

PROLOGUE

The girls slept peacefully on their dormitory double-bunk beds, without a worry in the world. A chilly easterly breeze blew outside, with soft drizzles peddling. The clock had just struck 02h00.

Everyone was tucked quietly inside their cosy blankets - except Fatima, Iman and Zaza.

Sleep couldn't be further from their minds. Under candle light, they'd mischievously congregated on Zaza's bed to cram Physical Science notes, and old test papers. Their exam would be in just eight hours.

'No it's not,' Fatima whispered, sure of this one. 'Smaller molecules are called monomers. When organic molecules are joined together, they form polymers.'

Iman responded with, 'Oh yah, right. Okay ... name four different types of macromolecules?'

Zaza dug deep, squinting and grinding her teeth for an answer. 'I know it ...wait... it's ...it's carbohydrates, lipids, proteins and hmmn ...'

'Nucleic Acids, dude.' Fatima teased in a sarcastic tone. 'We've been through it like ten times.'

'Whatever, t'was on the tip of my tongue...' Zaza spat, growing increasingly worried about her lack of knowledge. She hated Science. She hated Accounting and Maths also. She knew without a shadow of doubt that she'd never need these mindless subjects as an adult. She couldn't wait for the year to end.

In tertiary I'll get to pick my own bloody subjects, she consoled herself, trying to concentrate back on the test papers.

As Iman was about to hit them with another question, gunshots rang outside.

They froze. They paused, making sure.

The sounds grew closer and closer. It wasn't thunder ... it couldn't have been firecrackers ... It was definitely gun fire.

'Is that shooting?' asked Iman, fully concentrated on the racket outside.

They heard a sudden commotion. Headlights flashed through the dorm curtains – yelling, cars approaching and screeching to a stop. It was all loud and obnoxious, waking everyone up.

'Hell's going on out there?' asked Fatima, tossing her text book aside.

A frightened Iman held Fatima's hand. Her palm quivered. They stood staring at each other, confused, hoping it wasn't the rebels.

A loud voice from outside yelled out through an audio speaker system. It spoke slowly, in Yoruba. 'WE ARE GUARDS, SENT BY THE NATIONAL ARMY TO PROTECT YOU. YOU ARE NOT SAFE HERE. WE HAVE COME TO PROTECT AND TAKE YOU TO SAFETY. DANGEROUS ISIS AND ALQUEDA REBELS ARE COMING. WAKE UP AND GET INSIDE OUR VEHICLES NOW. WE WILL PROTECT YOU. WE ARE GUARDS SENT BY THE ARMY. GET IN OUR VEHICLES NOW!' The voice kept reiterating it over and over like a looped record.

Zaza hesitantly walked over to the window to steal a peek. With her pinkie finger, she slowly pulled the curtain back and peeped out with one eye.

Her jaw dropped to the floor.

Her eyes swoll up.

They were a gang of armed men in the school yard, hopping off vans, infesting the place like a virus. They were dressed shabbily, barging inside the two other dorms, switching the lights on. Nothing about their manner suggested that they'd been mandated by the army, to do anything.

Zaza stepped back and turned to her school mates. Her face told a tale of fear and panic as she shook her head.

'What's going on, Za?' asked Fatima, her knees trembling. 'Is it the army?'

All the girls were up now, waiting on Zaza's response. They all stared at her in tense anticipation.

'I don't guys ... I don't know. I think we're being ...' before she could finish her sentence, a hellish-looking soldier stormed inside their dorm room, and switched the lights on.

He was tall, dark, with terrible acne. Puss, pimples and boils plagued his bony face. He wore a sleeveless jacket, his tattooed hairy chest exposed.

The girls froze, all staring at the sickly soldier waving an AK47 in their dorm room.

'Get up,' he ordered, trying to conjure up a warm smile through his stained teeth. 'We're sent by the army to protect you. Hurry up and get in the vans. It isn't negotiable. Leave all your shit behind. Let's go! C'mon!'

In an effort to sell his 'we're sent by the army' story, he stood up straight, chin up and zipped his waistcoat up.

Another soldier stormed in, looking even more perverse than the first – topless, with a pistol in hand. His eyes were glassy and bloodshot as if he hadn't slept in weeks. He quickly retracted and stood at attention by the door, with his comrade. All he said in his husky voice was, 'Young ladies, we're on your side. Get in the vans, now! Let's go! You're wasting time.'

He was either high or mentally challenged, the girls reasoned, trickling out one-by-one in their pyjamas. Most were still half asleep, trying to make sense of it all. It was all happening too fast. A terrified Fatima said a quick prayer, tailing behind Zaza.

As they stepped out in the freezing cold, bear-footed on harsh cement, Iman witnessed their dorm mistress getting harassed at a distance. She kneeled in her nightgown on gravel, begging for her life - with a gun barrel shoved in her mouth. One of the soldiers stuck a rifle in her, saying something, angrily. Lying beside their hostel guardian, dead still, were the bodies of the school security guards. They suffered bullet holes in their foreheads.

Iman pinched Fatima, motioning for her to look.

Turmoil ensued.

The girls began to resist and apologize for an offense they knew nothing about. Many kicked and screamed, begging to stay behind. Their protests were met with forceful assaults – a head butt, a slap, the back of a rifle in the ribs, a kick to the stomach.

Others obeyed, hopping on any one of the four parked vans, praying that they weren't being duped. *Perhaps they're really rescuing us from terrorists...*

The capture took less than ten minutes.

Boko Haram soldiers drove away with over two hundred school girls, in a convoy, towards their hidden compound within the Sambisa Forests.

Chapter 1

It was late afternoon at the Houghton Golf Club. Heavy grey clouds hovered up above, with certain promises of rain.

The drab gloomy skies contrasted the glitzy golf course beneath. The place was a golfer's dream. A media article had once described the nine-hole circuit as *heavenly opulence*.

It comprised of celebrities, politicians and business execs as members. Joining was a rigorous affair. One's social standing determined acceptance or rejection. The club's chairman had been famously quoted for saying, 'Our lush green fairways are only graced by the worthy.'

Nobody had had the heart to ask him who exactly *the worthy* referred to.

Naima stood on the tee grounds, chatting with a peculiar-looking man whom she'd just met. He was Indian, tall, with piercing brown eyes and broad shoulders. His physique resembled a tennis star. She found him moderately handsome, despite an unsettling darkness to him. His eerie, nearly inaudible hoarse voice accentuated his arrogant manner, which Naima found rather unpleasant.

He seemed intrigued by her, intent on flirting and showing off his skill. He harped on about his handicap, the celebrities with whom he'd played and more.

Naima endured his tiresome and often outlandish rhetoric.

'You stand firmly with your legs slightly apart,' he explained, animatedly. 'A firm grip on the club, swing back fully and smack. It's all about your hips, sweetheart,' he said, eyeing her up and down blatantly.

Naima wore a white figure-hugging golf skirt, cute shades, matching golf shoes and a cap. She chose a sexy yet elegant look. Any higher above the knees would be trashy, she'd concluded, satisfied by her ensemble.

She needed to lure him in slyly, without looking cheap.

Standing just a few feet away, watching them, were their caddies. They stood beside the golf-carts, waiting obediently.

'I was just like you when I started, babes. You'll get the hang of it,' Naima's new friend reassured. 'In fact let's try this, if you don't mind.' He stepped up and stood right behind her, seductively. 'May I?'

Sure, I love it when strange creepy men press themselves on me, invading my space, thought Naima. But out loud she said, 'No problem. Please show me how it's done.'

He wrapped his wiry arms around her, grabbing Naima's three-wood club over her hands. Naima felt violated – his slimy fingers all over hers. Yuck!

He demonstrated the swing without a ball. 'It's simple. Like I said, you bend your knees slightly, loosen your hips, stare down at the ball, swing back ... hit. Easy!'

The Indian man's caddie smiled mischievously, watching his boss work it. He let out a soft chuckle and pulled a cigarette out, lighting up. It clearly entertained him.

Naima's caddie, Anthony, felt somewhat differently. He frowned, unimpressed – neither by the idiot smoking on the fairways or his haughty flirtatious boss. He chose not to say anything though.

'Okay, my turn, let me try,' said Naima, politely shoving him aside. She placed the ball down on the tee peg.

He stepped back with words of encouragement. 'Just concentrate love. You've got this.'

Naima breathed in, and out. She focused on the ball and gripped tightly to the club as he'd advised. She swung back awkwardly ... and wacked the thing.

It'd been an uncomfortable shot.

The ball travelled a decent stretch and landed on a sand bunker.

'Damn it man,' she hissed, dropping her head.

'Not bad at all, don't sweat it sweetie,' the man said, patting her back a little longer than necessary. 'At least you got some distance. Now check this out.' He stepped up and placed his ball down.

Fleetingly, Naima noticed two other golfers approaching, about to join the course. It made her anxious even though they'd use another tee box, a few feet away.

'It's about patience and finesse,' he clarified. 'Like you're making love to the ball. Know what I mean?'

Naima managed a dry smile without parting her lips. It was getting unbearable.

He swung back ... and hit the ball - straight and far.

Impressive shot, thought Anthony, still miffed by the fool smoking beside him.

Naima was equally impressed, but concealed it.

The man wore a wide grin, turning to her. He had his chest out, chin up, anticipating her applause. He raised a hand for a high five. Naima hesitated a sec, but slapped his sweaty palm. 'Impressive!' she finally let out, eager to walk on, away from the other golfers.

They handed their clubs to the caddies.

Anthony gave Naima a sand wedge club. Her helper was a round bearded man, with dark shades on. He'd been with her for decades.

Naima strolled on with her new golf buddy, towards the sand bunker.

The caddies followed behind on their carts.

'So how about you let me coach you, dear? No charge! You can obviously tell I'm an ace at the sport,' the man offered, wearing a mischievous smile.

'Nope! I don't even know you.'

He giggled, observing Naima's features again. He found her breath-taking. Clear caramel skin, gorgeous, with plump sexy lips. A black girl with almond-shaped eyes, giving her a mild oriental look. *She's probably thirty five, thirty sixish ...* he assumed. He couldn't believe his luck. She seemed like a lady too. He even loved her raspy voice, though often accompanied with hints of sarcasm. He'd bear it, for now, he thought.

Naima wore her hair sleekly under a white cap, with a well-kept ponytail sticking out. Her agile form qualified her both as a model and an athlete.

He struggled to take his eyes off her as they followed the balls.

'So, I'm Clinton, pleased to meet you,' he finally said, stretching his arm out.

They shook hands.

'Wendy. Likewise,' responded Naima.

She lied to him just as he had. His name was in fact Rajesh Singh, a wealthy nightclub owner. He ran a string of strip-joints along the Garden Route - Cape Town to Port Elizabeth. Everyone in adult entertainment world knew of him. He'd garnered a reputation as a shrewd and dangerous businessman, with his focus solely on profit.

'How come I've never seen you here before, Wendy? You're a member? What do you do?'

'Wow, so many questions ... feel like I'm being interviewed.'

'Sorry. I'm just a little ...'

'No need. Yes I'm a new member, and I'm in sanitation. We take out trash.'

She'd answered honestly.

'Interesting... Business good?'

'It is, but there's so much filth out there. It's an endless job.'

Anthony drove behind Rajesh's caddie. He pulled a 9mm Glock pistol out and screwed a sound suppressor on. The silencer would muffle the sound and reduce the muzzle flash, he reasoned.

'And you, Sir? What do you do?' Naima probed.

'Entertainment. I have bars and nightclubs all over the country.'

It was also his first stab at honesty.

'Adult entertainment I'm sure.'

'Kinda, but not sleazy,' he laughed. 'It's high class joints, all over the country. I'll show you sometime if you'll let me. No prostitution.'

They approached the sand bunker.

'I don't imagine you'd tell me if you had whores.' Naima motioned for him to kindly fetch the ball out. 'I can't hit it there. Do you mind please? We'll add an extra shot.'

'Yeah sure, you're not ready for a bunker shot. I'll teach you how to use your sand wedge another time.'

Just get the bloody ball, she thought.

'Lifts the ball high. It scoops it from the sand. But don't worry, we'll cheat and put it back on the fairway for you.' He tip toed over the sand.

Naima slid the bottom club-head off her golf club, revealing a long shiny sharp blade now. She'd transformed the bottom half into a spear-like sword. She gripped it tightly and followed him on the sand. She crept silently behind, like a wildcat to prey.

An excited Rajesh crouched down, scooping the ball. His mind had drifted to perverted places: He'd get her cell number... take her out... get her drunk ... take her back to his place ... maybe slip an ecstasy pill in her glass ... and then jackpot! *Like taking candy from a baby.*

As he turned around, peering over Naima's shoulder, he noticed Anthony parking his caddie's golf cart aside, by the rough. *But where's my ...?* Then he noticed Anthony placing his caddie's lifeless body neatly on their cart, in a sleeping position.

Startled, he turned to Naima, who had a sword drawn. She gripped it with both hands, legs wide apart, approaching.

'Fuck's going on here?' He asked, glancing out again to make sure. Instinctively, he looked around the whole course for answers. His mind raced, baffled. 'What the hell's going on here?' He reiterated, pulling an angry frown to intimidate her.

'You raped and killed Zanele Sebe and Danielle Saunders last year, and got away with it. Your sixth sexual charge on a minor.' Naima's eyes grew glassy. She trembled as she spoke, her lips quavering.

'WHAT? WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU?' He roared, calculating, confused. *Who's this bitch? Who sent her?* 'DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?' He yelled.

'I do,' Naima responded, her gaze swivelling, weary of onlookers. 'I also know what the media doesn't - that you traffic teenage girls from South Sudan and Burundi, to work here as whores for you.' She took a cautious step towards him, positioning the weapon up high, over her shoulder.

His heart raced. Terrified! He took a step back nearly tripping. 'Not that it's any of your business, bitch, but I was acquitted on all charges. Innocent until proven guilty.'

Naima bent her knees a tad and stood in a fencing en garde stance – legs wide apart, balanced.

'What you gonna do, cut me up in front of all these witnesses, in broad daylight? There's cameras all over, genius. Who's paying you? I'll double it.'

The pair of unsuspecting golfers approached casually, chatting, still at a distance. Anthony kept an eye on them as he drove up in the golf kart. He yelled out to Naima, 'Thirty-five seconds!'

'HEY! HELP!' Rajesh screamed out, trembling now. His macho demeanour had warped into yellow childlike anxiety. 'HELP ME PLEASE!'

Naima leaped up on him, ducked and sliced the side of his abdomen. She'd ripped through his golf shirt and into flesh. He bled and dropped to the side, howling in pain with his one hand on his wound. He tried to reach for the blade with the other hand; but in one motion, Naima slid behind him and punctured the other side of his stomach. She shoved the blade deep inside his intestines, angling it specifically to perforate his liver and pancreas.

He knelt down, yelping out feebly. He was still trying to grab her sword when blood erupted from his mouth. His eyes rolled to the back of his head, gargling blood, letting out slurs to the tune of, 'I can explain ...I'm sorry ... I'll pay you ...'

He dropped his head, losing consciousness.

The golfers at a distance grew overtly suspicious, pointed towards them, yelling out, jogging closer to see.

Naima stuffed the blade deeply behind his neck, protruding it through his Adam's apple. She twisted the spear, tearing his carotid artery and jugular vein. He'd never speak again.

Satisfied, she pulled it back out.

Blood squirted out of him profusely. It sprayed out like a broken water main – exploding out of him and staining the sand.

He dropped dead.

He'd never buy or rape another teenage girl again, thought Naima as she pulled his cell phone and wallet out his pockets.

'HEY COME HERE! HEY!!' The golfers called out, audibly now, sprinting closer. They were two heavyset black men in their sixties.

Naima hopped on Anthony's golf kart and tucked the bloody weapon in their golf bag - including the wallet and phone. From it, she drew gloves, jeans, a jacket and a helmet out. She noticed a cut right below her knuckles. *Must've been his nails*, she gathered, fleetingly.

A hesitant Anthony pulled a hand grenade out the bag's side pocket. He detached the pin out with his teeth and threw it safely towards the two golfer's direction. A scare tactic.

BBBOOOOOOMMM!!!

As intended, the old timers covered and dove for cover. Unfortunately, the loud sound created unwanted attention. People at the club bar and offices turned curiously towards the commotion. They watched nosily through windows and the balcony.

Pedestrians outside also lent their attention to the loud explosion, in fearful awe.

As if nothing happened, Anthony drove with Naima to the far edge of the course, the iron palisade fencing – a rough bushy part of the course with trees and shrubs.

They parked.

On the other side of the fence stood two Ducati superbikes - Panigale V4S models. They'd both been modified to a top speed of 311kmph. No law enforcement vehicle could catch up.

Fully dressed for a long bike ride, Naima hopped on the back stool of the golf cart and jumped over the fence.

She couldn't be bothered by random onlookers. The only thing on her mind was a clean swift escape. Experience had taught her that an op ended only when she was home safe, behind locked doors.

Anthony grabbed their golf bag and hopped over also. He ripped his wig off, and removed the shades.

Naima hopped on her bike and pulled her cap off, which was sewn into a disguised ponytail wig.

She wore a helmet over her real platted hair, fired up the engine and pulled away.

Chapter 2

The clock had struck 01h00am - a dark icy morning. Naima rode slowly through an upmarket suburb, feeling exhausted, both mentally and physically. She'd ridden at top speed, nonstop, from Houghton Golf Club in Johannesburg to a gated estate in Camps Bay Cape Town. It had taken her just under seven hours.

As tired as she was, the feeling was pampered by an air of ease and pleasure.

She was home now.

She rode slowly through her tranquil community, Chestnut Crescent. The place had been built in the fifties for white upper-class pensioners. It was a closed-off quiet community with three access points. To Naima, these were escape routes. She'd fallen in love with the estate at first glance.

Moments later, two large electric gates opened.

Naima's home was a modest cottage style home with tall trees, a substantial lawn, flood lights and barbwire fences. From outside it resembled a mini prison, only with a feminine touch.

Welcoming her with deafening barks was her hefty best friend and Rottweiler, Ginger.

She parked and hopped off the bike. Ginger sprang up on her, panting lovingly and licking her face.

'You missed me didn't you boy? You missed mommy? Missed you two,' she clowned, rubbing her nose on his. She massaged and stroked his hairy back, and headed for the front door.

She threw a quick cautious glance, side to side, as she punched a secret code to open. This also lit the entire house automatically. She stepped in.

Naima's home interior comprised of an eclectic mix of photography, paintings and biblical symbols. She owned framed artworks of all sorts - her own work and that of other artists. Beside her fireplace was a massive wooden statue of the crucifixion, with the crown of thorns, nails and blood accentuated for effect. Above Jesus's head hung a sepia coloured painting of angels staring down - making it seem like angels lurked over the Lord's head as he suffered.

Naima took her gloves off and shot straight for the basement.

There, she punched another secret code to open a steel door, and stepped inside.

It was an eerie cold room, dimly lit by LED lights.

Two assault rifles, a machete and a Beretta 9mm pistol laid neatly on a coffee table beside the entrance.

Up on the wall, pinned, was an image of Rajesh stationed outside one of his strip clubs - a newspaper article with the heading: Community Protests as Millionaire Strip Club Owner Escapes Rape Charge, Again.

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

She noticed a bit of blood on her fingers, a cut below her knuckles. It stung a little, but nothing serious.

She switched the lights off, exited and headed for her bedroom.

Chapter 3

The next morning, at Woodstock Art College, Naima stood in front of her Grade 12 class, teaching. The day was bright, warm, without a cloud in sight.

She wore a silky white blouse with cream pants and matching heels.

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

Thando, a tall stick figured bouncy teenage boy, stood beside Naima, reciting his poem to the class. He delivered it in an animated proud fashion, with wild hand gestures.

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, as mysterious art.

Follow the righteous path and enjoy an epic life.

Karma dissects and slices like a surgical knife.

Follow the darker path, you'll meet 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 Thando,' said Naima, conjuring up half a smile. 'That was good, but you were meant to give us four paragraphs. I asked for four stanzas, with more wordplay - oxymorons, puns, alliteration and so on. You gave us just one.'

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

'No you're not,' one of the students corrected - a chubby cheeky girl with thick glasses on. 'It was meant to be way longer, and we don't all believe in your stupid Karma, douchebag. Some of us believe in God.'

'Wait, hold up Sindi,' Naima interjected. 'Don't critique, yet. We'll have a debate when everyone's had their turn.' She turned back to Thando, who'd just discreetly given Sindi his middle finger. 'More word-play next time. Do your homework properly, please. Take a seat.'

Naima turned to the rest of the class. 'So, who's next?'

Thando slumped in his desk at the back of the class. He couldn't help but wonder why Naima frequently hid bruises and cuts. *Yo, what's the deal with her? Is she a boxer or something, or does she like it rough?*

He abruptly let the thoughts evaporate and started taunting the next student up to recite a poem.

Chapter 4

It was a scorching hot morning at the Sambisa Forests. The sun had already graced the grounds with unbearable heat, accompanied by haphazard winds which threw dust particles all over the place.

On the outskirts of Nigeria, approximately two hundred kilometres from the Cameroonian border, was the main Boko Haram compound - hidden within the heart of the Sambisa Forests.

The place comprised of tents, wooden structures and mud huts. In it were a gang of armed terrorists who lived and were drilled as rebel soldiers – some aged twelve.

It was a filthy community, both literally and morally. Dwellers were rebel group extremists, child soldiers, rape and kidnap victims. Evil and gloom permeated tangibly through the air, giving the compound a hellish spirit.

Inhabitants nicknamed it Gomorrah.

It was poorly fenced with wire, loose rocks and a huge dilapidated steel gate at the entrance. Anyone caught trying to escape had their genitals cut off, and then killed.

Fatima Ezekwesili was one of the inhabitants – an nineteen year old sharp and feisty girl. She sat up straight on the bed, braiding her own hair into cornrows. All she had was a small shattered mirror for the task - but it'd do. She sat half covered in blankets, wearing just a bra, contemplating.

Her husband, Captain Knight Kwafimbi, stood at the edge of the bed, wearing army fatigues. He too had a mirror to assist him – a long vertical one, also cracked.

He took pride in his uniform, straitening his black beret just right.

Fatima found it odd how such a twisted soul cared for his appearance. She'd never said it, but that was the only thing she respected about him - cleanliness. Knight was a tall dark **fifty four-year-old man**, with a menacing scar which travelled from his right eye right down to his neck. He was proud of it, and often told tales of how he'd got it – some rather outlandish.

The other side of his neck and ear was a white patch. It had progressed over the years, yet nobody dared to insinuate that he had the skin pigmentation condition, vitiligo.

He was a tall wiry man, but muscular.

As a high ranking Boko Haram soldier, second in command, Knight made it a point to display his savagery. He went out of his way to instil fear, in both the troops and also his two young wives.

He yearned for blood, especially Christian blood.

He loathed anything and anyone who wasn't loyal to their sacred Islam faith.

Allahu Akbar, which means, God is the greatest, was tattooed on the right side of his neck, just below his scar.

'Where's my food?' He asked Fatima, in his usual firm demeanour.

Before she could answer, Iman walked in their wooden hut, carrying a warm plate of goat stew and a cooked pig head.

She stepped up to Knight, managed a respectful smile and handed him breakfast.

'Thank you, wife,' was Knight's response, already stuffing his fingers in the meal, sitting on the mattress to gulp down comfortably.

Iman feared Knight. Besides his random fits of rage and their thirty-five year age gap, there was a tangible demonic air about him, Iman felt.

Fatima feared him too, but not as intensely as Iman. Her physique may have had something to do with it. Fatima was a tall big-boned young lady, with enough sass to match her size. She'd taken much of the atrocities at this Boko Haram compound with a grain of salt.

Iman joined Fatima at the top end of the bed.

'Let me help you. I'm better at this than you,' Iman whispered jokingly. She kneeled over Fatima and took the rat-tail comb to part her hair in rows. She started parting her hair down the middle first, from your forehead.

They sat in silence.

All that was audible was Knight's chewing. He preferred it this way.

He had to be the centre of attention, always.

Moments later, he stood, leaving a half-finished meal on the bed. 'Wrap it up for me. I'll chow it later,' he instructed, addressing either one of them.

He pulled his AK47 rifle from under the bed, strapped it over his shoulder and walked out.

The mood changed instantly. Iman smiled and asked, 'And you? Where're you going, trying to look all cute, platting your hair and stuff?'

'To a fancy ballroom dance show out of town. I've got my shiny gown, make up, heels and everything,' Fatima clowned, snapping her fingers animatedly.

They chuckled softly. They'd often role play and joke constantly to make up for the hell they were in. It'd become a psychological defence mechanism, after their abduction.

Girls weren't permitted to speak or laugh loudly. They'd been warned sternly on their very first day.

Iman turned serious. 'So how are you, really? You feeling better girl?'

'If you're asking if I still plan to ... y'know... then yes. Nothing's changed.'

'Don't be stupid, Fatima. C'mon man!'

'It's already done. Just leave it alone please.'

Iman paused, staring at her disapprovingly.

Fatima felt her cold stare bore into her from above, but she wasn't about to change her mind.