

## Chapter 8

# A Mother's Secret

Edited by Serendipity

What would you be willing to give up to save the life of your child?

I believe many women live life with the misconception that being a woman gives you the ability to be a mother; that once you conceive your instincts will kick in. For a mother nurturing will come naturally and you'll have it all down within a space of minutes.

A lot of people believe that a surrogate is the woman who carries the foetus but a mother is the person who lives with the child, the one who makes the doctors trips and ensures that the child has an education. I was never of that mind because I couldn't distinguish that definition from someone who is a mother or someone who is simply playing the role of a guardian and making sure that the child does not die while in their care. Would I be wrong to say that is nothing more than a woman taking the role of a guardian?

Being a mother means sacrifice, it means being able to love unconditionally and to accept that sometimes your children will not appreciate what you have given to them. They'll think the lies you told were to hurt them and that you never put anyone above yourself. Sometimes being a mother means losing yourself and giving up the thing that means most to you and other times it means having to accept in life, nothing's ever guaranteed. That

raising a child can be a hit or miss even when you've done your best.

As mothers we fail to understand the influence we have on our children, how they will live and act in future will to some degree always be a reflection of who we are. When we influence them in a way that they receive positively they will want to copy that aspect but when our influence is negative, they will live life trying to be everything but what we were. I am living proof of that, I have lived my life trying to be the opposite of the woman who raised me.

I do my best not to raise my voice to my daughter, she always has dessert after every meal and my words are punishment enough for when she does wrong. I don't compare her to others, nor do I make her feel like she doesn't have a voice. I never expected my mother to be a saint but all I ever wanted was for her to be a mother, to separate the queen who runs the kingdom with an iron fist from the woman who was supposed to always see me as her little girl. Unfortunately, I never got that, I was trained and taught to always live up to the standard, to always be the best.

Ironically, the one trait I hated most about my mother, is the one I inherited from her and it has stuck with me even till this day.

My mother writes all her thoughts and feelings in a diary and thanks to her, I do the same.

It used to be something innocent. I would sneak into the study and take a peek at some of her diaries just to know what she is thinking and who she really was. It was my way of communicating with her.

I stopped reading her diaries the day I found out the truth about the kind of woman she really is. It was a day before my father's funeral. I was looking for something, anything that belonged to him. I missed him and wanted to feel close to him again. In the study I found one of my mother's diaries, it was dated with the year she and my father got married. I hoped for a love story but learnt of a new family secret.

It started out simple with her talks of excitement, of how magnificent her wedding was and how she was in love but sadly it wasn't with my father.

*"Dear Diary*

*It's been three weeks since my wedding. It was a wonderful day, cake, flowers, musicians and an amazing guest list. I am now a married woman, married to a wonderful man. He is sweet and charming but Diary, he isn't the man I love.*

*I'm not in love with him and I don't think I'll ever love him. My parents wouldn't let me marry the one I love because he was a prince from another country. We met during a visit to Kenya. It was my first introduction to world politics and to him.*

*According to his culture, if I married him, I'd have to move to his country. That would mean removing the throne from my family and forcing me to let him dominate over me. I admit I don't like the idea of a man controlling me but when it comes to him, I am ready to submit and let him lead me wherever he wants to go.*

*Diary, I'm pregnant. I am two months pregnant and I'm so excited. I wonder if it's a girl or a boy but either way, I'll be happy. I love my baby so much and I am sad that she or he will never meet his or her father but I am glad I have a wonderful man to raise my child with.*

*I wanted to say goodbye to my prince the night before my wedding, it was only supposed to be a kiss but one thing led to another and we did it. It was amazing, there is no better way to say goodbye.*

*I love him so much and I'm happy to be able to carry his child. If I can't have his ring on my finger, then I'll have his child as a memory of our love. I've also decided that I'll never carry another child, whether I give birth to a girl or a boy. If I give birth to a boy, I'll call him Imani and if I have a girl, I will call her Mapenzi.*

*I can't wait to be a mother, I promise I'll be nothing like mine and my child will appreciate me. That's my promise, to my unborn child.*

*Signed*

*Queen Clarise."*

I read with bated breath and tear-filled eyes. It hurt knowing that my father wasn't my father, it hurt knowing that my mother lied to me about who I was but what hurt most was that I couldn't tell anyone.

I had to prevent the scandal from coming out, so I burnt the diary.

I wanted my father's memory to stay intact. Everything in me wanted to move away and get away from the lie. I hated my

mother and wanted to get away from her. I knew she would not let me leave of my own accord, so I blackmailed her to let me move to Paris. I'm not proud but I had to get away. All of this was happening two weeks after I married a stranger, now my father was a stranger to me. I had to get away.

Even though she said yes, I'm sure it wasn't because of the blackmail, I think she was afraid I'd read something else in one of her diaries. The day after I left one of the servants called and informed me my mother was burning all the diaries in the house.

My mother is a woman with too many secrets and I spent all my life trying not to be like her. Today, I feel like her reflection. A clone of all her mistakes, keeping secrets from the ones I love. I conceived with someone who wasn't my husband and to make matters worse, I waited until I loved him to cheat on him. We either immolate or become the opposite of what our parents stood for.

My mother was not perfect and she made mistakes. I tried my best to learn from them.

One thing I did learn from my mother though is that someone is always ready to read. So I never documented the things I did while in Europe, nor did I document that my daughter isn't her

father's child. I also didn't document that my daughter has a twin brother.

It is ironic that as I sit here in this hospital room, staring at my daughter and thinking to myself, how to save her life, the only person that comes to mind is Imani. The child I gave up to guarantee my happiness, is now the person I need.