

## Chapter 9

# Things Money Can't Buy

Edited by Serendipity

A problem shared is a problem half solved. I didn't know if my mine could be solved but it was time I shared it.

I knew I couldn't keep it a secret anymore, that I had to tell someone, anyone, before these secrets would hurt me, they had consumed me for so long. It's been 13 years but it's never too late for the truth.

I'm not sure if it's the thoughts or my guilty conscience but I struggle to sleep at night. It's why I'm always in the study, always working; the only positive consequence of my insomnia.

Maybe after admitting to my wrongdoings I'll be a better mother, a better wife and possibly, I'll be able to forgive myself for doing it in the first place. I'm not seeking personal justification but a little piece of mind would make it easier to sleep at night.

I wondered where I would begin, what would I say? I wondered whether I would blurt it all out or beat about the bush. Hopefully, he wouldn't judge me.

Hopefully, he'd understand that my intentions were pure and all I wanted to do was to have a family, keep my family intact and maybe bring everyone closer to him, closer to God. I wanted everyone to see it as a miracle, that women also deserved miracles.

To make it as simple as possible and to avoid an audience or unwanted attention, I made an appointment. I made sure I was early, dressed appropriately and prepared to tell him the whole truth.

The location was perfect for my intentions too; the statue of a mother and child, made me feel more at ease and the roses were so welcoming. The pond's reflection of the sun was inviting and even though I couldn't go in for a swim, looking at it was more than enough to keep me calm. It was Eden and I was Eve, ready to confess that another had tasted my forbidden fruit.

A beautiful brunch was set up for us.

I waited patiently for him, taking in the environment until finally, the moment arrived and he walked in. He walked up to me and gave me a hug, he then sat down with his hands held out to me and I knew that was his way of signalling me to begin the process.

Without hesitation, I placed my hands gently on his and said "*Forgive me Father, for I have sinned. It has been 15 years since my last confession. Father, truly, I don't know where to begin*".

With a comforting smile, he put his hand on my shoulder and said "*It is okay my child, talk to me and I will listen. You know the church is a safe place, I am not here to judge you... But before you begin, may I say that by the look in your eyes, I can tell that what lays in your heart weighs heavy, so I don't understand why you would wish to discuss it in the church garden out in the public.*"

I took a moment to admire his keen senses, then looked down at my wedding ring and then back at him. "*Father, before I begin my confession, I would like to confirm that everything I say shall stay between us correct?*"

He smiled and nodded at me, removing his hand off my shoulder and placing it back in mine.

*"The truth is Father, I wish to avoid any possible scandal. The media has always loved my family, so meeting you in a confessional or inside the church would leave room for gossip but meeting out here removes speculation and with a bit of misleading body language, I can control what they assume.*

*I plead for your understanding, what I am about to tell you brings me no joy and that the smiles and laughs in between my confession, will simply be to mislead the media. In a month Rafiki and I will be tying the knot again, having our meeting here will keep the focus on the wedding and keep me out of scandal. Please understand and don't judge",* I spoke with a smile and paused for a reaction.

I don't know if it's because my family contributes greatly towards the church but I could tell he agreed to play along. Clearly, he

wouldn't smile with me but there would be no frowns or tears from both of us.

I paused for a moment and took a sip of my tea, I looked to the sky to admire the birds and then continued my confession.

*"Father, my story begins 2 months before my marriage. My husband and I were on a trip to South Africa. It was one of his means to try and court me, it was a wonderful gesture but a failed attempt.*

*While on the trip we were involved in an unfortunate accident. A driver fell asleep behind the wheel and crashed into our car. I was stuck with a terrible headache and my husband was in a coma for 3 days.*

*At the time, I was between myself. Sad that if he died it would mean I would have to start this process again and meet a new suitor but happy that his death would mean postponing the*

wedding and I would be free for a few more months or even years.

*Fortunately, he did not die and the accident had brought some good news. While he was in the coma, I was informed that the accident had damaged my husband's reproductive organs and he would never be able to father a child.*

*You have no idea how delighted I was to hear such news, not carrying a child would be that I would be able to reign and secretly mock the entire system of our culture. It would also mean the throne would end with me and no child of mine would ever suffer the way I did.*

*I knew in order for my plan to work, my husband's predicament would have to be a secret. Without hesitation, I bribed the nurse and doctor who knew, so that I would avoid having to marry another man. They would be paid a large sum of money and move to another country, I would get to have the life I wanted with an outcome I was in control of.*

*My plan was flawless and it was working perfectly until a few years later when my husband was forced to take a second wife and I had fallen in love with him.*

*Little did I know at the time, no Queen had ever struggled to have a child and so there was never a fear the throne would end. The elders enacted a new law, that should the Queen not conceive, a young 'surrogate' would be brought in to help her.*

*I was hurt watching him marry Mfariji but I couldn't stop it. Since I had no child, everyone considered it to be a sign from God that I was meant to be a good leader but not a good mother.*

*As hurt as I was, I decided to accept it and move on. I made my bed, so I had to lay in it. I knew he couldn't have children, so everything that happened afterwards was a consequence of my actions.*

*Just as I was getting used to the pain of having to share him, I was surprised by the news that Mfariji was pregnant. I was baffled and thought to myself that it was impossible, so I hired a private investigator and the things I found out about her blew me away.*

*Turns out Mfariji was a loose woman, she loved sex and couldn't get enough of it. She had a history of cheating on her boyfriends and having lots of them. She had countless affairs on my husband under the guise of travelling for cultural enrichment purposes. She would leave the house once a month and travel to a foreign place and find some interesting local entertainment. I refused to believe it but had no choice once I saw the videos brought to me by the PI.*

*After a few tapes, the shock faded and I understood where her experience came from.*

*I watched the videos over and over, shocked and surprised, could the girl saying things like 'Daddy take it, it's yours' and 'I can be a slut for you any day' really be the timid girl who was married to my husband but then again it made sense how she could release the beast inside my tame husband.*

*I wasn't sure if she was using protection or not during her adventures and that was a major concern for me. Her sole purpose in our marriage was to bear a child for the throne, so I knew she definitely wasn't using it with him.*

*I actually stopped sleeping with Rafiki for a while. I should have told him why but how would I start, 'You are impotent and so I got suspicious of your second wife, so I had her investigated?'. I should have said something, I put his life at risk but the I was afraid he would hate me if he found out that I hid what effect the accident really had on him. He thought I was just jealous that I wasn't the one having the child and he gave me space.*

*My curiosity got the better of me and I went to Mfariji for advice on how she fell pregnant. She said she didn't know how she and my husband were able to conceive since they were using the withdrawal method.*

*I laughed with amusement but with that being said, it was safe to assume that Dada wasn't my husband's child and that Mfariji doesn't know the father of her child."*

I paused again, to take another sip of my now-cold tea but also to examine the priest's reaction.

Father Amani Zawadi, was a man of the cloth and like his name, he always harboured for peace.

Judging by the look on his face, I could tell he already knew of her indiscretions, so I continued with my confession.

*"By the lack of shock or astonishment in your eyes, I can tell you already knew, so I guess you are the reason she changed. According to the PI, she changed her ways after her daughter was born, which was around the same time she started visiting our church. So her ability to be monogamous, stems from you.*

*As I'm sure you have figured out, my daughter isn't my husband's child either. It was during the months I wasn't letting my husband touch me, I cheated on him and I conceived. To cover my tracks, one night while he was drunk, I undressed him and pretended we had slept together.*

*Lies, secrets and manipulation, I'm sure you think that's my confession but it's not.*

*When I was pregnant I went for sonars and scans and a lot of people knew that I was expecting but they also knew I was having twins.*

*I cheated on my husband and conceived twins.*

*God in his infinite humour decided to give me two miracles.*

*In the aim of ensuring my child could acquire citizenship in another country, I decided to give birth in America but before that, my husband and I had to stop in South Africa for a meeting with a few of his friends. I was on my way to meet him at the airport when my car was caught in a terrible rainstorm and crashed into a tree. The shock sent me into premature labour and I had no way of reaching a hospital.*

*The nearest hospital was informed of the situation and my status, so they decided to dispatch one of their nurses to act as a midwife, to help me with the safe delivery of my babies.*

*To my surprise, the nurse who came to my aid was the same nurse I bribed in order to keep my husband's impotency a secret away from the media. I could tell she recognized me from the look in her eyes.*

*She told me about what happened after my husband and I left the hospital 16 years ago. The doctor who was in on the secret with her took all the money for himself and left the country. She said she kept quiet about the secret because she knew no one would believe her if she said I bribed her because she had no money to prove it.*

*I thought she would blackmail me but to my surprise, she made me an offer.*

*She asked that I keep the girl and she takes the boy. She told me how she was old and lonely, that she had no one around. She reminded how my village placed importance on females and not males, that all I really needed was my little girl and that the boy would be safe with her.*

*I wish I could say I gave it a lot of thought but I knew I couldn't afford to run the risk of losing everything. Mfariji and Dada would lose out too, at the time we weren't close but we were*

*family. My people wouldn't have forgiven her for cheating on the king and Rafiki would be stripped of his title because he was unable to have children.*

*So I made the trade, she arranged for someone to pick the boy up while she took me and Uhuru back to the hospital. Everything was fine and sorted. Additionally, I gave her a huge sum of the money and sent her and my son abroad. He took her surname and became her son. At the hospital, she asked me to name my son so he could have something that came from me. I named him Imani, it was a simple name that meant faith. It was also the name my mother would have given me had I been born a boy. I suppose in some way, that was the first time I accepted I was just like my mother.*

*Over time my curiosity got the better of me and I tracked them down, she and I have been communicating ever since."*

The priest looked at me as if to say something but he just stared. I believe he was baffled that I managed to keep this a secret so long or that it was I, the girl he calls his Goddaughter telling him all this. In my subconscious, I knew I might have said too much

but I wished to be absolved from my sin, so I felt compelled to continue.

*"A month ago my daughter was in the hospital and was in need of a bone marrow transplant. It was selfish of me to ask but I requested that the nurse and Imani come to my rescue.*

*They did and my daughter was saved but I made the mistake of seeing Imani and he was more handsome than in the pictures.*

*Father, I don't want to take Imani from the mother he knows but I want to have another son and raise him, a son I can call my own.*

*Father, for these sins that I've mentioned and those that I've forgotten I ask that you forgive me. Earlier on I requested you don't judge me but a part of me wishes you did because it feels like the part of me filled with compassion is diminishing.*

*Father, I ask for forgiveness for the lies I've told and the secrets I've hidden but I also ask for forgiveness for my future sin because I'm planning to cheat on my husband again."*