**Company Property**

Katie Smith

Tracey looked out of the airplanes window with excitement as they circled the small airfield. The sun was shining brightly off the blue sea to her left and she could tell that it was a hot morning outside.

“Looks great doesn't it?” she heard Mr Chambers say beside her and she nodded her head in agreement wishing that he wouldn't lean over her quite to much to see out of the window. It had been a 7 hour flight to get here and she didn't think the overweight Mr Chambers smelt so good normally, after a seven hour flight he definitely didn't smell so good!

However he was the reason she was here, approaching the African country she was soon to be working in for the summer. She had applied to the small holiday company a few weeks ago when she had seen the advert for courier work and had been really pleased to be offered an interview within a few days. The advert had simply said that the firm needed couriers to work for a travel company in their hotel complex in a small African country, no experience needed but had to be good with people. It wasn't the type of job Tracey had been looking for but something about it had caught her eye, maybe the enticing picture of the swimming pool at the hotel, but more likely the fact that she would be out of the country for a few months. She had just split from her long term boyfriend and after moving three hundred miles to live with him and it not working out and finding herself in a town where she knew nobody, going to work in sunny Africa for a few months didn't sound a bad idea at all.

The interview itself had unnerved her slightly though. Mr Chambers was a slightly creepy type of man, she caught him several times glancing at her chest during the interview and he didn't seem embarrassed when he must of known she'd seen him. He had explained that he would fly with her to the hotel himself and stay with her for a few days and then he would return to England leaving her to deal with the holiday makers he would pass her way.

“Nothing to it really, just flash them a big smile and anything else you may want to flash and they will be putty in your hands.” he had laughed once again staring at Tracey's chest and once again making her wonder about him.

She had had to complete a questionnaire which had asked quite a few personal questions and she noticed that he did seem to get a bit excited when she had put down that she had no real local contacts in the town but she thought no more about it. Two days later she had received the phone call telling her she'd got the job and she almost squealed with excitement. It had all seemed so quick and before she knew it she was at the airport with her suitcase waving hello to Mr Chambers as he had started walking towards her.

The flight had been a bit bumpy in more ways than one! Mr Chambers had this annoying habit of patting her leg whenever he asked her questions, was she feeling okay, was she excited etc. and each time he let his hand linger on her leg slightly longer than acceptable. Tracey was beginning to think that maybe she would have to be careful around him when they were at the hotel. On the other hand she genuinely was excited, this was her first trip abroad and this was where she was going to be living and working for the new few months, she really wanted to do a good job for the company.

The airport had been a small wonder to Tracey, the site and noises and even smells were completely alien to her but luckily Mr Chambers knew exactly where to go, which line to stand in and which documents to be holding and before Tracey knew it she was standing outside the airport doors waiting for a taxi. The heat had caught her by surprise, she wasn't stupid, she knew Africa was a hot place but landing at midday after a long flight almost knocked her for six and even worse when they climbed into the old looking taxi it had no air conditioning and during the 30 minute ride into town Tracey felt decidedly light headed.
Finally they pulled up outside a rather dingy looking office in a rather dingy part of town and Mr Chambers quickly explained that he needed to check for any faxes and post before they could go to the hotel so Tracey found herself sitting next to the only fan in the office while Mr Chambers did whatever he had to do.

Mr Chambers almost ignored Tracey but then after twenty minutes he suddenly smiled and said he only had to make a quick phone call and then they could be off to the hotel and he picked up the old fashioned telephone and started to dial the number when all of a sudden the office door opened and four policemen entered the room.

Tracey was startled, the men all looked enormous to her, all of them black and dressed in a blue uniform and Tracey couldn't help but stare at the massive looking guns they all carried in holsters on their hips.

“Mr Chambers”, one of them said with a fake smile, “ How nice to see you in our city again”

If Tracey had been concerned before she was even more so now, the way the policeman spoke it was obvious he was less than pleased to see Mr Chambers and she saw straight away that Mr Chambers wasn't that pleased to see him!

“Hell officer Ruis, what can I do for you?” Mr Chambers replied with a quavering tone.

“Oh I think you know what you can do for me Mr Chambers” the policeman laughed, “for a start I am impounding this office and equipment of yours and then we can talk about any monies still outstanding after that.”

The policeman motioned to his fellow officers and Tracey watched as they started unplugging the computer and fax machine and taking them out of the office. As she sat there in shock Mr Chambers quickly explained to her that it was just a little problem with the local tax officials and once he had paid the money he owed them it would be business as usual, nothing to worry about.

Tracey was worried though, this was hardly the start to her new job she had hoped for and as the policemen came back into the small office and started taking out filing cabinets and even the fan that Tracey was sitting beside she was getting more and more worried, they even motioned for her to stand up and the chair she had been sitting on was whisked away.

After 15 or 20 minutes the office was stripped bare and the main policeman looked up from his notebook and smiled at Mr Chambers,

“Not quite enough I'm afraid, I think you still owe around $500.”

Mr Chambers almost looked relieved , almost as if he had been expecting a lot more than that and he looked at the officer and said,

“Okay I can go to the bank and get that for you now right now Officer Ruis.”

“Yes and disappear back to the British consul or maybe the airport.” the policeman laughed.

“No No I promise you I will be straight back”

The officer suddenly looked at Tracey properly for the first time and Tracey almost shuddered as she saw him looking her up and down.
“And who is this girl, your girlfriend perhaps?” he laughed.

“Oh no, she just works for me, an employee.” Mr Chambers said nervously.

“So she is an asset of your company then?” The policeman asked smiling slightly.

“Well yes I guess she is” Mr Chambers replied slightly puzzled.

The man suddenly grabbed Tracey's arm in a vice like grip and pulled her towards him making her yelp in fear.

“Good we will take her then as well as the office property, you bring us the $500 and you can have her back, if you don't she will be sold with the rest of the company's property.”

“I don't understand” Mr Chambers said as Tracey started at him in horror, “she is a human being not some company property”

The police officer laughed, “ She is just company property in this country, she will be sold along with your computer and desk if you don't pay up, you'd better hurry to, we have auctions most days.”

Almost not believing what was happening Tracey suddenly found herself being dragged out of the office and towards the open road outside. For a second she thought of trying to run for it but the mans hold on her arm was iron like and where would she run! To scared to speak she found herself thrown into the back of a dirty police van and all she could do was sit on the bench seat opposite the four policemen who were all grinning at her!

Tracey had never been more terrified in her life, she was in a foreign country on her way to God knows where and to God knows what and the only man she knew within 5000 miles was less than perfect! How she didn't cry in the back of that van she never knew but eventually it stopped and Tracey was prodded out of the back doors and into the glare of the strong sunlight again. She found herself in a courtyard surrounded by white buildings which only made the glare of the sunlight worse. The ground was just dry earth and she couldn't help but squeal when one of the policemen grabbed her arm and started leading her off to a corner of the yard.

As they walked Tracey suddenly saw with horror what he was leading her to, a three foot high wooden pole with what appeared to be a chain and a collar fitted to the end. One of the men grabbed both her arms and pulled them behind her and as she started to cry out another men fastened the collar tightly around her neck before they released her. Tracey tugged strongly at the chain and collar but she realised immediately that both were stronger than her and she wasn't going anywhere, she was tethered to the pole like a stray dog would be.

“Please you can't do this to me, I'm a British citizen” She cried but all she heard in return was laughter.

“You are property of this country now white girl, unless your boss pays the money to but you back.”

and again she heard laughter coming from the other men, “ you stay here for a while and we come and get you later.” and all four men walked away leaving her tied to the pole in the glare of the unbearable sun.

Tracey was relieved that they had gone and left her alone but also scared that she was now alone, helpless and tied and not knowing what was to happen to her. Surely they must have been joking when they had told Mr Chambers that she could be sold just like any other piece of office furniture! She had no idea about the laws of this country but surely they couldn't sell girls!

She sank to her knees and started to cry, how had she ended up in this situation, all she wanted was a few months of sun and sea and now all she could do was wait for Mr Chambers to come and give the police the money they wanted for her, she hoped he wouldn't be long.

She had no idea how long she knelt there in the sun, in reality she would of laid down on the ground, the sun was making her so weak but the short length of chain didn't allow that, all she could do was kneel. She looked over to a door in the side of one of the walls when a small commotion broke out and she saw two of the original policemen coming her way with what appeared to be a garden hose!

As they approached her one of the men motioned for her to stand up and as she unsteadily got to her feet she suddenly shrieked as a blast of cold water hit her face. To Tracey it felt wonderful and she almost embraced the stream of water as the laughing policemen hosed her down, her thing dressed becoming saturated in seconds. Her mood changed though from ecstasy to humiliation as one of the policemen suddenly came forward and with no warning proceeded to rip the sodden dress from her completely and as she screamed at him to stop her bra and panties were ripped from her too leaving her completely naked. She tried to cover herself with her hands but the policeman who had ripped her clothes off produced a small length of rope and in no time had fastened Tracey's hands tightly behind her back and they proceeded to carry on hosing her down, this time naked.

It was at this time that she heard Mr Chambers say,

“Hello Tracey I got here as fast as I could, I have some rather bad news I'm afraid.”

Zzzzzzz