

A Princess Amongst Warriors

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I'm Emily Thompson, a Christian American girl from Oklahoma. I believe in the importance of missionary work because of its potential to change people spiritually, so when I had the chance to visit Ethiopia as part of a mission trip with my Methodist church I jumped on that opportunity.

However, it turned out that our missionary work wasn't as easy as I thought. Although humanitarian assistance was desperately needed in some regions, ravaged by the Tigray war, logistical and organisational issues were preventing us from reaching out to many people in need. We decided to step up our efforts and to take contact with some local institutions.

I was chosen as part of the team to be sent to the governor of the war-torn province where our mission was operating to coordinate humanitarian efforts. The ongoing conflicts had severed basic infrastructure and locals desperately needed us. We tried to get in touch with the regional government to get some logistic support but we only got vague promises up to that point, but we hoped that meeting in person would speed things up.

I wore very covering clothes despite the hot weather because I hated putting my body on display, especially around powerful people. I wanted to be heard for what I had to say, not for how I looked.

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The governor, Berhanu Belay, was a powerful and wealthy man, yet deeply unhappy. Apparently, he had lost his daughter, Kelile, in a terrorist attack a few months before, and he couldn't accept the loss. I tried to comfort him, but he didn't pay too much attention to my words. He told me he was impressed by an uncanny resemblance between me and his daughter. I thought he was obsessed with his daughter and saw her everywhere but didn't think much of it. Anyway, he was absolutely stunned by the resemblance and immediately changed his approach towards our mission.

He told me he had to carry a few background checks on our church. If everything looked ok, we would be given substantial support from the local institutions. In the meanwhile, he suggested that I remained in the area, to speed up communication with our organisation. He offered me to stay in his mansion in the meanwhile, just nearby the regional governmental headquarters.

I was a bit surprised he wanted me to stay but I was thankful for the opportunity for our mission to do more and gladly accepted his offer.

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I would have rather helped people in need rather than spending my time living in a luxurious mansion, having scarce briefings with the governor's team and being taken out for dinner with the governor's entourage. I knew people needed my help now but I told myself this was going to help them more in the long run.

I was given his late daughter's room for the time being, as it was still empty. The walls were decorated with lots of pictures of her. I had to admit that there was a vague resemblance between us, despite our very different complexions.

As I wasn't planning a long trip, I didn't have any extra clothes, so I eventually accepted the governor's offer to borrow some of his daughter's clothes, who happened to be more or less of my same size, except for a different breast size. My only problem with that was that the girl seemed to have been a lover of low-cut dresses, crop tops and very revealing clothes I didn't feel very comfortable wearing. Still, I didn't really have a choice.

I tried a few extravagant outfits in front of a mirror, just to see how I looked and I realised I had never done anything like that. I had to admit I looked really good but this wasn't really my style and I was looking forward to being able to wear the kind of clothes I usually wore.

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The governor's office told me that my presence was required for a little bit longer so I prepared myself to spending a few days in his mansion.

As I reluctantly got more and more used to wearing low-cut dresses and exposing more of my skin, I noticed how my skin was getting darker. Not just a usual tan, my complexion looked naturally darker.

I couldn't know this, but the vaccinations he had generously offered to give me to make my extended stay in the area safer, were actually melanotan shots, a lab-made chemical commonly used for skin tanning.

The governor complimented me on my healthy tan, to which I didn't really know what to respond. I usually never tanned much, I would simply get sunburned.

During the briefings and dinners with the governor's entourage, I started being asked whether I was of partial Ethiopian ancestry. I insisted that I was a white American but they would often laugh back at me and tell me that I should be proud of being mixed.

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I tried avoiding the sun as much as I could, and I always used sun protection when outside. Still, my skin was turning brown. My body was betraying me.

One day I carefully inspected my body, only wearing the fashionable underwear of the governor's late daughter, and noticed how even the body parts that were not exposed to the sun were getting equally darker. Even my nipples looked dark brown! I started worrying and told the governor about this, and he quickly got me in touch with a doctor, who told me I was perfectly healthy but suggested to run some checks.

As I was lying down on a hospital bed, I noticed the badge of the doctor talking with the governor. It said "Plastic Surgery Clinic". Something didn't add up. I raised my head to look at the documents the two were talking about and I realised the governor was showing him some pictures of his daughter. Then everything clicked. He wanted to turn me into a replica of her. Maybe he thought I was some sort of reincarnation of her or something! I started saying a prayer as the doctor walked towards me. I jumped off the bed and was about to escape when a couple of nurses got me and injected me some sedative.

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When I woke up again, my lips were fuller, my facial features slightly more exotic and my breasts felt bigger. Everything confirmed my worst fears, this psycho wanted to turn me into his dead daughter.

"You probably hate me right now but what daughter doesn't hate her dad once in a while?" - he asked me, sitting by my hospital bed.

I gulped. "You're completely dilusional. I'm sorry for your loss, and I will pray for her soul, but I'm not your daughter! No amount of surgery will turn me into her"

"Give it some time" - he replied - "I feel some of Kelile's soul in you. All I'm doing is simply matching your body to that. Look at your face, you were already quite similar, only a few touch-ups and you look almost like her. Same for your body, only a minor breast augmentation. My daughter wasn't as flat-chested as you, she got her mum's good genes." - he added, lost in memories. "Anyway, you look almost like her now. Except for your skin, of course. But that will follow soon".

"What do you mean?" - I wasn't ready to see myself changing even more dramatically.

"You'll see!"

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To give me some time to reflect about my recent changes, he sent me to spend a few days his private-owned resort in a small island in Zanzibar. The whole inlet was heavily guarded, so escaping was impossible.

Once on the island, they told me that a genetically-engineered cocktail of chemicals had been released in my bloodstream to increase the amount of melanin naturally produced by my body to a much higher level. That psycho wanted to make me even darker! I recalled the pictures of the real Kelele I saw, she was very dark-skinned, even for a local.

To activate the effect of the chemicals, direct sunlight was required, so I was forced to spend most of the day sunbathing outdoor. The entrance to the governor's bungalow was locked. I desperately tried finding some shadow to preserve the brown skin tone that now seemed to me like the most tolerable option but the islet offered little to no shelter to the scorching Equator sun. I had chosen the most covering swimsuit I could find but the large portions of skin left uncovered received more than enough sunlight to activate the chemicals that had been entered into my bloodstream.