

Chapter 1

"**No** other choice, Ambo, I'm sorry." Auntie Saleeha's voice echoed in his mind digging up the frustration he was valiantly trying to bury.

"Either you get married and inherit the property of your mother or let Jayrun-Mrs Yahya become the guardian of the girls and the *LIFE* Group of companies." Amash gritted his teeth at the mention of Mrs Yahya. She meant no good to anybody and he wasn't ready to carry the burdens his mother had left on his shoulders. His heart was weighed with uneasiness from the time he had heard the bad news about his mother. It was sixteen years since he had run away from his family. Perhaps there was no way out of this or he wouldn't have been destined to return to the life he had rejected. He felt as if he was thrown out from the glamorous cities to the lonely teardrop of the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka. When he left this land he had never wanted to come back. It wasn't for the hate for his beautiful motherland, but for his mother.

"I already foresee enough of trouble in that house with three girls and an old woman, lovely though she is, and you want to add one more! You must be kidding, Auntie Saleeha." He shook his head several times, trying to pacify his anger. Saleeha shoved her glasses further up her nose and picked up the documents her eyes had been studying all this time.

"I wish I was, Amash. Please go through the documents," she pushed the papers toward Amash. He leaned back in his chair, showing no interest in reading them. He watched Saleeha place a glass paper-weight on top of the papers.

"How would I know this person..." he paused. Irritation made it difficult for him to speak. How had he fallen this low, to such a position to even consider his mother's ridiculous suggestion?

"Your mother knows you better, Ambo, trust her, at least for now," Saleeha consoled him in a calm tone.

The smile that twisted his mouth was heavy with mockery. If she, his mother ever understood him, would he have run away from her in the first place? Though it hadn't been intended, he thought as his heart ached. He was his mother's disobedient child, unfortunate enough to not even be present at her funeral.

He sighed loudly.

"I'm sorry that you have to go through all this, Ambo." Saleeha addressing him by his nickname reminded him of his childhood, easing his churning misery a little bit. "But we have to fulfil her last wish."

"Even if we don't agree?" he said irritably.

This time it was Saleeha who had to knit her frustration in a long sigh. "You have two choices, Ambo. Either you agree to marry and inherit the property or disagree and go

back to live your own life." Even though Saleeha hadn't meant to offend him, his mind was fertile ground for receiving it.

"Everything isn't hers! I treasure my father's house!" Amash slapped his right fist on the papers Saleeha had placed on the table. He had always wondered what had made his mother live in that old house while her millionaire husband could afford a luxurious place for them. The thought of them living in that house had always bothered him. But he had never wanted to come back from the UK to fight for his rights while his mother was alive. He had never wanted to meet her again after that horrendous argument all those years ago. God had accepted his wish without any second thoughts.

Seeing Saleeha's regretful expression, Amash tried to calm down. It wasn't fair to show his anger to her- his mother's best friend. Failing to look directly at her, Amash's gaze lingered to rest upon the legal documents. He watched the papers flutter to the gentle breeze blowing through the window, yet they couldn't break free from the heavy glass paper-weight. It reminded him of his current dilemma.

Would his mother, if she was alive, be pleased to see him now? She would have wept, yes, only to convince him to agree with her wicked plans. Amash rubbed his knuckles, white from when he had clasped his fist tightly.

"May I know who my mother wanted to ruin along with me?"

Saleeha couldn't hide her knowing smile from Amash's hawk like eyes. He was least interested in joining her.

"Well, A.B is a dynamic girl with good manners and a religious background."

The description itself made him choke. "A.B- is she an undercover agent?" he snorted.

"Aminah Ismael," Saleeha announced, removing her glasses.

The name was as bland as they come and didn't ignite the proverbial spark inside of him. Of course, he was partly to blame, for how could he let any woman have that effect on him when his mind was chanting the name of someone else?

And that special person never reciprocated her feelings for you! his subconscious mocked. It was now seven years since he promised himself to hate that woman but that was something he failed at each day.

"She's the one who took care of your mother during her *Iddah*."

Surprise lifted his brows. *So had his mother chosen her maid as his bride?*

"She's the acting chairman of *LIFE* Group of companies."

Amash's brows disappeared into his hairline. "What?!"

"She's a charming and educated girl."

He saw Saleeha's facial expressions lighten when she mentioned this strange woman. That woman must have hoodwinked these old ladies, his anger chuckled.

"She has an extraordinary personality for a woman," Saleeha continued.

No wonder! Amash thought with a grimace. Any little extra performance would have been sufficient to let these women dance on her palm.

It's ridiculous to marry a woman with extraordinary qualities. It would be like marrying an army commander. Gawd save me! his mind screamed.