

# *SARAH'S STORY I*

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## **Day To Day Routine**

“April will you cancel the rest of my appointments today? And tell the Windows Support Managers that the meeting is here in my office so they need to leave their assistants out of the meetings. No vendor meetings for the remainder of this week and no job applicants. Let Human Resources handle them for a change.

“Yes, Sarah. Are you okay?”

“We’ll talk when you bring in the daily server downtime reports. And April, no coffee for me today. I’ll need fifteen minutes before you come in so watch for my phone light to go off.

“Ok, Sarah. I have to run to Accounting real quick and then I’ll be here to watch your phone light.”

April was a great administrative assistant, well worth the forty grand plus per year salary plus benefits that Thermodyne paid her. An island girl. April was tall, thin and proof of the old saying that *“black is beautiful”*. She had intelligence about her as if she could read your mind. There were times when she seemed to sense things almost before they happened. Sara called it her *“voodoo”* but she knew that April was a devoted Christian who volunteered at her church and also back in her home country of Jamaica.

Sarah took the phone receiver off of the hook and placed it aside on her desk to alert April that she was not to be disturbed. Starting up a connection into a proxy server located in Russia which was really Pastor Kensington’s server Sarah then went to the EFnet internet relay chat web site and logged in with the web chat login of 46866662 which is leet speak for *“hotmomma”* a non-existent

person but it suited her purposes. Hoping to start a botwar or maybe even a distributed denial of service attack against Kensington's server she began to taunt the members of the internet relay chat area. This area is known to be a haunting place for those who have nefarious intentions for those that they deemed to be worthy of their scorn. Young Asian men were some of the smartest and yet the most volatile members you can meet on these chat sessions. All it took was a few racial slurs and the final blow to their egos was an attack on their scripting skills. Telling these young egomaniacs they didn't possess basic computer programming skills was an act of war on the Internet.

On another window on her monitor Sarah had Kensington's site pulled up so she could watch what happened to it. Since it was war she was looking for it was war she got. The first thing they did was to deface the web by putting their own names all over the pages, replacing the page images with pornographic ones, along with ferreting out entire email lists and posting them on the site. After about a half hour they attacked the bullet-proof server itself. Bullet proof servers are merely ones that allow their client the opportunity to pretty do much whatever they want with their accounts. But this doesn't make them impervious to attack. Sarah admired the work of the sysadmins of the servers as they tried to fend off the attacks but it was just too much for them in the end. Before long the site was responding slower and slower until it reached a point to where the notification that the service was unavailable showed on Sarah's screen.

"Well there you go boys. Maybe you'll be a little kinder to strangers and visitors to your little group. It'll also teach you not to smack me in the mouth."

Sarah wasn't a vindictive person but she didn't like being pushed around either. She disconnected her connection into Kensington's server and closed out the various windows she had open and hung up her phone. In less than a minute she heard a soft knock on the door and April entered the room with some reports in her arms.

"What on earth ever happened to you, Sarah?"

April laid the downtime reports on Sarah's desk and walked around to the where Sarah was sitting. While leaning against the back of Sarah's desk April looked at Sarah's face and winced at the puffy lips and the accompanying bruises.

"What on earth happened to your mouth Sarah?"

"The long and the short of it? I'm out back in the garden, knee deep in compost. Well not really knee deep but kneeling in a bed of compost and I have garden tools scattered all around the area. Some stupid stray dog comes wandering in the back yard wanting to play and my cat Fred sees him and the fight is on. I tried getting between the two of them and nearly knocked myself silly with a stupid rake. Instead of avoiding the classic *rake in the face* gag I actually fell face first over it into the trailer hitch on the back of my old truck that was backed into where I was working.

"Satisfied?" she then asked.

Sarah was met with a cold stare and then silence. After a brief period of time April responded.

“Satisfied? No, but if that is the lie that you want plugged into the company grapevine. I don’t like lying for you but you must have a reason for both the lie and the lip so I’ll trust you on it but only this once. I don’t like lying or gossiping Sarah, you know I don’t.”

Sarah was squirming in her seat by now. Partly from the stare from April and partly because her back was aching once more. Lying to April wasn’t easy but she didn’t need to know just where Sarah had been last night. Friend or no friend April just could not know about this situation. Not yet anyway.

“Thanks for your concern April, but I really am okay. Now if you will show everyone in for the meeting.”

“Why yes, massa. Ise kin do dat fo you. Sho nuff.”

Sarah knew full well that she deserved that last little crack but she dare not allow April a chance to pick her brain. It wouldn’t take long before April would get the truth out of Sarah. But then again, neither April nor any of the others at Thermodyne needed to be involved with this. Surely Kensington’s people know someone is prying into their network by now, but one thing is for sure and that is they don’t know *who* or *where* the intrusions are coming from. The pastor had many people as a buffer between him and this group but Sarah had located a chink in his armor. Granted it was a small chink but a chink nevertheless.

The managers began filing into her spacious office and assume seats at the conference table. They were carrying their coffee cups and reports, electronic gadgets while Sarah sat down with her famous yellow tablets with meeting outlines already started. No one dared look at her face nor did they bother asking questions so Sarah assumed that April had done her job. The rest of the morning was filled with I.T. talk, a little banter about whose department was performing better and talk about whether or not Thermodyne would embrace the cloud computing frenzy.

Once the meeting broke up Sarah handled some phone messages that April sent her over the Thermodyne intranet. Sarah decided to forego lunch today with her lip still hurting from last night. She also didn’t need anyone that she personally answered to see her face so marked up. Plus she was sick and tired of retelling the lie she had concocted. Truth be known she realized it would only be a matter time before she told the wrong story and tripped herself up.

Sarah turned her chair towards the window and stared out over Dunlawton Avenue to try to wrap her brain around this so-called pastor. Somehow she had to connect the dots between Kensington and this group she was with the previous evening. Oh sure, they had him up on the screen at their meeting but that alone doesn’t necessarily mean that he is involved with them. For just a few short minutes she closed her eyes while she concentrated on the facts she had gathered. And then a faint noise, like a rustling sound was evident but she didn’t hear anyone come in the room.

“Sarah!”

Sarah opened her eyes and caught the sight of something moving inside of her office. But it was just a reflection in the plate glass window facing the street. Sarah spun the chair around, almost falling out of it in the process. There wasn't anyone in her office with her but she distinctly heard her name being called.

"I must be asleep and dreaming or just punchy from all the excitement of last night. Or maybe it was from getting punched in the face that made me hear someone who isn't in the room."

She picked up the phone and buzzed April on the intercom line.

"Were you just in my office April?"

"Ah, no ma'am, I was not. Do you need something?"

"No April. Why aren't you at lunch?"

"I had a few things to catch up on and I'm working on some of the self-improvement courses on the company intranet."

"Oh okay, sorry to have bothered you on your lunch break."

"Not a problem Sarah."

Sarah hung up the phone and started reviewing the server downtime reports that April had brought in earlier that morning. The downtime was minimal and she wrote the managers of those areas a group email congratulating them on keeping everything running as best as possible.

In the outer office April was on her cell phone listening to someone outside of the Thermodyne building.

"Lord, we beseech You that You watch over our friend Sarah. We don't know where she is walking right now but Lord, You do. We don't know what dark world she has been to but Lord, You do. Lord we pray Your hedge of protection around this prodigal sister of ours. Lord we thank you for the prayer warriors gathered around Sister Sarah. We praise Your Holy Name and that of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Thanks for calling April, I will see you in church Wednesday evening."

"Bye Maybelline, God bless you!"

April snapped the cell phone shut and tossed it into her handbag sitting on top of her desk. Turning her chair back around towards her monitor she went back to work on the courseware she was taking on the company intranet.