

Dr. Placebo

Book Two



By Nkosi Moyo

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This book is dedicated to all the badly written but popular material that litters the American media landscape in print, TV, and Internet format. It helped convince me that I, too, can write badly and sell my material.
Long live mediocrity, bad grammar and the love of smut.

Chapter 1

From the minute he saw her in the crowded Wal-Mart store, he knew trouble would soon follow. If he played his cards right, however, no one would even know. If he played his cards right, things could turn out to be no trouble at all. Now the question was; could he still do it? Did he still have what it took? Those were questions he couldn't answer at that very minute. It bothered him that, even for a second, he'd doubted himself. He hated that. He hated it because he knew that no amount of self-doubt would prevent what was to follow. There was no way of avoiding it. A familiar feeling churned through his stomach. His chest rose as he took in a deep breath. This was a feeling he knew well. Even though he'd never seen her before, he knew right there, he'd have to do it.

He found himself gripping his shopping cart so tightly his nails dug into his palms. The resulting pain was only a minor distraction. Without prying his eyes off her, he brought his hands together and rubbed them briefly, before grasping the shopping cart handle again. A voice he hadn't heard in a while whispered softly in the back of his mind. Right now he was on the verge of breaking commandment number one: Never let them know you're watching.

He looked around. The crowd in the grocery section of the department store was a mixture of those who seemed to be in a great hurry but had no idea where to find what they wanted and those who appeared to be in the middle of a leisurely stroll whose only purpose was to admire the store displays. No one was looking at him. He felt sure no one had noticed him leering at her. A sigh of relief left his lips. Commandment number two – Never let anyone else know that you're watching – had not been broken.

He looked ahead. She was still there, walking along and stopping at the entrance of each aisle. She appeared to be pondering whether or not she needed anything from each aisle she came to. Turning to one side, he looked at a shelf. He had to appear casual. He had to look like he had nothing but shopping on his mind. So far, no one had noticed that he had been staring at her. But what about those security cameras, hooded behind their black glass domes, dotting the ceiling of the store? Was it possible that one of them had caught him in his moment of captivation? Even if one of them had caught him, did it really matter? He felt sure that nothing in his demeanor betrayed what was running through his mind. Even if other shoppers noticed the beads of sweat collecting on his forehead, they wouldn't know their cause.

He wiped his forehead, and the cold and clammy layer of wetness left a shiny smudge on the back of his hand. He looked at it briefly before wiping his forehead again, this time with his upper arm.

He turned his head back to the side aisle. She was still there, now almost towards the far end. He had to make sure he didn't lose her. He wasn't going to allow this one to get away. He knew her type well. She was the type that would keep him awake at night. If this one was going to keep him up at night, it wasn't going to be because he had managed to let her get away. It was going to be because she was his current project. Yes, project was a much better term for it. He nodded slightly in satisfaction, happy with how he had made the switch to referring to them as projects instead of victims. That had been very clever of him. After all, what he engaged in were victimless incidents. They were incidents, not crimes. Of course that wasn't the view that law enforcement would take. That's why extreme caution was warranted. As long as he stuck to the commandments,

he would be fine. These would continue to be victimless incidents and not crimes.

He gripped the handle of his shopping cart and began to follow her. The sweat that had collected on his palms surprised him. Was he that much out of practice? How long had it been since he'd had such a project? He couldn't remember. Anyway, that was not so important. It was far more important that he make sure that he didn't lose this one. Tilting his head from one side to the other, he peered through the crowd. She was getting too far away from him for comfort. The crowd suddenly seemed to be much thicker than it had been just a few minutes ago. He had to hurry in order to catch up with her.

Suddenly, she was no longer there. He had lost her! How had he allowed this to happen? He couldn't even tell where he had last spotted her. The pressure that welled up in his chest was unbearable. He was sure he wasn't going to be able to suppress the scream that he felt building up inside. The urge to dash screaming in the direction he had last seen her was overwhelming. But what good would that do? He had to calm himself down. He had to calmly but briskly walk after her. He had to find her. He had to find her right now.

As suddenly as she had disappeared, she came briefly into view again as she turned into an aisle. With his nostrils flared in determination, he took off towards her. He wasn't going to take his eyes off the entrance of the aisle he had seen her enter. The crashing sound that followed startled him as well as a few others in the immediate area. In his haste he had failed to see another shopper coming out of one of the aisles. Their carts had collided, causing everyone around them to stop what they were doing and stare.

A petite girl who didn't look old enough to be pregnant clung to the handle of the offending cart. Her

swollen belly, appearing to weigh about as much as her tiny frame, was partially exposed where her pink T-shirt should have met her brown knee-length skirt. He wasn't sure if that was a fashion statement or if she simply couldn't afford clothes that fit.

He spoke first. "I'm sorry."

For what seemed like an eternity, she said nothing. She just stood there, mouth partially open. Finally she said, "I'm sorry. I should have been paying more attention. Sometimes it's hard to pay attention to everything when I'm trying to keep them in line." She motioned to three kids standing next to her.

He looked at the kids and concluded that she was dressed the way she was not as a fashion statement but because she couldn't afford better fitting clothing. Looking at the children's dirty bare feet, he wondered whether the store's "No shoes, no shirt, no service" policy only applied to grownups. The children, a boy who looked to be around eight years old and two girls probably seven and five years old, looked at each other before appearing to find some fascination with the store's floor tiles.

He said, "That's okay, ma'am. No harm done. Have a nice day." He smiled before pulling his cart back, redirecting it and moving on.

He had told the pregnant girl that no harm had been done but he wasn't too sure about that. Had that short delay caused him to lose subject of his next project? His eyes quickly focused on the frozen-food aisle he had seen her go into. Rapidly, he made his way towards it. His head was already leaning into the aisle before he could fully turn into it. There she was! He stifled a gasp as he took in her physique. Since he was standing behind her, he could look at her without any fear of being spotted by her. Every inch of her body exemplified feminine athleticism. Her snugly

fitting white T-shirt tucked into her tight black jogging shorts made for a pleasing clothing-to-skin ratio.

He was still trying to determine whether or not she had any panties on beneath her jogging shorts, when she turned to open one of the upright freezer doors. With the smoothness of a seasoned veteran he turned and opened a door as well. Normally, the cold temperatures were unbearable to him in this area of the store. Today, however, was different. Today he had a project on his mind.

It was about time he got back into working on such projects regularly. But what if he made a mistake? What if he was caught? That would be the end of everything. There was no way something like that could be kept out of the headlines. Not only would the Athens and University of Georgia papers splash it all over their front pages, the Atlanta paper too would probably find the story too juicy to overlook. Then there was the possibility of TV news crews. He could picture them camped outside his apartment, waiting to catch a glimpse of him. Of course that would be assuming he was out on bail. The fact he was a twenty-eight-year-old male teacher at an all-girl private school could quite easily fuel the story nationwide. All that notoriety would kill him. It would kill his parents too.

Carefully, he stole a look in her direction. She still had the freezer door open. She appeared to be comparing the nutritional information labels on her selections. That made sense. She looked like the type that would do that. Her shape of body didn't come from just chomping down anything that was put in front of her. She made her selection, putting it in her cart before proceeding down the aisle. He had to see her from the front. He *needed* to see her from the front. Walking past her and then turning around to look at her wouldn't be a good idea. That would be a good way of violating the first commandment. Turning his cart,

he began to walk away from her. He was going to walk up the next aisle and then re-enter the aisle she was on from the direction she was facing. That way, if their eyes happened to meet, he would look just like another shopper wandering around in the store.

Walking quickly, he made it through the next aisle. Assuming what he was sure was the facial expression of a shopper deep in thought, he entered the aisle he had left her in. He made sure not to immediately look for her. That would be stupid. He hadn't got where he was and successfully completed all his other projects by being stupid. From the corner of his eye, he could see that she was still in that aisle. He hoped the sweat that was once again collecting on his forehead would not betray him. He looked up and down the freezer shelves, and all the while his focus was on her. Once again, questions flooded his mind about the possible consequences of embarking on this new project.

There was still time to safely back out. He could sleep well at night knowing there was no possibility of being caught. But could he really sleep well if he didn't go through with this? When he felt the moment was right, he cast his eyes in her direction.

The second his eyes fell on her face, everything changed.

All doubts melted, evaporating into the air around him. Abandoning this project would not help him sleep well at night. Not taking the project is what would keep him awake at night. For the first time in a long time he looked at his endeavors and saw a clear victim. He could no longer pretend that he was engaging in victimless incidents. There was a definite victim here. *He was the victim.* He *had* to follow this through. How could he resist that kind of beauty? He was powerless to do anything else. An

unfamiliar sadness descended on him. Who was really in charge in these situations? Had he been fooling himself all these years by thinking that he was in control? Wasn't it the power of the subjects of his projects that controlled him?

He looked away from her. As they walked past each other going in opposite directions, she appeared oblivious to his presence. A distinct scent trailed behind her. It was a scent he expected a woman like her to have. It was mild yet seductive and refused to be ignored. How could he expect himself not to take her as his next project? His earlier thoughts slowly evolved into feelings of anger. Feeling like a victim didn't sit well with him. He wanted to be in charge. He wanted to be in control. He wanted to be sure that what he did took place because he decided he wanted it to happen. He was the man, he was in charge and nothing was going to convince him that what he engaged in entailed victims, himself included.

He reached the end of the aisle. Turning, he checked to see if she was still in the same aisle. She was. He knew he was going to have to act quickly. If he wasn't careful he would lose her in the crowd again. He *had* to follow her. Maybe there *was* a victim after all. However, there was no question about who the victim was. He was the victim. He was a victim of that fateful day by the river.

Chapter 2

As Robin pushed her shopping cart out of the frozen food aisle, she still could not shake the feeling of discomfort that had weighed down on her all afternoon. Once again, as she'd done throughout her shopping trip, she reached into her handbag which sat in the cart. Taking out her cell phone, she checked the time. Dr. Placebo was probably still busy with his clients. She'd have to wait for about an hour or so before calling him. This was something that could wait. After all, she'd waited this long. Another hour or so couldn't hurt.

In frustration, her clenched fist pounded the shopping cart handle. She wasn't going to be able to wait. What she'd seen that day was still vivid in her mind. The sooner she started working on that problem the sooner she'd begin to feel at ease. She was just going to call Dr. Placebo and hope he picked up. Positioning herself next to a display of washing detergent, out of the way of other shoppers, she scrolled down the phone book on her cell phone. She selected the number and tapped her fingers on the shopping cart as she listened to the phone ring on the other side.

"Hello," Dr. Placebo answered.

"Dr. Placebo! Thank you for picking up. I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

"Not at all. If I'd been busy I wouldn't have picked up. Besides, I figured you had a good reason for calling at this time."

"I do. I need a medication favor."

"Okay. Is this for one of the kids you work with?"

"Actually, no. This is for an adult."

"Adult? I didn't realize you had any adults in your case load right now."

“I don’t.”

“Oh?”

“It’s one of those cases, Dr. Placebo, where you go into a home to work with a kid and find other problems with the adults in the family.”

“I know what you mean. What are the particulars of this situation?”

“This was one of those cases where a teacher makes a report to the Department of Family and Children’s Services.” An announcement on the store’s public address system requested customer assistance in Electronics.

“What’s all that in the background?” Dr. Placebo asked before she could continue.

“I’m inside a Wal-Mart. I was doing some shopping here and this case just kept bothering me. I just had to call.”

“Ah, I see,” Dr. Placebo responded. “So this was a referral that came to you because a teacher reported some problems with a child?”

“That’s correct. There were allegations of child neglect reported to them. The Department of Family and Children’s Services then contacted me as a sub-contractor.”

“By the way, are you still sub-contracting with them through the company you were with when we first met? You’ve previously mentioned possibly branching out and doing this independently, not through someone else’s company.”

“I’m actually now doing this on my own. I did manage to get it all put together. It’s been working pretty well for me.”

“Well, I guess congratulations are in order. Congratulations, Robin; your own successful business at just twenty-four.”

“Thank you, Dr. Placebo.”

“Okay, back to the matter at hand.”