

A close-up photograph of a woman's face. Her eyes are closed, and her mouth is covered by a white cloth. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the texture of her skin and the dark, thick eyelashes. The overall mood is intimate and serene.

AUSTIN MITCHELL

*No Tears
for Sonya*

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by
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Chapter One

Sonya Brown was getting ready to go out with her occasional boyfriend, Mickie Harris, when her cell phone rang. Her boss, Chester Guthrie, was on the line. They talked for about two minutes before he ended the call.

“Who was that?” Mickie asked.

“Chester, he wants me to come to the office tomorrow at ten o’clock. He says it’s an emergency.”

“That damn slave driver, what does he want that can’t wait until Monday?”

“You’re still bitter at him for firing you after that detective told him about you and Tanya.”

“That guy was lying.”

“Why did you have to go out with her when you know that she was Chester’s woman?”

“She begged me to go with her for a drink. We never went to any hotel.”

“I still want to know why you did it? I was calling you while you were with her and only getting your voicemail.”

“That was almost two years ago and we’ve gone over it many times since. We don’t know why Chester wants you down at the store tomorrow.”

“Maybe he’s doing some stock taking, but I worked until three o’clock today and he didn’t say anything to me.”

“You think he could have found out.”

Sonya bit her lips.

“About what?”

“The apartment and the three taxis you have on the road.”

“I don’t think it’s that. He can’t prove that I’ve ever stolen any money from his hardware store.”

“Still want to go out again?”

“No, I’m sorry. I want to know what he has up his sleeves.”

“I told you to leave from about four years ago, but you wouldn’t listen.”

“Leave and go where? You know that if I resigned, he would get suspicious. I’ve been with him, since leaving high school almost twelve years now.”

Mickie patted the gun at his waist, hidden by his sports shirt. Sonya also carried a gun in her handbag. It was a Smith and Wesson, Colt. 22. She had completed a firearms instruction course. She had been careful not to let any of her colleagues know about it.

“Do you want me to get Carlos to bump him off? We made him take care of Judy when she got too nosy.”

“Are you crazy? And as to what happened to Judy, you know that I had nothing to do with it.”

Judy Binns had been one of Chester’s assistants and she had begun to ask some awkward questions. One day she saw Sonya writing receipts for customers in an irregular receipt book. She had threatened to go to Chester.

Sonya had wanted to give the girl a good beating, but Mickie had suggested that they used Carlos to beat her up. God, she hated Judy. It was like Chester had set her to watch her. Sometimes she would burst into her office unannounced. She was still in shock when she heard that Judy had been killed in a hit and run accident. She had refused to give Mickie any money to give Carlos.

She remembered Alton West. They had been going around for a year before she ended the relationship. Alton kept turning up at her gate at all sorts of hours, begging her for another chance. He had lost his job, the bank had seized his car, in fact, he was almost bankrupt with credit card debts of over half a million dollars. True, she had helped him run up the credit card debts, but she didn't want any broke pocket men around her. One night, she had called the police on him. He got into an altercation with them and was shot. He died the next day in hospital. His family and friends had blamed her for his death, but she felt blameless. Nothing came out of the case. The policeman who shot him claimed that he fired his gun in self defense after the man stabbed at him with a knife. She felt that after eight years, it was time to put the whole episode behind her.

"We don't know what he's up to. I think we should wait."

"What if that detective is spying on us and reporting to Chester?"

"What could he report? The money from the apartment is sent straight to my bank account and remember that you manage my taxis."

"Suppose he finds out about us?"

"He doesn't know that I've stopped seeing Skippy."

"I'm tired of this kind of life. We have to be hiding just because of one man."

"You've just got to be patient. Things will work themselves out."

"It's like all his employees are slaves. He doesn't trust any of them. That's why he fast into their business so much. I'm glad I'm no longer working for him."

Sonya came and hugged Mickie. She could feel his frustration. Maybe after tomorrow she would know what to do about Chester.

"Let's go down to Randy Chin's bar and have a few drinks. It might make you feel better."

"Okay, but I just feel like going with you tomorrow and let him know about us."

She wondered what Mickie was talking about. They had too many break ups over the five years they had known each other. She certainly didn't want anymore relationships with him. She would soon tell him that they should let their relationship remain as employer and employee. That would put him down a peg or two, but she didn't care.

"I'll lock up the house and we can go."

That morning, Sonya left for her work place at nine o'clock. Being a Sunday there was hardly any traffic on the roads. As she drove down, she thought of calling Mickie. He had dropped her home last night before leaving for his flat. As she neared the entrance to the store on Barnes Avenue in Constant Spring Gardens, she was shocked to see yellow tape and policemen.

A car had crashed into the gate! It was Chester's BMW! The front doors were open and police photographers were snapping

away. A small crowd had gathered. She stopped her car on the other side of the road, flung open the car door and rushed out. She dashed across the road. Other police vehicles with their sirens flashing were coming on to the scene.

“Miss, move away from the yellow tape, you’re disturbing our work,” a young policewoman shouted at her.

Policemen were all over, taking photos of the scene.

“It’s my boss’ car. What happened to him? Is he injured? Was he shot? I saw blood in his car.”

“Miss, move away from the tape,” an inspector growled at her.

Sonya did as the inspector ordered.

She saw a security guard and called him over. She couldn’t remember his name, their employer changed them so often.

“Just as I came on duty, Miss and Mister Chester drove up, I heard the gunshots. By the time I turned around, the car sped around the corner and disappeared.”

“How long ago it happened? Is Chester badly injured?”

“About a hour ago, Miss. It’s in his head he got most of the bullets. He looked dead to me.”

“You know what colour car it was?”

“It was a white car. Everything happened so fast that I didn’t even have time to see what kind of car it was .”

Mickey drove a silver colored Nissan Tida. She drove a Suzuki Swift Hatchback. The guard left and went to stand with a group of onlookers.

Sonya took out her cell phone and called Mickie again, but all she got was his voice mail. She decided to wait around and see what was happening. Within a half hour most of the staff members were there. Chester’s wife, Delta and other family members were also there. Some of them, including Delta and some employees were crying. Watching them Sonya had to hold herself, not to join them in shedding tears too. She got on her cell phone to other staffers whose numbers she had and let them know what had happened. Some of them lived far away.

Everybody left after the police finished what they were doing. Sonya returned home and tried to call Mickie but all she got was his voice mail. She wondered if she had mislaid her gun, but she searched all the places she would have put it, but to no avail.

Two hours later Delta, called her, Chester had been pronounced dead at hospital.

A few mintes later, her cell phone rang again. She picked it up and pressed the call button.

It was Kirk Palmer one of Mickie’s friends.

“Sonya, I have to talk to you. We can’t do it over the phone. Can I come up and see you?”

“What for, Kirk?”

“It’s about Mickie.”

“What about him?”

“I can’t talk now.”

“Okay, so come up then.”

Sonya was in tears.

“I can’t believe it. Saturday night we were down at Randy Chin’s

sports bar. Now you're telling me that you dropped him at the airport this morning and he's bound for Montego Bay."

"I heard that Chester was shot dead this morning. Do you think he had something to do with it?" Kirk asked.

Kirk was a former employee of Chester's Hardware, but he had left three years ago.

Sonya started drying her tears.

She didn't know what Mickie running away to Montego Bay meant. She went for her laptop.

Mickie had cleaned out one of the bank accounts. That was the one on which she had made him a signing officer. How he had managed to get into the account without her permission was a mystery to her. He must have used one of his tech savvy friends to do it. Nevertheless, the bank had a lot of explaining to do, she thought. She checked her investment accounts, these were intact and so was her main bank account. She looked at Kirk.

"At least he hasn't left the island," Kirk remarked.

"He must be planning to do that, or why would he go down there?"

"What should I do? I can't go to the police."

"Why not? All you have to do is to come clean to them."

"Kirk, you wouldn't understand. I have to find Mickie or else I'll be in big trouble."

The next day Sonya went to work. The whole office was in turmoil over Chester's death. Delta came in and took control of everything. Sonya was petrified lest any fingers got pointed at her for causing Chester's death when she didn't know a thing about it. She was gravely worried about Mickie and the loss of her gun. As she sat at her desk in the accounting office that morning she wondered what could have happened to it. She should report the loss to the police.

At lunch time she drove up to Manor Park and had lunch at Oscar Chin's restaurant. When she returned, she saw two police cars parked in the customer's parking lot. She became petrified and wondered what they wanted.

One of the security guards pointed to the two police cars and told her that detectives were inside questioning the staff. As she went to her office, she wondered what they were going to ask her.

Surprisingly the detectives only talked to Delta. They were locked up in the board room with her for about half hour. They then left. Sonya heaved a sigh of relief. It would give her enough time to find out where Mickie was.

She left work that evening still in a trance. She drove up to her sister, Marsha's house in Barbican. Her eldest and youngest sisters were in the United States. Marsha was the one she followed. She had a half brother but he was dead. Her parents were both dead. Her father, in a drunken stupor, fell down a gully in Red Hills, one night and broke his neck. Her mother never recovered from his tragic passing and died two years later.

"My God, so what are you going to do, Sonya?" Marsha asked.

They were in her living room talking.

Marsha was married to a senior banker. He was employed to one of the biggest banks on the island. They had two children, a boy and a girl.

"What I fear is that he could have used my gun to kill Chester," she told her sister.

"I always told you that I never liked that guy."

"I never knew that he would behave that way," Sonya remarked. She knew that she wasn't telling Marsha the truth.

"Does Mickie's parents know about him?"

"I think that all they know is that he went down to Montego Bay to do some business."

Sonya left Marsha's house that evening feeling as if the whole world was closing in on her. It had begun to rain so she took her time on the road.

When she reached home, she tried calling Mickie again. All she got was his voice mail. She began to wonder if he had skipped the island. It was raining even heavier now. She was glad that there were no leaks in the roof of her small flat in Molynes Gardens.

She went to the office that morning, still petrified at what the police and Delta might find out about her.

Delta appointed her sister's husband as the new manager. Sonya thought that he looked to be in his mid forties. Delta said that he previously worked as a security manager at a hotel on the North Coast. His name was Norman Minott. He held a staff meeting that morning where Delta introduced him to the staff. After that it was back to work.

By the end of the week the staff was beginning to settle down. She heard nothing about the funeral arrangements for Chester. She knew that it was early and the autopsy hadn't been performed as yet. On Sunday she was feeling more relaxed. She still hadn't heard from Mickie. She suspected that his parents were worried about him too.

On Monday a brash young detective visited the office.

He and Mister Minott were in the board room for about forty five minutes before the latter told her that the policeman wanted to talk to her.

She felt that this young policeman couldn't be more than twenty five years of age. She was surprised that such a young man could be a corporal already. It showed that he was smart, so she had better not underestimate him.

He introduced himself as Corporal Dwayne Duggan.

She gave him her name and address. She told him that she was a senior accounting clerk with the organization.

"How long have you been working at Chester's hardware?"

"Over ten years."

"Do you have any idea why he wanted you to come to the office on a Sunday morning?"

Sonya hesitated before replying. If she told him that she didn't know he might feel that she was lying.

"Some new stocks had come in and he wanted me to help him to check them off."

"He and you alone?"

"No, Hal Johnson and Merris Dehaney were going to be there."

Hal and Merris both worked as cashiers at the hardware.

"Do you own a gun, Miss Brown?"

It was like a bomb had been dropped on her. She felt her pulse racing.

She looked him squarely in the eyes before she denied owning a gun.

He left but told her that he would be back with some further questions.

Over lunch with her colleagues, Layne Howard and Nina Holmes, she refrained from saying anything about her interview with the policeman.

They were at Joyce's restaurant, a short distance from where they worked. Layne was a cashier while Nina was a counter clerk.

"I heard that Chester will be buried next month," Nina told them.

"And up to now the police haven't found out who killed him," Layne remarked.

"Well, I'm sure it wasn't I," Nina declared.

"Chester, as all of us knew, had a lot of enemies," Sonya stated.

She was of course referring to the threats she knew he had received from at least three other hardware merchants. They had warned him about undercutting their prices.

Chapter Two

When they were back at work, Sonya was in deep thoughts as she did her work. She knew that she had better keep away from the police. She had never gone to jail, but had several close brushes with the law.

When she reached home that evening she didn't immediately start looking after dinner but sat thinking.

She remembered as a young teenager, seeing her mother rushing out of the house and running down the road. One of her husband's sisters, Elaine, had just stabbed another woman. She later learned that they were fighting after the woman accused Elaine of trying to steal her husband. The woman had cursed Elaine, and told her to leave her man alone. Elaine had retaliated by stabbing her in her right shoulder.

She remembered an incident that happened when she was still in high school. Her father was a marijuana farmer. One day a man accused him of stealing his marijuana and nearly severed his left hand.

She had few female friends as far as she could remember. She kept mostly male friends. She found women to be too difficult to deal with. Some of them could never keep a secret and if you had a lover along with your real man they would be the one revealing your secrets. She doubted if she would ever get married. She didn't see herself being tied down with a husband and babies.

Both at primary and high school, some of her female teachers had been afraid of her and had reported her to the principal for the simplest thing. As a result, she was repeatedly punished. She took her punishment in stride. While other children cried their eyes out she had no tears. No matter what the punishment was, she never shed a single tear. As a result, even her mother and other family members said that she was wicked.

She had beaten up several girls and a few boys in primary school. She still remembered the names of the two girls she had beaten up in high school and the reasons she had done so. The fights had been over boys. Hugh Allman and she had been friends since Grade nine. Maxine Gray came to fight her for Hugh. She had given that girl a sound beating.

Marge Rodgers came to fight her over Fabian Davis. That girl, had also received a good beating. After that she changed boyfriends regularly and no girl came to fight her.

She remembered an incident with her sister, Marsha. Shortly after leaving high school, Masha moved to Montego Bay to work in the hotel sector. Two years later she got a call from her. She and two sisters were in conflict over a guy. The two girls were planning to beat her up. She had gone down there to help out Marsha.

She was not at all impressed with Odel Ford. He was short, ugly and walked with a slight limp as a result of a motor vehicle accident in his youth. She thought that men must be short down there for women to be fighting over Odel. She wouldn't be caught dead with a man with any form of disability.

However, Marsha told her that he had just passed some big banking examinations and was now driving a Pajero. He was one of the top guys at his bank and was earning top dollars. He had just paid down on a house in a new development just outside Montego Bay.

She had worn thick leather slippers that day. She had used it to beat the two sisters. They had fled the scene after she started raining down blows on them.

She had scoffed at reports a month later that the two girls were planning to sue her.

Friday night she attended a wake at Chester's house in Havendale. This was really a get together by his friends to celebrate his life and times. As far as she knew the set up and funeral were some way off as the autopsy on his body had not yet been done.

She got involved in several domino games. She only drank soup and kept away from any strong drinks. As far as she observed all the staffers were there as well as several hardware merchants. There were whispers around as to who had killed Chester but she kept her mouth shut. She went into the house, greeted Delta, her three daughters and son and other relatives and friends of Chester some of whom she knew.

That Monday when she reached home, she thought about Mickie again. Marsha had advised her to report the loss of her gun. In a way she missed her brother, Calvin. Calvin was an outside child. Her father was a teen when Calvin's teenaged mother got pregnant for him. By the time he was seventeen years of age, Calvin was already a gunman, credited with several murders, kidnappings among other crimes. Three years ago, he had been cut down in a hail of police bullets.

If Calvin was around, she wouldn't have to worry. Mickie would never dare take any steps with her. Calvin was always warning him to treat her right.

She went to bed, still worried about her missing gun. She wondered if the tears she was shedding was as a result of her getting softer.

Wednesday night she was watching some boxing on television when a car drove up to her gate and stopped. She wondered who it could be. Then there was a knock on the gate. She went outside. It was Mickie!

"What are you doing here, and were you all this time?"

"Can I come inside? I don't want anybody to hear what I'm going to say to you."

"We don't have any secrets that anybody can't hear about. I want to know where my gun is and why did you go into my account?"

She knew he had his gun on him. She decided to let him inside. She didn't want any of the neighbors hearing anything they said to each other.

Immediately they were inside the house, she asked.

"What are you doing in Montego Bay?"

"I was down there on business. I heard about Chester's murder."

"Did you take away my gun? Why did you go into my account?"

He was sitting in a couch opposite her. She felt like running into the kitchen and grabbing one of her knives or machetes to arm herself. She looked at the ice pick on a side table beside her.

"What happen to your gun?"

"You know what happened to it. When I woke up on Sunday morning, it was missing. The next thing I knew is that my boss is shot dead."

“And you believe that I was the one who killed him?”

“Of course, you killed him. So why did you run away to Montego Bay?”

“I didn’t kill Chester. Maybe it was you who did it and is now trying to pin the blame on me.”

Suddenly she drew the ice pick and rush at him. He sprang up and whipped out his gun.

“Stab me with that ice pick and I’ll be the last person you stab.”

He came forward and twisted her wrist and took away the ice pick.

“You dirty fucker. You took away my gun, killed Chester and is probably trying to put the blame on me.”

“I didn’t kill Chester. Listen, I told Carlos to try and scare him. I was only trying to protect you. I don’t know if he was the one who did it.”

“Did I tell you that I needed any protection? So where is Carlos now? How much did you pay him?”

“You’re going to do the paying. It was you, he was protecting.”

“I didn’t hire him to do anything. I hope you didn’t go calling my name to him. I didn’t tell you that I wanted anybody to do anything to Chester.”

“You were just going to let him continue running your life forever?”

“I was getting on with my life. Listen, as I said, don’t try to get me mixed up in Chester’s murder. I’m innocent, I don’t know anything about his killing. As far as I’m concerned, you’re in this alone. All I want is my gun. You can have the money, you stole from my account. But everything is over between us.”

She remembered the bank giving her some stupid explanation as to how he managed to get into her account. She had written a letter to the manager of that particular branch and was awaiting a reply.

“So that’s how you want it? Look on the amount of things I’ve done for you and you just want to walk out on me like that.”

“What do you want me to do? Imagine after you dropped me home Saturday night, you disappeared with my gun and cleaned out one of my accounts.”

Mickie looked at her.

“I’m going, but I’m warning you against putting out any hits on me.”

Sonya had to laugh.

“You’re completely useless to me. Why would I put out a hit on you?”

He stood up.

“I don’t have your gun, but I’ll see you around. I might just tell Carlos where you live.”

“What! You wouldn’t dare.”

But her words seemed to have fallen on deaf ears as he simply walked out of the house and drove away.

She went back to watching television. She realized that she should have ended her on again off again relationship with him a long time ago. Several other guys had been after her and she wondered why she had stuck with him. He was a good lover, but maybe it was because he knew how to handle anybody she employed.

She felt hungry and went for a snack. As she had her supper she wondered what Mickie could have done with her gun. After he dropped her home, they had a few drinks before she ushered him out of the house. She wondered if he had put something in her drink. She had to find the gun. She was fearful that it could turn up as the weapon that was used to kill Chester.

Chapter Three

Friday, she was in deep sleep sometime after midnight when her cell phone started ringing. Mickie was on the line.

She felt like not answering, but he would only call again. She pressed the call button.

“Sonya, I’m leaving Jamaica for good. I need some money to take care of some things.”

“So what has that got to do with me?”

“Once I leave Jamaica, you’ll never see or hear from me again.”

“How do I know that you won’t try to blackmail me? How do I know that it wasn’t my gun that was used to kill Chester?”

“Where are you thinking of going?”

She wasn’t aware of him travelling to any foreign countries before.

“I’m going to the United States of course, where else?”

She declined from asking him if he had a visa.

“I’m going back to bed.”

She pressed the call button and ended the call.

He called her back.

“I want some money to take care of some things before I leave.”

“Go to hell.”

“You wouldn’t want me to go to Delta about your secret receipt books.”

“What! You wouldn’t dare.”

“Try me, you wouldn’t want her to know how you got the money to buy the taxis you have on the road and the apartment you have renting out in Old Harbor.”

“You, dirty traitor, so you’d sell me out to Delta? What is she going to give you?”

“I don’t want anything from her. I need some money from you to take care of some things. I told you that already.”

“I’ll see what I can do. All I tell you is not to go to Delta with any stories about me.”

“I won’t if you help me out.”

He ended the call abruptly.

Sonya was taken aback that he had ended the call so suddenly. She was afraid of Delta finding out anything about her. Whether she liked it or not, she had to give Mickie the money to keep him quiet.

She lay in bed thinking. How was she sure that even if he was abroad, he wouldn’t try to blackmail her?

She thought about Judy. She had never wanted the girl dead. All she had wanted Carlos to do was to warn her off. She was horrified when she heard about the hit and run accident in which Judy had been killed. She had chased Mickie away from her when he came to tell her about Judy. She didn’t feel responsible for anything that had happened to her. She didn’t know how Carlos had gotten paid as she had refused Mickie’s request for money to pay him.

Come to think of it maybe the money Mickie wanted from her was to pay Carlos for Chester’s murder. But she didn’t care, what he did with the money after she gave it to him.

She didn't want anything to do with Carlos. That guy was just too trigger happy for her liking. He had been thrown out of the police force and more than one security company because of how cold blooded he was.

Sunday night she didn't know when she dropped off to sleep. She woke up in bright sunshine and realized that she had overslept. As she went out to the driveway, she noticed an object, lying in some roses. It was a gun! She rushed inside for a rag. She picked it up and took it inside. It was her gun, she was sure of that. She took out her file with the gun papers, like the permit and compared the serial number with that on the gun. It was her gun, all right.

She put the gun in a drawer and locked it. She wondered if any cartridges were missing. She knew she should take it to the police, but she had to have some questions answered by Mickie before she did that.

That evening she called Mickie. He denied being the person who had brought back the gun. He didn't want to repeat himself that he wasn't the one who took away her gun in the first place.

She was at her house, Saturday evening when he came. This time he was riding a motorcycle. She noticed that he wasn't wearing a helmet. She didn't comment on his need to wear one as she didn't care.

"I got back my gun. Somebody threw it in the garden last night. I don't even know if any of the bullets have been fired from it."

"Why would a thief give you back your gun? Guns are so precious in Jamaica. I don't believe that you really got back your gun."

"You're the one who took it away. Lent it to Carlos to kill Chester and now you're trying to plant it on me."

"Listen, Carlos hasn't surfaced yet. I doubt if it was he who shot Chester. That guy had lots of enemies. It could have been anybody who murdered him."

"Do you have the thing? I'm in a hurry."

"Where are you going, to the airport?"

"No, some other places."

She went into her bedroom for the money. He took the envelope from her.

"I hope it's the right amount."

He opened the envelope.

"Why didn't you change it out into American dollars?"

"You didn't tell me which currency, you wanted it in."

"You know I'm going away. So what am I doing with Jamaican money?"

He hissed his teeth and moved towards the door.

"What are you complaining about? Are you afraid of going to the bank and changing out the money?"

"They ask too many questions. What do I tell them? Sonya Brown gave me some money to change."

He went outside, opened the gate, jumped on the bike and rode away.

As she watched him ride away, she knew she had to talk to somebody. She called Marsha.

She told her about everything that had been happening to her.

"You have to go to the police, Sonya. You have to tell them everything."

Sonya was taken aback by the girl's insistence that she go to

the police. Marsha had always been a no nonsense sort of person. It was only that she couldn't fight.

"I plan to go there one day next week."

"I'll go with you. You needn't worry, I won't let Odel know about any of this."

"Thanks, Marsha. You're a real sister. I know that I can always depend on you."

"I just hope you don't take too long."

"I won't, I just want this thing to be over."

"Okay, call me when you're ready, bye," Marsha said and ended the call.

Sonya decided to go to the police on Sunday and told Marsha so that evening. She hadn't heard from Mickie. She felt that he had left the island without telling her. Well, good riddance to him.

Just as she was getting ready for bed, her cell phone rang. It was a number she wasn't familiar with. She pressed the call button.

Kirk Palmer was on the line.

"Sonya, it's about Mickie, the police held him at the airport. I dropped him there this afternoon. He wants you to come and bail him."

"He wants me to come and bail him. Mickie must be joking."

"I thought the two of you had something going on."

"Look Kirk, Mickie and I might have had a thing going on at one time, but not again. I could never trust him again."

Kirk sounded as if he was in disbelief. She heard him sigh in the background. She knew that he and Mickie were good friends.

"Why did they arrest him, Kirk?"

"He didn't have the right papers."

My God, so Mickie had bought a visa to go to the United States.

"I wish I could help him. But as I explained to you, he and I aren't on friendly terms anymore. I wouldn't trust him to bail him. He might just run away and leave me having to pay back the bail bond."

"Mickie is a fool. I just hope that he gets out of this mess that he's put himself in," Kirk opined.

"I hope so too," she told Kirk before ending the call.

She should have known that was what he wanted the money to do. She was worried, if he came out of jail, he would just pester her about money or try to blackmail her about going to Delta.

That Sunday morning she called Marsha and told her that she was ready to go to the police station.

A year ago Marsha and Odel had relocated to Kingston after the latter landed a big job at a bank in the Corporate Area.

They had rented out their apartment in Montego Bay. Marsha had little trouble finding a job in Kingston at one of the top hotels.

Marsha left her children with her helper at Sonya's house. She had told Odel that she was going to visit Sonya.

So the two of them went down to the police station in Half Way Tree. When Sonya handed her gun to the corporal on desk duty, the man wanted to arrest her immediately.

"So you lost your gun and didn't tell the police. Somebody just threw it back in your garden. I wasn't born yesterday. I think you killed somebody. This gun has to be examined. Pray that no shots have been fired from it."

“The gun wasn’t fired while I had it.”

“Lady, if shots were fired from the gun, how will we know it wasn’t you who fired those shots? That’s why we always warn people when their gun goes missing to report it immediately to the nearest police station.”

He called a young constable to record her gun and give her a receipt. He told her that she would definitely be charged for not reporting the missing gun. He said he would soon assign a detective to the case.

Sonya was admonished by the corporal. She had to give copies of her drivers license. The policeman warned her that she would be prosecuted if it was found that she had given the police false information. He told her to make sure she got a lawyer.

She left the police station in deep thoughts. Marsha drove them home.

Sonya cooked dinner for all of them. Marsha told her that she had to take home some of the food for Odel. They went on the lawn to talk out of earshot of Marsha’s helper.

Marsha told her that she should take the policeman’s advice and seek a lawyer. Sonya wasn’t sure she wanted one just yet. They talked some more until Marsha decided to drive home.

Chapter Four

Sonya was there that evening after Marsha left for her home. She envied her sister for having a husband and children. At thirty, she knew that her biological clock was ticking. But she wasn't worried, she could always adopt. She had always been careful, knowing that if she ever was to get pregnant, it had to be for a man who could take care of her and her child.

She went up to Jimmy Chang's sports bar on Holborn Road later that evening. Jimmy, the proprietor and her were good friends. He wanted to know where Mickie was. She told him that he was still around, but things were sort of on hold between them. She got involved in a few domino games. A few of Mickie's friends greeted her and wanted to know where he was. She gave them the same story she had given Jimmy. She saw a few men eyeing her. She knew that she looked good, being of average height and well rounded. Men were always looking at her lovely facial features. Even some of the women in the sports bar were giving her envious looks because of her well sculptured face and body. And she had legs to die for. Right now she was in too many problems to get into any serious relationships with a man.

She had just returned home, locked up the car and was relaxing on her verandah when her cell phone rang. Mickie was on the line.

"Aren't you coming to bail me?"

"To do what?" she asked, perplexed.

"Don't pretend as if you don't know what has happened to me."

"You know I'm not going to do it. So why call me? We're no longer in a relationship."

"You're going to regret this. I just want to get out of here and you're going to see the worst part of me."

"Go to Delta with a story that I was robbing Chester blind. All of those receipt books have been destroyed and I never gave the customers any receipts. So go ahead and see what you'll get."

She had called his bluff.

"Don't be all that confident. She'll want to know where you got all that stuff from."

"You dirty rat. Go on, go to Delta. I won't bail you and you will never get another cent out of me."

He ended the call. She wasn't sure if it was him ending the call or he had run out of call credit.

The next evening when she came from work, Kirk called her. He told her that Mickie had been bailed by his father.

Good for Mickie, she was prepared for him. Wednesday, when she got home from work a car was parked at her gate.

"Why are you pestering me? I gave you more than fifty thousand dollars plus what you took out of my account. Please leave me alone, Mickie, or else I'm going to the police."

They were on the verandah, arguing.

"I want back my job, managing your taxis."

"I don't trust you so how am I going to let you work for me?"

"I used to do those things for you, did I ever rob you?"

“You’re forgetting that you went into my account without my permission.”

“I still want to know how you did it? Did one of your tech savvy friends help you?”

He didn’t answer her.

They were in her living room now.

“We used to be lovers, remember.”

“And you did everything to destroy it. I know you kept other women with me.”

“And you were innocent. I knew that you and Tony Danvers were friends. I heard that Doug Mason used to visit you too.”

Both Doug and Tony were regulars on the party circuit. Doug was in financial management while Tony was an academic. Although she liked both men she had never had an affair with either of them. Doug was in his late twenties and married with two children. As far as she knew Tony was living with his baby mother. She knew that he was in his early thirties.

She laughed and looked him squarely in the eyes.

“I won’t confirm that I ever slept with any of those two guys you just mentioned, but what did you expect me to do? You were hardly around and I wasn’t going to hug up any teddy bear when I wanted a man.”

“So are you sleeping alone these days?”

“You won’t get that opportunity again. So I don’t know why you’re asking.”

He didn’t reply and seemed to be in deep thoughts.

“By the way, who bailed you?”

“What do you care? You refused to do it. If you want to know, it was my father. Sonya, I’m asking you for the last time to give me back my job.”

“And I’ve already told you, no.”

“You’ll hear from me, but I can tell you that it won’t be pretty.”

He turned and walked away.

She watched him go. He went to his car and drove away.

She went to work the next morning. By ten o’clock she had completely forgotten about Mickie. She was having lunch down at Mattis open air restaurant on Eastwood Park Road when her cell phone rang. It was Beulah Anderson. Beulah used to work at the hardware, but had left a year ago.

“Sonya, they shot Carlos, last night. I heard that he’s dead.”

“What! I don’t believe you. Where did it happen?”

“Over in St. Thomas. I heard that he went to rob somebody and they shot him.”

“Thanks, Beulah.”

“I just called you because I tried getting Mickie, but couldn’t. You can tell him about it.”

“I will. Thanks for calling.”

She ended the call. She finished her lunch and went back to work.

After work she tried to get Kirk to find out some more about Carlos’ shooting, but her calls went to voice mail.

She was on the phone to Marsha, Thursday evening when a car pulled up at her gate. She ended the call and went out to see who it was. It was Kirk. She made drinks for both of them and sat on the verandah to talk.

“Mickie left the island last night. I dropped him at the airport. He’s gone to Cayman.”

“What! I don’t believe you. How could he have done that? It was just a week or so ago that they held him at the airport with false papers. He was out on bail. Oh my god, his father will have to pay his bail bond.”

“I asked him about that, but he said he would pay him back as soon as he got some money.”

She refilled their glasses.

“You know that Mickie won’t be doing any such thing.”

He drank some more of his juice.

“I don’t know how he got set up to get into Cayman. I asked him, but he wouldn’t tell me.”

“I hope he stays down there for as long as possible and don’t come bothering me again.”

Kirk finished his drink and stood up.

“Kirk, you know Carlos, Mickie’s friend. They shot him over in St. Thomas last night. The householder, he was trying to rob, shot him.

“I always warned Mickie about keeping friends with that guy. He had a bad reputation plus I felt that he was on drugs, the erratic ways he used to behave.”

Sonia nodded in agreement with Kirk.

“I get the feeling that Mickie might try for the States again. Cayman is too small for him.”

Sonya shrugged her shoulders as they went through her front gate.

“All I say is good riddance to Mickie.”

Kirk didn’t reply. He simply gave her a hug, went to his car and drove away.

She was at home the next evening when a police car drove up to her gate and stopped. She was on her verandah reading one of the evening papers. She wondered what they wanted. They knocked on the gate. She went out to see what was the matter.

It was the corporal from the station where she had reported her gun missing and two constables.

“Can we come in, Miss?”

She led them on to the verandah.

The corporal came straight to the point.

“You’re Sonya Brown. I have a warrant for your arrest for failure to report your firearm missing.”

Sonya was shocked.

“I don’t want to put these handcuffs on you, so I’ll warn you to come peacefully with us.”

“Don’t I get to make a phone call?”

“There will be time for that when we reach the station.”

“I will have to lock up the house. I can’t leave it like this.”

“Let my two assistants here help you and then we’ll be on our way.”

Sonya knew that it was a precaution he was taking, in case she tried to escape. But how could she hope to escape from three heavily armed policemen?

At the station, she was charged with failure to report her firearm missing. She got to make a phone call to Marsha. Marsha wanted to come to the station that night, but she told her that it would be better to wait until in the morning. She told Marsha to tell Delta what happened to her. She was also to get Lenny Samuels on the case.

So Sonya prepared to spend her first night in jail. She wondered how helpful Lenny would be. He was one of the sharpest young lawyers around. She was also fearful of what Delta would do. That woman was as hard as nails.

She remembered when she started working at Chester's, Delta was in charge of everything to do with the staff. After employees started leaving, Chester realized that he was losing his best staff, shunted her off to start her own business, a day care center. Sonya could remember her insisting that staff work overtime if they were late in the mornings or returned from lunch late. She absolutely refused to give any time off.

She was suspicious that a secret audit was taking place. She had seen some well dressed guys coming into the premises, mostly in the evenings. She had also been told that Delta had been there a few evenings too. She was taken to the female section of the jail and given a foul smelling mattress to sleep on.

She was bailed on Thursday by Marsha. Two of her aunts, Lyn and Elaine came down, to give support. Lenny told her that they would fine her. He said that a confidential source told him that the gun had been fired twice. The source had also told him that the bullets which killed Chester came from a higher caliber weapon.

She took the week off from work. The court date was set for the next week Friday. There was a shock for her when Kirk told her that Mickie had been held in Cayman for entering the island illegally.

She was fined for failure to report her gun missing. She paid the fine.

Chapter Five

On the Tuesday after court when she went to work, Delta was there. She called her into the boardroom. The manager of the hardware, Mr. Minott, was there too. So also was Dania Bernard, the accounting manager. Dania had been there a year now.

“Sonya, I’m firing you this instant! Here’s your letter of dismissal! I don’t want to see you back on these premises again.”

Sonya was in shock. She had heard that Mickie would soon be deported back to Jamaica.

“What have I done now, Delta? Why this now?”

“You should know what you’ve done.”

“I haven’t done anything. But you’ll hear from my lawyer.”

“And you’ll soon hear from the police. You’ll soon be in jail again.”

Sonya took up the envelope, hissed her teeth and walked out of the boardroom. She went to her office, took up her bag and left the premises in her car. She didn’t tell anybody as to why she was leaving.

By Thursday of that week she was arrested for fraud. She was astounded at the amount of money Delta was accusing her of stealing from Chester’s hardware. She hired another lawyer, Camille Oxford, a middle aged woman. It was Lenny, who recommended that she hire her as he was busy on some high profile cases. She was bailed by Marsha the next Monday.

Her two sisters, Zania and Kandy, called her wanting to know what was going on. She told them that Delta was telling lies on her. First the woman accused her of having an affair with her late husband and robbing the company of hundreds of thousands of dollars. They both told her that any help she wanted, she could call on them.

The court date was set for a month later.

Two weeks later Chester’s set up and funeral were held. Sonya was at neither event, despite some of her former colleagues urging her to attend one or both events. She felt that with Delta’s hostility towards her, she wouldn’t be welcomed at either event. She later learned that the funeral service was held at the First Baptist Church in Meadowbrook. The burial took place at Chester’s village of Salisbury Plains in West Rural Saint Andrew.

Despite her aunt, Lyn, appealing to Delta for leniency she refused, saying that Sonya was a wicked girl who deserved a sentence. She even accused her of having a hand in Chester’s murder. Lyn had once worked at Delta’s day care center.

In court Sonya pleaded not guilty and the trial date was put off for another two months.

She heard that Mickie had received a six month sentence in Cayman after which he would be deported back to Jamaica.

Marsha told her to try and reach a compromise with Delta. Sonya told her that she was accusing her of being a thief.

Sonya tried to get another job, but failed. She suspected that the notice Delta had put in the papers that she was no longer authorized to transact any business on behalf of the hardware may have contributed to her failure to land a job.

She decided to use some of the money she had saved to buy and sell clothes, shoes, colognes among other things. She only sold on a cash basis. She made sure not to store any goods overnight in her car.

A month before the case was called up, Delta called her.

“Sonya, the only reason I’m calling you is because I know some of your relatives. I’m giving you a chance to get off these charges. But you have to agree to pay back all the money you stole.”

“I’ll have to talk to my lawyer.”

There was a pause. Sonya didn’t know what the woman was thinking. She wondered where she was calling her from.

“Don’t wait for it to go back to court. I really don’t have that kind of patience.”

“Okay, I understand, but I don’t want to do anything before talking to my lawyer.”

“Well, you do that. I’ll be waiting.”

They both ended the call.

She called Marsha and told her about Delta’s proposal.

“I would take her up on her offer if I were you, Sonya.”

“I told her that I wanted to talk to Camille first before making any decisions.”

“Okay, you do that and call me back tomorrow.”

It took about three weeks of negotiations before Delta agreed to a compromise. Sonya had to give up the house in Old Harbor. She had two and a half year’s mortgage left on it. She also had to give up two of her taxis.

Her aunts, Lyn and Lois, warned her about how close she came in going to prison. Her other aunt, Elaine, said that she could tell her a thing or two about prison life. Delta has warned her that if she finds out that she was involved in Chester’s murder she will tear up the compromise agreement.

Sonya is also worried as Mickie has been deported back to Jamaica. He was arrested by the police upon his return home. She doesn’t understand how he got bail again. He has threatened to go to Delta to tell her that she was defrauding the company. She has told him to go right ahead. He has also threatened to go to the police about Judy. Sonya has dared him to do it.

The latest she has heard is that he is back in Montego Bay, scamming. She is fearful that he will somehow implicate her in Chester’s murder. She knows that he’s a walking time bomb!

In the meantime, she has decided to sell the taxi she now operates, to the driver. She wants to use the money to finance her business.

Sonya is still worried as the police haven’t up to now found out who killed Chester although they have identified the gun found on him as the murder weapon. One thing she’s thankful for is the fact that her gun wasn’t used in his murder. The police are still investigating why her gun was fired. The End

Epilogue-Sonya is now along with a guy from Portmore. His name is Lamar Whilby and he is in his mid-thirties. He operates a fifty acre farm in St. Ann. He is a divorced father of a little boy. She confessed everything to him. Some days she goes to the farm with him. They feel drawn to each other, but are just taking the relationship one day at a time.

Both Lenny and Camille have assured her that if she was not involved in Chester’s murder, then she has nothing to worry about.

Jamaican expressions-meaning

broke pocket-bankrupt, ruined, without any money

That's why he fast into their business so much.- enquire into their business, life or affairs

Other notes: At the time of this story it would take more than one hundred and twenty six Jamaican dollars to buy one United States dollar.