

CHECKMATE

Her father, a head of a terrorist organization, doesn't know she's working to take him down.

They were prisoners, taken against their will and held for a ransom their country was not going to pay, it was always the same story. I saw them come in late last night as my father and his foot men forced them into the false basement. It was really a dirt grave dugout that was served as a dungeon for those my father took. Usually it was men with the U.S. war rags that was made for them to look like the earth around them, but not this time.

This time bound together was women, not in uniform. Just women and children in regular daily rags who seemed to be taken and beaten. I watched from my bedroom window as one by one they were taken out, put in a separate room for a while, and then put back underground with dried blood and tears soiling their already soiled clothes.

I wanted to ask my father what was going on, but my mother said that we as women were to be quiet. We were not to discuss with the men what they were up to. I asked if I could take food down to them, I wanted to sneak and find out information about them, but my mother was strictly against it. She always acted as if she had no idea what was going on, but for years I had found more information than she ever admitted to. I was against my fathers "mission", they were nothing but local thugs and terrorist that had every country in fear. Many of his men had given their lives for this, and he has even used children. I wonder what he planned for those under our house.

Thank Allah for the internet. Not everyone in my country had the internet, but my family made enough money on the suffering of others, that we were one of the richest in our area. I hated it, but it came in handy to discuss with my mentor how to free the people and stop my father. See I was the daughter of a bad man, and I knew it, but I was in contact with other people whose plan was to rescue the ones my father takes. Usually, the people were too late, but it was only because I was never able to get information, but this time I would be braver. I mean this was women and children, not men in war, although no one deserved what my father did.

I tried to reach out to the woman who made me into who I am, Mahala Jemund. She was a brave woman who almost lost her life helping people escape the terrorist that my father and his men were. We had an online relationship, mostly through online chats and emails. I sent her a message to let her know my father had struck again, and this time it was women and children. I was born into this life, but at 13, I knew it was wrong and I wanted to find a way to stop them. I could hear the cries of the children and the shushing of the women in captivity. When it became dark and I knew my mother and father were sleep, I smuggled a pan of bread, a bowl of water and a towel to cover it. Now the hard part was getting the items to them without being turned around.

I tiptoed out an open window, placing the tray of bread on the ledge so I could grab it once I was on the other side. I walked lightly to the entrance of the "dungeon". I was almost where I could pass the bread out when my arm was grabbed.

"Little girl, what are you doing?" I looked up and was relieved to find the pervert of the group, Mumi. He was twenty years my senior but always made a pass at me. He asked my father for my hand in marriage two years ago, I was eleven. Thankfully my mother pleaded for me a little longer, said she needed me around the house, and instead, my father offered him a job until I was of age. Now of all times, he calls me little girl. I watch his eyes look me up and down but never noticed the bowls in my hands.

"I was only coming to give bread and water for them." His eyes narrowed in suspicion, "They can't survive another round of questions without something on their stomachs." The look on his eyes looked satisfied to the point I was disgusted. I shook off the feeling and walked past him, to the underground cell. There were no doors to this dugout, it was just tunnels through the

dirt, one dusty hallway after another. Looks like Mumi was the only guard to this group, because I saw no one else as I followed the sound of the tears.

As I rounded the corner into their dirt prison, I saw eyes all open wide to my entrance, it was a small pause until they saw what was in my hand. The children came first followed by several of the women, that's when I saw her. My mentor, the woman I was reaching out to help, Mahala, was here. She was captured again by my father. Her face looked defeated and dirty. I took the towel and dipped into the water and walked over to her. I wiped the dried blood off her face, unlike the others there were no tears, no signs of fear, just irritation.

"What happened?" I went to wipe her hands and she grabbed my hands and looked me in my eyes.

"You need to be careful and be quick, your father knows that there is someone on the inside giving information. He is searching through all of our things looking for hints to someone up top. I never wrote your name down, but there are signs that point to you." My breathing stopped, my father can never find out that I betrayed him. He will never forgive me. "Before you begin panicking, I need you to listen and follow my instructions quietly and quickly. In my items is a cellphone that is inside an orange and magenta lock box. The code is 0114, in it is my contact that will rescue us and will also wipe everything else in every other box. All you have to do is click on the app that says Wipers. Simple."

"How did they capture you?" I can't imagine that she was anywhere unguarded, she was very important to the take down of my father's terrorist group. Why was she so close? I had so many questions.

"I was coming for you, I couldn't let my little helper risk her life every day and I not come for her. You are a big part of our mission and you know probably more than you think you do. I didn't even know where the headquarters was. I heard of an ambush of women and children and put myself in the middle of them. They have no idea who I am as of yet, but I know soon they will when your father is given the pictures of each one of us captured. I know that today's questions were general, and the beatings were minimum, but tomorrow, when they find out who I am, it will be much worse, which is why you have to wipe all of my items. My laptop, cell and tablet are all synced, and the wipe will erase my identity and any signs pointing to you."

"What will we do after that? How will we get out of here?" Mahala looked behind me, her eyes were wide, I turned to see Mumi walking in and looking directly at us.

"What are you doing?"

"Her wounds were worse than the others, and I thought I would tend to them." I stood up, brushed my hands on my clothing and walked over to the empty pans and bowl to collect them.

"Why are you checking on me?"

"There's no need to tend to their wounds, they will all be dead in a few days anyways. I wanted a chance to walk out with you and talk." I looked back at Mahala, she winked her eye and gave a small grin of encouragement. I turned back and started walking, letting Mumi do all the talking. He was rambling on about our nuptials and not being able to have me for himself and get me from doing mundane jobs. I ignore him as we exited the tunnels. I walked away from him as he was still talking, I had to get back in the house and find where the items were being held.

With the house sleep, me searching would be suspicious, so I went to my room to go to sleep. I needed the rest and strength for tomorrow, I planned on finally being free away from the mistakes and lies my father fed his followers. I stared at the white stucco ceiling, tracing the texture with my eyeballs, waiting for sleep to find me. My blood was boiling, my anger was making me antsy. I had to protect my mentor, Mahala was the only person in my life who made

sense of my purpose. I was born into a family that was full of hate and revengefulness, I was nothing like them. I wanted to be like regular kids and go outside, and now a teenager, I would like to have crushes and friends, but no I was working for a cause I didn't agree with.

I'm sure it was easier when my mother and father were growing up because they didn't have the internet to tell them that what they were doing was wrong. Nothing my parents or their workers could tell me would make me think what they do ok. They stole people from their homes, their countries, their jobs. Not just people of other religions, and races, but our own people, no one was safe from my father's war, everyone was made a martyr or a victim of the cause.

As the sun came up, I sat up, still wide awake, my eyes never closed. I got up and got ready to help with meals as I do every morning. My mother seemed a bit more hushed and in a hurry this morning. She wouldn't engage in small talk with me or any of the other women in the kitchen. She pressed a bowl in my hand and told me to take to the men on the second floor outside the big office. I did as she said, paying attention the entire time to the things in each room. Right before I got to the last guard on the second floor, I found the stuff Mahala was talking about. I walked up to the last guard but slipped his water in my pocket. I hope this plan works.

"Girl child, there is nothing to drink with this?" I looked in my basket and acted as if I must've ran out. "Stay here, I will go get me something to drink. Make sure no one comes down this hallway." I watched as he walked back the way I came in a light jog mode. I slipped in the room with the items and located the lock box. I opened it up and found the phone and quickly slipped it in my pocket and closed the box back. Just in time because the guard came back as I stood back in his spot. "You can go now. Thanks." He winked his eye at me and I went back to the kitchen.

I had the phone I went through my day and went to my room as my mother was going for her nap. I opened up the phone and went to the name Mahala told me, sent him a location point and wiped her devices. As I did this, I could hear my Dad scream at a few people. I heard the hustling and moving around the house. I took the phone and hid it under my mattress and turned around to see my father. I was caught! I watched the look on my father's face as he pulled the phone from under my mattress. His face read betrayal. He looked at the men on his right and they slowly turned around and walked away. I swore one had a tear fall down his face.

My father was going to kill me. This was bigger than just me, I was a martyr for my mission and a victim of his. I stared in his face as he pulled out his gun, watched his face as he pointed it at me and smiled as he pulled the trigger, he may take me, but I still won.