

THE PLUS SIZE SHEIKH BY CHIAMAKA ANYASO

“PROLOGUE”

Running and Hiding...

All Thamer knew was running and hiding. But why hide anymore?

He left that stupid country and he was free, free to be whoever he wanted.

Somehow he could relate to Moses. That bible guy that ran away from Egypt.

That’s exactly what he was doing now. Running away from Egypt. His heritage, his home. His mother’s last home. Thinking about her made his heart ache badly. Sometimes he wished he never existed. His mother loved him with all her heart and him the same, but she loved his father more and that love was the bane of her existence. That love killed her.

Love.. pathetic.

It was annoying how love muddled smart people, for example, his “mother”. A smart doctorate archeologist had come to Egypt, fell in love, and forgot she was a graduate of Harvard. Maybe it only affects women.

His mother knew the risks of having a child with his father. The risks of having him but still she insisted that she loved his father and wanted to bring a child to this world. But

“Stupid woman”

CHAPTER 1

“Hello Irish cream “

Therese hated that name. She also hated that she loved the idiot that gave her that stupid nickname. She took a dramatic breath in before plastering a smile on her face to greet her best friend Amelia.

“Amelia, have you ever wondered what it would be like to die in winter?”

She glared at Amelia as the latter took off her layers of coat. Amelia’s blonde ponytail swished as she laughed at Therese. Even at 34, Amelia looks like a model, thought Therese. Amelia was stunning, to say the least, why she was a teacher was something Therese often wondered. Everything about her screamed camera ready. Even now in her black pencil skirt and mauve cotton blouse, Amelia looked like “she walked out of the runway. Therese had heard boys in their locker room after gym fantasize about Amelia’s hazel green eyes to her long legs. What a woman.

“It’s the last day of school and you’re already thinking about murdering me for the holidays.”

“It’s just that if I killed you Jim would immediately know I was responsible Amelia’s husband Jim was like glue sticking to her. He panicked even when she went grocery shopping. Therese grinned. It was the last day of school at Elizabeth Mayfield Middle and High School, she couldn’t wait to get away from pre-teens and teens. Being a gym teacher was a lot of work for a 24-year-old like her and she didn’t want to, all her life she wanted to be a coach. An important coach, maybe to an Olympic champion. Nah she didn’t want the medal she wanted to “help someone else her the medal. Sadly that dream would have to wait as she was currently stuck teaching hormonal kids.

The teacher's lounge was already empty except for two of them. It was an open secret that teachers loved the holidays more than the students and they escaped as soon as the last bell went.

“Fifty-nine cards and gift boxes this year” murmured Amelia. “ I don’t know what I dread more Christmas gifts or “Valentine’s cards. I guess private school kids are rich kids. How many gifts did you get this year redhead?”

“Fifty-seven “ blushed Therese. She still couldn’t handle this amount of admiration from kids younger than her. She wasn’t a looker like Amelia, but she was alright. Still, kids gifting her expensive perfumes and cashmere scarves.

“Look at our sweet Marie-Therese, always so shy. No wonder the students adore you. I wonder if they know you’re a virgin “

“Amelia!!!!!!” Therese’s face was as red as her hair. It was a touchy subject that she never had a boyfriend. Frankly speaking, she didn’t have that time, between teaching and having extra classes and family she’d barely have time to give a lover. It didn’t mean that she doesn’t want one, she was a hopeless romantic at heart but it just wouldn’t work.

“I’m just saying; you’d be more desirable. Especially the sophomore boys. It’s the seventh-grade boys I pity. I bet they dream about you. And your wild red locs. “Therese subconsciously twirled her hair with her finger. Her hair had always been her main point of attraction. It was too long, too voluminous, too red. Her nickname in pre-school was the little mermaid and Therese hated it. “I think I should cut it. I know I know I say it every Christmas holiday but this time I’m serious “

Amelia gave her the “yeah right” look. After they sorted through their gifts and decided which was worth taking home, they bundled in Amelia’s SUV; a gift from her husband the year before. Therese loved how cozy the car was, and there were snacks all the time (courtesy of Jim). It had always been routine since Therese moved out of her parent's home to have dinner at Amelia’s. Therese adored Amelia’s twins and spent half of the dinner time taking care of them, it was no wonder the twins said ‘Thewese’ before Mama and Dada.

“Can we stop by the store so I can get gifts for the twins?” Asked Therese as they made a left into the central district where the shopping mall was.

“No...no...no, you already got them Christmas gifts and you spend too much”
“on them. You spoil them and boy do they know it.”

“But they’re so cute“ groaned Therese.

“Yes, all they have to do is give you the puppy eyes and you’re all over them. And you’re already giving them ice cream tonight to no. No more gifts till the new year.”

Therese resolved to sneak in more gifts for the twins behind Amelia’s back as they pulled up their driveway. Amelia’s home smelled like cinnamon rolls and ginger cookies. She took a deep breath before letting it all out.

This was Christmas, here with Amelia, Jim, and the twins. Speaking of twins, they tore across the living room and wrapped Therese in the warmest hug she had gotten this month.

“Therese!! Therese!!! Therese!!!” they cooed each waiting patiently for their end-of-the-day kisses. They didn’t even bother with their mother as she sailed past them and planted a kiss on the only person that mattered to her; Jim. Therese kissed their foreheads and cheeks as they turned red with happiness. The twins, Xavier and Zach both “inherited Amelia’s beautiful blond hair and Jim’s startling hazel green eyes both identical, the only difference was the mole behind Zach’s ears. It was hard to tell who was who, but Therese could. Xavier was clingy to her and Zach was a free spirit.

“How was your day?” She asked as the twins pulled her to the living room so they could talk better and also give him and Amelia some privacy. As she listened to the twins and heard new words that didn’t exist in the English dictionary like fuzzylicious and viperous. She wondered if she’d have something like this. Twins, a home, a loving husband..sigh.

“Is everything okay Therese?” Xavier quietly whispered as soon as Zach left to torment his parents. Xavier placed his head on Therese’s breasts and wrapped his arms around her neck, it took all of Therese’s strong will not to burst into tears.

“Everything is perfect Love. Did you have fun at school today?” The five-year-old scrunched his eyebrows as he thought deeply. Amelia often joked that Xavier was the only serious one in the family.

“School. Just okay.”

“Did you make any new friends today?”

“No, don’t want friends. Zach is enough noise”

Therese chuckled, Zach was really enough noise as she looked across the room watching Zach badger his parents for cookies.

After a satisfying dinner and putting the twins to bed, Therese and Jim kept silent as he drove her back to her apartment.

“You know I can walk back home too really don’t have to drive me home Jim”

“Amelia insists and I don’t mind, it’s my way of saying thank you for always being there for the twins and loving them like they were yours.”

Therese blushed as she thought of how the twins promised to love her forever and ever. They fell into a comfortable silence, they pulled up to Therese's apartment Jim gave a little cough indicating he had something to tell Therese.

"Come on, spill"

"Well, I have this guy, a friend at work that wants to go on a date with you. You don't have to agree. I understand that with your schedule and family, you wouldn't have the time but, just try. For me"

"You know, I think the twins inherited your puppy eyes skill. What's this friend like?"

"You'll love him. His name is Ryan and he's a doctor we went to high school together. He's a funny guy, and very passionate about the things he loves. I'll hand him your number at lunch tomorrow and you two hit it off from there. I'm also inviting him to the house for the New Year's Eve party." Jim had gone through so much effort how could she reject him?

"You make it hard to say no. Of course, I'll talk to Ryan."

"Thank you, Marie, I owe you"

Therese smiled as she stepped out of the car. She waited until she saw Jim drive away from her apartment front before she went to her floor. Ryan, huh? She had never tried to date a doctor before.

CHAPTER 2

Marie-Therese waited till Christmas Eve before she decided it was time to see her family. So when she pulled up at her parents' home she was pleasantly surprised to hear her dad's laughter before she could ring the doorbell. Thank heavens he's smiling. She didn't have to ring the doorbell before her eldest brother; Sean opened the door. The next few minutes were blurry because all she remembered was being covered by her brothers and their loud Irish accent filled the air.

"Oh look the wee lass is home for the season," Sean said as she tried to lift her from the ground. This proved very easy as Therese was lightweight. This also proved to be a problem for her second brother Flynn.

"You are skinny Marie, do you eat? You live barely 10 minutes away, you should come home more " complained Flynn. Therese rolled her eyes.

"I don't see Aidan where is he?"

"Fast asleep." Answered Sean as Therese took off her boots. "Poor lad's been working nonstop."

"And dad?"

"The doctors say he's comfortable. No reason not to celebrate Christmas, Mum's been on the edge but I'm hoping she'll relax"

Therese kissed her brothers' cheeks before heading upstairs to her parent's room. Last Christmas her father collapsed during dinner and they heard the worst news, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Although it was in its early stages it still kept them in worry. She and her brothers pooled all their savings just to pay for chemo. Nick and Marie took on extra jobs just to meet up. Their father's treatment ate deep into their family's savings.

"Thank God this happened now we're all done with college. Imagine paying for college and paying for treatment " Nick joked last year. Yeah, thank God.

Sending four kids to college as an immigrant family was a huge deal and they were grateful to their parents for working hard to give them the best.

"Da.. ad" mumbled Therese as she knocked on her father's door. She knew he was in there with their mom. He often said since he was living in his last days, he was going to spend every minute with his loving wife.

Speaking of wife; Therese's mom opened the door and gave her a warm hug.

“M.. mom” her voice trembled a bit. Audrey Byrne considered herself a strong “woman. She married a man and left everything she knew to a new country. Worked to the bone, raised three strapping Irish lads, and ragged them like they were kids (even though her oldest child; Sean was in his 30s.) She loved her husband dearly and he loved her even better. They had planned to retire to a farm in Idaho that reminded them of Ireland but now. Her shoulders shook as she hugged her daughter. She was away from her husband and sons so she could cry, she hadn’t shed a tear since she heard the news but now. Now she felt weak, like a lone woman. She had to keep up the strong face or her sons and husband would worry.

“It’s going to be okay my darling Orla, your father is going to get better. Go in and kiss him for me.” She watched her mother’s thin figure glide down the stairs with all the pretend happiness she could muster. Therese sighed before walking into her father’s room. It was bright and airy, they had moved the Christmas decorations here. It smelt like cookies and cakes in here, maybe that’s why her dad refused to stay in the hospital.

“There’s my little sunshine. Hello little mermaid “

“Oh Dad”

Therese let go of all her reservations and cuddled beside her father. He still smelt like baby soap and spring. Brendan’s ginger hair had grown longer and Therese noticed white hairs too. She didn’t want to admit it but her parents were getting old. Her dad’s co coworker would tease her by calling her Brenda on account of her father’s name being Brendan and also she took after him. The same startling grey eyes and beautiful red hair. Her brothers all took after their mother, all with strawberry blonde hair and blue eyes. They were all tall like their dad; Aidan being the tallest at 6’4 and Therese the smallest at 5’8. Their father was a huge man at 6’2, Therese remembered avoiding bullies because everyone thought her dad was a pro wrestler. Therese remembered a lot now, even memories she thought were too deep. Maybe her brain was trying to prepare her for the worst. No!! Nothing is going to happen!!

“Sure you’re okay Orla?” Orla, loved that name, princess, it was like a secret name her father called her and she reveled in it.

“Everything is okay now Dad. I’m sorry I don’t come home often. I’ll move back after the holidays”

“Begorra!! Ah, don’t blame ya. you work yourself to the bones my little one. It’s the holidays. Your ma insists I stay in bed. But I’m a big man.”

The big man suddenly started a bout of coughing, alarmed Therese jumped out of the bed and poured him lemon water.

“Ay.. that’s better lassie” he smiled as he held Therese’s hands, “Seen any nice gentleman lately? Amelia tells me the children in your school are in love with you”

“DaaAaadd!!!! Amelia, you shouldn’t listen to her.” Her father chuckled as she turned red.

“I’m just teasing Orla, only teasing.” Therese kissed his forehead. “You get some rest now. The boys will be coming soon and from the looks of things. We’ll be opening our Christmas presents here since the Christmas tree is here”

“Your ma says it’s colder than usual this winter. It’s always cold here in Duluth. I don’t know what she’s worried about “

The room looked like the center of the holidays, under the tree were loads of presents, and the Christmas decorations were dropped at every corner of the room. It looked like a Christmas village.