

## Chapter 12

# Something Borrowed

Edited by Serendipity

We sat across from one another, letting out awkward stares. Shujaa and Rafiki not saying a word, Hatari avoiding eye contact with me and Mfariji confused as to what could be causing the tension in the room. We didn't tell her all that happened yesterday, not because we wanted to keep secrets but because Rafiki and I felt the less she knew, the easier it would be for her to perform the duties that was expected of her. The girls were seated between us but they were so focused on the upcoming wedding, they didn't care much for the adults. All they wanted to do was finish their breakfast before the seamstress arrived. They couldn't hold back their excitement for the last dress fitting.

*"So... How did every one sleep?"* ... Mfariji asked.

"I slept great", Rafiki responded.

*"How can a man with two wives not sleep great?"*, Hatari implied sarcastically.

“Here we go again.”, Shujaa remarked, “Why do you let him get away with such jokes? You have always told me that you hate such remarks”

*“I don’t need you defending me”*, Rafiki said.

*“Stop it children.”*, I interrupted. *“We have bigger issues to deal with. Can you two get over whatever it is that is going on? We have a trial to deal with”*.

*“The queen has spoken”*, Hatari quickly responded

As Shujaa was about to reprimand him, he put his finger on his lip. *“Sorry, that was the last one. You are so protective of our majesty. Anyway... Who is going with me to the police station?”*

*“I will be going with you.”* Mfariji said with a whisper, almost afraid to speak. *“I will go with you to the station, I have done a lot of charity work for them and so they will probably listen to me. As a suspect they have to arrest you but I will try see if we can’t persuade them to limit it to house arrest. The queen and king will go speak to the head detective on the case and Shujaa will be staying behind with the girls. He agreed to babysit them.”*

*“What about Uhuru?”*, Rafiki asked. *“Isn’t she going to a dance recital for the wedding? He doesn’t need to babysit her, one of the helpers can take her”*.

“She changed her mind”, I responded, “She said she knows the routine well enough and is comfortable performing it. Look, we don’t have all day. You two go and sort whatever it is. We all need to be on the same page. Do you understand?”

“Yes Zee. Come on Shujaa. Let’s talk”.

Rafiki stood up and lead the way to the study. I waited a few seconds and then rushed off to the car.

I instructed Rafiki to speak to Shujaa in the study. It was the most private place in the house, making it the most obvious place for them to talk things through. Before breakfast I called myself on the telephone in the study and turned down the volume on my phone. Maybe being sneaky wasn’t right but I wanted to hear

their conversation and eavesdropping while standing at the door wouldn't be very ladylike.

I sat in the car, locked the doors and put the phone to my ear; listening to check if the call had not ended.

I could hardly hear them in the beginning and under my breathe I whispered, 'Come on, move closer to the phone.'

*"Are you still mad?"*, I heard Shujaa say.

*"Yes I am still mad."*, Rafiki responded.

*"Are you not overreacting? You are mad at me over a conversation we had while we were drunk"*, Shujaa said annoyed.

*"You were having thoughts of sleeping with my wife."*

Maybe he had a good reason for ending their friendship. I understand why he didn't want Shujaa in our lives anymore. He was threatened by his friend and thought that he would make a move on me.

*“I never said I was having thoughts.”*, Shujaa said calmly. *“I told you, it was just one random dream”*.

*“A random recurring dream, right?”*

*“I don’t want your wife. Why can’t you get that?”*, Shujaa lashed back.

*“So you thought you could tell me you had a dream whereby you slept with Zee and I should just be okay with it?”*, Rafiki asked.

*“You are mad at me over a dream Raf”*.

*“You need to leave.”*, Rafiki yelled. *“Find some excuse and leave. Stay away from my family this time, we don’t need you.”*

*“I am not leaving. Mapenzi asked me to be here for the wedding. You might not be my friend anymore but I know how Hatari is. I am here and I will look out for you like I have always done.”*

*“Shujaa, are you here to look out for me or to look at my wife?”*

*“I told you Rafiki, I had a dream that I slept with your wife. You let Hatari make jokes about being Uhuru’s father but you won’t forgive me for a dream I had years ago. Do you really think I would take Mapenzi and have sex with her in the backseat of a car? I respect her too much for that. All of it was just a dream.”*

He remembered. He remembered that night. He thought it was dream but those were memories of that night.

It didn’t take long before I realised what this meant. Rafiki knew he couldn’t have children and kept quiet this whole time. He didn’t keep Shujaa away because he was trying to keep him away from our marriage, he did it because he was keeping Shujaa away from Uhuru.

Rafiki knew that Shujaa was Uhuru’s father.

I spent so much time trying to keep it a secret but he already knew. I wonder who was really the fool in our marriage; I, who had the secrets and worked to keep them hidden or him, who had to play the role of a father to a daughter he knew wasn't his.

I unlocked the doors and walked out of the car. I knew I had to stop this. It was clear that Rafiki was not going to back down and Shujaa was not going to abandon his best friend. This wasn't just a random argument, it was a father trying to protect the identity of his daughter.

Without second thought I rushed out of the car, moving as quickly as I could. As I got to the door, I hear the sound of a car in the distance making its way up the driveway.

I didn't have time for another guest. I walked over to one of the security staff and told them that they had to send whoever it was away.

*“Listen, I said no guests. Whoever it is, no matter how important they are. They need to leave Salama”.*

*“Your majesty I don’t think I can tell them to leave.”*, he responded.

“Why not?”, I asked.

*“My queen”*, he said with his head bowed, *“You know how your mother can be”*.

I forgot that she was coming. Rafiki sent her an invitation but she never RSVP’d. He hoped that the wedding would be a great opportunity for us to bond but she picked the worst time to get here. If no one was home to greet her, she would throw a tantrum and I couldn’t let her walk in on Shujaa and Rafiki’s conversation, so I knew I had to be the one to suffer through entertaining her.

“Salama, when she gets here. Please bring her to the family living room. Tell one of the helpers to bring food and wine for us please.”

In regular Queen Clarise fashion, my mother took her time. I had been waiting 20 minutes before she decided to grace me with her presence and instead of hello, I got complaints.

*“You know Zee, when I was queen, the staff were more polished and efficient.”*, she said as her voice echoed in the room.

*“Hello to you too mother”*, I responded.

*“I’m just saying that things could be managed better”*. She said and kissed me on the cheek.

*“I know mother. It’s good to see you. I didn’t know you were coming to the wedding.”*, I said cautiously.

*“I wasn’t but with the attention you and your husband’s friend have brought to my kingdom, I had to come and save the day.”*, she said proudly.

*“Mother it is okay, I will handle it. Father taught me how to be calm in high pressure situations. Things are not that bad”*.

*“Not that bad? You have involved the royal family in a murder trial. Right now it looks like you are siding with your husband’s friend instead of letting justice take its course. Zee, that isn’t bad, it’s the worst situation possible.”*

*“Mother, it is okay. I will fix it.”*, I responded.

*“Zee, why won’t you let me help?”*, she asked.

*“Mother you have done enough.”*

*“You always do this. No matter how much I try, you never let me in. Will you ever forgive me?”*

*“Forgive you for what?”*, I smirked, *“For ruining my childhood? For making a fool of my father or the man you had me believe was my father?”*

*“You don’t believe me when I say it but I loved your father very much.”*

*“Which one?”*, I asked.

I could see the rage in her eyes. It was the first time in years she wanted to raise her hand against me.

*“Why do you hate me so much Mapenzi.”*

*“Because you never loved me. You had me to carry on the throne and doing that doesn’t require me loving you.”*

*“Zee, I love you so much”*. She said as she moved closer to me. I moved away. Rejecting her affection became second nature after the funeral. I didn’t want her next to me or hugging me.

*“No, you never loved me. Father loved me.”*

*“Why do you think he loved you and I didn’t?”*, she asked.

*“Father was the one who tucked me in bed at night, read to me and showed support. You ran the kingdom. You put your duty before loving me.”*

*“You were always so spoilt and sheltered. Your father did what I told him to do; all the things I wanted to do but didn’t have time to, he did them because I made him do it.”*

*“What?”*, I asked. I knew this was just another one of her mind games. She was just trying to break me again.

*“You always thought I didn’t care because I wasn’t involved. I never took my sight off you. No matter how much you’d push me away or pick him over me, I was always there guarding you in some way. You think I didn’t know about your time in Paris and your little coffee shop visits? I know about you and that boy Michael. I know everything”.*

*“So you were spying on me. Just like you did with Rafiki while he was in university. How could you help with such a cover up?”*

“I did it for you Zee”, she said as she tried to move closer again.

“For me? How was it for me? How the hell is hiding a dead body doing something for me”.

She stared at me and stayed silent. I should have enjoyed the silence and I should have walked away but my curiosity got the better of me.

*“Why mother? How was that for me? Is this another one of your mind games where you make me feel wrong for wanting to feel normal?”*

*“You’re weak Zee”,* she said with a sigh.

*“I told you, I am handling the situation. I will get it sorted”*.

*“No Zee. That’s why I hid the body. Because you are weak. I needed to make sure there was a way for you to control him. Hiding his body meant that he would owe our family and he would always respect you. I helped him because you needed someone you could control.”*

I felt the tears build up and all I wanted to do was cry. This woman had found another way to infiltrate my life, to make sure she was a part of it in some way.

I felt my body give up as I sat on the couch.

She moved closer and I didn’t have the strength to move this time. It was taking everything from me not to cry in front of this woman.

She pulled me closer, put my head on her shoulder and started patting my hair. If she really kept track of everything that happened in my life, it means she knew about all the things I had been keeping secret. She probably knew that Rafiki couldn’t have children and that Uhuru was not his daughter; she probably knew Imani was alive as well. I always knew mother to be conniving and sneaky but I never thought I was one of the pawns in her game.

*“I’m sorry baby”, she said in a whisper. “It’s not your fault. You got this from your father but mommy is here now. I am going to make everything better, like I always do.”*