

OUR NEIGHBOURS' SECRET

By

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OVER BLACK:

There are delirious laughters of children, from a short distance.

FADE IN:

EXT. BUSHY PITCH - DAY

At a corner, behind a thicket, three children are spotted sittted close to each other, at the middle of the pitch.

From a first look, they seem as if they are hatching a plan, or maybe nobody knows.

CUT TO:

One of the TRIO, a young boy with the name KIGOTHO kneels, positioned in between the other two. His LEFT HAND PALM touches the grass.

The remaining two, MERCY and HER brother, GLEN, their left hand palms also on the grass. Mercy is bigger than the rest.

Kigotho touches Mercy's hand first, then Kigotho's and finally his, with his thumb. He counts audibly as he does so, and repeats the counting THREE times. A test done to determine whoever starts the game, HIDE AND SEEK.

KIGOTHO

One, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight, nine, ten.

The tenth touch goes to Mercy's hand.

KIGOTHO

It's you, Mercy.

Glen stands and stares at a thicket, on the farthest corner of the pitch. He signals Kigotho, making amereur gestures to him, without Mercy's awareness.

Kigotho stands. He looks at Mercy and sees, she has closed her eyes.

KIGOTHO

Tighter, Macii. Remember this is like
a test, no cheating.

(Looks up at Kigotho)

Let's go.

He and Glen run to the corner, to hide. Mercy makes the counts.

MERCY

One..., two..., three..., four...,
five...,

She opens her eyes.

MERCY

I think I'm done.

She continues sitting there, buying time.

CUT TO:

Behind the thicket, Glen and Kigotho lie still. Glen peeps in the spaces amongst leaves.

KIGOTHO

Is she done with the counting ? You know I don't trust your sister sometimes.

GLEN

Yeah, me too. Right now, she is standing there looking at this way.

KIGOTHO

What ! Is she coming ?

GLEN

No, no, not yet.

KIGOTHO

Let me see.

Glen moves aside. Kigotho raises his head and peeps. He stops almost immediately.

GLEN

What have you seen ?

KIGOTHO

She is coming, this way. I have to find another place.

He crawls fast to another set of the thicket, which is quite a distance, from where Glen is.

Glen watches him until he stops crawling. Then he turns and peeps.

CUT TO:

Mercy draws close to the corner, her face posing doubts as to whether she is on well on track. She stands a METRE away from the thicket, one which Kigotho hides behind.

MERCY

I have found you, Glen ! I have found
you Glen ! Come out !

CUT TO:

Glen looks at Kigotho.

GLEN

(Whispers)

She is there before you.

Kigotho turns and sees Glen whispering. He can't hear
anything. He gestures him.

Glen points his index finger to the pitch.

GLEN

(Whispers)

Mercy.

Kigotho understands the message. He crawls back to where
Glen is, making some sounds as he moves.

Glen signals him to stop but Kigotho ignores it.

Suddenly, a hand, obviously MERCY'S HAND dives in, and grabs
Kigotho's sweater at the back. She pulls him out of thicket.

MERCY (O.S)

Come out Glen, I already found you.

CUT TO:

Mercy drags Kigotho to the pitch. Against her expectations,
she releases him on seeing it is Kigotho and not Glen.

KIGOTHO

Terrible mistake, girl.

He gets up and wipes dust off his clothes.

MERCY

No way ! I'm not doing the counts
again.

KIGOTHO

You'll have to since it was your
mistake. Take responsibility.

MERCY

I can't believe it.

Her face achieves a stony expression.

MERCY

And where is Glen ?

Glen emerges from his hide out, shouting and laughing
loudly. Merely at his sister.

GLEN
You've killed the pot ! You've killed
the pot !

He continues laughing.

KIGOTHO
I know you didn't even reach ten
counts in the first place. Am I lying
?

MERCY
It doesn't matter now.

GLEN
Don't worry sis, you've saved the
day.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. PITCH - DAY

Mercy sits with her eyes closed. She makes the counts.

MERCY
Thirteen..., fourteen..., fifteen...,
sixteen...,

She opens her eyes and stares before her. Then she blinks
once and closes her eyes again.

CUT TO BLACK:

Glen and Kigotho are hiding behind a thicket at a corner, a
different one. This time, Kigotho sticks to the same point.

GLEN
I have never understood her.

KIGOTHO
What do you mean ?

GLEN
She is so perfectionist.

KIGOTHO
She has never accepted the fact that
you can't live without making
mistakes.

GLEN
Everyone makes mistakes as long as
they are human beings.

Kigotho laughs.

GLEN

What are you laughing about ?

KIGOTHO

Nothing really, you know it's just not long before she parts with us. Next year when she joins high school, things will be different.

GLEN

That way we can be free.

KIGOTHO

She has bullied us enough.

GLEN

But I also doubt whether she will make it to high school.

KIGOTHO

Why ?

GLEN

You know, she is never serious in her studies. All she cares about is minding other people's businesses- she is a busybody.

KIGOTHO

But she is still your sister, remember ?

GLEN

I know and I just pray for her to change.

CUT TO:

Mercy walks heading to the corner. Before she reaches the thicket, Kigotho emerges from the bush and comes running towards her. She gets confused.

Glen comes out and follows him. Also confused.

MERCY

(Smiles)

Why do you always have to make it look like a movie ?

Kigotho stops before her. Glen reaches there and stands besides Mercy, panting. They stare at Kigotho.

KIGOTHO

I have to go, it's already midday. See you tomorrow.

He walks past them. Mercy and Glen watch him as he walks fast, without doing anything. Mercy runs to catch up with him.

MERCY

Stop !

Kigotho turns to see Mercy running towards him. He stops and waits.

Glen follows her.

MERCY

You can't go.

KIGOTHO

I have to, infact I'm late.

MERCY

My intuition tells me you are hiding something from us.

KIGOTHO

You are wrong. There's no way I could hide anything from my friends.

Mercy grabs the collar of his shirt, and tightens the hold. Kigotho bends in attempt to free himself in vain. He tries to push Mercy off him but fails. Then he rotates fast, his sweater moves up and exposes, his lower abdomen.

KIGOTHO

Get off me, Mercy. Not anymore.

Glen reaches there. He grabs Mercy's hand and tries to pull it off Kigotho. Mercy tightens her grip, now almost choking Kigotho.

GLEN

Can you stop what you are doing ?
This is way below your age.

MERCY

He's just fooling us.

GLEN

Let him go.

Mercy reluctantly loosens her grip and, Kigotho frees himself. He steps away from her, coughing. He pulls his sweater down to cover his already exposed belly.

GLEN

What's wrong with you ? See, you choked him.

MERCY

You'll tell us, whether you like it or not.

GLEN

What will he tell us ?

MERCY

His secret.

KIGOTHO

I don't have a secret.

MERCY

You think I'm a fool ? My instincts never lie to me. I promise you, today will be different.

GLEN

Wait, what's going on here ?

KIGOTHO

Your sister accuses me of not telling the truth.

MERCY

He's lying. Tell us your secrets and I promise it will be over.

GLEN

Is this true ?

KIGOTHO

No.

GLEN

You don't have to hide anything. We are your friends, we can help you.

Kigotho turns and runs fast, passing through the first corner.

Glen turns and walks, leaving Mercy behind. She stands there turning this way and that way, not sure who to follow.

Glen looks back.

GLEN

Aren't coming with me home ? It's lunch time.

He continues walking slowly. Mercy runs to catch up with him. She stands in front and blocks his way. Glen diverts to avoid her and continues with whatever he is doing.

Mercy follows him.

MERCY

Follow me.

GLEN

Where ?

MERCY

Kigotho's home.

GLEN

To do what ?

MERCY

Just follow me.

GLEN

No, I'm not following you, I'm going home.

MERCY

Please.

Glen stops. He gives her a stern look to make her believe he means it.

GLEN

Go search for trouble alone. And stop dragging me into your own AFFAIRS !

Mercy grabs his hand from behind. Glen continues walking.

MERCY

Please Glen, I'm begging you to come with me.

GLEN

Let go of my hand.

Mercy drops his hand. Glen stops and turns.

GLEN

Fine ! And let this be the last time. I'm not your slave or your bodyguard. Okay ?

MERCY

Yes.

CUT TO BLACK:

Glen and Mercy follow the path Kigotho took.

MERCY

What if we discover something ?

GLEN

Like what ?

MERCY

Our neighbours' secret.

GLEN

You can quite be funny, sis.

MERCY

I'm funny ?

GLEN

Yeah, you always make me wonder. Why can't you mind your own thing at least for once ?

MERCY

I don't understand you.

GLEN

You always love busying yourself with other people's matters, unimportant things. Don't you even know you have a national examination at the end of the year ?

MERCY

And so what ?

GLEN

You should be serious about it. Instead of wasting time with us, you should be revising for it.

MERCY

I don't care about education.

GLEN

It's up to you.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. KIGOTHO'S HOME, OUTSIDE THE GATE - DAY

The gate is wide open. Mercy storms in first. Glen throws quick glances around him. Then he enters.

CUT TO:

Mercy makes light steps towards a large window. She stands on the left side. Glen does the exact thing as her. He bends low to pass to the other side of the window. He stands there.

The two listen to a strange conversation coming from the inside.

A comparison of Mercy's body size to that of Glen clarifies one thing. She is way up above whatever she is doing.

She turns and walks to the door. Glen bends low again and passes below the window.

Mercy enters the house.

CUT TO:

INT. KIGOTHO'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mercy enters the living room. What she sees makes her hold her mouth in shock.

Right in front of her, a BOY, 12 or so, is sitted in a WHEELCHAIR. Kigotho stands behind the wheelchair, holding a mug.

Kigotho drops the mug on seeing her. It breaks into pieces. He is surprised to see Mercy and it is obvious that he never anticipated for this.

Mercy pushes forward when Glen enters the room. He holds the back of his head with both hands. In complete awe. He stands besides her.

KIGOTHO

I...I ca...ca...can
ex...expl...explain.

MERCY

I knew it.

She turns to Glen whose eyes are downcast to the boy. He is studying him or wondering who he is.

GLEN

(To Kigotho, without looking up)
Who is he ?

KIGOTHO

My brother Jim.

GLEN

Your brother ?

KIGOTHO

I'm sorry I never told you. No one else is supposed to know this.

MERCY

Why ?

KIGOTHO

Our parents always threaten to kill me if they discovered I told someone else about this.

MERCY

Really ?

JIM

They are very tough on us. And they even wouldn't let me go to school like my brother.

GLEN

What !

KIGOTHO

Jim has never attended school.

MERCY

And what happened to him.

JIM

I was born like this and I've never stepped my feet on the ground.

MERCY

I'm so sorry. Do you go outside even for sun basking ?

JIM

They wouldn't let us.

Glen and Mercy look at each other.

KIGOTHO

I'm always helpless. I wish there was something I could do to help him.

MERCY

This is a police case to be frank enough.

GLEN

(Nods)

We should report this matter to the police. They will help us.

KIGOTHO

I don't know.

MERCY

It's the best thing we can do for Jim. After all, he needs to go to school, or don't you want him to ?

KIGOTHO

I want him to go to school.

JIM

(Looks up)

Let's do it bro. It's for the good of both of us.

Kigotho nods in agreement.

FADE OUT: