

PROLOGUE

I am the end of the tunnel lost in my beginning.

—*Dambudzo Marechera*

AN AFRICAN NIGHT

Lusaka, Zambia
August 2011

The girl walked alone on the darkened street. Lights moved around her as cars drove by, their headlights shining on the dusty roadway, but no one seemed to notice her or care that she was alone. Her gait was steady, but her steps were irregular, for one of her legs was shorter than the other. She was wearing a thin dress that offered little protection against the late winter chill. She felt the cold on her skin, but it concerned her less than the empty apartment she had left.

She looked back at the building where she lived. Lights were on in the windows. She could hear the blare of televisions over the sounds of traffic. She held her doll by the arm and stared at Auntie's apartment through the thick lenses of her eyeglasses. She didn't understand where Bright and Giftie had gone or why they had left her by herself. She didn't understand why they had forgotten to close the door.

She turned back to the road and started off again, swinging her doll like a metronome. She heard music in the distance, and for a moment

it distracted her. Then she saw a group of young people across the road. They were smoking cigarettes and talking loudly. Remembering Bright and Giftie, she took a step toward the tarmac, wondering if the smokers knew where they went. But a horn blast from a passing car stopped her in her tracks.

She clutched her doll to her chest and glanced around again, rocking ever so slightly on her feet. Everything looked strange in the dark. Sometimes Giftie took her to another building to play, but she couldn't remember which way it was. The street didn't appear the way she remembered. She began to cry. She wanted the sun to rise and the strangeness of everything to go away. The night made her afraid. People lost their kindness when darkness fell.

The girl saw him then—a boy playing with a ball in an alley. She focused on the boy and started walking again. Bright and Giftie had many friends. Perhaps the boy was one of them. She strolled along a wall rimmed with razor wire, her feet scuffing the dirt. As she approached the alley, she heard a popping sound, like fritas frying in a pan. She glanced over her shoulder and saw a truck pull up behind her, its tires grinding the earth. The truck stopped beside the wall and its lights pierced her eyes. She turned away and looked for the boy with the ball. He was gone.

The girl entered the alley and listened to the boy's voice echoing off the walls around her. She heard another voice—a woman's voice—rise above it, sounding cross. The girl caught a glimpse of the boy running. Seconds later he disappeared and the woman's lecture stopped. The girl walked deeper into the shadows, holding her doll and searching for a break in the wall—whatever the boy had passed through. She stumbled on a pile of rocks and tears gathered in her eyes. Even the ground was unfriendly at night.

She looked at the buildings beyond the walls. They were tall, like the building where she lived, but they were strange. The fear came upon her in a rush, and she decided to go back to the apartment. Auntie would return soon, and Bright and Giftie would come home.

She was about to turn around when she heard the popping sound again. At once, light filled the alley. Then just as quickly darkness

descended. The girl looked toward the street and saw the truck that had stopped beside the wall. It was driving slowly up the alley, its headlights off. A man got out of the truck and stared at her. There was something in the shape of the man's face that made her comfortable and uncomfortable at the same time.

The man knelt down and held out his hand. She saw a sweet in his palm. Her mother had given her sweets whenever she had asked her to sleep in the bathroom. After a moment, the girl reached out and put the sweet in her mouth. She smiled at the man, deciding he must be a friend.

What happened next made no sense to her. She had no idea why her legs grew weak and her fingers lost hold of her doll, why the night spun out of control and pain shot through her head. Her eyelids drooped, then opened again. She saw the shadow of the man hovering over her. He bent down and lifted her off the ground. She had lost her glasses, but his face was close as he carried her and she saw his eyes. They were large and round, like a cat's. Her mother had told her stories about cats—the cats that lived wild in Africa.

She heard a click like a door latch and felt the man's hands push her into a cramped space blacker than the sky. Her last impression was the rumble that began beneath her and grew louder until the world fell away and the night itself vanished in darkness.

A HEARING IN THE SENATE

Washington, D.C.

May 2012

The lights above the dais were blinding to Zoe, a string of miniature suns staring back at her, exposing every imperfection in her face—her slightly offset ears, the mole at the crest of her left eyebrow, the freckles that dotted the fair skin around her nose—and reaching deeper still, as if to make public her thoughts. Having watched her father on the campaign trail, first in his race for the Senate twelve years ago and now in his quest for the White House, Zoe knew that all politics were theater and that privacy had no place on the stage.

She closed her eyes against the glare and pictured her mother's face—the way her smile had dimpled her cheeks and wrinkled the skin around her eyelids, the look of earnestness and secret pleasure that had turned skeptics into supporters across the globe. Catherine Sorenson-Fleming had been irresistible in life, a force of indefatigable optimism about the world that could be—a world in which the poor were not an afterthought. Africa was her great love affair,

and she had passed it on to Zoe. It might as well have been written into her will as a bequest.

How would you have handled this, Mom? Zoe thought, wrestling with the dilemma before her. She remembered something her mother used to say: *Speak the truth, consequences be damned.* But that didn't resolve the question. The truth was only part of the story.

Zoe opened her eyes and regarded Senator Paul Hartman, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who had taken his seat at the head of the dais beneath the great seal of the United States. Around him in the wood-paneled chamber aides scurried, brandishing sheaves of paper. Hartman placed a binder in front of him and glanced around the room until his eyes settled on Zoe. He smiled slightly, as if sharing an inside joke, and Zoe felt the ice inside her begin to crack. His kindness deepened her dilemma. He had no idea of the secret she carried, or the anger.

Senator Hartman was the reason she was here. He had read her article in the *New Yorker* and issued the invitation. She had been intrigued and skeptical at the same time.

"Is my father aware of this?" she had asked when they had first spoken on the phone.

"I haven't shared my thoughts with him, no," Hartman replied.

"What are the chances he'll come to the hearing?"

"With the demands of his campaign, I'm not sure. But your presence could shift the balance."

"In other words, the hearing is for show," she said, testing his motives. "A partisan ploy in a presidential election year."

Hartman hesitated. "Was your article for show?"

The question caught her off guard. "I wrote it because it needed to be said."

"Call me old-fashioned," Hartman said, "but I feel the same way. As you put it, generosity itself is on the gallows."

"And you think a Senate hearing will make a difference?"

"The public loves a good controversy. Whether you meant to or not, you created one. If we take advantage of it, people might actually learn something."

It's a gamble, Zoe thought, but it might just work—for him and for me.

"I've talked to Frieda Caraway," he went on.

"Is she on your witness list?" Zoe asked. Caraway was an actress on Hollywood's A-list and something of a legend in humanitarian circles. AIDS, trafficking, conflict minerals, Free Tibet, her causes were as numerous as her screen credits, yet only the most cynical questioned her intentions. Her grandparents had died at Auschwitz.

"Not yet," Hartman said, "but I'm working on it."

The Senator's words had thrilled and terrified Zoe. The opportunity was too enticing to decline. "You get Frieda on a panel with a couple of experts from the development community, and I'll be there."

Hartman had chuckled as he hung up the phone. A week later he called her back with good news and a hearing date. He also passed along Frieda Caraway's e-mail address.

"She read your article, too," he told her. "She can't wait to meet you."

"The nonprofit lawyer from Zambia or Jack Fleming's daughter?"

Hartman laughed. "You have your mother's tongue. She wants to meet the Zoe Fleming who took on the African justice system and changed the life of a girl with Down syndrome."

Five weeks later, Zoe had boarded the South African flight from Johannesburg to Washington, D.C. It was the first time she had returned to the United States in three years.



A chorus of voices outside the hearing room made Zoe turn her head. As spectators gawked and cameramen angled for a shot, Frieda Caraway made her entrance, her security detail in tow. Like Zoe, the actress was dressed in a conservative pantsuit and an open-collared blouse, but Hollywood glittered in her diamonds—at least ten carats between her earrings and the pendant on her necklace.

Zoe stood as she walked to the witness table. Frieda's almond-brown eyes lit up. "My dear Zoe, such a joy to finally meet you."

Although they had exchanged e-mails and spoken once over Skype, Zoe was unprepared for the hug that followed Frieda's greeting.

"Looks like the sharks have gathered," Frieda whispered. "Are you ready for this?"

Zoe watched the cameramen take their positions in the space between the dais and the witness table. Behind them senators shuffled papers importantly, but their eyes strayed toward the actress, revealing their true interest. Only one seat had yet to be filled—her father's.

"It's a bit of a circus," Zoe replied, trying to affect a nonchalance she didn't feel.

"Ignore it," Frieda replied. "The only thing that matters is what we're here to talk about."

Zoe took her seat again as Frieda shook hands with the other witnesses at the table: Bob Tiller, computer mogul, philanthropist, and masthead of the largest foundation in the world; and Susan Moore, chairwoman of the Organization for International Development, a global NGO. It was a star-studded panel. In a presidential election year, Hartman had pulled off a coup.

Zoe looked down at her notes, then back at her father's chair. She checked her watch. It was four minutes past two o'clock: the scheduled start time for the hearing. If he didn't show up, the dilemma would resolve itself and the truth that had defined her life since she was seventeen would stay buried. She felt a sudden sense of relief. At moments she had convinced herself that the truth needed to come out. Yet the prospect of actually speaking it filled her with unease.

She glanced at her older brother, Trevor, sitting in the reserved seats. He nodded at her, a vision of ambivalence. She turned back to the dais and felt the guilt churning in her stomach. Trevor was one of her favorite people in the world and, until recently, the only man whose motives she trusted implicitly. Only a year apart in age, they understood each other as no one else did. In the years when they were raised by nannies—Jack off conquering Wall Street

and Catherine gallivanting across the globe—Trevor had been her shelter. But he didn't know about the ghost that lived at the Vineyard house. He had left for Harvard, and she had never told him.

Zoe focused on Senator Hartman as he rapped his gavel, bringing the hearing to order. Suddenly, a door opened in the paneling behind him and Jack Fleming appeared, flanked by senior aides. Zoe took a sharp breath, barely conscious of the buzz rippling through the gallery or the cameras swiveling to capture an image of the candidate, fresh off the stump in Ohio. She hadn't seen her father in eight months. He looked older now, his hair grayer, his face fleshier, and his trademark pinstripe suit too tight around the midsection. He had always prided himself on his fitness, but the endless campaigning seemed to have weathered him.

He leaned down and whispered something into Hartman's ear—an apology, Zoe guessed—then took a seat on the left side of the dais without so much as a pad of paper in front of him. In spite of herself, Zoe almost smiled. When she and Trevor were children, he had sometimes allowed them to attend board meetings at Fleming Randall, the investment firm he had built into a Wall Street giant. Though they had been excluded from anything confidential, she had seen enough to understand the reasons for her father's success. Along with a dynamo personality and unshakable self-confidence, he had a photographic memory.

“Many thanks to Senator Fleming for his attendance,” Hartman began, silencing the spectators. “I know his schedule is demanding. We have a distinguished panel to hear from, but before we give them the floor I'd like to say a few words about what brings us together today.”

He looked at Zoe, then at Frieda, and commenced his remarks. “In the midst of the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt articulated a vision of American society that has defined us for generations. ‘The test of our progress,’ he said, ‘is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.’ Now, in the midst of what some have called the Great Recession, that vision is in peril.”

Zoe listened as Hartman recited an argument she knew by heart. She kept her eyes fixed on his face, willing herself not to meet her father's eyes. She heard Trevor's voice over breakfast that morning: *He loves you, Zoe. Do you really want to hurt him?* It was a question she didn't know how to answer. Their estrangement was a knot that seemed impossible to untangle. For what he did, she had never forgiven him. But he had never asked.

At some point, she raised her eyes to the seal behind Hartman's head, etched in relief upon the polished blond wood. "E pluribus unum," her mother had been fond of saying. "A motto for the world, not a nation alone." She thought of Kuyeya lying on the hospital table in Zambia, crying, and Dr. Chulu, at once grim and enraged, examining her. Suddenly Zoe's suffering seemed small, even petty, in the shadow of an evil so much greater.

She decided then that Jack Fleming deserved to be defeated. Not because he had betrayed her or because he was unfit to be Chief Executive—in many ways he was born for the Oval Office—but because in the name of fiscal austerity he would abandon children like Kuyeya. That was why Senator Hartman wanted her father in the chair, why he had brought her in from Africa to tell her story. It wasn't about partisanship or election-year politics. It was about conscience.

At last she looked at her father and touched the ring on her finger, the ring the Somalis had salvaged from the wreckage of her mother's plane. *You know what I'm thinking, don't you? August 19, 2000. I know you remember.*

He angled his head and she thought she saw a flash of fear in his eyes. At that moment Zoe did something she had never expected. She smiled.

*The Rule of Achilles, Dad. You taught me.
No one is invincible.*

PART ONE

The night comes with its breath of death.

—*Anonymous*

CHAPTER 1

Lusaka, Zambia
August 2011

The music was raucous, but it was always that way in African clubs. The beat of the drum—the backbone of village song—had been replaced in the cities by the throbbing insistence of electronic bass, amplified until everything around the speakers picked up the rhythm—people, beer bottles, even the walls. On Zoe's first trip to the continent—a brief jaunt to Nairobi when she was six years old—her mother told her that Africa is the keeper of humanity's pulse. It was a truth she remembered every time she stepped foot in a Zambian bar.

The place was called Hot Tropic, the club du jour in a city constantly reinventing its nightlife. The decor was all fire and glitter, neon lights flashing red against the walls and dazzling disco balls turning everything to sparkle. The place was packed with bodies, most of them African twenty-somethings, bouncing to the beat.

Zoe was seated at a table in a corner of the bar where the decibel level was slightly buffered. She was dressed in jeans and a Hard Rock London T-shirt, her wavy blond hair pulled back in a clip. At the table with her were three African friends from work—two men and a woman. Most Saturdays Zoe hosted a barbecue, or *braai*, at her apartment, and afterward those who had not satisfied their appetite for beer and conversation went clubbing. Tonight, the subject on everyone's minds was the September election, pitting Zambia's President, Rupiah Banda, against the aging warhorse Michael Sata, and the energetic upstart Hakainde Hichilema, or "H.H."

"Banda is finished," Niza Moyo was saying, her dark eyes aglow with indignation. "As is his party. They've run the country for twenty years and what have they given us? Mobile hospitals that take doctors away from the real hospitals; police officers that have no vehicles to investigate a crime; roads that only the rich can drive on; and corruption at every level of government. It's a disgrace."

Like Zoe, Niza was a young attorney at the Coalition of International Legal Advocates, or CILA, a London-based nonprofit that combated human rights abuses around the world. She was feistier and more outspoken than most Zambian women, but she was Shona, from Zimbabwe, and her father was an exiled diplomat known for challenging authority.

"I sympathize with your position," said Joseph Kabuta, an officer with the Zambia Police Victim Support Unit, or VSU. Solidly built with close-cropped hair and wide perceptive eyes, he reminded Zoe of the young Nelson Mandela. "But Banda is still popular in the rural areas, and Michael Sata isn't well. Zambians don't want another president to die in office."

"The press reports about Sata's health are overblown," Niza rejoined.

"What I can't figure out," Zoe interjected, "is why you don't throw out the guys with one foot in the grave and elect the best candidate. Everybody loves H.H. He's a born leader and he has no political baggage. But everybody says he can't win. Where's the logic?"

“It’s the way people think,” said Sergeant Zulu—who everyone called Sarge. Strategically brilliant and compulsively affable, he was the lead attorney at CILA and the mastermind behind the organization’s campaign against child sexual assault. “In Africa, presidents are like village chiefs. People vote for the gray heads.”

“So what you’re saying is that reformers don’t stand a chance until the old guard dies?” Zoe asked. “No wonder progress is like pulling teeth here.”

Sarge smiled wryly. “Each generation has to wait its turn.” He held up his empty bottle of Castle lager. “Anyone else need another beer, or am I the only one drinking?”

“I’ll take a Mosi,” said Joseph, draining his bottle and pushing it to the center of the table. Suddenly, he frowned and reached into the pocket of his jeans. He pulled out his cell phone and glanced at the screen. “It’s Mariam,” he said, giving Sarge a quizzical look.

Zoe perked up. Mariam Changala was the field office director at CILA and the mother of six children. If she was calling Joseph in the middle of the night, it had to be serious.

Zoe watched Joseph’s face as he took the call. His broad eyebrows arched. “Is Dr. Chulu on call? Make sure he’s there. I’m ten minutes away.” He put the phone away and glanced around the table. “A girl was raped in Kanyama. They’re taking her to the hospital now.”

“How old?” Niza asked.

Joseph shrugged. “Mariam just said she’s young.”

“Family?” Sarge inquired.

“Not clear. They found her wandering the streets.”

Zoe spoke: “Who picked her up?”

“Some people from SCA.”

“She’s disabled?” Zoe asked. “SCA” stood for Special Child Advocates, a nonprofit that worked with children with intellectual disabilities.

“Presumably,” Joseph said, throwing on his jacket. “Sorry to break up the party.” He gave them a wave and headed toward the door.

Zoe decided on a whim to follow him. Child rape cases usually appeared on her desk in a weeks-old police file. She'd never learned of an incident so soon after it happened. She tossed an apology to Sarge and Niza and weaved her way through the crowd, catching up to Joseph.

"Mind if I come with you?" she asked. "I've never seen the intake process."

He looked annoyed. "Okay, but stay out of the way."



Zoe followed him into the chilly August night. Thrusting her hands into the pockets of her jacket, she looked toward the south and saw Canopus hanging low over the horizon. The brightest southern stars were visible above the scrim of city lights. Joseph walked toward a rusty Toyota pickup jammed in between cars on the edge of the dirt lot. Only the driver's door was accessible. Zoe had to climb over the gearshift to reach the passenger seat.

Joseph started the truck with a roar and pulled out onto the street. Since Hot Tropic sat on the border between Kalingalinga, one of Lusaka's poorer neighborhoods, and Kabulonga, its wealthiest, street traffic on a Saturday night was kaleidoscopic, a colorful blend of pedestrians, up-market SUVs, and blue taxi vans crammed with revelers.

"How did the people at SCA find the girl?" Zoe asked as they left the club behind.

He stared at the road without answering, and she wondered if he'd heard her. She observed him for a long moment in the shadows of the cab. She knew almost nothing about him, except that he had been a police officer for over a decade, that he loathed corruption, and that he had recently completed a law degree at the University of Zambia.

She spoke his name to get his attention. "Joseph."

He twitched and took a breath. "One of their community volunteers found her," he said. "A woman named Abigail. She saw blood on the girl's leg and called Joy Herald." Joy was the director of SCA. "Joy called Mariam at home."

“It happened in Kanyama?”

He nodded. “East of Los Angeles Road, not far from Chibolya.”

She shuddered. Kanyama lay to the southwest of Cairo Road—the city’s commercial center. A patchwork of shanties and cinder-block dwellings, most without toilets or running water, it was a haven for poverty, alcoholism, larceny, and cholera outbreaks. In an election year, it was also a cauldron of political unrest. But at least Kanyama had a police post. Chibolya was such a cesspool of lawlessness that the police avoided it altogether.

They left the well-lit neighborhoods of Kabulonga and headed west along the wide, divided highway of Los Angeles Boulevard. Skirting the edge of the Lusaka Golf Club, they took Nyerere Road through a tunnel of mature jacarandas whose dense branches slivered the light of the moon.

“Were there any witnesses?” she asked.

He sighed and shifted in his seat. “I have no idea. Are you always so full of questions?”

She bristled and thought: *If I were a man, would you be asking?* She considered a number of barbed responses, but in the end she held her tongue. CILA needed her to build bridges with the police, not wreck them.



Five minutes later, they passed through rusting gates and parked outside the pediatric wing of University Teaching Hospital, the largest medical facility in Zambia. Zoe climbed out of the cab and followed Joseph into the lobby. The air in the room was pungent with bleach. She saw Joy Herald, a matronly Brit, sitting on a bench with an elderly Zambian woman and a girl with mulatto skin who looked no older than ten. Zoe’s heart lurched. The child’s innocent eyes, framed by epicanthal folds, flat nose bridge, and tiny ears, revealed her extra chromosome.

She had Down syndrome.

Joseph spoke. “Where is Dr. Chulu?”

“He’s on his way,” Joy replied.

“Has the child been examined by anyone else?”

Joy shook her head. “The doctor’s assistant is collecting the paperwork.”

Before long, Dr. Emmanuel Chulu walked briskly into the lobby, his white medical coat billowing behind him. A giant of a man with an owl-like face and a deep baritone voice, he was the chief pediatric physician at UTH and also the founder of a clinic for the victims of child rape—“defilement” in Zambian parlance.

Dr. Chulu spoke to the old woman first, mixing English and Nyanja, the most common indigenous language in Lusaka. “Hello, mother, *muli bwange?*”

The woman returned his gaze but didn’t smile. “*Ndili bwino.*”

“Are you a member of her family?” he asked.

The woman shook her head. “I am Abigail, the one who found her.”

The doctor knelt down in front of the girl and gazed into her eyes, his large frame utterly still. The child was rocking back and forth and humming faintly under her breath. “I’m Manny,” he said, searching her face for a sign of recognition. “What is your name?”

The child’s hum turned into a moan. Her eyes grew unfocused and her rocking increased.

The doctor spoke to her in a number of different languages, trying to make contact, but she didn’t reply. “Hmm,” he said, visibly perplexed.

Zoe fingered her mother’s ring, empathizing with the girl. She couldn’t imagine the physical pain the child had endured, but she understood the horror.

All of a sudden, the child’s moaning diminished, and her eyes focused on Zoe’s hands. It took Zoe a moment to realize that she was looking at Catherine’s diamonds. She slipped the ring off her finger and knelt down in front of the girl.

“This was my mommy’s,” she said. “Would you like to hold it?”

The girl seemed to think for a moment. Then she reached out and clutched the ring to her chest. Her moaning ceased and her rocking grew less agitated.

Dr. Chulu looked at Joy, then at Zoe. “Ms. Fleming, right?”

Zoe nodded. “Yes.”

“CILA hasn’t sent a lawyer before. Our good fortune to have you.” He looked around. “Has anyone seen my assistant? I can’t do the exam without the forms.”

At that moment, a young Zambian woman emerged from a door labeled “Administration,” holding a clipboard and a stack of papers.

“Nurse Mbelo, just in time,” he said, taking the clipboard. He looked at Abigail. “Mother, Officer Kabuta needs to ask you some questions, but first he needs to witness the examination of the child. Can you wait?”

Abigail nodded.

“Ms. Herald,” said the doctor, “I presume you and Ms. Fleming can handle the child.”



The intake room was small and poorly ventilated. The fluorescent light cast by two discolored bulbs created a haze at the edge of Zoe’s contact lenses. After seating the girl on a narrow table, Dr. Chulu began the examination. His touch was gentle and his bedside manner as tender as a father with a daughter.

Zoe leaned against the wall and watched the doctor’s face as he conducted the exam. She found the sterility of the intake room unnerving, as if the medical procedure, in its sheer scientific orderliness, could sanitize the rape of its obscenity. She searched Dr. Chulu’s eyes for a shadow, a cloud in his professional calm, and felt empathy when his jaw went rigid. He placed a swab he was holding back in its clear container and sealed it in a plastic bag.

It was stained with blood.

The process of sample collection took thirty minutes. Afterward, Nurse Mbelo wheeled a robotic-looking instrument called a colposcope to the bed, and Dr. Chulu used the built-in camera to photograph the girl’s injuries. The child endured the colposcopy for less than a minute before she rolled over and began to make a loud vibrato sound—part cry, part groan.

Dr. Chulu looked at the nurse. “How many images did you get?”
“Five,” she replied. “All exterior.”

The doctor conferred with Joseph. “Do you think it’s enough for the Court?”

“I’ll sign the report,” Joseph replied quietly. “The magistrate will listen to us.”

Dr. Chulu nodded and turned to Joy. “I need to keep her overnight to monitor her. But I can’t put her in the ward without knowing her HIV status. I need you to keep her still while I conduct the test.”

“Do you have any music?” Joy asked. “It might soothe her.”

The doctor gave her a puzzled look. “I have a CD player in my office.”

“I have an iPhone,” Zoe interjected, taking it out of her pocket. “What about Thomas Mapfumo?” she asked, referring to the celebrated Zimbabwean artist.

“Try it,” Joy said. “Your ring worked like a charm.”

Zoe selected a song from the album *Rise Up* and pointed the speaker toward the girl. At the sound of the traditional Shona thumb piano the girl’s protests lost their shrillness and she began to bob her head with the rhythm.

Joy looked at Dr. Chulu. “Do what you have to do.”

The doctor reached out for one of the child’s hands and cleaned the middle finger with a cloth. He put pressure on the fingertip and pricked the skin with a lancet. The girl stiffened, but the doctor held her finger firmly, dabbing drops of blood with a pad before collecting a sample in a vial. He handed the vial to his assistant, who placed a drop in the window of the test display.

“Nonreactive,” the nurse said.

“At last some good news,” Dr. Chulu replied. “Get me ten-milligram bottles of Zidovudine, Lamivudine, and Lopinavir in suspension and some pediatric Tylenol.”

Nurse Mbelo returned a minute later with the pain medication and what Zoe guessed were antiretrovirals—ARVs—designed to prevent the transmission of HIV.

Dr. Chulu looked at Joy. "If I give you the medicine, will you administer it?"

Joy nodded and helped the girl to sit, speaking softly in her ear. "I have some juice to give you. I need you to open your mouth. I know you can do it."

When the doctor handed her the first medicine dropper, Joy showed it to the girl and then gently inserted it between her lips, squeezing out its contents. The child swallowed the liquid easily. Joy repeated the procedure with the remaining three droppers, all of which the child took without complaint.

She understands medicine, Zoe thought, feeling a surge of affection for the girl.

Dr. Chulu took Joseph aside and Zoe joined them. "I'll contact Social Welfare in the morning," he said. "I need you to find her family."

Joseph nodded. "I'll go to Kanyama tomorrow. Someone will know her."

Zoe took a deep breath, debating with herself. "If it's all the same to you," she said, "I'd like to stay with her tonight."

The doctor stared at her. "That's not necessary. We can sedate her if we need to."

"I understand," she said. In truth, she had deep misgivings about spending hours in the sickness-laden air of the admissions ward, but she couldn't imagine leaving the girl alone after the trauma she had suffered.

Dr. Chulu smiled wearily. "If you want to give up sleep, I'm not going to stop you."

CHAPTER 2

The hours of the night felt like days in the admissions ward, and Zoe never quite fell asleep. She sat on a metal chair beside the girl's iron bed and rested her head against the wall, trying to ignore the cloying odor of the place. The girl slept fitfully, troubled by nightmares Zoe could scarcely imagine. The night nurse—a middle-aged Zambian—stopped by on occasion and brought Zoe a glass of water. She drank hesitantly, hoping the water had been boiled or taken from a borehole. Even after a year in Lusaka, her stomach had yet to conquer the witch's brew of bacteria and parasites that thrived in the city's water system.

At seven in the morning, Dr. Chulu reappeared holding a stuffed monkey. Zoe had been dozing when she heard his heavy footsteps.

"I bought this for my daughter," he said. "It's not much, but maybe she'll take to it. I imagine you'd like to keep your ring."

"I got it back," Zoe said with a yawn, turning to look at the child. She was lying on her side, her eyes closed and her knees tucked under her arms. "She made sounds for a long time during the night. But an hour ago she fell into a deep sleep."

Dr. Chulu stepped to the bedside and felt the girl's carotid artery. "Her pulse is thready, but not weak enough to trouble me. She's going to be uncomfortable for a while, but she'll heal. She's one of the lucky ones."

Zoe looked at the doctor, and he answered her unspoken question.

"I had a child rape case last month," he said. "The victim was an eight-year-old with mental retardation. She was severely underweight and had all kinds of complications from malnutrition. Her parents weren't feeding her. I see it all the time. Eighty percent of kids with disabilities die before the age of five." He pointed at the girl. "At least someone's been taking care of her. And now she has you."

Zoe nodded, feeling a bond with the child that she could not explain. "What about HIV?"

He shrugged. "It's a possibility, assuming the perpetrator was positive. But the likelihood of infection is low. We'll keep her on ARVs and test her again in six weeks." He gave Zoe a compassionate look. "I bet you could use some sleep. Why don't you go home?"

She stretched her arms and felt the ache of sleeplessness in every muscle. Still she hesitated.

"I'll get my CD player," he said, anticipating her concern. "She'll be fine."

"Okay," Zoe conceded. "I'll give you my cell number in case anything happens."

After giving the doctor her information, she took a last look at the child and slipped out of the hospital. She inhaled the dry Zambian air and smiled at the rising sun. Even after years of visiting Africa's highland plateaus, she still found the near-perfect climate a gift.

She took out her phone and called Maurice Isaac, a driver for CILA who lived nearby. He dismissed her apology and promised to pick her up in ten minutes. She called Joseph next. He answered on the second ring.

"Did you sleep?" he asked, sounding groggy.

"Not a wink. What's the plan for today?"

He hesitated. “The plan?”

“Your trip to Kanyama. I’d like to be part of the investigation.” When the silence lingered, she decided to press. “Look, I’m not Joy Herald, but I care about this girl. I can call Mariam if you like.”

“That’s not necessary,” he replied. “I’m just concerned about your safety. The compounds are unstable with the election coming up.” He took a breath and gave in. “All right. I’ll pick you up at fourteen hundred.”



With the shades drawn in her bedroom, Zoe managed to sleep until noon. She woke again to the ringtone on her iPhone—the chorus from U2’s “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For.” She shook her head and blinked a few times, seeing only the blur of her mosquito net. A curse of Fleming genetics, she had inherited her father’s nearsightedness. Without corrective lenses, she would have been legally blind.

She threw aside the net and found her contact lens case on the bedside table. As soon as she could see, she checked her phone. She thought the caller might have been Dr. Chulu, but instead she saw Mariam’s name on the screen. The field office director had left a voice mail.

“Good morning, Zoe,” Mariam said. “Joseph told me you plan to accompany him to Kanyama. Be careful, please. We’ll have a response team meeting in the morning.”

Zoe pulled back the curtains from her second-story window and admired the red leaves of the poinsettia tree in the courtyard. The poinsettia had been her mother’s favorite African plant, a symbol of the continent’s exoticism and fecundity. She took a fast shower—there was never enough hot water in the tank for a long one—and dressed in jeans and a lavender Oxford shirt.

Heading to the kitchen, she fixed herself a breakfast of eggs, toast, and papaya and ate on the porch overlooking the gardens while rereading Proust’s *Swann’s Way*. It was a regular pilgrimage, the closest thing she had to religion after her years at Stanford. Like

Proust's narrator, she saw the past everywhere she looked, as if it were a layer of reality just beneath the present. In this, too, she was her father's daughter. Along with his failing eyesight, she had inherited his extraordinary memory.

The text from Joseph came at quarter to two. She gathered her backpack off the dining room table and crossed the courtyard to the gate. The guard—a recent recruit whose name she couldn't recall—let her out onto the street. She saw the VSU officer behind the wheel of his truck, wearing aviator sunglasses and a jean jacket. As soon as she climbed in, Joseph pulled away from the curb, accelerating quickly down the tree-lined road. The sky was spotless, not a hint of cloud.

"How was your morning?" Zoe asked.

"Fine," said Joseph.

"Do anything fun?"

He raised his eyebrows. "Why do you ask so many questions?"

She suppressed her annoyance. "I figured if we're going to work together, we should be friendly. You seemed to have no trouble talking at the bar last night."

He cleared his throat. "If you have to know, I spent the morning working on this truck. It is—what do you call it?—a money pit. I bought it from a cousin who's a mechanic. I'm convinced he gave me a good deal because he knew it would be a steady source of income."

She chuckled. "Glad to see you have a sense of humor."

He gave her a sideways glance. "I have five siblings. You learn to laugh."

She whistled. "Your mother must be a saint. What does your father do?"

"He owns a textile company."

She frowned. *And you've spent the last ten years taking bread crumbs from the government?* "Why did you become a police officer?"

His answer was cryptic. "One has to start somewhere."

She sensed a deeper truth beneath his vagueness, but she decided to leave it alone. "Where are we going?"

“To talk to Abigail. She’s going to introduce us to her neighbors.”



They entered Cathedral Hill and took Independence Avenue toward Cairo Road. Sunday traffic was light, but pedestrians were everywhere on the jacaranda-lined shoulders of the road. Zoe sat back and watched Lusaka pass by. Designed as a garden city in colonial times, its leafy boulevards, stately Edwardian architecture, and quiet bungalows had in the decades after independence suffered the encroachment of grit and urban decay. The poor had come from the villages in droves, and the wealthy had responded by barricading themselves behind walls rimmed with glass shards and razor wire.

Crossing Cairo Road, they skirted the edge of the bustling City Market before entering the ramshackle sprawl of Kanyama. Vendors stood on both sides of the dusty thoroughfare, hawking tires and tarpaulin and talk time for cell phones. More established merchants tended booths set back from the road. Everywhere Zoe saw signs of the presidential election: banners, flags, T-shirts, and posters, almost all of them green—the color of the Patriotic Front, or PF. The air, too, was clogged with electioneering. Bands of young men prowled the lane with makeshift bullhorns, castigating President Banda and the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy, or MMD.

One of the young campaigners gave Zoe an angry look before shouting something in Nyanja. “What is he saying?” she asked, feeling a twinge of nerves.

“Roll up your window,” Joseph said, inching forward through the mob.

She complied quickly. “Was he talking about me?”

Joseph nodded. “He doesn’t like foreigners.”

Eventually they turned left onto a tributary lane crowded with shabby cinderblock dwellings, their corrugated roofs scaled with the rust of many rainy seasons. Children of all ages scampered about, pointing at the truck and staring at Zoe. A few old people sat on chairs, watching the children. Missing from the street were young

adults—the parents of the children. Some were working, no doubt, but Zoe knew their absence conveyed a darker truth: many of them were dead.

They rounded a bend and Joseph slammed on the brakes, barely avoiding a head-on collision with a pickup truck swarming with young Zambians in green T-shirts. The driver of the truck—a young man wearing a green bandana—honked loudly while his comrades beat the sides of the truck like drums. Zoe caught a hateful look from a lanky youth standing in the flatbed.

“*Muzungu! Muzungu!*” he shouted.

She felt a surge of fear. “What are you going to do?”

Joseph nosed his truck to the side of the road. “If I were alone, I might teach them a lesson. But I’m not alone.”

As the vehicles edged past each other, the young hooligans pounded the roof of Joseph’s truck. Time dragged on amid the thunder of hands and shouts. Zoe felt the urge to yell at them, to put them in their place, but she knew it would only exacerbate the situation. At last, the other truck accelerated up the lane, leaving them in a cloud of dust.

“*Bastards!*” Zoe exclaimed. “Who do they think they are?”

Joseph glanced at her but didn’t respond. He made another turn and took them deeper into the labyrinth of unmarked lanes. Most of the homes they passed had no doors or windows, and many of the alleys were piled high with burning trash. After a few minutes, Zoe lost all sense of direction. The undifferentiated mass of slum-like buildings was dizzying. Joseph, however, seemed to know exactly where he was going.

In time, he pulled the truck into an alley not far from a weather-beaten house graced with a flame tree in the front yard. Grabbing her backpack, Zoe stepped out of the truck and was instantly mobbed by bright-eyed children. They pulled at her shirt, begged her for kwacha, and asked her to take pictures of them. She patted their heads and greeted them in Nyanja. “*Muli bwange? Muli bwange?*” It wasn’t long before she forgot about the troublemakers in the pickup.

She followed Joseph down a breezeway lined with flowerpots toward the door of the house. Abigail was waiting for them behind a curtain of lace. She invited them in and gestured for them to take seats on a couch covered with a sheet. Abigail sat opposite them on a worn recliner. She spoke hesitantly in English, pronouncing the words with care.

“How is the child?”

“She’s recovering,” Zoe said simply. “We need to find her family.”

Joseph took a digital camera out of his pocket and showed her the screen. “I have a picture of her. Perhaps it will help with the neighbors.”

Abigail stood, wrapping a shawl around her. “Come,” she said. She led them out the door and down the road to a shanty dwelling that barely resembled a house. “Agnes,” she called out.

An old woman appeared. Her skin was heavily wrinkled and most of her teeth were missing. She and Abigail exchanged words in Nyanja, and Joseph showed her the photograph of the girl. Agnes shook her head. She looked at Zoe and asked about the “*muzungu*”—foreigner.

Joseph chuckled. “She says your hair looks like gold. She wants to know if it’s real.”

Zoe smiled. In a country where almost all women wore wigs or hair extensions, she had been asked that question countless times. “Tell her I was born with it,” she said, leaning down so the old woman could touch it. “Does she know anything?”

He shook his head. “She’s never seen the girl before.”

Abigail bid Agnes good-bye and led them to the next house. A rotund woman was hanging clothes on a line. She smiled at Abigail but eyed Zoe with suspicion. The exchange between the women ended almost as quickly as it began.

“Her family was asleep at midnight,” Joseph explained.

Zoe thrust her hands in her pockets and took in her surroundings, trying to imagine the street as the girl had seen it. *I bet it was almost deserted*, she thought. In the compounds, night was the handmaiden of violence. Those who were wise stayed indoors.

In the next half hour, they spoke to two widows, a young mother nursing an infant, and a group of adolescent boys lounging under a tree. All of them denied having seen the child, and a couple of the youths made wisecracks about the girl's appearance.

Zoe turned away, angered by their callousness. "Let's get out of here," she said.

Suddenly, a boy spoke up. "Hey, *muzungu*, why do you care what happens in Kanyama?"

She stared at him. "Where were you at midnight last night?"

He shrugged. "I was watching TV."

"So you were awake?"

He elbowed one of his friends. "Do *muzungus* watch TV in their sleep?"

The joke elicited a chorus of guffaws.

She ignored them. "Did you see anything unusual? A person, a car you didn't know?"

The boy glanced down the street, then crossed his arms. "I saw a truck."

She caught her breath. "What color was it?"

"Silver. Like this." He reached in his pocket and produced a foreign coin, no doubt the largesse of a tourist or an aid worker.

"Was it parked or driving?"

The boy flipped the coin in the air and caught it. "It was driving."

She traded a look with Joseph. "Will you show us where you saw it?"

The boy considered this. "What's it worth to you?"

She didn't blink. In Africa everything had a price. "Fifty pin. But only after you tell me everything you know."

The boy's eyes lit up. Fifty thousand kwacha was the equivalent of ten dollars. He stood up and his friends joined him, their banter gone. "*Bwera*," he said. "This way."

He led them down the lane to a house with unpainted block walls and crumbling mortar. A gaunt woman wearing a sweat-stained shirt and *chitenge* skirt sat outside the door, holding a carton of cheap Lusaka beer. The boy pushed aside the curtain and

sat down on a torn couch in the cramped living room, displacing a half-naked child who jumped up to make space for him.

“The truck drove by,” said the youth. “I was sitting here. I saw its lights.”

“What kind of truck was it?” Joseph asked.

“I think it was a Lexus. It went that way.”

“Was it an SUV?” Zoe asked, realizing the vehicle had been traveling toward Abigail’s house.

The boy nodded.

“What direction was the girl walking last night?” she asked Abigail.

The old woman pointed down the street in the same direction.

Zoe turned to the boy again. “You said you saw its lights. Did you see brake lights?”

He shook his head.

“What about the driver? Did you catch a glimpse of him?”

He gave her a blank look. “I saw nothing else.”

She examined his face and decided to believe him. Unzipping her backpack, she took out the money she had promised him. “What’s your name?” she asked.

“Wisdom,” he replied.

“Wisdom is the finest beauty of a person. It’s a proverb. It applies as much to *muzungu* ladies and little girls with funny faces as it does to Zambian men. Think about it.”

She handed the boy the kwacha.

“We need to find someone near Abigail who saw the truck,” Joseph said.

She nodded. “I was thinking the same thing.”



They retraced their steps, questioning the people they had met and a few others who appeared on the street. None had seen the silver SUV. Zoe checked her watch. It was nearing five o’clock. From the way Abigail was walking, it was clear she was growing tired. Zoe was about to suggest that they take her home when Joseph led them

toward Agnes's shanty and knocked on the door. The old woman appeared, and Joseph spoke a few words in Nyanja. Agnes scratched her head and blinked a few times, then replied in the same language.

"What did she say?" Zoe inquired.

Joseph ignored her and asked Agnes another question. The old woman nodded and walked around the corner of her house, showing them an alleyway strewn with loose stones and litter. She gestured toward the road and spoke again in Nyanja.

"She heard a vehicle outside her house," Joseph said. "It stopped for a minute or two, and then it left. She didn't think about it until now."

Zoe felt a chill. "Did she hear any voices?"

He put the question to Agnes. "She didn't hear people," he interpreted, "but she heard something that reminded her of a drum." The woman spoke again, and Joseph clarified: "Two drumbeats. Perhaps they were car doors being shut?"

Zoe left the alley and stood in the lane, staring at Abigail's house thirty feet away. She imagined Kanyama huddled against the night, its narrow streets lit by porch bulbs and the glow of the moon. Then headlamps appeared in the darkness, followed by the flash of an upmarket SUV and the sound of an engine. The driver had pulled into the alleyway beside Agnes's house and left the girl. *It explains why no one has seen her before. She's not from around here.*

Her eyes wandered the scene and focused on a group of children playing a game in the dirt. They were the same children who had showered her with curiosity when she got out of Joseph's truck. She had an idea. She asked Joseph for the camera and walked toward the children. They looked up from their game. There were five of them, and they were seated around a circle drawn in the dirt. At the center of the circle was a pile of rocks.

"How do you play?" she asked the oldest boy while Joseph translated.

Instead of speaking, the boy gave a demonstration. He threw a ball into the air, grabbed a few rocks with his fingers, dragged them outside the perimeter of the circle, and caught the ball again

with the same hand. The second time he threw the ball into the air, he moved all but one rock back into the circle, and placed the orphaned rock in a pile beside his knee.

“*Chiyanto*,” Joseph said. “I played it when I was a kid.”

Zoe held up the camera, showing it to the children. “Can I take a picture of you? I’d like to show it to my friends back home.”

They began to talk excitedly. “Photo,” said the oldest. “*Muzungu* lady take photo.” They wrapped arms around each other, smiling and waiting for the camera to flash.

She laughed. “They’ve done this before.” She captured the moment in the digital frame and showed the picture to the kids. The oldest boy asked her to take a photo of him alone, which she did. It was then that Zoe brought the camera down to the level of the youngest and displayed the picture of the girl. The children crowded around and stared at it without speaking.

“Have you seen her before?” Zoe asked. “She was on this street last night.”

The oldest boy tilted his head and shrugged. He looked around, seeking confirmation. All of them shook their heads—except one. The child was no more than seven years old, and his eyes were too large for his head. He smiled at Zoe shyly. The oldest boy pushed him and said something in Nyanja, but the child continued to stare at Zoe.

“Girl,” he said, nodding.

Zoe took a sharp breath. “Will you translate?” she asked Joseph.

“I’ll talk to him,” he replied.

He sat down beside the child and spoke to him softly. When the child responded, Joseph bobbed his head and smiled. Joseph’s performance had the intended effect. The boy spoke without restraint, using his hands to emphasize his words.

Eventually, Joseph looked up at Zoe. “His name is Dominic. He lives there.” He pointed at a green-painted house close by. “Last night he was in bed. But he had to use the latrine. He saw the truck when it stopped. He saw a man with the girl. The man got back into the truck and drove away. The girl walked toward Abigail’s house. She looked like she was crying.”

“Did he see the man’s face?” Zoe asked excitedly.

Joseph shook his head. “It was dark. He said the man was tall—taller than his father.”

“And the truck: did he see the license plate?”

Joseph translated the question into Nyanja. Dominic’s eyes widened and he drew something in the dirt. Zoe stared at the sketch as it materialized. The boy had traced what looked like a misshapen rectangle with an X at the center.

“What is it?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Joseph said. He talked with the child further, and Dominic drew a second rectangle to the right of the X. “He saw something like this beside the license plate. He doesn’t remember anything about the plate itself.”

She tried not to feel disheartened. Dominic was an extraordinary discovery, but his testimony couldn’t be valued on the street. It had to withstand cross-examination.

Joseph pulled a pen and notebook from his jeans. He filled a page with notes and reproduced Dominic’s sketch. Then he and Zoe followed the boy home and had a conversation with his father—a sturdy man with salt-and-pepper hair. Joseph punched his cell number into the man’s phone and patted the boy on the head.

“*Zikomo*,” he said. “It is a good thing you have done.”

The child smiled and scampered back to his *chiyanto* game.



When the sun disappeared behind the corrugated metal horizon, they returned to the alley where Joseph had parked his truck. Zoe glanced at him and saw the disappointment in his eyes. It was obvious he had expected to learn more from an afternoon in Kanyama.

“This is a strange case,” she remarked.

“Every case is different,” he replied.

“Sure, but most of them follow a pattern. The perpetrator is a neighbor or family member. The crime happens near the victim’s home. The suspect covers it up with threats and bribery. This is different in every respect.”

“It’s different in *some* respects,” he corrected. “The girl could have known the perpetrator.”

“Sure. But why go to the trouble of driving into Kanyama at midnight? It’s as if he wanted her to disappear.”

Joseph nodded. “Or be violated again. The perfect cover for rape is another rape.”

“My God,” she exhaled, acknowledging the horrible symmetry of the idea.

“The question I have,” he went on, “is how did he snatch her so late at night?”

“We have to find her family.”

He nodded. “They’ll file a report eventually.”

She was about to ask another question when she heard the squeaking of brakes behind her. She glanced over her shoulder and saw a pickup truck blocking the alleyway—a truck carrying young men in green T-shirts. The driver stepped out of the cab, and Zoe’s heart lurched.

It was the hawkish boy in the green bandana.

The rest of his gang jumped out and surrounded them. Joseph made a move toward his truck, but a brawny kid stepped into his path. Zoe scanned the alley and saw that they were boxed in. The walls were too high to scale, and the neighbors were useless—they would never come to the aid of a stranger. *Why are they doing this?* she thought. *What do they want?* Suddenly she knew. *They want me.*

“Let me handle this,” Joseph said, stepping between Zoe and the bandana-clad leader. He spoke a string of heated words in Nyanja, but the young man just smirked, eyeing Zoe.

“What your name, *muzungu?*” he asked in heavily accented English.

“Don’t talk to him,” Joseph commanded her. He gave the boy a piercing look. “I’m a police officer. You touch us and I’ll throw you all in jail.”

The gang leader laughed as if Joseph had made a joke. “In Kanyama, police sleep. You sleep with *muzungu*, police?”

Zoe heard sniggering and glanced around. The gang had closed ranks. A wave of dread surged through her and spawned an equal but opposite wave of anger. She was certain Joseph was unarmed; Zambian police officers were rarely issued firearms. She searched the ground for a weapon but saw only scattered bricks ten feet away.

“Back off,” Joseph said darkly. “You don’t want to make an enemy of me.”

The gang leader looked annoyed. “What you do, police? You fight for *muzungu*? Rupiah Banda fight for *muzungus*.” He glanced around at his companions. “Police is friend of MMD.”

The allegation had its intended effect: the gang members began to grumble and curse. Emboldened, the gang leader tried to shove Joseph out of the way, but Joseph backhanded him across the face. The gang leader cried out and threw a wild punch, which Joseph easily ducked. He countered with a swift jab into the kid’s stomach. The gang leader doubled over, and Joseph pivoted on his feet, searching for another target. He managed to land two more punches before three boys took him down.

Zoe screamed as strong hands grabbed her from both sides. She fought back instinctively, twisting her body to escape their grasp and lashing out with her feet. She drove her heel into the jaw of a reed-thin young man, and he collapsed in a heap. She kicked a stocky boy in the stomach and hit him in the side of the head with her backpack. A third gang member wrapped her in a bear hug, and she kned him in the groin and crushed his nose with her palm.

But she was no match for a joint attack.

Two boys came at her from behind, lifting her off her feet. She kicked violently, screaming at the top of her lungs, as they pushed her into the dirt and held her down. She felt their rough hands yanking at her shirt, at her jeans. Time seemed to fragment like shattered glass. *No! Please, God, no!* Apparitions danced around her in the dusk. One of the boys sat on her thighs and another straddled her back. She began to lose touch with reality. *This can’t be happening! Not again!*

Suddenly, she heard a voice rise above the din. "Get away from her!" Joseph screamed. "Get back or I'll *shoot!*"

The weight on her thighs relented, as did the pressure on her back. She blinked, squinting through the dust clouding her contact lenses. Joseph was standing over a heap of bodies wielding an AK-47 rifle. At the sight of the roving barrel, the gang members who were still on their feet stepped back, and one of them dropped Zoe's backpack. Joseph trained the gun on their leader.

"I told you not to make an enemy of me," he hissed.

In an instant, fear replaced the gang leader's bravado, and he ran to the pickup truck. His compatriots followed, the injured stumbling behind the able-bodied. As soon as the gang leader keyed the ignition, he floored the accelerator and sped off down the lane, nearly throwing two of his companions out of the flatbed.

When they were gone, Zoe stood slowly, her whole body trembling. She leaned against Joseph's truck, feeling a relief so overwhelming it found no expression in her conscious thoughts. She watched Joseph as he fought to catch his breath. His clothes were coated with dirt, and he had a large scratch on his neck. At last she managed to speak.

"I didn't know you had a gun."

"I keep it in the truck," he growled. "My brother was in the army."

Zoe shook her head, struggling not to think about how close she had come to being raped. Then it struck her: the girl at the hospital had walked by this alley less than twenty-four hours ago. A man driving a silver SUV had abducted her, raped her, and abandoned her to the night. No one had come to her rescue. Zoe pictured her sleeping in her hospital bed, Dr. Chulu's monkey beside her, and heard the doctor's words: *Now she has you.*

Joseph picked up Zoe's backpack and dusted it off. "Where'd you learn to fight like that?" he asked, handing her the bag.

She let out a small laugh and felt some of the tension release. "I took self-defense classes in high school. I have a brown belt in taekwon do."

He raised an eyebrow and managed a half smile.

She opened the passenger door of the truck and climbed in slowly. "Can we stop by the hospital on the way back?" she asked when he joined her in the cab.

He gave her a baffled look. "Why?"

"The girl," she replied. "I'd like to see her again."