

36

While waiting for Michael to join her for breakfast, Virginia was sitting in the hotel restaurant analysing the past events. The reported sighting at the detention centre turned out to be a red herring, and there was no other lead to follow. She thought, if we couldn't find him after all that media exposure, something terrible must have gone wrong. He could've been killed and his body left to rot somewhere in the bush. No I don't think so; he isn't the type of a person who could get involved in crime. I'm a good judge of characters, and I could tell that he couldn't hurt an ant. I think one piece is missing from this puzzle, and I'm determined to find that piece.

"Good morning, I'm sorry to keep you waiting." Michael interrupted her thoughts.

"G'day Michael," and half stood stretching her hands and held his firmly, and smiled receptively. "I am glad you came," and pulled him in and planted a kiss on his lips that didn't last more than a second before the electrical surge caused the circuit to break. Their gazes

locked temporarily and they sat down, hands, still holding. Virginia noticed the blush on Michael's cheek despite his olive coloured skin and realised that she was still holding his hands. "Sorry" and withdrew her hands politely.

"It's my fault. *'I wish I could say encore.'*

"I'm afraid I don't have any good news on Ameer's case. The detention centre's claim was investigated by the police and came in negative, but I can say congratulations on your new post." She put her elbows on the table, and grasped her chin between her palms and smiled with a glint in her eyes.

'Gosh! I haven't recovered from her kiss yet.' "Thanks to you." He said with signs of shyness showing clearly on his face.

Virginia held his hand and fixed her gaze into his eyes. "Don't thank me Michael. I didn't do anything. Robert told me that the interview this afternoon went extremely well, and the manager was pleased with your qualifications and performance. If you were not qualified to do the job, they wouldn't have approved your application regardless of who has vouched for you."

"Thanks, but I feel that I owe it to you."

"Forget it darling! Tell me now what do you want to have for breakfast?"

Michael couldn't believe it. Did she call me darling? His pulse raced and a blush showed clearly on his face. Virginia noticed the sudden blush and tried to rescue him from his embarrassment.

"Do you need help to choose your breakfast?"

"Well! I'm easy, what ever you order."

"OK. What about a cappuccino and toast with butter

and honey."

"Fine with me."

Just before they finished their breakfast, the waitress came in with a phone on a tray "Miss. Virginia a phone call for you. Would you like to take it here or in the office?"

"Virginia took the phone off the tray "Thank you Margie. I'll take it in here." She lifted the receiver to her left ear "Hello, Virginia speaking."

"Hello Miss. Virginia, my name is Ellen Givinganna; I'm the head of the admission department at the North West Metropolitan Hospital and..."

The introduction was long enough to hasten Virginia to interrupt her. "What can I do for you?"

"Well Miss Virginia, I was reading a newspaper a few days ago and noticed the photo of a missing person. I didn't take any notice at that time, because you know that every year, we hear about thousands of missing people and most of them either adults running away from home or one partner trying to run away from the other because of -"

"Thank you for the information, I'm quite aware of this, but what's that got to do with me?" Virginia interrupted again.

"Well, because of such a pattern of missing persons, I did not take much interest in the photo ..."

"What photo?" She interrupted again.

"The photo of the person in the newspaper who was listed as a missing person, and this phone number was listed as a contact."

Virginia covered the phone with her hand and whispered to Michael. "I think we've found him." Then she brought the phone back to her ear. "Please continue

Miss Givinganna."

"You know the one I mean, the photo of Ameer Sarrafin, the person you're looking for."

"Thank you for your observation. What about his photograph?"

"As I mentioned it before, I didn't take any notice, but yesterday after we've had our dinner at home, I looked at the photo again, but I wasn't hundred per cent-"

Gosh! Why should I be listening to such fine details? I wish she'd omit these systemic approaches and come straight to a conclusion. "I'm still listening go ahead Miss. Givinganna." Virginia interrupted again.

"When you reach to a certain age, your photographic memory sometimes will fail to serve you properly you know-"

"Please Miss. Givinganna, I'm pressed for time, and I wish you'd come to a quick conclusion."

"I thought you were interested to know what had happened to your friend!"

"Of course I am, but please make it nippy."

"As I said, I wasn't hundred percent sure, so I took the newspaper with me to the hospital and guess what?"

"What?" Virginia asked.

"The picture in the newspaper fits exactly the patient (UPN 13) who's laying in bed right in front of me."

"Are you trying to tell me that the missing person whose photograph appeared in the newspaper is a patient in your hospital?"

"Yes I do."

"Miss. Givinganna, for heaven's sake, why didn't you tell me straight without this entire introduction?"

"Well! Before I became a nurse, I was studying to

become a psychologist, and I knew what can happen to a person if he or she received happy news so suddenly-

"Please Miss. Givinganna; don't go through the details again," Virginia interrupted. "I can imagine it. I'm very grateful to you and your help is greatly appreciated. We'll be going straight to the hospital."

"Make sure you go to the administration office."

"Thank you again and we'll see you soon," and hung up.

"If this nurse is right, our friend is in the North West Metropolitan Hospital."

"Shall we go now?" Michael asked enthusiastically.

"Yes! How long would it take us to be there?"

"At the most fifteen minutes."

Virginia signalled the waitress. "Thank you Margie, the breakfast was nice, and don't forget to add your usual tip to the bill." Then she jumped to her feet. "Let's go." She said and wrapped her hand around his waist. "Keep your fingers crossed and wish it is not another practical joke."