My dearest friends,

GREETINGS!! I just wanted to reach out to all of you who have been so supportive of me during both my creative writing/dancing/teaching time, as well as the very difficult time I've had recovering from surgery. Everyday I grow stronger and healthier!

Many of you have lovingly encouraged me to keep writing, and I wanted to let you know that Amara and Alem, the main characters from my first novel, "The Abyssinian", have more of their story to tell. They allowed me to have some "silent time" to heal, rest, and become rejuvenated. I've always said that "I write when they tell me to write, I stop when they say it's time to stop".

And so, like any woman who has given birth says..."It's time!"

Please enjoy the first chapter of the book. Future installments are forthcoming, I will keep you posted.

Thank you again for your continuous prayers, support, and encouragement!

Sincerely,
Nia (aka Kenisha)

Nia Books
Stories of purpose and celebration of the African experience

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Chapter 1

Amara walked into her two bedroom townhouse, clutching her purse and two bags of groceries in one hand as she fished for her keys. Tossing them on the couch as she often did, only to regret it when she had to rush out the door, as she often had to these past few days, she kicked off her shoes and grabbed her telephone to check her messages.

“Mousey, mommy’s home”, she called out to her kitty, a tiny black haired, green eyed cat who served as her baby. Since she was not married, or in a relationship for that matter, she had to take her nurturing instincts out on her cat. She was entitled to pamper her pet who was actually very independent when she allowed her to, which was fine with her. Since getting the green light on her museum, her schedule had been a series of appointments, conference calls, grant writing sessions, and licensing paperwork. She had a solid concept, and was really excited about being amongst the leading institutions in the state. She did not have “old” money backing her venture, but she had business savvy, a sense of style, and an eye for artwork that would not only enlighten the community, but allow her to feed herself off her passion. It was a match made in heaven.

Mousey came scampering into the living room, rubbing appreciatively against Amara's calves, before standing up on her hind legs, and stretching her back, yawning, and clutching her jeans. It was the equivalent of "hey mom, whatcha bring me?"

Amara laughed, and scooped up the cat, rubbing behind her ears, and nuzzling her soft head. Someday, she'd make a great mom, she told herself.

There were three messages on her house phone, which she knew were from her mother, her best friend, and her cousin. Her father always called her cell phone, being closer to her than her mother, and always wanting to make sure he touched bases with her at least once a day. Her mother preferred to profess her love via the telephone. All of her business associate's called her call phone or her office phone, and she made a mental note to herself, for the hundredth time, to look for an assistant. The constant ringing of the phone and the whir of the fax reminded her of just how far she'd come in a year, but still, she believed in efficiency, and wasn't above delegating.

Her best friend, Valaida, was acting as her interior decorator, as they planned together to redefine the world of academia, history, and culture. She usually called her cell phone when she wanted to talk business, and her house phone when she wanted to talk "girl talk". Her cousin was a college student at the local university Amara had worked at, and had gone into anthropology. She was very excited and supportive of the museum project, and was always submitting exhibit ideas to Amara. She was glad she recruited her to come to school' if she hadn't, her cousin would have stayed in her hometown and wilted in the stagnant environment. There weren't many people from that side of the family who had gone on to college and actually earned degrees that led to lucrative careers, so Amara was not only a trendsetter, but an oddity.

Sure enough, like good, old faithful clockwork, was the message from her best friend and her cousin. The third call…she was not expecting.

There was a definite accent, which she immediately deduced as East African. Kenyan? Somali? Ethiopian?

"Hello ma'am. I am Wangari Muriithi, calling on behalf of a party interested in purchasing your most recent acquisition. "Le Picture de Le Fuorilegge" is an exquisite piece which as caught the interest of my employer. Please, call me at 315-281-6945 at your earliest convenience. Thank you."

What an odd call. How did this person know her phone number? How did this person know she had recently acquired the portrait? Also, her business was a museum, not an auction house, why would they think she would even consider selling it?

The call unnerved her, though the polite female voice was actually quite professional, still…there was something insincere about the message. She hoped that with all the research and safety precautions she'd employed, that she had not received a piece that was the center of controversy, dispute, or conspiracy. Some of the older works had such history and sentiment attached to them, that one would have to go to great lengths to assure all officials-both formal and

informal, state elected, or village elder, were satisfied. She didn't want to rob one culture in order to promote it to another.

She clutched her kitty closer, her mind already racing, her heart quickening. "Oh Mousey. Mommy hasn't even opened her doors yet, and already the vultures are circling. God, give me strength".

Mousey jumped out of her arms, bored now that there was no toy or treat for her from her owner, and ran off to finish her nap, or use her litter box, or whatever she did when Amara wasn't doting on her. Amara went into the kitchen to grab a bottle of water out of the refrigerator, and gazed out her kitchen window. She loved the kitchen in her apartment, though she rarely had time to do any real cooking anymore. These days it was take out and sandwiches, pretty much anything to dull the hunger pangs. This is doing nothing for my figure, she'd chastise herself each time she pulled into the drive thru, but figured the stress of getting the business started would balance out how much weight she'd actually gain.

The stress didn't bother her too much, though. An astute professional, she planned so far ahead and for all sorts of scenarios, that very little came down the wire that she had not at least considered. She tried very hard not to generate bills, and had not carried a balance on her credit card since a mishap in her early credit life wherein which her first credit card bill quickly got out of control. She didn't like the idea of there being a "negative" on her reputation.

Her mind played over the list of things she'd accomplished that day, what she needed to do before she went to bed, and what she needed to do the next day. She leaned her elbows on the counter, and smiled contently to herself.

Life is so friggin' good right now. I have my first piece, my actual first piece of artwork! And speaking of fine black men…she wondered who the mysterious man was in the portrait? She knew the legend of the portrait, but she wondered about his life, his thoughts, and his actions. She wondered about the sound of his voice, the depth of his laughter, or extent of his anger. She pondered his favorite foods, his choice of recreation, the feel of his arms around her body…the warmth of this breath on her neck…the…feel…of…his…lips…

Her eyes snapped open, and she gasped at how intense her fantasy had been. Her heart was racing in her chest, her breathing staggered. She flushed in embarrassment, thankful that nobody was in the room with her to see her reaction.

Aye Dios mio! She chided herself. You can not have a crush on a picture, Amara. You haven't done that since the seventh grade.. Thank goodness Valaida isn't here, or else she'd never let you live this down!

But…there was a presence in the room. Another set of eyes that watched with interest as she moved from room to room, object to object. Eyes that were interested in her every move, and in particular what she'd do, and where she'd go next.