

Ruby 3

Chapter 3 - Nairobi

“The caller was gone and Ruby put her hand out to wake Serge. Damn, not for the first time it hit her, Serge wasn’t travelling with her this time, or ever again.”

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Ruby had begun to feel affection for the city of Nairobi as soon as she’d seen where Jomo Kenyatta International Airport was on the map. It seemed to have become a trend to build major airports miles from the city they served, often in what felt like the middle of nowhere. She travelled a lot with George and it had become one of her pet peeves. Not in Nairobi though, the international airport was only about five kilometres from the city centre. Walking distance if you weren’t carrying lots of baggage. She was currently watching Sarah go into a state of panic in the baggage hall.

“Those must be the bags from our plane; you’ve got your bags.” Said Sarah. “Why does this sort of thing always happen to me ?”

“Look, there are new ones coming down the chute all the time. Give it a while Sarah.... Relax. If they have lost your bags, it’ll give you an excuse to buy lots of new stuff.”

They sat on a luggage trolley, watching the bags go round on the carousel. Sarah began to see the plus side of having to buy a new wardrobe, she was even talking about spending a day shopping in Nairobi. There was even the sound of disappointment in her voice, as her three bags appeared.

“There they are..... The ones with the rainbow tape on the side.”

Everyone had their own way of making their bags stick out among the crowd, but Sarah’s were the only bags with thick rainbow stripes down the side. They got them onto a trolley and headed for where everyone dreads in any airport around the world, customs and immigration.

“Are we hiring a car or getting a taxi to the hotel ?” Asked Sarah.

Ruby no longer reacted with anger, she hadn’t done that for years. It wasn’t that Sarah was stupid or had gone to sleep through the numerous briefings. She just knew that Ruby would look after her. In a way, her crap memory was a compliment.

“We’re getting a taxi to the Crowne Plaza.” Said Ruby.

“Really ? Spider thinks it’s the Sereni Hotel.”

“Ahhhh got you..... I did think you were just winding me up.”

Sarah even had the nerve to wink at her, as they got their passports ready. There had been no shouting, no Spider telling the world he was an innocent man and there had to be a mistake. He and Anna had been in front of them at the baggage carousel. It appeared that whatever passport he was using had successfully allowed him into Kenya.

“Sometimes.... Pretending to be daft, is irresistible.” Said Sarah. “I remember the plan, you made us go through it often enough. Check our phones work, mine does by the way.”

“And then ?” Asked Ruby.

“Taxi to the hotel and everyone should arrive by midnight. Meeting in a proper conference room tomorrow, because we’re not doing anything clandestine.... Your exact words.”

“I hate it when you’re being efficient Sarah, it never ends well.” Said Ruby.

Why did the people on immigration desks never smile ? Ruby had seen a lot of them, the guy at Philadelphia International had actually given her the stink eye. It had to be a fairly soul destroying job, but still.....

“What is the purpose of your visit to Kenya ?” Asked the woman, with no smile.

“A vacation.”

She was handed back her passport and was out of the seemingly endless bureaucracy that air travel seems to breed. Sarah followed her and they were through a set of automatic doors and looking at rows of people waiting for loved ones.

“After the meeting tomorrow, we have the rest of the day for shopping in Nairobi. A bit of time to get used to the local weather.” Continued Sarah. “The following day we pick up our four wheel drive vehicles and head for the Great Rift Valley. Is it far Ruby ? I don’t remember that bit.”

“About a thousand kilometres..... And will you and Spider be sharing a sleeping bag ?”

Sarah actually tsked at her, a definite tsk.

“Oh really, you’re obsessed with my sex life.”

Ruby wasn’t sure of the etiquette, but the first taxi in the line had a sticker saying it was fully air conditioned. It was a hot humid day, the cool air felt like taking a shower. The driver piled their bags into the back of the large SUV.

“Getting back to your sex life.....You love talking about it. You should be one of those women on Instagram with a million followers, giving out advice on achieving multiple orgasms.”

“How do you know I’m not ?” Asked Sarah.

“It wouldn’t surprise me, not one little bit. So.....Are you and Spider likely to be at it again ?”

“Oh, your choice of words..... Yes, we are going to give it another try.”

Ruby told the driver the name of their hotel and they were off into Nairobi’s never ending traffic jam. One day the city would reach perpetual gridlock. She grabbed Sarah’s hand, squeezing it a little too hard.

“Just promise me you won’t chew Spider up this time.” She said. “When you get fed up, just tell him to fuck off or something, it’ll be kinder.”

“I don’t chew him up.”

“You do, every single time..... You’re my friend Sarah and I love you. But Spider is my friend too and I’ve had him sat on my couch at four in the morning, wondering why.”

“Why what ?” Asked Sarah.

“Why you kicked him in the balls..... Again.”

Sarah was trying to pull her hand away and Ruby refused to let go.

“The way you talk to me..... I’m not a monster Ruby.”

They hugged while Sarah sobbed a little.

“I know you’re not.”

The taxi driver was smiling at them in the mirror and giving them his ‘crazy westerners’ look. That happened a lot when she was travelling with Sarah.

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It had been a while since Ruby had left her phone on during the night. Everyone was now in the hotel though and Monique’s phone had refused to work in Africa. They’d managed to find her a local phone, but everyone had been late getting to bed. When her phone rang at about three thirty, Ruby assumed it was one of the thirteen having problems.

“Hello.”

“Apricot Dish Ozymandias.”

The phone and the voice sounded local, but she knew the code words.

“Yes, do you have a message for me ?” She asked.

“He thinks you must be a little rusty. You were caught on CCTV. Once in Tallinn and again near the station in Marrakesh. He said it’s not your fault.... There are more cameras now and....”

He was obviously reading from a message sent by British Intelligence in London, probably sent by someone working for Sir Edwin Fox, Foxy to his friends.

“..... And no one gives a shit about privacy laws anymore. Some old friends think you might be active again. That annoys them.”

“Who are they ?”

“Please let me finish. They are coming to see you very soon. He said you should be able to deal with them easily enough. Move to another hotel though and most importantly.....”

“Yes ?”

“Make it look like an accident.”

“How soon until they arrive ?”

“Very soon.”

The caller was gone and Ruby put her hand out to wake Serge. Damn, not for the first time it hit her, Serge wasn’t travelling with her this time, or ever again. She sat on the edge of the bed for a count of three. No hanging around, the annoyed friends might well be walking into the hotel lobby. Ruby pulled on her grubby clothes from the day before and pulled her hair right back, securing it with an elastic band. Bodily functions couldn’t be ignored, though she did look over the building as she sat and peed.

“There you are.” She muttered.

Three agitated men were walking across the lobby, one going to the reception desk. The other two stood and waited near the elevators. Only three, she was almost insulted. Who were the annoyed friends ? She’d heard the Russians had brought her file out of storage and made it an active concern again. Then there were the Americans, who didn’t see Britain as natural allies these days. Most likely though were either the North Koreans or the Chinese. Ruby had a whole back catalogue of people she’d annoyed over the years, but those two topped the list.

“Who the hell are you ?”

Her first impulse was to go out into the corridor and hit a fire alarm button. Let the men get swept up in the chaos and they’d probably go away. An easy solution, but they’d be back, they might even follow her to the rift valley.

“No..... If Foxy says it has to look like an accident.....”

She looked harder with senses that allowed her to look through several floors of concrete, sleeping guests and hotel furniture. Two men and a woman, she was sure of it. That probably ruled out North Korea, they tended not to use women agents. It was time to wake Sarah and probably Spider. First Ruby jammed a chair hard under the door handle to her room.

“Sorry Sarah, I’d go crazy if someone did this to me.” She muttered.

“Nothing is really solid, nothing at all.” Nari had once told her. “At least not solid in the way most people think of being solid.”

Nari had been the child bride of the late Ryōm Kwan, who’d been leader of the special people in North Korea. The mystery people, Das Geheimnis had been taken under the wing of the North Korean dictators. At first it had looked like a paradise being offered to them, though it had quickly become a prison. Nari was younger than Ruby, but she’d learned from the best.

“The only reason this cup doesn’t fall through the table is all about probabilities Ruby. Everything is really ninety nine percent space, given the illusion of form and structure by a few tiny particles. Alter

the probability that the particles in the table will get in the way of the particles in the cup and.....I always feel I should say abracadabra or something.”

Ruby would always remember the feeling of shock and elation as the cup fell through the table and was caught by Nari. Ruby learned and within a few months she could get a cup to fall through what looked like a solid oak table. Not content with that she moved onto bigger items, including herself. It was dangerous of course. Lose concentration and the particles that made up her body would become one with the wall..... And she'd die.

“Even Kallina doesn't do that, it's too dangerous.” Sophie had once told her.

“Kallina is good at moving her entire body short distances, I'm not.”

Ruby actually got a buzz out of moving through solid objects, it felt like something out of the Twilight Zone. Her fatigue levels had improved too, no more needing hours to recover from using her gifts to the full. She placed her palms on the wall and then her knees. Nari had taught her which parts of her mind to use to concentrate and which parts to relax. When she could no longer feel the wall against her finger tips, Ruby walked forward, into Sarah's room. They were both there, asleep under just a sheet. At the foot of their bed, Ruby allowed herself to become solid once more, or as solid as anything ever is. Not the main lighting, that would be too mean. Ruby turned on the bedside light on Sarah's side of the bed. Her friend woke up, though probably not completely.

“Hello Ruby, are we there yet ?” Asked Sarah.

Damn, the sheet fell away to reveal Sarah's naked breasts, her friends were probably both naked. Spider woke up when he heard Sarah speak. He wasn't angry, which surprised her, she'd have been furious.

“Oh, Ruby.....What's up ?” Asked Spider.

“Sorry Spider, but it's urgent.” Said Ruby. “Are you both naked ?”

He lifted the sheet a little and looked, as though checking. It was the early hours of the morning, he did have a right to be a little sleepy and confused.

“Yes....Completely naked.” Said Spider.

Sarah seemed to wake up at last.

“Fuck.....What the..... How did you get in here Ruby ?” She yelled.

Good, she was angry. In a way, anger was easier to deal with than mindless affability. Ruby had been checking for their own people, anyone not asleep in bed and blissfully unaware that three agents had arrived at the hotel to kill her. She found Sophie up on the roof. It was something she enjoyed doing, Ruby had long ago ceased to mention it. Ruby held up a hand towards Sarah and put her thoughts into Sophie's mind.

“There are people on the way to hurt me.”

“Where, who are they ?”

“Don't do anything to them, just keep them busy.”

“Alright, where are they ?”

“About to start knocking on the door to my room. Come and talk to them, do your little girl lost routine.”

“Alright.”

“This is important.....Don't do anything bad to them.... Not yet.”

“Alright.”

Sophie on her way, it was time to talk to a very angry looking Sarah and a bemused Spider.

“Sorry..... Again.” She said. “You probably heard, there are two men and one woman, just coming out of the elevator. I have been told they’re here to kill me. You both need to dress, throw anything on.”

“Who told you about them ?” Asked Sarah.

“Later Sarah, please throw some clothes on.”

Ruby faced away from their bed and listened to them rummage through the discarded clothing on the floor.

“Crap.... It’s only just after three thirty.” Muttered Spider.

Ruby ignored them, she’d just heard the first knock on her room door. Hopefully Sophie would delay them for a while and stop anything that might wake up any of the other guests.

“Will this do ?”

Ruby turned and Sarah still looked fairly naked. Just panties and bra, with some sort of nightie thrown over the top. Spider was in just his boxer shorts and a Led Zep T shirt.

“Oh, dreadful..... But actually you’re both perfect.”

The knocking on her door stopped, Sophie had obviously arrived. While they’d been in Vladivostok she’d kept three men busy talking to them about cures for insomnia.

“Alright, we don’t want to wake any of the guests.” Said Ruby. “The message came from London and they used the code for Foxy’s department.”

“That makes sense.” Said Spider.

“I was told it had to look like an accident, which sounded more like an instruction than a request. I think Foxy wants to send a message to whoever sent these people.”

“Who did send them ?” Asked Sarah.

“I’ve no idea, probably someone in China who is still holding a grudge. I want you to go out there and have a pretend row. A quiet row, make it intense but low volume. You’re finished with him Sarah, throwing him out. Make it convincing.”

“Well.... We’ve had quite a lot of practise at it.” Said Spider.

Sarah was actually grinning at her.

“I think we can do a convincing row for you.” She said.

“Sophie will have their attention and then you two will confuse them even more.” Said Ruby. “I’ll open my room door at hopefully just the right moment. Then I want them unconscious and in my room, without any of the neighbours calling the front desk. Can you handle that ?”

“No problem..... just three of them.... That’s insulting.” Said Spider.

“That’s what I thought.” Said Ruby.

The knocking on her room door had started up again, though only intermittently. It looked like they were getting bored with Sophie’s small talk.

“Right.... Go now.” Said Ruby. “Be careful, these guys are probably tough and well trained.”

“No problem, easy peasy.” Said Spider.

Sarah was looking at the wall behind her.

“Actually..... How did you get in here ?”

“Something new..... Go on, go and throw Spider out.”

Ruby let Sarah get up to speed with a few insults Spider had probably heard for real in the past. She found it easier to move through the wall to go back to her room, for some reason the return trip was always easier. She found Sophie’s mind again and inserted one thought.

“When I open my door, knock them out and get them into my room..... Quietly.”

There was the chair to move and the door needed to be unlocked. It all made noise, but Sarah seemed to have forgotten about being intense but not too noisy.

“Go.....I’ll leave your stuff with the front desk..... Just fuck off !”

That was Ruby’s cue. If that hadn’t distracted the agents outside her door, nothing would. She threw open her room door and smiled at Sophie.

“Now.” She said.

It had been a while, they’d have probably done it quicker in the past and with less noise. Sarah was into cloggy shoes and used one of them on the head of the woman. Spider hit one of the men with a good solid blow to the side of his head, before grabbing him by the throat and pulling him into her room. Sophie was strong, some would say preternaturally strong. Her man had been going for a gun under his jacket, as Sophie hit him. A thump on the temple by a tiny hand, yet the agent was out cold. Sophie dragged him into Ruby’s room, dropping him next to the woman.

“Stop messing about Spider.” Said Sophie.

Spider got an arm around the man’s neck and squeezed until he stopped moving. It was all over in less than a minute or two, though it had felt longer. Ruby checked the corridor, before closing her door.

“No one out there.” She said. “In the morning someone might remember a couple having a row in the night, but I doubt if anyone will complain to the hotel about it.”

“Can someone get a towel ?” Asked Sophie. “Sarah really did a job on the woman, she’s bleeding. We don’t want blood on the carpet.”

“I was told to knock her out.” Said Sarah.

Ruby put the towel under the woman’s head, while Sophie went through her pockets. There was a gun in a holster of course, what self-respecting assassin doesn’t carry one. According to Spider it was Russian.

“Doesn’t mean anything.” He said. “Russian weapons are cheap and easy to come by, everyone carries them.”

Two more Russian automatics tended to add weight to the agents being Russian. The conclusive proof for Ruby, were the credit cards and tickets to a trade conference in Nairobi.

“All with Russian credit cards and business cards for executives in the building construction sector. Someone was thorough with the details; they’re even carrying tickets for a conference on Russian trade with Africa.” Said Spider.

“Construction Executives don’t carry these.” Said Sophie.

She was holding a wicked looking blade, the sort usually only seen in films and TV shows about Special Forces.

“Wow, where did you find that ?” Asked Spider.

“Down her boot.....I only thought they did that in cheap novels.” Said Sophie.

“That’s it..... Strip them all down to their underwear.” Said Ruby. “Let’s see what they’re carrying. Then cut up their clothing and use the strips to tie them up. Bind them up nice and tight, gags too. We don’t want them making a sound.”

“No worries about this one.... No pulse.” Said Sophie.

“Crap..... Did I kill her ?” Asked Sarah.

“Don’t beat yourself up over it, they had come to kill me.” Said Ruby. “Tie her up anyway, it’ll make her easier to carry.”

Given the time Ruby might have interrogated one of the men, Sarah was fluent in Russian. Sun up was around six thirty though, with the sky beginning to lighten from around six. There simply wasn't time to talk to the assassins before disposing of them.

"Quite a haul..... All of it Russian." Said Spider. "The blades are the real giveaway....Russian Special Forces, or I'm a Dutchman."

"I can't even think of why they might have a grudge against me." Said Ruby. "I guarantee I upset them though, I seemed to have upset everyone at one time or another. The equipment will be useful, hide it in our bags when we leave."

Two very much alive Russian agents and a dead one. Ruby had an idea of how to dispose of them, if Sophie thought it was feasible. It was a cloudy night with no moon, which was helpful.

"The next door building is a bank." She said. "Sophie, do you think you can carry our friends here to their roof..... Without being seen?"

"No problem. Even if someone looks up, they'll think the dark shadow in the sky is a large bird. Anyway..... No one ever looks up."

"What's the plan?" Asked Sarah.

"Take our Russian pals to the roof of the bank building. Strip them down to their undies and chuck them off the roof. Not sure if it'll look like an accident, but it'll look like something weird. I'm sure the Kenyan police will be confused by it all."

Spider was smiling at her, usually a good sign.

"Kinky sex on a roof ends in tragedy." He said. "I can see the headlines now."

"Didn't we do this in Paris?" Asked Sarah.

"Yep, it worked pretty well then." Said Ruby. "If an idea works well once.....Sophie, shall I wake up Charlotte to give you a hand."

"That would be useful."

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A famous Prussian general said something along the lines of 'No battle plan ever survives contact with the enemy.' Plans changed and adapted to the new situation. They'd all assumed they weren't under any threat and now they knew they were. Changing hotels before breakfast was relatively easy. Other pieces in the jigsaw weren't quite so easy to fit in place. Ruby had called one person who had contacts across the globe. Dubious contacts, very often criminal contacts, but those were the sort they needed. Ruby had spoken to Olga, who was currently living in Budapest again. Spider had been given his orders after Ruby finished the call. Yes, orders, they were no longer on a simple vacation. Ruby had put everyone on a war footing; she'd even used the line about not being a democracy.

"Not what I expected." Said Nari.

They'd cancelled the vehicles they'd arranged to use. It had cost Ruby the deposit of course, though it seemed worth it. If bugs hadn't been planted in the four wheel drives, their number plates would be known to whoever was after them. Olga had recommended a tour operator and guide. Someone who knew the rift valley area like the back of their hand.

"It's a bit..... Squalid." Said Sarah.

"You can't judge by appearances." Said Isobel.

Four of them to see about renting three vehicles and a guide seemed a bit overkill, but everyone had their own expertise to bring to the table. Sarah was probably most important; she could actually talk to Doc in his own language. Mukami Kibore to give him his full name, owner and operator of Kibore Tours. Mukami preferred to be called Doc for some reason, and Spider believed everyone had the

right to be called whatever they liked. Olga claimed that Doc spoke fluent English. Sarah was an insurance policy, in case he didn't.

"It's not what I expected either." Said Spider. "Come on, we all know what needs doing."

A rusty gate in a rusty fence, gave access to a muddy yard. Rather ominously there was a burned out Range Rover in one corner of the yard. The offices of Kibore Tours was a large building that wouldn't have looked out of place on an industrial estate anywhere in the world. No windows on the ground floor, constructed out of precast concrete, with a large set of metal double doors.

'Entrance – Ring Bell.' Said a sign over the door.

Even the bell was grubby; Spider's finger was black with grease after he'd pressed it.

"Just look around the vehicles while I talk to him." He told Nari. "If anything seems out of place, there are other people we can try."

Spider liked Nari; she didn't need to be told anything twice. She was their bug and tracker hunter, though the terms didn't really describe what she could do. She felt for things that didn't feel right, later additions to a vehicle, things that just didn't fit.

"You must be Spider."

The man at the door was scruffy, but there was something about him. Black skin, dark eyes, you'd have walked past him on the streets of Nairobi without giving him a second glance. A bit taller than the average Kenyan perhaps, if there was such a thing as an average Kenyan. Spider trusted his instincts; the boss answered his own front door.

"I am, a friend in Budapest said she'd call you..... You must be Doc."

"Come in.....You're a little off season, though I'm guessing you're not really tourists. I can give you three reliable vehicles with drivers."

Outside was probably grubby and squalid to discourage burglars, like celebrities wearing grunge on the railways. Inside the building was smart, with at least a dozen spotless vehicles lined up against one wall.

"Expensive of course, though Olga said you're good for it." Continued Doc. "Hey, what are you doing ?..... What is she doing ?"

Nari was doing her thing, walking around the line of vehicles, feeling out their Feng Shui or whatever the hell she did. Spider had no idea how any of Ruby's wunderkinds did what they did, he just trusted them to get it right.

"She's just looking over the vehicles." Said Spider. "Don't worry..... She won't steal anything."

"Look at what you like, all my four wheel drives are in good condition. I just didn't expect you to bring so many friends."

Spider noticed that Doc spoke perfect English, with hardly a trace of a local accent, unless he was agitated. The way he pronounced friends signalled that he was beginning to feel anxious.

"I'm Sarah..... I came just in case Spider needed an interpreter."

"My English is just fine."

"I know, but Spider's can get hard to follow sometimes."

"Hey.... Stood right here." Said Spider.

"And her, what's her job ?" Asked Doc.

He was pointing at Isobel, who simply smiled at them all. Isobel had been born in Edinburgh in the year eighteen hundred and one. She was one of the nicest people Spider had ever met, unless you upset her.

"Just being cautious." Said Sarah.

“Olga mentioned you had a spot of bother..... My office is over here.....You’re in luck, I just made some fresh coffee.”

The office was one of those rooms that looked like it hadn’t been intended as the boss’s office. Long and thin, the desk and chairs looked as though they’d been added as an afterthought. Spider and Sarah sat down, while Isobel stood near the door.

“No milk..... There’s a jar of coffee whitener.” Said Doc.

Not a badly equipped office, Doc even had a fridge the size of a hotel minibar. He checked it for milk and apologised yet again. The coffee tasted pretty good anyway. Doc was still watching Isobel, he seemed either nervous of her or he liked the look of her.

“We don’t need drivers.” Said Spider. “We want to drive ourselves, though an experienced guide would need to be part of the deal.”

“Hmmm did you see the burned out Range Rover as you came in ?”

“Yes, we saw it.” Said Sarah.

“That was from the last time someone told me they wanted to hire vehicles without drivers. There are some bad places out there, more than the government would like to admit. My drivers are there to keep you safe and stop you going into the bad areas.”

“But we’ll have your guide with us.” Said Spider.

“Look..... Why is she here ?..... Why won’t she sit down ?”

Isobel was still hovering by the office door, occasionally looking out to where Nari was inspecting the line of vehicles.

“Isobel..... I’m Isobel. I’m here to see if you’re an honest man Mukami Kibore.”

“Well am I..... honest I mean ?”

“Honest enough.”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean ?”

Tempting to ask Isobel to sit down. They each had their own say of working though, all of Ruby’s wunderkinds. For all he knew Isobel was deliberately trying to wind up Doc.

“Can we get back to not needing drivers ?” Asked Spider.

“Alright..... I’ll go with you as your guide.” Said Doc. “I’ll charge you the same rate as you’d pay for three drivers.... Take it or leave it.”

“We haven’t even discussed your fees yet.” Said Spider.

Doc talked about numbers that would have been ridiculous in the busy period, they were insane in the off season. Ruby had given him her blessing to spend what was required though and..... They were desperate.

“I think we’re in the right ballpark.” Said Spider. “Isobel, could you call in Nari for me ?”

Isobel leant out of the door and clicked her fingers twice. Nari appeared a few seconds later. Being Nari she filled up a cup with coffee, without being asked.

“The vehicles are fine, no problems.” She said.

“I told you..... Maybe a bit of mileage on one or two, but they’ll get you wherever you’re going, and back again.” Said Doc.

Doc visibly twitched as Isobel whispered in his ear. Spider made a mental note to tell Ruby it was something they’d have to keep an eye on, once they were on the road.

“Telling you I’m honest enough again is she ?” Asked Doc.

“Actually something I had worked out, considering you know Olga.” Said Spider. “You don’t just take tourists about, I’m sure of it. There will be other items you pick up and deliver, if the price is right.”

“No, not drugs or contraband, not these days.” Said Doc. “Once maybe, but we’ve had terrorists coming across the borders, the police watch everyone. I have to live here after you’ve gone home. Guess who the police would put in prison for years if things go wrong.”

Spider held his hand up, shaking them, palms towards Doc.

“No, you’ve misunderstood Doc.” He said. “No drugs.... Nothing like that. There may be enemies following us, even right out to The Great Rift. I was hoping you might be able to supply us with a few weapons. Nothing that high tech, a few rifles would do. A handgun or two would be nice. Can you do that ?”

“Rifles yes, half a dozen carried openly....No problem. I know people and we usually carry a few weapons in case a wild creature tries to eat a tourist. Not handguns though, sorry.”

Spider thought it was worth pushing a little, they were going to pay Doc a lot of money.

“Not even one for me ?..... Just for use as a last resort.”

“We’re back to who the police will lock up forever if things go wrong. Rifles are fine, everyone carries a rifle. A handgun though..... That can’t be explained away. I’ll be in jail until I collect my pension, maybe longer.”

“Alright..... So, six high powered hunting rifles will do. How much for those ?”

Doc mentioned a figure that would have bought half the stockroom of a weapons dealer in somewhere like Tallinn. Only they weren’t in Tallinn and as they were desperate, it was a seller’s market.

“That is a lot of money Doc.” He said. “We can do it though, if you can guarantee we’ll be on the road the day after tomorrow.”

“I can do that, as long as cleared funds are in my bank account later today.”

“Not a problem..... One last thing though.”

He had Doc, he knew it. Spider could almost see Doc working out what he was going to buy with the unexpected windfall.

“What’s that ?” Asked Doc.

“I really do want a handgun. Nothing fancy, any automatic as long as it works. You can tell the cops you had no idea I was carrying it..... If things go pear shaped.”

“He means if things go badly wrong.” Said Sarah.

“I guessed that.....Alright you can have your automatic.”

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Anna Kaloyanova hadn’t really enjoyed the shopping day in Nairobi, though she had bought some jeans and new underwear. As for her body becoming used to the local heat and humidity...It was far too hot for her to feel comfortable, but she’d be fine.

“Slow down.....You’re making me nervous.” Shouted Sarah. “Why did they let you drive anyway ?”

“I’m just keeping up with Doc. Go shout at him.”

Sarah was probably going to hate her forever, as the woman who tried to steal her man. Not that Spider was her man then, and she hadn’t meant to steal him. She’d only wanted to borrow Spider for a while, probably only for a few nights. Now they were on the road she’d had a proper look at Doc. Not her usual type, but he was fit and wiry.... She quite liked wiry guys.

“Are we going to have a stop soon ?” Asked Sarah. “I’d kill for a decent coffee.”

“Not for a while.” Said Ruby.

Anna wasn’t sure why Doc had let her drive one of his precious four wheel drives. She’d just sat behind the wheel and he’d given her the keys. No one had even asked if she had a driver’s license. She had owned one in Bulgaria, but that had been bought from one of her contacts and hadn’t been

in her real name. Anna wasn't even sure why she was still with Ruby, following her across East Africa.

"Sorry.....I need to pee." Said Sarah.

"Oh.... We haven't been driving for that long." Said Ruby.

Sarah had been trying to push her buttons all morning and Anna saw the chance to get a little revenge.

"We could hold her out of the window..... Like a puppy." She said.

"What the fuck did she call me ?" Yelled Sarah.

"Please Anna, don't make her any worse."

"Fine." Said Anna.

Sarah was glaring at her, Anna could see her in the mirror. They exchanged a look, a declaration of war had been offered and accepted.

"Give Doc the three headlight flashes to say we need to stop." Said Ruby.

"Ok."

The three vehicles parked up on the side of the A104, which didn't look that much like main road. Quite narrow, there was an industrial estate next to the road, with a few trees and a wall. Sarah ran behind the wall, while Doc nodded his understanding about why they'd stopped.

"How far to Gitaru ?" She called out.

"Another two hours." Shouted Doc.

They were going to overnight in Gitaru, Doc knew someone there. It was also where they were going to pick up a few weapons.

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