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## Trapped

by Richard Lewis

Imprisoned in a relationship she knew was wrong from the start, Ami wondered how she'd accepted life on Thomas's terms. Allowing herself to be taken over by a force greater than her own.

Ruminating about her past, Ami remembered what Jamal the Indian gardener had said about the banyan tree that spread its arms across her childhood garden in Johannesburg. What he told her had struck a chord but as a young girl she had not understood the meaning. The banyan, he said, is an epiphyte. Birds deposit seeds which land in cracks and crevices of an existing tree, where they germinate. The sapling then gradually grew around its host. It was a columellar, that slowly strangled the host which would eventually die and decompose, leaving a hollow centre, providing shelter for small animals.

The strange beauty of the banyan had always fascinated Ami. Now she realised she had been one of those animals. It had been her shelter, yet also represented the cage she was trapped in. The realisation hit her like a bullet. That's me, she thought, slowly dying, so easily taken over by others.

First, she'd been constrained by a needy mother who hoovered up all the light, leaving Amy floundering in the shadows. Her mother was starved of attention herself as a child.

Orphaned as a two-year-old, having been brought up by foster parents, she envied her daughter for having what she had never had.

Now there was Thomas. They say we're drawn to what we know and Thomas's manipulating ways were so familiar to Ami. Like her mother, he ruled her every move.

Lockdown only added to things being out of her control. The basement flat was restrictive and one week seemed much the same as another, she thought, the days pass quickly yet I'm so bored here. It was a sense she knew well. As a child, if she complained of being bored, she'd be told, well do something! Now she realised boredom was a cover for feelings she was afraid to acknowledge and that it connected with her parents own lack of interest in her. It's hard to give significance to oneself when others have never shown it.

Inside, an anger was growing about her past and present situation. It was a feeling she'd always suppressed, having been told, girls don't get angry. Now she knew, if those feelings ever broke free, there would be no going back.