

# The Promise

NUTRIMENTI

park and Jamal unexpectedly asked me, 'what's that?' He was pointing at my ring Marie and I had bought as an anniversary present of when we'd first met. It wasn't a proper wedding ring but rather a regular silver ring that we had bought when we couldn't afford a proper one. We had never wanted to follow the real traditions, even when we got married. 'It's my engagement ring,' I replied. 'What does that mean?' He asked confused. 'Well it's what people give to one another when they decide they want to get married, before the wedding.' He stayed quiet, still fascinated by the ring.

We played one more round of basketball before heading back to the house where Aisha was waiting at the door smiling. Before getting to the door, Jamal turned to me and asked, 'so that ring is like a type of promise then right?'

## Prologue

The sun was shining on the day that Aisha came to our house on Rue du Temple in Paris for the first time.

It was one of those days when the sun's rays were shining down filling the Marais with light, and the tourists crowded around to read the commemorative plaques outside the Jewish Museum or wondered around the Carreau du Temple.

Like others before her, Aisha had answered to our advert we had put in various newspapers and on a few websites. Marie and I had been looking for someone to help us around the house part time so that Marie could have some more free time.

At that time, about two and half years ago, our relationship was in trouble, so the idea of having someone to help round the house to give us some more time together seemed like a good idea, and Aisha really ticked all the boxes.

The time I met her, a Nigerian girl, I was not only struck by her amazing level of French but also her physical appearance. On one side of her head she had a coloured braid plaited into her hair, which though it sounds silly, gave her a wild and saucy look which I was drawn to immediately.

We fell in love with her immediately and a week later she began working for us. She was a thorough and punctual housekeeper as well as a fantastic cook. She would arrive at ten o'clock and leave at four when she would go to school to pick up her son Jamal, who we were able to meet a month after she started working.

He had to have been at least eight years old and went to primary school. He was a very tall boy, tall for his age, with coffee coloured skin and dark curly hair. He had two big brown out and teeth that beamed brilliant white.

On a Wednesday, as he didn't have school, he would go to the youth club and would then meet his mother at our house.

After lunch we would play football and if we had enough time would even go to play basketball at the park down the road.

One particular occasion after our weekly basketball game, we sat on the benches in the