

***All the things  
she said,***

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***- Akua Lormane***

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## Chapter 1

Sunday, 13 Oct

Afternoon

Present "Hello, this is the Manhattan Police Department. How may I help you?"

"H-Hello? I just heard a gunshot in the area; it sounded close. I have kids here, and..."

"Y-yes, of course"

'Everything will be alright. How is the victim doing? Is her pulse regular? Is she still breathing? Please tell us your location, and we will take care of it,'" said Detective Kim.

"Certainly," replied the person on the other end.

"My location is 840 Park Avenue."

"We will be there shortly, Ma'am," Detective Kim assured the woman on the other line.

840 park avenue

"The victim has been identified as Carmen Bordeaux, 21 years old, and she has been sent to the hospital, sir," reported someone else. "Okay, I want your team to investigate this case. Emily, I trust you on this," said Detective Kim. "Yes, sir," replied Emily.

As a photo was taken, Detective Kim said, "Send this to the forensic team. I want research of when this happened and why as soon as possible."

“Right away, sir,” responded someone else.

“Jayden, son I want you to lead the case.”

"Dad, I am really busy, and I am not sure if I am the right fit. I do not have a lot of time on my hands." Jayden said.

“This is very important to me, son. She is from a prestigious family and very important”, Detective Kim replied.

“Sir, we have a problem,” someone else interrupted. “Trust me, son, lead the case,” said Detective Kim to Jayden.

“Do you have any leads already? What exactly happened, and why was she bruised in her own house? What did the offender do to the young miss? Are they going to get away with this?” asked Detective Kim.

"This is going to be a complicated case, even worse if she dies. There are no leads yet," Detective Kim added.

"What should we do?" asked Jayden. The sole individual identified in her file as her official guardian is 46-year-old Lilian Bordeaux."

Lillian? Could it be? Detective Kim thought to himself.

“Someone inform her about the incident, please." He commands.

"I want to know what exactly the victim did in the last 24 hours, who she was with, where she intended to go, anything."

Investigation room:

"Madame, my name is James Stuart. I'm very sorry about your current situation, but with your help, maybe we can find new leads. Please cooperate with us."

"My daughter's condition is critical, and I am not sure what you want from me! Little do I know what she was doing in the last 24 hours! I want to know who hurt my daughter, and if she dies and the murderer is still wandering around, you will be accountable for it. Excuse me, I have to go."

"Lilian, I'm sorry I had to."

"I don't have time for this, Ji Hyun. Let her go, it's alright."

Evening:

"Carmen, I have failed as a mother. I'm sorry for not being there when you needed me..."

\*Knock\*

"Hey, Mrs. Bordeaux, how is she doing?"

"Better, I hope. Thank you for coming, Marya."

"No worries. I am sure Carmen will make it through this as well."

"I hope so. I do. She has been strong since her childhood. She is still so young, and I feel like I took her for granted. How could this happen to her in her own apartment I have failed her." Lillian says as she holds Carmen's hand hoping it would help her awake faster. hoping that she would get answers about why her only daughter was treated so miserably.

"I know she is probably listening right now, but she always appreciated you no matter how busy you were."

"Thank you."

"Wake up, Carmen. Tell me what happened to you. Who did this to you?"

## Chapter 2~Carmen

Sunday, 2nd February (the year before the crime)

Somehow, every time I sleep, I find myself running. It's always dawn, and he's after me.

I never look back; instead, I continue running through the dimly lit autumn leaves.

He's following me. He knows who I am, he knows what I saw and how I look. It's going to rain; I can smell it, and I'm tired, but I will not give up, not now.

He's too fast, getting closer. Now there are cars everywhere. But every time I try to turn around, it hits me: that loud, eerie sound in my darn. head. And I wake up. Sweating. Crying about something that I cannot vividly remember anymore.

Monday, 3rd February

Morning

Manhattan's early mornings with the perfect view are one of the things I enjoy in life. On my 21st birthday, my mother decided to buy me this penthouse, which I am very grateful for since it was the first and last birthday present, I received from her. I decided to wear my casual business attire, as I felt like today wouldn't be that much of a special day. I wish I could share this day with Jamal.

I called him JJ. Jamal junior. He was the best brother I could wish for and more.

I stop at the Park Avenue café to buy an espresso and head to my company. To say that it is mine is a little exaggerated since my mother is still the CEO of the company, and I am just the chief executive. I do like calling things that will soon belong to me mine.

"Good morning, Carmen, ready for today?" Lina, my employee asks me and waits for my reaction.

"I don't quite know what to be ready for?" I say and start walking faster in hopes that she will leave me alone. "Well... Today is the art exhibition, was it?" she adds. "Of course, I knew that."

"Get the art team together. I want to have a word with them." I tell her as I enter the elevator.



"Yes, of course." She replies.

"Always acting like the big boss," she whispers under her breath. I decided to ignore her comment and step into the elevator and watch her walk away.

The first time I met my mother, I was just six years old. Ever since then, I felt miserable, but not because of her. She was never the reason that I know. However, I tend to blame it on her. I chuckle to myself with just the thought of it. I can hear them talking and watching, and I cannot help but smile at them because it is so funny that they just view me as a rich heiress. Carmen, the beautiful woman, had it all because she was lucky.

People can be very pessimistic.

"Carmen!" She always looks at me with such guilt and so much expectation. This is all her fault. If she never left...

"Yes, Mother," I smile at her and try to hide my frustration.

"Are the preparations going well?" She asks and slightly tilts her head to the right. "Yes, I'm taking care of it. I was about to head to the art team and make sure the exhibition goes as planned." "Good."

"Head to the meeting. There is so much to do today,"

"Okay."

If there was something that never failed to meet my expectations, it would be the exhibitions held at Mondue Marketing.

I wouldn't want to sound self-centered, but after every event, I would allow myself to buy one of our products for my satisfaction. As I preferred.

## 1 HOUR BEFORE ART EXHIBITION

06:00 pm

I cream my ebony dark skin with the la Mer body cream which I bought last week, calling myself that reminds me of a column not too long ago. It questioned things it should not have. They saw past my qualifications and abilities and focused more on how an exquisite ebony skinned woman could rise in business thanks to her rich grandparents, pathetic. I decided to put on a gray silk dress with matching earrings and light makeup but bold rouge, straightened my wavy hair, put on my black shoes, and headed out from my apartment to the occasion.

## ART EXHIBITION

"I would like to give a toast, especially to the art team who made this exhibition possible. We are glad that you could come to this event. Enjoy this beautiful night and thank you for supporting Mondue Marketing. We assure you will find eye-catching artworks, Bissous."

Certainly, my mother knows how to open an event. I look at the pieces and sip from the champagne that the waitress just served me.

"Beautiful event, dear." I follow the familiar voice. "Mrs. Wayne, thank you very much." Even with that beautiful smile, you won't be able to hide your obnoxious ways, Carmen, remember that."

I can't believe this woman came to my event to insult me after all I did for her company. I smirk unwillingly walk towards her and say: "Well, it seems like your husband is surely enjoying our event. Even if he is our business partner, he shouldn't get so close to our employees. Have a good night, ma'am."

"Ruthless bitch" She whispers to me so only I would hear.

She shouts, only embarrassing herself with that tongue of hers.

How imprudent of her. If I would teach her a lesson. However, it would only do me harm. Out of anger, I take the biggest artwork I see and head out of the exhibition.

"Carmen!" I hear my mother call me after taking a few steps out of the exhibition.

Although I am a bit hesitant, I walk out onto the street with no jacket on a cold February night.

I breathe in and out as I hear steps approaching me. I start walking faster with the Canva in my hand. But I am sick of running away.

I turn around, petrified; it's too dark to see anything, but there is a shadow that I notice. He appears strangely familiar.

It's turning away now.

Could it be? Could he still be alive after all these years?

## Chapter 3

Monday, 14 Oct .2022

They say that tragedy follows people like a shadow. Some are born luckier than others, attracting love and peace, but some are meant to live a tragic life. All her life, she dealt with hardship and loss—from leaving her only home to moving to an unknown country. Grief and loss clung to her; every day and night, she could feel her emptiness, her weariness.

Even though the sun was shining through the café, she already knew that she was about to find out about what happened to her only daughter, Carmen. Maybe she felt a certain comfort knowing that Ji-Hyun would be the one telling her what happened the night her daughter was shot. Tears started flowing down her face as she quickly wiped her face with her silk handkerchief.

Shortly after that, Ji-Hyun, and the forensics finally had answers to what happened. Ji-Hyun could see the pain in her eyes when he stepped into the café. He held the report in his hands and looked at her with remorse and sadness. As she held her hands to her face, she told him to cut to the chase. She didn't want to wait to know what had happened to her daughter. He kept it from her the awful things the culprit did. The gun, the bruises. He felt guilty.

"It must have happened a few hours before she was found. She has scars on her body, which means that she was attacked or had a conflict with... the culprit." He looks at her and waits for a reaction, but there is none. Her eyes looked even more empty than almost 19 years ago. "I - I don't know what to say, I..." Her breath becomes more unstable with every word she says.

"That's not all. The culprit must have smashed something to her head, which led to excessive brain damage. Luckily she survived."

He stops, reminding himself that he was being too straightforward and acting more like a detective than a friend. Even if that was years ago, she has been through too much. He pushes his coffee and grabs her hand to assure her that everything would be alright.

Even if it was just for a moment, she knew that this was wrong; he had a wonderful wife and a well-educated son following in his footsteps.

All her life, Lillian had called herself the black sheep. She believed that she was ill-omened, so much that everything that had happened to her proved her right. It was her fault after all. She did not deserve to be happy. It was her fault.

She slowly removes his hands from hers. "We haven't seen each other for so long, and this is how we meet again." She smiles gloomily and gets up.

"Next time we see each other, let's not come as old friends but as a mother and a detective." She stands up and heads for the exit.

On the inside, Ji-Hyun wishes she would turn around and look at him once more, but she doesn't.

"She hasn't changed one bit," he whispers to himself and finishes his coffee. When he was about to go and pay, he got a phone call from his wife. He suddenly remembers how cunning she can be and that she tends to follow every step that he makes.

"Yeobo (Darling), is something wrong?"

"No, can't a wife call her husband during work hours?"

"Well, can't I be worried about you, Hyeon ja?"

"When will you be home today? My mother will be coming over; we are going to have a family dinner with Jayden."

"I will be there."

"Al-as-seo (okay). Don't be late."

After the phone call, Ji-Hyun went back to the police department and enjoyed his family dinner with his wife, son, and mother-in-law after work.

Meanwhile, Lillian had to deal with her company that was on the verge of extinction without her daughter; it didn't feel the same anymore. She was burnt out and had no one to go home to.

Everything reminded her of what she had lost.

While everyone ended their exhausting day at home, she'd return to the hospital to lie next to her daughter, who was in a coma. For the first time in a very long time, she bowed her head down to pray to the God her family believed in so much.

"If I am worth praying to you if you are listening, please help my daughter. Let her see the light once more, mon Dieu."

For the first time in her life, this was the one thing she believed in—that her daughter would awake, and that this nightmare would soon be over.

~ Carmen

Someday in the past

A day I wish to forget, yet it clings to me. Every day, I yearn for a different life, one without the shadows of my past.

"I hope you take care of it, Carmen. I trust you with this project, especially after what happened at the last exhibition," Mother said.

"The artwork was mine, Mother. I never stole anything, and I am in charge, aren't I?" I retorted, frustration lingering.

She chuckled.

Later, during a meeting, Marya expressed concern, "Are you okay, Carmen? You seem all over the place; it's unlike you."

"I'm fine, Marya. No need to worry," I replied dismissively.

"Well, if you say it like that, then I get worried even more, girl," Marya persisted.

"Maybe you should mind your own business and leave me alone," I snapped.

"Carm...," Marya stammered, "You're always so mean."

Marya, with her focus on looks and societal norms, never understood my struggles. I chuckled, reflecting on our differing worlds.

Last night, a familiar aura engulfed me. Why, if he's alive, didn't he kill me as a fragile kid?

Flashback 15 years ago – a fragile six-year-old, witness to things no child should endure.

Lillian, defying family expectations, chose love. Chaos ensued, leaving me and my brother as unwanted heirs.