowing her face to become illuminated.
She was striking, almost too beautiful.
Her eyes were slanted gorgeously; giving her a mild oriental look.
Her cheekbones gave her an air of cool austerity.
Her mouth, though, was unexpectedly sensual: full-lipped and supple.
She wore black gloves, complemented by a figure-hugging little black dress,
highlighting her agile form.
Her hair, which she wore short, was slicked back.

She spoke as she moved closer. “You pathetic idiot. Loser.”

“More.”

“Filthy swine. Nobody. You make me sick.”

The man’s eyes sparkled. He was in absolute paradise. He felt a twitch in his groin.

“You like that, when I treat you like the scum you are?”

“Yes,” he said meekly.

“Good, because you disgust me. I pity you.”

He thought it was all part of the seduction as she stood on the edge of the bed now, yearning for her. “I know, love. I’ve been a bad boy.”

“Get on the floor.”

“Now?”

“YES, NOW, moron. Do you even speak English?”

“Yes.” The man’s voice quavered slightly.

She smelt his fear, however artificial. She enjoyed the scent. “Then get on the floor, right now.”

The man shuffled from his position at the foot of the bed, and knelt on the carpet.

“Get on all fours,” she instructed.

The man did as she said. “Don’t hurt me too bad, baby. Don’t leave any scars, okay.”

She circled him till she was behind him, with a view of his hairy chubby back.

“What are you?” she queried.

“Like you said, I’m a disgusting loser.”

He attempted a quick glance over his shoulder at her.

A swift kick to his ribs sent a clear message.

“Did I say you could look at me?”

“No,” the man whimpered.

“I can’t hear you.”

“No, I’m sorry,” cried the man.

“Good. You don’t deserve to look at me. You don’t deserve to see anything.”

“You’re right, absolutely, my baby.”

“Good! Now we’re getting somewhere!” She said with false cheer. “Good doggy. Not as dumb as everyone thinks.”

The man shivered with self-hating pleasure. His pupils dilated.

His mind had gone to a dark place – but he wanted to be there.

He was no victim.

She climbed onto his back, saddling him.

“Over the last two years, you raped and killed Danielle Peters and Sindiswa Mkhize,” she whispered into his ear. “And got away with it.”

His body tensed immediately.

He made an attempt to rise.

In less than a second, Naima’s rope was out and wrapped around his neck.

She didn’t let him answer. She tied the knot extremely tight, as if to snap his neck with it.

He gasped for air desperately, rolling his eyes to the back of his skull.

His mouth gaped.

He bucked like a horse attempting to shrug off its rider.

But her hold on the rope was like a vice - strong as steel. She tied the knot even tighter.

He wriggled on the ground, trying to get her off. They hit the wall, wrestling. His face flushed with colour, his eyes looked fit to pop.

His blood screamed in his veins – screaming for oxygen it would never get.
Naima made sure of that.
He wriggled desperately, falling to one side.
It was futile.
She hung tightly on to him and clipped the rope knot tightly with cable ties, which she'd hid inside her glove.

She hopped off him, and watched the dirty rapist struggle alone with the rope.

He gasped painfully for air, trying to grip the rope with his fat fingers.
His face had turned a dangerous shade of red.

“You have all the money in the world, with your sleazy night clubs,” said Naima, looking around, making sure there weren't any traces of her left behind. She breathed heavily, catching her breath. “I'm sure you have plenty women. Why rape and kill young girls?” She looked around the room, almost oblivious of the man begging for his life. She couldn't risk a trace of evidence.
He gulped agonizingly, uttering words that sounded vaguely like, “I'm sorry. I'm sorry.”

“You will be sorry, buddy, just now,” Naima responded, nearly satisfied that the room was clean.

20 seconds later, his body fell limp to one side, breaking a glass table.
She checked the time on the radio-clock beside the bed – 23h20.

The pig lay slumped on the carpet.
She looked at him for a minute. Satisfied, she scanned the room once more for traces.
As usual, she'd left none.

With that, she turned and quietly approached the exit.

Her gloved hand opened the door.
The hallway was empty.
She slipped out, made for the elevator.
She got in.
It pinged as its doors opened to the lobby.

The reception clerk was absorbed in a magazine.
“Night,” she said in a tone designed to be ignored.
“Night,” answered the clerk, not looking up.

She exited into the night, becoming one with it.

At top speed, Naima rode her motorbike over the freeway, back home.

Home was a modest cottage-style house on the outskirts of town, with huge electric gates.

Welcoming her was her hefty best friend and Rottweiler, Ginger.

She parked and hopped off her bike, patted her dog lovingly and got inside.

The interior comprised of an eclectic mix of photography and famous quotes. She had framed photos of all sorts - her own work and that of other photographers. The place resembled an art studio, only without the paintings.

She took her gloves off and shot straight to the basement. She punched a secret code to go inside the room.

It was cold and dimly lit by LED lights. Two assault rifles and Beretta 9mm pistol laid neatly on a coffee table beside the entrance.

Up on the wall was a photo of the fat man from the hotel. Beside the image was a newspaper article with the heading: Community Protests as Millionaire Nightclub Owner Gets Away with Rape and Murder Charge, Again.

Naima took a red marker and crossed his face with it.

She noticed bruising on her knuckles as a result of the rope and strangle hold. It hurt a bit. She'd have to cover it somehow, perhaps with make-up. She turned off the lights, and walked up to her bedroom.

The next morning, at Woodstock Art College, Naima stood in front of a class, teaching. The day was warm and windy – humid too.

She wore a silky white blouse with black pants and heels.

It was her Creative Writing class. This was her second favourite class to teach, after Photography.

Siyabulela, a tall stick figured handsome teen, stood beside Naima, reciting his poem to the class.

Karma

*No bad deed goes unpunished, no good deed unrewarded.
Every act is recorded. Earth's journalists report it.
Listen to your intuition. Listen to your heart.
It knows better than the brain, it's the voice of God, as gorgeous as art.
Follow the righteous path and enjoy an amazing life.
Karma dissects and slices like a surgical knife. It's clear, merciless and crystal.
Follow the darker path. Welcome misery and pain.
Welcome a life of shame. No sunny days, just rain.
What goes around comes around. It's a law, it won't change.
There's no escaping blame. Karma will come knocking again.*

The class gave him a lukewarm ovation.

"Thank you Siya," said Naima, conjuring half a smile. "That was good. But you were supposed to give us four paragraphs. I asked for four stanzas. You gave us just one. I wanted a long poem, with more wordplay - oxymorons, puns, alliteration and so on.

"It rhymes, Miss," he objected, folding his crumpled piece of paper and slyly observing the bruising on Naima's knuckles. "It's insightful and it rhymes tight, Miss. I'm spitting knowledge up in here, yo."

"No you're not," one of the students objected - a chubby cheeky young lady with thick glasses. "And we don't all believe in Karma, douchebag. Some of us believe in God. Not in the universe or your silly Karma universal laws."

"Wait, hold up Sindi," Naima objected. "We'll have a debate when everyone's had their turn." She turned back to Siya, who'd just discreetly given Sindi his middle finger. "More wordplay next time, and do your homework properly, please - completely. Go take a seat. Good effort though."

Why does she keep getting random cuts and bruises? Siya thought, as he walked back to his desk. *Something's up.*

Naima turned to the rest of the eager students. "So, who's next?"

**Coming up soon:
We tap into Naima's background. Who is she, actually?**