



SAMPLE

healing
his MEDIC

NANA PRAH



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CHAPTER ONE

The dead weight of Navy Commander Akin Solarin's naval brother in his arms didn't keep him from running towards the hospital. Despite the strain in his legs and the burn in his chest, he didn't stop for one second. Ishaq Obatola had squeezed himself into a tight ball, moaning in agony while they'd been sailing on the dinghy from their destroyer, *Reckoning*. Akin's own stomach had clenched with sympathetic pain and worry. Such moaning couldn't spell anything minor.

Waiting for a helicopter to reach their ship for an emergency transport would've wasted critical hours. When they had landed on the shores of The Gambia, they'd ordered a taxi to get them to the hospital with great haste.

Bursting through the doors of the Emergency Room, Akin spotted an empty stretcher and lay his friend onto it. Ishaq groaned as he rolled onto his side and tucked his knees to his chest.

“We need help. Help us!” he bellowed.

The four other officers who’d escorted them off the ship looked around the empty space and joined in the call, pushing open doors in search of someone. Anyone.

A woman came running through a pair of double doors that one of his men had yelled into. Her gaze darted around the room in alarm. Once they fell on the man curled up on the stretcher, she propelled into motion, reaching for a gown from a shelf and slipping it on in the few steps it took to reach them. “What happened?”

Did it matter? His best friend was in agony. Taking a breath, Akin drew on

logic. “He said he’s been feeling unwell and complained of severe pain in the lower part of his abdomen. On the ship, he said it might be his appendix and insisted that he had plenty of time before he’d have to see a doctor.”

As the medic put on a mask with a plastic shield attached, two more hospital workers arrived. A pair of gloves completed the first woman’s outfit before she rushed to the stretcher, where she placed two fingers along the side of Ishaq’s neck. “What’s his name?”

“Ishaq Obatola.”

“Mr. Obatola, can you hear me?”

Without opening his eyes, he groaned before mumbling, “Appendix.”

“That’s for us to determine. Let’s roll him into the examination room,” she said in a crisp British accent that meant business.

Akin followed the squeaky stretcher through the swinging doors into a semi-private room. “It’s *Doctor Obatola*.”

The woman snapped her gaze up to Akin. “A medical doctor?”

He nodded. “Yes. So he should know what he’s talking about.”

“Dr. Obatola, I need you to lie on your back for me,” the woman coaxed.

He could only presume her to be the doctor from the way she’d taken control and everyone else deferred to her.

She and another fully protected worker helped Ishaq onto his back while someone else took his temperature and blood pressure. Akin admired their ability to work as a tight-knit team.

Her fingers hovered over Ishaq’s belly. “I’m going to palpate your abdomen.”

Ishaq tried to draw his legs up in an attempt to prevent the woman from

touching his belly. He drew in a breath before opening his lids to look at the doctor with bloodshot eyes. “Right lower quadrant pain,” he mumbled.

“The rebound tenderness will make me pass out,” he added after a deep grunt. “I’ll give up my license if it isn’t an appendicitis. It hit me too fast. Ultrasound, no time for X-ray. Surgery.”

He then closed his eyes, his breaths harsh and fast.

The doctor considered him for a moment before turning her head to one of her staff. “Sara, please bring the ultrasound machine.”

Akin’s heart slowed its pounding as his esteem of her went up. She’d decided to listen to her patient rather than her ego.

“Blood pressure is ninety over sixty, pulse one-twenty, respirations forty. Temp

is thirty-nine,” the only male attending to Ishaq read out as he wrote on a paper.

The person she'd sent for the ultrasound came sliding to a halt with the equipment.

The doctor set up the machine. “I’m going to need you to lie flat so I can scan you.”

Ishaq swallowed hard, and with a strength Akin admired, did as she asked. Clenched fists and jaw were the only signs his friend showed of being in pain as the doctor did her work.

She spoke directly to Ishaq when the grey picture came on the screen. “We’re taking you to surgery, Dr. Obatola. Your abdomen is filled with fluid.”

“Burst.”

“Yes, your appendix has ruptured. Monica, alert the surgical team of an emergency appendectomy. Tariq, draw

blood for a complete blood count, type, cross and match.”

Akin gripped the edge of the trolley as terror squeezed the air out of his chest. He'd prefer taking out a slew of enemies in battle rather than seeing someone he considered a brother die.

The doctor touched Akin's shoulder. Warmth and a tingle made its way along his arm.

“We'll take good care of him.”

Her reassuring grin alleviated a fraction of his trepidation. The awareness of her as more than a medical personnel did not.

CHAPTER TWO

Exhausted, with eyes too gritty to keep open without effort, and sipping on lukewarm coffee, Doctor Comfort Djan stepped into the long hallway. Her walk towards the testosterone-crowded waiting room set her belly quivering. The overpowering presence of the men had weighed on her as they'd watched her every move in the Emergency Room.

The surgery she'd assisted Dr. Peters with had taken hours longer than expected. She'd heard of doctors not taking care of themselves—hell, she could plead guilty—but she didn't think it was the case with her patient. Things had gone wrong for him too quickly to control.

She didn't look forward to updating the group of Dr. Obatola's condition. She should've opted to review the patients for Dr. Peters instead.

Hovering outside the door of the waiting room, she assessed the group. She'd never considered a man in a military uniform sexy, but these guys made her reconsider. Each stood as a mountain on his own, but the one she'd spoken to in the Emergency Room snagged her attention. Everything about him screamed leader. Guardian.

From his intense deep brown eyes, which complimented his golden skin, to his broad chin. She'd noticed the flare of his upturned nostrils when he'd heard something he didn't like. His firm lips had stayed pressed together as he'd given a curt nod when he'd been told that his friend had to be rushed to the operating room.

As if sensing her, the man raised his head and went from seated to standing at a height of what had to be six-foot-two in one lithe movement. The others followed.

She walked up to him, attempting to stay just far enough away so she wouldn't have to crane her neck in order to glance

past the darkened shadow of stubble covering his strong jaw and into his expectant eyes.

Flanked by his men, she mentally reinforced that this was her domain, not theirs. “Mr...”

Had she learned his name? No.

“Akin.”

“Mr. Akin—”

“No, just Akin. How is he?”

She clasped her hands in front of her and squeezed. “Dr. Obatola made it through the surgery.”

The collective sigh of relief warmed the air.

She held up a hand to provide the rest of her news. “Not only had the appendix ruptured, but he had a diffuse infection of the peritoneum. When—”

“You just operated on the only man among us who could’ve understood what you just said.”

Akin’s scowl disturbed her. How could such a handsome face look so frighteningly reprimanding?

“Can you please speak English?” he continued.

She could do without his harsh tone, but the request was acceptable. “A small structure of his intestine burst open, and the inner lining of his abdomen was infected.”

She scrunched her nose as she remembered the offensive smell which had gushed into the operating room when they’d cut him open.

“We normally make a small incision to remove the appendix.” She held her thumb and pointer finger about four inches apart. “The incision we made is much bigger because we needed to clean out his abdomen. He has a tube connected to a bulb in place to drain out the fluid. Depending on the amount of drainage he has overnight, we’ll see if we can remove it tomorrow.”

She dragged her gaze away from Akin’s and focused on the friendliest-looking of the four. “We have him on pain

medication and antibiotics. He's resting comfortably."

"Can we see him?" the friendly-looking one asked, with a crooked grin.

"Yes, but only for a short while."

"Thank you, Dr..." Akin looked down at her chest. Her hardening nipples didn't understand that he'd only searched for her nametag. "Djan."

"I'll show you the way."

Or she could direct them there so she'd be out of their presence. When had her body ever reacted to a man just looking at her before?

It must be the fatigue.

Akin had never experienced such a rush of lightheaded relief as when he saw Ishaq. How could a dark-skinned man look pale? It was a wonder his best friend hadn't died.

"I'm going to kick your ass, just as soon as the doctor gives the okay to do so. Why the hell did you wait so long? You're a damn doctor."

Ishaq's eyes crept open with a groan. "I'm on my deathbed, and you're yelling at me? What kind of brother are you?"

"One you scared the hell out of," Akin answered. "She said they had to gut you and clean out all of your shit, but you'll be fine."

Ishaq's smile was small, but present. A good sign. "I'm sure that's exactly how she expressed it."

"She left out the shit part," Dubem said. "But we knew what she meant."

Ishaq responded with a grunt as his eyes closed.

Akin took a moment to send up a gruff prayer of gratitude. God hadn't featured much in his life, but he couldn't deny His presence during times like this.

They stepped away from the bed to let their brother rest.

Dubem rubbed his hands together. "Now that I know he's okay, there's a fine honey I'd like to talk up."

Commander Dubem Nzeogwu had the reputation of getting any woman he lusted

after with little more than a flash of his double dimples and a few sweet words. Did he want to make a play on Dr. Djan? Akin's short nails dug into the flesh of his palms.

They'd made it to the door when the soft patter of feet caught his attention. The woman who'd helped save Ishaq's life swept into the room with a nod and an antiseptic scent. She went to their comrade and spoke in soft tones Akin couldn't discern. He turned his full attention towards her, unable to keep his eyes from roaming along the lushness of a body that even a baggy light green uniform couldn't hide.

Dubem's low whistle made it to Akin's ears.

For the first time in a very long time, a deep stab of jealousy twisted in his gut, and he restrained himself from punching the pretty boy in the jaw. "Don't even try it."

Dubem's eyes narrowed for a flash. Akin got the impression that he'd been seen as a rival the man hadn't expected.

Dubem raised both hands up in defence and laughed, distilling the tension that had crept between them. "Fine."

Dr. Djan glanced in their direction. Akin's heart stilled for an incredible moment as their gazes met. Her obsidian eyes held his as he soaked in the flawlessness of her dark skin. The scar reaching upward from her eyebrow to the hairline intrigued him. What had caused it?

He'd probably never know.

The corners of her lips rose into a slight smile as she focused on her patient again. Yes, her beauty had captivated him, but the innate sorrow he'd witnessed in her irises tore at his spirit. Screaming at him to bring her peace. What could've happened in her life that had caused her eyes to be filled with such agony and despair? It had registered earlier, but he'd

blamed the observation on his own anxiety.

“Akin,” Dubem said.

“What?”

“They don’t like it when you stare.”

At the sound of Dubem’s chuckle, Akin forced himself to look away to glare at his friend.

The laughter continued. “Just a bit of advice. With your *charming* personality, you’ll need all the help you can get.”

Akin knew the truth when he heard it. Unless the woman liked direct, forthright men who couldn’t stay in one location to save his life, he had no chance.

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